Ready to Read at New York Libraries: Early Childhood Public Library Staff Development Program

Early Learning Spaces
Marisa Conner, MEd. – Lead Trainer

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services
Ready to Read at New York Libraries: Early Childhood Public Library Staff Development Program
Foundation Training Components, 2014 – 2019

1. Early Literacy Community Asset Analysis
2. Strategies for Successful Partnerships and Outreach to Families with Young Children
3. Strengthening Young Families through Early Literacy Practices
4. Early Learning Spaces
5. Everyone Serves Families with Young Children
Objectives for Today

Participants will gain confidence in:

• Planning and designing welcoming, flexible Early Learning Spaces that promote family engagement.

• Making space selections that foster user comfort and encourage children’s development and early literacy skills.

• Making spaces safe and accessible.

• Creating spaces for various sizes, budgets, and staffing levels.
Every CHILD Ready to READ®
@ your library®

Talk
Sing
Read
Write
Play
The Power of Play: Designing Early Learning Spaces

Dorothy Stoltz, Marisa Cooper, and James Bradberry
“Play is the work of childhood”

Mr. Rogers
Why Play in Public Libraries?

“While playing, children learn about their world, acquire skills necessary for critical thinking, discover how to solve problems, and develop self-confidence. Play encourages healthy brain development while fostering exploration skills, language skills, social skills, physical skills, and creativity.”
Get Inspired...
Inspiration - Libraries

Mother Goose Playscape, West Bloomfield Township Public Library, Michigan
Storyville, Baltimore County Public Library, MD
Phoenix Public Library, Arizona
Hennepin County Library, MN
Lawndale Library,
County of Los Angeles, California,
a Family Place Library
Lewistown, Montana
Inspiration – Children’s Museums
Mid-Hudson Children’s Museum, NY
Super Kids Market
With Wegmans Food Markets
Cotsen Children’s Library / Princeton, NJ
Inspiration – Early Learning Catalogs
Inspiration – Your Community
Inspiration – Early Education
Design Idea Boards
To get ready to read, children need an environment that supports early literacy and learning.
Every library, like every child, is unique.

No matter what your size or resources, your library can create an environment that supports and encourages literacy and learning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>$0 - $10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>$10,000 - $100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>$100,000 and up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Westminster Branch, Carroll County Public Library, MD $100,000
Mt. Airy Branch,
Carroll County Public Library, MD $86,000
Storyville, Baltimore County Public Library, MD $750,000
The early literacy environment matters.

To get ready to read, children need an environment that supports early literacy and learning.
Middle Country Public Library, Centereach, New York, a Family Place Library
Design Principle: Appealing environment

1. First impressions
2. Signage
3. Graphics
The early literacy environment matters.

Design Principle: Appealing environment
Using light

- Varied
- Cold and Warm
- Natural and Artificial
- Interesting
- Half-light
- Textured
- Translucent
- Transparent
Design Principle: Appealing environment
Using color
West Bloomfield Township Public Library, Michigan
Storyville
Baltimore County Public Library, MD
Carroll County Public Library, Maryland
Bozeman Public Library, Montana
Design Principle: Organized displays

Use face-out displays to encourage children to browse and choose titles for themselves.

Use seasonal or thematic displays with hands-on activities to engage children and parents.

Change or rotate displays at regular intervals to create ongoing interest.
Design Principle: Easy access to materials

The early literacy environment matters.
Design Principle: Flexibility

The early literacy environment matters.
Southampton, New York
Spring Cafe
Pet Vet
Tables
Tables, Window Sills, Ledges
Discovery Table
Design Principle: Interactive spaces

The early literacy environment matters.
What does “interactive” mean?
5 Active Learning Ingredients

• Choice – The child chooses what to do.
• Materials – There are ample materials that children can use in a variety of ways.
• Manipulation – The child can manipulate objects freely.
• Language – The child describes what he/she is doing while they are doing it.
• Support – Adults and peers encourage the child’s problem solving and creativity.
Arranging Your Space

• Small, well defined niches and nooks encourage greater language experiences and collaboration with peers and adults.
• Children become more involved in sustained literacy play when objects are clustered together to create schema or meaning network (themes)
• Place books in the immediate area of play activities
• Create cozy areas for families to sit and read.
• Create spaces that allow for children to engage in dramatic and constructive play.
Consider a few Basic Features

• Area Rug to Define the Play Space
• Bins, bin units, shelves to organize learning toys
• Bookcase for thematic books
• Puppet Theatre for themed puppets
• Magnetic Board for changeable magnetic activities
• Child height table and chairs
• Seating for adults and children
Woodlawn Branch, BCPL
Loch Raven Branch, BCPL
Furniture with Bins
Early Learning Play Themes

- Animal Buddies (pets)
- Busy Bugs (insects)
- Down on the Farm (farm animals)
- Splash (water animals)
- Dinosaurs Rock!
- Wild Things (wild animals)
- On the Go (transportation)
- Community Helpers
- Once Upon a Time (fairy tales, nursery rhymes)
Word Wall
Self-Serve Activity Bins

Search and Find Alphabet Bags
Learning Tips

Alphabet Picture Blocks

Contents: 24 Wooden Alphabet Picture Blocks

Together with your child:
TALK about the letters and pictures on the blocks and ask your child to identify them.

SING the Alphabet Song.

READ words you make by putting blocks together to spell a word like “CAT”.

WRITE trace the letters with your fingers.

PLAY with the blocks. Allow your child to build their own towers and structures. As they build, encourage your child to talk about the blocks by asking questions, such as, “Can you please hand me the C block”, “What are you building with the blocks?”
Thematic Learning Toys
Realistic Animals
Puzzles
Puzzles

Farm Puzzles
Cause & Effect Toys
Basic Concepts
Alphabet Activities
Sensory Toys
Fine Motor/Prewriting Skills

Chubby Pegboard
• Colors
• Patterns
• Building
• Cause and effect
Imaginative Play
Story Telling Props

Combine props with books for dramatic play.
Selecting Library “Friendly” Toys

- Not too many pieces, consider clean-up
- No choking hazards, no batteries
- Consider noise factor
- Open-ended for multiple developmental levels, interests, promote creativity
- Combination of toys on a theme and concepts (color, number, shapes, ABC)
- Gender neutral
- Reflect community culture (food, dress-ups, etc.)
Group Toy Activity
Connect Play to Books

- Merchandise thematic books
  - Board books
  - Picture books
  - Easy non-fiction
  - Concept books
Puppet Theaters
Themed Puppet Sets
Magnetic Boards & Activities
Did you know?
Butterfly wings are symmetrical. That means they look exactly the same on both sides.

Can you make a symmetrical design with the magnets?
Small Table and Chairs
Themed Activity Rugs
Themed Furnishings
Giraffe Book Bin
Additional Play Opportunities

• Baby Play Area
• Kitchens and Markets
• Dress up Areas
• Train Tables
• Duplo Tables
• Block Areas
• Light Table
Norfolk Public Library, a family place library, baby & toddler playscape
Baby/Toddler Gym
Kitchen
Market and Garden
Store
Train Table
Blocks
Duplo/Lego Table
Light Table
Doll/Animal House
No Money? No Worries! Time to Get Creative!
Baby in tunnel.
Middle Country Public Library
Centereach, New York,
a Family Place Library

Boy in a box.
Westminster Branch,
Carroll County Public Library Maryland
Dramatic Play – Caps for Sale
Dramatic Play - Kitchen
Cleaning your Space
SANITIZE ME!
PLACE ITEMS IN THIS BIN THAT YOU FEEL NEED CLEANING
Care and Cleaning

• Consider a “sanitize me” bin – parents put “dirty” items in designated bin
• Child safe spray solution “Clorox Anywhere”
• Machine washable items – use non-fumed non toxic laundry detergent
• Cleaning schedules
• Replacement materials available
What about straightening up?

• Encourage clean-up as part of the play
  ▫ School readiness skill
  ▫ Promotes sorting, classifying
  ▫ Social...clean up after yourself...expected in Kindergarten
  ▫ Make it fun...show child by example
  ▫ Idea – give a sticker to children for cleaning up the area
Accessibility and ADA Requirements

• Early learning spaces should follow the same guidelines for accessibility as other spaces in the library. These guidelines are primarily around space for wheelchairs to get around and making sure that all materials are accessible.
• Consider the placement of your play area and furnishings and make sure they meet these guidelines.
Staff Participation

- Involve your staff in determining space designation and choosing furnishings
- Include staff when choosing themes and selecting learning materials and activities
- Provide training for staff the on purpose, use and care of the centers
- Give all staff in your branch some “play time”
Early Learning Center Philosophy & Guidelines

1. Philosophy – purpose, function, strategy, staff role in family engagement

2. Guidelines – creativity and innovation within a framework of practical expectations

   a. Who – team approach
   b. What - play-and-learn opportunities for young children through safe, educational, and fun environments
   c. How – using components such as a puppet theatre and activity unit, rotation of toys and materials, innovation based on community needs

PowerPoint presentation on staff intranet
Written guidelines on staff intranet
New staff training
The library has so much: many more toys and books than I could ever have; so we come here; and it is good to get the kids out of the house. Just to expand what they are seeing.

—Parent visiting a Family Place Library

Valley Community Library, Peckville, Pennsylvania
A Family Place Library

Carson Public Library, California
A Family Place Library

Providence Public Library, Rhode Island
A Family Place Library
Library spaces create exciting places for every child to get ready to read.
“Maintain a joyful, playful atmosphere around literacy activities”

--National Research Council, 1998

“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.”

-- Maria Montessori, 1870-1952
Funding

Where do we go for funding an Early Learning Spaces project?

How do we make our case to potential funders?
Children’s Room,
Middleburgh Library, NY
Thank You!

Case study provided by:
Teresa Pavoldi
Library Director
tpavoldi@mvls.info
CASE STUDY:
Central Library,
Onondaga County
Public Library

Janet Park
Early Literacy/School Age Outreach Coordinator
Some major changes underway at Onondaga County's Central Library in downtown Syracuse. An $8.7 million renovation project has already transformed much of the space. As Alexa Green shares, it's all to better fit the needs of the community.

Study Report

Early Childhood and School Readiness: Creating a Community Where All Children Thrive by Five

2013 Study

The “Thrive by Five” study explored the early childhood landscape in Onondaga County to assess the concerns and challenges, and consider how we might more effectively deploy our existing resources toward the goal that all children enter school ready to learn. The Study Committee concluded that we must shift our focus to the earliest years as the optimal time to invest in young children and their families to improve health, well-being and academic outcomes throughout the lifespan.

View The Study

Early Childhood and School Readiness: Creating a Community Where All Children Thrive by Five

Study Details

Board President: Heidi Holtz
Syracuse named a 'pacesetter' for child literacy

- a community-wide effort in Syracuse and Onondaga County to increase childhood literacy, school readiness and, ultimately, high school graduation rates

- the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading announces that Syracuse is one of 38 municipalities across the country to be named a 2013 Community Pacesetter
Reading program expanded to cover all of Onondaga Co
By Brandon Roth  3/2/16
Space Planning is not Furniture Selection

- Programmatic
- Schematic
- Design Development
- Design Documentation
Big Blue Blocks
by Imagination Playground
Imagination Playground is a breakthrough play space concept designed to encourage child-directed free play.

Benefits include:
- Creativity
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Self expression
- Social skills

- Problem solving
- Release, relaxation
- Fine & gross motor skills
- Accomplishment
- Focus, determination

www.imaginationplayground.com
THE HOKKI STOOL
-ergonomic seating for active kids

Mod Rocker™
Awarded Honorable Mention, 2006 I.D. Magazine Annual Design Review
Picture Book Bins with Face-Out Shelving
First Steps® Activity Carpets
from Lakeshore Learning

3branch Discovery Activity Tables

Table Tops include:
Lego
Tinker Toy
Train
LightBox **NEW
Smaller, less expensive ... Alternatives
Weplay Design by Wendy Wu

http://www.e-weplay.us/
Thank You!

Case study provided by:
Janet Park
Early Literacy/School Age Outreach Coordinator
jfpark@onlib.org
CASE STUDY:
Queens Borough Public Library

Gillian E.W. Miller
Coordinator of Early Learning Services
Queens County

- 108 square miles
- < 2.3 million people
- 6.5% under 5 years old
- 47% foreign born
- >60% speak a language other then English in the home
- 165 languages spoken
Queens Library

- 62 Branch Libraries
- 1 Central Library
- 2 Pre-Schools
- 1 Teen Library
- 7 Adult Learning Centers
- 13.5 million items circulated
- 52,000 programs with 884,000 attendance
Early Learning Mission

Our role is vital not only offering early learning opportunities to families with young children, but also in supporting parents in being their child’s first teacher.
Play Today at Queens Library

Statistics
January 2015- January 2016
3620 program sessions
51,000 children + 45,641 adults
96,710 total attendance

July-February FY15
2,532 sessions and 67,396 attendance.
July-February FY16
2,960 sessions and 82,724 attendance.

This is a 16.9% increase in the number of early childhood programs and a 22.7% increase in attendance.
Queen’s Library Spaces of Play

- Designed for the appropriate level of development
- Incorporate the needed skills of early education
- Made to pique the interest and imagination of young learners
- Be inventive but safe in design
- Include ALL users, creating enhanced experiences
- Make it a place children WANT to come
Children’s Library Discovery Center
Children’s Library Discovery Center
Early Learning
Elmhurst Community Library
Elmhurst Early Learning
Glen Oaks Community Library
Glen Oaks Early Learning
Peninsula Community Library
Peninsula Early Learning
Corona Community Library
Corona Early Learning
Thank You!

Gillian E. Miller
Coordinator of Early Learning Services
gmiller@queenslibrary.org
Phone: 718-990-5164
Cell: 347-549-2721
The early literacy environment matters.

Now it’s your turn.

Apply the design principles to your library spaces. Discuss ways you can use these principles to create space that supports the five early literacy practices.
Small Play Spot
Midsize Plan
THANK YOU

Presenter’s Name | email address