**Laundromat Literacy Feedback**

**from Idaho Pilot Libraries (2020-2021)**

1. **What tips do you have for libraries who are just starting to reach out to their local laundromat owners about partnering on this project? What worked well for you? What didn’t?**

* “My suggestion would be to go in and talk to the owners in person with the flyers in hand to demonstrate what the spaces might look like. Most of the owners that I spoke with initially believed that they could not possibly find space for a literacy center but after taking some time to talk about it and look around together we were able to problem solve and identify a way to make it work.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls
* “It would be great if the laundromat owners could get in on the [Laundry Cares] on-line summit presentations. There was a flyer to print for the first summit I attended. The owner of the laundromat was out of town and did not tune in. Beyond that, it is important to get across the idea that literacy activities can and should happen everywhere, and that setting the laundromat up for this will improve the atmosphere. Some laundromat owners I talked to were flat out against it because ‘the kids will break everything, and the families will steal the furniture.’ [I knew they would not be] appropriate partners. The laundromat I did end up partnering with at first wanted to contain the kids in one area and keep them from wandering around. I finally convinced him that if they had a purpose for moving about the laundromat, and parents were involved in that purpose, that it would be better for everyone.” – Coeur d’Alene Public Library
* Library Director felt lucky because she knew laundromat owner personally, so that was easy. Another laundromat owner reached out to her and asked what she could do to get a Literacy Center in their laundromat as well. When she saw a new grant opportunity through First Federal Foundation, she decided to write a grant on her own instead of asking ICfL for another center. She was awarded grant funds to purchase a second center! – see her award ceremony [pic here](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1JJTC_enUS959US959&sxsrf=AOaemvIyCh_3vXx46wgHowv_KqBlATcoGw:1631647047577&source=univ&tbm=isch&q=Books,+helmets+and+a+fitness+trail:+First+Federal+Foundation+awards+16+grants+news+article&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj5h631lv_yAhUKv54KHcnQBp0QjJkEegQIBxAC&biw=1734&bih=912#imgrc=_o8KbZ2RnWz1HM) – Gooding Public Library

1. **Has your library been able to begin any in-person storytimes or other library programming at your laundromat location? What worked well for you? What didn’t?**

* “I have not been able to host any in-person storytimes or programs at the location and truth be told I do not believe that is in our near future. The idea of hosting programs there is lovely, but the space is relatively small, and the owner has concerns about the spread of covid-19. For that reason, we have opted to promote programs that take place at our library or in other community locations using a ‘what is happening in our community?’ corkboard in the literacy center.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls
* “In-person programming went out the window, and with the business of Summer Reading, we never did get a laundry day off the ground.  We planned to have it in September, but now cases are on the rise again.  We are now looking at an outdoor event, weather permitting. The literacy centers have been well received and generated a lot of initial excitement. We have to get another event going to renew and inspire more interest.” – Coeur d’Alene Public Library
* The library director offered a live storytime a few times – 2-3. The programs weren’t well attended – about two families at each. She realizes that now isn’t the time to work on building up the program and increasing attendance, so she stopped offering them. In the future, it will be challenging to determine what time of day to offer the storytimes as some families/parents come to the laundromat at 10:00 at night to do laundry so she is withholding judgment on this part for now. – Gooding Public Library

1. **If you have not yet been able to start any in-person storytimes/programs, do you have ideas of how to further enrich the literacy center space? Have you been able to advertise/share virtual storytime information with the laundromat patrons/families?**

* “As described above we have advertised both in-person and virtual storytimes and programs at the laundromat space using a community board. We have discussed potentially adding to the existing materials in the literacy space by using our STEAM kits to provide extra activities on a rotating basis.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls
* “We have updated and kept our virtual library programs flyers in stock at the laundromat. It is hard to say whether any of those families tuned it at all. We also put up a poster with a QR code taking patrons straight to Libby Kids Books, but this requires a library card.” – Coeur d’Alene Public Library
* The library director advertised other programming and included sign-up information for summer reading. She also added books for Teens and Adults too. One person got a new library card because of this so far. – Gooding Public Library

1. **Have you received any feedback (pos or neg) from the laundromat owners about the literacy centers? Are there things they don’t like about it or that have made it difficult for them to stay committed to the project?**

* “The owner loves it, but they have expressed that many patrons are hesitant to take books home and they really need better signage illustrating that the books are intended to go home with children that visit the laundromat.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls
* “All feedback was good about the literacy centers…At first the owner was concerned that the books would be stolen… he finally got the idea that it was ok for books to go home with kids.” – Coeur d’Alene Public Library
* The library director received only positive feedback from laundromat owner - other than she felt bad when the magnetic letters were stolen in a week – she only put them out when she was there at the laundromat, and they walked off while she was in the bathroom. – Gooding Public Library

1. **Have you received any feedback (pos or neg) from the laundromat patrons about the literacy centers?**

* “Initially, several positive comments… nothing negative that I know of.” – Coeur d’Alene Public Library
* When she stops by the laundromat to check in and restock books, patrons in the laundromat tell her they love it. She often will stop what she’s doing and read the kids a book if any are in the laundromat while she’s restocking. – Gooding Public Library

1. **Are you all making any changes to the services and/or programs you are currently offering at your laundromat literacy center due to rise is COVID cases in Idaho?**

* “We are not making any changes at this time due to the fact that we have not offered storytime at the laundromat up to this point, however some of our in-house programs will be modified to be temporarily virtual and we will keep an eye on things to decide what moves need to be made in the future.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls

1. **Anything else you’d like to share with us regarding the pilot phase of the laundromat literacy library project?**

* “I have another laundromat in the area that is interested in hosting a literacy space as well and I believe the concept is great and the kits work well. I think the more colorful and welcoming the things in the kit could be the better. The owner expressed that they wished the carpet was colorful rather than black.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls
* “Planning for an outdoor event in September… wondering about how to do virtual programming other than asking parents to tune into our virtual storytime from the library.” – Community Library Network, Post Falls
* The library director is very grateful for this project, and she would recommend it to other libraries. The experience with the pilot project is what motivated her to apply to the private grant – the First Federal Foundation. She got to go to a big luncheon to receive the grant where she had other people come up to her and say: “Oh I would have donated to that!” and “I want to take this back to the business I run and offer it for the folks there, can I do that?” She would be happy to talk with/mentor any small/rural library who wants to talk it out about this project. – Gooding Public Library