

Case Study

Lester Public Library, WI



Bay Area
Discovery
Museum



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What follows is a case study showcasing how various aspects of the *Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit* were tested and implemented during a national pilot study in Winter 2019-2020. This pilot was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic which hit the United States in March 2020. At that time, libraries and in-person programming were closed and remained closed indefinitely at the time of this publication. Nevertheless, this library, like many others, moved some of their programming online. This case study outlines what type of programming existed before the pilot, how things were modified during the implementation phase, and any post-pilot reflections. The Appendices that follow includes signs, templates, and activities created and utilized by library staff. At the top of each, we highlight the relevant skills associated with the key findings (i.e., Talk & Play, Science & Math, or Body & Brain).

Before the Pilot

Lester Public Library is located in a small community with limited early education opportunities and the library serves as a primary resource for families. There is one full-time youth staff and two part-time staff who develop programs for young children. They have a good relationship with their local school district and partnerships with Reach out and Read and Investing Early — Healthiest Manitowoc County, which is a collaborative leadership group providing resources and guidelines to community organizations. Before being introduced to the *Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit*, the Lester Public Library had a number of programs geared towards young children and their families and for about eight years had been revising their programming to focus on preparing children for school. Programs include early literacy initiatives encouraging caregivers to read at home (e.g., Babies Bloom and 1000 books before Kindergarten), drop-in Storytimes, and a series of age-based 6-week literacy programs.



During Implementation

The Lester Public Library staff had been gearing programming with children to be more hands-on and exploratory and found that the Toolkit resources helped them situate the work they were already doing into a research-backed framework. Staff incorporated the Toolkit resources in several ways — they used Toolkit tips and key findings in their newsletters, social media posts, and around the library, incorporated materials into their dramatic play center, put a heavier focus on math and science including reintroducing family STEAM nights, and introduced STEAM-To-Go packs.

“It just helped us really frame the vocabulary that we’re using with parents and helped us explain why we were doing what we were doing.”

— A staff member

Children at yesterday's Story Time created winter art: they mixed different shades of blue to discover new shades, added silver metallic paint, dribbled glue and added Epsom salt and glitter flakes.

This is called "open-ended art" and also "process-oriented art." It is a WONDERFUL and VITALLY IMPORTANT way to learn.

Children use their imaginations as they explore a variety of materials without a planned outcome. It's about the process of creating, and allows caregivers to observe the developmental growth being experienced by the children. Open-ended art provides children an important opportunity to think about, feel, and express ideas. It also helps slow down the pace of the day, and lets kids (and grownups) appreciate the beauty that comes from simple experimentation with art materials.

When Ms. Tami introduced this project, Lyle exclaimed, "WHAT'S gonna HAPPEN?!"

Ms. Tami says that's the BEST reaction she could've hoped for, because wonder and curiosity are marvelous things!



Toolkit Tips and Key Findings

The Lester Public Library staff promoted that they were part of the IMLS *Reimagining School Readiness* pilot study in their newsletters and by talking about the project and key findings during library programming. See Appendix A for a newsletter example. They also talked about the key findings from the research in Library newsletters and included tips from the bookmarks and math activities. "We really wanted to share with parents simple ways that they could do these skills at home without having to purchase all these fancy things." To facilitate the messaging, they put Toolkit posters up around the library and left the flyers out for caregivers to take home. Lastly, staff used the social media posts on Facebook and Instagram.

REIMAGINING SCHOOL READINESS

Lester Public Library chosen as pilot site in national program.

The Lester Public Library is one of four Wisconsin public libraries, and one of 12 in the nation, selected as pilot sites in the implementation of a community program designed to help families prepare children for success in school and life.

The library will utilize resources in the Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit to support children and families in building key early learning skills through fun, everyday activities.

The toolkit was developed by the Bay Area Discovery Museum and piloted in six California libraries. This is the first expansion of the program outside of that state, and the

Lester Public Library will participate in an evaluation to assess the toolkit's impact.

Visit the library to learn key findings of the research behind Reimagining School Readiness and practices to try at home. The library will also post information on social media.

"School readiness is crucial to the success of a community," said librarian and site leader Terry Ehle. "The first five years of life are the most important; what you learn and experience has lifelong effects. We hope to illustrate how simple it can be to raise intelligent, curious problem-solvers."

Dramatic Play Center

Prior to becoming a *Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit* pilot site, the Lester Public Library had been including dramatic play in their programming for about two and a half years. They were rolling out a new Dramatic Play Center at the same time they signed up to participate as a pilot site and incorporated many of the Toolkit signs and posters into the center. They put up images of the graphics representing the three key finding areas (i.e., Talk & Play, Math & Science, Body & Brain), and they included signs explaining how caregivers could work on skills related to the key findings. Staff also included signage with photos of what the space looks like when it is clean and tips for adults to make clean-up time a learning activity. See Appendix B for example signage.





Post Pilot Reflection

The Lester Public Library staff found the Toolkit to be very helpful in providing them with the background research to support the programming they were already offering. This helped support their planning as well as communication with caregivers. *"I just love it. I'm just so glad that all of these thoughts and ideas that we have and the reasoning behind it, is just all in one place."* Staff especially appreciated the reminders about keeping activities open-ended and exploratory, which led to the reintroduction of Family STEAM Nights. The staff reported receiving positive survey responses from STEAM night participants, including requests for more offerings. Future plans for the Toolkit resources include incorporating more of the Toolkit tips into their STEAM-To-Go packs, probably in the form of an adapted bookmark from the kit.



Talk & Play



Science & Math



Body & Brain

EARLY LITERACY @ THE LIBRARY



Read, sing, talk, play and write *every day!*

BABYGARTEN

Thursdays ▪ Jan 23-Feb 27
10:15 AM or 6:30 PM
Birth to 18 Months

Share nursery rhymes, songs, and books with your infant! Learn the importance of reading to babies. Class concludes with free play.

1ST STEP

Mondays ▪ Jan 20-Feb 24
10:15 AM
18 Months to Age 3

A moving child is a learning child! Activities focus on the five early literacy practices: read, sing, play, talk and write!

JUMP START

Wednesdays ▪ Feb 5-Mar 11
10:15 AM or 12:30 PM
Ages 3-5

Inspire imagination and encourage creativity! Children gain problem-solving and literacy skills utilizing language, math, science and art.

For children AND their caregivers. To register, call 793-7114.



STORY TIME

Tuesdays, *Weekly* ▪ 10:15 AM

Enjoy stories, music, finger plays, movement, drama and puppetry that enhance the five early literacy practices: read, sing, play, talk and write. Designed for preschoolers but children of all ages are welcome. No registration required.



FROZEN TUNDRA

Tue, Feb 25 ▪ 6:30 PM

Take a look at cryogenics: What are the effects of freezing on different materials?

- * Race to build a snowman with that mysterious substance, oobleck
 - * Make ice rainbows
 - * Excavate objects trapped in ice
 - * Use chemistry to create an ice sculpture
- and MORE frozen fun!

A family-oriented event; parents are encouraged to explore and discover alongside their children!

No registration required.

REIMAGINING SCHOOL READINESS

What is school readiness?

Many schools focus on children's ability to name letters, hold a pencil, and count to 10 as the only indicators of "school readiness," but research shows that children through age eight need to develop other crucial skills to achieve continued success in school and in life. It is never too early or late to develop these skills!

These crucial skills are divided into three main categories:



Talk & Play



Body & Brain



Science & Math

Throughout the year, watch for these symbols in the newsletter and around the youth area to find useful tips on how to prepare your child for school.



DINING ROOM

♪ Clean up, clean up, everybody everywhere. Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share! ♪
When you are finished playing, can you put things back together? Match the picture.



Science & Math

- **Try using a number as an adjective when talking to children.**
“There are four chairs at this table.”
- **Try counting chairs, plates, cups, etc. with children.**
After counting make sure to ask how many are there in total.
“1, 2, 3..How many cups are there? 4 cups!”
- **Model and encourage spatial talk.** Before you put a toy away, ask children to put it next to, behind, above or below another object.



GROCERY STORE

♪ Clean up, clean up, everybody everywhere. Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share! ♪
When you are finished playing, can you put things back together? Match the picture.

SORT BY TYPE
(BOXES, SOFT,
HARD, ROUND)



SORT BY FOOD
(FRUITS, VEGGIES,
BREAD, MEAT)



Body & Brain

- **Teach children specific strategies to respond to their own stress or difficult emotions.** “When I have a big mess to clean up I do one thing at a time until it is done! Let’s clean up all the food first.”
- **Give children opportunities to make their own plans and decisions.** “How do you want to clean up?” After accomplishing their goal, ask them to reflect on their process. “What was easy or hard? What would you do differently next time?”



Week 5: A Zip line for Red Riding Hood!

Source: *More Than a Worksheet* by Sarah Wiggins

Sponsored by NextEra Energy

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The Problem:

The Big Bad Wolf is back! Little Red Riding Hood has a basket of snacks that she wants to take to Grandma, but you know what happened the last time she walked through the woods! This time, she's decided to build a zip line from her house to Grandma's.

The Challenge:

Build a contraption that will carry Little Red's basket down the zip line to Grandma's house.

Success Criteria:

Your contraption should carry Little Red's basket at least two yards.

Materials Needed:

- Small basket with goodies inside (M&Ms, Smarties, Cheerios, etc.)
- String
- Different building materials like straws, paper clips, clothespins, rubber bands, pipe cleaners, spools, corks, popsicle sticks, metal fasteners, etc. (some included)
- Timer (not included) & measuring tape



Procedure:

1. Choose a spot to place your zip line. Tie one end to a higher spot, tie the other end to a lower spot (a 45-ish degree angle works best). Pull the zip line so that it is tight.
2. Conduct control test. a control test tells how quickly the zip line will travel.
 - Using the timer, time how long it takes the basket to travel the zip line.
 - Measure how far down the zip line the basket traveled.
 - Explain that in order for their zip line to be successful, the basket should travel the length of the zip line quickly, without any of the goodies falling out.
3. Design and build contraption.
 - Use attached sheets to help your child formulate their design.
 - Remember, it doesn't have to be perfect! The only way to improve things is to have a starting design that can be improved upon. Just try a design then make it better.
 - Testing and failing is how we learn!

Questions to ask:

- Was your contraption successful? How could you tell?
- Which design worked best? Which designs were flops?
- What surprised you about this project? What frustrated you?

Extend the activity:

- Experiment with different heights and angles for the zip line. See which one creates the fastest and smoothest ride.
- Create a travel brochure that persuades adventurers to come and try "Little Red's Zip Line."
- Write a version of Little Red Riding Hood that includes your zip line as part of the story.