



Simple Tips for Making a Family Literacy Backpack

1. Obtain a Backpack
 - a. Demco Library Supplies have net backpacks.
 - b. Wal-Marts have had clear backpacks.
 - c. Some stores might even donate them.
2. Determine a theme and a title for the Backpack and then select a graphic that can be put on items you make (Booklet, Bookmarks and Feedback form) to connect them all together (i.e. Farm Animals – picture of a barn).
 - a. Many examples are listed on the Buddy² website at <http://www.buddyproject.org/backpack/>.
 - b. Just select a theme you want and then a Backpack. Bookmarks and Booklets are provided.
3. Acquire literacy items that go with the theme for inside the Backpack
 - a. Books at various reading levels (picture book to adult)
 - b. Magazines
 - c. Videos
 - d. Manipulatives
 - i. Games
 - ii. Stuffed animals
 - iii. Toys
 - iv. Computer software
 - v. Journals
 - vi. Other hands-on activities
 - e. Other ideas found to go with the theme
 - f. These items can be purchased from companies, mail-order, at company warehouse sales, Discount warehouses, discount bookstores, public library sales, school library discarded books, donation from various companies or stores, new or used donated by student's families.

4. Set up an introductory Booklet or letter to explain the Backpacks to the families. This can be attached to the outside of the Backpack or placed inside in a folder. The Booklet is a 4-sided card (ran through the printer twice) includes the following:
 - a. Front - Theme title, graphic, short description of the purpose of the Backpack
 - b. Inside - the Indiana Academic Standards that are addressed in the activities and a few Additional fun activities families can do
 - c. Back - list of all the items in the Backpack for easy organization
5. Design Bookmarks for each item in the Backpack
 - a. We developed family-centered activities around each item in the Backpack. Some were follow-up activities, crafts, internet and computer activities.
 - b. These are listed on the Bookmark and placed with the item in the Backpack.
6. Management of Backpacks
 - a. Determine how long Backpacks will be taken out for (most kept over 1-2 weekends)? Who is allowed to check them out (certain grades, certain groups of students, only students who's parents came to an introduction meeting)? Where the Backpacks are housed when they are not checked out? Who will check them in and out? How will records be kept on who has taken them out? Set up a policy on if things are lost or damaged; Possibly set up a replacement fund.
 - b. A feedback form, which covers what activities were done and how they were received, is developed to be filled out at the end of the time a Backpack was home.
 - c. Journals to record what went on while the Backpack was at home were used in some Backpacks.