

Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) Storytime Competency Recommendations August 2017

Overview:

Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) is committed to providing comprehensive support for librarians who are providing storytime experiences for their library users. Early Literacy experiences, like storytime, provide families with the knowledge and tools to continue learning beyond the walls of the library. With consistent and frequent messaging to parents, children will be more likely to have the experiences they need to be as prepared as they can be for Kindergarten and the rest of their lives. Research has shown that the more words a child hears before Kindergarten, the more likely that child will be to succeed in school and in life. Whether those words come from the pages of a book, conversations with family and friends, or song lyrics, all words imparted are important. The following is a set of competencies compiled by the CLEL Steering Committee to help ensure that your storytime staff have the skills and support they need to succeed.*

Goals:

- Every staff member providing storytime is familiar with the Every Child Ready to Read 2 (ECRR2) practices: Read, Write, Sing, Talk, and Play, why they are important, and how to integrate them into the Storytime setting.
- Storytime participants leave each week with a new tidbit of knowledge about their child's brain development and ideas for activities to do at home to continue that learning process.
- The parent is the child's first and best teacher - library staff encourages parent and caregiver interaction throughout and beyond library experiences.
- Build a lifetime love of visiting the library, learning, and reading through fun and rich experiences that include books, songs, rhymes, crafts, and/ or activities.

Storytime Process:

Set-Up

- Make sure that the space is prepared before families enter the room. Felt boards, props, books, and tools should be set up, with the space clearly demarcated as to where families should sit.
- Storytime provider welcomes families (ideally by name) as they enter the room and/or in a welcome song.
- If possible, books related to the theme are displayed for easy checkout after the storytime program has terminated.
- Toys and other distracting objects have been removed from the room to promote focus and attention on the storytime.
- Handouts or overhead projection of song lyrics may be used to enhance literacy skills and ensure participation from the group.
- Announcements and/or guidelines are announced before storytime begins, if necessary.

Content

- Storytime includes a variety of elements including but not limited to: books, songs, fingerplays, flannel boards, action rhymes, puppets, scarves, shaker eggs, musical instruments, etc.

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- Early literacy tip for parents and caregivers pertaining to one of the ECRR2 practices (Read, Write, Sing, Talk, or Play) and connecting to the storytime theme or activity.
- May provide a handout for adults to take home to help support Early Literacy outside of storytime. Handouts may include book titles, early literacy tips, songs and fingerplays used during storytime, craft patterns, and activity ideas.
- Activities and crafts have an early literacy component, if provided.

Presentation

- Voice projection is clear and loud enough to be heard around the room.
- Engages with children while reading books and throughout storytime, modeling dialogic reading strategies and encouraging participation.
- Ensures that children can see the pages of the book being read and time is allotted for viewing of the images.
- Uses captivating body language and facial expressions.
- Makes eye contact with children and adults while sharing stories and/or doing activities together.
- Interacts with children and adults in a friendly manner during the storytime.
- Demonstrates evidence of planning and practice by presenting a smoothly performed, well-paced, thoughtfully sequenced storytime.
- Displays enthusiasm for and enjoys storytime.

Management

- Demonstrates the ability to adapt storytime plans to meet the needs of the group.
- Demonstrates the ability to manage disruptions and interruptions effectively.

Storytime Provider Expected Competencies:

[Adheres to the competencies and expectations as outlined by ALSC](#)

Know Your Audience/Community

- Ensure that your space is set up appropriately for children who may be hard of hearing or sight, might respond negatively to high stimulus, require sign language or may not speak English as a first language. Additionally, be aware of space requirements for children who may be differently abled and need certain accommodations.
- It is important to be culturally sensitive, making sure to read books about people from all walks of life and not just those that happen to reflect one's individual community.

Have a Solid Competency in Early Childhood Development as related to Early Literacy

- Up to date on current research and guidelines for brain development for target age group.
- Understands ECRR2 (Every Child Ready to Read 2) skills and practices and incorporates them into Storytime:
 - Remember that children need to learn two key parts: decoding and comprehension. In order to *decode* words, children need to develop the following early literacy skill areas:

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- **Phonological Awareness**
Be able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. Children have to be able to pay attention to the sounds in words in order to learn how to match letters to those sounds.
 - **Print Awareness/Conventions**
Notice print and understand that printed words stand for spoken words.
Know that print is read from left to right (in the English language).
 - **Letter Knowledge**
Know letter names and that they represent sounds.
Know the same letter can look different.
 - **Note:** Knowing letter names and sounds (letter knowledge) and being able to hear and play with the sounds in words (phonological awareness) are the strongest predictors of early reading success, through grade two.
- Comprehension* requires building these early literacy skills:
- **Vocabulary**
Knowing words and their meaning.
 - **Background Knowledge (Print Motivation and Narrative Skills)**
Knowing about the world around us; the prior knowledge a child has before entering school. The more background knowledge children have, the easier it will be for them to understand what they read, to make connections, and to comprehend.
 - Background knowledge also includes print motivation, enjoyment of books and reading, and narrative skills. Children's exposure to enjoyable experiences around books and stories helps them develop print motivation, creating the enjoyment around books and reading that will help them stick with learning to read even when it is difficult. Supporting their narrative skills by recounting stories and events teaches them how stories work, having a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Advisory and Reference Service Competencies

- Has solid understanding of current resources and books available to children and families and can adequately and effectively share these resources with library users.
- Connects users to materials and information that match their needs and interests.
- Models positive customer service standards with children and adults that is respectful and appropriate regardless of age, culture, ability, language, etc. and provides nonjudgmental answers to questions from all parties.

Programming Skills

- Develops, promotes, and implements programming that is appropriate to the community and respectful of differing cultures, languages, and abilities.
- Works with community members to bring the Early Literacy message to families at outreach events outside of the library as well as inside of the library.

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Professional Development and Training

- Works with library staff to ensure that Early Literacy information and techniques are understood and exhibited by all staff members.
- Continually strives to learn about current Early Literacy research and information and effectively communicates new information to staff.
- When possible, trains others in Early Literacy techniques and practices in professional development opportunities outside of the library and participates in similar events.

* Competencies have been compiled from those of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Denver Public Library, Pueblo City/County Library District, and CLEL member libraries.