

Family Game Night at the Library

Thompson Integrated Early Childhood Program

Loveland, CO



The Thompson Integrated Early Childhood Program in Loveland serves over 600 preschool-aged children at 13 sites in the Thompson School District. The program offers preschool education to children funded by Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, Special Education, as well as a tuition paying option. One of the goals of the program is to connect preschool families with services in the community. Last year, the program enhanced a partnership with the Loveland Public Library by holding an annual family game night at the library instead of the preschool centers. Previously, staff were unable to host all families together at one preschool site, therefore, the program held several game nights at separate sites.

The children's services supervisor at the library solved this capacity problem by generously providing space to accommodate all of the families at one time. Families in the preschool program, as well as family support staff, were invited to help plan the event.

The Early Childhood staff set up board games in the story-telling room, and a snack room was provided for families to play card games and enjoy healthy snacks donated by local grocery stores. The bilingual librarian, who also offers story time in Spanish in the classrooms, was on hand to help families obtain library cards, give tours, and answer questions in English and Spanish. This event was a great way to share learning activities with families and promote parent-child relationships as well as positive relationships with staff. Families were provided information about library resources and checked out books with their children.

The result of the partnership with the public library has proven to be successful. Last year, 27 families reported that they received library cards, and this year 41 families received library cards, according to a family survey. Families also reported that they now visit the library more regularly. In addition to family game night, the preschool programs are now working with multiple community partners to host a preschool fair at the library in collaboration with a county-wide school readiness initiative known as *Be Ready*. This preschool fair is an opportunity for prospective preschool parents to learn about the program as well as other preschool programs in the Thompson community.

By connecting families to the public library, awareness of the importance of early literacy increases, and families have the opportunity to be engaged in their child's education. Program staff would encourage any early childhood program to enhance their partnership with their public library. Community institutions such as libraries reinforce the concept that children can "learn anytime, anywhere."