

Sharing the EFL's Research and Links

Members of the current EFL Committee include Betsy Diamant-Cohen, executive director of *Mother Goose on the Loose*; Lori Romero, coordinator and supervisor of the Child and Family Library Services Department, Arapahoe (CO) Library District; Joanna Ward, children's services librarian, LA County (CA) Library; Kathryn Baumgartner, children's librarian, Great Neck (NY) Library; Carol Arlene Edwards, retired youth services librarian, Denver (CO) Public Library; Crystal Faris, director of youth and family engagement, Kansas City (MO) Public Library; Ruth Guerrier-Pierre, children's librarian, New York Public Library; Kristin Piepho, library manager, Sno-Isle Libraries, WA; Emmie Stuart, librarian, Metro Nashville (TN) Public Schools; and Sarah West, children's librarian, New York Public Library.

Serving on an ALSC committee is a great way to meet other children's librarians and to work on issues that interest you. Committees create or sponsor programs for conferences, discuss current issues and trends, brainstorm new ideas, participate in national projects, work as a team to review all sorts of media and present national awards, promote intellectual freedom, and more. Committee work enables you to share ideas and help shape the world of children's librarianship. In fact, this column was envisioned and created by Dr. Tess Prendergast, while she was serving on the Children and Libraries Editorial Advisory Committee.

Earlier this year, co-chairs of the ALSC Early and Family Literacy (EFL) Committee expressed a desire to write about some current research resources.

Via wonderful storytimes, access to quality children's books, and building engaging relationships with families, libraries have always played a pivotal role in supporting early childhood literacy development. The popular and widely implemented Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) initiative helped underscore the importance of both understanding the research and sharing with parents the practical ways they can incorporate important early literacy skills and practices into fun, everyday activities. These research-informed experiences are instrumental in helping children to become ready to learn to read and succeed in school.

When the ALSC board voted to conclude its formal work on ECRR as an active, joint initiative with PLA in 2018, ALSC decided to build on the foundation and successes of ECRR, moving forward with a focus on early and family literacy without necessarily being tied to a single product. To further support the library community with research-based early and family literacy endeavors, the Early and Family Literacy (EFL) Committee was created in 2019. One main goal is to stay on top of current research in the field of early and family literacy and share it with the library community.

The EFL Committee has taken a holistic approach in seeking recent, research-based articles pointing to practices that contribute to early literacy development. To start, the following pieces have been selected to spotlight and share with youth services colleagues.

Play

How Play Energizes Your Child's Brain

www.nytimes.com/2020/07/21/parenting/play-brain-science.html?searchResultPosition=1

Based on studies, various psychologists note that play, specifically pretend play, helps children develop skills such as planning, problem solving,

and deciphering the world around them. The complexity of play changes as children grow. This research is important to librarians in explaining the need for play spaces and play programming. It is also a useful tool in the development of various play programs for different age groups.

Social Emotional Health

Reading with Kids Could Help Curb Negative Behavior and Points to “Less Harsh Parenting”

<https://people.com/parents/reading-to-kids-can-reduce-negative-behavior-harsh-parenting-study/>

<https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0000000000000687>

As reported in *People Magazine*, researchers from the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School found that reading with a child isn't just about developing early literacy skills. Reading with a child can help develop a child's social emotional competence, which can lead to a decrease in a child's disruptive behaviors, and can result in less harsh parenting, less parenting stress, and an improved parent-child relationship.

Shared Reading Quality and Brain Activation during Story Listening in Preschool-Age Children

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5728185/

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2017.08.037>

In this study by the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, a controlled group of four-year-old girls from at-risk families were videotaped with their mothers for a reading of an age-appropriate picture book for observation. While the observations noted “maternal distraction by smartphones” and generally low shared reading quality scores, the conclusions still determined positive correlation with brain activation among the girls supporting complex language, executive function, and social-emotional processing. The study concluded that dialogic reading interventions between mother and daughter promoted healthy brain development, especially in at-risk children.

Using Literacy to Boost Your Child's Health and Resilience

<https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/23748/>

This article shows a variety of ways that reading helps build resilience in a child during difficult times, including (but not limited to) creating social connections, self-pride, and increasing feelings of belonging.

Technology

Screen Use Tied to Children's Brain Development

www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/well/family/screen-use-tied-to-childrens-brain-development.html

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3869>

Researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center determined that children with higher screen-based media use scored lower on cognitive tests measuring important early literacy skills. To help counteract possible ill effects of media use on children, library staff can encourage parents to do what parents do best—make time during a child's screen use, or anytime, to be there with the child to talk, ask questions, answer questions, and interact. And read!

Screen Time for Children and Adolescents During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/oby.22917>

This article explores the ways screen time for children and adolescents can positively affect physical and mental health, expand connectedness and socialization, and ensure a good night's sleep during the pandemic.

School Readiness

Literacy Loss in Kindergarten Children During COVID-19 School Closures

<https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/nbv79>

This article examines how COVID-19 will affect children by keeping them out of school. This can help both caretakers and parents understand the research behind why reading at home is important, especially during this time.

Beginning Readers

How to Inspire Every Child to Be a Lifelong Reader. TED Talk 2017.

www.ted.com/talks/alvin_irby_how_to_inspire_every_child_to_be_a_lifelong_reader#t-428907

Author, comedian, teacher, and Barbershop Books founder Alvin Irby delivers a challenge to rethink reading education. According to the US Department of Education, only 15 percent of black fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading. This talk challenges educators (which includes librarians) to rethink how we present book familiarity and reading and to do so through a culturally competent lens. The goal, of course, is for all children to view themselves as readers.

Programming

Impact, Advocacy, and Professional Development

www.academia.edu/19658640/Impact_Advocacy_and_Professional_Development_An_Exploration_of_Storytime_Assessment_in_Washington_State

Researchers from the Information School at the University of Washington were inspired by the Project VIEWS2 study to look into what types of assessments take place during and after storytime programs. There are challenges to creating formal assessment procedures, such as fear that these will negatively impact a librarian's annual evaluation, but there are many benefits to encouraging even informal, self-reflective assessment. By looking back on how a program went and how children responded to the activities, librarians are able to improve the quality of their programs, better meet community needs, and advocate for the importance of their work.

How Drag Queen Storytime in Libraries Helps Early Years Children Develop Multi-Literacies, Empathy and Centres Inclusion

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8790/174d45d6956e0bfa144e25e2aada546401a0.pdf?_ga=2.174693410.101971783.1596215629-1448062845.1596215629

Though storytimes hosted by drag queens have faced a lot of backlash in recent years, this article from Colette Townend combines a vast amount of research on this type of program and discusses its benefits. When conducted properly, Drag Queen Storytimes encourage important aspects of early childhood development and early literacy such as play, community cohesion, and empathy. By providing multi-modal stimuli and knowledge of the world, these programs have the ability to increase comprehension in children. &

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