



1000 Books Before Kindergarten

Early Literacy Initiative

La Crosse Public Library Youth Services has developed an ongoing early literacy initiative called **1000 Books Before Kindergarten** that began March, 2011. This multiyear project encourages parents to read aloud at least 1000 books with their children ages 1 and up before they enter school. The program, open to any preschooler in La Crosse, has an initial goal of reaching – and involving - **700 (or more!) children over a two year period.** As of August, 2011, we have 400 preschoolers enrolled and twelve who have already reached the 1000 finish.

Project Goals include:

- Introduce a fun method to encourage families to read aloud to preschoolers
- Introduce children to a wide range of excellent books to promote pre-literacy so children enter school ready to learn
- Encourage regular library use by families and enhance our already existing outreach to daycares and preschools

Children receive a “**Read and Grow**” **reading folder** at registration at the library with a colored page to record the first 100 books read to the child. Families are encouraged to return to the library every time they finish reading and listening to 100 books.

Children receive new pages and congratulatory stickers each time they finish a 100-level. They also place a sticker on a part of a giant **wall mural** to show the community how much reading is being done. Both children and parents (since they do all the reading and are integral to the success of the initiative) receive small incentives here and there along the way. The culminating prize is a book the child can keep.

As the program has progressed, stickers at each level have been the biggest hit with kids, along with the 500 and 1000 level incentive (fingerpuppet and book). Parents are somewhat indifferent to their incentives. I would recommend something like a bookbag for parents at the beginning that will be an advertisement for the initiative on its own and let the kids enjoy the sticker fun!

A key aspect of the project is to connect **with schools, hospitals, daycares, Head Start and the parenting Place** that reach out to and work with families to support the program so it truly reaches its intended goals. We hope working with these partners will help us get the word out about the importance of these early learning years and help us **achieve our goal of children entering their formal schooling years with a rich background of literacy tools – language, visual literacy, grammar, shared literacy –that help them to be “ready-to-learn”.**

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Blog: [Tiny Tips for Library Fun](http://tinytipsforlibraryfun.blogspot.com/)

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