

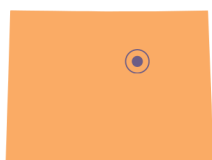
Public Libraries: Encouraging a Lifetime of Learning

Education and literacy across a lifetime remain core to a healthy economy and strong nation. From **storytimes** and **after-school programs** for children to **safe and supportive spaces** for teens to adult **literacy programs**, **libraries help meet peoples' educational needs** wherever they are in life.

Children's libraries are designed for the young person with a wide selection of colorful books, interactive storytimes, educational games and cozy reading nooks to nurture young readers. **Teen spaces** cater to older students with features like **dedicated computers**, video game consoles, **college and career services** and volunteer or work-study opportunities. Libraries are a critical supplement to in-school learning with **after-school homework help and activities**.

Adult literacy programs at public libraries often offer free tutoring, literacy classes, and access to learning resources to **help adults improve their reading and writing skills**. Additionally, **ESL classes** at a library provide non-native English speakers with free language instruction, conversational practice and cultural orientation to help them improve their English proficiency, build relationships and **form connections to the community**.

Snapshot of Libraries Supporting Lifelong Learning



Denver Public Library (CO)

The Denver Public Library leads a [program for teens](#) that focuses on building community, connecting with peers and creating an environment where teens feel included and empowered. [Students work with library staff](#) to dive deep into themes around social action and belonging. The library created this new approach because the pandemic disrupted so much of a teenager's typical experience during those years. Library branches have teen rooms, dedicated staff trained to help them and programming gives teens a safe space to explore, read or hang out.



Queens Public Library (NY)

The Queens Public Library is one of the country's largest, most accessible and most welcoming venue for [free adult education](#) and proudly serves a multilingual population of which almost half are born outside the U.S. The Queens Library's Adult Learner Program serves 6,000 to 7,000 literacy and ESL students annually. As a provider of the [high school equivalency exam and preparation](#), Queens Library is firmly established in the adult education world. Each year, more than 100 students celebrate their accomplishments at the Adult Learner Program graduation ceremony. Graduates cite the library's low-pressure environment and supportive approach as being pivotal to success.





Toledo Lucas County Public Library (OH)

The Toledo Lucas County Public Library is building on its decades-long **commitment to early literacy** to ensure all librarians are well-versed in the science of reading. The library is one year into an **intensive two-year staff training effort** that focuses on essential skills all kids need to learn to become good readers. The two primary skills are decoding (phonics) and language comprehension. As part of the blueprint, reading specialists are meeting with families in the community, offering a toolkit of ideas and things that families can do at home. This includes the basics of how children learn to read and ideas for helping a child develop a growth mindset. The library aims to be in alignment with local educators and school leaders, so that when parents come in seeking reading materials, they better understand what is being taught in school.



WHAT'S AHEAD FOR LIBRARIES: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING OF THE 'SCIENCE OF READING'

The pandemic exacerbated the decline in reading scores, especially for children in low-income communities. Not only is a child's school learning predicated on reading, but literacy is tied directly to vocational success and health outcomes later in life. The high percentage of children who fail to read proficiently is leading several states to enact new policies regarding instructional methods centered around the science of reading. In response, libraries need to embrace the science of reading approach to offer direct support so that all children can become strong readers.

Libraries need to strengthen partnerships with national organizations to increase funding for out-of-school programs and resources and for increasing awareness of early childhood and family literacy programs they have available. For college and career readiness, libraries must be embraced as on-ramps to earning a high school diploma or attending college. Additionally, Congress should increase literacy and education funding nationally and support legislative policies and investments in the U.S. Department of Education and Institute of Museum and Library Services.