



TEACHING YOUNG CHILDREN/PRESCHOOL

Our Annual
Themed Issue:
Beyond the
Classroom

VOL 8 NO 2

Voices

From the Resources in Our Communities

Family Place Libraries
Centereach, New York
www.familyplacelibraries.org

This library network, with 300 sites in 23 states, offers resources to families and teachers nationwide. The librarians believe that literacy begins at birth, and that libraries are an ideal setting for nurturing healthy families.

TYC spoke with Kathleen Deerr, coordinator at Family Place Libraries.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about Family Place Libraries and the work you do?

A: We help libraries transform into centers for early childhood learning, support, and engagement. We do that through the spaces we develop in the libraries. We provide

toys for children, parenting materials, handouts from family-serving organizations, pamphlets, brochures, and parenting books. We offer comfortable seating near the children so families can be engaged with their children while they play. Signs placed near all the stations at the family workshops explain to parents what their children are learning while they play at those stations. We're trying to help families understand that play is important to learning.

Our family workshops bring together all of these components. Children explore the room according to their own interests, abilities, and developmental stages. While the children and families are playing, a librarian goes around and talks to families one-on-one, casually learning any concerns that parents might have. Librarians can get them materials and connect them with resources they need. Some of those resources are not just physical materials but connections in the community.

Q: Can you describe how teachers can use or get involved with this project?

A: The program is great for teachers of children with special needs. We work a lot with preschool teachers and early intervention specialists. The library can become the natural environment in which children receive special services. Families are referred here by teachers who have the opportunity to work with children one-on-one or set up a meeting with a special services expert. We find that because children's special needs are identified early, quite often they receive the support they need before they start school.

In terms of teachers of children who do not have special needs, it's a great way to increase family involvement and engagement. Families receive information about child development. They get support from library staff and make important connections with families of children the same age. **TYC**