



# Components of a Successful Baby Storytime

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**Baby Storytime is for 0 to 24 month olds and their parents or caregivers. Baby Storytime is for parents/caregivers to understand the importance of books and reading. This storytime is really about the interaction of the baby, parent and books. The librarian is a guide, showing the parents how to involve the baby with books and literature.**

## **Print Motivation**

- Each week enjoy books together, modeling for parents how to use and enjoy books. Storytime celebrates the joy and love of books. We clap hands and cheer at the end of each book to celebrate the joy of reading it.
- Encourage the parents to let the older babies hold the books and turn the pages.

## **Vocabulary**

- Encourage the parents to talk to the babies about what's happening in the books and to give a word to the pictures in the books. Let the parents know that by age 2 the children will know about 200 words.
- Have parents point to objects and name them, such as eyes, nose and mouth.

## **Movement (small and large)**

- Books like Baby Signs for Mealtime get parent and child to work together on small movement skills.
- Rhymes like "Cuckoo Clock" get the parents to move the children to rhyming words.

## **Music**

- Use the same songs each week so they learn them and anticipate them.
- Encourage the parents to sing the songs at home, explain that songs help with vocabulary development and syllable recognition.

## **Rhyming books, Words, Poetry**

- Use rhyming books such as Big Book of Beautiful Babies or Smile. Let parents know this helps the children enjoy language, learn new words and as they get older identify syllables.

## **Parent Education**

- Each week handouts are available, such as "Raising Readers" or the PLA Parents Guide to Emergent Literacy for Pretalkers.
- One fact is stated each week during storytime, such as "reading everyday to your child helps increase their vocabulary".

## **Parent/Caregiver Involvement**

- Everyone reads the books together and participates in the songs and movement activities.
- Encourage the parents to do these activities at home with their children.

## **Visual/Realia**

- Use a puppet each week as "your baby".
- Use "lift the flap" books and books with mirrors, allowing the babies to interact with the book.
- Have some toys for the babies to play with following the storytime to allow them to continue their visit to the library.

## **Videos**

- Videos are not appropriate for babies and are not shown at storytime.
- Do provide a time following storytime for the babies and parents to interact, play and enjoy their time at the library.



# Components for a Successful Preschool Storytime

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Preschool storytime is for 4 to 6 year olds and their parents or caregivers. It is a time to learn about the love of books and language, to learn letters and how words are made from letters. Children at preschool storytime can understand and enjoy longer and more complicated plots.

## Print Motivation

- Model how much fun reading is and clap after each story is finished.
- Use a variety of books to show the range of enjoyable books for various interests of children.
- Select favorite picture books to have in your storytime space, telling families to select as many as they want to bring home and share together.
- Encourage parents and kids to sit together or very close, providing a bond during storytime.

## Print Awareness

- Use books that encourage participation, like stories with repetitive phrases.
- Choose books that encourage number awareness and counting, like Ten Flashing Fireflies and Five Little Ducks.
- Point out words and pictures in the picture books during storytime.

## Vocabulary

- Encourage parents to talk to children, to answer their questions and to give them opportunities to learn new words and concepts.
- Include books in storytime that have richness of language and challenging vocabulary, such as Mama Do You Love Me and Rub-a-Dub-Sub.
- Point out pictures of unusual animals, places, or things in a picture book. Introduce them to new words; books often have pictures of things we don't see everyday.

## Narrative Skills

- Give kids a chance to respond to questions about what is happening in the story.
- Ask who, what, where questions or "What do you think happens next?"
- Select books where there is a sense of anticipation about what is coming next, and allow them to guess, such as Squeaky Clean or Bunnies on the Go.
- Allow a few minutes before and after storytime for kids to tell a story about ....

## Letter Knowledge

- Use a letter to "sponsor" your storytime, and have a few items in your storytime space that begin with your chosen letter. Ask the kids to name other things that begin with that letter.
- Have carpet squares with letters on them for kids to sit on during storytime; it functions as their magic flying carpet; ask kids what letter they have, and a word that begins with their chosen letter. Talk about other words that begin with the " \_ " sound.
- Have letters available for kids to use, like alphabet carpet squares to sit on, or a magnetic board with letters that kids can use to spell out their name after storytime.
- Choose fun alphabet books to share, like B is for Bulldozer.
- Nametags give kids an opportunity to spell their name out loud. Ask kids if you got the letters in the right place. Your name begins with the letter "B". What else begins with B?

## Phonological Sensitivity

- Use rhyming books or puppets, such as "This Old Man" and have them fill in the missing word – "this old man, he played one, he played knick knock on my \_\_\_\_\_."
- Choose titles with rhyming and repetitive text, like Shark in the Park. Encourage kids to participate in the "There's a shark in the park" phrase throughout the story.
- Have kids say words out loud that rhyme with a particular word (Shoe – glue, new, blue, flu, clue).
- Sing songs: songs have different notes for each syllable in a word.
- Make up silly words by changing the first sound in a word: milk, pilk, ril, nilk.

## **Movement (small and large)**

- Use a welcome song or routine and act it out – Go for a walk, dive in, swim, plug your nose and swim underwater, put on mountain climbing gear, climb the mountain, swing on the vines, run across the playground, climb on the monkey bars, put your seatbelt on and let's get on the plane and head for the library! Zoooooom! Let's land 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1! Here we are at storytime!
- Use a fingerplay such as "Ten Horses", put on cowboy hat, check spurs, do fingerplay and finish with a big "Yeehaw!" and lasso.
- Use music to have kids jump, walk, dance and be imaginative.
- Use parachute, beach balls, shakers, and bubbles to encourage movement.

## **Music**

- Use music as families arrive to introduce new music for kids and to set a mood.
- Let caregivers know the name of the CD's you are using.
- Use music to encourage creativity, small and large motor skills and parent/caregiver participation.
  - Berkner, Laurie. Buzz Buzz. "Monster Boogie"
  - Berkner, Laurie. Victor Vito. "I Feel Crazy so I Jump in my Soup"
  - Diamond, Charlotte. Ten Carrot Diamond. "I am a Pizza".

## **Parent Education**

- Adapt ideas from [www.earlyliteracy.ecsd.net](http://www.earlyliteracy.ecsd.net), a website designed to share early literacy information for parents on ideas for supporting literacy development at home.
- Check information on the West Bloomfield Public Library website ([www.wbplib.org](http://www.wbplib.org)), such as Counting the Days Til Kindergarten handout which offers weekly activities to make reading fun.
- Check [www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org) for more information on early literacy tips.
- Have handouts about reading tips available for parents, including booklists.

## **Parent/Caregiver Involvement**

- Greet kids and parents before storytime and chat about what they've been reading together.
- Pair up kids and parents before storytime begins, making sure each child is on an adult lap or nearby.
- Encourage everyone to participate in fingerplays and songs, including standing up and dancing.
- Select stories that allow kids and parents to participate, such as Buzz Buzz Buzz Went Bumblebee, have everyone make hands in the shape of a bee, buzz when bee buzzes in story, and have them say all together on each page, "Buzz Off!"

## **Visual/Realia**

- Use kits for popular books from the puppet library (Brown Bear, Brown Bear or Very Hungry Caterpillar).
- Bring props that relate to books and themes – Summer books, bring beach ball, towel, toys.
- Bring in a big soup pot for Growing Vegetable Soup. Each child can pretend to put in their favorite vegetable. "Taste" the soup after everyone has contributed to the big pot.
- Use puppets to act out a picture book after you have read it. Let kids retell the story with the puppets.



# Components for a Successful Toddler Storytime

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**Toddler storytime is for 2 and 3 year olds and their parents and caregivers. It is a time to nurture a love of books, learn letters, sounds, and new words. It is a time to be active with music and movement.**

## Print Motivation

- Model how much fun reading is. Tell children they are doing a great job helping you read.
- Encourage parents to understand that reading books to children should be a fun activity.
- Use a variety of books, BIG books, pop-up books, flannel stories.

## Print Awareness

- Call attention to the title of the book. Sometimes put the BIG book upside down and ask children if they notice something wrong.
- Point to words that repeat, such as “Jump Frog Jump”. Have the children say these words each time you point to them.
- Have children write their own name tags and encourage them to find their name each week.
- Add some “print words” to fingerplays and flannelboards.
  - Two little blackbirds – have words underneath picture
  - Five little ducks – using repetitious print to identify mother duck’s QUACK from Father Duck’s QUACK.
  - Use flip charts with the words typed out for both parents and children to see. Encourage parent’s participation when they read the words to the action songs.

## Vocabulary

- Encourage parents to talk to children, to describe what is going on in books and in their everyday life.
- Let parents know toddlers learn about 9 new words a day and reading helps them develop a stronger vocabulary.

## Narrative Skills

- When reading, ask “What might happen next?”
- Ask who, what, where questions when reading the books

## Letter Knowledge

- Use “Letter of the Week” alphabet carpet square
- Put up alphabet letters in storytime area.
- Have children make nametags and try to find their nametags at beginning of storytime.

## Movement (small and large)

- Use a welcome song that has children waving, turning, stomping, mooing, quacking....
- Use fingerplays, such as “I have Ten Little Fingers”.
- Use CD’s to have children jump, stomp, walk, turn.
- Use flip charts with action songs on them.

## Music

- Use music to foster movement, language and vocabulary.
  - Hallum, Rosemary. Fingerplays and Footplays
  - Palmer, Hap. So Big: Activity Songs for Little Ones
  - Stewart, Georgiana Liccione. Bean Bag Activities & Coordination Skills

## Rhyming books, Words, Poetry

- Use books, flannel boards and fingerplays that rhyme to develop phonemic awareness.
- Have toddlers fill in the missing rhyme words. Examples of books to use are The Magic Hat by Mem Fox and Mouse Mess by Linnea Asplind Riley.

## Parent Education

- Share one fact from “Working Toward School Readiness” (storytime planning sheet developed by Elaine M. Czarnecki) and point out to parents how you incorporated it into storytime.
  - Print motivation (the idea that reading is fun!)
  - Language and vocabulary (calling attention to pictures, encourage children’s participation in music and movement)
  - Concepts about print (pointing to words)
  - Narrative skills and comprehension (using puppets or flannelboards and have children retell the story.
- Have handouts for parents, such as:
  - PLA Parent’s Guide to Emergent Literacy for Talkers
  - Information from Zero to Three [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)
  - Mem Fox’s “Ten Read Aloud Commandments”

### **Parent/Caregiver Involvement**

- Encourage everyone to stand up for action songs, encourage participation in fingerplays. Have the audience repeat repetitious sentences and fill in rhyming words.
- Dialogic reading – encourage parents to ask who, what, where questions when they are sharing books with their children.

### **Visual/Realia**

- Use a puppet before storytime begins by having a nametag for the puppet (example: Cassie Cat, Bob Bear, Morris Monkey). Introduce the puppet to the children and then have the puppet talk to the children.
- Use flip charts with large typed words.

### **Videos**

- Videos are not appropriate to show during toddler storytimes.



# Components of a Successful Family Storytime

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**Family storytime is for families with 2 – 6 year olds. Because it includes children from both the Toddler and Preschool storytime ages the storytime will include a range of books and activities to accommodate a wide range of ages.**

## Print Motivation

- Show children what fun it is to read silly stories such as Jules Feiffer's Bark George or Nick Sharratt's Shark in the Park, which also stimulates their imaginations.
- Children are intrigued with toy or moveable books such as Paul Stickland's pop-up Dinosaur Stomp, and the activity of moving something while reading may speed learning.
- For evening storytimes, read a book or do a story with a bedtime theme, such as David Melling's The Kiss That Missed. Parents will appreciate the reminder to their children that soon they must sleep!
- Encourage children to wear pajamas and bring blankets, teddy bears and other "loves" to evening storytimes, reinforcing the idea that the library in general, and storytimes specifically, are fun.

## Print Awareness

- Occasionally point to the words on a page as you are reading. Big books are great for this because the children can actually see the print from a distance.
- Put a Big Book upside down and ask the children if they notice something wrong. Books like Eric Rohmann's My Friend Rabbit, in which one must turn the book in a different direction, also reinforce the notion that print normally runs left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page.
- Encourage children to print their own nametags, and find their "special" nametag each week. Have a new stamp or sticker on the table each week and children will eagerly search for their nametags so they can apply the new decoration.
- Use flip charts with the words to action songs/exercises typed out for both parents and children to see. Parents/caregivers are more likely to participate if they can read the words while performing the action songs/exercises (and you are facilitating the verbal learner's preferred method of learning).

- Add some "print words" to fingerplays and flannelboards. Or use ready-made puppet collection kits such as the "BINGO" Monkey Mitt or the "Five Little Monkeys" with the Palm Tree and letters.

## Vocabulary

- Don't be afraid to use stories that have some big words. Explain the meaning of unfamiliar words before reading the story aloud.
- Read stories that expand children's understanding of concepts, such as spatial relationships, and encourage children to "act out" the directions (e.g. in Nick Sharratt's Shark in the Park, have children look up, down and all around with you).

## Narrative Skills

- Take two old familiar flannel board stories and deliberately mix up the details, including the sequence of events, as you tell one of the stories; allow the children to interrupt you with their corrections (e.g. tell "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" mixing in pieces from the "Three Little Pigs").
- Similarly, use a silly puppet to sing the song "Old MacDonald" with a flannel board kit. Have the puppet name the wrong animal as you put each piece on the board; then allow children to shout their corrections. The puppet can then get the animal sounds wrong, and the children will again correct the puppet.
- Invite participation in any story that has a refrain that repeats (e.g., have children say "Gotcha!" while clasping their hands into a catching motion during Gail Jorgenson's Gotcha. Children can also guess which animal has been disturbed after each "Gotcha").
- Perform a theme-based storytime in which you do one story, and then have the children guess what the connecting theme will be before you tell them the title of the next story.
- Have children name colors or count out loud with you whenever it is appropriate in a song or story (e.g., put a rainbow composed of separate color sections on the flannel board to sing Ella Jenkins' "I Know the Colors of the Rainbow").

## Letter Knowledge

- Point to the title of the book as you read it. Ask the children if any of them have a name starting with the letter beginning the first or subsequent words.
- Read one of the many wonderful alphabet books, and ask the children to say the name of each letter as you point to it.
- Do theme based storytimes based upon the letters of the alphabet (e.g. this storytime is brought to you by the letter “J”), or do stories all relating to a single word for which you can stick letters on the flannel board (e.g. dogs).

## Phonological Sensitivity

- Use books, flannel board stories, songs, poems and fingerplays that rhyme. Say a sentence, hesitating before the final rhyme, allowing the children to guess the missing rhyming word. The “Touch your” rhyme in I Wish I had a Computer that Makes Waffles requires children to listen to the phrase and then touch a body part that rhymes with the end word (e.g., “Touch your bed” translates to “Touch your head”).
- Dramatize songs such as “A Hunting We Will go” using puppets and props. Let the children see the puppet to fill in the end of the line, “We’ll catch a little \_\_\_\_\_, and then let them guess what the end rhyme will be for “and put him in a \_\_\_\_\_, which helps children to recognize different initial sounds.

## Movement (small and large)

- Welcome children to storytime with a song/fingerplay or two. One or two fingerplays at the beginning of storytime will help prepare the children to actively participate in listening to a story. (It also allows latecomers to enter without missing a story). If a fingerplay has not been performed before in a storytime session, perform the fingerplay twice, “teaching” the words and movements the first time, and doing it a second time, so they all can learn it. Repeat the songs/fingerplays within the session, so that by the last storytime, children and caregivers will have a repertoire they can perform at home. Repetition reinforces learning.
- Get the children up between stories to do an action song or exercise. Use action songs that encourage children to jump, stomp, walk, dance, turn around and move (e.g. People on the bus”). Many fingerplays can be adapted to full body exercises (e.g. “Incy Wincy Spider”).

## Music

- Singing, with or without accompaniment enhances phonological sensitivity through rhythm and rhymes. Songs such as “Peanut Butter and Jelly” reinforce narrative skills, providing children with patterns that may encourage them to predict what comes next.
- Songs such as Ella Jenkins’ “Jambo” provide an opportunity for cultural diversity.
- Distribute rhythm band instruments for a special storytime treat that encourages muscle coordination and creativity.
- Moving to the beat of a song allows children to coordinate minds, voices and bodies.

## Parent Education

- Share one fact each storytime from “Working Toward School Readiness (storytime planning sheets developed by Elain M. Czarnecki).
- Have the handouts available for parents such as
  - HCL Read Aloud Tips
  - PLA Parent’s Guide to Emergent Literacy for Talkers and Pre-Readers
  - Information from Zero to Three [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)
  - Copies of Mem Fox’s “Ten Read Aloud Commandments”

## Parent/Caregiver Involvement

- Announce at the beginning of each storytime as a reminder, that parents/caregivers are in attendance because they love their children, and that they will help them to enjoy storytime best by fully participating, which will help children to get ready to read and to have fun.
- Encourage everyone to perform action songs, exercises and fingerplays. Teach the audience words and actions, repeating refrains, and allowing them to fill in rhyming words.

## Visual/Realia

- Use puppets, props and flannel board pieces to give children a different and visual spin on a story, song or poem. A puppet host with an alliterative name (and nametag) can greet the children at the beginning of storytime, and receive hugs at the end. Many wonderful puppets are available through the HCL Puppet Collection.
- Use your agency’s “Book Buddy” and his script to talk about the care and love of books.
- Reserve the rhythm band kit from the puppet collection for a sound-sational storytime. Librarians can also use musical props such as a variety of whistles to tell a single poem such as “The Fourth of July” by Shel Silverstein.
- Educate the children about their neighbors from around the world by employing storytelling techniques from other countries (e.g. Kamishibai cards from Japan).
- Use flip charts with the words to action songs/exercises typed out for both parents and children to see.
- Use “letter of the week” carpet squares in storytime.
- Display alphabet letters.
- Videos may be shown in Family Storytime, however librarians are encouraged to experiment with puppet shows, flannel boards and other retelling activities which are more interactive and intellectually engaging for children. Videos that reinforce a story already told, or that may be retold the following session are preferred, as children need to repeat activities in order to learn.



# Components of a Successful World Language Storytime

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**World Language Storytimes can be offered for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and families. Family Storytimes serve families who attend library programs with multiple children. As a result, World Language Storytimes may include books and activities to accommodate a wide range of ages. Hennepin County Library (HCL) provides these storytimes in languages that the library's World Language Collection supports.**

In the early years of children's lives, formal learning in their native language promotes "academic achievement and literacy in a second language" (Cummins 1979; Oller and Eilers 2002; Rolstad, Mahoney and Glass 2005; Thomas and Collier 2002). The goal of World Language Storytimes is formal early literacy practice for families who speak a language other than English. Depending on your target audience (see the HCL document "World Language Storytime Best Practices"), these storytimes also may accommodate families who speak English at home but who want their children exposed to a second language. Both of these situations are valuable. In either case, early literacy should remain the focus.

Following are the six early literacy skill areas as they relate to World Language Storytimes. The related document "World Language Storytime Best Practices" covers how these components can be presented with a community partner who is a native speaker of your target language.

## Print Awareness

- Encourage children to print their own nametags. Encourage parents to have children practice writing their names at home.
- Add "print words" to the environment. When reading books about colors, for example, make a big rainbow with the names of the colors spelled out in one target language only (such as Spanish). Research indicates that children learn two languages best when the languages are kept separate; therefore, label things that are used in instruction in only one language.

- Use flip charts with the words to action songs and fingerplays in only one language.

- Provide handouts in both English and the target language for parents and caregivers to take home. Parents who are learning English will understand the songs with these handouts. Having the words also in their native language may increase their participation in the library program and will encourage the singing of these songs at home. Providing both languages on one page is acceptable in this context since the words are not for the children to read, but are only for the parents' benefit.

## Vocabulary

- Use stories that are vocabulary rich. Explain the meaning of unfamiliar words before reading the story aloud. Use props to support your explanations. Focus on one language at a time rather than explaining words from two languages at once.
- As with any storytime, the vocabulary should reflect the children's developmental abilities. Remember that a four-year-old from a literacy-rich home will be able to handle more complex text than a four-year-old from a home environment that is not literacy-rich (Hart and Risley 1981). Read the text first and assess how many words would need explanation; if you have more than ten unfamiliar words, the book is too difficult.
- Use objects from the target culture to encourage further conversation and expand understanding of the object. Ask your native-speaking partner for ideas (e.g., when reading a Hmong story about turtles, you may want to bring in a Hmong storycloth that depicts turtles).
- Theme-based storytimes build vocabulary and promote further conversation (Passe 2005). All stories may be on the same topic. Use props and puppets to show objects that are in the story. Singing activities may be related to the main theme. For example, a storytime about pizza could have pizza books, pizza songs and an emphasis on the letter "P" and the sound that letter makes, as well as a discussion about new words related to pizza such as tomatoes, mushrooms and red peppers.

- Use books with realistic and literal illustrations that support the text. If you can tell the story by looking only at the pictures, then you have a good example of literal translation. Families who have not been in formal literacy settings benefit most from these types of books.

- When choosing books, be aware that there may be slight variations in the words used by people who speak the same language but who are from different regions or countries. (For example, just as English terms or spellings may be different in books published in the U.S., England, Australia or New Zealand, words in Spanish may be unfamiliar when the books are published in Spain, Mexico, Argentina or the U.S.) Encourage parents and caregivers to participate. When there is an unfamiliar term in the target language, ask families what they call a hat, or a fox, or a skunk, or whatever word needs clarification. Keep a list of these words that you can refer to in other stories in subsequent storytime sessions. This is an excellent way to build new vocabulary for you and for your audience.

- You even could make a “word wall” where, for example, you add to lists of what different animals are called in the same language in different countries. At the top of the word wall, have a picture of the animal or item. Use only words in one language, and do not mix that target language and English.

### **Narrative Skills**

- Use a puppet to help tell and retell a story, reinforcing narrative skills, concepts and participation.

- Many cultures have strong oral traditions. Invite storytime parents and caregivers to retell stories from their childhoods, or lead songs that they sang as children (Duran 2006). Using parent resources will enrich your storytimes and reinforce the parents’ roles as teachers.

- Many parents and caregivers may feel shy and uncomfortable. You need to provide strong encouragement for them to participate. Participation is more natural when telling stories with repetition. Provide extra support for children and parents who have not been in formal storytime settings in the past. Tell them that it is okay to act silly or to not know all of the words. Using some of the same songs and fingerplays throughout a series of storytimes will build their confidence.

- Wordless books are great for parents and caregivers who may have a low-literacy level in their native language or in English. Model for parents and caregivers how to tell stories and have rich conversations using wordless books. Before starting with wordless books, have just one picture and prompt adults to talk about it with their children. You might say, “In this picture, what do you see? The mommy is holding the baby, and they are smiling. Why do you think they are smiling?” Then provide wordless books and tell families they can make their own stories with these books. Give them time to practice on their own at the end of storytime. If the books are related to your theme, that is even better.

### **Phonological Awareness**

- Use culturally familiar music, fingerplays and rhymes. These activities help with rhyming and alliteration (Duran 2006). Reinforce early phonological skills *in the child’s native language* using rhyming and alliteration in the child’s native language. This technique will improve English literacy as well (Durgunoğlu, Nagy and Hancin-Bhatt 1993).

- When you sing common American songs and nursery rhymes in the native language, such as “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider” in Spanish, you are creating new traditions for families. Tell parents that their children might be learning these songs in English in preschool or kindergarten, so learning them in their native language first will help their children understand what the songs or nursery rhymes mean when they hear them in English at school.

- Choose nonfiction books, fiction books, fingerplays, songs and props that are related by theme to ensure a repetition of words and sounds. Point out words that start with the same sounds, or look for children’s names that start with the same sound as the title of the book.

- Choose books that incorporate rhyme, and point out rhymes to the children. Play a clapping game where the storytime leader says a word and the audience comes up with a word that rhymes. This can be done in any language, although some languages have more rhymes than others, so you may need your native-speaking partner to give you advice about how to best address rhyming in the target language.

### **Letter Knowledge**

- Have a “Letter of the Week.” Encourage families to emphasize that letter and letter sound in their everyday lives throughout the rest of that week. Talk about finding the letter in environmental print as well as in books or songs they do together outside of storytime to continue the storytime experience.

- Use the Letter of the Week to “sponsor” your storytime (e.g., “This storytime is brought to you by the letter ‘J’”), and have a few items in your storytime space that begin with your chosen letter. Ask the kids to name other things that begin with that letter.

- Do theme-based storytimes based upon the chosen Letter of the Week, or read stories all relating to a single *word* for which you can stick the letters on a flannel board (e.g., P-E-R-R-O for *dog* in Spanish).

- Have letters available for children to use, such as alphabet carpet squares to sit on or a magnetic board with letters that kids can use to spell out their names after storytime.

- Choose fun alphabet books to share, such as *A is for airplane / A es para avión*.

- Namerags give children an opportunity to spell their names out loud. As kids are reciting their names to you, ask them if you got the letters in the right places. Or say, “Your name begins with the letter ‘B.’ What else begins with ‘B’?”

- Point to the title of each book as you read it. Ask the children if any of them have a name starting with the letter beginning the first or subsequent words.

- Have a mystery bag with objects that start with the same letter as the Letter of the Week. You also could ask children to bring objects for next week’s letter. This builds vocabulary and also encourages families to continue thinking about storytime during the rest of the week.

### Print Motivation

- Use a variety of books to show the range of enjoyable books for various interests of children. Use fiction and nonfiction that highlight people and activities that might be familiar to the children or their parents (e.g., for Spanish, Diane Gonzales Bertrand’s *Las empanadas que bacía la abuela* or George Ancona’s Somos Latinos series. Children respond well to Lucy Cousins’s Maisy series because they recognize the characters.

- Encourage parents and children to sit together or very close, providing a family bond during storytime.

- Model how much fun reading is. Tell children they are doing a great job helping you read.

- Use a variety of formats: big books, pop-up books, flannel stories.

- Show children what fun it is to read silly stories such as David Shannon’s *¡No, David!* or Anthony Browne’s *Mi Papá*, which also stimulates their imaginations.

- Select favorite picture books to have in your storytime space, telling families to select as many as they want to check out to bring home and share together.

- Encourage parents to understand that reading books to children should be a fun activity.

### Other Suggestions

- Plan how you will share information about the early literacy skills with parents during your World Language Storytimes. One strategy is to have a large sticky note on the book to remind the reader (whether it is the librarian or the native-speaking partner) to connect it to one of the six early literacy skills. The librarian and the native-speaking partner plan the early literacy dialogue together.

- World Language Storytimes should be scheduled regularly. For example, do not offer Spanish storytimes only during Cinco de Mayo or Hispanic Heritage Month.

- A series of four weekly sessions works best when using a community partner to assist you. The day of the week and the time of day you offer World Language Storytimes will depend on your community.

- In your storytime space, showcase your World Language Collection, including fiction, nonfiction and non-print materials such as music CDs and audiobooks for both children and adults.

- Look for nonfiction books on more topics than just colors and shapes. Search for books about visits to the doctor, going to school, traveling through airports, going to the store, being with grandparents, etc. This is helpful for recent immigrants; they are often reading for information rather than recreation.

- If possible, do your World Language Storytimes out in the community where your target audience is already comfortable, such as at a church, community organization, English Language Learner site or ethnic grocery store, etc.

- Tell parents that using the library and reading in both English and the children’s native language will help their children learn better in school.

### Parent Involvement

- Parents who speak a language other than English may not have any experience with libraries in the United States or with storytimes. Take time at the end of the World Language Storytime to explain library services, to show different parts of the collection, to highlight the World Language Collection for both adults and children, and to get families registered for library cards.

- Parents may not know that you are modeling early literacy skills, so it is important to explain why parent involvement is important and why they should read with their children at home. In some cultures, reading at home is not a habit that is practiced. Everyone wants their children to succeed in school, but not everyone knows that they as parents or caregivers are a critical part of that success. Thank parents for bringing their children to the library and for being such wonderful teachers and for sharing stories with their children.

- Ask parents to tell stories from their childhood and to lead songs. This not only enriches your storytime, but also keeps adults engaged in the program.

- Parents have received conflicting information regarding using their native language with their children versus learning English only. Validate parents’ feelings of concern about learning English. We now know the positive outcomes in learning multiple languages and school achievement. Explain to parents that they may encounter school staff and others who have not yet been exposed to this information, but that research indicates that children will do better in school if they maintain their native language. Reinforce the fact that their

children are surrounded by English and that they will quickly learn English in school. Parents are the best teachers at home using their native language. With this teaching at home, their children will do better in school.

•Therefore, encourage parents and caregivers to read, sing and talk with their children. Our goal is to help parents help their children to have the skills they need in order to be ready to learn to read and to succeed in school.

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# World Language Storytime Best Practices

[www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org)

**Families who speak languages other than English have significantly less access to formal storytimes. World Language Storytimes are an opportunity for these families to gain the early literacy benefits of storytime.**

Hennepin County Library (HCL) supports families who want to provide learning opportunities for their children in a native language. HCL provides World Language Storytimes to promote early literacy and language development for children who are English language learners.

The main goal of World Language Storytimes is to demonstrate to parents and caregivers how to effectively share books with children and to support families as they help their children with early reading success. Parents will be given information about how to support early literacy in their native language at home. Home learning activities like book reading in any language help children develop skills that transfer to English literacy and school success (Neuman and Dickinson 2002).

World Language Storytimes can be done for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and their families, in any language the library's collection supports. Families attending library programs with children of various ages benefit from Family Storytime methods that include books and activities accommodating a wide range of ages. Best practices for storytimes in English also apply for World Language Storytimes. Use those best practices in combination with the information in this document. Also refer to the HCL document "Components of a Successful World Language Storytime" for details on presenting the six early literacy skill areas for these storytimes.

The librarian will present World Language Storytimes together with a community partner who is a native speaker of the target language and who has had training in HCL storytime best practices. The librarian provides knowledge of the library's collection and early literacy resources and serves as a storytime coach for the community partner. The community partner provides in-depth knowledge of the language as well as cultural practices that enrich the storytime

experience. The community partner is the link to the target families and culture. The librarian models early literacy best practices and becomes a trusted source of information about the library and its services.

Use these Best Practices as guidelines, as each community is unique.

World Language Storytimes can accommodate native speakers and immersion audiences:

## **Native speakers of target language**

Families speak the target language at home, and they may also speak English or be learning English.

*Our goal: To model early literacy techniques and to teach the target language group (e.g., families who speak Spanish, Hmong or Somali) about library resources.*

•World Language Storytimes, in this case, will be promoted to families who speak the target language at home and will be promoted as "Spanish Storytime," "Hmong Storytime" or "Somali Storytime."

*Publicity example for Spanish:*

### **Cuentos y Canciones**

Para niños de 2 años en adelante y sus familias.

Ayúdale a su hijo/a alistarse a leer.

Presentado en español.

(This would be advertised in *Spanish only*. Translation: "Stories and Songs. For children age 2 and older and their families. Help your child get ready to learn to read. Presented in Spanish only.")

•The entire story, dialogue and follow-up activities will be presented by the native-speaking partner 100 percent in the target language, including the early literacy tips. The librarian may use some English to welcome families, to introduce the storytime, to describe library resources and to assist and coach the native-speaking partner.

- The librarian's presence is essential to building relationships and trust with these families, and to become their connection to the library and its services.

- The parents' role as their children's best teachers will be reinforced. Messages may include, for example, reassuring parents that their children will learn English at school, but that parents are giving their children something that no one else may be able to—their native language and culture. Research shows this supports healthy self-esteem and academic achievement (Duran 2006).

- Encourage parents to read aloud to their children in their native language at home, but also to constantly talk with their children, as oral language is the most important part of early literacy development (Passe 2005).

- Special efforts should be made to thoroughly explain library services and resources, for both adults and children. Emphasize that library resources, programs and computer usage are free.

### Special Considerations

- In many cultures, reading is not done "for fun" but more for gathering information. Use nonfiction books as part of the storytime. Families may be more likely to respond to books that provide "real" information about insects, cooking, going to the doctor, family life, etc.

- In many cultures, libraries are either non-existent or a resource for academic use only, so many families may not be familiar with an American public library's services, especially services for children.

- Since many families who speak a language other than English have not had formal literacy support, the librarians may need to be more directive with these families and children. For example, parents and caregivers may need to be encouraged to participate and given clear explanations as to why their participation is important to their children's success. Use activities that are generally culturally acceptable for the target group. Start with these and then build on them during your storytime sessions. Be careful not to start with activities that seem so out of the ordinary to culturally diverse families that they feel uncomfortable attending the storytime sessions. Use culturally connected community partners to assist you in planning activities.

- Use books that have high context for the target culture. For example, use stories and props that the families may be able to identify with. Ask your community partner about culturally familiar objects or topics that these families might talk about in their everyday lives.

- Use books that have simple concepts and very literal themes. Look carefully at the illustrations. The illustrations need to support the text. If children can see the illustrations and

understand the context of the story, this will allow them to really listen to the vocabulary and enjoy the story. If the language in the book is too complex, and the illustrations are not clear, you may lose the audience quickly. Poetic stories will be "lost in translation," so you may want to avoid them.

### Native Speakers of Target Language-Case Study

The Youth Services Librarian at the Oxboro Library offered a Spanish storytime. Here are some learning experiences she had:

- "When choosing storytime books, I looked for books with repeating themes, so I chose *Mama, do you love me?* by Barbara Joosse. It was not a good choice because my community partner did not know many of the animals described. She did not think that most of the parents would either."

- "I also learned to be very careful regarding books that were published in Spain. Most of the storytime families are from Mexico or other countries of Central and South America. One of the books I suggested contained repeated verbal phrases that were particular to Spanish spoken in Spain. This is something my community partner explained to me."

- "Be careful of translations for songs found on the Internet. I made the mistake of printing off the words for *Ten little dogs*. I didn't have time to check them with my community partner, and I found out that they did not match the CD at all, and there are many different versions of this song."

### Immersion audience

This storytime may have a mixed audience. Some parents do not speak the target language, but rather English is their first language, and they want their children to be exposed to a second language. Some families may have one parent who speaks the target language and the other parent who doesn't. Native speakers also may decide to attend this storytime.

*Our goal: To introduce literature in the target language and to model early literacy techniques.*

- This type of World Language Storytime will be promoted as "Bilingual Storytime," and the publicity will be in both the target language *and* English.

*Publicity example for Spanish/English:*

#### **Spanish Storytime: Experience the World in Other Languages**

Para niños de 2 años en adelante y sus familias.

Cuentos y canciones en español e inglés.

For children age 2 and up and their families. Stories and songs in both Spanish and English.

- The librarian will lead the discussion and the native-speaking partner will read the stories and lead the songs and other activities.

•Dual language education indicates that children learn two languages best when they are kept separate (Cloud, Genessee and Hamayan 2000). Here are some examples of different ways to present a storytime for immersion audiences:

-Read the book entirely in the target language and then discuss the book in English, if everyone at the storytime also speaks English.

-Summarize the book in English before reading the story, letting adults and children know that you want them to listen to the sounds and rhythms of the language you are using. Have them guess what the book is about. Then have the native-speaking partner read the book entirely in the target language.

-If you are targeting Spanish learners, for example, have the native-speaking partner read the text in Spanish and use English at key points throughout the story to summarize. For example, “On this page Carlito found a (English noun) and he \_\_\_\_\_ (English verb), didn’t he?” This way you are reinforcing comprehension, but not translating word for word, which can get tiresome, and in terms of language acquisition is *not* a best practice (Duran 2006). This also demonstrates summarizing to parents, which is a technique used to foster early literacy development.

-Even when using books with bilingual text on each page, do not read the story that way (i.e., reading *both* languages aloud). Stick with the target language throughout the entire book, as mentioned above.

•As previously noted, poetic stories will be “lost in translation,” so you may want to avoid them. It is best to use books that have literal themes.

•Using themes for these storytimes may make it easier to highlight new vocabulary words and allow families to have further conversations about the theme when they are at home.

### Special Considerations

•At the beginning of each storytime, be clear about what will happen and highlight the beauty of hearing different languages all around us. You may say something like, “Today we are going to listen to stories read in Spanish. Do you know anyone who speaks Spanish? There are many people in the world who speak different languages, and many people speak Spanish. Today we will hear some stories about...and I want you to see if you can follow along.”

•Part of learning another language is learning about the culture, so try to include culturally traditional stories or songs, not just books that have been translated.

•Refer to the HCL document “Components of a Successful World Language Storytime” for ideas about how to label the environment without mixing languages.

### Immersion Audience-Case Study

The Youth Services Librarian at the Ridgedale Library has built a relationship with a teacher from a Spanish immersion school in her community. Here are some learning experiences she had:

- “I didn’t speak any Spanish prior to the Spanish storytime, but I used the library’s Spanish Language Collection and then worked with my community partner to choose the best stories to use.”
- “The keys to success were planning ahead of time and working with a community partner who was a regular storytime mom as well as a teacher, so she was comfortable with children in a learning environment.”
- “I was able to build relationships with families who didn’t attend traditional storytimes. I also met some parents who were native speakers, and my community partner translated important information about library services for them.”
- “A real benefit I see is that students in an immersion school are getting an opportunity to absorb the language and practice their comprehension skills outside of school.”
- “I learned some Spanish throughout the session, including basic greetings I can now use whenever these families visit the library again.”

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