



*NOTE: This is the fourth in a series of articles that were released monthly throughout 2017 as part of the celebration of the NH State Library's 300th anniversary. The State Library was founded in Jan. 25, 1717 and is the first state library in America.*

## **Classrooms Aren't the Only Places Where Better Readers Are Made**

**May 8, 2017:** While some people think that children don't develop reading skills until they start school, research shows that reading, singing and playing with children can impact their brain development and help provide them with the pre-reading skills they need before they enter the classroom. Instilling a love of reading in children from the very beginning is one of the most important things that an adult can do for a child.

But trying to do this without help from an expert can seem daunting. Luckily, in New Hampshire, we have literacy experts all over the state – right at our public libraries.

New Hampshire public libraries are wonderful resources that help children develop a love of reading and strengthen the literacy skills that they'll need to succeed. The children's sections of our libraries have books for young readers of all ages and interests. Visit and you'll find classic picture books you remember from when you learned to read, like "Where the Wild Things Are," right up through newer classics like "Pete the Cat" – often alongside colorful artwork, puppets or other activities that help children become involved in storytelling in a very personal, meaningful way.

Librarians strive to help parents nurture their children's early literacy skills through a variety of age-appropriate programs, including baby lapsits for their youngest patrons and story times for toddlers and preschoolers. Parents and kids learn songs, finger plays and nursery rhymes that they can use at home between visits to the library.

A new program in New Hampshire, "1,000 Books Before Kindergarten," makes it a goal for children to have had 1,000 stories read to them before they start school, helping them be better prepared for formal reading instruction. Thousands of children across the state have already signed up and, although the program is only a year old, dozens have already completed the challenge.

As children grow and their skills develop, libraries have early readers, chapter books, series fiction, nonfiction titles, magazines and audiobooks to hold their interest. There are also children's DVDs and music CDs – a world of choices that engage children, helping them strengthen their reading skills and expand their worlds.

Public libraries have literacy activities for school-aged children as well, helping them strengthen their skills as readers and users of information resources. Throughout the school year, most New Hampshire libraries feature a variety of programs for youth, including book discussion groups, LEGO clubs, drop-in crafts, gaming tournaments and other special events that tie in with reading.

None of this ends with the close of the school year. Each summer, libraries around the state have special summer reading programs that encourage children to read recreationally, helping prevent what has

become known as the “summer slide” in reading skills. This past year’s theme focused on sports and saw libraries holding reading marathons, karate and fencing demonstrations, children’s yoga, juggling performances, hula hooping, mini golf, storytelling and more. This year’s theme is “Build a Better World”; be on the lookout for everything from “Touch a Truck” events to environmental programs to community awareness projects at your public library.

Whether your children attend public or private school, are home-schooled or won’t be in school for a few years, you can find resources at your public library that will help them develop the literacy skills they need to become better readers. Be sure to check out your community’s library today – and remember to take your kids with you when you go.

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