

Working with Migrant Families in Colorado: How Denver Public Library is Supporting Parents in Early Literacy



The SPELL blueprint (s.Irs.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 Denver Public Library (DPL). Read on to learn about its prototype.

Community Profile - Denver, Colorado

Population (Denver County): 682,545
Racial Makeup: 54% White, 30% Latino/a, 10% Black or African American, 4% Asian, and 3% two or more races
Median Income: \$51,800
% Below Poverty Line: 16%
Number of Languages Spoken in Denver Public Schools: 145

Partners

Metro Migrant Education Program (MMEP): An organization that identifies, recruits, and supports migrant and refugee families in achieving their educational goals.
Aurora Public Library (APL): Public library in the city of Aurora (adjacent to Denver) where many MMEP families live.

Prototype

MMEP provided training to DPL staff on how to work with migrant and refugee populations.

DPL provided early literacy training to MMEP staff who serve families with 0-5 year olds.

During home visits to families with preschool-aged children, MMEP staff used early literacy materials designed by library staff.

APL and DPL staff offered early literacy programs at Aurora Public Library and participated in a MMEP-hosted summer park party, offering storytime and sign-ups for library cards and the summer reading program.

I don't think we can expect that they [migrant families] are already coming to our libraries so we have to seek them out.
-Children's Librarian

The Play in the Park event was a huge success...MMEP gave out backpacks, books, food. This population got to really see and meet "library people."
- Children's Librarian

Project Resources

Funding: \$36,911 (24% federal grant, 76% Denver Public Library)

Purchases included:

- Approximately 1,200 books for children, caregivers, and MMEP staff
- Manipulatives and puppets
- Art supplies (markers, finger puppets, paint brushes, and dry erase markers) for parent giveaways

Activities

- 5 library visits to MMEP
- 3 MMEP visits to library
- MMEP staff worked with approximately 30 children
- 7 offsite early literacy consultations with parents
- 4 family events
- 57 caregivers and 90 children attended events

Outcomes

After participating in SPELL,

- more than 9 in 10 parent survey respondents are more confident helping their child(ren) be ready to read in kindergarten, and
- almost 4 in 5 parent survey respondents know what everyday activities to do with their child(ren) to help them be ready to learn to read in kindergarten.

More details about this prototype are available at spellproject.weebly.com/research.