

Alberta Pre-K Library Services

Surveyed September 2015

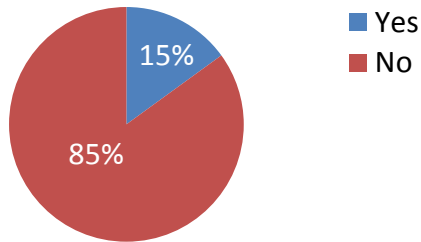


In September 2015, the Public Library Services Branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs sent a survey to all public libraries in Alberta. In total, 130 responses were received and are reflected in this document. Results were compiled in February 2016.

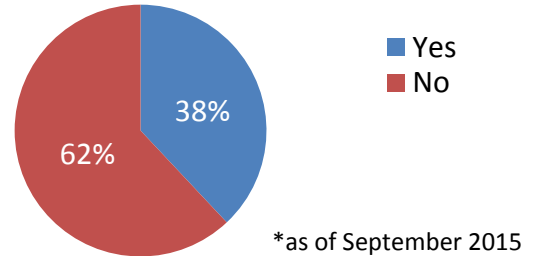
Prepared by:
Alberta Municipal Affairs
Public Library Services Branch
#803, Standard Life Centre
10405 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5J 4R7

Toll Free: 310-0000
Phone: 780-427-4871
Fax: 780-415-8594
Email: libraries@gov.ab.ca
Website: www.albertalibraries.ca

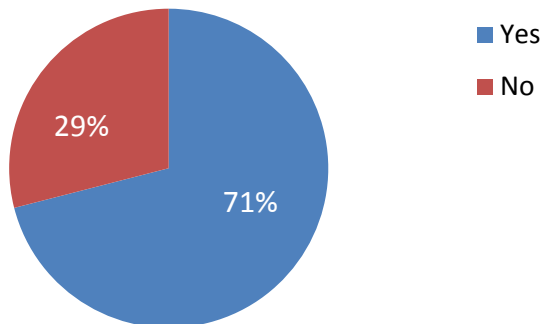
Does your library board have any policies that specifically relate to Pre-K services?



Does your Library Board charge for children’s library cards?*



Does your library board employ someone that devotes a portion of their working day to serving children (including dedicated to pre-K)?



71% respondents indicated that there is a staff member (or volunteer), who devotes a portion of their working day to serving children (including pre-K). Within that 71%, the majority of the individuals were either clerks or library managers. However, some referenced volunteers, contract employees, students/interns, professional librarians and dedicated children’s librarians/programmers.

The hours *per week* spent providing service to children ranged from 1 to 37.5 (full-time), and some noted that it was only for specific times, i.e. only during the school year or only during the summer.

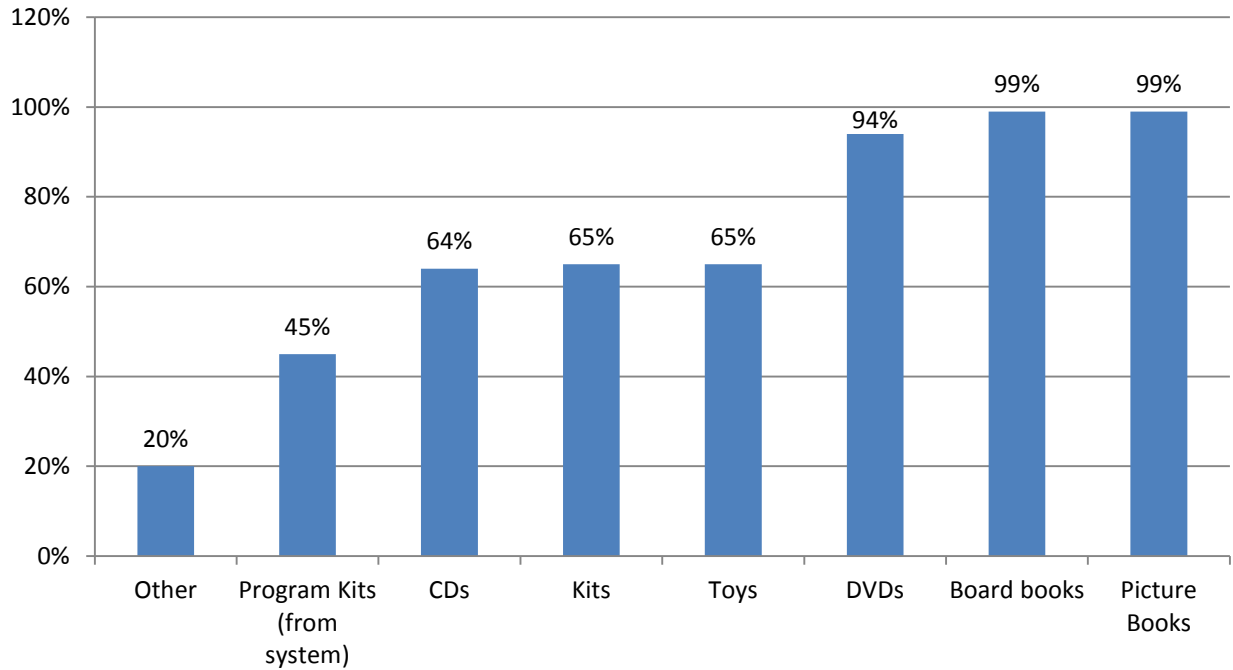
In terms of special training in early literacy, of those that indicated they had a staff member that works with children, 43% responded that they had no

formal training in early literacy, 50% responded they did and 7% did not provide a response either way. The special training specified was a mix of having someone with a teaching background or their B.Ed; while others reported receiving training from literacy organizations. Several indicated they had training in Early Childhood Development, but not specifically literacy.

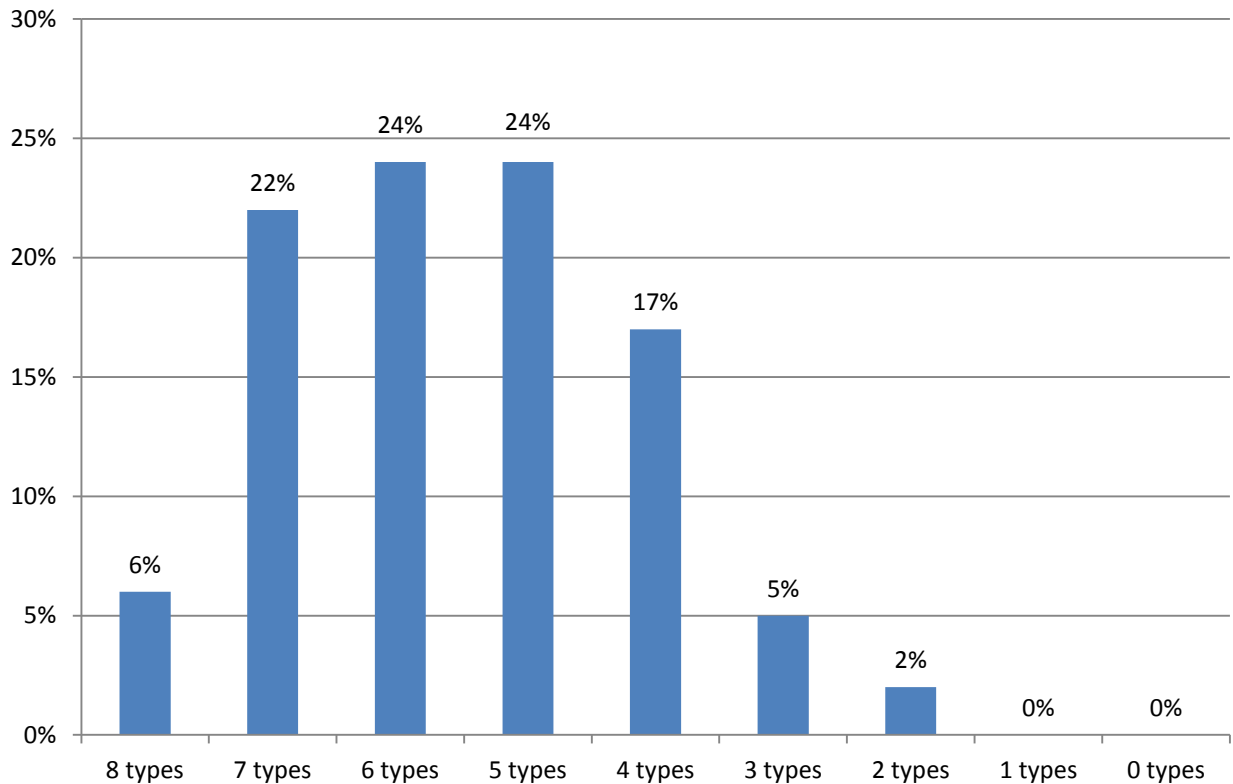
Sample Comments:

- Yes. Staff who deliver programs get trained in Introduction to Family Literacy and whatever programming model they need. We also have staff training throughout the year on Every Child Ready to Read as part of a three module training program.
- Support from Early Literacy Agencies and our Regional Library.
- Early Childhood Development diploma and Education Assistant training.

What types of pre-K materials do you have in your library?



Number of type of materials typically available at a location

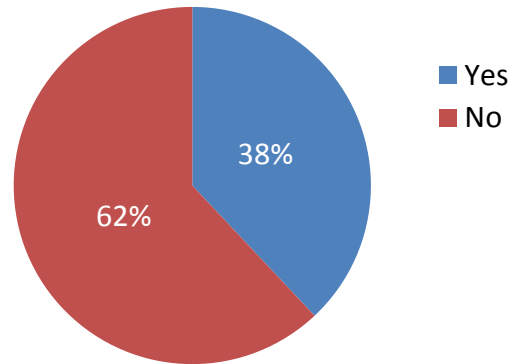


Overall, of the 38% of respondents that indicated yes to the question, booklists and resources available on the Internet are the most common. There is also strong support for selection materials provided through early childhood development and literacy organizations such as ECMap and Family Literacy Centres. Respondents also indicated they use a variety of journals, publisher catalogues and NovelList.

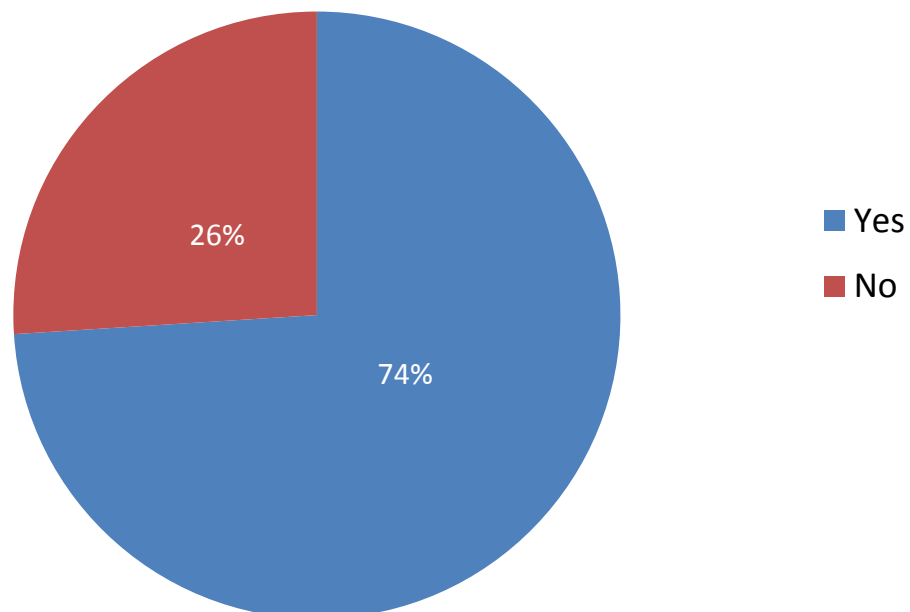
Sample Comments:

- YRL has excellent resources and I work very closely with Parent Link and they also have very good resources. Also the network of libraries are great for sharing.
- Find titles and google for reviews and sample pages. Consult with local family literacy coordinator and homeschool coordinators.
- Use professional reviewing materials such as Horn Book; awards lists such as Newbery, Caldecott, etc.; online resources such as Goodreads, etc.
- Request input from our local literacy groups, read online reviews (Kirkus, School Library Journal, etc.)

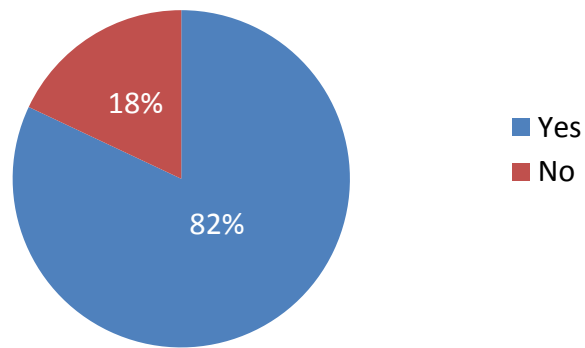
Do you consult early childhood literacy resources when making purchase decisions?



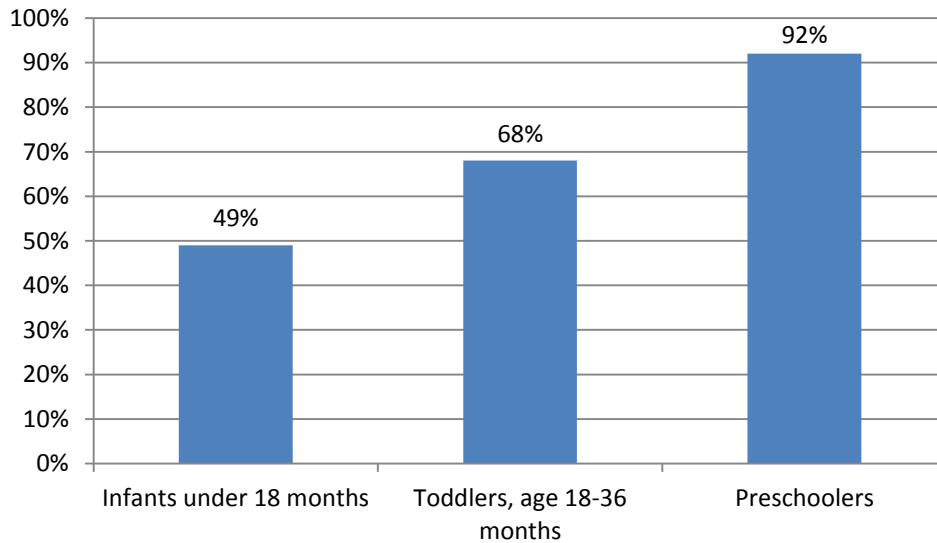
Are any of your children's programs (typically for ages 5 and up) open to pre-K?



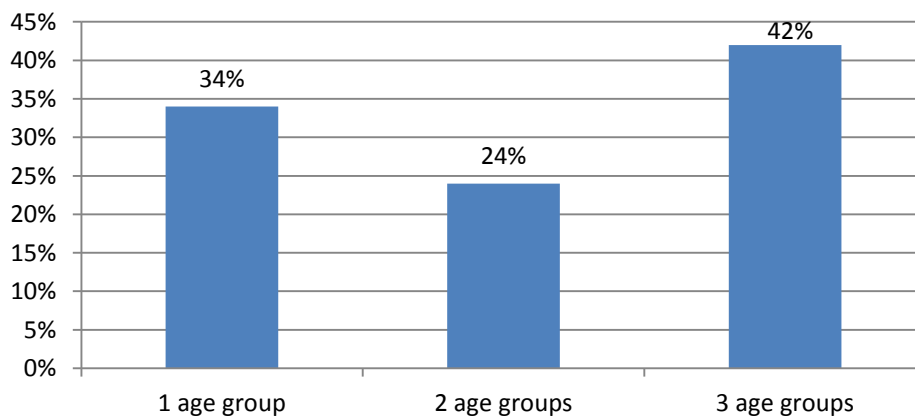
Does your library offer pre-K programs?



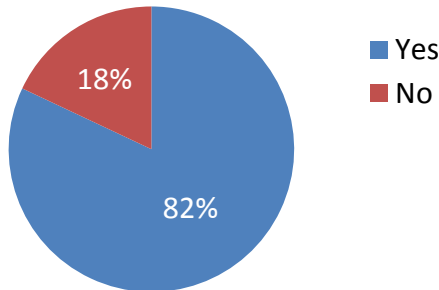
If yes, for what age groups?



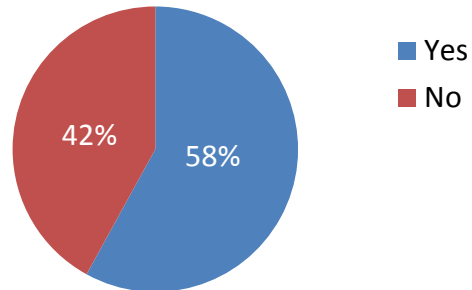
% of libraries offering pre-K programs for multiple age groups



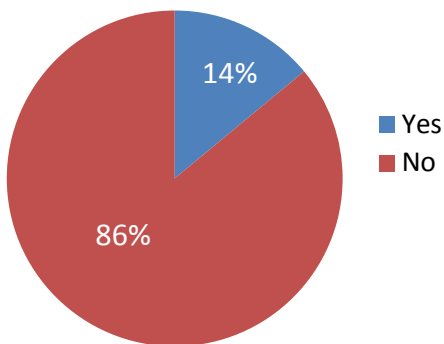
Does your library offer pre-K programs during the school year?



Does your library offer pre-K programs during the summer months?



Does your library have a budget line specifically for pre-K programs?



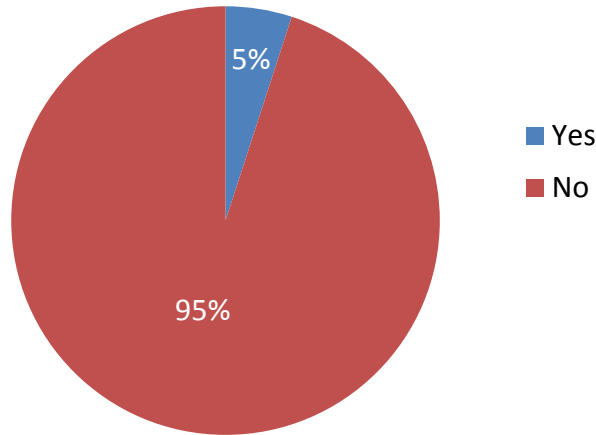
Responses varied both in the amount spent and how it was tracked. Of those that indicated they had a budget line specifically for pre-K programs, the range was from \$200 to \$2,500 per year, with the median amount being \$1,000. When asked about the children's programs budget if they did not specifically have a pre-K budget, the range was from \$0 to \$35,000 per year, also with a median amount of \$1,000.

Responses indicated that often the budget amount was the equivalent of the staff person's wages. Some rely on grant money or donations for programming, while others reported that the amount varies depending on the program, and/or the time year.

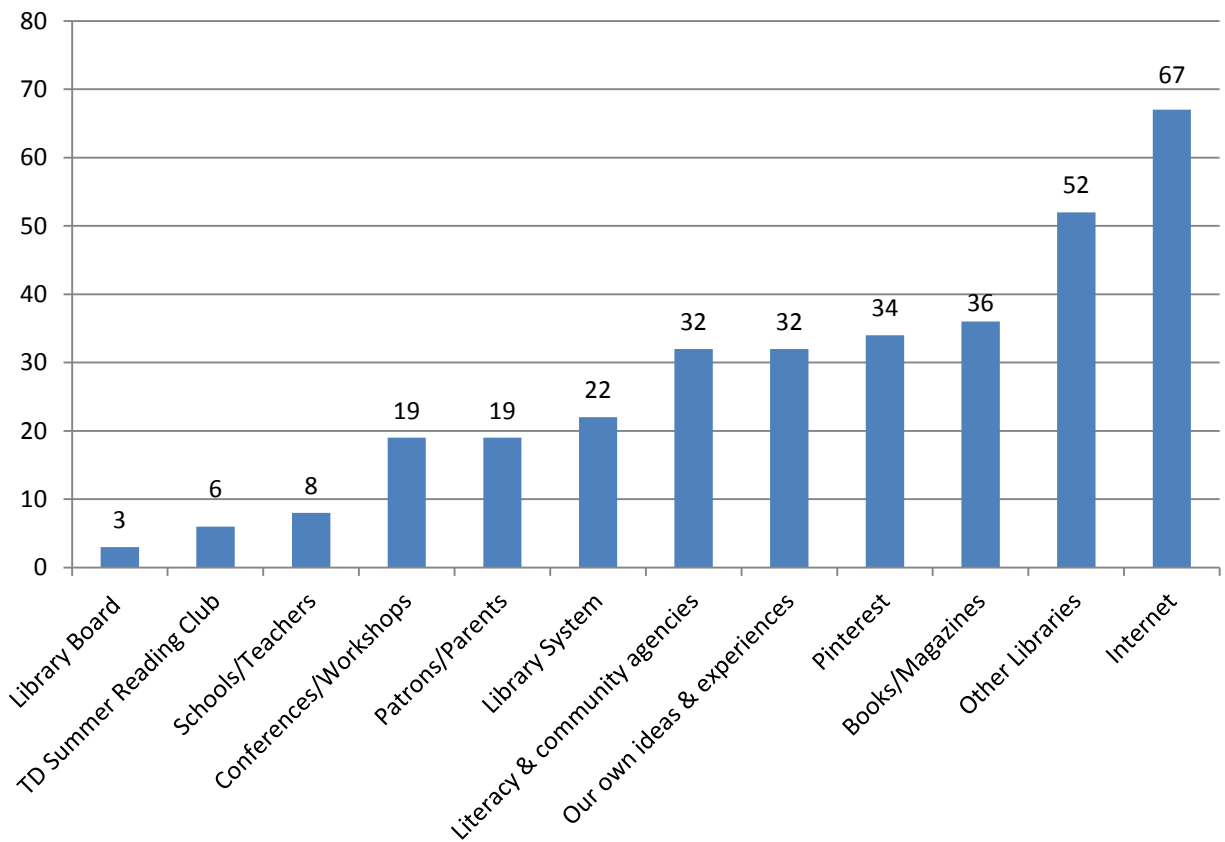
Sample Comments:

- We do not have a separate budget line for programming as it is considered part of a staff member's job. We have a separate budget line for programming supplies however.
- Our children's programs are delivered by *Literacy for Life* who does not charge us for them.
- We purchase snacks, runs about \$10 per event.
- Adult and children programming is combined. The budget for both is \$20,000 per year.

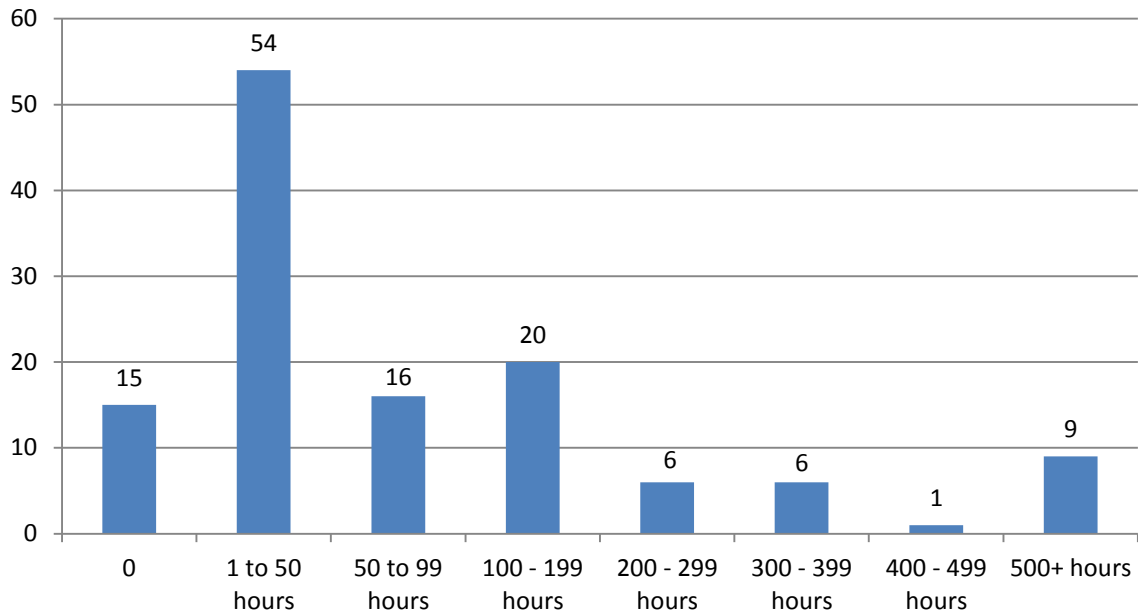
Does your library charge for some (or all) of its pre-K programs?



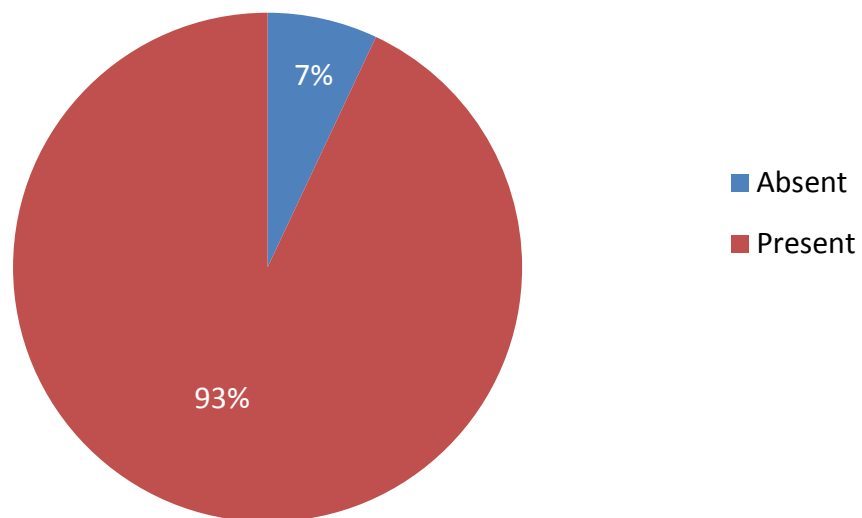
Where do you get your programming ideas?



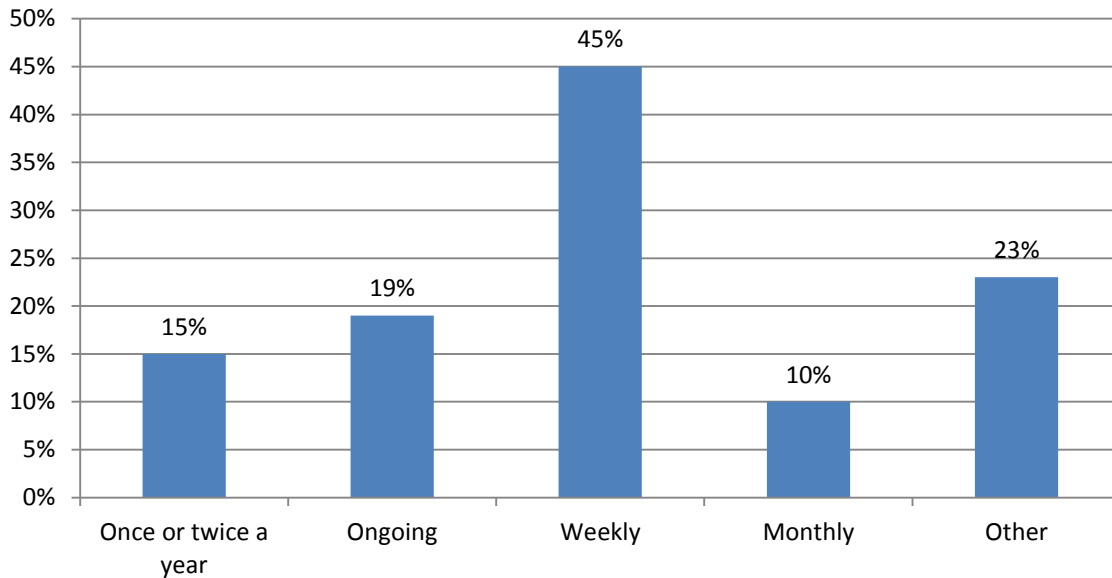
In the last year, approximately how many hours did you devote to planning for pre-K programs?



Is it your practice to have adults leave the room or to be present during your programs with preschoolers?



How frequently do you offer pre-K programming? (select all that apply)

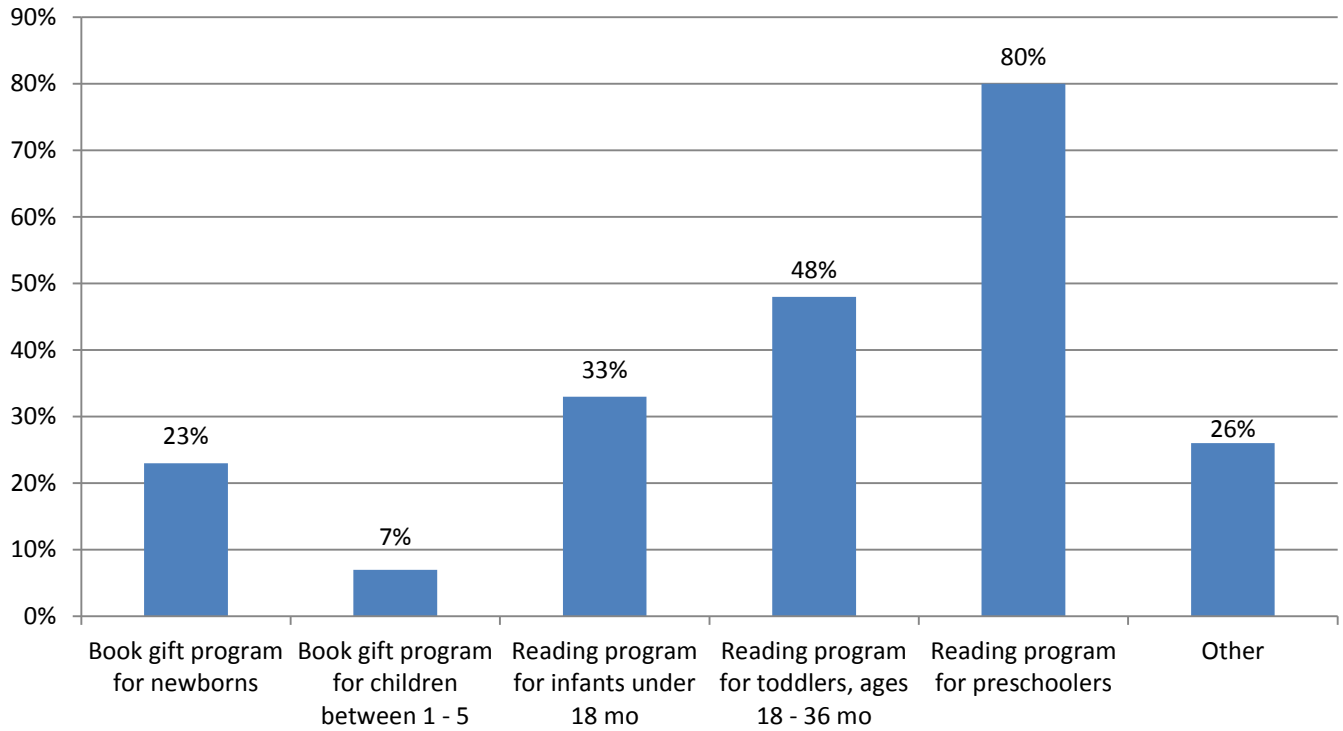


Traditional storytime (comprised of reading or storytelling, crafts and activities) for a variety of pre-K age groups was the most common response. Other programs described included versions of: Time for Twos, Rhyme Time, Mom and Tots, and Mommy & Me. Names of the programs differed, but formats and elements of the programs were similar.

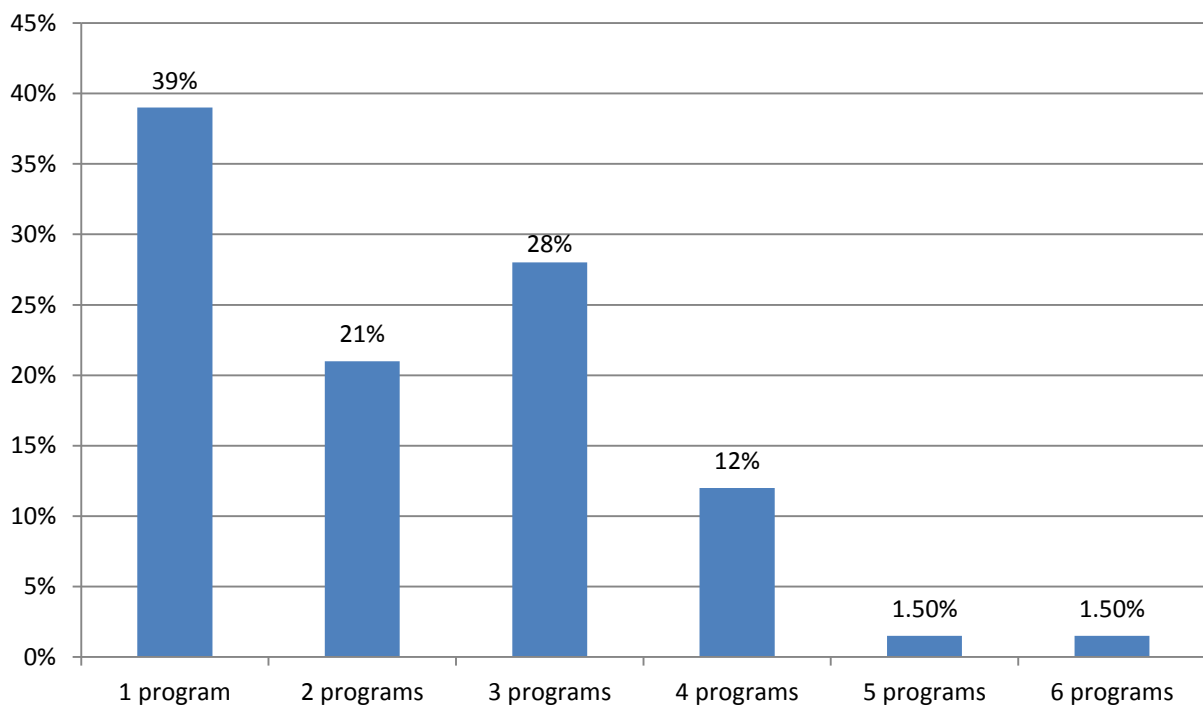
Sample comments:

- Baby's Day Out (older siblings welcome) Two hour program for Moms and their babies to socialize and engage in stories, song and dance and free style play. Runs for two months in the spring and in the fall. Moms enter their name when they attend and a prize is given at the end of the two month program.
- We have Wiggle Worms - based loosely on Rhymes that Bind. It is for the under 3 crowd. We sing songs, tell nursery rhymes, finger plays, read very simple books and have animals and puppets for the children to practice noises and sounds with. Then we have pre-school story time. Longer books, fewer songs and finger plays. Craft at the end that focuses on fine motor skills
- Once a week the playschool students in our school visit the library and we read stories and they choose books to take out. This year when they return their books they are given a Lego block for each book they return and are building a tower.
- We partner with our local literacy groups for Rhyme Time ages 0-5, twice a year in September/October and January/February 8-10 weeks per session. Pajama Time (very similar to Rhyme Time but offered in the evenings for working parents) is usually offered once a year during the winter months for four weeks. We also provide space for Books for Babies and BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success). Our Library gives free one-year memberships to each parent/caregiver who participates in these programs.
- Preschool Storytime. FREE programming for 0-5 yr old and caregivers. Stories, songs and crafts for 1 hour every Wed morning. (With the exception of time during summer and Christmas break.) Crafts are planned for the 2-5 year old and storytime is enjoyed by all.

What type of programming do you offer?



Number of pre-K programs offered at a library

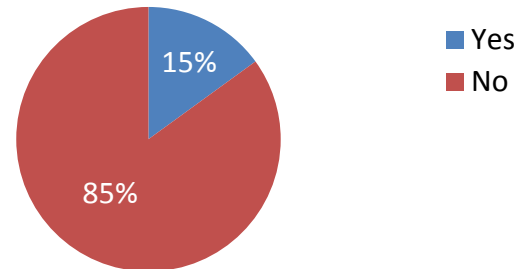


Of the 15% that indicated they follow specific guidelines or standards, only half indicated the specific guidelines or standards they follow.

Sample Comments:

- Rhymes Alive as per family literacy guidelines.
- We follow the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program for ages 0-2. Over 2 years is an extension of this program.
- Our literacy programmers follow the Center for Literacy program guidelines.
- ALA's Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (ECRR).
- We adapt the "Rhymes that Bind" program to ours and then include a little extra.

Do you refer to any specific guidelines or standards when planning pre-K literacy programs?



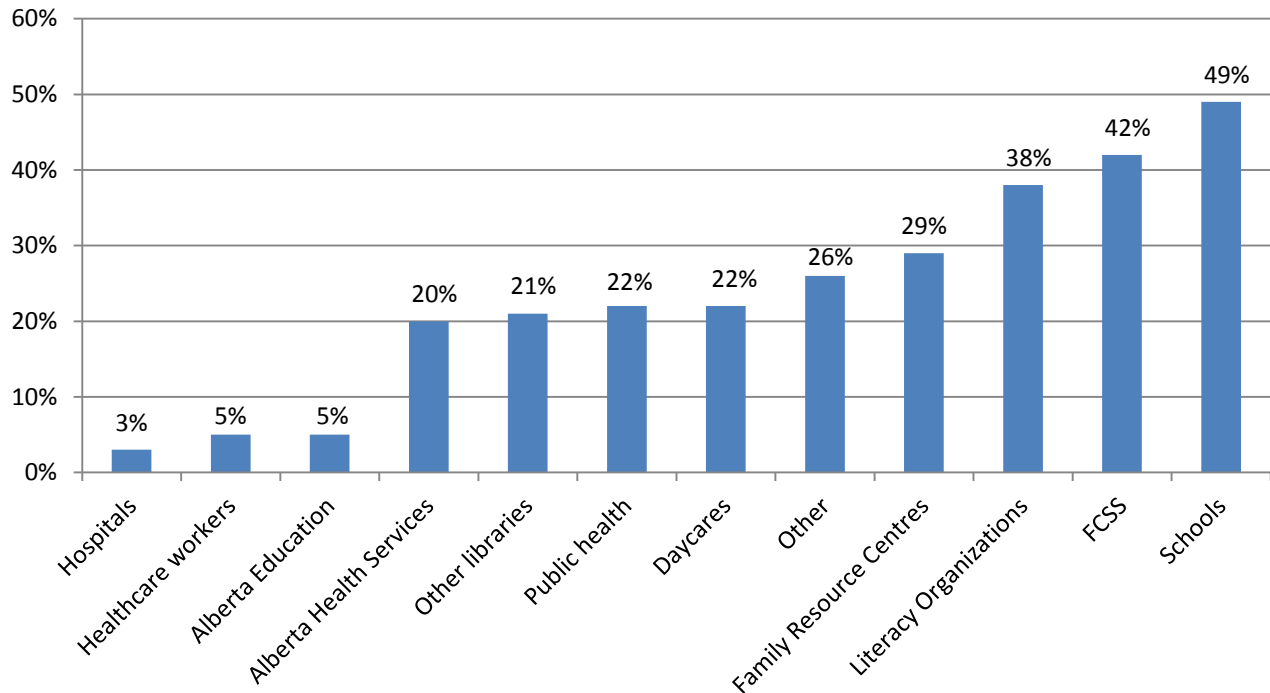
Do you have a dedicated space for providing programming?

Overall there was a wide range of responses, including "yes," "no," and "sort of." Some clearly had a dedicated library space, such as a programming room. Others indicated that they used open areas of their library, the children's area (carpet or table), or used space from neighbouring organizations. Some indicated that there was no space at all.

Sample Comments:

- Yes, we have a separate room with storage next to it - where craft supplies, puppets, etc. are kept.
- At this time we do, but we will have to give it up. As a consequence, we will return to family storytime in the library, as an addition to Moms and Tots which will move to the Community Hall. We are a small community and the ties will remain.
- No. The lack of dedicated program space has been identified as a key element in a future library space currently being planned.
- Our library has a child sized table and a reading carpet.
- Partly: We have a shared area that we use at specified times.
- The area used is our Story Tree Corner, which houses our board book and early reader picture book collections and story kits. While pre-school programs are in progress, the corner is fenced off to keep children in the area.
- Small children's area of the library with bean bag chairs for the kids and a table and chairs for crafts.
- We use the main space of the library and a shared conference room with the town that we are able to book.
- Yes (and no). Stories are read in the open library space, we have a small room dedicated to preschool craft time.
- Yes but we do use the whole library and we call this up-front programming.
- No, just around the tables that are already there.
- Limited space for special programs (one room library) The Parent & Tot program takes place in the main part of the library.
- Due to library size, we are short on space, however have a small area for programming.

Do you partner with any of the following organizations in your community? (Choose all that apply)

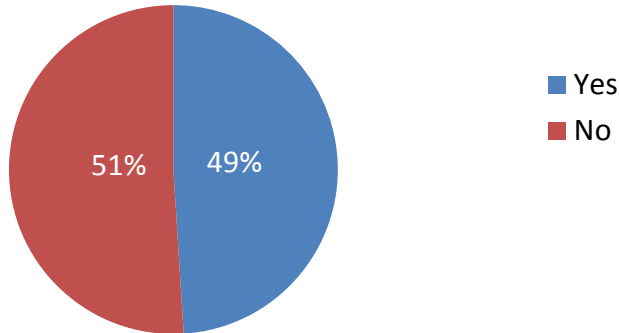


The three most frequently mentioned were Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSS), Parent Link and Local playschool / preschool / daycare.

Sample Comments:

- We encourage the school to use our public library on a weekly basis.
- The local health unit refers new moms to the Library to receive the library membership and first book.
- We run several programs a year, either once a month or once a week for 4 to 6 weeks with Parent Link. We provide the space, materials and sometimes snacks. Their coordinator runs the program. These programs are separate from our regular Storytime program.
- We have partnered with various organizations to bring programming to our community. We have participated in Early Years Expo with our local FCSS and Early Childhood Coalition; we partner regularly with our literacy organizations for Rhyme Time and other programs; we partnered with our AHS for a Celebrate Me, I'm 3 event.
- Parent Link and Family Literacy run preschool and infant storytimes at our library. We have worked with Alberta Health Services (our local Children's Rehabilitation Services -- Speech Language Pathologist, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, and Physical Therapist) and the local daycare primarily through our summer reading program, but we have started to discuss additional opportunities to work together.
- We partner with everyone in the community who is willing to partner with us, we provide space, programming space and a Librarian and staff member to provide program delivery. We are currently reviewing and upgrading and reassessing the need in our community.
- The local health unit refers new moms to the Library to receive the library membership and first book. Work with daycare and Parent Link at large community events to provide preschool and school aged activities.

Do other organizations use your library to offer their programs?



The most frequently mentioned organizations were Parent Link, Alberta Health Services and Family Literacy organizations. 20 respondents mentioned Parent Link specifically.

Sample Comments:

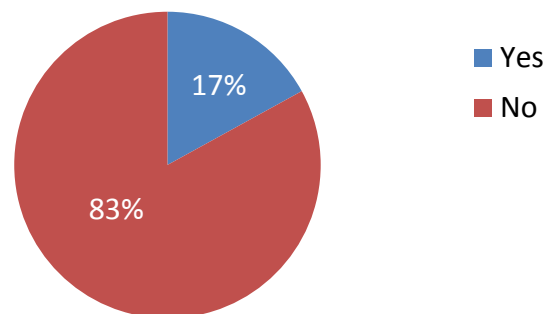
- Other groups will hold meetings in our library. Such as daycare and sports co-ordinators.
- Parent Link holds 2 weekly programs and several special programs each season.
- This is not every day. One time a photography class was held weekly for 6 months, nothing since no one to teach anything in this small town.
- We share our programming spaces mainly with our literacy organizations. In 2015, Parent Link Center has come to our community and we have been working with them as well.
- Parents as Teachers are offering an Infant massage class; Early Years Coalition is using the library for a site for their Parent Cafes.
- Learning Council Association has used our facility for some of its Family Literacy programs.

Most respondents did not receive money from a community partner. Where funding was received, some respondents mentioned FCSS, APFA, and various community coalitions.

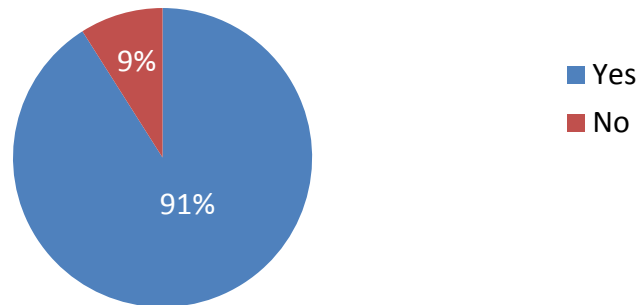
Sample Comments:

- We got a \$3000 grant from BMI to run programs in our library for a year.
- In kind donations of staff; no funds are given directly.
- We have received unsolicited donations with encouragement to use the funds for Pre-K offerings (i.e. 1000 Books before Kindergarten)
- Sometimes they help fund supplies, helpers, and special events.
- When I apply for a grant from FCSS.

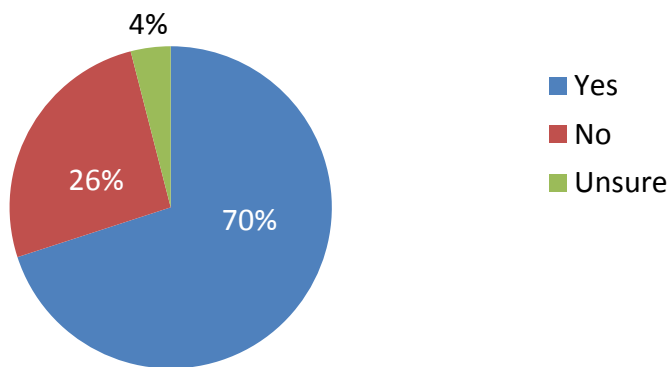
Do you receive funding from your community partner(s) specifically for pre-K?



Does your library participate in the TD Summer Reading Club?



Do you have an interest or a need in early childhood literacy training and/or program support?



Overall, respondents felt more information in the area would be beneficial. A WIDE range of responses were received on the spectrum from “NO, not really” to “Yes, one can never have enough knowledge.”

Sample Comments:

- No, due to lack of interest and time and budget.
- With the playschool being in the same building we are happy to let them handle it.
- Yes, absolutely. We would love to go beyond basic story time into an increased amount of literacy involvement.
- Would love more help with training and program support.
- It would be beneficial. Our programs would be more successful if there were training available.
- No, I have a lot of background in early literacy.
- If there were more children in our area, I would love to have more program support.
- Because we have partnered with our local literacy groups so much in the past, only a small number of our library staff have attended literacy training. However, recently, we lost our literacy programs in our community and have been considering the need for our staff to receive further training in this area because unless our community gets these literacy programming back, our community will still expect our library to fill that gap.

What are the three greatest challenges to providing your early literacy program?

Space constraints, lack of time and not having appropriate staff or volunteers were the biggest trend in responses.

Sample Comments:

- Accessing the whole population. Our biggest supporters are the home school children. There are several pre-school children in the community but we seem to have a hard time appealing to the parents who really need their children to participate in early literacy.
- Our library is only open 24 hours a week so finding times that work for the kids and the hours at the library is sometimes an issue.
- We have very limited space. We have only one person on staff at a time so very challenging to offer programs. Time available for staff to organize programs is very limited.
- Communication with parents and young families (getting the word out about the programs). Involving dads as well as moms. Encouraging parents to follow up with reading at home.
- Lack of interest in the community.
- Space and staffing, avoiding duplication with existing programs offered in the community, lack of transport to get families to our location.
- Limited Staff, Limited Space, Limited Open Hours, Limited Budget.
- Having enough staff, time, and space to meet demand

What are your three greatest successes in providing your early literacy program?

Increased library membership, programs that are well attended or full, children's increased confidence and structured learning were the most often cited successes.

Sample Comments:

- Hearing that children LOVE to come to the library. Hearing that our programs have helped with speech development. Seeing our small patrons have a love for books.
- New library lovers. Helping parents. Providing community space for parents.
- 1. Once we get them in the library then they are involved. 2. Children taking out more than one book. 3. Parents reading to the children weekly so the children can come back in and tell us about the book.
- Bringing awareness to the community about the Library and the services we provide. Having the only program in our community for 2 year olds.
- 1. Feedback through parents from Kindergarten teachers on how pleased the teachers were that the children were so well versed in their rhymes and songs. 2. Watching new parents start to interact with other parents and promote good parenting skills that they have learned. 3. Watching the children progress through the programs. The improvement in their knowledge and confidence can be amazing.
- Watching families grow, being able to provide free resources, learning opportunities, and recreational activities for families at risk.
- Watching shy children blossom as they learn to interact with other children - newcomers to the community make new friends (parents and children) - children become prepared for school (using scissors, learning to sit to listen to a story, etc.)

Any other comments to share?

Comments varied widely. A sampling has been selected below.

Sample Comments:

- Would love to see an early literacy library based conference. We do attend the family literacy conference in Edmonton but a library based conference would be valuable for resources and program training.
- Pre-school literacy programming is essential to developing children with a love of reading and learning, which in turn creates better communities and society.
- Libraries have been doing early literacy, and early literacy well, for decades. There is pressure, now, to have libraries be educators, and sometimes the difficulty lies in the distinction between what libraries do, and what preschools / schools do. Libraries need to maintain their integrity as early literacy providers, not early literacy educators. Our hope is that we don't lose our identity as storytellers, and providers of literature to preschoolers and their families. Even our Library Board questioned why we changed our overall program name to "Early Literacy Programs" when we aren't educators. "Don't the schools do that?" Early literacy has always been a cornerstone of what Children's Departments do - a rose by any other name would smell as sweet! In a lot of ways it comes down to marketing, and early literacy is just another way to market what Children's Departments have always done.
- We do what we can for our small rural library and everyone loves the programs :)
- With our community's very poor results in recent Kindergarten readiness - Pre-K programs are an obvious need.
- We have a very successful program with over 230 children attending on Fridays from Jan to June of this year. Our facilitators over the years have been excellent and so are our parents. Working with ParentLink instead of competing against them is the perfect way to do things as we are all serving the same group of parents and children in our community.
- Early childhood development is so important that all libraries should be able to maintain this vital programming in their communities, especially with the declining literacy rate in this digital age.
- In past years, our summer reading program was very successful, but with more of the local parents putting their kids in daycare, our pool of preschool children has decreased greatly. Now our program is more informal and more of a "drop-in anytime" program. Moms come in with their toddlers and I will read stories, help with puzzles, etc. while the Moms pick out books for the children and for themselves. The moms seem to prefer this system, rather than committing to a dedicated day and time frame.
- Early Literacy is a huge component to creating successful readers.
- We are hoping to hire a person to specifically run programs so that we can increase programming for all age groups. Pre-K programming is one of the areas we are lacking programming in.
- We don't have any programs for Pre-K mostly because of lack of interest in the community. Since there are other organizations which do offer Pre-K programming we concentrate more on the older ones.
- We are a small library. Our community is small. However, we regularly bring in 40 children to our summer reading program. Over 50 children take part in our winter reading program and approximately 10-15 children show up to our monthly storytelling and craft night.
- I am proud of our interaction with other agencies and the success that those agencies have helped bring to our programs, particularly in a community of 2300. Amazing staff that share creative ideas are a great part of that as well!