



Baltimore County Public Library

BCPL News Release

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FOR RELEASE UPON RECEIPT

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY CONTRIBUTES TO INCREASE IN SCHOOL READINESS

The Maryland Model for School Readiness assessment released last month by the Maryland Department of Education shows that 85 percent of Baltimore County kindergarteners are ready for school, up from 32 percent when the test began 10 years ago. This increase can be attributed to Maryland's *Creating Connections to Grow Readers: It's Never Too Early* initiative, established by the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Library Development and Services in 2001.

More than 1,000 public librarians statewide have participated in training created by the Johns Hopkins University's Center for Reading Excellence to align their resources and services to young children birth to five, and their families and caregivers with the Maryland Model for School Readiness.

"A library is often a child's first classroom, and a lifetime love of books and learning can begin within library walls," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "Libraries provide the key to strong early childhood development. They offer critical resources to communities in every part of our State."

Marisa Conner, Youth Services Coordinator at Baltimore County Public Library noted, "BCPL's early learning and literacy efforts are specifically designed to support the school readiness skills identified in the Maryland Model for School Readiness. We are proud of the results showing more Baltimore County children are entering school 'ready to succeed'."

Baltimore County Public Library supports school readiness by providing a variety of programs and materials for children ages birth through five.

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- In FY 2010 nearly 120,000 participants attended over 6,000 story times for infants, toddlers and preschoolers and their caregivers incorporating early literacy best practices for children and tips for parents and caregivers.
- Each month approximately 12,000 children (birth to five years old) and their parents and caregivers visit Storyville located in the Rosedale and Woodlawn branches. Storyville is an interactive early literacy and learning center designed and created to foster school readiness.
- Early Literacy Activity Centers are located in the Children's area in each branch of Baltimore County Public Library (17 locations). These special areas are designed to promote the development of early literacy skills in preschoolers, from birth through five years of age, by providing interactive early literacy play activities that promote school readiness.
- Early Literacy Resources including suggested reading lists, tips on how to share books and activities with children, information on child development and other online resources are available on the BCPL website at:
http://www.bcpl.info/firstyears/firstyears_resources.html.
- Baby Boosters Kits are collections of books and resources for use by parents and child care providers. Each kit has a unique theme that appeals to children and promotes reading readiness. On average a total of 185 Baby Booster kits are circulated each month.
- Each summer BCPL provides a summer reading program for all ages of youth. The "Read-to-Me" club is specially designed for children ages birth to five to participate with their parents and caregivers. In 2010 over 10,000 preschoolers participated in the summer reading program.
- Learning Parties for preschool children and their parents and caregivers are provided at the Rosedale Branch of BCPL. Topics focus on the Maryland Model for School Readiness areas of Language and Literacy, Math, and Science.
- Read Rover, BCPL's mobile children's library, visits 150 child care centers and home care providers each month, providing early literacy story time programs and children's books and teaching resources for check-out by providers.
- Baltimore County Public Library partners with other agencies serving young children in the community, including the Baltimore County Infants and Toddlers and Preschool programs; the Judy Center; and Head Start.

With these services and more, Baltimore County Public Library works to nurture a love of reading beginning in early childhood. For more information on BCPL's early childhood offerings at BCPL's 17 branches, please visit <http://www.bcpl.info/firstyears/>.