



Librarian Toolkit

Helping Libraries Deliver Literacy

Updated August 15, 2018

Stork Storytime Overview

The **Stork Storytime** initiative is a completely new and original approach that delivers literacy by focusing on the expecting family. This expecting family education initiative encourages the development of a daily reading routine before baby (and chaos) arrives. It offers expecting parents and caregivers opportunities to learn about early literacy skills and connect with resources in their communities, empowering them to be more confident in their roles as a child's first teachers, right from the very beginning.

History

Families are faced with many changes and challenges after baby arrives but implementing a daily reading routine with their newborn doesn't need to be one of those things. When Jennifer Jordebek was a new mom, she struggled to start *and* maintain a daily reading routine after bringing her first child home. She was not a librarian yet but knew reading every day was important to do. However, adjusting to that new little person — and everything that came with him — made a daily reading routine more hope than reality.

After she began her career in library land, she saw firsthand how critical developing a love of reading — and becoming proficient in it — was to a child's future success, not only in school, but in life. Jennifer realized that if she had difficulties in the beginning, other caregivers probably did too.

And so began her desire to develop the **Stork Storytime** programs to help prepare caregivers to start a child's lifelong learning and love of reading as soon as possible.

Stork Storytime Initiative

This initiative consists of multiple programs including **Stork Storytime Reads**, **Stork Storytime Talks** and the **Stork Storytime Expo**.

The **Reads** program encourages expecting families to do 100 “read alouds” before baby arrives. Adults become more comfortable reading out loud and current children in the family can practice their literacy skills. It's a wonderful bonding experience and sets the tone and expectation that reading is important and valued at home. This program is also a great segue to the popular 1000 Books before Kindergarten program.

The annual **Expo** connects new and expecting families with valuable resources in their community. It was initially designed to be a kickoff to raise awareness about the initiative; but was extremely popular, and so an annual event was born. Non-profit organizations and businesses share their expertise and knowledge with attendees and each other at this free event. Mini library programs and screenings are also available for families with children during the **Expo**.

The monthly **Stork Storytime Talks** enables adult caregivers to listen to podcasts and learn from local experts when it's convenient for them, whether that's during their commute, a child's naptime or a 2 a.m. feeding.

Why Deliver Literacy

Libraries have always been natural advocates of literacy and lifelong learning. Librarians offer a variety of programming to encourage and develop a love of reading for even the youngest patrons. Current early literacy programs are good, are making a difference, and need to continue. They all, however, focus on either the parent or child after they are born. The **Stork Storytime** initiative is unique and groundbreaking because it moves that timeframe up to before the child arrives.

Libraries already play a valuable role in delivering early literacy. We are in an excellent position to offer programming of this nature to our communities. Even though every community is unique, all communities, as statistics show, deal with the consequences of children starting school not being prepared to learn.

The North Liberty Community Library has created the **Stork Storytime Reads** Librarian Toolkit to assist libraries in delivering the **Reads** program to their communities. Developing new programs take time, staff and money. Libraries are constantly working within these limited resources, so using this toolkit will enable libraries of any size to offer this programming.

Libraries are encouraged to check back often as the NLCL will be updating this toolkit with information on how to implement other **Stork Storytime** programming, including the **Expo** and **Talks** programs.

As passionate advocates of lifelong learning, librarians should consider delivering **Stork Storytime** programming to their communities by using this Librarian Toolkit. The NLCL would like to stay in communication with other libraries offering this programming so we can support and learn from each other. Please email Jennifer Jordebek at jjordbrek@northlibertyiowa.org if you decide to implement the **Reads** program or feel free to contact us at (319) 626-5701 with any questions you may have.

Statistics

Third and fourth grade are critical school years for students because they are making the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Research and statistics show that being proficient in reading by the end of third grade is an important indicator of a kid's future success in school. If students are behind by the end of the fourth grade, they unfortunately tend to stay behind.

Children starting school not ready to learn is prevalent across the United States and is not limited to any geographic area. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count project, for example, which assesses national child well-being and uses literacy as one key indicator, noted that nearly two-thirds of fourth graders are reading below proficiency. This data book, available at aecf.org, offers profiles for each state, librarians can see how their state is doing.

Additional resources are available from the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. The forum's most recently published report, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, available at childstats.gov, provides recent information on children in the United States across 41 report indicators, including education. Librarians can review this statistical information to help support their decision to expand reading programs at their libraries.

Stork Storytime Reads

The **Reads** program encourages expecting families to do 100 “read alouds” before baby arrives. The goal is for families to begin developing this daily reading routine that can be more easily continued or picked back up after baby arrives. Establishing this habit when there is more time and life is not as chaotic will enable them to be more confident to continue reading once baby is in their arms.

The program includes two separate reading logs. Each log has a parent tip on it and 50 egg outlines that are used to record the read alouds. For simplicity, read alouds can be tracked either as the number of times or number of books someone reads, as determined by the expecting family. They receive their first reading log during registration. The logs are included in this toolkit and can be updated with the participating library’s information.

The NLCL registers each family via Beanstack, online software at beanstack.com, which many libraries use for tracking summer reading programs and other reading challenges. Libraries can use whatever registration process works best for their library, however.

Families participating in the **Reads** program at the NLCL receive prizes, but libraries can choose to give prizes or not, depending on available funding. The specific type of prize can also be at the discretion of each library. The prizes in our program include a registration prize (we give families a board book). This is a great incentive to encourage participation in the program and gets a book immediately into the home. Families earn two additional prizes as they progress through the reading program.

Our initial board book is from the Usborne series First Focus Frieze. Selected because these books are “filled with panels of recognizable, high-contrast black-and-white images and patterns to aid visual development in the early stages.” The books in this series are a fold-out, accordion style, stand-up book that is perfect later for baby’s tummy time. The First Focus Frieze series include the *123 Counting*, *On the Farm* and *Under the Sea* titles and the publisher is Kane Miller. We’ve worked with a local Usborne Books& More consultant who has participated in our annual **Expo** to purchase these books at a discount through their company program.

After completing the first 50 read alouds, expecting families turn in the **Reads** log and receive their second reading log and prize. The NLCL gives an *Indestructibles* book. There are a variety of titles by author Amy Pixton. We selected this as our second book prize because *Indestructibles* are 100 percent baby-proof, chew-proof, rip-proof, and drool-proof. The books are printed on a unique nontoxic, paper-like material that can even be put in the washing machine or dishwasher. The lightweight books are very portable and can be tossed in the diaper bag for reading anywhere.

After completing the second **Reads** log, the expecting family has completed 100 read alouds and has completed the program. Their final prize is a baby bib bearing the logos of the **Stork Storytime Reads** program and our local sponsor.

Libraries understand the importance of measuring and collecting statistics to help tell our library story. A **Reads** survey is available in the toolkit for libraries to use once an expecting family has completed the reading program. The information collected from this survey will enable libraries to share information with key stakeholders about the impact the **Reads** program is having.

Benefits

The **Reads** program is a natural segue way to the popular 1000 Books before Kindergarten Reading Program, which you may already offer, and there are many additional benefits to families when they participate in the **Stork Storytime Reads** program:

- Developing a regular reading routine before baby arrives so that habit can be more easily continued afterward
- Reading aloud can be difficult or uncomfortable for many adults and even children, so reading to the bump beforehand gives the family some practice
- Bonding with the unborn child
- Current children are able to practice their reading and develop their literacy skills
- Sets the tone and expectation that reading is important and valued at home
- Gets books in the home to start baby's personal library
- Developing a love of reading and life-long learning are important at any age and starting from the very beginning is a great way to set the child up for future success

Funding & Sponsorship

While some of the cost of the program have come from our regular operating budget, we look to stretch those dollars with sponsorships and other funding opportunities.

Forming partnerships within your communities take time and should be an ongoing activity. You are encouraged to begin building these relationships if this is not currently being done. These partnerships are vital to libraries so reach out to community organizations in your area that are applicable to this program. Many businesses and organizations are willing to sponsor programs, they just need to be asked.

A local hospital is the exclusive sponsor for our **Stork Storytime** initiative at the NLCL. In prior years, they sponsored our annual **Expo** program and purchased tote bags for the attendees. We have continued to grow this relationship and both organizations have benefitted. They donated all the design and building costs associated to construct a new lactation room in our children's area. This example illustrates the importance of developing partnerships in your communities.

Additionally, we have used the registration fees we charge for-profits to showcase themselves at our annual **Expo** to fund parts of the initiative.

Implementation and timeline

The timeline for planning and delivering a **Reads** program is approximately 3 to 6 months. There are many variables that will impact this timeframe including buy in and approval from management or administration and available resources like staffing and budget.

Costs to implement the **Reads** program will mainly consist of staff time and money if you choose to offer incentives. This toolkit will save you a lot of time and energy in planning so the program can be implemented in a more cost effective manner. A great resource to find inexpensive books is from the First Book organization, from which libraries can receive books sometimes for just the cost of shipping.

There are some requirements though so please see their website, firstbook.org, for additional information.

Marketing for the **Reads** program should begin at least 4 to 6 weeks before the rollout. A sample news release and customizable flyer are included in this toolkit. Social media posts are a great way to reach the public and will help generate interest and excitement in the program. General announcements before current storytimes and other programs are a wonderful way to share this new program with current library patrons. Word of mouth among expecting families will help market this program too.

Additional resources

The American Library Association (ALA) has identified six early literacy skills that children need to learn in order to be prepared to learn to read and write when they start school. The State Library of Iowa explains these skills and ways to include them in storytime at its [website](#). Librarians can share this information with expecting parents and caregivers to aid them in understanding the early literacy skills in a simple and helpful manner that they can then apply during their reading time with children.