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Turning Libraries into Family Centers: The Hidden Treasures!

By Michelle Royer, M.S.
Children's Librarian, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, Newington, CT

This article is translatled into Spanish on page 2. Ver la versión en español de este articulo en la página 2.

Produced by the State Department of Education Early Children Special Education Program and the Connecticut Birth to Three System in collaboration with the

University of Connecticut
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
College of Agriculture & Natural Resources

When you hear the word library, you may immediately think of books and reading. That's true, but reading books is just one of many great services libraries have to offer to families and their children. Libraries are now focusing more and more on families and their children, especially those from birth to five years old. Throughout the state, many libraries are offering children's programs that go beyond reading books. Many libraries are helping parents find professional help and resources that weren't available at libraries before.

To illustrate how libraries are turned into Family Centers, I will use my own experience as children's librarian at the Lucy Robbins Welles Library in Newington, Connecticut. Although program names may vary from library to library, I am very sure that when visiting your local library, you will find out that libraries are becoming true Family Centers. For example, since 2003 when Newington first became a *Family Place Library*, our *Parent/Child Workshop* program has helped families connect with Birth to Three resource professionals as well as representatives from the Newington Public Schools and other interested agencies. As a Family Place our library started to provide professionals that could respond to questions or concerns regarding child development from birth to five in a very comfortable playgroup setting.

It was soon apparent that many families were utilizing services for their children after formal observations and testing were done from both the Birth to Three and public school professionals. Many of these children qualified for services based on these professionals' referrals. It is very likely that when visiting your library next time, you will see professionals from different specialties serving families through programs such as the *Parent/Child Workshop*. Specialists in the area of child development, special education, behavior analysts, speech and language, nutrition, pediatric dentistry, optometrists, physical therapy, occupational therapy, music therapy, pediatric nursing and more are available for families who may be looking for support services. After several years of success stories about children and families who qualified and benefitted from early intervention and special education, more programming ideas began to arise under the Family Place umbrella.

Many libraries are offering programs that have worked well for other libraries. These programs are usually customized or adapted to better fit local families' needs. For instance, our library implemented the program *Play for All* under the Family Place umbrella. This program was modeled after a play group we were fortunate to visit in Terryville, Connecticut. This program gives parents an opportunity to talk, support and encourage each other while their children play.

Another family program called Play with Us is uniquely designed for families of toddlers with disabilities. *Play with Us* is made possible by Dot Carso from Creative Interventions; one of the local Birth to Three

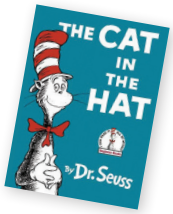
programs that specializes in serving children with autism. Because of this program, the Newington library is visited by people from all over the state. For parents who see their children in a group setting with children who don't have disabilities for the first time, it can be a very moving experience. Professionals are there to support families through this transition and encourage group activities such as play, snack time and music. Every week small miracles happen in this program!

For the "Graduates" of the programs listed above, Family Place Libraries and the National Center for Learning Disabilities have partnered to present *Get Ready to Read*, a program designed for children ages 4-7. Our version is *We All Get Ready to Read!* This initiative is an early literacy activity program designed to help parents make sure that young children are exposed to the skills they need to be ready to learn to read. Children participate in hands-on activities, listen to and read books together, and more. The program usually draws typically developing children, special needs friends and children learning English as a second language.

In addition to programming for children, many libraries now are serving as a liaison between families and many local agencies. A benefit of these relationships is that libraries have become more proactive than reactive to families' needs. As the need arises for additional programs for parents and caretakers, libraries can develop them quickly. Here are some special education programs you may find at your local library:

- Special Education Accommodations in schools (parents)
- Transitioning out of Birth to Three and into public schools
- Sensory Workshop
- Life 24/7 of Families with special needs
- What to do when you may have a child with special accommodations in your daycare and nursery school.

In conclusion, the new concept of library services goes beyond books and reading programs. Libraries are becoming Family Centers by implementing services and programs that help families connect with Birth to Five professionals serving children under five years old as well as local service providers. Libraries are truly hidden treasures families are invited to discover! To find out what your local library is offering, take the first step: Visit your local library and get ready to discover the hidden treasure!



Convirtiendo Bibliotecas en Centros Familiares: ¡Los Tesoros Escondidos!

Por Michelle Royer, M. S.
Bibliotecaria de Niños, Biblioteca Lucy Robbins Welles, Newington, CT

Cuando escucha la palabra biblioteca, posiblemente piensa inmediatamente en libros y lectura. Eso es cierto, pero la lectura de libros es sólo uno de los muchos excelentes servicios que las bibliotecas tienen para ofrecer a las familias y sus hijos. Las bibliotecas se están centrando cada vez más en las familias y sus hijos, especialmente desde el nacimiento hasta los cinco años. En todo el estado, muchas bibliotecas ofrecen programas para niños que van más allá de los libros de lectura. Muchas bibliotecas están ayudando a los padres a encontrar la ayuda profesional y los recursos que no estaban disponibles en las bibliotecas anteriormente.

Para ilustrar cómo las bibliotecas se convierten en Centros Familiares, utilizaré mi propia experiencia como bibliotecaria de niños en la Biblioteca Lucy Robbins Welles en Newington, Connecticut. Aunque los nombres de los programas pueden variar de una biblioteca a otra, estoy muy segura de que al visitar su biblioteca local, usted encontrará que las bibliotecas se están convirtiendo en verdaderos centros familiares. Por ejemplo, desde el 2003, cuando Newington abrió la primera *Área Familiar en la Biblioteca*, nuestro programa de Talleres de Padre/Hijo ha ayudado a las familias a conectarse con los profesionales del programa desde el nacimiento hasta los tres años, así como representantes de las escuelas públicas de Newington y otras agencias comunitarias. Como Área Familiar nuestra biblioteca comenzó a traer profesionales para que pudieran responder a preguntas o inquietudes que los padres tenían sobre el desarrollo del niño desde su nacimiento hasta los cinco años, en un ambiente de grupo de juego muy cómodo.

Pronto fue evidente que muchas familias estaban utilizando los servicios para sus hijos, después de las observaciones formales y las pruebas que se efectuaban tanto

de los profesionales del programa desde el nacimiento a los tres años como de las escuelas públicas. Muchos de estos niños calificaron para servicios basados en las referencias de estos profesionales. Es muy probable que cuando visite la biblioteca la próxima vez, vea profesionales de diferentes especialidades que sirven a familias a través de programas como el Taller de Padre/Hijo. Especialistas en el área de desarrollo infantil, educación especial, analistas del comportamiento, del habla y del lenguaje, nutrición, odontología pediátrica, optometristas, terapia física, terapia ocupacional, terapia de música, enfermería pediátrica y más están disponibles para las familias que pueden estar buscando los servicios de apoyo. Después de varios años de historias exitosas de los niños y las familias que calificaron y se beneficiaron de la intervención temprana y educación especial, más ideas de programas empezaron a surgir bajo del programa de Área Familiar.

Muchas bibliotecas ofrecen programas que han funcionado bien para otras bibliotecas. Estos programas suelen ser personalizados o adaptados para ajustarse mejor a las necesidades de las familias locales. Por ejemplo, nuestra biblioteca implementó el programa *Juego para Todo*s bajo el programa Área Familiar. Este programa se inspiró en un grupo de juego que tuvimos la suerte de visitar en Terryville, Connecticut. Este programa ofrece a los padres la oportunidad de hablar, apoyar y animarse unos a otros mientras sus hijos juegan.

Otro programa familiar llamado *Juega con Nosotros*, ha sido diseñado para familias con infantes con discapacidades. *Juega con Nosotros* ha sido posible gracias a "Dot Carso" de "Creative Interventions", uno de los programa locales desde el nacimiento hasta tres años que se especializa en servir a niños con autismo. Debido a este programa, la biblioteca de Newington es visitada por personas de todo el estado. Para los padres que ven a sus hijos por primera vez, en un ambiente de grupo con niños que no tienen discapacidades, puede ser una experiencia muy conmovedora. Los profesionales están ahí para apoyar a las familias a través de esta transición y fomentar actividades de grupo como juegos, meriendas y música. ¡Cada semana suceden pequeños milagros en este programa!

Para los "graduados" de los programas antes mencionados, el programa Área Familiar en la Biblioteca y el Centro Nacional para las Discapacidades del Aprendizaje se han asociado para presentar *Prepárate para Leer*, un programa diseñado para niños de 4 a7 años. Nuestra versión es *¡Todos Nosotros nos Prepáranos para Leer*! Esta iniciativa es un programa de actividades de alfabetización temprana diseñado para ayudar a los padres a asegurarse que los niños estén expuestos a las habilidades que necesitan para estar listos para aprender a leer. Los niños participan en actividades prácticas, escuchan y leen libros juntos, y mucho más. El programa por lo general atrae a niños con desarrollo típico, amigos con necesidades especiales de aprendizaje y niños que aprenden inglés como segunda lengua.

Además de la programación para niños, muchas bibliotecas ahora están sirviendo como enlace entre las familias y muchas agencias locales. Una de las ventajas de estas relaciones es que las bibliotecas se han vuelto más proactivas que reactivas a las necesidades de las familias. A medida que surja la necesidad de programas adicionales para los padres y cuidadores de niños, las bibliotecas pueden desarrollar programas rápidamente. Aquí hay algunos programas de educación especial que usted puede encontrar en su biblioteca local:

- Lugares de Educación Especial en las Escuelas (padres)
- Transición de Infantes a Tres Años en las Escuelas Públicas
- Taller Sensorial
- Vida 24/7 de Familias con Necesidades Especiales
- Qué hacer cuando usted puede tener un niño que necesita lugares especiales en su guardería y jardín de infantes.

En conclusión, el nuevo concepto de servicios de las bibliotecas va más allá de los libros y programas de lectura. Las bibliotecas se están convirtiendo en centros familiares mediante la implementación de servicios y programas que ayudan a las familias a conectarse con los profesionales del Programa Desde el Nacimiento hasta los Cinco Años que atienden a niños menores de cinco años, así como los proveedores de servicios locales. ¡Las bibliotecas son verdaderamente tesoros escondidos que las familias están invitadas descubrir! Para averiguar lo que ofrece su biblioteca local, de el primer paso: ¡Visite su biblioteca local y prepárese para descubrir el tesoro escondido!

BIRTH through 5 news

Birth through 5 News is published periodically by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Newsletter Advisory Board. We welcome readers' comments and contributions related to the special needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Please mail correspondence to the editor at 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801.

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Birth to Three Update

By Linda Goodman, Director, Birth to Three System

There is lots of uncertainty at this time about when the Birth to Three System administration will be moving to the new proposed Office of Early Childhood. The plan proposed by the Governor indicated a July, 2014 move which would allow time to put everything in place that is needed to change the lead agency from the Department of Developmental Services to the Office of Early Childhood. But, as budget negotiations stretch out, we'll have to wait to see what the legislature decides about the timing since the draft budget bill had indicated a move as early as July 2013. We fear that this abrupt change may cause some problems with our federal grant and probably with Medicaid billing. The good news is that no matter what date is selected and how it affects our federal and Medicaid funding, Birth to Three provider contracts will transfer smoothly to the new agency and providers will continue to be paid from state funding. Families should not experience any disruption in services. Once we know the answer, we will post it on the "What's New" section of the Birth to Three website (***www.birth23.org***).

In the meantime, the federal grant application for July funding to the Department of Developmental Services has been submitted. Our grant amount dropped about $200,000 (5.21%) due to budget sequestration but our plan is to absorb the reduction administratively with no impact on provider services.

As families head into the summer and are perhaps going on vacation with their children, parents should ask their Birth to Three providers for any advice or tips on using vacation travel as an opportunity for their child to try out new skills or to generalize the ones he or she has learned to use around home or in child care. If the child doesn't like change, parents can ask about some ways to prepare for the trip or things to do daily (such as a picture schedule) or other ways that parents can let their child know what to expect. It's also another opportunity for parents to use the early intervention techniques they have acquired and to gain confidence in their ability to help their child in many different situations.

We want to serve you!

Please send your ideas or suggestions for future newsletter topics to:

german.cutz@uconn.edu or call 203-207-8440 / 207-3267.

Thank you so much for your input.

Providers' Perspective

Tips on Accessing Library Programs for Children With Disabilities

By Kristen Peck
Middletown Pubic Schools

- Find out when nearby local libraries offer playgroup. Find a group that runs during a time that you know is generally a successful time of day for your child.
- Prior to attending playgroup, take your child to visit the library and the space that will be used. Help your child to feel comfortable and familiar with the space by looking at books and doing simple activities they can be successful with (at which your child will experience success).
- On the day of playgroup, make sure your child is well rested, healthy and has had a snack.
- During the playgroup, support your child by being by his or her side. Monitor to avoid any potential behavioral difficulties. Do not be upset if your child does not sit when all of the other children are sitting. It is okay if your child quietly roams around the space. Ensure that your child is safe and know that with continued exposure to the routine of playgroup, your child will learn to sit and participate with the other children!
- Attend playgroup as regularly as possible. Exposure, practice and routines build success!

ICC Update

A Vision of the State Interagency Coordinating Council

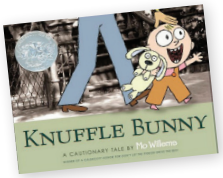
By Anna Hollister
Birth to Three staff to the State ICC

Connecticut's State Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) was legislatively established to provide a collaborative effort at the state level to increase and improve:

- **Availability** of early intervention services;
- **Quality** of those services;
- **Capacity** of the Birth to Three system to provide services; and
- **Accessibility** of early intervention services to all families.

A vision of the State ICC is that collaboration among early childhood stakeholders, state agency representatives, legislators and service providers will improve the way the ***system*** of early intervention services is organized, coordinated and delivered in the Birth to Three System. This system of services will support the goals of improved ***availability, quality, capacity, and accessibility***, which, in turn, will improve services to children.

According to Connecticut House Bill 6359, "An Act Concerning An Early Childhood System," a state Office of Early Childhood would be established and it would be in charge of consolidating resources from five state agencies into one office. It would have jurisdiction over services to children from birth to five years of age. The department would also enhance and implement the Early Childhood Information system; develop and report on an early childhood accountability plan in consultation with the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and implement a communication's strategy for outreach to families, service providers and policymakers. Currently, Connecticut's ICC is addressing state legislators with their concerns and is trying to ensure that children with disabilities have a voice in the new proposed office as well as maintaining a system that works well for families. The State ICC will also be looking to see how they fit into the new office and can expand their vision of early intervention to the broader Early Childhood System.



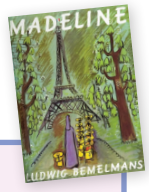
Early Childhood Special Education Update

Maria Synodi, Coordinator ECSE

The upcoming summer months are a great opportunity to take advantage of the options and opportunities available in your community. This newsletter features the resources and benefits of being connected to the public library which is integral to early childhood development in local communities. A range of programming for young children has grown out of a long history of the public library's support for early learning. Many libraries have spaces that are specially designed for children and their caregivers and offer many different child-focused programs and services including: a diverse collection of reading, viewing, and listening materials for all reading levels and in many languages; classes and learning opportunities for parents, caregivers, and teachers on early learning and child development; story times where children and their families can share the experience of reading; and enriched learning environments with a focus on literacy and learning.

Summer provides a wonderful opportunity for all children to continue growing academically and socially. The State Education Resource Center (SERC) provides a directory that includes a range of offerings of indoor and outdoor activities including camps and other programs for children with needs and their families. The directory can be accessed through the SERC website or through the following link: ***http://ctserc.org/docs/2013%20Camp%20directory%20final.pdf.***

Spring is the optimal time to begin thinking of and planning for the summer months. Whether the options are relaxed day-to-day opportunities for outside fun or some structured options that target need areas for your child, it's important to explore what's in your community. Have a great summer!



Parents' Perspective

How Do You Use the Library When Your Child Has Special Needs?

By Sylvia Leal
Preschool Paraprofessional
at Middletown Public Schools

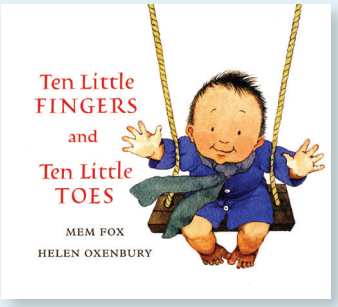
Libraries are more than buildings where books can be found. A library is a free community resource just waiting to be discovered. Plan a child's library visit with your Birth to Three service providers to learn how to play with a train set or a doll house. A child may use library children's toys and other resources to create a puppet show or a tea party with another child. Free computer access exposes them to technology they may or may not have at home.

Go and discover many other library services! Libraries host play dates and some towns even have play dates geared specifically for children with special needs. Connect with other families with similar struggles. You will discover that other families can offer hope and that you are not alone. You can also observe how your child handles different play and social situations. Through library programs such as "Story times," children are introduced to movements, finger plays, songs, and books. Take your child to story times as often as you can so that they get comfortable with listening and attending to a story in a structured environment by the librarian or a featured story teller.

The universal language of music helps all children! Every library has a great selection of prerecorded music to test out and see what artist or genre your child will like best. Children can learn about different cultures when introduced to a variety of children's world music. Use CDs to help children go to sleep, to calm them down in the car, to redirect a potential meltdown, and to learn their ABC's. The repetition of messages in songs helped my child learn safety skills of "stop, look and listen" from a CD that I played over and over from my local library. Please go to your local library today and help your child get a free library card. The library will help your child love to learn and play! As a parent of a child with special needs and preschool paraprofessional at Middletown Public Schools, Birth to Three System and the library community have made me a better mom and teacher. Thank you!

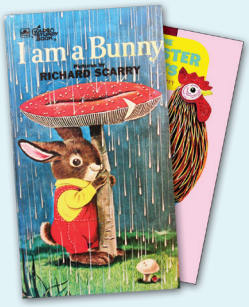
Books:

Many of these books are available in Spanish, and can be purchased as a hardcover, paperback, or board book.

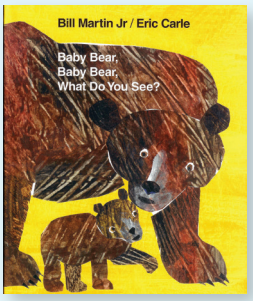


Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes (2008). By Mem Fox. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury.

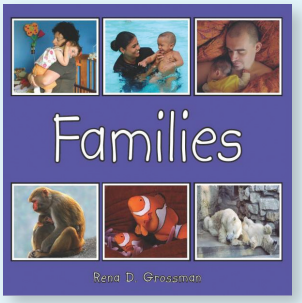
Mem Fox uses rhyme and repetition to create a multicultural book about something all different babies have in common: ten little fingers and ten little toes.



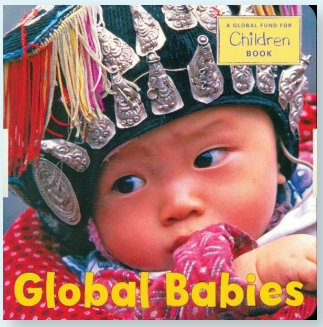
I Am a Bunny [1963] (2004). **The Rooster Struts** [1963](2004). By Richard Scarry. I Am a Bunny depicts the small animal's changing habits as one season turns into the next and the yearly cycle starts again. In The Rooster Struts simple sentences describe how each animal moves: "The duck waddles. The goose waggles."



Baby Bear, Baby Bear, What Do You See? (2007). By Martin Jr. Illustrated by Eric Carle. This book presents a collection of endangered animals. Baby Bear portrays North American animals and a baby bear's bond with its mother.



Families (2009). By Rena D. Grossman. This nonfiction board book highlights the common ways humans and animals take care of their babies.



Global Babies (2007). From Global Fund Children. In this beautiful multicultural board book, babies from all over the world are captured in exquisite local clothing—decorative but not fancy.

Websites:

Center for Early Literacy Learning

http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/parentresource1.php

The Center for Early Literacy and Learning (CELL) has Practice Guides for Parents that can be used by parents to provide their infants, toddlers, or preschoolers fun and exciting literacy learning experiences and opportunities.

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Este boletín está disponible en inglés y español. Visite el sitio del Sistema para Infantes de Tres Años en *www.birth23.org* y pulse en Publicaciones o el sitio del Departamento de Educación en *www.sde.ct.gov* Luego pulse en Early Education (Educación Temprana en español).

CHILDREN'S ARTWORK WANTED!

You are invited to send pictures or other artwork that your child has done. We would like to start an "art collection" for possible inclusion in future Birth through 5 News newsletters. Please mark the artwork with the artist's first name and age then mail to:

Dr. German Cutz, Editor, UCONN CES
67 Stony Hill Rd.
Bethel, CT 06801-3056

Or send by e-mail to: ***german.cutz@uconn.edu***

No artwork will be returned.
We look forward to receiving your child's works of art!