



# FAMILY DAY GUIDE

A SmartStarter's Guide  
to leading Family Days for caregivers



+27 (0)60 658 6058 (WhatsApp hotline)



hello@smartstart.org.za



smartstart.org.za





## Why is caregiver engagement important for SmartStart?

*Children need caring caregivers to help them thrive and succeed. Caring caregivers contribute to a child's physical and emotional wellbeing, and ensure that a child has access to quality learning opportunities.*



Research shows that the more 'engaged' a caregiver is in their child's learning, the better the child will do at school AND IN LIFE.

This is what we want at SmartStart as it supports the child, as well as YOU!

Because caregivers are our customers, we must do everything we can to build positive relationships with them, so that they support us in continuing the child's early learning at home.

## What does caregiver engagement look like?

Caregivers are engaged or involved when they:

- Talk about the importance of early learning for their children.
- Build a relationship with their child's teacher.
- Attend meetings to learn about what is happening at school and show interest in their child's progress.
- Show interest in supporting early learning at home.
- Play, talk and share stories with their children as often as possible.
- Come to Family Days to support their children.

## What should SmartStarters do to involve caregivers?

SmartStart understands the importance of caregiver engagement. We will support you as you find clever ways of making it happen.

Things you must do to ensure caregiver involvement:

- Greet caregivers warmly every time you see them and talk to them about their children, especially if you think there might be a problem.
- Hold Child Progress meetings with caregivers twice a year.
- Run Family Day events every term (see Family Day Guide).
- Encourage caregivers to attend Family Days to support their children.

### DID YOU KNOW...

2/3 of SmartStarters communicate with caregivers at least **once a week.**

*SmartStart Caregiver Research, 2021. BCA*

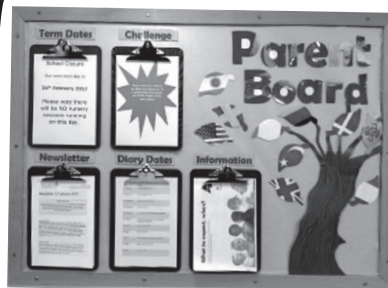


## What else you can do?



### Set up a class WhatsApp group

- Use this to keep in touch and share important messages.



### Have a family notice board

- Put up useful information like showing the theme that you're busy with, birthdays for the month, announcements and important dates.
- Update this notice board often so that it stays interesting and useful.



### Showcase amazing work

- Create an area where you can hang up the children's work.
- Encourage caregivers to go and have a look at it.
- Encourage children to talk about their work.



### Make a mail box for each caregiver

- Use waste materials – small boxes, envelopes or anything else you can find.
- Make sure there is one per child.
- Ask children to help you put messages into their mail boxes.
- Remind caregivers to check their boxes for any personal messages or invitations.



### Pin up your SmartStart calendar

- Put this near the Family Notice Board.
- This helps caregivers keep track of important dates.
- It will remind you to celebrate important days, like World Book Day.



### Think about your own ideas

- Be creative in how you engage caregivers. They are your customers.
- You're far more likely to succeed in giving every child the power to succeed when you have committed and involved caregivers supporting you. You are a team with a common goal - together, you are stronger!





## What is Family Day?

**Family Days are fun-filled, themed events.**

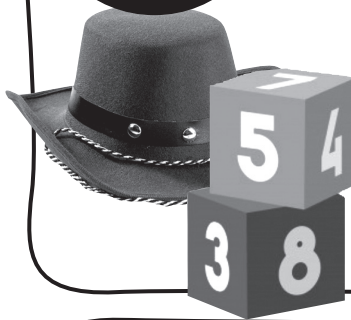
- Caregivers are invited to join the children for the themed event.
- There are four types of Family Days: Open Day, Play Day, Story Day and Graduation Day.
- These happen once a term.
- They are usually one hour long.

## Why are Family Days important?

**Family Days keep caregivers connected to what is going on at your preschool.**

- Caregivers come into your space to spend time with their children and other caregivers.
- During these sessions, you can share information about a caregiver's important role in their child's development.
- Family Days should give caregivers a good feeling about the work you are doing.

### TERM 1: OPEN DAY



Caregivers **ENJOY** an hour at your preschool along with their children.

- They learn about your service.
- They learn about the SmartStart daily routine.
- They get to know YOU while they have fun.

You can also introduce new families to your programme and register new children.

### TERM 2: PLAY DAY



Caregivers and children **PLAY** together.

- Share your toy-making skills and the power of play with caregivers.
- Everyone can have fun together doing an activity that develops fine motor skills for children.

### TERM 3: STORY DAY



Caregivers and children **SHARE STORIES** together in a fun and interactive way.

- Sharing stories is fun!
- By sharing the joy of stories, we can help caregivers raise readers who show how sharing stories every day improves future reading.

### TERM 4: YEAR-END CELEBRATION



Families are invited to an end-of-year **CELEBRATION** for children.

- Congratulate children for their progress.
- Celebrate caregivers for everything they have done.
- Everyone sings and dances together.





## How to lead a fun-filled Family Day?

The Family Day guide contains simple steps to support you in running each of the Family Day sessions.



### BEFORE EACH FAMILY DAY... GET SET ...

Write which event this is for here eg PLAY DAY

**1**

07 08 09 10  
14 15 **16** 17  
21 22 23 24

**Pick a date** and mark it on your SmartStart Calendar.

**2**



**Let the children know** about this special occasion.

**3**

**Put up a poster** to share more information and build excitement.



\* Put the **INVITATIONS** into the **caregiver mailboxes** at least **TWO** weeks before the day.

You can also **send a WhatsApp invite!**

\* **Fill in the date** and time and what caregivers need to bring.




**5**




**Remind caregivers** about the event when you see them.

**6**



Arrange an **assistant** if you need extra hands. They could help you make your room look professional and welcoming, and support you on the day.

**7**



**Check the Family Day Guide** for guidance on the specific day you are running.

**8**



Most importantly ... just have **FUN!** And **make the day EXCITING and ENTERTAINING** for everyone. This will help to build strong relationships with children's families.



# TERM 1: GUIDE TO OPEN DAY

Suggested time 60 minutes

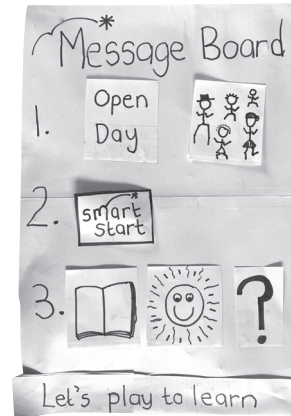


## PREPARATION

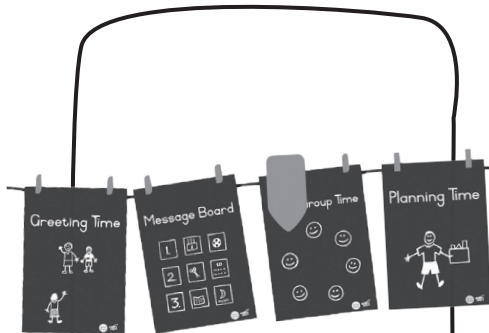
- ✓ Send invitations
- ✓ Make a message board
- ✓ Set up play areas
- ✓ Organise a book to read
- ✓ Organise an assistant
- ✓ Set up chairs



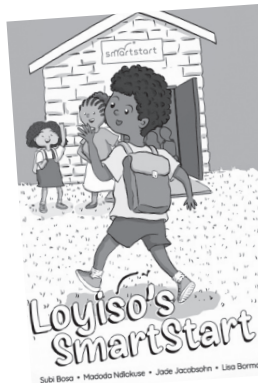
SEND invitations to the OPEN DAY at least **two weeks** before the date.



MAKE a **message board** for caregivers. You can use example in the plan.



SET UP **play areas** and daily routine cards.



HAVE '**Loyiso's SmartStart**' ready to read.



ARRANGE an **assistant** to **watch** over children if you can.



IF you have chairs, **arrange them** in a way so people can see each other.

SEND **WhatsApp** invite.



## OPEN DAY GUIDE:

Suggested time 60 minutes



### PLAN

20

#### Welcome everyone warmly as they arrive (About 20 mins)

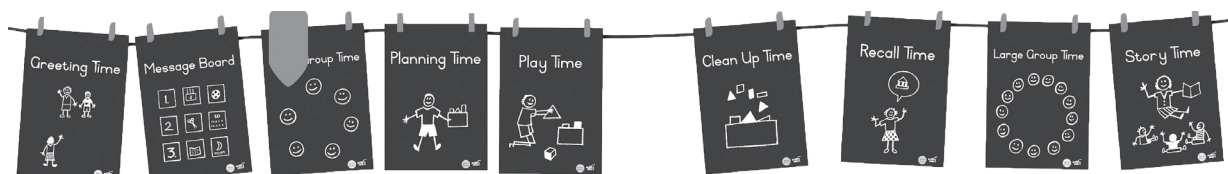
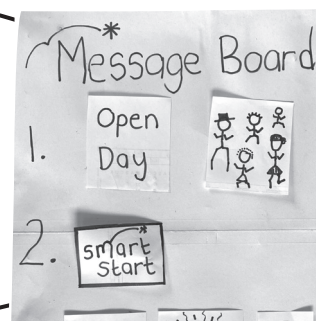
- Ask children which AREA they would like to play in
- Invite caregivers to take a seat, and welcome them by name
- Ask each person to tell you a little bit about their children



5

#### Greeting Time and Message Board (About 5 mins)

- Welcome caregivers and their children
- Use the message board to show the plan for the day and say:
  1. We'll talk about my early learning programme, and I will answer your questions.
  2. Then we will end with a beautiful story which the children will join us for.



10

#### Point to the daily routine cards (About 10 mins)

- Explain how the daily routine gives structure to each day
- Explain how structure makes children feel secure and confident
- Explain that the Message Board helps children to develop early literacy skills which they will need when they learn to read at school

10

#### Talk about your programme (About 10 mins)

- Make sure you have filled in pg. 4 of the OPEN DAY HANDOUT
- Explain your hours and costs and talk about registration
- Ask if anyone has any questions and answer as best you can
- Help or encourage caregivers to register their children right then



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## OPEN DAY GUIDE:

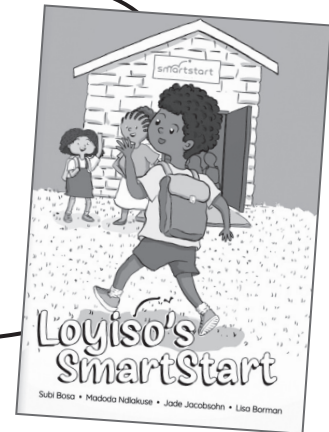
Suggested time 60 minutes



### Close by sharing a beautiful story (About 10 mins)

10

- Invite the children to sit on their caregiver's lap
- Read **'Loyiso's SmartStart'** using expression and gestures
- Give each family a copy of Loyiso's SmartStart to share before school starts
- At the end, get everyone to talk about what they enjoyed



### End the session by thanking caregivers for coming (use words that make people feel connected.) (About 5 mins)

5

- Thank caregivers for focusing on early learning
- Share that EARLY LEARNING is the best investment for their children's future
- Share that the best results come when caregivers support more learning at home
- Share inspiring stories about current caregivers
- Encourage them to register their children today or soon
- Say that you look forward to seeing them during the year
- Say that you will share monthly ideas and activities to support learning



Let's  
give our  
children the  
roots to grow  
and the  
wings to fly

Give your child a SmartStart for life.

SmartStart programme name: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme features: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme benefits: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme cost: \_\_\_\_\_

SmartStart's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Don't miss out on important opportunities for your child's development. **Register your child now.**

**smartstart**  
GIVING EVERY CHILD THE POWER TO SUCCEED.  
+27 (0)60 658 6058 (WhatsApp hotline) @ hello@smartstart.org.za smartstart.org.za





## TERM 2: GUIDE TO PLAY DAY

Suggested time 60 mins

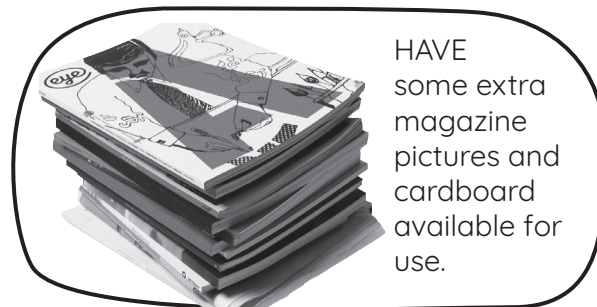


### PREPARATION

HANDOUT invitations to the playday at least **two weeks** before.



SEND a reminder WhatsApp invite.



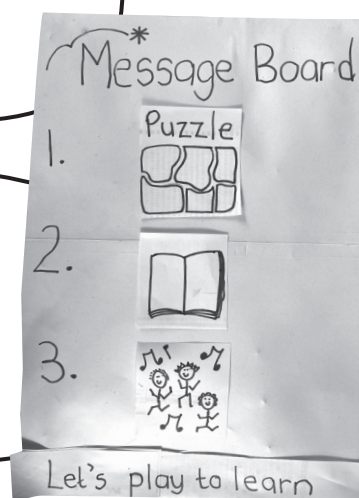
### PLAN

**Welcome everyone warmly as they arrive** (About 10 mins)

- Ask children to take their caregiver to their favorite play area
- Encourage them to play together, while everyone arrives

**Greeting Time and Message Board** (About 5 mins)

- Sing a happy greeting time song together – clap and dance
- Use the message board to show the plan for the day and say:
  1. We will make a puzzle together
  2. We will end with a story and a song





## PLAY DAY GUIDE:

Suggested time 60 mins



### Small Group Time (About 20 mins)

20

- Ask everyone to find a space with their child
- Explain that we are going to play together and say:
  - Play is the best way for children to learn important skills
  - Children build language, learn patience and solve problems when they play
  - We should play together as OFTEN as possible
- Show them how to make a puzzle with pictures and cardboard
- Explain that cutting and sticking are fine motor skills; children build finger strength, which is needed at primary school
- Ask what other fine motor activities they could do at home
- Ask caregivers to show what they created



### Large Group Time (About 10 mins)

10

- Create a safe space so everyone feels comfortable
- Choose one of your favorite large group activities and do it together

### Story Time (About 10 mins)

10

- Get everyone into a circle and show them your puzzle
- Share a 5-minute story about your puzzle
- Use facial expressions, funny voices and ask questions
- Get everyone involved
- Say that they can use their puzzles to tell stories at home



### End the session by thanking them for coming (About 5 mins)

5

- Make them feel good for being involved
- Remind them that it is important to play with their children OFTEN because this is the best way for children to learn. Play also builds a special bond that no-one can break.
- Ideally, caregivers should SCHEDULE daily and weekly playtimes
- There are some ideas for making toys on the back on the BROCHURE



10





# TERM 3: GUIDE TO STORY DAY

Suggested time 60 mins



SEND  
invitations to the  
STORY DAY at  
least two weeks  
before the date.



Reminder  
WhatsApp  
Invite



## PREPARATION

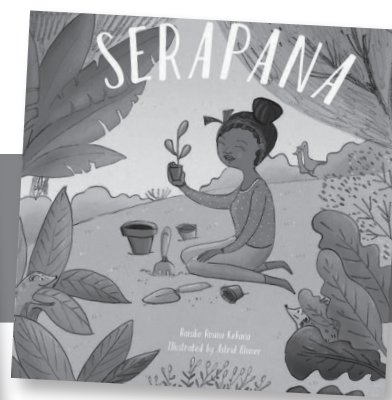
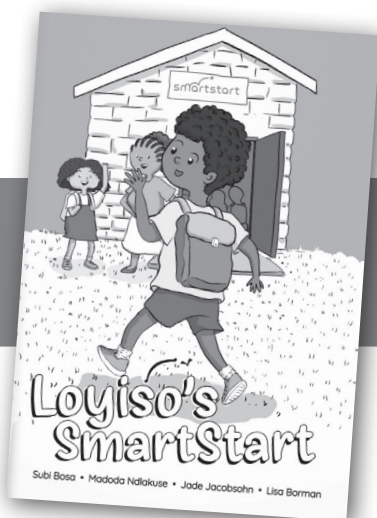
CHOOSE one of your  
favorite stories and  
practice it.



HAVE art materials  
and paper ready  
for art  
activity.



If you have chairs,  
arrange them in a way  
that people can see.



# STORY DAY GUIDE:

Suggested time 60 minutes



## PLAN

### Welcome everyone warmly as they arrive (About 10 mins)

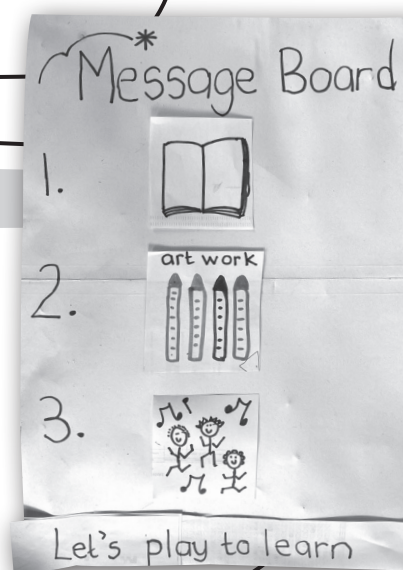
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- Ask children to take their caregiver to their favorite play area
- Encourage them to play together, while everyone arrives

### Greeting Time and Message Board (About 5 mins)

5

- Sing a happy greeting time song together - clap and dance
- Use the message board to show the plan for the day and say:
  1. We will share a wonderful story together
  2. We will do an art activity
  3. We will end with a song



### Story Time (About 20 mins)

20

- Ask everyone to get comfortable
- Explain that stories are important for learning
  - Children build language and learn to concentrate
  - They also learn about people, places, ideas and the world
- Share your story, using all your storytelling skills
- If you use a book, ask them to tell you about the cover
- Use facial expressions, voices, gestures and ask questions
- Make sure the story is fun and keeps everyone's interest
- After the story, ask everyone what they enjoyed
- Explain that caregivers should share stories EVERY DAY, even if it's only for 15 minutes
- If you don't have books, you can make the stories up or share traditional stories



Continued →

## STORY DAY GUIDE:

Suggested time 60 minutes



### Art Activity (About 20 mins)

10

- Give out paper and crayons and ask the caregivers and their children to draw a picture of the story that you read or create a simple storybook
- Caregivers can do it together with their children or they can each draw on their own
- Ask everyone to show their pictures and talk about them



### Large Group Time (About 10 mins)

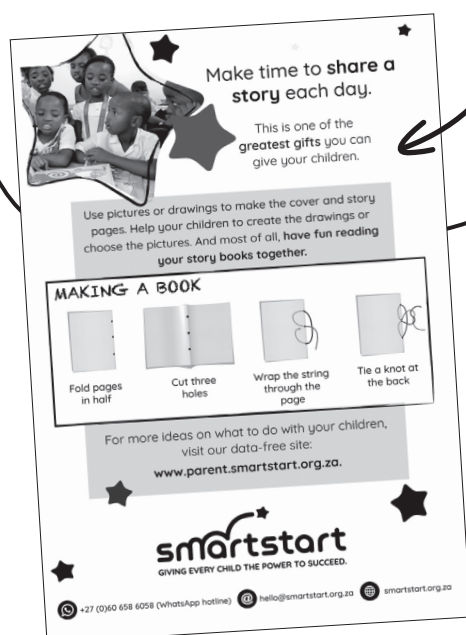
10

- Create a safe space so everyone feels comfortable and relaxed
- Choose one of your favorite large group activities and do it together
- Make it fun and entertaining

### End the session by thanking them for coming (About 5 mins)

5

- Encourage them to share stories with children everyday
  - It is the first steps to helping children become readers
  - It is the best way for them to learn language
  - It builds a special bond that no-one can break
- Explain that they can learn how to make books at the back of the BROCHURE





# TERM 4: GUIDE TO YEAR-END CELEBRATION

Suggested time 90 mins



## PREPARATION:

(This day should feel special for children and caregivers)



SEND front page of INVITATION to the YEAR-END CELEBRATION at least TWO weeks before the date.

★ Dress smartly ★

TELL everyone how you would like children to dress.



MAKE sure you have certificates ready (tied with ribbons if you want to).



**OPTIONAL:** Have a strong box for children to stand on to get their certificates.




WRITE DOWN special stories about each child that you can share.



SET UP your chairs for graduation.



DISPLAY special artwork from the year.



Let's sing the SmartStart song together.



PLAY SmartStart song in the background when people arrive (if you can).



## YEAR-END CELEBRATION DAY GUIDE: Suggested time 90 mins



### YEAR-END CELEBRATION DAY PLAN

#### Welcome everyone warmly as they arrive

(About 20 mins)

20

- Ask children to show caregivers their art and to talk about it
- When everyone has arrived, ask them to take their seats
- Bring children to the front so that they face the caregivers



#### Greeting Time and Message Board

(About 5 mins)

5

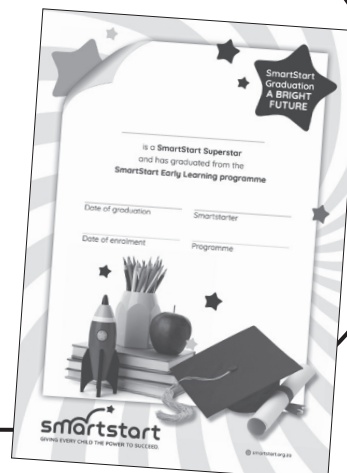
- Invite children to sing a greeting song to welcome caregivers
- Encourage lots of clapping at the end
- Ask children to sit down
- Share the message board and say:
  1. First, we will tell a special story about each child
  2. Then we will hand out certificates
  3. Then we will all sing a special song together



#### Special Stories (About 40 mins)

40

- Call each child up by name and ask them to stand on the box
- Share a special story for each child  
For example: When Mihle arrived, she could not catch, and now she can kick a ball and catch a ball
- Ask family to come up and hand out the certificate
- Clap for each child



## YEAR-END CELEBRATION DAY GUIDE: Suggested time 90 mins



### Celebrating Caregivers (About 40 mins)

40

- Remind everyone that a child's first teacher is their caregiver!
- Thank caregivers for everything they have done that year to support you and their children (If you have examples, share them)
- Let children hand out the caregiver certificates to their caregivers



### Closing Song (About 40 mins)

10

- Sing a favorite song that everyone can join in with
- Create a feeling of celebration; use drums and shakers
- Share how much you have enjoyed working with children
- Thank caregivers for their support
- Remind them about how important it is to keep talking, playing and reading together
- Thank everyone for coming and wish them well
- OPTIONAL: Serve tea and snacks if you want to

