

## “I Love to Read” Library Field Trip

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*Early Childhood Center  
Chaska, Minnesota*

“**M**om, my school came here!” By “here”, the eager kindergartener meant the public library, where the Early Childhood Center (ECC) bused its 650 kindergarteners in honor of the district’s “I Love to Read” Month. There, they got their own library cards, and books for their parents to read to them. Because of the varying reading skills and diverse backgrounds of the students, the ECC’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) organized the field trip to expose 5- and 6-year-olds to a wonderful source of reading materials and other services.

Because of the large number of students involved, the field trip took place on six different days and at two libraries. Students received a tour, along with storytelling, story reading, a magic trick, and bookmarks. Students learned about the library’s regularly scheduled story hours and available resources, such as bilingual materials. Students also received registration forms for library cards and were encouraged to come back with their families to receive the cards and check out books.

After the event, the librarians set up “ECC Day at the Library” on two Saturdays so that children could return with their families to listen to stories, learn about available library services, and turn in their completed library card registration forms.

ECC’s ATP, which consists of the principal, four kindergarten teachers, a special education representative, a support staff representative, a school board member, the parent involvement coordinator, and three parent rep-

resentatives, planned the library field trips. The ATP wanted all kindergarteners to have library cards as part of a larger plan to increase literacy among students. The school’s media specialist contacted the librarians to work out the details. The PTO and the school shared the cost of the buses. The school’s weekly newsletter told parents all about the trip, including what students would do at the library and the specific date when their child’s class would go.

Since the field trips, the librarians have noticed an increase in traffic at the libraries from ECC students, especially the children of bilingual families. Many students, some of whom had never gone to the public library before, returned to get library cards, and families brought younger siblings along with their kindergarteners for story time. “Several parents told me how wonderful they thought the library field trip was and how their child became much more interested in books and in going to the library as a family,” commented a kindergarten teacher.

With the resounding support of ECC staff and the county librarians, kindergarteners will continue field trips to the library. The ATP would like to better track how many families return to get library cards and designate more Saturdays as special days for kindergarteners and their families throughout the year.

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