

# CuddleUppets, Books, and Community: How the Cortez Public Library is Supporting Parents in Early Literacy



The SPELL blueprint ([s.lrs.org/blueprint](http://s.lrs.org/blueprint)) was created to assist library staff in their effort to support caregivers in practicing early literacy techniques with their children. In November 2014, eight libraries in Colorado were selected to implement the blueprint in their communities. Each library created a programming prototype that guided the library in collaborating with community partners, and providing outreach to low income and high need communities. One of the SPELL libraries was Cortez Public Library, located in a rural community in southwest Colorado. Read on to learn about its prototype.

## Community Profile - Cortez, Colorado

*Population (Montezuma County): 26,168*  
*Racial Makeup: 73% White, 13% Native American, 13% Latino/a*  
*K-12 % Minority: 42%*  
*Median Income: \$28,772*  
*% Below Poverty Line: 19%*

## Partners

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Towaoc Head Start, Butler Head Start, Piñon Project (an organization that works with high-risk children to increase family stability and self-sufficiency), Montezuma County Health Department, Montelores Early Childhood Council, Imagination Library

## Prototype

Advertising early literacy strategies on TV and radio and in print (newspaper ads, fliers, etc.)

Holding events to teach parents to create reading habits - family literacy library nights, Ute Mountain Ute storytimes and events, home visits, farmers market booths and storytimes

Offering parents CuddleUppets (blanket puppet) and Ready Rosie (an app that provides video modeling of early learning skills)

The reassurance that little things, most of which I've already been doing, are helping my kids learn is nice. Being a parent can be scary & intimidating. I like programs like this that reassure, encourage & educate.

- Parent

It [literacy night] has provided confirmation that we are doing the right things for our son's learning. And structure for encouraging those behaviors/activities.

- Parent

## Project Resources

Funding: \$14,914 (73% federal grant, 27% Cortez Public Library)

Purchases:

- 611 books
- 500 CuddleUppets
- Ready Rosie app (available county-wide)
- 1,000 early literacy informational materials

## Activities

- 4 library events
- 10 outreach events with the Head Start, Early Childhood Council, Piñon Project, and recreation center
- 189 caregivers and 143 children participated in SPELL programming
- 82 Ready Rosie sign ups, representing 136 children
- 240 CuddleUppet giveaways

## Outcomes

After participating in SPELL, more than 9 in 10 parent survey respondents:

- know more everyday activities to help their child(ren) be ready to learn to read in kindergarten,
- are more committed to maintaining a regular reading routine, and
- plan to use the CuddleUppet when reading with their child(ren).

More details about this prototype are available at [spellproject.weebly.com/research](http://spellproject.weebly.com/research).