

ONE VILLAGE ONE FAMILY

HOMELESS GEAR



Family Literacy Handbook

Updated May 18, 2015

The Family's Role in Reading

“Outside a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside a dog, it's too dark to read.”

–Groucho Marx

A child becomes literate when parents and families talk, read and sing

Parents and families play a crucial role in helping children learn to read. Families are the first language teachers, determining language, dialect and establishing the rules for communication. When families share stories, songs, and books with their children, they give their children the message that learning to read and write is important. This guide will show simple ways that parents can help children learn to read.

- When children are young, they learn by listening and talking with their parents, relatives, babysitters, and others.
- Reading aloud to children, even to newborns, helps form a special bond between parents with their children. Studies show that this helps children when they're learning to read in later years.
- On average, low-income children hear 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers before the age of four. This literacy-gap builds over the course of a child's educational career.

Simple actions to teach and improve reading

- Let your child choose what they want to read – or be read to – for 30 minutes each day. Children are much more likely to engage in material that interests them rather than materials forced upon them.
- Use language and reading opportunities throughout the day. Talk with your child and point out reading materials wherever possible: on menus, magazines and newspapers, signs, brochures, maps, guidebooks, etc.
- Turn reading into a game. The next time you read a story or watch a video with your child, stop before you reach the end. Talk about or write your own endings. Who was closest to the actual ending?

- Make reading a lifestyle. Keep books and magazines around the house in order to create an atmosphere of reading. Children need good reading role models.

Reading to Children

Children enjoy being read to. You can experiment to find books with the amount of text that fits your child's attention span. Present several choices and allow the child to select the book. You can learn a great deal about children based on their response to particular stories.

- Let children be involved in choosing books and let them practice retelling the story in their own words.
- Talk about the pictures, characters and events in the story as you are reading.
- Encourage children to use their imaginations or to make predictions about what will happen in a story.
- Casually point out some of the letters in the book. "There is a 'J.' Your name starts with a 'J,' too." At times, run your finger below the text as you read aloud.
- Choose some books with repetition and rhyme and read aloud with pauses to allow children time to fill in the words.

Reading Facts

- If a young person is read to at least three times a week, that person is twice as likely to score in the top 25% percentile on reading tests.
- Approximately 26% of the world's adult population is non-literate.
- Children who have not developed some basic literacy skills by the time they enter school are three to four times more likely to drop out in later years.
- Children who grow up in environments with few or no literary experiences are already playing catch-up when they enter school.
- Nearly two-thirds of low-income families in the U.S. own no books.

Improving the Teacher/School Relationship – the suggestions below can be used to improve or repair the relationship between parents and teachers.

- Check attendance records regularly.
- When appointments need to be scheduled during the school day, try to stagger them so that children don't miss the same class every time.
- Update emergency card information as soon as changes occur (phone number, address, parent work location, etc.)
- Attend school open house events in order to meet teachers.
- Ask teachers how he or she wants parents to help educate their children.
- Read school and classroom notes, newsletters, and websites.

The Public Library

“A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.”

— Andrew Carnegie

Public libraries increase children's access to books and computers while providing a safe and pleasant space where children can develop a lifelong love of learning. The library makes all kinds of resources available, from email to electronic databases that provide financial, health, and historical information. In the increasingly digital age it is important to remember that we don't need more information so much as we need the right information in a form that we can use and trust, that's where skilled library staff come in. Many programs and classes are available at the library, including computer classes, story time for kids, job search support, tax information and more.

Local Resource: The Poudre River Library District has three locations in Fort Collins. Check them out at www.poudrelibraries.org

Old Town Library 201 Peterson St Fort Collins, CO 80524	Harmony Library 4616 South Shields Fort Collins, CO 80526	Council Tree Library 2733 Council Tree Ave. #200 Fort Collins, CO 80525
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Online Early Literacy Resources

Note: Not all families have internet access. For those that don't, you can access the sites blow at your local library.

Storyblocks - Produced by the Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy in partnership with Rocky Mountain PBS, this collection of 30-60 second videos uses songs, rhymes and finger puppet plays to increase understanding of child development and pre-literacy needs.

<http://www.storyblocks.org/>

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) - Prepares and motivates children to read by delivering free books and literacy resources to those children and families who need them most. RIF provides new, free books for children to choose from and make their own.

<http://www.rif.org/>

Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) - Presenting early literacy information to parents and caregivers as well as song, rhyme and book recommendations.

<http://clel.org/>

Reading Rockets - A national multimedia literacy initiative offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help. Denver Public Library's Reading Rocket bookmobiles visit 25 schools and 18 senior living centers throughout Denver. Anyone is welcome to climb on board and browse at any Reading Rocket stop.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents/>

Get Ready to Read! - A website designed to support educators, parents, and young children in the development of early literacy skills in the years before kindergarten.

<http://www.getreadytoread.org/>

Wonderopolis- An online destination which helps parents nurture a brighter world for their children through discovery, creativity, learning and imagination. The Wonderopolis program helps bring learning into the home on a daily basis in bite-size bits that fit into everyday life.

<http://wonderopolis.org/>

Local Resource: Fort Collins Read Aloud offers free books, training and resources to promote literacy in children and families. Fortcollinsreadaloud.com or 970-490-3179

Local Resource: The Matthews House offers a wide array of services for children and family. The Homework Helpers program supports kids in an afterschool educational time, and adults can be served through GED, ESL, computer and exercise classes. Classes and programs focused on parenting and other family needs are also available. www.themattewhouse.org or 970-472-4293.

Summer Reading

To succeed in school and life, children and young adults need ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential skills. This is especially true during the summer months.

Research shows that summer reading can make a significant difference in a student's overall academic achievement, particularly when he or she begins a new school year in the fall. Children who do not read over the summer will lose more than two months of reading progress.

In addition to helping make reading a life-long habit, summer reading programs generate interest in the library and books. It's important to remember that access to books during the summer isn't enough, especially with younger kids who are still learning to read. Reading is most effective when parents or family members provide guidance and make sure that kids understand what they're reading.

The Colorado State Library (CSL) offers several recreational reading programs designed to reduce summer reading setbacks among students from low-income families. Visit the links below to learn more about "summer slide" and how you can stop it.

<http://www.summerlearning.org/>

<http://www.rif.org/us/literacy-resources/articles/keeping-kids-off-the-summer-slide.htm>

Online Adult Literacy Resources

1) The Literacy Coalition of Colorado (LLC) offers a wide variety of Adult Education Classes designed to improve basic literacy skills. The LLC also provides GED Preparation, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Citizenship Classes.

<http://www.literacycolorado.org/>

2) The Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education promotes programs that help American adults get the basic skills needed to be productive workers, family members, and citizens.

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html>

