Ready to Read at New York Libraries
New York State Library Early Literacy Plan

National Early Literacy Best Practices

Family Engagement and Public Libraries

Family engagement is a shared responsibility among families, educators, and communities to support children's learning and development. For libraries, this means having respectful partnerships with families and providing information, guidance, and opportunities for families to be active in their children's learning and development as well as their own lifelong learning. This policy brief highlights the ways four states—California, Colorado, Georgia, and Maryland—integrated family engagement in early literacy and learning programs. It focuses on the change strategies to innovate, scale, and sustain family engagement. Information found in the research and the brief can be extremely helpful to state libraries looking to take action to create and improve family engagement, within their own institutions and across other state agencies serving children and families. State library leaders can also share this policy brief to help them make the case for statewide partnerships that address critical issues in education and family well-being.

Policy Brief: *Leading Family Engagement in Early Learning: The Role of State Library Administrative Agencies*

The task of creating a New York State Library Early Literacy Plan began with an analysis of best practices for library-based early literacy programs

Research into national early literacy models that have informed state library practices revealed that three models were universally praised as best practices for library-based early literacy programs: *Every Child Ready to Read*, *Family Place Libraries*, and *Mother Goose on the Loose*. Each of these models presents a unique approach: *Every Child Ready to Read @ your library* is based on parent/caregiver education; *Family Place* uses library space, coaching and play for early literacy outcomes; and *Mother Goose on the Loose* applies research and learning principles to preschool story times. All programs rely on partnerships, have training that can be purchased, are grounded in research and provide models and practices useful in evaluating training for New York State Libraries. .

1. **Parent and Caregiver Education with Every Child Ready to Read @ your library®**
http://www.everychildreadytoread.org/

Every Child Ready to Read @ your library (ECRR) is a partnership between two divisions of the American Library Association--the Public Library Association and Association for Library Service to Children that advocates a shift in practice from programs for children to parent/caregiver education. This initiative began in 2000 in response to national educational findings that many children were entering

kindergarten without the early literacy skills needed to learn to read. Public libraries are strategically located in all communities and have unique access to preschool children and their families.

As the conversation between PLA and ALSC grew, it became apparent that the greatest impact on early literacy outcomes could be achieved through parent and caregiver education. If the primary adult in a child's life could learn more about the importance of early literacy and how to nurture pre-reading skills at home, the effect of library efforts could be multiplied many times. It was also determined that the parent education must be based on the most current research and evaluated for impact.

The first edition of *ECRR* was created by national researchers Dr. G.C. Whitehurst and Dr. C.J. Lonigan, was tested and evaluated in pilot sites across the country and made available for purchase and national distribution in 2004. In 2008, a joint ALSC/PLA Task Force to measure the impact of *ECRR*, conducted a literature review to determine if *ECRR* materials needed modifications based on new research and to make recommendations about updating materials.

Dr. Susan B. Neuman and Dr. Donna Celano conducted the research and created the second edition of ECRR that debuted in 2011- ECRR2. The second edition is framed by five practices (talking, singing, reading, writing and playing) and is based on the following principles:
- Reading is an essential life skill.
- Learning to read begins at birth.
- Parents and caregivers are a child's first and best teachers.
- Lifelong learning is a primary role of the public library; public libraries need to support parents and caregivers as they develop early literacy skills in children from birth to age five.
- Every Child Ready to Read is a parent education initiative that provides skills and strategies parents and caregivers can use to help children get ready to read.

The ECRR2 expanded the librarian-led workshops for parents and caregivers to include four workshops designed for parents and children to attend together. The ECRR2 manual provides staff training on early literacy research, development of partnerships and design and use of public space for early literacy education.

2. Public Space, Coaching and Play with Family Place Libraries™
http://www.familyplacelibraries.org/

Family Place Libraries began as an experiment in 1979 at the Middle Country Public Library, Centereach, NY, as a *Parent/Child Workshop*. The innovation in this pilot was opening the library to very young children and a focus on the parent and child interaction in a comfortable community setting. The pilot program has expanded to a national model with a franchise retained by the Middle Country Public Library.

*Family Place Libraries a*ims to position the public library as a center for early childhood information, parent education, emergent literacy, socialization, and family support with a focus on children from birth to three. A key message of the program is that play is essential learning for young children. *Parent/Child Workshops* are organized into five sessions that include an orientation and introduction to early literacy; a session on speech, hearing and language development; a session on child development; a session on

nutrition; and a fifth session on music, play and physical fitness. Library staff are trained to reach out to parents and build community coalitions.

Family Place is a quality program that has been implemented in 250 libraries in 25 states. It fills a unique niche with its focus on children from birth to three. It requires a commitment from the library to devote significant staff time and public space to the program.   *Family Place* also requires a significant initial monetary investment followed by ongoing infusions of resources to keep the toys, equipment, and furniture fresh.

3. Storytimes with Mother Goose on the Loose®
http://www.mgol.net/

Mother Goose on the Loose (MGOL) is a trademarked thirty-minute nursery rhyme program for children from birth to three. The program was developed by Dr. Betsy Diamant-Cohen combining principles of library programming with Barbara Case-Beggs' "Listen, Like, Learn" method for teaching music to very young children. Diamant-Cohen ran the program on a weekly basis for years in the Ruth Youth Wing Library of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem before bringing the program to Baltimore in 1999. The program is most frequently offered in library settings, but it can also be used in daycare centers or in other group settings.

The stated mission of *Mother Goose on the Loose* is to engage and educate infants to three-year-olds, partnering with parents, caregivers, and the community, through an entertaining and creative strategic program designed to cultivate and foster early literacy and learning skills. The librarian is encouraged to be a facilitator, rather than a presenter or a teacher. *MGOL* programs are storytimes designed to engage the youngest children, using flannel board stories, rhymes, songs, finger and body plays, and repetition in a predictable pattern.   Librarians are taught the 10-part framework ("repetition with variety") in which each segment builds on the one before.

Dr. Diamant-Cohen does all licensed *Mother Goose on the Loose* training. Her full-day workshop includes current research on brain-development, and play in addition to hands-on exercises in developing and presenting *MGOL* storytimes.