



Family Literacy Landscape Analysis

Summary of Findings for the California State Library

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State Literacy Context

California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) were created in 1984 as way to help adults build their reading and writing skills. Library literacy programs work with volunteer tutors to provide supportive, learner-centered instruction to more than 16,500 adults each year across the state. To participate in these programs, patrons must be over the age of 18 and not currently enrolled in high school. Local library literacy programs receive a portion of their funding from the State Library through the California Library Literacy and English Acquisition Service Program. In addition to funds, the State Library provides literacy programs with technical assistance, training, and professional development, supported with federal Library Services and Technology Act funds.

In 1988, the Families for Literacy (FFL) program was founded to help library literacy programs enhance their support to adult learners serving as parents or caregivers of children. The mission of Families for Literacy programs was to break the multigenerational cycle of illiteracy that affects the extended family of many adult learners. The Families for Literacy program provided parent/caregiver education, special family storytimes, activities that encourage family member interaction and book giveaways that help create “home libraries.” Since 2011, funding for family literacy has been integrated into the regular baseline funding for adult literacy programs. However, 38 out of 105 library literacy programs continue to provide some form of family literacy support. As the adult learner builds their own reading and writing skills, family literacy programming aims to ensure that their children and family are simultaneously building a “culture of literacy.”



Project Overview & Purpose

The California State Library has received a significant augmentation in its budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year for the overall purpose of enhancing family literacy. Funds will be administered through literacy programs and will be focused on the needs of adult learners and their families. To qualify for the new family literacy funds, library literacy programs must use the money to provide services to a qualifying adult learner (parent or caregiver) that may also extend to their children or family members. Services should be provided in coordination with other library departments and/or external partners. The application process is being rolled out in October for funds approval in December 2018.



To lay the groundwork for strategic planning for the new funds, Common Knowledge has helped the State Library conduct a qualitative and quantitative landscape analysis of family literacy activities to understand current and past services, program capacities and needs. The State Library has been very intentional about creating an inclusive and collaborative process where each step has shaped the next:

- In March 2018, the State Library convened 15 library literacy program coordinators to get a range of perspectives on how to leverage the new funds in the most effective manner, while also attending to core literacy service issues of staffing, professional development, tutor training, learner recruitment and overall visibility
- In June, 80 literacy coordinators completed an online survey about the family literacy activities they provide now or have in the past, their partners and what they see as the greatest needs and opportunities with family literacy

Out of this initial work, some clear themes and interests emerged:

- Develop more broadly shared understanding of successful family literacy practices across library literacy services especially given the number of newer-literacy coordinators
- Identify and share best practices and training in family literacy and family engagement, adding state and national expertise to current successful practices
- Provide more consistent support to the total family, especially as children age out of the current 0-to-5 age eligibility range
- Enhance support from library management and coordination with Children's and Youth Services
- Design family literacy funding and activities to be of benefit to the library literacy services program overall and help enhance recruitment and retention of adult learners

Some library literacy programs focus on delivering defined services at library locations to the eligible population. Others have a more holistic view of family engagement and are active partners out in the community in creating demand for what they can offer. In some cases, that difference is a function of the library literacy services leadership's choices and in other cases it is due to library-wide partnerships and

culture. To address the larger question of management support and how the family literacy funds integrate with the overall library system:

- In July and August, Common Knowledge conducted group interviews with 11 libraries with California Library Literacy Services programs and two additional libraries known for outstanding support to families and work with community partners
- Common Knowledge also spoke with a handful of current and former adult learner parents to hear about their experiences with library-based family literacy programming

Throughout this landscape analysis, the State Library has paid careful attention to engaging a mix of libraries: rural and urban, city and county, large and small, with diverse demographics. This analysis also incorporates 2016-2017 fiscal year reports to the State Library about family literacy. The findings provide a description of the field as a stepping off point for additional collaborative planning and implementation to enhance the positive impact of the new funds for family literacy.

Executive Summary

Input from over 80 California public libraries revealed broad philosophical support for family literacy and a diverse array of practices currently in place to support families. Family literacy was described as core to the library's mission by library literacy services staff, library directors and youth and children's services librarians. Common themes were *"Empowering a family to meet their educational goals and to foster a love of learning"* and *"Breaking the cycle of illiteracy."*

This personal and professional commitment to supporting parents, children and families is reflected in the many programs and services offered by libraries throughout the state. The essential role of the parent in establishing a family's love of learning was respected across all departments. Many libraries emphasized that early literacy, particularly for children ages 0-5, is where the library is uniquely positioned to make a difference. As one librarian put it, *"Early literacy is one of the biggest gaps in education. Before a child gets to preschool, the library may be the only place that families receive literacy support."* This emphasis on early learning was seen as the best way to reduce the number of school-aged children struggling to meet grade-level expectations as well as reduce the need for adult literacy supports in the future.

Although early literacy continues to be a major focus, California Library Literacy Services programs described benefits from



easing strict eligibility requirements for family literacy. Many libraries are providing a continuum of services for all age groups in a family, either within the library literacy services program and/or across the library. Many libraries described a shift toward interactive, inclusive programming that has affected nearly every aspect of the library. Storytimes now routinely include content aimed specifically at parents and caregivers. Summer reading programs increasingly include all age groups. Family-oriented spaces and passive programs aim to engage the entire family in learning together. Partnerships with First 5, pre-schools, schools and community groups are integral to family engagement. Across the programs and services, staff talked about how developing relationships with families helped them be most effective in their work.

Amid a wide variety of supports for families, input from library staff indicated uneven levels of capacity and coordination. Not enough staff, staff turnover, insufficient training and limited approaches for collaboration are common challenges across the state. Some libraries have high levels of integration between departments built into their system plans and others are more ad hoc about coordination between library literacy programs and the balance of the library. Interviews surfaced some core questions that many are grappling with:

- How can the library best support parents with low literacy skills and balance pre-literacy activities including play, overall mindset development, parenting skills and the discrete literacy skills needed for reading and writing?
- As the role of libraries continues to expand, what mix of family literacy services is right for a given community? What is the library's role relative to other partners?

As there may be no easy answers to these questions, many of those who contributed to this landscape analysis said that they welcomed the chance to pause and reflect on their family literacy principles and practices. A representative comment: *"We could use a more system-wide idea of how we are enriching family life and learning."*

There were high levels of interest in the new family literacy funding, not only for the resources but also for the opportunity to focus on planning, training, and the sharing of successful models. Some felt their skills needed updating (*"It's been awhile since I have done family literacy"*) and almost all were seeking more models to choose from (*"I'd like to see new techniques for family literacy"*).

In addition to building staff capacity through additional training and professional development, other areas of common interest include increasing the library's reach into the community, providing services to a greater number of families and a more diverse range of family

Proven Practices

Library literacy programs with highly experienced family literacy staff identified some common "proven practices" that have helped learners grow in their role as parents:

1. **Being learner centered** with both staff and tutors attuned to where learners are in their parenting journey
2. **Developing and sustaining rapport** through informal as well as structured activities
3. **Collaborating and co-teaching** with staff from children's services, emphasizing a rich array of links to relevant library programs
4. **Being out in the community** for recruitment and service delivery
5. **Engaging learners as contributors and volunteers**, letting them share their strengths and build their capacity

types, as well as more consistent programming to help change the culture of a family to a “growth mindset.”

Regarding evaluation of family literacy, the literacy program Roles and Goals model was seen as an appropriate starting point. Goals are set based on the needs of the learner and their family. Structures are in place to track progress toward desired outcomes. Developing clearer models for evaluating family-oriented services in other parts of the library was discussed as an opportunity area among many of the libraries that were interviewed.

Recommendations

The participants in the March meeting, June survey and July/August interviews were invited to provide suggestions for how the family literacy funds should be allocated to local library literacy services by the State Library. The landscape analysis also identified three priority focus areas that can help organize the State Library’s support during the first year of implementation.

Suggestions to the State Library

- Use a two-year phased approach to build a body of best practices, models and jointly developed strategies for measuring outcomes
 - During Year 1: Distribute funds while building a body of practices across the three focus areas identified by the field; improve knowledge of effective family literacy communications and assessment
 - During Year 2: Provide funding and support that is informed by learning during Year 1 about best practices and models, enhanced training opportunities and specific tools/techniques that may be replicated across similar library settings
- Integrate planning for the new family literacy funds with the State Library’s strategic planning for library literacy services overall, including goals articulated by literacy coordinators:
 - Establish a clear vision, mission, and an outcomes-based approach
 - Offer increased training for staff, tutors and other volunteers
 - Provide supports for communications, recruitment and community outreach
- Structure the funding to encourage internal partnerships like coordination between library literacy services, administration and other library departments as well as support external partnerships
- Deepen understanding of how family literacy funds can help libraries accentuate their distinct role in local collaborations with other organizations serving families and children
 - Be explicit and intentional about proven principles of family engagement across the whole library
 - Understand family literacy activities in relationship to key institutions and organizations, such as schools, First 5 and other partners active in the library’s community
- Provide training and models that help people in the field learn from each other as well as from other leaders in the field of family literacy

- Review and enhance current literacy tutor training around family literacy; share training with staff and volunteers in other departments, especially those who have indicated limited exposure to serving adults with limited literacy skills
- Use the regional networks and professional staff support -- “circuit riders” -- to share and discuss different family literacy models
- Assemble and disseminate a dynamic collection of best practices (see [resource worksheet](https://tinyurl.com/FL2018res) at <https://tinyurl.com/FL2018res>) that draw from experience at library literacy programs across the state as well as nationally recognized programs and training

How Libraries Envision Using the Funds

Library literacy services coordinators identified several ways that they might use the new family literacy funds, such as hiring new staff members, offering additional training opportunities and expanding program locations and/or hours. Many were also interested in implementing new programs. Overall feedback fell into three general categories:

- **Training:** Empower literacy program staff, tutors and colleagues across departments with family literacy skills and best practices
- **Expansion:** Increase the size and reach of existing family literacy programs
- **Innovation:** Develop or implement new, novel approaches to serving families

Priority Focus Areas

Three high priority focus areas emerged from the landscape analysis:

1. Strengthen libraries’ capacity to deliver family literacy supports, through expansion of successful services and/or training
 - Help library literacy staff and tutors deepen their knowledge of early literacy concepts
 - Enable children's librarians to be better partners to library literacy programs by orienting them to the needs of low-literacy parents
 - Design training to include the latest research on emergent literacy, including the importance of literacy-supporting concepts, such as play, numeracy, memory and visual-spatial awareness
2. Help low-literacy parents develop confidence and skills in supporting their children’s education, including strength-based workshops, digital literacy and support, partnering with school districts, enhancing access to homework help and offering after-school programming
 - Provide parents with assistance navigating school websites, communicating with teachers, preparing for school conferences and other ways to support their children
 - Help parents of children with learning differences prepare for IEP or 504 meetings and find other resources for their children
 - Connect parents with additional educational supports provided by community partners
3. Create more opportunities for families to develop a culture of positive learning experiences together on a more sustained basis

- Offer joint parent-child programming for early literacy, including making it easier for parents with young children to develop their own literacy skills (addressing a widespread call for child care with learning-oriented activities)
- Provide programming that attracts and supports the whole family
 - a. Offering programming that is more sustained and less “one off”
 - b. Incorporating play and activities that encourage interactions between family members or children and caregivers
 - c. Reaching a greater number of families by offering programs outside of the library in family-friendly locations
- Occasions for family-to-family peer support, lifting up a strengths-based approach

In addition to these three focus areas, nurturing community partnerships is a cross-cutting strategy that was emphasized by library staff in both the survey and interviews. To support families, local public libraries and their literacy programs are partnering with a wide array of nonprofits, pre-schools, schools, local government agencies and community organizations. It is expected that any family literacy effort supported by the new funds would be explicit in defining how it plans to sustain and/or enhance mutually beneficial relationships with partners.

Highlights of Findings

How the parent/caregiver role is served in library literacy programs now

Like all adult literacy students, parents participating in library literacy programs identify areas of need using the state’s Roles & Goals curriculum. Using a learner-centered approach, literacy students set goals based on their roles as a life-long learner, worker, family member and community member. For adults with children in their lives, the family member role offers multiple goals of interest, including *interact with schools or teachers, share a book with children or family* and *take children to library storytime*. Of note, library literacy programs confirmed that they were not literal about how they defined who was a parent. The learner might actually be a child’s grandparent, aunt, uncle or other caregiver. (This report uses the words parent or caregiver to refer to any of these adults.) Family member “parent” roles are chosen by about 15-20 percent of those choosing to set goals.

Share a book with children/family goals set	2,612
○ Share a book with children/family percentage met	76%
Help children with homework goals set	2,253
○ Help children with homework percentage met	57%
Interact with the school/with teachers goals set	2,191
○ Interact with the school/with teachers percentage met	62%

Take children to library storytime goals set	1,105
○ Take children to library storytime percentage met	76%

More learners are meeting goals for sharing a book and attending storytime than for helping children with homework or interacting with schools or teachers. Survey responses and interviews indicate that more learners and families are interested in family literacy supports than participate in formal FFL activities right now.

How adult learners and their families experience family literacy services

In addition to input from Library Literacy Program coordinators, we spoke with a handful of adult learners who are parents to provide examples of that perspective. Several coordinators asked to have the adult student perspective more fully explored during the upcoming strategic planning process. Common themes from adult student interviews included:

- The library literacy program is a safe, welcoming place for me and my family
- Adult literacy tutors and library staff members are trusted sources of support and encouragement
- Many services and supports are provided beyond tutoring sessions and classes

"I feel welcome with bringing my kids into the program," said one adult learner. "Some programs, I cannot just bring in my kids, or they are not allowed. Even when I need to be with a teacher or a tutor, I can bring in my kids and get help for their homework or to use the computer."

A single mother of an elementary school-aged child – while no longer eligible for official family literacy activities – said she drops in for unstructured support when she needs it. *"I need help coping. Being a mom is tough. I need someone to confide in who won't judge me. They give me good advice and help me with resources."* She added that staff have provided other support, as well, including *"suggestions for books, help downloading programs for my son, field trips, stuff to do together and mental support."*

Our students need a safe space to grapple with the challenges of being a parent. Almost all of them have had poor role models and lack support systems. We provide support at that teachable moment when they have a need.

Numerous literacy coordinators mentioned warm personal relationships between learners and staff as integral to the effective delivery of family literacy services. One literacy coordinator wanted to make sure that this relatively "invisible best practice" was not overlooked or just assumed to happen on its own without intentional focus. *"Our students need a safe space to grapple with the challenges of being a parent. Almost all of them have had poor role models and lack support systems. We provide support at that teachable moment when they have a need. A lot of that happens outside of scheduled programs and classes."*

Another literacy program staff member shared her library’s approach to building strong relationships with families. *“We build rapport with our families by getting to know them well: remembering birthdays of family members (especially the parents), asking how a child’s spelling test went, or how a family member is feeling that was ill, or how their meeting went with a teacher etc. I know this is important because the parents/caregivers in our program tell us how much it means to them, and because they seek us out for support and as a resource. They invite us to family celebrations, graduations, and IEP meetings. I think this is also because we always treat them with respect, honoring their knowledge by inviting them to share it, and by reflecting back to them all they do for their children. I point out that by attending FFL they are modeling so much for their children: reading and education is important and fun, the library is a good place, books are valuable—not to mention sharing special time with them!”*

How Library Literacy programs provide family literacy services

California Library Literacy Services programs are typically providing formal family literacy services through:

- Families for Literacy (FFL) Programs
 - Most programs are available to adult learners with at least one child or grandchild between the ages of 0 and 5. Specific program offerings vary by library, but nearly all include:
 - One-on-one tutoring with a trained volunteer. Tutors work with adult learners to discuss family needs, set individualized goals and practice skills that will be used at home. Tutors also support family literacy by connecting family members with other library services, such as after-school programs and summer reading
 - Book giveaways to help families build “home libraries”
 - Support reading aloud, including practice reading the “book of the month” selected for FFL families
 - Meetings and events for FFL families that allow children to attend parallel programs, such as storytime, and encourage parents to learn from each other
 - Parenting workshops
- Examples of other family-oriented programming by literacy programs
 - Monthly family days
 - Themed workshops
 - Workshops series (“boot camps”)
 - Special events such as “Family Palooza” and International Literacy Day
 - Computer labs
 - Family Learning Adventures, guided field trips
 - Families gardening together
- Providing occasions for parents/caregivers to play an active role contributing to family literacy activities

The literacy program’s trained volunteer tutor is usually the primary point of contact helping adult learners develop skills to read to their children. At larger library systems, the tutor is also the one most likely to help the adult learn about and access the range of children and family services at the library. In smaller programs, staff described providing a tour of the library and “warm referrals” (often with personal introductions) to the children’s area of the library. Literacy program newsletters also are

commonly used to help build awareness of programming. In some cases, newsletters also provide specific early literacy activities and ideas.

Some literacy program staff talked about creating special occasions to orient parents and caregivers who might be initially overwhelmed in navigating the full range of services at the library, such as a tour before the library opens. This comment from the Fresno program was representative of many: *“With our family literacy program we reach out to families that are not always traditional library users. We meet them where they are comfortable such as housing authority, parks, Summer Lunch Program and outreach sites and we show them what kind of things we do with families in our program. We work to make adult learners feel ownership of the library and the programs we provide. We offer to give them personalized tours of the library closest to home, showing them how they can use their library.”*

A commonly mentioned practice is to have tutors or staff members attend storytimes with parents until they felt comfortable attending on their own. One program described a scavenger hunt created by a tutor that was successful in developing greater awareness of the range of library services available outside of the literacy program. The processes by which literacy programs help refer adult students to other library services appeared to vary widely. In addition to size of the library system, program location is a significant factor – particularly when the main literacy office and/or tutoring sites are in a different location than children’s services. Other variables were whether there was any intentional protocol and differences in staff style and preferences.

Some of the literacy programs are intentional about offering adult learners opportunities to contribute to family literacy activities. Many roles were described, ranging from simple volunteer tasks or bringing food to a family literacy potluck, all the way to San Leandro’s adult learners running family literacy storytimes and mentoring peer adult learners to take over the following year. Other assignments included helping with community outreach, volunteering with family literacy events and co-teaching classes. Staff explained that this approach built on a strengths-based attitudes about adult learners and also, importantly, allowed the parent or caregiver to be a visible role model for their child.

Library literacy program family activities and events are usually attentive to the school and community calendar. Staff described supports during back-to-school season and during school vacations. *“During school breaks we create special programming that includes the whole family; we use this as a tool to recruit more learners.”* In situations where no tutor is available, programming can help fill the gap. The Solano County’s literacy program’s comment: *“Family literacy activities are shared with the adult learner at the initial assessment and goal planning session. Unmatched students are encouraged to incorporate FFL Learning Opportunities including library storytime while waiting for a tutor.”* Some CLLS programs, like the Los Angeles Public Library, use drop-in tutors to meet the needs of unmatched students.



San Diego Public Library’s FFL program also offers a weekly “boot camp” series that last from three to five weeks. Each series engages families around a central theme, such as “Everyday Learning” (which includes “Learning through Cooking” and “Learning at the Grocery Store”) and “Screen Time – Choosing Media

Use Appropriate for Your Family.” The series-style programming helps learners dig more deeply into topics with their families and build on learning week to week. *“With the boot camp model, we could delve into social media use, different age ranges for screen time, we had caregivers fill out a survey of their own screen time use, we did a “no screen time week” and talked about alternatives, etc.”*

During the March meeting, literacy program coordinators shared that in serving the parent/caregiver role they are continually weighing how to best balance one-on-one tutor support, direct support from literacy staff, family programming and proactive referrals to other library activities and resources. Several literacy program staff also mentioned that childcare is a challenge. In particular, adult students with infants or young children in tow have difficulty focusing during one-on-one tutoring.

How libraries support family literacy more broadly

Outside of adult literacy programs, libraries are offering a wide range of programs and services for families. The extent to which these programs are coordinated with the library’s literacy varies between libraries and individual branches. Literacy programs and children’s departments are often tasked with promoting and referring patrons to family programs, but further coordination may be limited. In other libraries, all library staff members share responsibility for promotion and referral. Family programs and supports include:

- Diverse Storytime Offerings
 - Storytime continues to be the most prevalent form of family programming across libraries
 - Offerings include infant, lap sit, toddler, elementary, bilingual, family and sensory storytimes
 - Libraries are also offering storytimes in diverse languages, such as Spanish, Mandarin, Portuguese, French and Farsi
- Summer Reading Programs
 - Many libraries are now offering inclusive summer reading that encourages the participation of all ages, including children, families and adults



- Many programs also proactively recruit from CLLS families and those participating in FFL
- Stay and Play Activities / Passive Programming
 - Many libraries extend the 30-minute storytime with optional activities that encourage parents and caregivers to linger with their children
 - Informal exchanges between parents/caregivers is common and encouraged
 - Some libraries have created intentional gathering spaces that encourage families to stay for extended periods of time, such as “family zones,” “kids corners” and “stay and play spaces”
 - Other libraries are developing a family-friendly environment through designation and training as Family Place Libraries
 - Passive programs are increasingly designed with the whole family in mind
 - Activities may require the child and caregiver to work together or interactive elements that encourage dialogue
 - Activities are available for a range of age groups
- Borrowable Family Resources
 - Activity kits that encourage families to read, write and play at home
 - Laptops that include literacy games for the whole family
- Supports for Parents and Caregivers
 - Libraries are offering parenting classes, hosting guest speakers, and creating opportunities for parents to learn in a supportive environment and connect with each other
 - In addition to classes, some libraries offer personalized digital literacy support to help make sure accounts get set up and help build confidence with family-oriented online resources and activities
 - Partners such as First 5, WIC, CalFresh and county departments of health are also partnering to offer library-based nutrition and cooking programs.
 - Some libraries are also acting as “social service hubs,” connecting families with healthcare, housing and educational resources
- Family Programs in the Community
 - Many librarians spoke to the need to “go where families are” and “reach people with



- children who aren't already coming into the library." *"People are location bound."*
- Some use a mobile "literacy coach" or family-focused bookmobile
- "Taking the storytimes on the road" at parks, community centers, daycare facilities and the offices of county agencies are all approaches to reaching new families
- Jail-based programs, such as the one in Alameda County, help incarcerated parents read to their children during weekend family visits

Local factors that impact the type of family services offered

Library staff frequently spoke of the need to "be responsive" to their patrons and the communities they serve. As a result, the demographics and culture of a community are key determinants when it comes to the type of family supports offered. One librarian mentioned serving communities where 70 percent of the children did not meet expectations for kindergarten readiness.

Some staff described how the library was the primary (and perhaps only) environment for some families to experience positive learning together. *"Parents need a place; often there's no space in their home."* Not surprisingly, transportation challenges and access issues were more frequently reported by rural libraries than urban libraries. The need for responsive and strategic scheduling was mentioned across library settings as a way to maximize program impact.

How libraries think about family literacy together

In the online survey, literacy coordinators defined family literacy as:

- Encouraging a culture of reading and learning in the entire family
- Adults and children learning together, building skills to work together
- Fostering a literacy rich home environment
- Helping parents build the skills and confidence needed to support their child's education
- Literacy as it appears in family life; using everyday activities for learning
- Supporting the literacy skills of anyone who interacts with children

Staff participating in the group interviews were presented with the examples above and were invited to each share their own phrase or idea. While there was no one definition of "family literacy," there was significant congruence across departments and systems around a few common values:

- *"A unit of people who consider themselves family, expanding their literacy skills together."*
- *"Supporting caregivers in their own literacy development and helping them support their children's literacy."*
- *"Working together, learning all together, reading because they enjoy it."*
- *"Providing a welcoming environment for families to learn on their own terms."*

Library staff defined family as inclusively as possible. It is common for children to enter the library with a parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle or other caregiver. The value of "intergenerational" services was a frequent theme. Although there are many ways to describe "family literacy," there was broad agreement about the "what" of family engagement (adapted from Global Family Research Project):

- It begins at birth and continues through young adulthood

- It includes adult literacy and access to formal and informal community social supports, which create a home environment conducive to healthy learning
- It happens everywhere children learn—home, school, and community

There was a broader range of answers on the “how” of family literacy and family engagement. Some librarians were very focused on books and a love of reading: *“We are launching the next generation of readers.”* Some cited the idea of not only helping a parent develop the skills and confidence to help their child learn but also to provide *“lifelong skill building to be advocates for their children’s education.”* Others emphasized the importance of families learning together: *“The ability to have a shared experience within the family – that’s more important than the type of reading they’re doing.”* Librarians serving communities where their patrons have extra challenges talked about helping develop social bonds. *“We build relationships with each family member to help them build relationships with each other.”*

The interviews also surfaced broad values associated with family engagement (*excerpted/adapted from Ideabook : Families and Libraries*):

- Meeting families where they are and giving them opportunities to design how they would like to promote Child & Family learning
- Building on family strengths, acknowledging the family’s knowledge skills and values that can contribute to the library as a learning space
- Creating positive family interactions through programs and services
- Understanding the library’s role in the larger system of local institutions that serve family and children
- Intentional planning for a meaningful and effective family engagement

As far as the “why” of family literacy, there was universal agreement that *“encouraging a culture of reading and learning in the whole family”* was at the core of the library’s mission. The Beaumont Library talked about how past funding structures were not as supportive of this core purpose as they would have liked. A few years ago, they revamped their library plan of service to sharpen focus on early literacy and family literacy.

How libraries consider the roles of parents, caregivers and other family members

Staff across different departments agreed about the central role of the adult caregiver in family literacy. At the practical level, one librarian noted: *“The little children don’t walk themselves to the library.”* The widespread shift to storytimes with parenting tips is an example of this belief being put into practice. One children’s librarian shared: *“The old model was that we would take the children away from the parents. The new model is that the storytime is now structured as much for the parents as the kids.”* Several expressed the sentiment that, *“It’s very important for children to see the adults in their lives reading.”*

Some children’s librarians had been exposed to the needs of low-literacy parents. At the Sonoma County Library, children’s staff and literacy program staff recently reviewed a range of books from the perspective of a low-literacy parent. Others indicated that they had never served adults and/or people

The old model was that we would take the children away from the parents. The new model is that the storytime is now structured as much for the parents as the kids.

with low literacy. Staff frequently described parents as “their child’s first teacher.” Although there was broad agreement that parents play a formative, irreplaceable role in educating their children, the phrase “child’s first teacher” drew mixed reactions. Some literacy program staff explained that for parents with limited education and/or negative experiences in school, being handed this “assignment” could be seen as intimidating or even off-

putting. Teacher translates to “professor” in Spanish, adding to the feeling of disconnect. Some cultures respect the distinct role and expertise of the teacher, so exploring alternate ways to describe the parent’s role in their child’s learning may be beneficial.

With many programs focusing on children 0-5, libraries are also striving to improve services for older children in the family. Although timing is a challenge, some libraries are providing concurrent or sequenced programs for multiple age groups. FFL programs are also engaging older siblings who may already be taking on a more language-prominent role in the family. *“Some older children are already past where their parents are in terms of reading and writing,”* said one literacy staff member. Getting older children involved is an important way to ensure follow-through at home and to enhance effort. Encouraging older children to reflect on their own family roles and take actions, such as reading to a younger sibling, were highlighted as effective practices. Staff also noted that the involvement of older children also increased the likelihood that families would continue to participate. *“When older kids can participate, it increases family interest.”*

Many described programming for elementary school kids that gives parenting tips and encourages positive interaction between child and caregiver. During STEAM programming, for example, instead of doing something for the child, parents are given specific ways to support the child’s learning experience. Library staff are also coaching older siblings to not rush in to do the activity for the younger sibling but to coach them instead. *“It helps when a caregiver can see that older child...8, 10, or 12...help with the activity for the younger sibling. The can model for the parent what to do.”* Libraries that provide after-school homework help are also drawing on high school students to help act as tutors and mentors.

How libraries support literacy across age groups

Many of the libraries interviewed talked about an intentional continuum of support across age levels. One librarian explained: *“We meet families at each point along the way to be a reading family.”* A literacy coordinator shared: *“We want them here for life.”*

For example, Contra Costa County library talked about these main phases and types of literacy:

- Pre-K: Talk, Read, Sing
- Elementary: Literacy Skill Building
- Middle/High School: Information Literacy
- Adults: Literacy Support
- All ages: Computer literacy



To illustrate a continuum of specific programming across ages, as an example, here are programs for infants though high school provided by the El Dorado County Library:



- Infant storytimes & developmental support
- Movement and activity for toddlers
- Preschool storytimes and standard early literacy
 - Enriched with science-based storytimes
 - Visits at pre-schools and in homes
- Raising a Reader out at schools
- Afternoon STEM -- requires help from parent; they support parents and kids with constructive interaction.
- Lego block party once per month, an engineering challenge (helps to attract Dads)
- 3rd to 5th grade fantasy book club (kids help lead)
- 5th to 8th grader 8-week coding class (funded by Friends and local donations)
- Teen volunteers serve as book buddies with first or second graders
- Various ages: pet partner therapy dogs
- El Dorado County also provides play centers with light, tables, and kitchen. *“Families are using it constantly. They tell us: ‘How great it is to have a place to go where there’s no pressure to buy something or to leave too soon.’”*

Staff from multiple libraries described parenting workshops designed to help with different phases of their child's development:

- Early learning
- Pre-Kindergarten
- Transition to Kindergarten
- Choosing a school
- Preparing for the transition to middle school
- Orientation to the college process

In explaining their workshops, the Los Angeles Public Library shared: *“It’s natural to help with any transition.”*

How libraries support family literacy across age groups



Patrons (by age)	0 to 3	4 to 6	Elementary School	Middle & High School	Adult
Programs and services	Baby and toddler storytimes and other pre-literacy, play and movement activities	Preschool storytimes and related programming	Family programming STEAM programs (including coding, digital literacy) Library card initiatives	Homework Help live or online (<i>may</i> have trained support) STEAM programs and Makerspaces Transition assistance events	One-on-one tutors Small group classes
Cross-Cutting Programs	Summer Reading & Summer Meals				

<p>Parent/ Caregiver</p>	<p>Modeling play and pre-literacy activities</p> <p>Parenting tips, workshops, peer time</p>	<p>Tutoring/help to read simple books</p> <p>Parenting classes: pre-K readiness, healthy eating, etc.</p>	<p>Family programming</p> <p>Parenting classes</p> <p>Support to interact with schools/teachers</p>	<p>Family programming</p> <p>Parenting classes</p> <p>Support to interact with schools/teachers</p>	<p>Note – sometimes children are enlisted to help parents and/or siblings</p>
<p>Library's Unique Role</p>	<p>Often the primary (or only) support or “intervention” before a child reaches preschool</p>	<p>Complementing the work of preschool teachers (or serving as primary teacher if no pre school)</p> <p>Acting as a “neutral” advocate for children and early literacy</p>	<p>Providing students with “free choice” ways to learn (versus school) without testing or leveling</p> <p>Programs and supports that schools may not be able to offer, such as family engagement</p>	<p>Self-selected learning experiences, complementary to school.</p> <p>Opportunities to design and deliver programming</p>	<p>A “safe space” to develop literacy skills with personalized support</p> <p>Connecting adults to complementary services and other educational opportunities</p>

Programs, philosophies or trainings for early literacy and school readiness that were most frequently mentioned

Librarians did not identify a single philosophy or approach that guides their work. Instead, they spoke to a handful of common reference points that have been promoted by organizations such as Every Child Ready to Read, Early Learning with Families (ELF) and First Five California. Themes include:

- The need to take an inclusive and holistic approach to literacy
- Broadening the range of activities that libraries should promote beyond reading
- Designing programming based on children’s developmental needs
- Empowering parents to be “their child’s first teacher” (noting caveats mentioned above)

Librarians continually referenced the need to include a mix of literacy and learning activities. This could include “Talk, Sing, Read, Write, Play” from Every Child Ready to Read and trainer Saroj Ghoting, or “Talk. Read. Sing.” from First Five of California. Some librarians are also using the California Department of Education’s Preschool Learning Foundations and Preschool Curriculum Framework as a guide to services for children age 0-5.

Parenting skills and tips provided cover children’s development, health and nutrition as well as behavioral issues. Some referenced Touchpoints as instrumental in changing their thinking about family development. Others referred to trauma informed care (and ACES: adverse childhood experiences). Some of the other trainings mentioned included Family Place, Mind in the Making and the Play Summit at the Sacramento Library (“*I found out you don’t have to separate the fun from the educational*”).

Helping to reduce the “summer slide” was an objective mentioned by many libraries. In addition to robust summer reading programs, libraries are offering multiple forms of summer enrichment. “Lunch at the Library” was called out as an example of a much-appreciated and successful program.

How libraries offer opportunities for families to learn side by side

Libraries are designing facilitated and passive programs with the entire family in mind.

- Storytimes are increasingly designed to be inclusive, interactive and integrative
 - Children and caregivers learn side by side
 - Literacy and developmental concepts are integrated or explicitly referenced during storytime
 - Parents and caregivers practice techniques and skills that they can replicate at home.
- Libraries are encouraging reading among broader age groups
 - Summer Reading programs have increasingly been broadened to include the whole family
 - Libraries are also offering year-round book clubs for parents and children, as well as family-focused programs, such as PRIME TIME Family Reading
- Passive programming seeks to engage the entire family in learning
 - Both children and caregivers play a role
 - Leveled activities are available for younger and older children
 - “Learning through play” is encouraged more than it used to be

- Access to Discover and Go museum passes and other community resources
- STEAM programs address topics of multigenerational interest
 - Children and adults are interested in technology
 - Programs designed to stimulate interest in building and engineering, such as Lego clubs and 3D printing classes, frequently include children learning alongside their parents

Factors that hinder or encourage effective coordination between literacy programs and other library departments when supporting families

How funding is structured was called out as one of the biggest challenges to integrating how services are delivered. *“The funding drives the outcomes and it usually doesn't lend itself to integration.”* One library director mentioned that the literacy program as defined by the State Library is the system’s only maintenance-of-effort grant and ends up being in its own category. *“The state has a special pot of money for this and I need to come to grips with how it fits within the whole.”* Another library director shared that after the FFL funds were discontinued, *“staff went back to their corners.”* The way funding is allocated can also create silos and barriers between programs. *“We feel very limited in what we can offer in terms of family literacy, because our funding is limited to serving adults,”* said one director. A literacy coordinator shared: *“We would love to be able to serve both the adult and their child in the same Literacy program, in the same room! Currently, the child must get that support in the Children's and Teen areas of the library.”*

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Physical space is another common challenge. One staff member mentioned that *“we would love to offer a larger after-school program [at a more remote branch], but we don't have the space.”* In some cases, this leads programs to only be offered at larger branches or the central library, regardless of community need. Other common challenges to coordination were discontinuity in key staff positions, insufficient training and loss of institutional knowledge. A few of the interviews also surfaced issues around how to manage and motivate shifting teams that blend contract staff, full time staff and volunteers.

Supports to coordination were often described as situations that allowed for exposure and personal relationships across departments. In some cases, the literacy program coordinator had previously been serving children and youth at the same library. In other cases, literacy programs and children’s librarians were co-located at a branch. Smaller libraries and/or smaller locations tended to have more informal yet more frequent communication between departments. The Beaumont Library team talked about how literacy staff are able to work the adult or the children’s service desk and that there is regular cross-pollination. *“We've broken down a lot of walls. We don't have the capacity to silo. We have to know what each other are doing.”*

More formal supports to coordination also include joint trainings and cross training staff between departments. Programs such as ELF, Touchpoints and Mind in the Making have all provided training for librarians across departments. Several librarians cited the ELF trainings as instrumental in deepening collaboration, as the training required attendance by the literacy coordinator, a children's librarian and someone from library administration. In addition to ELF, some libraries have begun offering joint training

in early literacy development for CLLS staff and children’s staff together. Sonoma County Library, for example, has been working to share adult literacy best practices with children’s librarians. To help disseminate best practices more widely throughout the library, those that attend conferences and trainings are also frequently asked to share what they’ve learned during all-staff meetings. Alternatively, some of the larger libraries had more formal strategic plans and/or community partnerships that supported integration of effort.

How libraries work with community partners to support family literacy

Local public libraries are partnering with a wide array of nonprofits, schools, local government agencies and community organizations. Partnerships with large statewide organizations were relatively uncommon. The most frequently mentioned partners were county-level First 5 organizations, pre-schools and elementary schools. Libraries are also commonly partnering with entire school districts, community centers and local agencies. Common agency partners include departments of education, health and family services, and parks and recreation. To reach more parents and caregivers, many library literacy programs have developed their own outreach partnerships with the housing authority, health clinics, and jails. Some libraries also highlighted partnerships with local businesses and collaborative efforts that bring together multiple stakeholders to address issues such as literacy, child poverty or homelessness.

There was a wide variation in the extent to which a literacy programs and/or its library is positioned as a leader in the local family support ecosystem. The group interviews clustered into three types of libraries:

- Those who see themselves as having “a seat at the table” and respond to partnership and service requests
- Those who help guide what happens at the “table,” jointly planning activities with partners
- Libraries who are at the center of defining the shape of the table, with a community-wide system-change lens

Several of the libraries interviewed are very active in comprehensive Cradle to Career collective impact initiatives or are serving as community hubs with complex objectives and evaluation systems. Those with smaller leadership roles in the community asked for training to be more proactive in developing strategic partnerships. Libraries that are more active as community leaders offered to share information about their practices and approaches.

In addition to the system-level oriented collaborations noted above, some partnerships are at the branch or neighborhood level. For example, Huntington Beach Library’s Oak View branch is co-located with an elementary school. They are part of a hyper local community collaborative with the school and a highly active community center. This ongoing partnership defines a lot of how they provide services and collaboration. When there are back to school nights, the literacy program is included.

Another example from San Mateo from FY 16-17: *“In addition to working directly with the Project Read families, our family literacy coordinator also visits the local preschool and toddler programs where the Project Read families send their children. We have found that this helps complete the circle of trust and education in our program.”*

At the level of family programming, libraries also described how they partnered with a range of organizations offering resources and expertise in the sciences arts, and diverse cultural activities.

How libraries evaluate family services

Library literacy coordinators consistently pointed to the longstanding practice of adult learner-directed Roles and Goals as a measurement tool that helped them understand adult learners' progress toward self-defined goals. These goals are typically measured through learner self-report and tutor observation. Some FFL programs are also using surveys and evaluation forms as a way to collect data on "family days" and intensive "FFL boot camps." Children and youth services librarians shared that their programming tends to be evaluated informally based on attendance and verbal feedback. The aim was to be responsive. For example: *"Our community is vocal. They ask for what they want."* Some libraries are providing feedback forms to parents and caregivers following some storytimes; however, this does not appear to be standardized in any of the libraries we interviewed. For certain programs, like Summer Reading, libraries mentioned doing more comprehensive assessments. Generally, outside of the literacy program Roles and Goals process, there were very limited sightlines into the interests, capacities and progress of parents and caregivers with limited literacy skills.

Most librarians serving school-aged children said they did not track student skills because that was the province of the school district. *"We are not competing with the Department of Education."* A few libraries with long-term partnerships did have ways to help gauge student progress. A recurring theme was that evaluation is most likely to occur when it is required as a condition of funding and/or because the library has elected to be part of a more elaborate collective impact effort with defined metrics. In these cases, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating programs may be shared with an external organization. Some librarians mentioned First 5 as an example of a funding partner that requires more robust monitoring and reporting. Some of the larger systems mentioned using tools like "Orange Boy" to upgrade the data they are collecting.

Most librarians indicated that evaluation was an area for improvement. Many expressed an interest in doing more evaluation than they are now but needed ways to make it a higher priority while not wanting to reduce level of service.

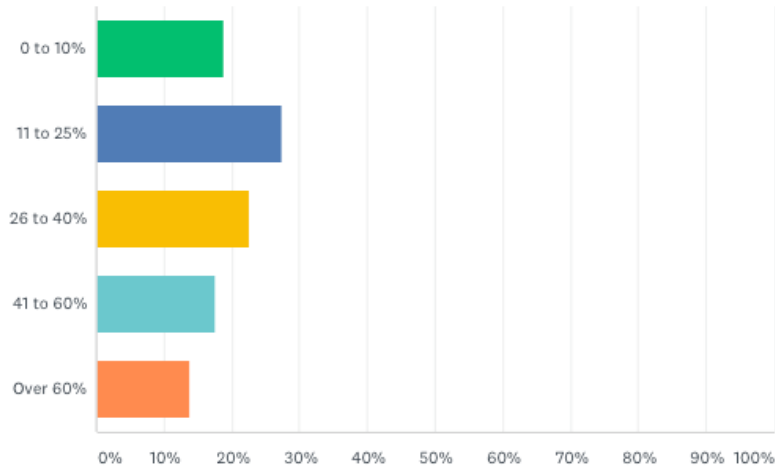
Highlights from Online Survey

California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) survey participants:

- 80 programs completed the survey
- Over half have 2 FTE's or less
- Over half of library literacy program coordinators have been in their position 5 years or less
- 60% have other library roles/responsibilities besides being the CLLS coordinator
- In addition to tutors, 70%+ of programs have other kinds of volunteers

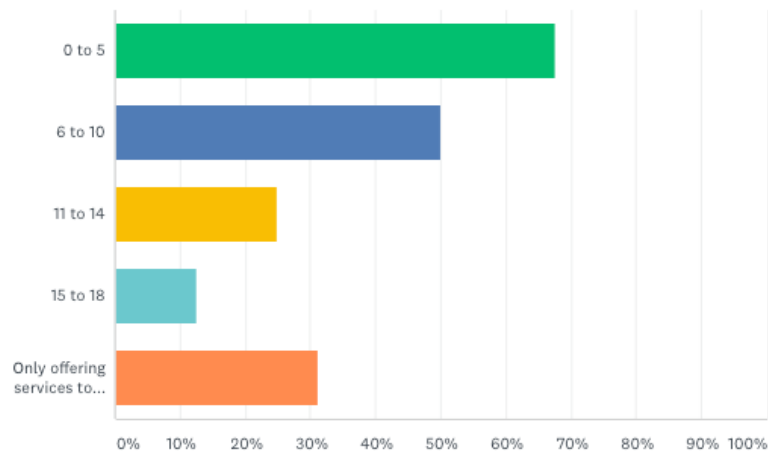
Approximately what percentage of adult learners in your program select roles and goals relating to helping children in their family (e.g. share a book, help with homework, interact with school/teachers)?

Answered: 80 Skipped: 2



What is the age range of children served through the family literacy services or programs your CLLS program may have provided? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 80 Skipped: 2



Literacy Program Coordinator plans for the new family literacy funds

78% - We would like to implement new ideas for family literacy

71% - We would like to receive training and learn more about best practices relating to family literacy services

56% - We would augment what we are doing right now

24% - We would reinstate past efforts

20% - We're not sure yet

Family Literacy Convening Participants – March 2018

CLLS Coordinators at March 21 State Library Discussion represented various regional networks:

- Cathy Andrews, Salinas Public Library (NCCLLN)
- Allan Callaci, Rancho Cucamonga Public Library (Inland)
- Carol Chapman, Ventura County Library (SCCLP)
- Pam Cornelison, San Jose Public Library (BALit)
- Val Hardie, San Diego Public (SCLLN),
- Randall Hinson, Los Angeles Public Library (SCLLN)
- Carey Jones, Livermore Public Library (BALit)
- Diane Moseley, Huntington Beach Public Library (SCLLN)
- Sabrina Rosengren, Sacramento Public Library and CLA IG chair
- Linda Sakamoto-Jahnke, Berkeley Public Library (BALit)
- Bev Schwartzberg, Santa Barbara Public Library (SCCLP) – now with CSL
- Lucy Johnson Sims, Beaumont Library District (SCLLN and Inland)
- Heather Tovey (Butte County Library /Siskiyou County Library, NCLC)
- Randy Weaver, San Francisco Public Library (BALit) and CLA Leg Committee
- Kara Washington, Stanislaus County Library (CVLLN)

Library Group Interview Participants – July & August 2018

Alameda County

- Deb Sica, Deputy County Librarian
- Rebecca Maher, Children’s Librarian
- Luis Kong, CLLS coordinator
- Darlene Garcia, CLLS Student advocate

Beaumont

- Luren Dickinson, Library Director
- Lucy Sims, CLLS Coordinator
- Kelly Van Valkenburg, Early Literacy Outreach

Butte County

- Melanie Lightbody, Library Director
- Heather Tovey, CLLS Coordinator
- Ashley Crane, County-wide Children’s Librarian

Contra Costa County

- Melinda Cervantes, County Librarian
- Gail McPartland, Deputy County Librarian
- Amy Mockoski, Youth Services specialist for CCCL
- Laura Seaholm, CLLS Coordinator (outgoing)
- Megan Brown, incoming CLLS Coordinator

El Dorado County

- Jeanne Amos, Library Director
- Sandra Kelsey, Youth Services Coordinator
- Christina Roselli, Early Childhood Literacy Specialist

Huntington Beach:

- Stephanie Beverage, Director of Library Services
- Diane Moseley, Literacy Specialist
- Melissa Ronning, Children’s Librarian

Los Angeles

- Eva Mitnick, Director of Engagement and Learning Division
- Kelly Tyler, Managing Librarian and CLLS Coordinator
- Alicia Moguel, Associate Director, Lifelong Learning
- Priscilla Rojas-Naiman, assigned to assist with FFL events across LA
- Randall Hinson, CLLS program
- Megan Katz, Children’s Librarian

Marin County

- Sara Jones, Library Director (key informant)

Monterey County

- Jayanti Addleman, Library Director
- Be Astengo, Deputy Director
- Chris Ricker, Assistant Director adding CLLS coordinator role

Redwood City

- Derek Wolfgram, Library Director
- Kathy Endaya, CLLS Coordinator
- Maria Kramer, Youth Services
- Jan Pedden, Early Literacy

San Diego

- Misty Jones, Director
- Val Hardie, Program Administrator, CLLS Coordinator
- Kim Noriega, Family Literacy Coordinator

Santa Monica

- Patty Wong, Director of Library Services
- Cecilia Tovar, Principal Librarian, Public & Branch Services
- Roger Kelly, Youth Services Coordinator
- Ann Wilson, Children Services Supervisor
- Nancy Bender, Adult Literacy Coordinator & Adult Programs Librarian
- Tara Crow, Literacy Program Assistant

Sonoma County

- Susan Hildreth, Interim Director
- Kathy DeWeese, Youth Services Administrator
- Sarah Vantrease, Public Services Division Manager

June 2018 CLLS Family Literacy Survey

80 participating libraries completed the survey:

1. A.K. Smiley Public Library
2. Alameda County Library
3. Alameda Free Library
4. Altadena Library District
5. Amador County Library
6. Beaumont Library District
7. Berkeley Public Library
8. Butte County Library
9. Cahuenga Library
10. Calaveras County
11. Camarena Memorial Library
12. Carlsbad City Library
13. Colusa County Free Library
14. Contra Costa County Library
15. Corona Public Library
16. Covina Public Library
17. Del Norte County Library
18. Escondido Public Library
19. Fresno County Public Library
20. Glendora Public Library & Cultural Center
21. Hayward Public Library
22. Lake County/CA
23. Lassen Library District
24. Lincoln Heights Library
25. Livermore Public Library
26. Lompoc Library
27. Los Angeles Public Library
28. Los Angeles Public Library, Echo Park branch
29. Mariposa County Library
30. Merced County Library
31. Monrovia Public Library
32. Monterey County Free Libraries

33. Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library
34. Napa County Library
35. National City Public Library
36. Nevada County Library
37. Newport Beach Public
38. Oakland Public Library
39. Oceanside Public Library
40. Orange County Public Library
41. Placentia Library District
42. Placer County Library
43. Plumas County Library
44. Rancho Cucamonga Public Library
45. Redwood City Public Library
46. Richmond Public Library
47. Riverside County Library Systems
48. Riverside Public Library
49. Roseville Public Library
50. Sacramento Public Library
51. San Benito County Free Library
52. San Bernardino Public Library
53. San Diego Public Library
54. San Francisco Public Library
55. San Jose Public Library
56. San Luis Obispo County Libraries
57. San Mateo County Libraries
58. San Mateo Public Library
59. Santa Barbara Public Library
60. Santa Clara City Library
61. Santa Fe Springs City Library
62. Santa Maria Public Library
63. Santa Monica Public Library
64. Santa Paula - Blanchard Community Library
65. Shasta Public Libraries
66. Siskiyou County Library
67. Solano County
68. Sonoma County Library
69. South San Francisco
70. Stanislaus County Library
71. Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library
72. Sutter County Library
73. Tulare County Library
74. Tuolumne County Free Library
75. Twelve Bridges Lincoln Public Library
76. Upland Public Library
77. Ventura County Library
78. Watsonville Public
79. Willows Public Library
80. Yolo County Library

California State Library FY 18/19 Family Literacy Planning Framework

FY 18/19 Focus Area	Examples from the Field	Training Resources/Concepts
Learning and Literacy Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 to 3 • Pre-K • Early elementary • School-aged • Adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various Families for Literacy (FFL) and CLLS programs ▪ Enhanced Storytimes ▪ Homework help, after-school programs ▪ Read with Me (Alameda County) ▪ Read to a Dog ▪ Book clubs, Summer reading programs ▪ Leamos (Let's Read) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conceptual Level: Mind in the Making, Touchpoints ○ Every Child Ready to Read ○ Mother Goose on the Loose ○ Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) ○ Storytimes for Everyone! and Early Literacy Storytimes @ Your Library (Saroj Ghoting) ○ ProLiteracy Tutor Training ○ Therapy Dogs International (TDI)
Parent/Caregiver Capacity and Confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting groups • Skills practice • Individual supports • Emotional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parenting Classes ▪ Workshops on how to choose a school ▪ Practice communicating with teachers (adult literacy and newcomers) ▪ Tutors and literacy staff joining parents at IEP meetings ▪ Fremont branch ACE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ California Parenting Institute (CPI) ○ Positive Parenting (Dr. Jane Nelsen) ○ Child Abuse Prevention Council ○ Care Parent Network (Contra Costa County) ○ Decoding Dyslexia
Families Learning Together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces and places • Occasions (sustained) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programming for multiple ages ▪ Stay and Play spaces; passive programs ▪ Family storytimes ▪ Building home libraries via book giveaways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family Place Libraries ○ Life is Good Playmaker Training ○ Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) & American Library Association (ALA)
Partnership Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood level partnerships • Community collaboratives • Collective impact initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ READ San Diego/San Diego Public Library ▪ Santa Monica Cradle to Career ▪ Raising Readers (El Dorado County Library) ▪ Student Success Initiative ▪ Asuza City case study re hyper-local partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harwood, Libraries Lead the Way ○ Campaign for Grade Level Reading ○ 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten ○ Partners that have models: First 5, County Departments of Health, Adult Schools, YMCA