

EXPLORE • CREATE • BUILD

Learning Lab Educator Guide – Session 1

This Learning Lab framework supports intentional, play-based learning through three simple classroom experiences:

- Explore – Sensory investigation & early math concepts
- Create – Process art & movement development
- Build – Fine motor strength & visual planning

Each section includes purpose, step-by-step setup, developmental outcomes, and family communication language.

EXPLORE

Scoop, Pour & Explore

Sensory scooping and pouring supports early math concepts, coordination, focus, and regulation. Children build understanding of volume, cause and effect, and comparison through hands-on investigation.

Educator Setup Guide

1. Prepare the Space

- Place a shallow bin on a table or floor mat.
- Keep materials contained and visually simple.
- Limit the number of tools at first.

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2. Choose a Base Material

Examples:

- Oats
- Dyed rice
- Sand
- Shredded paper

4. Introduce the Invitation

Model scooping and pouring once. Use calm descriptive language

5. Observe Before Extending

Watch how children use the materials before adding prompts or challenges.

Age Group Adaptations

👶 12–18 Months

Materials

- Large scoop
- 1–2 big cups
- Simple base material

Focus

- Cause and effect
- Sensory exploration
- Hand-eye coordination

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Educator Language

"Pour." "Dump." "Full." "Empty."

Family Update: Today we explored sensory scooping and pouring to build early coordination and cause-and-effect learning. Children practiced filling and emptying containers, strengthening hand control and focus.

🧠 **19 Months–Under 3 Years**

Materials

- Cups and scoops
- Funnel
- Small containers with lids

Focus

- Early math language (full/empty, more/less)
- Bilateral coordination
- Sustained attention

Educator Language

"Is it full?" "Can you fill this one?" "What happens if you pour slowly?"

Family Update: Children explored early math concepts through scooping and pouring. This hands-on activity strengthens coordination, introduces volume concepts like full and empty, and supports concentration.

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 **3–4 Years**

Materials

- Measuring cups
- Variety of containers
- Optional colour sorting bowls

Focus

- Measurement
- Comparison
- Planning and sequencing
- Problem-solving

Educator Language

"How many scoops does it take?" "Which container holds more?" "What could you try next?"

Family Update: Today children investigated measurement and comparison through sensory scooping activities. They practiced problem-solving, early math reasoning, and fine motor coordination.

CREATE

Paint, Roll & Create

Purpose

Process art strengthens shoulder stability, crossing midline, creativity, and confidence. It builds the large-to-small muscle foundation necessary for writing.

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Educator Setup Guide

1. Prepare the Surface

- Tape large paper to table or wall.
- Offer 1–2 paint colours to start.

2. Select Tools (Not Brushes)

- Toy cars
- Sponges
- Rollers
- Forks
- Natural materials

3. Model Exploration

Roll a car through paint. Press a sponge. Narrate your actions.

4. Avoid Product Focus

Do not provide an example of “what it should look like.” Focus on movement and experimentation.

Age Group Adaptations

🧠 12–18 Months

Materials

- Thick tools
- Large paper
- Limited paint colours

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Focus

- Sensory tolerance
- Gross motor arm movement
- Cause and effect

Educator Language "Roll." "Push." "Look at the marks."

Family Update: Today we explored process art using rolling and pressing tools. This supports sensory development and strengthens large arm movements that lay the foundation for future writing skills.

🧠 19 Months–Under 3 Years

Materials

- Cars
- Sponges
- Vertical or horizontal surface

Focus

- Crossing midline
- Controlled movement
- Descriptive language

Educator Language "What happens if you press harder?" "Can you roll it slowly?" "Look at that line."

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Family Update: Children experimented with paint tools to strengthen coordination and control. Rolling and pressing supports pre-writing muscle development and builds creative confidence.

 **3–4 Years**

Materials

- Variety of tools
- Optional layered surfaces (foil, cardboard)

Focus

- Planning
- Creative experimentation
- Fine motor refinement
- Visual tracking

Educator Language

"How did you make that?" "What could you try next?" "What do you notice about the colours?"

Family Update Today's process art experience supported planning, coordination, and creative expression. Using different tools strengthens the muscles needed for writing and builds problem-solving skills.

BUILD

The Sticky Art Wall

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Purpose

Vertical sticky play strengthens shoulder stability, hand strength, visual-spatial planning, and fine motor precision — all essential for writing readiness.

Educator Setup Guide

1. Prepare the Surface

- Tape contact paper sticky side out on wall or window.
- Secure edges with painter's tape.

2. Offer Lightweight Loose Parts

- Tissue paper
- Foam shapes
- Fabric scraps
- Feathers
- Yarn pieces
- Nature items

3. Keep Materials Minimal

Add new textures later if engagement remains high.

4. Model Pressing Once

Place one item on the wall and invite children to try.

Age Group Adaptations

👶 12–18 Months

Materials

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- Large lightweight pieces
- Minimal choices

Focus

- Whole-hand grasp
- Pressing and pulling
- Pause and effect

Educator Language "Stick." "Press." "It's on."

Family Update Children explored vertical sticky play to strengthen hand muscles and coordination. Pressing and sticking materials supports early fine motor development.

🧠 19 Months–Under 3 Years

Materials

- Smaller pieces
- Variety of textures

Focus

- Refined pincer grasp
- Bilateral coordination
- Decision-making

Educator Language

"Where will it go?" "Can you press it flat?" "What happens if you layer it?"

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Family Update: Today children built creative designs on our Sticky Art Wall. This activity strengthens fine motor precision and supports coordination and creativity.

 3–4 Years

Materials

- Mixed textures
- Yarn for lines
- Optional themed invitation

Focus

- Planning
- Visual-spatial awareness
- Layering
- Writing-readiness muscle strength

Educator Language

"What are you building?" "How can you make it taller?" "Tell me about your design."

Family Update: Children created layered designs on our Sticky Art Wall, strengthening hand and shoulder muscles while practicing planning and visual-spatial skills that support writing readiness.

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Observation Focus for Educators

Look for:

- Persistence
- Coordination (two hands working together)
- Problem-solving
- Creative expression
- Language use
- Regulation and engagement

Document what the child did and the skill demonstrated.

Example: "Ava carefully layered tissue paper pieces vertically, adjusting placement until they stayed. She demonstrated planning, persistence, and refined hand control."