

Inclusive Library Spaces and Programs for Young Children

Library Program Self-Assessment

Physical Spaces

Representation

- Families see themselves as well as families who look different from them in books on display and in other promotional materials.
- Families see themselves as well as families who look different from them in materials available in play spaces (e.g. toys and play accessories reflect people of all types and in non-stereotypical ways).
- Signs are presented in all languages spoken in the community.
- Signs are written in fonts, sizes, and colors that make them clear and easily discernable.
- Written messages are at a reading level appropriate for all caregivers.
- Written messages are translated into all languages spoken in the community.

Atmosphere

- Expressions and body language of library staff convey approachability and respect.
- All children and caregivers are welcomed into library spaces.
- Library staff respond to the questions and interests of all children and caregivers.
- Expectations for use of space and materials are explicit and written in positive language. For example, "You are free to use any art supplies on this table, but please use them at this table only so they don't get lost. Also, remember to put everything back in order when you finish."

Socialization and interaction

- Materials promote cooperative play between children.

- Toys and spaces are arranged so that multiple children can explore and play simultaneously.
- Furniture is arranged in a manner that invites gathering.
- Places for caregiver gathering are situated so that they can watch their children and socialize with other adults simultaneously.
- Furniture is arranged to allow for full mobility of all children and caregivers.
- Quiet spaces or nooks are available to allow children to retreat for individual time.

Development and learning

- Materials support a variety of child interests and ability levels.
- Materials afford opportunities for multisensory learning.
- Materials afford opportunities for fine motor development.
- Electronic devices allow for child socialization and/or adult mediation (note: headphones limit multi-child interaction and co-engagement and adults' ability to support digital decision making or discussion of content).
- Adaptive digital materials are available for use in the library (e.g., screen reader, adapted keyboard, etc.).

Programs

Representation

- Families can see themselves as well as families who look different from them in books and materials used in programs.

Interactions

- Adult participants are able to address other adults and children by name (e.g. name tags are available; participants have opportunities to introduce themselves, if they choose to do so).
- Children have opportunities to interact with others (e.g. cooperative play, collaborative activities, and/or questions are integrated into the program).

- Children have opportunities to use expressive language (e.g. open-ended questions that elicit children's reactions or opinions and facilitate both socialization and learning are integrated throughout the program).
- Adults and children have opportunities to develop relationships with others, should they choose to do so (i.e. through informal play, experimentation, tinkering, or artistic experiences immediately before and/or after programs).

Program Environment

Physical

- Seating options are available for participants who might not be able to sit on the floor.
- The seating arrangement enables everyone to see what is happening and feel included.
- The seating arrangement enables children who want or need a caregiver to sit closely.
- The physical arrangement allows for wheelchairs and special seating.
- Adaptive seating (e.g. sensory seat cushion, balance ball chairs, etc.) is available if/when needed.
- Quiet spaces or nooks are available for children to retreat temporarily if/when needed.

Communication

- Presenters use a microphone or other amplification equipment.
- If an ASL interpreter is available, the information is displayed on a sign in the room where the program is taking place (and in marketing materials).
- If noise reducing headphones are available, the information is posted on a sign in the room where the program is taking place (and in marketing materials).
- Program facilitators clearly state whether and to what extent adults should participate.

- Program facilitators establish whether participants can freely leave and return to the program based on their families' needs (e.g. to go to the bathroom).
- Program facilitators define rules regarding participants who need to retreat to a quiet space during the program.
- Program facilitators notify participants in advance of any program elements that may be overwhelming or overstimulating.
- A visual agenda conveys to both caregivers and children what is in store for the program.
 - The visual agenda includes icons that provide visual representation of planned program activities.
 - Facilitators re-visit the agenda throughout the program.
- Program facilitators let caregivers know that they are receptive to their families' needs and are available for conversations after the program.
- Program facilitators reinforce positive behaviors of the children (as well as their caregivers).
- When a child is exhibiting behavior that is inappropriate or distracting, program facilitators re-direct the child's attention or energy to a task that is appropriate.
- Materials such as fidget toys and sound dampening headphones are on hand for children who may need them.
- Facilitators reassure caregivers by providing nonverbal cues or statements of reassurance when necessary (e.g. "I'm so glad you came! It's okay." "That is normal kiddo behavior." "It may take time to get used to storytime." "Everyone has a rough day sometimes." "We hope you come back.").
- Facilitators adjust program plans as necessary based on the needs of the participants.
- Where appropriate, staff relax rules or expectations, particularly in relation to children sitting still.

Participation strategies

- Programs are structured around a standard routine.

- Elements of repetition are embedded within and across programs.
- A variety of resources, materials, and activities support a range of interests and ability-levels.
- Children can use more than one sense to participate.
- Embodied learning (i.e. activities that involve gestures or bodily activity) activities are scaffolded through repetition:
 1. An explanation of what is going to occur.
 2. An opportunity for the participants to join in and practice the activity.
 3. An opportunity for everyone to apply what they just practiced.
- Children have opportunities to react and respond to ideas and events verbally or with gestures.
- Facilitators ask open-ended questions that offer opportunities for participants to connect their own experiences and perspectives with the program material.
- Facilitators provide sufficient wait time [after asking questions or providing directions] that enables all participants to process the information and generate responses.
- Staff convey information to caregivers in a manner that enables them to extend strategies and activities beyond the program and library.

Logistics

- Programs are sized (the number of participants) to maximize opportunities for socializing, learning, and satisfying the interests of caregivers and children (i.e. without anyone feeling overwhelmed by crowds and/or noise).
- Programs are offered beyond the traditional workday/school day (i.e. evenings and/or weekends) for those families with members who work and/or attend school during traditional library hours of operation.

Digital Spaces

Representation

- Families can see themselves as well as families who look different from them reflected in the images, languages, and offerings communicated digitally (e.g. library website, social media, email messages, etc.).
- Families can see themselves as well as families who look different from them reflected in digital materials, services, and programs offered by the library (e.g. ebooks, materials used in virtual programs, etc.).

Interactions

- Library staff are available to support patrons remotely (e.g. via virtual chat, virtual drop-in meetings, etc.).
- Opportunities for social and educational interaction are included in the design and delivery of virtual programming.

Program environment

- Scaffolding strategies are incorporated into the design and delivery of virtual library programming (e.g., activities with multiple levels of engagement to support differences in interest and/or ability).
- Virtual programs are designed with the unique needs of individuals with disabilities in mind ([see Association for Library Service to Children *Virtual Storytime Services Guide* sections on serving Children and Families with Disabilities](#)).

Accessibility and communication

- Digital spaces and communications are fully accessible ([see ADA.gov Web Guidance](#)).
- Universal design principles are incorporated into the design and functionality of the library's digital communications and spaces (i.e. reflect an intuitive and user-friendly design that takes visual, audio, and motor skill needs into account).
- Digital access, support materials, and service options (both those that are available within the physical library and those available remotely) are

clearly communicated digitally (e.g. library website, social media, email messages, etc.).

- Digital access, support materials, and service options are accompanied by clear information to support users with limited digital skills or knowledge.
- The flexibility of library programming and/or possibility of accommodating diverse abilities and access needs is clearly communicated on the library website.
- The library partners and communicates with community organizations, agencies, and healthcare providers to ensure all members of the community are aware of programs and services.

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