

Opinion: Importance of reading to children

To the community,

Reading aloud is one of the most important things we can do to help young children eventually learn to read. Together with community partners, First 5 El Dorado promotes early literacy through reading programs that develop both pre-literacy skills and children's love for books. These programs have been extremely successful, and have grown to meet community needs. Between September 2009 and May 2010:

- * The Ready to Read @ Your Library Project provided early literacy services to approximately 4,400 children newborn-5 years of age and their parents, teachers and care providers through library storytimes and outreach visits to preschool and childcare sites throughout the county. Storytimes were offered in English and Spanish.

- * Storytimes for young children were provided at the main library in Placerville; Cameron Park, El Dorado Hills, Georgetown, Pollock Pines and South Lake Tahoe branch libraries; and at Northside School in Cool.

- * Library staff visited 127 preschool sites where children listened to stories and each month preschools received a free book or puppet to support ongoing literacy activities.

The reach of storytime extends beyond the library walls. In 2009-10:

- * 75 percent of parents who answered the First 5 El Dorado Parent Survey reported reading to their children every day. Families that attended Ready to Read programs at the library were even more likely to read to their children, with 85 percent of this group reporting that they read to their

children each day.

Together our community can help ensure that all children have the foundations for reading. This issue is dedicated to information and resources on early literacy.

Sincerely,

Rick Alford, First 5 El Dorado