



Southeast Steuben County Library
300 Nasser Civic Center Plaza; Suite 101
Corning, NY 14830
ssclibrary.org

CONTACT: Pauline Emery
Library Director
emeryp@stls.org
(607) 936-3713 ext. 205

CONTACT: Cherie Chigama
Public Relations Director
chigamac@stls.org
(607) 936-3713 ext. 220

December 8, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OP-ED: EARLY LITERACY EDUCATION THE NORM AT SSC LIBRARY

As New York State begins to plan and implement its statewide Ready to Read program, our community members can feel good knowing that these practices are in place already at the Southeast Steuben County Library.

Literacy begins at birth; not in kindergarten. And yet, research indicates that 35% of children in the United States are starting school without a good early literacy foundation.

What's going on? Well, it really has a lot to do with whether a child is read to or not and whether a child practices the five important and fun early literacy practices: talking, singing, reading, writing and playing – yes playing. Think of these as the five foundation stones to early childhood literacy development.

Children of low income families are particularly at risk. According to a study conducted within the Southern Adirondack Library System 47% of respondents reported no alphabet books in the home. A national study conducted by the American Library Association study found that 12 percent of families with children ages 1-5 indicated that they read to their children fewer than three days a week and 44% of children ages 3-4 don't attend a preschool.

Ok so numbers are fine, but what does that mean for your child? Think of it this way, a child who is read to on a regular basis from birth will have an average vocabulary of 20,000 words by age six. However, a child who is not regularly read to will have a significantly smaller vocabulary, about 3,000 words. This is an enormous deficit that is completely avoidable.

That's where libraries come in. No matter your income, libraries provide books to all. But more than that, libraries, and the Southeast Steuben County Library specifically, provide the early literacy curriculum that children require for school readiness.

The library currently, and has for years, partnered with Corning Community College Childcare Center; Little Lambs; Once Upon a Time; Ready, Set, Grow; Creative Kids; The Corning Children's Center; Great Beginnings; Weekday Preschool; the YMCA; the Corning-Painted Post Area School District, and Proaction to offer story time curriculum to more than 2,000 children each month.

That means, library staff go out to 15 locations each week in the library's service area, including CPP's Severn and Erwin Schools and ProAction's Head Start at Gregg, Smith, Carder and Winfield elementary schools to provide early literacy services in the form of participatory story times.

Staff members who conduct story times at the library or at partner locations spend hours each month creating story time curriculums that incorporate four of the five early literacy practices: talking, singing, reading and play. This does not include the hours of preparation for classes and workshops offered to young adults and adults or the dozens of other events for children.

Currently, NY State ranks 28 out of 50 states on the child well-being scale. By reading to your child and bringing your child to story times at the library or at partner locations you are giving your child an advantage that will pay major dividends in the future.

While "the earlier the better" is a good rule of thumb, it's never too late to start a reading and story time regimen for your child.

In addition to outreach, the SSC Library offers four in house story time options for children of different ages every week.

Chicken Little's Story Time is held Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m., and is suggested for ages 18 months to 3 years and their caregivers.

Baby Bookworms infant lap sit is held Tuesdays at 10:45 a.m., and is suggested for infants, ages 6 weeks to 18 months and their caregivers.

Little Red Hen's Friends Story Time is held Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. for preschoolers and their caregivers, and Blankets, Books and Slippers PJ Story Time is held Thursdays at 7 p.m. for children of any age and their caregivers.

The library also has a therapy dog story time that runs serially. The dogs are currently on break, but they will be back in March 2015. Readers of all ages can attend and read a story to a certified therapy dog on Tuesdays from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in March and April.

Join us for story time and give your child a boost. And the next time you are preoccupied with the bills and your youngster is begging, "Look at me!" just sit him or her down with a pencil and paper (writing) or some play dough (play) and you will be helping your child to be Ready to Read.

Cherie Chigama

Public Relations Director for the Southeast Steuben County Library