

PAST WINNING LIBRARIES

Alfred H. Baumann Public Library, *Passaic County*
 Bernardsville Public Library, *Somerset County*
 Hilton Branch Public Library, Maplewood Memorial Library, *Essex County*
 Jersey City Free Public Library, *Hudson County*
 Lake Hiawatha Branch of the Parsippany-Troy Hills Public Library, *Morris County*
 Mary Jacobs Branch Library, Somerset County Library System, *Somerset County*
 Middletown Township Public Library, *Monmouth County*
 Monroe Township Public Library, *Middlesex County*
 Moorestown Public Library, *Burlington County*
 Mt. Tabor Branch Library, Parsippany Troy-Hills Public Library, *Morris County*
 Princeton Public Library, *Mercer County*
 Somerset County Library System, *Somerset County*
 Swedesboro Branch Library, Gloucester County Library System, *Gloucester County*
 Watchung Public Library, Somerset County Library System, *Somerset County*



Fourth Annual Report ON THE

BEST PRACTICES IN EARLY LITERACY PROGRAMS

TO NEW JERSEY'S YOUNGEST LIBRARY USERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS



NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY



• Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library

Math and Science Literacy Program



With increasing preschool costs, library patrons are turning to the Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library to offer their children a free alternative. To meet this need, the library created a monthly *Math and Science Literacy Program*. The program shows children how to apply a science or math concept to their everyday lives while preparing them for school. Since it began in 2013, children ages 3-5 and their caregivers have explored such topics as colors, sorting and matching, strength (building & constructing), and weight and balance in the sessions.

Each program begins with a brief explanation of the science or math topic for that day; then stories related to the topic are shared, often with the children's help, and after that the children explore three stations with their caregiver that includes a craft, an experiment and other hands-on activities.

At the end, each caregiver is provided with a handout of activities that reinforces that day's science or math concept.

"After the first Science Fun program, children and caregivers were so excited they were already asking when the next program would be!" Chrissie McGovern, children's librarian, said.

The mother of a four-year-old participant enthused, "It is important for young minds to not only hear about things, but experience them hands on. These programs were the perfect opportunity for my daughter to have that experience. When she mixed colors with the eye droppers, she could see the colors change right before her eyes rather than just hearing that yellow and red make orange. Seeing the scale in front of her to balance one ball with five buttons is different than hearing the ball is heavier."



Mastery of Early Childhood Literacy Skills Leads To a Successful Future

Assessment results of the 2013 fourth grade reading achievement levels in New Jersey, provided by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), indicates that in 2013, 25 percent of New Jersey's fourth graders were reading below the basic reading level, a 3 percent increase from 22 percent in 2011. Studies have shown that children who do not learn to read proficiently by the end of third grade are unlikely ever to read at grade level and will determine their future success in school and later in life.

Public libraries are providing an invaluable service by recognizing this literacy need by making sure that young children and their caregivers in their communities have access to the resources they need to help them achieve reading success. According to a May 2013 report from the Pew Research Center, entitled *Parents, Children, Libraries and Reading*, 94 percent of parents say libraries are "important" for their children and 84 percent of parents of young children under six describe libraries as "very important." The study also reported that 58 percent of parents with children under the age of six read with their child every day and another 26 percent read multiple times a week with their children.

The importance parents assign to reading and access to knowledge shapes their enthusiasm for libraries and their programs:

- 84 percent of these parents who say libraries are important say a major reason they want their children to have access to libraries is that libraries help inculcate their children's love of reading and books.
- 81 percent say a major reason libraries are important is that libraries provide their children with information and resources not available at home.

New Jersey public libraries lead the way in highlighting the essential role that early literacy programming plays in ensuring the future success of their youngest library users. The four libraries recognized as 2014 Best Practices in Early Literacy Award winners each offer exemplary early literacy programs for children from birth to age six. Each of the libraries' programs was created to help the children and their caregivers understand the importance of early childhood literacy and all emphasize practical strategies that can be used to implement these early literacy skills. This brochure highlights four exciting and well planned early literacy programs that can be easily executed and replicated in other public libraries.

As State Librarian of New Jersey, I am very proud to commend these libraries on their outstanding programs. I encourage all New Jersey public libraries to continue to strive to provide children and their families with the opportunity to develop and expand their literacy skills to help them on their path toward future academic achievement.



Mary L. Chute
State Librarian of New Jersey



2014

Best Practices In Early Literacy Programs

Winning Libraries

- **Cherry Hill Public Library**
“Book Bundles Program”
- **Franklin Township Free Public Library**
“Scribble Time: An Introduction to Art Media”
- **South County Regional Branch of the Camden County Library System**
“Bouncing Babies and Books”
- **Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library**
“Math and Science Literacy Program”

- **Cherry Hill Public Library**

Book Bundles Program



One of the newest services at the Cherry Hill Public Library is its assortment of hand-picked items called *Book Bundles*. “*Book Bundles* were created with two goals in mind. First, we aimed to assist busy parents and teachers in the selection of age appropriate books,” said Cassie Runkel, youth services librarian. “*Book Bundles* were conceived to help parents find the kind of books they are looking for quickly. Working with a theme, we gather picture books, non-fiction and audiovisual materials, including educational DVDs, with a targeted age range. Our second goal was to highlight the variety of materials the library has to offer—and answer the call to provide Common Core connections for parents and teachers.”

Staff made it a priority to include fiction, nonfiction, and bilingual materials in their *Book Bundles* and to

choose materials that would be a hit with almost any child (crucial for fostering print motivation). The bundles are labeled with clever titles (like *To Bee or Not to Bee*) and age recommendations (such as 2+ or 4-6). The items may also be circulated separately, so parents can cherry-pick from the bundles as they see fit.

One of the patrons put it best when she told staff that “one of the first places my four and two year olds visit when we get to the library is the display of *Book Bundles*. We love our library and the *Book Bundles* make it easy as a mother to educate my children about a variety of subjects in a fun and creative manner. They have learned about Paris, trips to the zoo, wacky fairy tales and so much more!”

- **Franklin Township Free Public Library**

Scribble Time: An Introduction to Art Media

Franklin Township Public Library’s *Scribble Time* introduces toddlers, ages 12 – 36 months, to the type of art media that helps develop the fine motor skills used in writing. Anne Lemay, head of youth services, says this introduction is more about the experience than the final product. “We focus on the use of a single crayon and a large piece of paper in one session, while other sessions will use a glue stick and bits of paper, or cotton swabs and paint, or play dough. We talk about what we do as the toddlers explore what *they* can do with each type of media, thus developing vocabulary and language skills as we explore,” she said.

During preschool craft programs staff noticed that, in some cases, the parent actually did most of the craft as the child watched, rather than encouraging the child to try it. “We designed a program that would be child-directed and that would show parents some things that they could do

with their child at home,” Lemay said. In each session, a book is read aloud that is related to that day’s activity that helps the children make the leap from the printed page to the activity at hand. “We make up words to familiar tunes to describe what we are doing during the activity too,” she said. “After singing ‘The crayon in my hand goes round and round’ to the tune of *The Wheels on the Bus* with me, one toddler piped up, ‘Now do *Eensy Weensy Spider!*’ I was surprised, but we tried it and found a new element to use in this program.”



- **South County Regional Branch of the Camden County Library System**

Bouncing Babies and Books

Bouncing Babies and Books, for children up to 18 months at the South County Regional Branch of the Camden County Library, incorporates sign language, songs, books, nursery rhymes, and creative story telling through act-outs and felt boards. Each session ends with an activity and play time. Candace Worrell, children’s librarian, begins each program with a song that is sung by all and includes each child’s name. She says this helps everybody learn the children’s names and gives each child a moment to feel special, as evidenced by the smiles on their faces.

“I incorporate sign language into each story time to signal transitions between activities and also to illustrate what we are reading,” Worrell said. “For example, ‘All done’ is frequently used to end an activity. The use of sign language gives children an early start on communicating and acquiring language skills, as well as developing fine motor skills.”

Nursery rhymes are an important part of the story time, according to Worrell. Reciting the rhymes encourages

vocabulary building, recall, and sequencing of events. Math skills are also built through the use of patterns and counting. “I prepare props for each story which allows the children to use their auditory, tactile, and visual senses in enjoying the many tales and enables them to be active participants.”

Worrell realized that the structure of the program was also ideally suited for older children with developmental delays so she created another program called *Sensory Story Time* to meet their needs, too. “Together, these story times offer the first step to the road of reading,” she affirmed.

