

# VIEWS2 Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning that Work Successfully

## Storytimes Matter!

*“When children are exposed to specific reading skills they can learn to read more successfully. If literate adults and librarians know what these specific skills are they can integrate them into to almost any kind of storytime – structured or casual.” – Dr. Eliza T. Dresang*

### The Research

Children become readers with the support of the community—parents/caregivers, family, friends, neighbors, early childhood educators, and librarians. Public library storytimes have long been considered a staple in the lives of many young children. Filled with colorful stories, playful rhymes, and movement, these events offer opportunities for creative play and socialization. More recently, librarians have been incorporating early literacy concepts into their storytimes, but they had no way of measuring what impact, if any, this new addition might be having on the children who attend their storytimes.

In the groundbreaking study *Project VIEWS2*, Dr. Eliza T. Dresang, Beverly Cleary Professor at the University of Washington Information School and her team observed 240 storytimes, over two years, at 40 libraries around Washington State. The team demonstrated a correlation between librarians offering early literacy practices and children displaying corresponding early literacy behaviors in the storytimes. Bottom line: children ARE learning and responding to what librarians are presenting in storytime.

Furthermore, the results of this research have wide applications across many early learning settings. For early learning practitioners, (such as childcare providers, museum educators, Play & Learn facilitators, etc.) delivering more structured circle times/storytimes, this research provides simple, evidence-based tools that enable them to insert early literacy content into their programs. These planning tools also provide educators and parents/caregivers with the understanding of how to support children’s early literacy development in the unstructured interactions they have with children attending their programs. Being more intentional and interactive in incorporating early literacy behaviors into all of their interactions and storytimes can make a difference in the early literacy outcomes of children who attend their programs.

## Policy/Advocacy Professionals

Policy-makers and advocacy professionals can make a crucial impact by continuing to support outreach and programs such as storytimes. Libraries are a natural extension of the early learning and K-12 system. Supporting ongoing longitudinal research into how library programs and other informal early learning environments can set a child up for lifelong learning. Additionally, policies should encourage partnerships between early learning professionals and informal learning environments in order to promote a holistic, community-centered approach to children and their learning and development.

## Parents/Caregivers

Parenthood is full of everyday moments--perfect opportunities to be intentional and to interact with your child to support their pre-reading development. Whether your baby is turning a board book from upside down to right side up, your toddler is pointing to every vehicle on the road and saying, "CAR!" as you drive to the grocery store, or your preschooler is starting to sound out the letters on the STOP sign—these all represent important steps toward later reading success. You can be your child's best partner in this journey. Talk, sing, read, write, and play with your child to promote language and literacy development as they grow. Take your child to storytimes and other library programs.

## Philanthropists

Philanthropists are in a unique position to connect educators and librarians through funding. Funders can encourage early literacy skills into their philanthropy by encouraging partnerships with libraries, looking for programs and projects that incorporate high quality early literacy skills and professional development around early literacy. Philanthropist should also consider funding professional learning communities that incorporate librarians as a way to infuse these skills into the community.

## Educators and Family Support Professionals

Reading, rhyming, singing, and playing—these activities occur in early education environments as much as they are staple elements of public library storytimes. Moreover, these activities promote and support children's literacy development by encouraging vocabulary, alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness, and more. Librarians and educators should have opportunities to work together to crosswalk best practices and build mutually beneficial communities of practice.

Visit [views2.ischool.uw.edu](http://views2.ischool.uw.edu) for the full tools and more information about the research!

