



ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY
SERVICE TO CHILDREN

CHAMPIONING CHILDREN'S SERVICES TOOLKIT

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BECAUSE CHILD READERS BECOME GROWN-UP LEADERS

Children who read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are more likely to graduate high school, opening more doors to success in their future.¹

Children's librarians, teachers, and caregivers strive to help kids develop beyond the stage of learning to read and become kids who read to learn. As Jim Trelease says, "The best S.A.T. prep course is to read to your children when they're little."² The programs and services a public library offers through its children's staff can greatly improve the academic success of students.

PROGRAM IDEA

Children's librarians and the materials and programming they provide offer varied paths that enable and motivate children to become independent readers. Since children are expected to read to learn starting as early as 4th grade, it is imperative that they are given the tools and opportunity to master reading fluency and comprehension. Communities who cultivate strong readers in their children are ultimately raising the thoughtful, educated, and engaged leaders for a healthy society.

Invite your stakeholders to attend the Summer Reading/Learning Program kick-off. They can simply attend the event or you can give them a more active role.

- Ask them to read aloud at a specific time and give them a selection of books to pick from.
- Offer them a table so they can do a meet and greet with community members who attend.
- Do you give out game boards or other incentives as kids sign up? Ask if your stakeholders would like to help out.

Having your stakeholders be part of your family focused community events shows them that the public library is woven into the fabric of the community. Make sure to mention how programs like Summer Reading help prevent the summer slide, makes reading a habit for caregivers and their children, and, ultimately, fosters educated and engaged leaders that contribute to a healthy society.

1 Sparks, Sarah D. [Early Reading Problems Flag Potential Dropouts](#). Education Week, 2011;30(28):5.

2 Trelease, Jim. [The Read-Aloud Handbook](#). 7th ed. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2013.



BECAUSE STORYTIME IS A KEY BUILDING BLOCK TO SCHOOL SUCCESS

Library storytimes and programming for the baby through preschool ages help generate social and academic skills that directly correlate to early school success.

The State of Ohio created its own standards for early learning so that children would be better prepared to start school. They focused on five areas that include: "social and emotional development, physical well-being and motor development, approaches toward learning, language and literacy development, and cognition and general knowledge."¹ These topics are well established areas of child development and children's librarians intentionally incorporate these standards into their storytime practices.

PROGRAM IDEA

Invite stakeholders to observe a storytime program and then afterwards make time to talk about the different elements in your storytime and how they can be directly tied to the skills children need when they enter kindergarten.

You can even create an eye-catching infographic that highlights how storytimes allow for children to gain experience and practice with the skills they need to be successful in school. Here is an example infographic that demonstrates what that might look like using the five major categories for early learning as laid out in Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards.

This infographic can also be downloaded at www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/speak-out/alscchamptoolkit.

There are various other ways that the activities we do in storytime introduce, reinforce, and expand on the skills children need to be successful in school. Select some of your favorite activities that you do at each storytime and find a connection to that activity and how it supports one of the five major standards for early learning to include in your own document or elevator speech.



1 [Birth Through Kindergarten Entry - Learning and Development Standards](http://www.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Early-Learning-Content-Standards/Birth-Through-Pre-K-Learning-and-Development-Standards). Ohio Department of Education. Accessed February 19, 2019.



BECAUSE LIBRARIES ARE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING

Non-traditional programs and collections showcase the responsive and flexible nature of the library—these types of services are reflective of a community’s needs.

By bringing unique collections, programs, or even programs *about* your unique collections to the forefront, you can conjure instant inspiration and build an intrinsic connection to your community. Furthermore, you can show stakeholders the ways in which the library evolves to meet its customers’ needs and interests in a world that is rapidly changing. These collections and programs stand out as markers of experimentation, innovation, and, at times, a proactive response to those you serve.

Looking for innovative ideas? Check out the article, [Innovative Library Services “in the Wild,”](#) for state by state examples of pioneering programs.¹

PROGRAM IDEAS

Seek out opportunities to showcase to stakeholders all that you do. It’s not a time to be shy—brag a little! A few groups to consider creating presentations for include: the Board of Education, the Library Board, and the Chamber of Commerce. Do a short slideshow, using the Championing Children’s Services PowerPoint template, that highlights the unique programs and services you currently offer—and new ones you’re implementing. The slideshow template can be downloaded at www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/speak-out/alscchamptoolkit. This is a wonderful way to exhibit how children’s librarians are evolving to meet community needs. Don’t forget to include the technology and STEAM aspects of your day as they help place your library at the center of innovation in the community. It also opens the door for stakeholders to offer partnerships for future programs and services.

Try offering a **STEAM Petting Zoo**. This can include tutorials on how to use library technology (ebooks, 3D printer, telescopes for checkout, etc) and stations that highlight robotics programs. Share with with community stakeholders but don’t just talk about the programs, find a way to give them a taste. It can be as simple as bringing a few items to the Chamber of Commerce’s next meeting and offering a quick demonstration.

1 [Innovative Library Services “in the Wild.”](#) Pew Research Center: Internet and Technology, January 29, 2013, for examples of innovative library services across the country broken down by state.



BECAUSE CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS FOSTER COMMUNITY NETWORKS

As trusted centers of the community, libraries are in a unique position to attract potential partners, and to provide resources and benefits to organizations with common goals.

Children's librarians offer more to the community than storytime. They seek partnerships with local organizations to add value to their neighborhoods. For example, they work with area artists to provide lectures and hands on experiences and they work with community groups to offer classes for English language learners.¹ Many libraries are also working with food banks to provide meals to children during the summer.

PROGRAM IDEA

Host an **Intergenerational Art Festival** where library users of all ages can work side by side to create art. Libraries can offer a one-time art session or an ongoing class where art lovers can meet and learn from an artist in the community or from someone from the local art museum. Additional partners may include senior centers, assisted living centers, and nursing homes. Once the artwork has been created, invite the community to an art exhibit opening. Art not your niche? Perhaps you would want to try a **Intergenerational Storytelling Festival** where kids and adults share family stories. Don't forget to add stakeholders to your guest list!

Children's programs that bring in community members as presenters or co-presenters help connect the library to the families it serves. The opportunities to connect with the community are endless and these community members are library stakeholders. Their engagement and investment in the library gives the library relevance. In a time of diminishing funds and increased demands, partnerships are essential to meeting community needs, and to sustaining active and engaging environments for library users.

1. Edwards, Julie Biando, Melissa S. Rauseo, and Kelley Rae Unger. [Community Centered: 23 Reasons Why Libraries are the Most Important Place in Town](#). Public Libraries Online, April 30, 2013.



BECAUSE LIBRARY PLAYDATES AREN'T JUST FOR KIDS

Libraries have an impactful role in the quality of life in a community. Children's librarians provide resources and experiences that give both child and caregiver a chance to succeed.

Once an institution devoted primarily to book circulation, today's public libraries provide communities with Internet connectivity, career services, immigration assistance, economic development, teen services, childhood literacy, public safety, and other important services.

Children's librarians assist communities by providing services that encourage literacy, foster education, and promote culture and recreation. As the Public Libraries of New Zealand states, "We're not a book barn."¹ Instead, we're a vibrant space within the community for people of all ages to meet, learn, and explore.

PROGRAM IDEA

Children's staff training includes areas such as early literacy, digital media, and the social emotional well-being of children. Hosting a **Stay and Play** after your weekly storytimes and inviting stakeholders to attend is a great opportunity to share special knowledge with all of the adults in the room. You can drop early literacy tips into your interactions with the caregivers that can be as simple as sharing how parents can use everyday objects like empty cereal boxes to encourage spatial and vocabulary skills. Then, facilitate conversations with caregivers, asking them what they do to encourage learning through play with their child. By doing this, your stakeholders will see children's librarians as an educational resource in the community.

¹ [Libraries Help Communities Thrive](#). Public Libraries of New Zealand. Accessed, February 19, 2019.



BECAUSE KIDS NEED TO SEE THEIR WORLD IN BOOKS

By seeking out culturally accurate materials, children’s librarians ensure that children and families see themselves and others represented in books and media.

In 1990, Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop first wrote about books as mirrors and windows for children. “When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what makes us all human.”¹

Almost 30 years later, there is still much work to be done towards a diverse and representative children’s and educational publishing industry. Children’s librarians purchase, plan, and shine light on diverse, authentic collections and programs so all members of the community can be celebrated and affirmed.

PROGRAM IDEAS

Offer programs that reflect the world we live in and highlight the vast array of books in your collection. Here are some suggestions to help you get started.

- [African-American Read In](#)²
- [Drag Queen Story Hour](#)³
- [El día de los niños, El día de los libros](#)⁴
- [Reading Without Walls](#)⁵
- [Multilingual Storytimes](#)⁶
- [Sensory Storytime](#)⁷

These events are a great way to bring both the community and stakeholders together at your library. When doing publicity, make sure you personally invite your stakeholders to attend.

The library becomes a welcoming place for all, and your stakeholders have an opportunity to witness and experience why the work being done by children’s librarians is crucial to the lives of families.

1 Sims Bishop, Rudine. [Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors](#). Reading is Fundamental, January 3, 2015 (1990).

2 [National African-American Read In](#). National Council of English Teachers. Accessed June 19, 2019.

3 [About](#). Drag Queen Story Hour. Accessed June 19, 2019.

4 [Together with Dia](#). Association for Library Service to Children. Accessed June 19, 2019.

5 Yang, Gene Luen. [The Reading Without Walls Challenge](#). Gene’s Blog. Accessed June 19, 2019.

6 Horrocks, Dana. [Multilingual Storytimes: A Beginner’s Guide](#). Jbrary. Accessed June 19, 2019.

7 Miss Holly. [Resources](#). Special Needs and Inclusive Library Services (SNAILS). Accessed June 19, 2019.



BECAUSE HOMEWORK SHOULDN'T CAUSE HEADACHES

Afterschool programs are about more than just numbers. They provide improved school performance, reduced drug use, introduce community connections, and build life skills.

Children's librarians know that students spend more hours outside of school than in school. With this knowledge guiding them, libraries have created afterschool programs to engage and educate kids. Not only do afterschool programs help youth perform better in school by boosting grades in reading and math, they offer myriad benefits: participation in afterschool programs has been linked to reduced drug use and criminal activity, improved classroom behavior and attendance, and positive health outcomes. The benefits aren't just for the kids as studies have shown that, "parents are less worried and more productive when students are in afterschool programs, saving companies hundreds of billions of dollars."¹

PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Libraries offer programs like STEAM, coding, homework help, art experiences, book clubs, etc for school age kids. Is the community outside your library's walls aware of these opportunities?

Try these tips to get the word out to a broader audience.

- Usually both library and school board meetings will allow members of the audience to speak briefly. Come prepared to highlight a program you just did "We taught 30 fifth graders how to code in January" or promote a service you offer "Did you know the library offers free homework help Monday–Thursday from 3:00–7:00pm?". These quick tidbits over time will show your library as a community education partner.
- Does your community have a farmers market or county fair? Ask for a table and bring along gadgets to try and samples from past programs. Have flyers and, if possible, sign kids up for afterschool programs right at the event.
- Don't forget to highlight the programs and services the children's department provides in monthly or quarterly reports to your supervisor. Even if it's not required, you'll want to make sure your boss knows the impact your department's work has. It can become very important during lean budget years.
- Some schools host afterschool care for working parents and it can be an excellent outreach opportunity for public libraries. Bring an activity, handout, or even a station where families can sign up for library cards and learn more about weekday evening programs for kids when they pick up their children.

1 Grant, J. & Strauss, V. [Why Strong Afterschool Programs Matter](#). The Washington Post, December 15, 2011.



BECAUSE CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS TRANSFORM LIVES EVERY DAY

Every day, your local children's librarian is creating connections, igniting curiosity, and enriching lives.

Your local children's librarian is deeply interwoven into the fabric of their community and is invested in seeing all members thrive. From programs that equip youth with the skills they need to succeed, to providing opportunities for caregivers to learn and grow from each other so that they know that they are not alone on their caregiver journey, your local children's librarian plays a valuable role in the life story of each and every member of your community.

Want to see examples of how children's librarians are vital to the community? Watch the Championing Children's Services video and become part of the transformation. Visit www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/speak-out/alscchamptoolkit

PROMOTIONAL IDEA

Articulating just how a children's librarian is making a difference in their community needs both statistics and stories. We've provided articles and statistics in the previous Because Statements, and here is where you can zoom in and tell your story of transformation.

According to James LaRue, a good library story includes the following elements:

1. A real person
2. A problem (that needs to hook your heart)
3. A library action (with the library as a secondary character)
4. A happy ending
5. One fact
6. A tagline

For example: Caiden was seven years old and struggled with confidence in reading. His teacher recommended that his father take him to the library's "Read to a Therapy Dog" program, and, one year later, Caiden has increased confidence and can take on longer books with more complex vocabulary. Across the county, children's librarians are offering 25 programs like this per week. Children's librarians are transforming lives every day.¹

1 LaRue, James. [Telling the Library Story](#). Webjunction, August 23, 2012.

