

Beyond the Rhymes: Rethinking the Who, Where, and How of Storytimes

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Action Items & Conversation Prompts

Part 1: The People

- Have everyone on your staff read a similar article relevant to early childhood literacy and discuss.
- Invite your supervisor to observe your storytime and schedule to time to talk about it.
- Discuss storytime at your next staff meeting and talk about how it connects to the larger goals of the branch and the library system.
- Acknowledge the great things other staff members do to make storytime a success.
- Read the article on Peer Coaching from *Public Libraries* and discuss at your next staff meeting or youth services meeting.

Part 2: The Place

- Conduct an audit of the physical layout of your children's area. Factors to consider: What visual or spatial cues indicate that you are entering the children's area? What furnishings are fixed in place and can't be moved? What is easy to move? Where do people gather? Have multiple staff do the same audit separately and compare notes.
- Use census.gov to research demographics for your service population. How many children are aged 0-5? How many families with children 5 and under live in poverty?
- Identify a new venue outside of the library where you can bring storytime.
- Talk about noise at a staff meeting. How do you manage different expectations among your customers for a shared public space? When is noise disruptive, and when is it the sign of a vibrant, busy library? How is noise addressed in your library's behavior policy? How do you respond to complaints about noise?
- Find two improvements—one costing under \$100 and one under \$500—that would make your space more playful or family-friendly and discuss them with your supervisor.

Part 3: the Package

- Chat with families after storytime. Some conversation starters: Ask families what they like best about storytime, then ask them to name one thing that would make participating in storytime easier for them. Find out where they first heard about storytime and how often they attend.
- Think about the song *Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* or one of your favorite songs or fingerplays. How would you present it for an audience of babies? For toddlers? For preschoolers? How can you weave together elements for each of those audiences into one song?

- Assign someone other than the person leading storytime to direct traffic as families arrive. Have that person be responsible for counting attendance.
- Ask other youth services staff to share their strategies for dealing with unexpected developments during storytime.

Recommended Reading

Ginsburg, Kenneth R. *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds.*

<http://www2.aap.org/pressroom/playfinal.pdf>

Gray, Peter. *The Special Value of Children's Age-Mixed Play.*

<http://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/3-4-article-gray-age-mixed-play.pdf>

Pew Research Center. *Parents, Children, Libraries, and Reading.*

http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/legacy-pdf/PIP_Library_Services_Parents_PDF.pdf

Pew Research Center. *Library Services in the Digital Age.*

http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/legacy-pdf/PIP_Library%20services_Report.pdf

Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook.*

Working Together Project. *Community-Led Libraries Toolkit.*

http://www.librariesincommunities.ca/resources/Community-Led_Libraries_Toolkit.pdf

Stoltz, Dorothy, Elaine Czarnecki, Connie Wilson, and Gilda Martinez. *Improving Storytime Delivery with Peer Coaching.*

<http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2013/05/improving-storytime-delivery-with-peer-coaching>