



ECRC Community Chronicle

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER :: *Summer News 2019*

REACHING FOR THE STARS IN AKRON

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Sixty percent of children entering Akron's kindergarten classrooms are not ready to learn. The GAR Foundation is betting that higher-quality early learning environments will give Akron's youngest children the school readiness boost they need.

GAR's new early childhood quality initiative is called STARS (Supporting Teachers and Ready Students), and it's targeting Akron's highest-need neighborhoods. Over a two-year period, the Early Childhood Resource Center's Early Childhood Specialists will provide intensive training and coaching for educators and administrators at 24 urban early learning centers.

After the children enter kindergarten, teams from Summit Education Initiative and Kent State University will work together to analyze their Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores. GAR hopes they'll find that the STARS Project's improved early learning environments and experiences set the children up for school success.

ADMINISTRATORS have assessed their program's overall strengths and challenges in areas such as fiscal management, staffing, benefits, wages, and overall operations. From there, our **EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALISTS** have helped them

create and implement improvement plans. Administrators are also meeting in groups to collaborate, train, and brainstorm with peers.

EDUCATORS similarly took stock of strengths and challenges in each classroom. Our Early Childhood Specialists are helping them set and meet improvement goals. The Specialists are also guiding and modeling student-teacher interaction techniques, lesson planning, and parent engagement strategies.

Early Childhood Specialists Megan Ballard and Elizabeth Schilling are working with 12 programs each. They spend several hours at each program, several times a month, to provide the coaching and mentoring needed for quality improvement. Parent Engagement Coordinator Shawn Crable is helping all the centers reach out and engage the families they serve.

Megan says many educators have been excited about pursuing a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential by taking Early Childhood Resource Center classes at no cost to them or their employers. The CDA is the nationally recognized foundation of an early childhood career, requiring 120 hours of training in eight subject areas. It equips educators with the skills and

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BOOKS: THE MAGIC OUR CHILDREN NEED

Books are magic for our children. We see it at the ECRC's Canton location every day: Inspiration Station programs and the playscape are great fun, but nothing widens little eyes quite like getting to choose a brand new book from the bottomless book drawer.

Getting books into as many homes as possible is one of our constant goals. That's because researchers have repeatedly found that just having books in the home strongly correlates with academic success. "Even a little bit goes a long way," in terms of the number of books," to the extent that "having as few as 20 books in the home has a significant impact on propelling a child to a higher level of education, and the more books, the greater the benefit."¹ Beyond mere academic success, though, access to books is associated with positive behavioral and psychological outcomes as well.²

Early experience with books contributes greatly to success in learning to read.³ That's the concept behind Stark Library's new early literacy initiative called *1,000 Books before Kindergarten*. For every hundred books logged, the child gets a prize. A thousand books is not as daunting as it may sound, considering that just one book a night equals nearly 400 by year's end. The children's library in our Canton location is a Stark Library branch, so we're busily enrolling families in the *1,000 Books* effort.

It's simple, powerful, and irrefutable: there's not much in our modern world that's more magical than simply reading to a child.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL HOWARD, ECRC BOARD CHAIR



SCOTT HASSELMAN, ECRC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Bottomless Book Drawer: The Coolest Spot Around

No visit to the Early Childhood Resource Center's Canton location is complete without a final stop at our legendary Bottomless Book Drawer. Each child gets to choose a book, every time the family visits.

Watching the selection process is quite instructive. Some children choose a book featuring a familiar character from television, films, or toys. Some choose a book that's their favorite color. Others choose based on their current subject of fascination, whether that's trucks, princesses, or bugs.

However they choose, each child beams as they leave for home with a brand new book in tow.

In case you can't make it to the book drawer, we've asked some community members what books they recommend. We've offered their suggestions to you throughout this issue. Happy reading!



REACHING FOR THE STARS *Continued from page 1*

strategies they need to be effective. Early learning centers can only enter the Step Up To Quality rating system if at least half the staff members have a CDA. Interest was so great that CDA classes filled up within three days.

Other professional development offered will include training on leadership development, developmentally appropriate practices, trauma-informed care, and family engagement.

Staff members from Summit Education Initiative will assess educator quality by using the evidence-based CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) tool, which measures elements of teaching that are linked to school readiness.

Megan's finding that the educators and administrators are eager to work with her. She's "so excited to get the opportunity to work closely with these programs to help increase school readiness for the children of Summit County." ✦

STARS in Action

MARGO SLAUGHTER owns Glory Hallelujah Child Care. She and her staff have been working with Elizabeth Schilling, who is helping them improve classroom areas and use more open-ended dialogue with the children. Margo's especially grateful for Elizabeth's help with paperwork, which can be challenging at times.

The center has been reaching out to families, with help from Shawn Crable. They're about to hold a family game night, and they've been inviting parents to visit the classroom to read to the children.

TASHA PHILPOTT is the Co-Director at Rosa's Playhouse. With Megan Ballard's help, every classroom now has a cozy corner (a quiet area with soft surfaces that helps small children relax and learn to self soothe).

Tasha is thrilled to be working with Megan, who "is amazing, knows her job well, and she's so helpful. If I didn't know it, she helped me find it."

WE SUGGEST: *Trashy Town* by Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha is a fave, because of the repeated question, "Is the trash truck full yet?" that kids can engage with. — Erica W., Community Member



Cultivating School Readiness, One Book at a Time

Learning how to engage her child while reading has been very helpful for SPARK mom Megan. She says, *“I thought you just read a book, then move on to the next book. I know now, because of SPARK, that I should ask a question about the characters. In fact, sometimes I change the name of the book character to my son’s name and he just cracks up laughing! It really makes him pay attention.”*

Each month, SPARK introduces a new book to the parent and child. The lesson always starts off with interactive storytelling and moves into activities that engage the parent and child as they learn together.

The SPARK parent partner teaches, through modeling, that reading together can be exciting, especially when the parent engages the child in the story and refers back to the story after the reading is done.

Studies show that engagement strengthens critical thinking skills, and that children better understand and recall information when they’ve been actively involved in learning. To deepen engagement, the parent partner will often pause the reading to count the items pictured or ask the child to search for an object shown in a picture. During many SPARK lessons, the parent and child are given props, so they can act out the story as it’s being read.

Many SPARK children say their favorite part of the program is that each month, they get their very own brand-new book to keep. Sometimes, SPARK books are the first books those children get to own. The books add up fast: families accumulate a home library of up to 18 children’s books during their time in SPARK.

The program has given more than 59,824 books to Ohio children in just the last five years. ♦



Getting to Know Books

SPARK lessons always start with a tour of the book cover. The parent partner points out the author and illustrator before reading the book, and explains what each person does.

Learning about the author and illustrator, and the cover and spine, is part of *print awareness*, or the process of learning to use books. Print awareness is an important part of early literacy. No one is born knowing to hold a book right side up, or read it from left to right. These skills are taught.

A lack of print awareness can hold a child back from learning; children lacking print awareness skills are typically behind their peers in school.

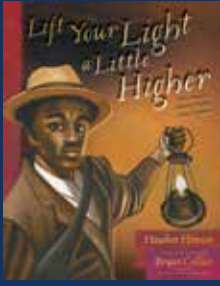
That’s why SPARK makes sure children aren’t just engaged with the stories being read, but also with the books themselves. It’s a great way to nurture a lifelong love of books.



WE SUGGEST:

I asked my 13-year-old son to recommend a book. He ran upstairs and grabbed *Chicka Chicka ABC* by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault. While I remembered the book and how much we enjoyed reading it together, I had no idea we still had it! But he knew exactly where it was, because he had tucked it away in a drawer for safekeeping. We spent many nights before bedtime reading that book. Lots of fond memories :)

— Bonnie Wilson, Coordinator, Trumbull County Family and Children First Council



WE SUGGEST: I have read this book to kindergarteners on National Reading Day, when the Fatherhood Coalition reads to children in elementary schools in Canton, Alliance, and Massillon. The book is entitled **Lift Your Light a Little Higher: The Story of Stephen Bishop, Slave Explorer** by Heather Henson. He was a world-famous Mammoth Cave explorer, cave guide, and slave before the Civil War. It may seem like a heavy read for children that young, but the illustrations and story have always kept the five-year-olds greatly interested! Stephen Bishop learned to read (which was illegal for slaves) by letting tourists write their names on the walls of the cave!

— Rob Pierson, Deputy Director of Child Support, Stark County Job and Family Services and Chairperson of the Stark County Fatherhood Coalition

We love the **Frog and Toad** books by Arnold Lobel. My kids particularly like the silly stories like **Cookies**, but also the poignant stories displaying true friendship, like **Alone**. All of them are winners!

— Erin J., Community Member

Corduroy by Don Freeman. This classic story never fails to capture kids' attention. It teaches responsibility and the importance of friendship.

— Kevin Thompson, Regional President (Akron, Canton, and Wooster), PNC



The Children's Library

Inside our Canton location is a children's branch of Stark Library, offering more than 4,600 fiction and non-fiction books, big books, storytelling kits, puppets, Sprout Learning backpacks, DVDs, and resource materials, all available for checkout.

An Early Childhood Resource Center visit is the perfect occasion to sign your child up for his or her very own Stark Library card. Items checked out can be returned to any Stark Library branch.



BOOK BUNDLES

Is your child suddenly fascinated with a certain subject? Whether it's ballerinas, trains, or dinosaurs, give us a call. We'll put together a bundle of books all about your child's topic of fascination. Then just drop by to check out the bundle at your convenience. Call Kelly at (330) 491-3272. She'll put together a book bundle just for you!





Students Hold Book Drives

In February, students from Hoover High School's Teaching Professions program, Perry High School's Teacher Academy, and GlenOak High School held children's book drives to benefit the Early Childhood Resource Center.

In just one month, the groups collected more than 2,000 books to donate. They all joined together to deliver the books, which will be given to children participating in the Early Childhood Resource Center's many programs.

Hoover teacher Shirley Dobry works with students in the Teaching Professions program, who plan to study education in college. Many also join the Ohio chapter of the national group Educators Rising. She's pleased with

the determination and commitment her students showed during this fifth year of the book drive.

"This is an annual district-wide book drive. We publicize it through social media and the school's newsletter," Dobry said.

Perry teacher Julie Wells was pleased with her students, saying, "Perry Teacher Academy appreciates the opportunity to be involved with other schools and the Early Childhood Resource Center to donate and help others. I would like to praise The Early Childhood Resource Center for all the different services that they provide for the community. Thank you for encouraging the love of reading." ♦

WE SUGGEST: *Bear Snores On* by Karma Wilson. The repetitive text, story of friendship, and the sweet bear make it a wonderful book.
— Meagan L., Community Member

Rhyming Dust Bunnies by Jan Thomas: This is a cute book about dust bunnies trying to avoid the broom and vacuum. The book focuses on rhyme and humor, and students love it! — Linnea Olbon, the Canton City School District's Director of Early Childhood

Books on Parenting

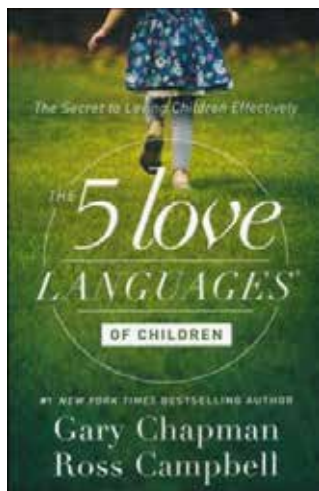
Recommendations from Early Childhood Resource Center
Regional Coordinator Kris Filhour:



Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood: Practical Parenting from Birth to Six Years

Jim Fay and Dr. Charles Fay offer insightful tips for parents to remember as they interact with their children. I learned a lot about how to help support children without getting upset or allowing

my buttons to be pushed. The strategies the book suggests can be used to help with tantrums, potty training, and setting limits in a loving way.



The 5 Love Languages of Children

Dr. Gary Chapman and Dr. Ross Campbell help you discover your child's love language, correct and discipline more effectively, assist your child in learning, and build a foundation of unconditional love.

The book helps us see our children as individuals

who express and receive love in different ways. Understanding this can help us connect with our children and help them to feel loved. It includes dozens of tips for practical ways to speak your child's unique love language.

THE GIFT OF BOOKS

If you have new or gently used children's books that need a home, please consider donating them to us. We'll get them into the hands of families who need them! Give the gift of school readiness by giving the gift of books. You'll change a child's world, guaranteed.

To donate, or to discuss holding your own book drive, contact Sandy Turner at (330) 491-3272 or sturner@ecresourcecenter.org



Ramona the Pest By Beverly Cleary. I loved this book because I also had an older sister that thought I was a pest. It is funny and light-hearted, and a perfect book for a young girl. — *Massillon Mayor Kathy Catazaro-Perry*



EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

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ecresourcecenter.org

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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Early Childhood Resource Center is to promote the healthy development of young children by strengthening families, improving the quality of early learning experiences, increasing school and community readiness, and informing public policy.

CENTER HOURS

Monday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Center is closed on weekends.

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The ECRC Board of Directors plays an important role in providing fiscal and legal oversight, making policy decisions, conducting strategic planning, and more. Chosen for their professional expertise and understanding of early childhood issues, each board member can serve a maximum of three three-year terms.