



The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading’s What’s Working XChange Summary of Stories Collected in Spring 2023

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) developed the What’s Working XChange (WWX) in 2020 as a way to answer the question that community partners asked most frequently: “What’s working, where, how well and under what conditions?” The WWX enables community lead organizations to share and learn about the good ideas, strategies, practices, programs and policies that are making a difference across CGLR’s diverse and dynamic network of 350+ communities. The information helps CGLR identify community efforts that may be sources of inspiration and proof points of success, and the process of collecting and sharing this information strengthens connections within the GLR Network.

The Spring 2023 (February–May) WWX was designed to learn what is happening in GLR communities to (a) **improve digital connectivity** (affordable, available and accessible connections to the internet for learning) and/or (b) **promote learning-rich environments in the community, outside of school.**¹

GLR community lead organizations from more than 79 communities² in 26 states submitted a total of 294 stories via an online survey in this round. This brief summarizes those stories to tell you:

- How and where school districts, public libraries, funders and other partners are ensuring that children in economically challenged families have [affordable, available and accessible connections to the internet](#), at home and in the community;
- Who is [partnering with internet providers](#) to ensure affordable internet accessibility through subsidies, negotiated rates for qualifying families or signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program;
- What kinds of everyday destinations are [dedicating space](#) for children to play and learn, [posting tips](#) for parent, and [offering programs](#) for customers that focus on children’s early literacy, early math and/or social-emotional development;
- How communities are creating learning-rich settings for children while they are [in transit and at public playgrounds](#); and
- How cultural, amenity and informal learning institutions like libraries, museums and zoos are encouraging economically challenged families to [use them as a learning resource](#).

¹ Please note that not all activities described in the stories are led by or connected with local GLR campaigns. We intentionally cast a wide net to capture the breadth of activities underway in communities.

² Some respondents represent countywide efforts.

ABOUT THE WHAT’S WORKING XCHANGE

The What’s Working XChange involves:

- **Short written stories** about local work, submitted by community leads in response to a call for stories that CGLR issues on a specific topic. Submissions are curated by CGLR staff, shared on CLIP and lifted up via social media.
- **Roundtable conversations** between GLR community leads and their local partners to dig deeper on the content of WWX submissions, held via Zoom and coordinated and hosted by CGLR staff.
- **Practice briefs** that summarize the stories and conversations and are shared broadly with the GLR Network.

WHAT’S WORKING XCHANGE BY THE NUMBERS As of June 2023

- 636** stories submitted on topics related to learning recovery
- 297** communities in 49 states submitted stories
- 5** roundtable conversations related to learning loss recovery
- 11** practice briefs related to learning loss recovery

WHY DOES THE WWX FOCUS ON LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY?

When the COVID-19 lockdown began, CGLR made a tactical pivot to encourage and support communities in taking action to slow and stop learning loss, jumpstart the recovery process, and launch and lead local initiatives to transform formal and informal places and spaces into learning-rich environments that inspire a community-wide commitment to children learning. Our approach in pivoting to learning loss recovery was, and continues to be, guided by three imperatives:

- Follow the data;
- Lift up bright spots and silver linings that offer hope for transformative change; and
- Encourage smart decisions to invest, rather than just spend, the significant infusion of resources from the federal government.

Emphasizing data acknowledges that learning loss is a significant issue, which is disproportionately affecting children in economically challenged families; that at this magnitude, if left unchecked, the loss could further compromise the prospects for a generation of vulnerable children whose future already is at risk; and that these consequences are neither acceptable nor inevitable.

Lifting up bright spots and silver linings underscores the fact that, while CGLR is clear-eyed and realistic about the potentially catastrophic impact of learning loss, we remain optimistic that “what crystallizes the moral imperative to act is the knowledge or belief that acting can make a difference” —and, in this case, can mitigate and reverse learning loss.

Encouraging smart decisions and big bets is CGLR’s way to help state and district school leaders respond to the availability of federal funds for COVID recovery without being overwhelmed by the potentially negative impacts of a rapid influx of “cataclysmic money.”

These imperatives have driven CGLR to zero in on specific topics, including:

- The emerging consensus and urgency around assuring digital equity, so that children in economically fragile families have equal access to the connectivity, devices, and supports needed for online learning;
- The deepening understanding that parents are essential partners in improving education outcomes for their children and need strong systems of care, services and supports to succeed with the additional tasks for which they have been conscripted due to pandemic-related pressures; and
- The acknowledgment that learning happens everywhere, so it is vital to cultivate broadly shared ownership of children’s learning and to transform homes and everyday places and spaces into accessible, affordable and welcoming learning environments.

Additional areas of focus include high-dosage tutoring, with a focus on relational health and supports; teacher professional development and coaching; and technology-supported teaching and learning.

Given CGLR’s pivot, it is no surprise that three of the four rounds of WWX held since 2020 have focused on topics related to equitable learning recovery. Nor is it surprising that the most recent WWX call for stories lifted up two of the topics that have been featured in bright spots, silver linings, smart decisions and big bets: digital connectivity and learning-rich everyday environments.

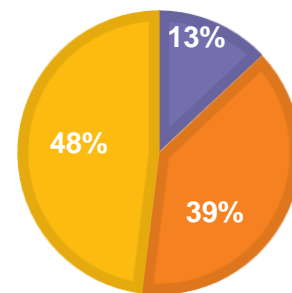
STORIES ABOUT DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

A1. Is anyone in your community taking action to ensure that children in economically challenged families have affordable, available and accessible connections to the internet for learning purposes?

Of 77 responses, almost half indicated that some actions are being taken.

Why is this important? As reported by [Education Superhighway](#), a national nonprofit dedicated to closing the digital divide, lack of internet access impacts approximately 28.2 million households, including families who live in urban, suburban and rural settings. The digital divide affects a disproportionate number of low-income, Black and Latinx households and those headed by adults who have less than a high school education. The federal government established the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#) to help income-qualifying families address this challenge.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading seeks to ensure that CGLR communities know about ACP and can support families in enrolling. The GLR Learning Tuesdays webinar series, previous rounds of WWX calls for stories and community submissions to CGLR Pacesetter Honors have revealed that some CGLR communities are working to address digital connectivity. Asking this question aimed to identify where and to what extent this is happening across the GLR Network.

What's happening in communities? Actions include:

- **Providing students with laptops and hotspots.** This is occurring through:
 - Public libraries, school districts and/or city municipalities (Johnston County, NC; St. Louis, MO; Winchester and Virginia Beach, VA; Truckee, CA; Riverdale and Marietta, GA; Hebron, CT; Avondale-Buckeye-Goodyear-Tolleson, AZ; Pinellas County, Suncoast, Miami-Dade and Broward County, FL; Omaha, NE; Grinnell, IA). Some libraries allow families to check out laptops, Chromebooks, iPads and hotspots for extended periods of time (Sioux City, IA; Dyersville, IA)
 - Public universities (Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL)
 - United Ways, via the organizations' education help hotlines (Wilmington, DE; Salt Lake City, UT)
 - Community programs such as Head Start, the Community Literacy Hub and NCFL (Avondale and Tolleson, AZ) and a church-based tech lab (Miami, FL)
 - GLR campaigns that provide laptops, iPads and notebook computers as prizes for reading contests (Pinellas County, FL)
- **Keeping computer labs open** in schools and libraries, for use by parents and students (Tupelo, MS)
- **Sharing information about the federal Affordability Connectivity Program** with families and encouraging them to enroll. This happens in several ways:
 - Through signage in the community and by sharing information with the school district (Ames, IA)
 - By meeting with families and/or nonprofit community organizations to encourage enrollment in the ACP (Suncoast, FL; Sparta, GA; Tallahassee, FL; Grinnell, IA)
 - Through outdoor, radio and text message campaigns (Miami-Dade, FL). As of December 2022, 92,430 Miami-Dade families have signed up for the ACP and drawn down \$48.4 million for internet service and devices
- **Helping families apply for low-cost or free devices and internet** (Salem, OR; Tallahassee, FL)

- **Helping families understand how to use education technology**, by:
 - Sponsoring digital navigators (Miami-Dade, FL) or digital navigator training to equip people in the community with the skills needed to help asset-limited families and individuals connect with digital connectivity, devices, training and support (Suncoast, FL)
 - Providing digital literacy services directly to families (Avondale-Buckeye-Goodyear-Tolleson, AZ)
 - Funding a technology hotline (Avondale-Buckeye-Goodyear-Tolleson, AZ)
 - Supporting community outreach at schools and community events and through nonprofit partners across the region (Miami-Dade, FL)
- **Paying for free online access to programs**, such as the myOn digital library for all children in Pinellas County, through a partnership among the school system, GLR campaign and United Way; and Footsteps2Brilliance for toddlers through third graders in LaBelle, FL

More About...

Ensuring Affordable, Available, Accessible Internet Connections

The Genesis Youth Foundation (GYF) Ubuntu Technology Program in **Des Moines, IA**, gives immigrant and refugee students access to technology to work on schoolwork and online learning and the opportunity to participate in STEM Scale-Up Programs (First Lego League Challenge, First Lego League Explore and the Medical Detective). GYF also launched an adult computer literacy program to empower refugee and immigrant parents. Participants learn application-related computer knowledge such as word processing, spreadsheets, email usage and video conferencing. Field trips to work sites help participants see how information technology is applied in the workplace. Working with local organizations, businesses provide job shadowing opportunities as a starting point for careers in information technology.

In **Grinnell, IA**, the Grinnell Education Partnership network is helping to coordinate efforts to identify, reach and register families who are eligible for the ACP. Partnering organizations include Drake Community Library, the Mahaska Communication Group (MCG), Grinnell Housing Authority, Grinnell College, Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation, Mid-Iowa Community Action, the Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation, the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District and others.

In **Broward County, FL**, public libraries loan out Playaway Launchpad Learning Tablets, which are designed for children and preloaded with high-quality, ad-free mobile apps that are fun and educational — and don't require connectivity or downloading.

The **Charlotte County, FL**, public library system has a traveling library that pops up at various places, including the beach, county facilities, neighborhoods, community organization meetings, schools and festivals. Equipped with a librarian, some collapsible crates, a hotspot, a portable table and an iPad, the traveling library enables community members to sign up for a library card and immediately check out materials via the iPad connected to the mobile library software system. The traveling librarian also distributes flyers for library programs and services and helps customers connect to online eBooks, audiobooks, movies and magazines.

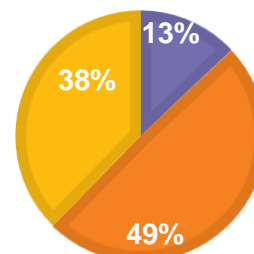
In **Suncoast, FL**, consultants from The Patterson Foundation provide training, implementation meetings and knowledge-sharing sessions in partnership with a regional network that includes Goodwill Manasota, Women's Resource Center, UnidosNOW, Easterseals SWFL, FUNducation Inc, Goodwill SWFL, Sarasota County Libraries, CareerSource Suncoast and Multicultural Health Institute. In addition, the Suncoast GLR campaign's THIS BOOK IS COOL! program partnered with the Digital Access for All team to survey the digital access needs of more than 3,000 children in economically challenged families who live in the four-county area. THIS BOOK IS COOL! provides free books and family engagement activities for asset-limited children in grades preK-3 to prevent summer learning loss. Survey participants also received information on the ACP.

A2: Is anyone in your community promoting and supporting the availability of more community-based sites for internet access to children and families?

Of 77 responses, about one-third were affirmative and half were “I don’t know.”

Why is this important? Free Wi-Fi service in public spaces — such as public libraries, municipal buildings, parks, commercial areas, transit stations, community college campuses and the like — enables students who have internet devices but no home internet access to learn and complete homework via internet sites and mobile apps. As the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) notes, this is also helpful for children in economically challenged families who have very limited smartphone data plans.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



What's happening in communities? Many types of public places and spaces are offering internet access to children and families in CGLR communities, including:

- **A retrofitted ambulance** (Sarasota County, FL)
- **After-school and community programs** offered by Boys & Girls Clubs (Tupelo, MS), KidReach (Barbour County, WV) and other nonprofit organizations (Pinellas County, FL)
- **Businesses**, which list the availability of free Wi-Fi for students on the public schools' website (Johnston County, NC)
- **Churches** (Little Haiti neighborhood, Miami, FL)
- **Libraries** (Tupelo, MS; Tahoe Truckee, CA; Broward, Suncoast, and Miami-Dade counties, FL; Grinnell, IA), sometimes with additional services such as computer tech support and basic skills tutoring for families (Alachua County, Gainesville, FL) and sometimes with internet service that extends beyond the library building so it can be used at all hours (Grinnell, IA)
- **Neighborhood-based hotspots** in underserved areas (Troup County, GA) and throughout the city (Sioux City, IA)
- **Parks** (Sarasota, FL; Avondale and Tolleson, AZ)
- **Public buildings** (Avondale and Tolleson, AZ)
- **Recreation centers** (Tahoe Truckee, CA)
- **Restaurants** located near schools (Fellsmere, Indian River County, FL)
- **Schools** (Tahoe Truckee, CA)

More About....

Providing Community-Based Sites for Internet Access

In **Council Bluffs, IA**, the Iowa West Foundation, Google, Council Bluffs Public Schools, city government, the Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce and other groups partnered to install a free public Wi-Fi network known as BLink. BLink is now available in most areas of the city and is expanding to cover areas of the Lewis Central Community School District.

The **Omaha, NE**, Public Library system created expanded hotspots and encourages families to use the DO Space Center — a special technology library that provides free access to software, devices and ultra-fast internet.

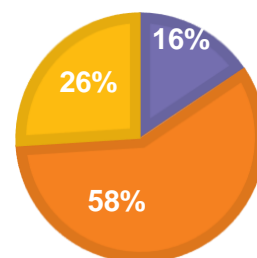
City government in **Sarasota, FL**, launched a Free Wi-Fi in the Parks pilot at four locations, with \$470,000 in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan.

AT&T and the Boys & Girls Club serving **Wake County, NC**, opened the first Connected Learning Center in North Carolina. The center provides free access to a range of digital resources under one roof, including: high-speed fiber optic internet, Wi-Fi, computers, free education resources, and tutoring and mentoring from AT&T employees.

A3: Is anyone in your community partnering with internet providers to ensure affordable internet accessibility through subsidies, negotiated rates for qualifying families or signing up for ACP?

Although about one-quarter of the 77 respondents knew of partnerships with internet providers, the majority of respondents did not know of any.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



Why is this important? Economically challenged families can obtain free or low-cost internet access either through government subsidies or through programs offered by internet service providers. For example, the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#), administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), offers a discount of up to \$30 per month for home internet access (and up to \$75 per month for households located on Tribal lands). [ConnectHome](#) — a collaboration among the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and public housing agencies, nonprofit organizations EveryoneOn and US Ignite, internet service providers, local governments, and corporate, philanthropic, and community leaders — also offers HUD-assisted households free or low-cost internet access.

What's happening in communities? CGLR communities are playing a major role in helping families enroll in free or reduced-price internet access programs through partnerships and deals with internet service providers. Efforts include:

- **Partnerships between the public school district and public utilities or internet providers** for free or reduced-rate access to Wi-Fi and internet at home or near schools (Truckee, CA; Cedar Rapids and Grinnell, IA; Dalton, GA; Avondale, AZ; Bristol, CT; Miami-Dade, FL; Virginia Beach, VA)
 - In Avondale-Buckeye-Goodyear-Tolleson, AZ, all cities, school districts and community partners are providing families with information on the Cox Connect program, which provides free or low-cost internet service to eligible families
 - In Grinnell, the partnership also includes Grinnell College, the Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation, and community organizations belonging to the Grinnell Education Partnership
 - Miami-Dade County Public Schools partnered with T-Mobile to acquire and distribute 35,000 hotspots to students and families
 - In Clayton County, GA, the school system partnered with AT&T, county government, and the state public library system
- **Partnerships between the United Way and an internet provider** for free internet access for low-income families (Indian River County and Gainesville, FL; Wilmington, DE)
- **Conversations between funders and broadband providers** about how to reach local families with low-cost student internet service (Valley of the Sun United Way, Avondale, AZ)
- **Sponsorship of internet services** for eligible families (Miami-Dade, FL, GLR campaign)
- **Expansion of broadband access** statewide (Alabama) or adding a wireless network in under-resourced communities, using county capital funds (Indian River County, FL)
- **Creation of digital equity committees and offices** within state government (Nebraska)
- **Providing local agencies with hotspots donated by an internet provider**; in Marshalltown, IA this occurs through a partnership between US Cellular and the YMCA-YWCA

More About.... Partnering with Internet Providers

The United Way in **Gainesville, FL**, partnered with Cox Communications, First Federal Credit Union, and Alachua County Libraries to provide low-cost internet options, laptops, and computer training to 75 low-income individuals to support education and workforce development.

In **Miami-Dade, FL**, an initiative called Miami Connected partnered with Comcast to bring free broadband service, digital skills training and career opportunities in technology to students and their families. Comcast also provides in-kind direct mail and television outreach to families and grant funding for programs that train digital navigators. Miami Connected is led by The Miami Foundation and Achieve Miami and involves numerous other public, private, philanthropic and community partners.

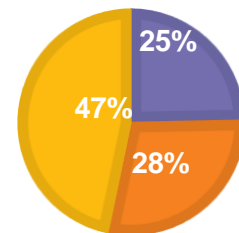
As part of its Digital Access for All initiative in **Suncoast, FL**, The Patterson Foundation (TPF) hosted web conversations where internet service providers, such as Comcast, Charter/Spectrum, and Myakka Communications, could engage with 150+ stakeholder representatives in the four-county region to describe their access programs and how to enroll. The Digital Access for All team also hosted ACP enrollment events in the community; mailed postcards to rural households to spread awareness of local internet services; facilitated conversations about broadband access between FCC representatives and local residents and organizations; partnered with the Sarasota and DeSoto county governments to increase public participation in developing local broadband strategies; and provided information about the ACP to internet service providers.

STORIES ABOUT LEARNING IN EVERYDAY PLACES AND SPACES

B1: Do any of the everyday destinations that parents and children tend to visit in your community (e.g., laundromats, grocery stores, doctor's waiting rooms, WIC Centers, public parks) have signs with tips parents can use to help their children learn?

Close to half of the 77 respondents knew of some signage in their community that encourages and guides parents to create learning opportunities.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



Why is this important? Surrounding families with early language and learning opportunities helps prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond, because babies begin to learn about the connection between words, pictures and real objects at a very young age. Through play and exposure to language, they learn the names of these objects and gradually make links and connections between object, name and pictorial representation. This process is a natural, spontaneous and subconscious one. And it remains important as children age, since 20 percent of their waking time is spent in school.

Currently, more than 300 laundromats across the country provide play and learn spaces, helping to focus resources on the unmet literacy needs of their customers. Cities such as Philadelphia, Detroit, Milwaukee, Oakland and Tacoma have citywide efforts to provide learning-rich opportunities for children and their families wherever they go. This question about signage helps us understand how ubiquitous the notion is in CGLR communities that learning opportunities exist no matter where a child goes.

What's happening in communities? Many of the public places and spaces that families in CGLR communities visit in the course of everyday life have signage alerting parents to things they can do to help their children learn. In addition to literacy and language tips, these postings often include information on early childhood development, kindergarten readiness, how to sign up for tip-texting programs such as Ready4K and access to more resources. Locations include:

- **Barbershops and/or beauty salons** (Lehigh Valley PA; Philadelphia PA; Tupelo, MS)
- **Child care centers** (Lehigh Valley PA, Sioux City, IA), including posters that remind workers to engage with children
- **Community gardens** (Avondale, AZ)
- **Community health centers and clinics** (Indian River County, FL; Lehigh Valley PA)
- **Community outreach events** (Des Moines, IA)
- **Community resource centers and public health agencies** (Avondale, AZ; Pinellas County, FL; Wake County, NC)
- **Convenience stores and other shops** (Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia, PA)
- **Doctors' waiting rooms** (Alabama statewide; Ames, IA; Dubuque, IA; Haverhill, MA; Johnston County NC; Omaha, NE; Sarasota and Tallahassee, FL; Wyoming Valley, PA)
- **Early learning centers** (Wyoming Valley, PA)
- **Government buildings and agencies** (Avondale, AZ; Des Moines, IA; Hancock County GA; Sarasota, FL)
- **Grocery stores** (Des Moines, IA; Lehigh Valley PA; Sarasota, FL)
- **Kindergarten round-ups** (Des Moines, IA)
- **Laundromats** (Alabama statewide; Avondale, AZ; Durham, NC; Johnston County, NC; New Orleans, LA; Philadelphia, PA; Sarasota, FL; Virginia Beach, VA)
- **Learning Trails** (Indian River County, FL) and Story Walks (Haverhill, MA)
- **Libraries** (Avondale, AZ; Broward County and Sarasota, FL; Hancock County GA; Lehigh Valley PA; New Orleans, LA; Wake County, NC; Winchester, VA)
- **Lunch programs** (Des Moines, IA)
- **Parks** (Ames, IA; Des Moines, IA; Sarasota, FL; Winchester, VA)
- **Professional development** opportunities for caregivers (Des Moines, IA)
- **Restaurant** community boards (Wake County, NC)
- **Schools** (Avondale, AZ; Des Moines, IA; Lehigh Valley PA), including artwork with tips hung on buildings' exterior walls (Indian River County, FL)
- **Shopping malls and plazas** (Ames, IA; Wake County, NC)
- **Social media** (Philadelphia, PA)
- **WIC Centers** (Council Bluffs, IA; Hancock County GA; Sarasota, FL; Wyoming Valley, PA), sometimes involving book giveaways (Council Bluffs, IA)
- **Yard signs** (Bristol, CT; Wake County, NC; Winchester, VA)

More About.... Posting Signage With Tips for Parents

In **Avondale, AZ**, ReadOn Avondale/Southwest Valley distributes Smart Talk resources and tools (posters, digital and social media, videos and tutorials) provided by ReadOn Arizona. In addition, the local PBS station supports Bright by Text, a national text messaging program that sends parents and caregivers of children from birth through age 8 free tips, educational games and child development information. Each text message includes a link to more details, short videos and related resources from national expert partners such as PBS, Vroom, Sesame Street, Count the Kicks and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

United Way of Central Iowa in **Des Moines, IA**, teams with trusted messengers — pediatricians and other health professionals, human services organizations, libraries, church groups, extension offices, child care homes and centers, early childhood educators and school districts — in Polk, Warren and Dallas counties to encourage caregivers who are newly pregnant, parenting or teaching young children to sign up for Bright by Text.

Lawn signs posted throughout **Bristol, CT**, declare “It’s too late to wait...read 20 minutes with a child today” and provide information on kindergarten registration. United Way of West Central Connecticut and the School Readiness Council also partner to connect parents and other grandparents with Sparkler, a mobile app that provides information on early child and brain development.

United Way of **Indian River County, FL**, created four Born Learning Trails in outdoor recreational areas. Each trail has 10 interactive signs listing fun, active learning activities that young children and their families can do as they play. In addition, the local community health organization partners with preschools, family-facing agencies and the local bank to hand out a monthly [Moonshot Family Calendar](#), which includes tips and fun activities encouraging parents to read, talk, play, sing and create with their child.

The Talking is Teaching: Talk Read Sing campaign in **Lehigh Valley, PA**, operates through people, businesses and organizations that families already trust for advice and assistance to distribute resources to the families they engage with. Resources include posters, tip cards, local resource sheets, books, tangible learning materials and more.

In **Omaha, NE**, the Metro-Omaha Raise Me to Read campaign is working with an award-winning, student-run public relations firm at the University of Nebraska-Omaha to create signage templates and with students at the university’s College of Education to create signage prompts for grocery stores and other places.

A community organization in **North Philadelphia, PA**, partnered with local businesses to install signage prompting adult-child conversations and interactions in 100 locations. The signs are available in Haitian Creole, Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin as well as in English.

A public information campaign is saturating **Troup County, GA**, with signs, social media, billboards and digital ads describing simple activities parents can do with their children each day to promote healthy brain development.

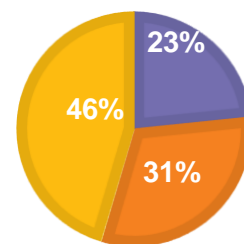
In **Wake County, NC**, partners in the WAKE Up and Read Coalition encourage families to sign up for the Ready4K text programs using posters, informational postcards, and yard signs posted at libraries, recreation and community centers, shopping center plazas and restaurants with community boards, and other places frequented by families.

B2: Do any everyday destinations in your community have dedicated spaces for children to play and learn?

Almost half of the 77 respondents knew of everyday spaces dedicated for children to learn and play in their community.

Why is this important? Having safe spaces dedicated for children’s play and learning is essential to a child’s overall development. Playful learning is the way children interact with their world, and play is glorious byproduct of the learning process. During self-directed playful learning, children think critically, solve problems and develop memory.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



As [Playful Learning Landscapes](#) observes, “by infusing our cities with playful learning opportunities we can enhance children’s cognitive and social development, better preparing them for success in the 21st-century.”

Playful learning is characterized by play that is spontaneous and intrinsically motivated, active and bound by rules that are determined by the children themselves. Playful learning is symbolic, meaningful and transformational — and, above all, it is fun.

What’s happening in communities? The list of places in CGLR communities that have dedicated space for children’s play and learning is as long as the list of places with educational signage. In addition to the **barbershops and salons, community centers, family centers, laundromats, libraries, parks, resource centers, schools and shopping malls** mentioned in answers to Question B1 — many of which offer books, toys, comfortable children’s furniture, story times, arts and crafts activities, and other play-and-learn opportunities in designated areas — locations also include:

- **Adventure Trails** (Omaha, NE)
- **Beaches** (Sarasota, FL)
- **Gyms** (Tallahassee, FL) and sports clubs (Des Moines, IA)
- **Museums** (Sarasota, FL)
- **Public housing** (Cobb County, GA)
- **Public playgrounds and learning playscapes** (Omaha, NE; Sarasota, FL)
- **Restaurants** (Tallahassee, FL) and coffee shops (Dyersville, IA)
- **Science centers** (Omaha, NE)
- **Welcome centers** (Avondale, VA)
- **Zoos** (Omaha, NE)

More About.... Dedicated Spaces for Playful Learning

In **Avondale, AZ**, Make Way for Books sponsors a classroom at Lattie Coor School. Arizona PBS provides “Play & Learn” activity packets, including materials for parents and a children’s book, at pediatrician’s offices. The Arizona Complete Health Resource Center offers an early childhood learning and play space, sponsored by First Things First, that has games, toys and manipulatives for children to play with; in the lobby, children can select free books to take home. The Pendergast Family Resource Center has active Play & Learn spaces at a community center and two elementary schools. Partners also are developing a literacy hub, which will offer learning resources for entire families ranging from early readers to GED study books. The space will also offer tutoring.

The **Bristol (CT)** Early Childhood Alliance and School Readiness Council sponsor “Appetite for Reading” bookshelves where families with children can obtain free books. The 10 locations include a pediatric office, ice cream shop, family restaurant, museum, parent/child center, WIC center, dental office, aquatic center, Head Start and a little free library in a community garden.

The Learning Spaces program in **Cobb County, GA**, is a drop-in program where parents, other caregivers and child care providers can learn how to build the cognitive skills of children from birth to age 5 through meaningful interactions. The spaces are supported by the United Way of Greater Atlanta and programmed by the local YMCA. Locations include a nonprofit organization, a public park and an apartment community.

Sarge’s Westside Boxing Club provides children ages 5–12 from economically challenged populations in **Des Moines, IA**, with athletic coaching, role modeling and educational tutoring. The program works with schools to identify participants and the specific assistance they need, and teachers provide the tutoring. Goals include

reducing school absences, connecting at-risk students with community resources, and improving students' grades, reading levels and behavior in school.

In **Detroit, MI**, a nonprofit called Brilliant Detroit has created centrally located, welcoming hubs for families with children birth through age 8 in high-need neighborhoods. The hubs, called “homes,” offer free activities, workshops and other programming around learning, health and family supports; social and support groups for parents and caregivers; and a neighborhood gathering place where children and their parents can play and learn.

Book Harvest in **Durham, NC**, has created family spaces in laundromats, where bookshelves are regularly stocked with culturally inclusive books, child-sized furniture and a magnet board with magnet letters. Book Harvest is working with the Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network and a local muralist to install a learning-related mural — designed with input from customers — in one of the laundromats.

A coffee shop in **Dyersville, IA**, has a children's play area complete with toys and books, plus books available to purchase and take home.

The LaundryCares Foundation and the City of **Gainesville, FL**, have established four literacy learning stations in Alachua County. United Way partners with the city and other stakeholders to support volunteers who read and engage with families at the laundry centers, which are stocked with books and kid-friendly activities for families, including books that children can take home.

Drake Community Library in **Grinnell, IA**, has a play area in their story room that includes a play kitchen complete with utensils, dishes and food. There is also a play grocery stand.

The **Jackson County, IA**, public library has a puppet show “stage,” puppets and bean bag chairs for the audience; games and Lego tables to use at the library; and many toys, learning kits and games that families can check out.

In **Lehigh Valley, PA**, the Talk Read Sing program expanded from laundromats to spaces in a family engagement program office for multi-language learners, three elementary schools and a rural community center. Next up: pediatric waiting rooms in three federally qualified health clinics. These areas offer child-sized couches, flexible-use chairs and tables, bookshelves, rugs, books, educational learning toys and Talk Read Sing characters in cardboard cutouts.

The GLR campaign in **Philadelphia, PA**, partnered with Too Small to Fail to create literacy-rich spaces in three laundromats and four waiting rooms, including a health clinic and social services office. The spaces feature children's furniture, books, blocks, a pretend kitchen and other play materials. Signage on the walls prompts adults to interact with their children. In addition, this Philadelphia GLR campaign partnered with:

- KABOOM!, to create 16 playful learning installations in publicly accessible locations across Philadelphia;
- Barbershop Books, to place books and materials in over 50 barbershops and train barbers how to engage young children and their caregivers in early literacy; and
- Local community organizations, to create spaces like the River Alive Learning Trail for children and families so they can learn about the environment and ecosystem in their local park.

The GLR Training Subgroup in **Pinellas County, FL**, has developed and installed literacy-rich environments with bookshelves, books, play mats or carpet, bean bag chairs, literacy puzzles and games at after-school programs and neighborhood family centers. Each environment is tailored to the site and supported by up to \$3,000 from the local GLR campaign. The campaign also supports “read while you wait” community book nooks with reading tip bookmarks, books, and Educare and Vroom! materials at more than 13 locations, including barber shops, health department waiting rooms, WIC sites, housing authorities and some schools.

The Underline is a 10-mile off-road, protected urban trail located under the Metrorail system, which helps commuters move more easily from the South to North corridors of **Miami-Dade County, FL**. Nearly 3,500 attendees of all ages from diverse backgrounds have enjoyed over 235 events along the Underline, including family-friendly gatherings with free art classes, storytelling and playtime offered by partners like the Miami Children's Museum. The Underline has also encouraged families to "get moving" with over 100 fitness classes, including virtual yoga and in-person yoga sponsored by Baptist Health, Walk4Life sponsored by AARP, Zumba, Cinderfit, Jr. HEAT Skills and Drills sponsored by Goldman Sachs, and free community bike rides that explore Miami's diverse neighborhoods. Over 1,200 student volunteer hours from 10 schools have helped to improve the Underline's gardens, support the programming and serve visitors.

Sioux City, IA, has 24 bookshelves stocked with free children's books, located in places where children and families gather, including nonprofit organizations, service agencies, attorney's and doctor's offices, and schools.

All five locations of Anna Maria Oyster Bar Restaurants in **Suncoast, FL**, have established book nooks where children can read and select a book to take home. These spaces distribute about 7,500 books a year. Other learn-and-play spaces in Suncoast include:

- A family reading room, located at the Riverwalk East Park, created by Realize Bradenton in partnership with the City of Bradenton, United Way Suncoast and Manatee Central Library. This space showcases visual panels with information about the park's rich history and environment, supplemented by text from books. The panels were funded by Knight Foundation, MFC, United Way and the Selby Foundation.
- Learning corners, which Soar in 4 opened in the Manatee County Libraries' five branches. These areas encourage hands-on learning and parent and family engagement, and Soar in 4 hosts a monthly read aloud and literacy engagement activity at each branch.
- Pop-up Neighbor Through Laundry events. At these events, sponsored by The Patterson Foundation, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading takes over a laundromat for several hours, covering all laundry fees for the patrons and setting up a book nook with free books children can read and take home. Community partners, such as All Faiths Food Bank, the public libraries, the health department and United Way often join to deliver information and resources to laundromat patrons. Since 2018, this program has provided more than 10,000 loads of wash for 1,000 families.

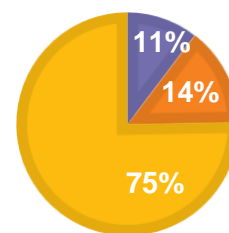
In **Raleigh, NC**, the Consulate General of Mexico provides an indoor area with small tables, chairs, and books for young children to enjoy while they are waiting for services. Through a partnership with NC State University, college students who are learning Spanish drop in so the waiting children can talk and read to them in Spanish.

B3: Do any everyday destinations in your community offer programs for their customers that focus on children's early literacy, early math and/or social-emotional development?

Three-quarters of the 77 respondents knew of community places that offer educational programming for children.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes

Why is this important? Programming is often an important part of the resources offered for playful learning in everyday places and spaces. The programs and activities usually involve partnerships and are part of a coordinated system of place-based learning opportunities for caregivers and their young children. Some programming operates on a large scale, while some is only in one or two places. Regardless of the program's size, when a whole community or city is engaged in making early



literacy, math and/or social-emotional development programs available, supported by local government leaders and philanthropic organizations, it can have a powerful impact.

What's happening in communities? GLR community leads reported a broad array of community-based programming available to children and families, including:

- **Book giveaways** at community events such as basketball games (Wilmington, DE) and at health care centers, libraries, laundromats and other locations (Wilmington, DE; Cobb County, La Grange and Sparta, GA; Fairbanks, AK; Avondale, AZ; Hartford and Bristol, CT; Indian River County and Daytona Beach, FL; Suncoast, FL; Volusia County, FL; Des Moines, and Dubuque, IA; Durham, NC; Moore County, NC; Wake County, NC; Lehigh Valley, PA; Philadelphia, PA)
- **Bookmobiles** that provide free books and story time at community events (Troup County, GA)
- **Church-based mini libraries** (Hancock County, GA)
- **Farmers' markets** hosting a children's literacy booth (Fairbanks, AK)
- **Free Little Libraries** and free Book Boxes located throughout the community (Durham, NC; Hebron, CT; Jones County, IA; Winchester VA)
- **Learning festival** (Suncoast, FL)
- **Learning trails and learning walks** to promote early literacy at parks, museums and apartment complexes (Ames, Quad Cities and Sioux City, IA; Indian River County, FL)
- **Library-based programs offering** literacy, story time, read-alouds and play-based social-emotional development for babies, toddlers and preschool children, sometimes in partnership with community nonprofit organizations and sometimes offered at community locations (Broward County, FL; Council Bluffs, IA; Delaware, statewide; Grinnell, IA; Lehigh Valley and Wyoming Valley, PA; Pinellas County, FL; Troup County, GA)
- **Parent/caregiver workshops** at early learning centers, community spaces, churches and libraries that focus on social, emotional and cognitive skills, including language development and math (Cobb County, GA; Suncoast, FL)
- **Passes** to free or reduced-price cultural events and institutions that offer programming, such as museums, zoos and theaters (Avondale, AZ)
- **Reading challenge** (Haverhill, MA) and literacy campaign (Miami-Dade, FL)
- **School-based after-school and summer** programs (Dalton-Whitfield, GA)
- **StoryWalks® or book walks**, which share a picture book through a series of engaging signs along a path, located on library grounds, nature centers, parks, schools, shopping malls, festivals and riverwalks (Broward County, FL; Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Dyersville, Jones County, Marion and Sioux City, IA; Columbia, LA; Detroit, MI; Hartford, CT; Haverhill, MA; Troup County, GA; Wayne, Johnston and Wake counties, NC; Virginia Beach and Winchester, VA)
- **Story times, open play and STEAM activities** at schools, welcome centers and libraries offered in partnership with public agencies and nonprofit organizations (Avondale, AZ)

More About....

Programming in Everyday Community Places and Spaces

The public library in **Ames, IA**, partners with businesses on Main Street to hold a winter book walk.

Kids' Corner @ The Frank Pembroke Pines in **Broward County, FL**, presents Frank's Virtual Storytime — an online reading and literacy-based enhancement for children to watch at home. Each reading is followed by a craft that complements the featured book's theme or message.

During the summer, the **Des Moines (IA)** Public Library offers Metro Kids summer programming in parks and community locations and in-house summer reading events. It also hosts annual third-grade field trips to neighborhood libraries for tours and library cards.

In partnership with Stars of Gold Readers, the Borough Library in **Fairbanks, AK**, hosts an annual Kids Literary Farmers' Market. About 35 community organizations that work with children host booths with a literacy activity

for kids and information for parents. When activities are completed, children earn a “kindness coin” to purchase local fruits and veggies for their families.

Andover Hebron Marlborough Youth and Family Services in **Hebron, CT**, has installed little mental health libraries in each of the four towns it serves, outside of the town halls and public libraries. The little libraries are stocked with books for all ages on mental health and social-emotional development. AHM replenishes the books as needed and has found that residents access them frequently.

The GLR campaign in **Haverhill, MA**, is working with the local conservation committee to create a conservation-themed calendar and reading challenge that will launch at the farmers’ market.

In **Indian River County, FL**, the Learning Alliance’s “Moonshot Families Early Learning” team provides fun outdoor learning events for families to connect with each other while learning and practicing the Read/Talk/Play/Sing/Create activities. The alliance partners with the library system, “211 Help Me Grow,” the school district, local preschools and area parks.

The **Jackson County (IA)** Interpretive (conservation) Center has a StoryWalk® in its prairie area. The center also offers drawers of touchable exhibits for young children, such as animal skins and bones; a reading area with books and stuffed animals; and programming for toddlers through teenagers.

"READY, Set, Go Miami!" (RSGM), a countywide campaign to incorporate easy early literacy activities into everyday routines at home, was developed by the partners of the **Miami-Dade, FL**, GLR campaign. RSGM emphasizes the wealth of year-round early childhood resources in the county. During a March Literacy Blitz!, parents and community leaders are trained to host workshops that empower and inspire fellow parents to incorporate early literacy strategies into daily chores, such as waiting on a bus or in the doctor’s office or cooking at home.

Growing Moore Readers in **Moore County, NC**, sets up week-long reading stations in June and July for children from preK to eighth grade in local low-income neighborhoods. These pop-up stations offer every child who attends a new book to keep, a STEAM activity, parent resources, and a snack and water. This year, interns will lead a STEAM activity with the children each day, and volunteers will read books to the children.

The **Omaha (NE)** Public Library offers story time for babies and older children, music and movement, costume character story time and an online story time option, with multiple partners and guests involved.

In **Philadelphia, PA**, a Neighborhood Literacy Fund launched by Read by 4th awards up to \$2,000 for community-driven projects that encourage young children to read. Many projects operate in everyday destinations, where they provide creative writing workshops, story times and autism support groups among other programs. In addition, the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation operates neighborhood-based Play Parks where children and their caregivers can enjoy playful learning opportunities during the summer. The activities support literacy, math, STEM and social-emotional skills — along with a water slide and ice cream truck on hot days.

In **Suncoast, FL**, the Forty Carrots Family Center presents Partners in Play weekly at 15 neighborhood libraries. Parents enjoy special uninterrupted playtime with their children from birth to age 5 at these free, drop-in parent education groups. The sessions, run by educators, include hands-on, developmentally age-appropriate activities, circle time, opportunities to make new friends and parenting information. In addition:

- Soar in 4 sponsors a free, two-hour family literacy event on the first Wednesday of each month at the Bishop Museum. In addition to free admission to the museum, early learners and their families receive literacy materials to support classroom learning. Hundreds of families attend every month.
- The Suncoast Remake Learning Days is a 10-day learning festival that involves more than 200 events with opportunities for participants of all ages to develop their creativity, perseverance and curiosity. Schools,

museums, libraries, after-school organizations, early child care centers, colleges, universities, media centers, faith-based organizations, businesses, tech startups and other organizations open their doors to welcome families and travel into neighborhoods to host free, hands-on educational experiences for youth from pre-K through high school and their families, caregivers and educators.

- The Suncoast GLR campaign partners with Manatee Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Sarasota County and The Patterson Foundation to sponsor Reach Out and Read in 11 clinics in DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties. Over five years, pediatricians and health care providers have provided 76,211 families of children from birth through age 5 with brain-building tools and books that strengthen parenting skills and improve school readiness.

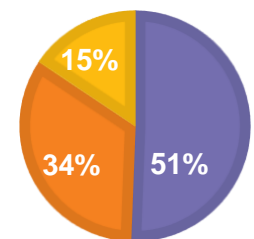
In **Volusia County, FL**, a partnership between Volusia County Library and the Volusia County Parks, Recreation and Culture Department trains counselors at 14 summer camps to help campers choose from books on a cart that contains more than 250 books aimed at different reading levels and interests. The camps schedule daily reading time, and some counselors read aloud to campers during that time. During June-August 2022, 639 campers read for a cumulative 8,922 days; 620 campers visited one of five regional libraries; and 302 new library cards were issued.

In **Wake County, NC**, the public school system, public libraries, Smart Start and Marbles Kids Museum provide play-based school readiness experiences for preschool-aged children and families who have not attended a formal preschool or day care program. The programming occurs at the museum and neighborhood libraries throughout the county. In addition, students at Wake Technical Community College, supported by community volunteers, provide culturally diverse, bilingual StoryWalks® outside libraries and at the Consulate General of Mexico in Raleigh, affordable housing complexes and community events. Coalition partners can check out books from a StoryWalk® lending library.

B4. Has your community created learning-rich settings for children while they are in transit?

Although learning-rich settings for children in transit exist in some GLR communities, this type of opportunity seems to be less developed than others in most communities.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



Why is this important? Many children spend countless hours in transit spots every week, from bus stops to subway terminals, commuter buses and trains. Instead of wasted time dulled by boring surroundings, this time can be a chance to encounter fun visual displays and reading opportunities — riddles, tongue twisters, alphabet hunts, maps, poetry, songs, stories and more — that stimulate children’s learning and engage them in conversation with their parents.

What’s happening in communities? GLR communities have created learning opportunities at the following transit locales:

- **Airport waiting areas**, where children can read books or take them on the plane through a program called “Books on the Fly” (Fairbanks, AK)
- **Bus stops and shelters**, where signage encouraging literacy activities is posted (Lehigh Valley, PA; New Orleans, LA; Philadelphia, PA); on bus interiors and exteriors (Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia, PA); and at bus depot transfer spots, where free books are available (Daytona Beach and Indian River County, FL)
- **Free Little Libraries** at bus stops and other locations (Grinnell, IA)

- **Sidewalks** painted with letters and numbers (Johnston County, NC)
- **StoryWalk®** at a bus stop outside a library and **Born Learning Trails** at the bus stop and a community resource center, for children to use while waiting for rides (Avondale, AZ)
- **Subway cars and stops** (Philadelphia, PA)

More About.... Creating Learning-Rich Transit Settings

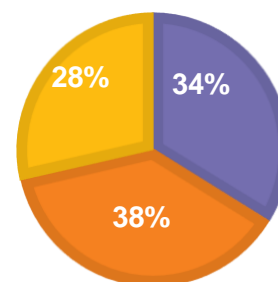
In **Daytona Beach, FL**, the Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia counties partners with the Votran system, which provides bus transportation for area residents — many of whom are young workers and women likely to have limited economic resources — to make free children’s books available. Coalition staff deliver the books to the bus depot, and bus drivers tell riders with young children that they are available to share or for caregivers to read with their children while they ride. Stickers placed on each book include tips for promoting literacy skills. Children are encouraged to take books they have enjoyed with them when they disembark, so that learning can continue at the next destination and at home.

In **Philadelphia, PA**, the Read by 4th program partnered with the William Penn Foundation, Mighty Engine and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) to transform two subway stations, 36 buses and 95 bus shelters across the city into learning adventures for families and kids. “Come Aboard the Reading Promise,” a citywide early literacy campaign, provides tips on how to support children’s literacy development, while fun literacy-themed questions and activities prompt caregivers to immediately practice the behaviors with their children.

B5: Has your community invested in, or considered investing in, learning-rich playgrounds?

Learning-rich playgrounds appear to be a valued but still-developing part of many GLR communities, with slightly more than a quarter of the 77 respondents saying such playgrounds exist or will soon exist in their community.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



Why is this important? Playgrounds epitomize spaces where children can have fun while also developing physical, social, emotional, cognitive and imaginative skills. As they move and interact, they improve their physical coordination, social interactions, language use and mental agility. This learning potential is enhanced when playgrounds feature elements specifically designed to promote learning.

What’s happening in communities? GLR communities are bringing learning and play together at playgrounds in creative ways, including:

- **Libraries** that have parks with literacy-based interactive areas (Cedar Rapids Public Library, IA), active learning-play areas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) or an outdoor playground with musical instruments (Avondale, AZ)
- **Playgrounds** that feature mini-libraries (Hancock County, GA), educational quotes and pictures (Wilmington, DE), or equipment that builds children’s motor skills (Leon County, FL)
- **Parks** that feature StoryWalks® (Bristol, CT), learning trails with stories and information kiosks (Avondale, AZ; Tupelo-Lee County, MS), and/or a Born Learning physical fitness and early learning course (Avondale, AZ)
- **Schools** that have outdoor spaces for art experiences (Riverdale, GA)

More About.... Learning-Rich Playgrounds

In **Avondale, AZ**, the Valley of the Sun chapter of the Arizona AEYC organized a “Flip This Playground” effort to create spaces with learning trails with stories and other information posted in kiosks. Arizona PBS contributed Sesame Street in Communities kits with children's books and everyday learning activities to the initiative.

Playtown Museum in Weston (**Broward County**), **FL**, has an indoor playground for children up to six years old and their families that is devoted to active imaginary play. It offers a variety of activities that encourage pretend play and educational activities, plus a slide and toddler area.

In **Grinnell, IA**, Drake Community Library has a permanent StoryWalk® installation at Arbor Lake Park that encourages people to interact with the book, each other and their surroundings as they enjoy a walk through the park. The installed stories include the pages of the featured book as well as talking points and actions that go along with the story.

The Born Learning Trails in **Indian River County, FL**, (see p. 9) feature painted images on the ground that coincide with walkway signs guiding parents to ask their kids to jump, clap, look, touch and more. By participating, children are exercising as well as learning, which causes their brains to work more efficiently and productively.

A park in **Johnston County, NC**, posts information on the five senses; a sign language panel; and a sign about water conservation located next to a hand-operated water pump. The park also has a sensory garden with a sign telling families what children can do with the plants growing there.

The GLR campaign in **Lehigh Valley, PA**, is developing plans to transform local playgrounds into Talk Read Sing destinations, with panels featuring messaging about early language and brain development and activity prompts, such as “Let’s Talk About Feelings” and “Let’s Talk About Nature.”

Omaha Urban Thinkscapes is developing a site in **Omaha, NE**, that will integrate learning and story-telling opportunities about current events and past history, with help from local artists and designers.

Kaboom! is working with Read by 4th in **Philadelphia, PA**, to develop custom stories for story trails at five playgrounds. The project, which will incorporate playful learning elements for caregivers and children, is aligned with Read by 4th’s Reading Promise campaign to help families raise strong readers. In addition, the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation is developing two spraygrounds with playful learning elements designed to help children learn math and STEM skills.

City playgrounds in **Raleigh, NC**, feature learning panels consisting of letters and the solar system; some play musical notes when a letter is touched. In partnership with Wake County Public Schools, the park system hosts Letterland Days to celebrate characters associated with each letter of the alphabet.

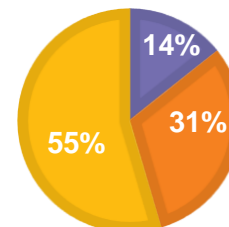
Welleby Park in **Sunrise, FL**, has a new park with a “safety town” play and learn area, which features mini buildings modeled after city facilities.

A local leadership group in **Wilkes-Barre, PA**, helped to transform playgrounds by adding an area that displays letters and areas where children can water the plants.

B6: Do cultural or amenity institutions in your community encourage economically challenged families to use the institutions as a resource for children's learning?

Well over half of the 77 respondents reported that these institutions position themselves as resources that economically challenged parents and caregivers can use to support their children's learning.

■ No ■ Don't know ■ Yes



Why is this important? Cultural assets and amenity institutions in communities, such as libraries, museums, zoos, aquariums, performing arts centers, botanical gardens, parks and historical sites, are important sources of learning-rich environments and experiences for children outside of the home and school. These venues for “informal learning” became increasingly important during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as the extra demands placed on schools and parents made it clear that children’s equitable learning recovery would require help from many other sources. Yet, as a recent CGLR report noted, “Parents who face economic challenges often are unaware of the learning resources provided by community assets, amenities and informal learning institutions; or, they do not know how to connect with them or deem them inaccessible, unaffordable or unwelcoming.” Through admission price breaks, community outreach, culturally responsive programming, diverse staffing, partnerships with family-facing organizations in communities and other actions, these institutions can encourage economically challenged parents to view them as allies in supporting their children’s learning.

What’s happening in communities? Many types of institutions in GLR communities serve as resources for children’s learning in various ways, including:

- **Aquariums and zoos** that offer free or reduced-price admission (Phoenix, AZ), school and camp tours (Omaha, NE), and summer and year-round classes (Omaha, NE)
- **Children’s, art and science museums**, many of which participate in the national Museums for All, Culture Pass, or Cool Pass programs, which give low-income families free or reduced-price admissions (Bristol, CT; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Winchester, VA). Others offer discounts on their own on specific days (Allentown, PA; Cedar Rapids, IA; Durham, NC; Tupelo-Lee County, MS) or provide scholarships for low-income families, supported by local businesses and private donations (Sioux City, IA; Wake County, NC). Other incentives include:
 - Field trips for groups of children and their parents (Allentown, PA; Dalton-Whitfield, GA)
 - Free admission days for city or state residents (Chicago, IL)
 - Monthly “learner and maker” spaces for children (Sarasota, FL) and art days or classes (Allentown, PA; Omaha, NE)
 - Free membership to an interactive playground for the first three years of a child’s life (New Orleans, LA)
 - Classroom resources for teachers (Omaha, NE) and learning materials for families to take home (Wake County, NC)
 - Mentoring (Omaha, NE)
- **History museums** that offer traveling history exhibits and digital learning classes (Omaha, NE)
- **Libraries**, which host free family art classes as special events (Omaha, NE; Wilkes-Barre, PA), monthly child-and-family reading activities (Hancock County, GA), free library cards for students and families enrolled in the local school district (Tahoe-Truckee, CA), and access to other learning experiences for youth (Chatham County, NC; Tupelo-Lee County, MS)
- **Parks and recreation centers** that offer learning programs and classes (Chatham County, NC; Tahoe-Truckee, CA)
- **Symphonies and orchestras**, which offer free or low-cost concerts for families (Broward County, FL; Omaha, NE)

- **Theatre companies**, which provide free or reduced-price admission to families through the Culture Pass program (Avondale, AZ) or on selected dates (Omaha, NE)

More About....

Cultural Assets and Amenities as Informal Learning Resources

Through the national Museums for All initiative, families in **Broward County, FL**, that receive SNAP benefits qualify for free or reduced-price admission to many museums, including Flamingo Gardens, Bonnett House Museum, NSU Art Museum, Stranahan House, the Art and Culture Center in Hollywood, and Old Davie School House and Historical Museum. Through partnerships with human service agencies, the Museum of Discovery and Science offers free access to children and families with limited resources and challenges in the home environment.

Blank Park Zoo in **Des Moines, IA**, offers in-person and virtual outreach programs year-round. Zoo to You programs visit schools, day care centers, libraries and many other community organizations. Programs for schools include classroom visits, school assemblies and after-school programs, with content aligned with the state science standards. The zoo also offers monthly at-home activities designed to encourage child-adult conversations.

In **Fairbanks, AK**, the Stars of Gold Readers GLR campaign and the Borough Library hosted an “Engaging All Readers” event to increase families’ awareness of recent literature that positively reflects Alaska Native and American Indian children. The event included activities for children and Alaska Native guests who shared stories, songs, dances and games. Each family left with new books to keep.

Several organizations in **Grinnell, IA**, offer free or scholarship-based family programming to encourage participation in cultural offerings. For example:

- Grinnell College partnered with the University of Iowa to host a traveling exhibit at Drake Community Library that used Anne Frank’s story to talk with young audiences about differences among people. Grinnell College students guided area school children through the exhibit.
- Grinnell Area Arts Council offers a free Music in the Park series and supports the Stewart Gallery, which hosts an annual show of art by local elementary school students.
- Youth can participate in Grinnell Community Theatre’s junior productions for free, and the company offers scholarships that gives children in economically challenged families free attendance in art education and other classes at Studio 6, the Arts Council’s after-school program.
- The Grinnell Area Arts Council and Grinnell College co-hosted Observing With NASA, an exhibit kiosk from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory that engages visitors in the art and science of NASA imagery. Local schools brought students to experience the exhibit.

Ballet Vero Beach in **Indian River County, FL**, brings ballet into Title 1 elementary schools and provides free admission to weekend performances for elementary students and their families. The performers integrate literacy into the ballet and work with students before they attend the performance so they will understand what they are seeing. The ballet company rewrites traditional ballets and creates original programming using vocabulary children will understand and integrating the literacy standards.

Economically challenged parents in **Miami-Dade, FL**, can obtain family passes or access to specific exhibits at children’s and history museums, parks, zoos, storytelling events and live theater shows in exchange for attending parent education seminars.

WIC clinics in **Omaha, NE**, coordinate with the Omaha Children’s Museum to facilitate low-cost memberships for WIC families.

Seven cultural institutions, including science centers and museums, in **Philadelphia, PA**, have formed a network to bring informal learning activities and resources to young children from birth to age 5 and their families during the summer. Network members jointly choose a theme or themes for programming, such as early literacy, social-emotional development and critical thinking. Each organization then implements their own programming on this theme in accessible community spaces, such as parks and playgrounds. To kick off the summer, the network hosts Toddlerpalooza, a free event that in 2022 featured access to the Barnes Foundation's galleries, musical performances and other activities. In summer 2022, the network served over 1,200 children and their families.

Arizona PBS hosted a family event at the Heard Museum in **Phoenix, AZ**, with Molly of Denali, a fictional 10-year-old Alaska Native girl featured in PBS LearningMedia videos, games and books. Children received Molly of Denali "I can read" books, had a chance to dance and interact with Molly herself, and completed several interactive crafts in addition to exploring the museum. Also in Phoenix, the city government's Great Start Initiative gives children in Title I schools free admission to several educational and cultural centers before they begin kindergarten, including the Arizona Science Center, Children's Museum of Phoenix, Phoenix Zoo, Desert Botanical Gardens, Arizona Latino Arts and Cultural Center, Musical Instrument Museum, Japanese Friendship Garden and other attractions. And, with support from the Gila River Indian Community, children in Phoenix can also attend Free First Friday Nights at the Children's Museum of Phoenix.

Through a partnership with local museums, libraries in **Pinellas County, FL**, have admission passes that families can check out and use. Similarly, the **Wayne County (NC)** Public Library offers free family tickets to the North Carolina Zoo every month during the spring and summer.

In **St. Louis, MO**, Turn the Page STL and Ready Readers work with the St. Louis Symphony, Missouri History Museum, Humane Society, the St. Louis Zoo and the Museum of Transportation to provide literacy-based field trips for students

In **Volusia County, FL**, libraries have adopted a "no fine" policy to encourage economically challenged families to check out books without fear of incurring expenses if they become overdue. They also offer "Lit Kits to Go" for children from birth through fifth grade. The kits include library books, activities and other educational materials to be checked out and used at home for one week or more. Kit orders are filled by library staff and picked up by patrons.

In **Wilkes-Barre, PA**, local libraries host events with artists from an art collective, who provide free art classes for families.

Thank You for Sharing!

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading thanks the community leads who used the What's Working XChange Spring 2023 survey to help us compile this census of what is happening in GLR Network communities to improve digital connectivity and to promote learning-rich environments in the community, outside of school, for children and economically challenged families.

We know that the information summarized here is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more great examples of bright spots and silver linings to be found in CGLR communities, and each one has a deep story that is beyond the scope of this document to capture in detail. We hope this brief inspires you to reach out to colleagues in other communities, ask for their guidance and share what's working for you.