



## Fact Sheet: Libraries, Early Learning & Literacy

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Washington's public libraries are the only free space for everyone, including early learners. At libraries families can find books, music, parenting information and programs to help start their children on a lifelong path of learning.

Activities and other early learning support provided by public libraries include:

- Story Times, Play & Learn Groups, and other programs for toddlers, preschoolers, and sometimes even babies.
- Developmentally/age appropriate materials to support early literacy for parents, caregivers and early childhood programs.
- Model early literacy activities in programs and general library contact, including the six skills every child must have to be ready to learn to read: print motivation, print awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, phonological awareness and letter knowledge (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development).
- Provision of computers and quality educational software. In rural communities many families do not have computers at home.
- A chance for primary caregivers to interact with other children and adults through Story Times, Play & Learn groups and other activities, which help to reduce isolation and increase socialization.

Public libraries participate in local initiatives and collaborations that are building strong and effective Early Learning systems in local communities including:

- Local activities that support and develop early learning initiatives either in the home or in licensed child care/home day care settings.
- Agencies/organizations working with early learning or the child care community.
- Public health measures that assure learning readiness.

In 2007, the Early Learning Public Library Partnership (ELPLP) was formed to provide a single voice and coordinate 26 partner library systems (December 2010). As a result of the ELPLP's work, libraries are included in Washington's Early Learning Plan and Birth to Three Plan. This means libraries are seen as an early learning resource and partner in helping to prepare children for school and life.

The ELPLP also provides librarians with early learning professional development opportunities and helps to educate the early learning sector on what libraries can do for them.

Want to know what your public library is doing? Just give them a call for more information about your local programs—and to schedule a time to stop by and see for yourself.