Counting Down to Kindergarten

Schuylerville Public Library

Children

Counting Down to Kindergarten

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Byline

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Due to lack of universal preschool opportunities in our area and expressed interest from patrons, our library designed a six-week program with lesson plans and thematic activities for children about to enter kindergarten. The program started over the summer, but sessions are now offered year-round.

Advanced Planning

In 2015, the Schuylerville Public Library developed its five-year strategic plan, and early literacy was strongly emphasized by the community members who took part in the process. The parents who attended story hours and other programs routinely complained about the lack of preschool opportunities in our area, and the library staff and board took notice. Without a universal pre-K program, many parents had to drive out of town or forgo pre-K education for their children if transportation wasn’t an option.

Library staff discovered ALA Edition's "Counting Down to Kindergarten" book and determined to make a free program for local families. The planning process took about six months (beginning in January 2016) and included the search for our early literacy library instructor. Once she was hired, we quickly worked to design lesson plans and thematic activities for the kids and offered our first six-week summer session in July 2016.

We found a wonderful template for this program from the book and structured our weekly lesson plans around the principles that author R. Lynn Baker identified. We also collobrated with Schuylerville Elementary School in identifying the key skills that kindergarten teachers look for in children entering school. WIC has helped to advertise our program to families in need. We also work with local businesses and organizations to enrich the program and offer field trips to our families.

Marketing

We began marketing the first session in early June and had a full class of 25 children signed up by the start of the program in July. We used our standard print marketing, social media marketing and mailings, but found that the most successful method of reaching our targeted audience was word of mouth. We encouraged parents who were registered to let their friends know about our program, and our friends at WIC helped to advertise the program to families with young children. Facebook was also a great asset since the library has a huge social media following.

With our more recent Counting Down to Kindergarten sessions, we have had to limit the number of children we register due to lack of space since the program has become so popular.

Budgeting

We spent approximately $800 in our first year for program supplies and manipulatives plus the salary of our part-time early literacy library instructor. Many of the educational toys and supplies we purchased could probably be obtained more inexpensively if budgets do not allow.

We made great use of our laminator so materials could be used repeatedly, and many of our purchases are used in other library programs as well, serving dual purposes.

Day-of-event Activity

The program consists of two hours, two days per week. Set-up was only difficult when we had large elements, like our life-sized building blocks; because our library has limited space, some program materials are stored outside of the building. Other than a lack of space and storage, we did not face any challenges.

Each week of the program is thematic and based on the core Ready to Read skills, including talking, singing, reading, writing and playing. The day usually begins with circle time and reading and singing, then literacy stations (sensory activities, fine motor skill practice, tabletop activities). The day concludes with cooperative play.

Parents are strongly encouraged to move through the stations with their children and offer one-on-one assistance. We place parent cue cards at every literacy station that offer helpful advice on how to mimic the activity at home and carry through the literacy goals at home.

Each activity is fun and designed to meet the education goals that kindergarten teachers identified. Play is a very important component of the program because it offers an opportunity for imagination as well as sharing and turn-taking. During pizza week, we work on some basic math skills, and our play kitchen is transformed into a pizza shop with a cash register. Children take turns playing the chef and the cashier, and others line up to order their pizzas.

Program Execution

The Schuylerville Public Library is committed to bringing high-quality programs to our patrons and to collaborating with our community members. With our small staff and limited space, we have to be resourceful when planning events, but we never limit our goals.

We serve as a community center for Schuylerville and offer hundreds of wonderful, free programs every year. This program represents our community-mindedness and dedication to early literacy. In 2016, the Southern Adirondack Library System awarded this program the Program of the Year Award for our ability to identify a community need and meet it.

Advice

This program has been our most successful in attendance and feedback. We hear wonderful praise often from families. The open-ended themes and structure of the program would lend themselves very nicely to other libraries interested in implementing similar programs.

Finding someone with a passion for early literacy to lead the program is essential. Libraries are one the best educational resources a community has, so we encourage more public libraries to serve as educators.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images



More Programs

Apr 4, 2017
Children (9 and under)+ | $$
Image



Robot Story Time: Coding for Preschoolers

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Feb 7, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | □□
Image



Kindergarten and Media Literacy

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Jun 5, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | □□
Image



Books to Get Kids Moving

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Dec 28, 2016
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Welcome to Kindergarten

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)