



Early Literacy and Summer Reading Ideas from Oregon Libraries

September 2013

This is a compilation of good ideas submitted by Oregon public libraries as part of an annual funding application required by their state. The ideas are grouped under the topics of Early Literacy and Summer Reading, and are arranged according to ease of implementation.

Katie Anderson, youth services consultant at the Oregon State Library, compiled this list to share with state youth services consultants and children's librarians around the country. Katie noted that the state funding Oregon public libraries receive must be spent on early literacy activities and/or summer reading programs. Oregon's state government is switching to outcome based evaluation, so you will see that reflected in some of these ideas. In addition, state funding to libraries is now technically included in Oregon's Early Learning Division of the Department of Education, so many Oregon libraries are aligning their activities with education goals, such as family engagement, reading comprehension, and creating responses to reading.

Early literacy ideas:

Easy

Replace crafts after storytime with activities that encourage parents to play with their children in ways that develop early literacy skills. Some play activity examples might be: talking about the letters on blocks while stacking them, having parents/kids make different shapes with play dough, or counting and sorting plastic animals.

Conduct informal "raise of hands" surveys with parents on early literacy skills during some storytimes and other early literacy programs, to evaluate whether or not they are reading, writing, singing, talking, and playing more with their children.

Each early learning outreach site that co-hosts an early literacy parent event will get a copy of "Success Starts with Reading" DVD to share with parents and a copy of "Storytime: Not Just for Kids Anymore" storytime training DVD for their staff.

Moderate

Each month we will feature one or two early literacy skills. The featured skill(s) will be demonstrated and practiced in all storytimes that month. One handout per month will be created and distributed at all storytimes. The handout will include information about that month's featured skill(s), a song or rhyme that helps develop that skill(s), a fun activity that families can do at home to develop that skill(s), and a few book titles that emphasize the development of that skill(s).



We will implement an early literacy book club to encourage families to read 1,000 books to their young children before they start kindergarten. Families will be encouraged to attend regular in-library storytimes, because books read during storytimes will count towards their goal. Prizes will be earned by reaching certain milestones, and a hardcover picture book and book bag will be awarded families and providers who read 1,000 books before their children start kindergarten. An annual awards celebration will be held for winners.

Partner with the local early childhood hub to identify appropriate sites for early literacy information stations where high risk families spend a lot of time waiting. Stations will include early literacy brochures, library information (including the storytime schedule), and other literacy material, like books and magazines, depending on the space at each site.

The library will distribute a quarterly early literacy newsletter in print and digital form.

Hard

In partnership with our local early childhood hub, we will develop a referral card for community agencies such as Head Start, Healthy Start, WIC, etc. The referral card will have a checklist of the partners on one side, space on the other side for the person providing the referral to write their name and phone number, and space for library staff to note whether this family is new to the library or a regular patron. When a community partner wants to refer a client to the library they simply fill out the referral card. If a patron presents a referral card at the library, then they will be entered into a quarterly raffle for gift cards to the local grocery store. The library will track how many referral cards are received from each organization and report back to them. This will give the library and partnering organizations a better understanding of how high-risk families in their community are using the library.

Create five early literacy practice kits with storytime books, activities, and parent handouts to rotate on a monthly basis among Head Starts and childcare providers. A short survey will be included in each kit for providers fill out. Surveys will be used to evaluate progress on outcomes and inform us how to improve the kits.

We will create and loan out sets of 10 good storytime picture books to childcare providers, daycare centers, and preschool who want to participate as group/class in the 1,000 book challenge. We will use the library's Facebook and Pinterest pages to connect participants with books, activities, and each other to help them reach their goal. We will implement an early literacy book club to encourage families to read 1,000 books to their young children before they start kindergarten. Families will be encouraged to attend regular in-library storytimes because books read during storytimes will count towards their goal. Prizes will be earned by reaching certain milestones and a hardcover picture book and book bag will be awarded families and providers who read 1,000 books before their children start kindergarten. An annual awards celebration will be held for winners.

Partner with a correctional facility or another organization at which parents live on site temporarily. Library staff visit once a month on a day when children visit to present an early



literacy education session to parents only and then do a storytime with parents and their children. Each month parents get two picture books that focus on the early literacy practice or skills emphasized in the education session and storytime. Parents will have these books to share with their children during other visitations while living on site and, when they are released, they will leave with a start-up collection of books for their new home.

Partnering with WIC to offer 1) conduct free classes to parents at WIC clinics on the early literacy skills and practices and early brain development, 2) provide early literacy training to WIC staff so they can help their clients when library staff is not present, 3) offer quarterly storytimes at the library at which WIC clients can earn their required education credit, and 4) improve the children and parents section on the library's website so WIC staff and clients (and more!) can be directed to the website for more information and resources.

Library will work with local early childhood hub to identify Head Starts, childcare providers, and other early childhood services that serve high risk children and will provide early literacy outreach to those sites that includes storytimes, giveaway books, early literacy education for parents/guardians, and early literacy education and resources for site staff.

Implement a pilot project to integrate iPads into storytimes and provide media literacy education, with a focus on app selection, to families with young children.

Maintain an interactive blog/Facebook page that provides short early literacy tips and encourages parents to share their early literacy experiences with each other. This will be mirrored in the library with a bulletin board that also provides early literacy tips and encourages parents to share their early literacy experience in English and Spanish.

Create an early learning space that will be furnished, decorated, and supplied to provide an inviting space in the library where parents and caregivers can access information and resources, and young children can engage in fun early literacy activities. Families will be able to try out and practice new early literacy activities at the library, so they can do them later at home or on the go more successfully. A comment book or bulletin board will be included for parents, caregivers, and children to share their experiences with or feedback about the new space.

Create an Imagination Station sponsored by local businesses. For example, if the local hardware store is the sponsor they will provide toy tools, tool belts, aprons and other related manipulatives that encourage imaginative play. The library will provide the space, a banner in the library above the imagination station thanking/promoting the sponsor, and include the name of the sponsor in all promotional materials.



Summer Reading ideas:

Easy

Training everyone who signs people up to participate in the summer reading program to ask questions like “Would you like to sign the rest of your family up?” to inform patrons that summer reading is for everyone and encourage whole families to participate together.

Offer the same activities and programs as usual, but schedule more of them in the late afternoon, evenings, and weekends when families are more likely to be able to participate together as a family.

Reading logs will track the number of books kids read as usual, but also include something new that will require kids to demonstrate their comprehension of one of the books they read by completing or participating in a fun activity.

Add “attend a library program together as an entire family” to the activity options listed on the summer reading game card.

Add optional book recommendations, conversation starters, and activity ideas to the reading record the library usually uses.

Based on 2013 summer reading participation rates by school, identify two schools with the lowest participation and develop a targeted campaign to increase the number of K-2nd Graders from that school participating in summer reading.

Put the arts and crafts kids create during summer reading activities on exhibit in the library. Invite parents and community members to the opening of the art exhibit at the library. Light refreshments will be served. At the end of summer, select a few of the children’s pieces to take to the City Council, school board, and/or library board meetings to show off what the kids did at the library over the summer.

Ask kids a comprehension question about the story they are reading/listening to before they can “spin and win” to get their summer reading prizes.

Summer reading participants will be encouraged to provide written book reviews or pictures to promote their favorite books on the bulletin board in the library.

Run the program as usual, but start providing additional incentives to kids who reflect on their reading and communicate their thoughts. Kids can choose to write book reviews, write a letter to the author of a book of their choice, create a picture of a scene from a book, write a traditional book report, or a number of yet to be determined activities.

Continue the adult summer reading program as usual, but now adults will be allowed and encouraged to submit entries in the adult SRP drawing when they read to their children. We will add a box on the adult entry slips they can check to indicate they read to their child. Staff will



compare the number of adult entry slips with checked boxes with the number of entry slips without the box checked to evaluate how many adults are participating with their children in summer reading.

Moderate

Create a family game card (reading record) that includes literacy based activities for families to do together. Families completing the family game card are entered into the family raffle to win a prize—a movie that appeals to all ages or a board game or something everyone in the family might enjoy.

Create and circulate family read-aloud kits that include multiple copies of a book so each family member can follow along while one person is reading aloud. The kit will include discussion questions and activity ideas.

Host two elementary school age programs that will include a reading at the beginning followed by a craft or activity related to the reading.

Add a reflection activity at the end of every contracted performer's program, display circulating material that relates to the program for people to check out on their way out, and distribute a handout with recommended books and activity ideas for extending the experience at home.

Invite children and teens to review books on the library's Facebook page.

Partner with the community center to provide more activities in the community. We will provide a weekly craft activity at the community center that will relate to the presenter or topic of summer reading activities happening at the library that week.

Summer reading participants will be invited to be filmed talking about their favorite books (with parent permission) to promote them on the library's website and Facebook page.

Hard

In partnership with local schools, use a referral card system to increase efforts to engage high-risk children in summer reading. The referral card will have a checklist of the schools on one side, space on the other side for the person providing the referral to write their name and phone number, and space for library staff to note whether this family is new to the library or a regular patron. When school staff want to refer a student to participate in the summer reading program they simply fill out the referral card. Kids who present a referral card during the summer reading program will be provided with an additional incentive. The library will track how many referral cards are received from each school and report back to them. This will give the library and partnering schools a better understanding of how high-risk families in their community are using the library.



Host two family craft events which will have 5-7 stations that relate to the summer reading theme or encourage kids to create responses to what they're reading/listening to. Examples of the response activities are:

- Create a life-size version of a favorite character by using the outline of a real person on butcher paper.
- Draw, paint, or color a picture of a favorite sidekick or supporting character.
- Create a realia depicting a significant aspect of a favorite book.
- Write a book review to be added to the library catalogue.
- Create a video (flip camera or smart phone) to demonstrate a skill or share a fact learned from a book. Videos will be posted on YouTube with parent permission.

The local Parks and Recreation Department and public library's summer programs will both use the statewide summer reading theme. Each week Parks & Rec and the library activities will focus on the same sub-topics of the statewide summer reading theme. Parks & Rec and the library will coordinate the days and times of their activities to leverage existing Parks & Rec transportation and add stops at the library so kids can more easily go from one activity to the next.

Partner with community organizations to provide summer reading program materials to schools providing free lunches and keeping their school library open during the summer. Transport children participating in summer reading at those sites to the grand finale at the library.

Children will create their own picture books on iPads in the library over the course of the summer and share their books with other participants at the summer reading grand finale.

Offer a nonfiction reading challenge that encourages families to participate together because children will need help from adults or older siblings to find books in each non-fiction section. The challenge also includes some writing and other creative activities families can do together. Special incentives will be awarded to children and families who complete this challenge.

Host a program which requires parents and their older children and tweens to use technology to complete a scavenger hunt through their favorite books from when they were young children. The scavenger hunt will require kids (and their parents!) to effectively communicate their understanding of and opinions about their favorite childhood books.

Contract with local educators to present three science programs. A handout with a list of materials used during the program and supplemental books, DVDs, software, websites, and project ideas for further exploration will be distributed after each program. Completed projects will be displayed in the library the last week of the summer reading program. Then some of the projects will be taken to City Council and School Board meetings to demonstrate how local youth created responses to their reading and learning as a result of participating in the library summer reading program.

Partner with the school and summer free lunch program to put bilingual summer reading and summer free lunch promotional material in the weekend food backpacks, for children on food assistance, during the month prior to when school gets out for the summer.



Tween and teen summer reading participants may choose to create online book reviews, book trailers, or book talks as part of the program. Book trailers and book talks will be posted on the library's website and Facebook page with parent permission. Online book reviews will be moderated by staff to ensure appropriateness.

Ideas not specific to summer reading or early literacy:

Easy

Post photos of families participating together in library activities on a bulletin board in the library and on the library's Facebook page—with permission from people in the photos. Photos will serve as an indicator that the library is increasing the number of families participating in literacy-based activities together and as an invitation to the community to come to the library with their whole family.

Keep an observation notebook at the desk and train staff/volunteers to record observations of and feedback from patrons that relate to our outcomes—patron names and identifying information won't be recorded to protect their privacy.

Moderate

Create a bibliography (book list) of good family read-alouds that includes a few generic discussion questions and story extension activity ideas to display and distribute. Maintain a display of family read-aloud books and audio books that include book review slips families can fill out and leave for other families to read.

Design and implement an easy to use checklist for staff to document observation data—patron names and identifying information won't be recorded to protect their privacy.

At the end of multi-week programs, parents and caregivers will be asked in a survey whether or not the amount of time spent reading with their children increased over the weeks of the program. The survey will be available in hardcopy in the library and online.

Hard

Book reviews of new titles purchased with R2R will be sent to the local newspaper to provide families with good book recommendations, encourage them to read, and encourage them to come to the library to check books out at no additional cost.

For more information:

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