

Collaborations with Public Libraries and the Benefits to Early Childhood Programs and the Children and Families They Serve

The early childhood education and care community is strongly committed to partnering with local public libraries to enrich the lives of families. There are 16,700 public libraries across the country that provide services for all ages, incomes, abilities, and ethnic groups. Using these services can help enhance the early learning experiences of all children and their families. These services are especially critical for children from high-need families. In the *Sampling of Public Libraries and Various Possible Benefits to Early Childhood Programs and the Children and Families They Serve*, learn about programs and services within libraries of all sizes. These programs and services are built around the needs of the communities each library serves. At the end of this document, find a sampling of both local and national websites sponsored by libraries and links to research articles.

Many Head Start and Early Head Start programs and child care providers have developed meaningful partnerships with their local libraries. These partnerships have led to invaluable community-based learning experiences for staff, children, and their families. Head Start and Early Head Start programs and child care providers that do not already have such partnerships can and should reach out to their local public libraries. In this way, programs and providers can learn more about what library services are available. They can also find out how to make use of these valuable community resources to serve the needs of their families.

Public libraries have become integral to early childhood development in their communities. They have a range of programming for young children, which has grown out of a long history of supporting early learning. Many libraries have spaces that are specially designed for children and their caregivers. A sample listing like the one that follows cannot possibly include all the programs and services available in the thousands of libraries across the nation. But, the listings below do show that libraries of all sizes create programs and services based upon the unique needs of communities they serve.

Libraries offer many different child-focused programs and services, including:

- A diverse collection of reading, viewing, and listening materials for all reading levels and in many languages
- Classes and learning opportunities for parents, caregivers, and teachers on early learning and child development
- Mobile units that visit Head Start and child care centers with books and other educational materials
- Story times where children and their families can share the experience of reading
- Enriched learning environments that focus on literacy and learning
- Evidence-based programs to promote early learning and adult literacy

Projects Supported Through Grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

The project descriptions below provide examples of grants funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). IMLS makes grants available to support collaborations with early education and care programs. Find out more about the grant application process and available grant programs [here](#).

Teen Parent and Early Childhood Literacy [Montgomery County Public Libraries, MD](#)

IMLS Funds: \$6,700; In-Kind Contributions: \$2,080; Total Cost: \$8,780

This program offers early literacy information and workshop practice for pregnant and parenting teens (ages 14–18) who are enrolled in parent education programs at two high schools in Montgomery County, MD. The workshops are designed to teach teenage parents how to use early literacy behaviors daily with their babies and young children in a variety of settings. These settings include the home, in the car, and while waiting in line. **A children's services librarian from Montgomery County Public**

Libraries (MCPL) talks with participants about early literacy techniques to use with their children. The techniques are then used in structured story time activities, the use of songs, rhymes, stories, and finger plays. Participants are encouraged to use these techniques to engage their children in activities that will help in language development. There is also a focus on the selection of books and the importance of reading with their child and using the library.

Creating Connections to Grow Readers

[Carroll County Public Library, MD](#)

IMLS Funds Expended: \$17,745; Cash Match: \$2,780; In-Kind: \$3,646; Total Cost: \$24,171

The **Carroll County Public Library's Creating Connections to Grow Readers: Training, Promotion, and Online Access** project provides information, materials, and training to parents, child care providers, and early learning professionals. The program focuses on the language and literacy learning domain. The purpose of this focus is to increase the abilities of parents and staff to foster school readiness for children in their care. Priority is given to low-income, Title I, and at-risk participants.

Early Literacy Station Project

[State Library of Kansas](#)

IMLS Funds: \$71,900; Cash Match: \$80,500; Total Cost: \$152,400

This project offers hardware with preloaded educational software to participating libraries. Thirty-three public and school libraries requested 70 stations, including 51 English versions and 19 Spanish (bilingual) versions. The stations **encourage children's thinking and allow them to learn at their own pace**. Even children with no previous computer experience are using the stations. In one case, a local **business owner noticed the high use of the library's** stations and donated funds for an additional one. In another case, a board member advocated for additional stations. Because of the workstations, several libraries are reporting increased attendance of families of preschoolers or early elementary students.

Getting Ready for Kindergarten Calendar

[RI Office of Library and Information Services \(OLIS\)](#)

IMLS Funds: \$1,759; Match: \$97.00; Total Cost: \$1,856

The State of Rhode Island Office of Library Information Services (OLIS) created an online version of the on the OLIS website. Through the website parents and other caregivers can print calendar pages, activities, and book lists to use with the preschoolers in their care. The website activities and materials are only available in English. The print version is available in both English and Spanish. The [Getting Ready for Kindergarten](#) website contains all of the calendar content from the printed version. It also includes additional content, such as expanded booklists and book-based activities. Parents, librarians, and caregivers will find the new activities integrated into each of the domains. They are also listed independently as a single, printable handout.

Services to Youth/Early Literacy Activity Center

[Shelby County Libraries - Amos Memorial Public, OH](#)

IMLS Funds: \$22,773; Match: \$7,592; Total Cost: \$30,365

The purpose of this project is to offer a welcoming environment where parents and children may engage in age-appropriate activities that promote the growth of early literacy skills in young children. The main objectives of the proposal are to have 50 unique families engage in early literacy activities with children in the Early Literacy Room during the first year of operation. Another goal is for 50 percent of the parents who frequent the Early Literacy Room to become aware of the importance of early literacy skills for the future reading success of their children. A third goal is to have 25 percent of the parents visiting the Early Literacy Room utilize the other services, programs, and early literacy skills materials that the library offers. The Early Literacy Room is outfitted with toys, equipment, and furniture to be used by families with young children. Parents with young children helped create the guidelines for the use of the room.

Stories for Learning, Laptops for Growth

[Central Washington University \(CWU\), James Brooks Library, WA](#)

IMLS Funds: \$17,987; Total Cost: \$17,987

The primary goal of the program is to connect job seekers with future employers. Central Washington University (CWU) students and community members receive dedicated access to 15 laptop computers,

books, and electronic resources. Well-trained staff also help them identify and apply for jobs. While parents are performing their employment search, their children engage in story hour, First Book books donations, and early childhood literacy embedded learning kits. In this way, the program serves the whole family in a supportive environment.

Ready to Read Resource Center

[Anchorage Public Library, AK](#)

IMLS: \$77,081; Match: \$27,046; Total Cost: \$104,127

About **half of Alaska's young children** are not able to read when they enter kindergarten. They lack fundamental receptive and expressive communication skills, and print concepts, such as knowledge of the alphabet. This grant helps to provide books and other resources to those who work with infants and toddlers. It also provides early childhood professional and family caregivers with information and practical training on early literacy development.

The [Ready to Read Resource Center](#) lends Ready to Read tubs, Lapsit bags, and Read-to-Me at Home kits to public libraries across Alaska. In towns without a public library, the Center mails these reading kits directly to child care agencies and professionals.

During 2010–2011, the goals of this ongoing project were to:

1. Promote the services of the Ready to Read Resource Center (RRRC) throughout the state through advertising and partnerships
2. Increase early literacy awareness statewide
3. Encourage use of RRRC materials by providing return postage for patrons residing outside of Anchorage and exploring ways to make it easier for parents and caregivers to use these materials

The Story of Food: Growing Healthy Readers

[Peabody Early Childhood School/School Within a School Library, DC](#)

IMLS Funds: \$19,980; Total Cost: \$19,980

The intention of this project is to:

- Actively involve all 245 students of the Peabody Early Childhood School in learning where their foods come from and which ones help their bodies grow healthy and strong
- Show children how to grow food themselves and how to help prepare healthy foods to eat
- Show how different traditions influence food choices and preparation in different regions of the U.S. and the world

The project involves families in food preparation and sharing what they made. It also provides a **cookbook to each family of participants' recipes**. The children write songs about food with their music teacher and every class performs at a celebration of food in late spring. After the celebration, children select a free book about food and/or gardening and share in the healthy snack offerings made by families.

[Pueblo of Santa Clara – Espanola, NM](#)

IMLS Award Amount: \$150,000

The Pueblo of Santa Clara's Community Library offers literacy programs for all ages. The library works with other tribal programs to provide literacy development activities for at-risk families, children, and youth. Literacy programs include the Every Child Ready to Read® (ECRR) program. This program trains parents in ECRR techniques and adapts the program to the Santa Clara community. The Pueblo of Santa Clara's Community Library also builds on the intergenerational elder-and-child activities of the Tewa Language Program. Activities for adults and teens integrate the use of traditional Tewa stories into adult book talks and teen book clubs. There are also monthly topical awareness activities such as health and environmental awareness, civic engagement, and economic literacy.

[Nisqually Indian Tribe – Olympia, WA](#)

IMLS Award Amount: \$149,604

The Nisqually Tribe expands **its children's library services beyond the walls of the newly refurbished tribal library**. The services include the isolated reservation and allotment land communities where tribal youth have difficulty visiting the library. The Tribe offers weekly bookmobile services to a variety of tribal facilities. By doing this, the Tribe provides **year-round children's services with a tribal member** serving as a youth services coordinator. The library partners with the Nisqually Day Care Center, Head

Start program, the Youth Center, and the Timberland Regional Library (TRL). This partnership provide **children's programming and an expanded children's collection.**

Part of the **library's** main collection circulates through the bookmobile. This expands the reach of the rich Native American collection at the tribal library. The library also promotes access to the TRL collection through a resource delivery partnership that already exists.

Sample Local Library Websites:

Colorado: [Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy](#) and [StoryBlocks](#)

Maryland: [Montgomery County Public Libraries](#)

Michigan: [West Bloomfield Township Public Library](#)

Virginia: [Virginia Public Libraries](#)

Wisconsin: [Wisconsin Public Libraries](#)

Sample National Resources:

[American Library Association: Great Websites for Kids](#)

[Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library](#)

Research:

The study, "[Children's Access to Print Material and Education-Related Outcomes](#)," was commissioned by Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) and conducted by Learning Point Associates, a nonprofit education research and consulting organization and affiliate of American Institutes for Research (AIR).

The meta-analysis found that access to print materials:

- Improves children's reading performance. Findings from the rigorous studies suggest that providing children with print materials helps them read better. Among the studies reviewed, kindergarten students showed the biggest increase in reading performance.
- Proves instrumental in helping children learn the basics of reading. Providing children with reading materials allows them to develop basic reading skills such as letter and word identification, phonemic awareness, and completion of sentences.
- Causes children to read more and for longer lengths of time. Giving children print materials leads to more shared reading between parents and children. Children receiving books also read more frequently and for longer periods of time.
- Produces improved attitudes toward reading and learning among children. Children with greater access to books and other print materials—through either borrowing books or receiving books to own—express more enjoyment of books, reading, and academics.

Additional Research Links:

[Early Learning Initiative for Wisconsin Public Libraries](#)

[New Research Shows Access to Print Materials Improves Children's Reading](#)

[Library Preschool Storytimes: Developing Early Literacy Skills in Children](#)

[Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Development](#)

[Raising a Reader](#)

[The Role of Public Libraries in **Children's Literacy Development: An Evaluation Report**](#)