

Early Learning with Families (ELF) @ Your Library
Using Child Development Knowledge to Enrich Library Services

Applying ELF Principles

A. Parents are recognized as the experts of their own children, receive support for their role, and are provided with opportunities to share ideas and concerns.

- Parents have an opportunity to network with other parents.
- Parents are encouraged to participate in storytimes and playtimes.
- Places in the library are created for parents to gather and talk.
- Parents/caregivers are supported and encouraged to interact with their children by cuddling, talking, singing songs, sharing books, playing, looking and listening with their children.

B. Children are encouraged to experiment and explore in order to learn about the world around them.

- Opportunities for spontaneous investigation and experimentation are offered.
- Programs and spaces are provided that encourage imagination, stimulate language, introduce music, and inspire creativity.
- Parents/caregivers are encouraged to extend learning through continued exploration and creation at home.

C. Play is an integral part of library services and is recognized as critical in the development of early literacy skills.

- Playtimes are incorporated into Children's Services with a focus on supporting the development of the whole child.
- Children have access to learning materials that provide opportunities for discovery and unstructured play.
- Play activities are often child-driven with parents encouraged to follow their children's lead.

D. Evidence based child development information is shared with parents and caregivers.

- Tip sheets are distributed, ideas are discussed, and suggestions are made during library events that relate to everyday activities that parents can replicate at home.
- Parent-led workshops are organized and parents are encouraged to share ideas.
- Parents/caregivers are connected to community specialists and resources that can respond to their questions and concerns about parenting and child development.

E. Partnerships are established between and among library services and community agencies.

- Within the library Children's and Literacy services work together in support of the ELF initiative.
- Library staff receives information about ELF and provide input on the best ways to implement ELF.
- Community partners offer parenting expertise and resources; libraries offer space, program and resource materials; together awareness for the importance of early learning can be increased, access for families to services and resources can be

Applying ELF Principles (continued)

- expanded, and parent/caregiver abilities to meet the needs of their very young children can be enhanced.
- Partners promote a consistent message to the community about the importance of early learning.

F. The library is established as a welcoming, family friendly environment.

- Trained library staff responds to parent/ caregiver questions in an open, facilitative manner aimed at strengthening the family.
- Physical space is friendly and fun with collections conveniently located and furniture appropriate for families with infants, toddlers and young children.
- Accommodations are made for the special needs of families, including restroom changing tables, private spaces for breast feeding, storage for strollers, and space for families to gather and children to play
- Children's learning materials and books are developmentally appropriate for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.
- Parenting collections are in languages that reflect the community and are located in the Children's section to make for more convenient access.
- Library policies are reviewed and modified in order to encourage families with young children to utilize library materials and services.