

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public libraries are one of the most visited destinations for children and families, making them an ideal setting to deliver community, enrichment, and learning opportunities to Californians of all ages.

Families are more likely to visit the library together than engage in any other leisure activity. Libraries were the top cultural destination for all Americans in 2019, outpacing movies, museums, live music, and sporting events across all sectors of the population.¹

Mission Viejo's **Kinder Ready!** addresses vulnerabilities in school readiness by providing programming focusing on four key areas of early childhood development—social and emotional development, self-care and motor skills, language development, and early learning.^a

Almost every parent—94 percent, in one nationwide survey—says libraries are important for their children. Parents value the library as a safe space that instills a love of reading and books and provides information and resources not available at home.²

FOSTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- Libraries are one of the most important supports for a child's early development. "*In the early years, family engagement is associated with children's positive growth and development, and often sets children and families on a pathway of lifelong learning.*"³ Early learning programs in libraries get families playing, singing, talking, and reading, prepare children for school, and provide support and community for caregivers.
- Greater exposure to books is related to the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills, and these in turn influence a child's reading comprehension level in third grade. Early literacy skills resulting from parental engagement can predict word reading by the end of first grade.⁴



- Young children who are read to regularly have a better understanding of language, larger vocabularies, and higher cognitive skills, regardless of their economic background.⁵

Forty percent of children aged 5 and below in California are in the care of informal caregivers—family members, friends, and neighbors. Stay and Play programs at local libraries provide these informal caregivers with guidance and resources typically only available to licensed childcare providers. Over 800 children and adults took part in the program at just five locations in the first six months.^b

HELPING OLDER CHILDREN SUCCEED

- Homework help and free access to books and resources help children succeed in school. After-school clubs and programs give children safe spaces to spend time with friends and take part in activities. Teen councils help youth develop leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, and other workforce-readiness skills.
- Summer programs provide school-age children with free, fun, and enriching activities during the months they're out of school. They help prevent summer learning loss in children and teens, and help adults model good reading habits for youth.

At the Los Angeles Public Library, Teen Council members suggest purchases for the library, plan library programs, write articles for the teen blog, and can earn community service hours. The library's Teens Leading Change supports library teen councils that work on topics like immigration and citizenship, voting rights and voter registration, net neutrality, and information literacy.^c



SUPPORTING OLDER FAMILY MEMBERS

- Parents of children under 18 are more likely than other adults to visit the library and have a library card. Often, parents and children visit the library as a family, with everyone making use of different programs and services. Parents use a broader range of library services and materials than other adults, and report that their children use the library for everything from research and homework to attending programs and events and socializing with friends.⁶
- Library programs that foster parental engagement have positive, long-term effects on children's readiness for school and educational outcomes.⁷ Adult learning programs that incorporate family literacy activities have also been shown to have positive effects for kids and grown-ups alike.⁸

Public library summer meal programs, like California's Lunch at the Library program, fight food insecurity, childhood obesity, and the effects of hunger on educational attainment and emotional wellbeing for kids. Besides providing free summer meals, Lunch at the Library delivers reading programs, resources, and activities for the whole family. In 2020, libraries provided children and teens with 296,124 summer meals and hundreds of thousands of books, activity kits, and learning and enrichment materials.^d

NOTES

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 - a. Project results reported by Mission Viejo Public Library to the California State Library, 2018–2019.
 - b. Guernsey, Lisa, and Sarah Jackson. 2019. "Stay and Play—and Learn—at the Library." *New America Weekly*, October 31. <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/stay-and-playand-learn-at-the-library/>.
 - c. Los Angeles Public Library. 2021. "Volunteer." Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Public Library. <https://www.lapl.org/teens/volunteer>.
 - d. Lunch at the Library. 2020. "Impact." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://lunchatthelibrary.org/impact/>.

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