

Looking to boost literacy in your community?

Libraries can help!

Created by the
**Kansas Head Start
Collaboration Office**

Libraries Provide More Than Books



Most people know libraries are a great place to find books. What they may not realize is that libraries also host a range of activities and programs relevant to early education. For parents and providers, public libraries can serve as an excellent resource for practicing skills, making connections in the community, and building a foundation for lifelong learning.

Here are a few of the many ways Kansas libraries are working with families and care providers to enhance literacy of all kinds.¹

¹ Head Start identifies four major areas of Family Literacy: children's education; adult education; interactive literacy for parents and kids; and parenting education.

Storytimes



- ▶ Age-specific (baby, toddler or preschool) with developmentally appropriate content
- ▶ A variety of times/days to accommodate parent and provider schedules
- ▶ Themes can be tailored to enhance a provider's curriculum
- ▶ Builds pre-literacy skills through story and song
- ▶ Teaches parents/caregivers how to interact with kids in an educational manner
- ▶ May include developmental tips and other useful information for parents

Family Engagement Activities



- ▶ Parenting classes with health and development experts
- ▶ BLOCK Fest and other play-based learning opportunities for the whole family
- ▶ Passes to children's museums, municipal swimming pools, and other attractions
- ▶ Printed parenting information on a variety of topics, collected in one place
- ▶ Storytime-at-home kits with themed books and activities
- ▶ Play areas with educational toys and activities for parents and children

Resources for Providers



- ▶ Free continuing education opportunities
- ▶ Collections devoted to early education
- ▶ Preschool information fair
- ▶ Storytime and activity kits for use off-site
- ▶ Summer reading programs and incentives for classroom use

Mobile & Remote Options



- ▶ Book delivery services and satellite check-out stations at grocery stores and other public spaces
- ▶ A book bus bringing library programs, health services, and more to under-served areas
- ▶ Online storytimes, animated books, and audiobooks
- ▶ Educational software accessible at homes or centers

Financial & Business Literacy \$

- ▶ Free computers and classes on how to use them
- ▶ Assistance with resumes and other career needs
- ▶ Guest speakers to educate parents about tax credits available to families
- ▶ Free Wi-Fi in library buildings



Check with your local library to see if they offer these or similar programs. If not, here are some tips on partnering with your library to create more literacy initiatives in your community.

For Libraries and Affiliate Agencies



- ▶ Find ways to include parent education in programs like storytime, e.g. handing out suggested reading lists or tips on early learning.
- ▶ Create a sense of familiarity and trust with consistent messaging, such as a child-friendly character or logo to appear on all library materials, or repeated use of themes.
- ▶ Find out which segments of your community are under-served, and consider hosting an outreach event or capsule collection at a readily accessible location, or add a multicultural or multilingual storytime to your schedule.
- ▶ Experiment with different times and days to give parents with varying schedules a chance to attend programs.
- ▶ Allow new programs enough time to build a regular audience, becoming part of a family's routine.
- ▶ Connect with community partners (health departments, colleges, financial institutions, federal food programs, Humane Society, Parents as Teachers) to enhance program offerings.
- ▶ Look to other libraries for inspiration. The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library was the 2016 Library of the Year!
- ▶ Remember that parents of young children sometimes need a break. Make the library a safe space to bring their kids to play and learn.

For Parents and Providers



- ▶ Talk to your library about your program's literacy and performance standards. They may have activities or ideas ready to share.
- ▶ Take a field trip to the library for a storytime, performance or other event.
- ▶ Ask for a customized storytime about a specific topic to enhance classroom learning. Allow a few weeks' notice if the library doesn't have a program already prepared.
- ▶ Subscribe to the library newsletter to keep up with their schedule of family-friendly activities.
- ▶ Consider holding meetings, Family Nights or other events at your local library, to familiarize parents with the space.
- ▶ Talk to your library about eliminating barriers to library use, e.g. waiving fees for overdue children's materials.

Bottom Line



If you don't see what you need or want, ask! Libraries – and librarians – can be an important ally in early literacy. Just like parents and providers, they want everyone in their community to read and succeed.

▶ **For more family literacy materials**, from tips on reading to young children to book lists and resources for adults learning English, visit the federal Head Start web site at: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/fac/family_literacy/PrintMaterials.htm

