Tips and Recommendations for My First Books Partners

The following tips and recommendations were gathered from previous participants and partners, through the My First Books final reports and partner surveys:

Tips for a successful program:

- Meet with the librarian before the program starts. You should both bring your calendars to plan out the monthly visits for the year. Be mindful of Monday/Friday holidays and other dates your center will be closed. (You can access a My First Books program calendar at http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/resources-my-first-books-participants.)
- Consider sending a letter home to your parents before the first visit, explaining the program and what to expect. There is a sample letter in English and Spanish on our website at http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/resources-first-book-participants.
- Contact your librarian if the number of children enrolled in your program changes so she/he can bring the correct number of books to distribute.
- If for some reason a conflict arises with the date of your scheduled visit (field trip, special program, etc.) please contact your librarian as soon as possible to reschedule for another day. Please do not cancel a visit altogether, as books can only be distributed during the month for which they have been designated.
- Before book distribution days, display a poster announcing when the story time will be. On book distribution days, please let parents know the book and *Bookworm* are being sent home (sticker on child, note on classroom/front door/cubby, email, etc.) You can access templates for these at http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/resources-first-book-participants.
- The following resources have been translated and are available for **Spanish-speaking families**. Each can be downloaded from our website (see link above):
    1. *Welcome to My First Books* letter from library: all parents must receive a letter explaining the program prior to the first distribution. Send this letter home with any newcomer families throughout the year.
    2. A sample letter from you to send to your families explaining the program.
    3. Monthly issues of *The Bookworm* in Spanish for each age group.
    4. End-of-program survey for parents.
    5. When possible, we will also send the library representative documents containing the Spanish translation of the English books. This document can be attached to *The Bookworm* or enclosed in the book. This document is for use with your My First Books families only, and may not be distributed for any other purpose. Some titles may not be available in Spanish translation. You will need to request this document from your library partner.

--continued on reverse---

Tips for encouraging parents to use the library:

- Hold your center's family events/parent workshops at the public library. Consider cost-sharing or ways to encourage parents to attend (food, transportation, child care, translator, etc.)
- Some libraries may issue special cards at no cost or low-cost to participating families. Help get the word out to them through face-to-face conversations, notes home, newsletters, etc.

Tips for reinforcing early literacy skills:

Librarians focus on specific skills each month during the storytime and book distribution. Here are some ways to reinforce the skills with the children in your organization:

- Compile a collection of books that support the skill, either from your site or from a deposit collection the library brings each month.
- Include special fingerplays or action rhymes in your storytimes that focus on the skills. Consider using the songs, rhymes, and fingerplays from *The Bookworms* so that the children are familiar with them. Each month *The Bookworms* are uploaded to the ICfL website. You can see the activities, book recommendations, etc. in advance of your librarian's visit: http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/resources-first-book-participants.
- Encourage your staff to attend professional development opportunities offered by the library representative.
- Allow children access to books every day, in order for them to practice these skills. If your center owns a limited collection of books, check some out from the library each month-- most libraries will let you check out a very large number of books at one time.

Here are some ways to educate parents about early literacy skills, and to help them reinforce the skills at home:

- The family event/parent workshop focuses on educating parents about early literacy skills. Encourage your parents to attend.
- Information and home activities that reinforce early literacy skills are sent home through *The Bookworm* handout. It should accompany the book and be sent home on the same day as the distribution. Families and staff can also subscribe to *The Bookworm* and receive an electronic copy by email each month.

Recommendations for strengthening community partnerships:

Ways in which libraries can support your organization:

- Increase your exposure in the community for your programs and/or services.
- Provide an additional way for you to help your clients or patrons.
- Provide staff development for early literacy development and teaching.
- Help you meet a program requirement, such as parent involvement or early literacy components.

Ways in which partner organizations can support the library:

- Attend and/or collaborate in the planning or hosting of parent workshops or family events sponsored by the library representative.
- Encourage parent participation in those events.
- Support library staff during book distributions by assisting in the book distributions or participating in activities.
- Work to get as many parent evaluations back as possible.