



Early Learning Hub Toolkit

from the California State Library



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Sunnyvale Public Library's 'A Sunny Place for Growing Readers' Early Learning Hub

Early Learning Hub Toolkit from the California State Library

State of California

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Introduction

Early learning hubs provide nurturing, inclusive and innovative spaces and programs for families to learn, explore, and enjoy with their young children. Through partnerships with community organizations, libraries with early learning hubs provide young children and families access to services, programs, and community resources that support whole child development and promote healthy futures.

This toolkit was created to help California libraries develop thriving early learning hubs that provide families with easy, supported, and tailored access to high-quality early learning, school readiness, and other community resources. It contains information on getting started, hub space considerations, creating partnerships and programming to enhance early learning offerings, and additional resources to consult.

For more information or if you need additional support in establishing an early learning hub, please contact earlylearning@library.ca.gov.

Getting Started: Developing Hub Spaces and Services

Want to establish an early learning hub in your library? Check out the list below of things to consider when making this important investment in your community:

- Assess community need and set goals for the project
- Determine resources required
- Acquire support of stakeholders and library staff
- Consider staffing models needed
- Build key community partnerships
- Obtain input and participation from community
- Develop team, and create plan and timeline
- Incorporate staff training as part of planning process
- Identify library space, programs, resources and services to offer
- Research and identify design, furnishings, supplies, collections, programs, etc.
- Create policies and procedures for space, collections and services
- Train and provide orientation to staff and partners
- Promote and communicate Hub and services to public, partners and staff
- Implement Hub programs and services
- Seek feedback and input from community and stakeholders
- Evaluate and reassess to continue providing quality and needed services





Sunnyvale Public Library's "A Sunny Place for Growing Readers" Early Learning Hub

Hub Space Considerations

Early learning hubs come in all sizes and include programs, resources, and services that are unique and cater to community needs. Some things to consider when designing your hub space include:

- Design the space for families with young children. Include families in design process
- The space should be dynamic, multipurpose, flexible, and durable (e.g., moveable furniture)
- Incorporate early learning educational and enrichment materials and books for ages zero to five
- Display parent, caregiver, and family resources in the area
- Work with local organizations to include partner information and resources in the space
- Encourage community engagement. Invite families to help develop programs
- Offer programs that are sensory-friendly and inclusive
- Include artistic elements (e.g., mural)
- Add signage about purpose of hub space
- Plan for regular maintenance and cleaning
- Have appropriate storage for materials



Partnerships

Create partnerships with community-based groups and organizations to provide families access to essential wraparound services that will help them thrive. Review the list below for suggestions of organizations and departments with which to collaborate and partner. Please note this list is not exhaustive – check around to see which local organizations would help to deliver mutually beneficial services and resources to your community.

- Head Start
- Local hospitals, health clinics
- County Offices of Education
- Local elementary, secondary schools and colleges
- Family Resource Centers
- Regional centers of the Department of Developmental Services
- First 5 regional offices
- Community health departments
- Museums
- Community Resources for Children
- Local food banks
- Community association and local service groups
- Parks and recreation departments
- Local transportation agency



Oceanside Public Library's Early Learning and Community Information Hub



Programming

Early learning hubs should offer a wide range of programs that are geared for early learners and their caregivers and that help develop early literacy skills and support whole child development.

Libraries with successful early learning hubs have shared tips on providing programs to effectively engage children and caregivers. These tips include offering programs in various formats (e.g., formal and informal), combining program offerings geared toward multigenerational audiences (e.g., play program + informal parenting workshop), and inviting partners to conduct programs or host presentations for resources and services they make available.

Consider some of the following suggestions of programs to host in your early learning hub:

- Developmental screenings, such as San Jose Public Library's [Wee Grow developmental milestones program](#)
- Early Literacy storytimes
 - [Bibliocuentos bilingual storytime resources](#)
 - King County Library System's [Tell Me a Story database](#)
 - Sensory friendly storytimes
- Kindergarten readiness programs, such as San Diego County Library's [Kindergarten Gear Up curriculum](#)
- Music, craft, and STEM activities, such as Sunnyvale Public Library's [STEM for Preschool resources](#)
- Parenting and caregiver workshops, such as Ventura County Library's [Parent and Child Together \(PACT\) classes](#)
- [Stay & Play](#) – Resources and support for informal childcare providers, often referred to as Families, Friends, and Neighbors, or FFNs.



Los Gatos Library's Interactive Analog Family Space



Toolkits and Publications

- [Stay & Play Toolkit](#)
- [Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit](#)
- California State Library's research paper, [Together Learning More! Interactive Family Learning in California's Libraries](#)

Be sure to also check out the State Library's [Early Learning with Families programming page](#) to find more resources that help libraries provide and deliver high quality, engaging, and family-focused early learning services.



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