TINY LIBRARY TOOLKIT

An overview of the Meridian Library District's Tiny Library project for early literacy.

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INTRODUCTION:
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

At Meridian Library District, we are an “everyone serves youth” organization. We are responsive to our community’s expressed priority to serve children and families in a city frequently listed as one of the “best places to live” in America.

The City of Meridian has grown exponentially over the past 20 years; in 2010, the population of Meridian was 75,092. Population estimates in 2016 were 95,623 making Meridian the second largest city in Idaho -- and still growing! In addition to our main library on Cherry Lane (opened in 1997) we leased space for a branch location, Silverstone, in 2007. We then gained experience with creating unconventional library service points when we leased an old bank building in Meridian’s downtown and launched a technology branch, unBound, in 2015. Yet, we were still falling short of the space needed to effectively serve our fast-growing community.

A collaborative community development project in the southern section of our community provided an opportunity to expand our footprint alongside several other organizations also serving Meridian families. Known as “The Hill” the development includes Hillsdale Elementary School, a YMCA, St. Luke’s healthcare services, and grounds operated by Meridian Parks and Recreation. In our view this was the perfect location for a new full-service library branch. We ran a capital funding measure in 2016, but fell just short of the supermajority required to pass.

Our determined and scrappy crew was not ready to give up and we did not want to miss out on the opportunity to join with these excellent community partners and serve families in south Meridian. Inspired by the tiny homes movement and the use of portables for school classrooms, we began to look at options for creating a “lighter, quicker, cheaper” means of installing a service point in the area. We began to hone in on community needs and our own strategic plan.

Soon, our Tiny Library full of early literacy resources and experiences was in the works!

While we know we can’t answer every question you might have about the agencies, resources, companies, or legal codes that might be specific to your community, we hope this toolkit will provide inspiration and practical assistance, no matter what your community or strategic goal. We would love to hear about what you come up with!

Warm regards,

Gretchen Coserotti
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The Idea

A big idea for a tiny space
A BIG IDEA FOR A TINY SPACE

Expanding our service footprint with minimal square footage

In 2016, we had secured some amazing partnerships in South Meridian with the YMCA, the school district, the city, and healthcare providers who were collaborating on a shared space design called The Hill. It is a dream of ours to build a library that serves as a community center in close proximity to other hubs. When our 2016 bond failed to pass and we were unable to build the full-service branch in partnership with these entities, we had to get creative to still be able to meet the needs of our community and honor the intent behind our partnership.

We’ve long been advocates and practitioners of the “lighter, quicker, cheaper” model and decided to play off the Tiny Home movement to build a “Tiny Library” inside of a recycled shipping container.

Taking a minimalist approach to building a library meant we couldn’t be everything to everyone. We had to be very strategic with how we filled our tiny space. None of the other partners at The Hill were offering services specifically for the 0-5 year old range, and based on a known community need combined with our area of early literacy expertise, focusing on the first five years was the obvious choice.

The guiding vision for our Tiny Library was, and still is, an informal literacy space that includes both resources and experiences for young children and caregivers. As we worked through design thinking activities and planning processes, we returned to this statement again and again to ensure that our focus had not drifted and that we were on track to meet our initial goals.

lighter, quicker, cheaper

EARLY LITERACY NEED

In Meridian, Idaho only 67% of children enter Kindergarten ready to read. Studies show that children who enter kindergarten unprepared are more likely to fall behind in school and are less likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, and succeed in their careers than those who have attended high-quality preschool programs. Idaho is one of only 6 states that does not currently invest in public preschool options. 62% of Meridian parents say there is a lack of affordable, high-quality early childhood programs in their area.

ONLY 67% OF IDAHO STUDENTS ENTER KINDERGARTEN READY TO READ*

*UNITED WAY TREASURE VALLEY 2017 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT
SPACE AS PROGRAM

Books are just the beginning...

When you have to consider how every square inch of a building is going to be used, it changes the way you think about filling it. Without a lot of room to host traditional programs, the whole space became a program. Everything inside - from the rotating book collection, to magnet boards, early literacy kits, to self-check out equipment - was designed to encourage caregivers to practice early literacy skills with their children.

The space is also more than the stuff inside of it - our staff members all have a deep knowledge of early literacy practices and can answer caregiver questions about how to develop literacy at home. From thoughtfully curated bins of books and objects by age group to "Tiny Tips" adorning the walls and display cases, visitors receive subtle hints for engaging in early literacy practices.

Staff-led storytimes and other activities incorporate the five early literacy practices and give caregivers ideas on how to play, write, read, sing, and talk* with their children.

Tips for caregivers do not end at the exit door; a Tiny Tips booklet, activity calendar and other handouts are on hand for home use. Staff can also refer patrons to a selection of parent-teacher resources on related subjects.

Patron Story

A grateful grandmother who is helping to raise her grandson reached out to let us know how our preschool storytimes helped prepare her grandson for kindergarten. The family cannot afford preschool, but through attending our programs, he was prepared for school and passed all the measures for kindergarten registration with flying colors.

Two patrons enjoy the kid-sized furniture and a good book

*see glossary in appendix for more about early literacy and the 5 practices of Every Child Ready to Read
WORK IT OUT: WHAT'S YOUR BIG IDEA?

What community problem do you see your library having a role in helping to solve? Does this require a physical space?

What community organizations have similar goals or audiences?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
2

What it IS

A shipping container as a center for early literacy
WHAT IT IS

320 square feet of immersive early literacy space

With utilizing a recycled shipping container, we knew space would be at a premium. The final interior dimensions were 40x8x9 feet, which translates to 320 square feet of workable space with a max occupancy of SIX.

We looked to our bookmobile as a model for the needs of a tiny branch and considered the particular requirements of the specialized audience of children aged 0-5 and their families.

The criteria for selecting furniture included meeting the needs of our tiny-sized patrons, taking up minimal space, and being easy to clean and maintain. Everything is mobile and can be rearranged as needed in a flexible space.

THE TINY LIBRARY IS:

- Focused entirely on early literacy
- Designed specifically for children ages 0-5 and their caregivers
- Intended to blend resources with experiences

IT IS NOT:

- A full-service branch or holds pick-up location
- A childcare service
- Just a box filled with books

Visitors enjoy the flexible interior space with lightweight, moveable furniture that can be rearranged to accommodate different activities and accessibility needs.

The exterior of the Tiny Library, 40 feet long and 8 feet deep
As the final partner to join what is known as "The Hill" development project, our building needed to fit with existing buildings on the site. The site already included an elementary school, YMCA, and medical offices.

The library is positioned in a convenient area with plenty of parking in front and just south of the YMCA’s main entrance. Behind the YMCA sits Hillsdale Elementary School.

This location provides a space of their own for young children whose older siblings are in school and makes it easy for families to return books or browse in between fitness classes or medical appointments.
EXTERIOR: DESIGN

Transforming a container into an invitation for learning

With its small footprint and simple design, it may be tempting to try and DIY the construction of a tiny library. However, we found that the specialized nature makes it even less straightforward of a building project than it seemed.

Contracting architects and builders to transform a blank shipping container into a bright, inviting, and useful space was a necessary investment in the completion of the project. The container itself was relatively easy to acquire; there are many container companies nationwide and we purchased from a local company called Storage On Site. However, there was still quite a lot of design work involved and structural considerations for adding windows, doors, heating & cooling, and having it set properly on its foundation.

Due to fire safety and local codes, hiring professionals makes everything go smoothly and keeps everyone safe!

Bright lettering invites young learners, while the overhang provides protection from sun and rain.

Multiple windows provide natural light for the small interior space.

Garage door opens to outdoor patio, extending program space when the weather allows.
INTERIOR: LAYOUT

Every inch counts!

Be mindful of space as furniture and finishes (even drywall!) encroach on usable space and ADA requirements.

A small staff workspace doubles as the circulation desk

Slatwall uses minimal space and provides a place for interactive displays

Thematic bins of books and props are arranged by age and easy to access

Bookshelves line the wall, filled with picture books color-coded by subject and easy readers for checkout

Leave plenty of room to meet ADA accessibility standards and allow all visitors to move through the space easily

Cushy chairs, rubber mats and a rug create a comfy corner for reading and play. A small kid-sized table and chairs provide spot for games and coloring which can also be moved outside to the patio.
2 - WHAT IT IS

INTERIOR: FURNISHINGS

Tiny-patron-sized, flexible, easy to maintain

Initially we had envisioned having a small holds shelf or a few titles for family members accompanying our young patrons but it quickly became evident that our tiny footprint would require a complete focus on early literacy if we were to accomplish our goals for the space.

We used free tools like ShelfShuffler and floorplanner.com to begin sketching out our ideas for the space. Ultimately, we enlisted the services of DEMCO Interiors to assist with our furnishing choices and layout. Their virtual tour helped us really see how tight the space would be; even so, we decided not to replace a bookshelf that was damaged in transit in order to keep things as open and flexible as we could.

FREE TOOLS

> ShelfShuffler uses Google Sheets or MS Excel to create a grid with standardized ratios for creating library layouts. Go to http://spreadsheetsforlibrarians.blogspot.com for more details.

> floorplanner.com can be a good starting point for mapping out furniture and ideas for your space

LESSONS LEARNED

> Timing of financial approvals, arrival of furniture, and opening day can be difficult!
> Allow time for possibility of damage in transit.
> Be prepared for things to feel a little different in physical space than on paper.

DEMCO Interior’s virtual tour demonstrated our chosen furnishings within the space
The furniture arrives!

Floors have a basic finish so they are easy to clean and less expensive to maintain with the anticipation of frequent dirt and water.

Books are arranged by category, color-coded by subject, and shelves are kept low – all for easy access by tiny users.

There is no need to spend a fortune – use what you have and employ simple tools for early learning.
What will people accomplish in your space?

Conditions will vary depending on the location and surroundings, i.e. a shady park vs. a busy mall. What will you need to consider?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
Planning

Getting from idea to finished product
THE PLANNING PROCESS

Getting from idea to reality

Planning
To make something happen "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper," most of the time is spent in the planning and dreaming phase. Our library team spent hours researching the Tiny House movement, discussing different ways to work with our partners, and bookmarking pages upon pages of images and influences.

We utilized the Design Thinking for Libraries Toolkit*, choosing a variety of Design Thinking activities to define our project and explore all of the possibilities. Asking "How might we design the space for early literacy?" helped us craft a mission statement. The use of personas reminded us that the audience was parents and caregivers as much as it was children. Going through the design process as a team kept us all engaged with the end goal - supporting early literacy with a tiny library.

Approval
Before we could move forward with our ideas, we needed to get approval from a few different places. First, we needed our Library board to buy in and support the idea. Since funding for the project was still tentative, it took a leap of faith on their part to give us the go ahead.

It became more complicated when our legal team determined that the Tiny Library would be classified as a new building, not an accessory as we had hoped. This meant that the funding had to come from that year’s operating budget because Idaho Code does not allow district libraries to fund new construction from funds saved year-to-year.

The next step was getting approval from Meridian City Council and working with the YMCA, owner of the property where our Tiny Library is placed.

Designing
Hand-in-hand with the approval process was hiring an architecture firm to design a code-compliant library. Utilizing an architect is a necessary investment for safety, meeting city regulations, and making sure every inch of a tiny space is maximized.

Our container company, Storage On Site, also worked with us on some modifications to the design, such as adding in the garage door and windows before it arrived, shortening our timeline.

Building
Once the tiny-library-to-be had finally arrived, we hired a general contractor to complete the finish work. We also worked closely with DEMCO Interiors to design the interior and furniture. They were incredibly accommodating and sent 360° representations of the space to help us envision the layout.

Opening
Our community partners were involved in many of the decisions we made along the way, ready to offer solutions to issues such as lack of space for programs. We sat down with all four community partners who utilized or owned the classroom spaces inside of the YMCA in order to coordinate schedules. This also resulted in creating a "FAQ" document for the front desk staff at the YMCA and our staff members at other branches, answering all of the questions about when, where, and how things were happening with the Tiny Library.

Things to Consider
- Is it a building or an accessory?
- Do accessories get addresses?
- When will things be delivered?
- Where can people use the restroom?
- Does your climate influence placement? i.e. Do you need to be in the shade? Are winters too harsh for outdoor programs?

*Design Thinking for Libraries Toolkit linked in Appendix
The original design called for a blue exterior and different window placement as compared to the final product.

The Tiny Library's BIG day! Open for learning beginning October 1, 2018.

MAY 2017
Feedback and Planning

JAN 2018
Location Set with partners

MAY 2018
YMCA Opens
Furniture Ordered
Permit Issued

JUNE 2018
Container Delivered

JULY 2018
Furniture Delivered

AUG 2018
Move in!
(Occupancy Certificate Issued)

SEPT 2018
Open for Learning!
For such a tiny project, there were a lot of moving pieces. Here's who handled what:
What stakeholders will you engage to get feedback and begin your planning process? Who needs to be a part of the planning?

Who gets to decide when something is final?
WORK IT OUT: THE PLANNING PROCESS

What do you want people to be able to do or accomplish in the space?

Are there state laws or local building codes that relate to your project? What steps do you need to take to ensure compliance?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
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Communications

Coordinating with partners and sharing with the community
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Keeping staff up-to-date and knowledgeable

We are firm believers that the most effective way to communicate is in-person, and one of our strongest marketing tools is our public-facing staff. This is where we build and cement relationships with our community and the first place patrons turn to when they have a question - library-related or otherwise. We periodically sent emails to our whole team, and issued updates at quarterly staff meetings. Leading up to the grand opening, we sent out a “FAQ” to both our staff and the YMCA, answering questions like “what is the Tiny Library?” and “what are the hours?” to provide an easy reference for anyone who might be fielding those questions.

COMMUNITY BOOK DRIVE

Our Community Book Drive was part fundraiser, and part public relations. A lot of thought went into building our collection, something you can read more about in the Collections section. One small piece of that was soliciting book donations from our community. Not only did this help cut down our collection cost, it increased community involvement and gave them more buy-in on the project.
Sharing milestones with the community

Our community was nearly as excited as we were to open the Tiny Library - so of course, we had to keep them posted on our social media channels.

We posted major milestones to our social media. We did not pursue any traditional media outlets because we wanted to keep things low-key (and wouldn’t be able to accommodate a crowd for a grand opening).

**Lessons Learned**

Don’t forget to update Google and other digital map services with the new location. Not only does this help people find you, it also lets them geotag on their social media posts.
4 - COMMUNICATIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA

meridianlibrary Exciting news! The exterior drawings of our Tiny Library have arrived and we are in love! Over the next few months we’ll be sharing fun details and plans for this innovative, tiny footprint that will bring south Meridian resources and hands-on experiences for early childhood literacy. We hope you’re excited Meridian, because we sure are!

meridianlibrary It’s happening! First sightings of the Tiny Library arriving at The Hill this morning. Stay tuned for more updates as we start the full installation and painting.

meridianlibrary Thanks to the generosity of our community during our Book Drive this past Spring, the Tiny Library collection is starting to take shape. With the shipping container on site as of last week and the books being sorted, this project is starting to feel real.

meridianlibrary Many thanks to Girl Scouts Troop 525 for volunteering their time to make the planters in front of the Tiny Library look beautiful. You are shining examples of community engagement, and we appreciate your hard work.

meridianlibrary We are at the Tiny Library site and getting ready to use the crane to load us, the pergola, and more to place it on the foundation. Watch Facebook for a live video!

meridianlibrary Yesterday, before we officially opened the Tiny Library, a young man arrived through the open door and was overwhelmed with all he saw. He was beaming at the prospect of having his very own library! We are so grateful for everyone’s support and can’t wait to see where our message of inclusion and inclusion takes us. Let’s maintain our vision and let him shine!

meridianlibrary Our Tiny Library doesn’t have furniture in it yet (stay tuned for the installation process happening soon), but that’s not stopping us from having some great programs! Come visit us at The Hill soon.
WORK IT OUT: COMMUNICATION PLAN

How will you engage your community in the process?

Which staff members or community partners make up your core team?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
5

Budget

Matching funding to vision
5 - BUDGET

FUNDING

minimizing capital investment

The biggest obstacle came when it was determined that the Tiny Library would qualify as a new building instead of an accessory, like a Bookmobile. This changed which funds in our existing budget we were allowed to spend and meant that it took longer than anticipated to finalize a budget.

Our team sought out a variety of unique funding opportunities to make the Tiny Library happen. We specifically sought out grants related to our theme of early literacy. A recycling grant paid for the container itself.

FUNDING SOURCES

- Community Grants for Recycling and Early Literacy
- National Grants for Innovation and Early Literacy
- Community Book Drive
- Operations Budget
- Local sponsors and donors

Tiny Library Budget

*Full budget is available in the Appendix*
COSTS

Making the most of our budget

Our biggest budget line was building and construction - getting the site ready, running electrical, and fitting the container with windows, doors, and floors. Even with the main structure already built, there were many additional costs to make it functional. We decided to keep the floors mostly unfinished to avoid having refinishing costs in the future.

At one point, the estimate for a concrete foundation was $50,000. While we knew we couldn’t skip a foundation, we also couldn’t make that number work with our budget, so we had to renegotiate with the architect to get it under $20,000. A full budget with a breakdown of construction costs is available in the appendix.

We pay an annual cost-share to have space on the YMCA property, like a lease. This includes water, sewer, trash, and other basic property maintenance.

One way we found to cut costs was by utilizing things we already had available or by making things ourselves. Many of our supplies were sourced from our main building. The kits we circulate were already part of our collection, thanks to a different project and grant. We made the magnet boards ourselves using cookie sheets from the dollar store, and wall decals were made in-house with a Cricut machine.

Libraries are accustomed to doing a lot with very little, and we used this to our advantage by figuring out where we could save money by making something ourselves, and where we needed to pay a professional to do the work.
What opportunities in your community may provide funding or cooperative space for this project?

How can you capitalize on resources you already have?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
6
Collection

Books and kits to promote early literacy
COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Items target ages 0-5 and their caregivers

All items in the Tiny Library collection target ages 0-5 years and their caregivers. Selections line up directly with early literacy practices and age-appropriate educational materials. The Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) Bell awards is an excellent resource for inspiration and establishing collection criteria.

The collection includes board books, picture books, easy readers (levels pre-k and 1 only), non-fiction (written for ages 5 and lower), parent/teacher resources, and kits. A small selection of CDs was added after we opened, primarily for staff and program use.

We use rotating collections district-wide to supplement the small existing collection, scheduled and delivered on an ongoing basis. This keeps the collection fresh with minimal cost impact (no need to buy more books), and also highlights the theme for caregivers and staff. We have curated our rotating collections by subject and by the 5 early literacy practices: play, write, read, sing, and talk.

By including a healthy selection of the classics and popular items, we can anticipate a higher circulation rate for a portion of the collection, thus freeing up additional shelf space with these items continually checked out.

Know your audience
Know your circulation
Know your space

FILLING THE SHELVES

As a multi-branch library with a district-wide collection budget, we were able to take advantage of our existing materials as a means for beginning to build the collection for the Tiny Library. In the months leading up to opening, our collection development librarians were simultaneously transferring items from our existing collection, ordering new items, and incorporating donations. Cumulative numbers were kept in a spreadsheet as we worked toward hitting our target numbers for each collection by opening day.

Please leave this spot empty for the tiny library
COLLECTION CALCULATIONS

Dedicating space and allocating budget

Based on the layout of the space and the shelving ordered, you can calculate the approximate total materials needed for opening day using linear measurements.

Our space allows for:
Board books: 75 inches in bins (not shelves)
Picture books: 240 inches across 12 categories
Easy Readers: 80-90 inches
Nonfiction: 40 inches
Parent/teacher: 20 inches

By multiplying the number of items by type that would fit in a given space, we were able to set goals for the total number of items to collect. Shelves were initially calculated at a 100% fill, knowing space would be freed up by items checked out. Ultimately we reduced that number to 75% because of adjustments to both visitation expectations and the timeline for receiving materials.

By the [approximate] item numbers:
- Picture books: 785 items, 58%
- Easy readers: 510 items, 23%
- Non-fiction: 120 items, 9%
- Board books: 115 items, 8%
- Parent/teacher: 50 items, 2%

We held a book drive, primarily intended to drive community engagement. We added less than 200 items from donations, once we evaluated for collection fit and condition.

We were able to reassign approximately 350 items to the Tiny Library that were already in our collection. The collection will continue to rotate, based on quarterly themes.

The majority of the collection was purchased new, over the course of several months. We received grant awards and private donations that helped fund the added materials.
KITS

Kits had long been a well-loved part of our collection, many of which were centered on early literacy, making them a perfect fit for our Tiny Library. They were developed to increase convenience for caregivers by creating a 'grab and go' option that included multiple formats in one. Kits are subject- or function-focused and geared to specific age ranges. A grant from our local Rotary club provided funding to duplicate kits and have a selection on-hand at the Tiny Library.

**Baby Board Books:** curated to match baby's development, a few months at a time
**Early Literacy:** 5 books, games, music, and more in fun themes for ages 0-5
**Rascal Reader:** 5 books and a puppet of our mascot for early readers in 5 skill levels
**Kindergarten Readiness:** books, games, and activities in 5 skill areas to get kids K-ready

Complete kits list available at: [https://www.mld.org/kits-devices-and-objects](https://www.mld.org/kits-devices-and-objects)
TIMELINE

Balancing storage space and opening date

Collection development for the Tiny Library required planning a few months in advance in order for many moving parts to come together on time. We are in a consortium of 11 public libraries and we do not have the ability to make major changes—like adding a branch—in the shared Polaris catalog. We made sure to communicate our needs to our ILS administrators early in the process to ensure the proper codes were available before books started arriving.

As a library that was already bursting at the seams, we made our purchases and transfers in small batches with creative adjustments to our limited storage space along the way. Orders were placed every 1-2 weeks to space out shipping. This also minimized overburdening our small (3-person) team of processing and cataloging staff.

- Communicate with consortium
- Keep cataloging staff in the loop
- Stagger orders, allow time for processing

February 2018:
Began communication with the consortium. Requested the Tiny Library location be added, and code and permissions created in shared Polaris catalog.

June-July-August 2018:
Bulk of ordering was submitted to ensure items arrived on time and were processed gradually. Items were transported to our Silverstone branch for storage after processing. We also reassigned titles from Cherry and Silverstone at this time, pulling newer duplicates and favorites.

September 2018:
Added Tiny Library codes to automated materials handler at Cherry and set up collection at the Tiny Library with 2 staff members.

October 1, 2018: Open!

The location is too small to add to the consortium courier; we planned in advance to increase our page budget and expand our internal courier to 5 days a week to transport returned items within our district.

We decided against having a branch label because most of the collection would rotate out. Instead, we use a translucent lavender-colored spine overlay (our Bookmobile uses green).
WORK IT OUT: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

What kind of collection will you need to build to realize your vision?

How can you capitalize on resources you already have?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
7

Programs

Space as a passive program
7 - PROGRAM PLAN

CLASSES AND EVENTS

Increasing community space through partnerships

Since our Tiny Library is... tiny, we had to get creative about building strategic partnerships with our neighbors to share space. During the warmer months, we can open up the side of the building to utilize the great outdoors as part of our space. However, during the long winters of Idaho, we worked with the YMCA and St. Luke’s, the nearby pediatric office, to host programs in a larger indoor space.

We kept our staff-led programs relatively minimal in order to minimize impacts on staffing, reduce use and scheduling of partner spaces, and to encourage free play and exploration within the Tiny Library space itself.

Weekly year-round programs:

- **Stumble Upon STEAM**: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math for brilliant young minds.
- **Baby Storytime**: new concepts, songs, books and engaging play for ages 0-1.
- **Preschool Storytime**: a morning of stories, songs, dancing, and playing for ages 2-5.
- **Silly Song and Dance**: silly songs, singing, and dancing to the beat for ages 2-5.

Weekly summertime program:

- **Super Saturday**: an afternoon of play highlighting parachutes, fort-building, and something new each week.

Special programs in 2018-2019:

- **Kindergarten All-Stars**: a 9-week program to prepare kids with academic and social-emotional skills needed for starting school.
- **Yoga Storytime**: a fun afternoon of yoga, paired with story book favorites.
Our initial concept was to view the entire space as a passive program centered on play, however, we realized caregivers wanted more guidance on how to engage with the space and with early literacy practices. Based on this observation, we created a rotation of curated boxes themed around the Five Early Literacy Practices of Read, Write, Talk, Play, and Sing. Every practice has three bins (ages 0–2, 2–5, 3–5) that match the practice and guide caregivers in age-appropriate activities. Bins are rotated every three months when the practices rotate, which is also in sync with the systemwide programs calendar. The rotating bins are filled with a combination of toys, books, and tips for caregivers.

Activity bins for the "Read" rotation are left open on shelves near the play area. Signage guides caregivers to materials in three age ranges with helpful hints on engaging with the items.
READ: 0-2
One of the first ways a child learns words is by us talking to them! Talk about what you see around you or what they are doing. Believe us, they are retaining the words whether we think so or not!

READ: 2-3
Letter recognition is the first step on the way to reading! Some of the first letters kids learn are the letters in their name.

READ: 3-5
Rhyming and alliteration help children feel more confident using language to communicate. Playing with sounds and figuring out what sounds the same prepares children to become better readers.
## A YEAR OF PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date</th>
<th>theme</th>
<th>our favorites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| December 2018-February 2019 | play  | 0-1: Moo, Baa, Lalala + puppets  
2-5: Duck! Rabbit! + puppets  
3-5: Book-O-Hats + costumes |
| March - May 2019  | sing  | 0-1: Happy!, song, Pharrell Williams  
2-5: Hip-Hop Lollipop, S. Montanari  
3-5: Pete the Cat, Litwin & Dean |
| June - August 2019 | read + talk | 0-1: Touch & feel books  
2-5: Playdough letter stamping  
3-5: Not a Box, A. Portis |
| September - November 2019 | write | 0-1: Tummy time no-mess finger-painting  
2-5: Where’s Spot + egg-shaped crayons  
3-5: Little Plane Learns to Write, S. Savage |

*Check out the Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) Bell awards for book ideas!

A sample Tiny Tips calendar with activities for the month of May 2019. See full size in appendix.
WORK IT OUT: CLASSES AND EVENTS

What classes, events, or services are you already doing well that would be a good fit for your tiny library?

What community partners offer programs or services that would be a good fit for your tiny library?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
8

Operations

Day-to-day details
PARTNERSHIPS

When the space is the program, but you still need space for programs...

Something major that was sacrificed to the lack of space was running water. Any public space needs to be less than 500 feet away from a public restroom if it doesn’t have its own. Fortunately, our proximity to the YMCA made it easy to share. Sharing space required some creativity and planning. The YMCA requires memberships for people to enter their facility. They made exceptions for our patrons, allowing them to just leave their driver’s license at the desk to enter the building to attend library programs and use the restroom. We signed an MOU outlining all of the terms of the shared space.

Our partners’ gracious sharing of their own space made it possible to host larger programs at The Hill. The Tiny Library is great at being “space as a program,” but it does not have space for traditional children’s programs.

We coordinated with St. Lukes, The YMCA, Hillsdale, and Parks and Recreation to use the classrooms inside The Hill. Matching up four different organizational calendars with different planning deadlines was a challenge and requires quarterly meetings with all partners to map out everyone’s schedules. These quarterly meetings have led to our partners planning programs around our themes.

space as program ≠ space for programs

STAFF MANUALS
Equipping staff with operational FAQs

Without ever being in the same place at once, our staff had to get creative with communication and consistency. This led to a few manuals with everything from partner contact information to the Spotify password (we create custom playlists for storytimes), to opening and closing procedures.

Since our staff are frequently working alone, it was especially important to make sure they had access to all of the information they might need to keep things running smoothly.

Supplies, collection rotation, and other deliveries either go over with staff or with one of our Pages running the internal courier service.

IMPORTANT INFO:
YMCA Phone number: 555-555-5555
Wifi Password:
Spotify Password:
Emergency contacts:
Who Has Keys:
- Outreach Dept.
- YMCA front desk
- Managers
STAFFING

Training and hiring early literacy experts who can work solo

The initial vision for the space was to have a trained, Early Literacy Librarian providing high-quality services for all of the hours the Tiny Library was open. Our reality ended up being a collaborative staffing model pulling from all departments. We developed a pipeline for staff interested in working in the space and provided training in early literacy education for anyone not yet qualified, in addition to training on the logistics of the space itself.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Choosing our hours of operation was pure guess-work. We knew that our intended audience probably wouldn’t be out late, might have nap times, and showed up consistently for morning and afternoon story times at our other branches. We also knew that with a solo staffing plan, we’d need to keep hours short enough that people would be less likely to need a bathroom break.

This resulted in being open for three-hour shifts, alternating mornings and afternoons throughout the week, and four hours on Saturdays. These hours provided an additional benefit of solidifying the space especially for early literacy since it was primarily open while older siblings would be in school at Hillsdale Elementary, next door. During the summer, our hours nearly double, from 19/week to 36/week, but still in 3-hour blocks.
WORK IT OUT: OPERATIONS

How will you handle the daily operations of your new space? Do you have adequate staff and systems in place already?

What unique challenges can you foresee in operating your tiny library?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
9
Technology
Choosing the right tools for the space
9 - TECHNOLOGY

WEBSITE

Adding a new location to our existing website

The Tiny Library isn’t a full-service branch, and organizationally, it is part of our Outreach Department. Our current website has a brand color assigned to each of our branches on our calendar to make it easier for patrons to find events. Initially we had planned on Tiny’s events matching Outreach Blue, however, we realized that as much as this made sense to us as organizers, it wouldn’t be apparent to our patrons. We were hoping to avoid any major changes to our website until we had a better idea of what our bigger expansion plans looked like. We made the call to our website provider, and found it was cheaper than expected to add the infrastructure to our current site for Tiny Library to stand on its own, with its own unique color. Magenta was unofficially added to our brand color line-up, for minimal use.

See it here:
https://www.mld.org/tiny-library

“As much as this made sense to us as organizers, it wouldn’t be apparent to our patrons.”

CHOOSING A NETWORK PROVIDER

Internet service is necessary to have access to our catalog and ILS – after some debate, we settled on using a cellular modem and cellular data service because it had the lowest up-front costs and took up the least amount of space. We tested different service providers and settled on the one that provided the best bandwidth where our Tiny Library is. This allowed us to have a static IP address so we could access our ILS. In hindsight, a more traditional internet connection with better bandwidth would have made it possible to make the whole space self-serve and a space for unstaffed holds pickups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CELLULAR</th>
<th>DSL/CABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes up less space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent bandwidth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot support self-serve model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher upfront cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires a bulky server rack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent bandwidth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher speeds available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empowering patrons to make the most of their time in the space

With our Tiny Library, it didn’t make sense to create a circulation desk and place the (often only) staff member behind it. For one, there simply wasn’t room, but we also wanted to empower caregivers to make the most of their time in the space. With a self checkout option, parents and caregivers could check out books and kits while the children enjoyed storytime, eliminating a bottleneck of checkouts after programs.

We went with meeScan from Bintec. At $599, the meeScan “Small Library Edition” is a lower cost alternative to Bintec’s full-sized branch offering. The “Small Library Edition” name has more to do with service point size than actual functionality of the software since they are essentially the same product. The software allows patrons to check out books from their own smartphone while at the branch. (While MLD patrons can only use meeScan at this location, multi-branch, multi-site checkout options using meeScan are available.)

- A laptop with access to our catalog
- Barcode scanner
- MeeScan Kiosk
- iPad

We added an extra battery pack to the back of our MeeScan to extend its unplugged life.
WORK IT OUT: TECHNOLOGY

What technology will be needed for core functions?

How important is consistent bandwidth in accomplishing the goals of your space? Are you wanting to make it self-serve?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
10
Evaluation
Assessing the impact
MEASURING IMPACT

Using available data, surveys, and the Logic Model to show the difference we make

Our evaluation plan focused on early literacy and kindergarten readiness measurements, and it is an ongoing process. For many of our metrics, we need to coordinate with the local school district to see how we are moving the needle on school readiness for kindergartners and their caregivers.

This year we included questions about the Tiny Library in our annual Customer Service Survey. In the spring, we issued short paper surveys to encourage patrons to “share their tiny story” with us. Using a blend of hard data questions and narrative questions has resulted in some great information. (A copy of this survey is available in the Appendix). These questions and our goals were developed using The Logic Model, which is broken down on the next page.
LOGIC MODEL

IF we build a library focused on early literacy, THEN kindergarten readiness will increase

**INPUT**
- A tiny library space focused on early literacy
- Skilled staff with deep knowledge of early literacy practices and development
- A collection for early learners and their caregivers

**OUTPUT**
- Classes centered on early literacy themes
- Experiences introducing early literacy themes, encouraging parent-child interactions
- Partnerships with daycares and other early childhood education providers

**IMPACT**
- Teachers spend less time doing remedial work with kindergarteners
- Families feel supported when using early literacy resources
- Higher literacy and education achievement rates

**OUTCOME**
- Parents are more engaged and knowledgeable in supporting their children’s literacy foundations
- More students are prepared for kindergarten
LESSONS LEARNED

Things that would have been nice to know at the beginning

First Things First

With so many moving pieces, it wasn’t always easy to accomplish them in the right order. While we highly recommend ordering your furniture with enough time for it to be delivered, don’t forget to get official permission from all the powers that be before jumping into the middle of things. To sum it up, Official Permission > On-Time Furniture Delivery.

Cataloging Fumbles

Our ILS is administered through another library in our system, and we did not coordinate with them as closely as we should have to make sure that all functionality was turned on in time for opening. We recommend double-checking that all items are “checked in” and ready to circulate; we overlooked one small segment of our collection.

RED TAPE

Because no project is complete without it

We were so blue

Our first color choice for the Tiny Library was blue, but this didn’t match the color palette of the main building, the YMCA. City Code ultimately dictated what color we could choose (hint: not colorful primary kid-friendly colors!). It was a good lesson in not getting too stuck on small details.

Blue Tape

Early on, we took a roll of blue painters tape, headed to the biggest room in our library, and taped out the dimensions of our shipping container on the floor. It was humbling to see just how tiny of a space we were working with, and we immediately scaled back our plans to match the size. Seeing it visually, and standing in the tape mockup was much different than seeing the mockups on a screen.

Snail Mail

Our shipping container is big enough to be a building with its very own address, but not big enough to get a mailbox, which is sometimes a very minor inconvenience.

Make a List

When you’re opening a new building, it feels like a million people need to be notified. Don’t assume other organizations will be proactive; instead, make a list of everyone and everywhere you need to post your new address. Don’t forget to be added to both Google’s and Apple’s maps for navigation.
What does success look like in your tiny library?

How will you measure your success?

Tiny Space for Your Big Ideas:
Appendix

Resources, References, and Printouts
GLOSSARY

**DEMCO Interiors**
Demco’s team utilizes user-centered design to help schools and libraries create comfortable and engaging interiors that support inquiry and learning.
https://www.demcointeriors.com/

**DIY**
Made popular by Home and Garden Television (HGTV), “Do it yourself” (“DIY”) is the method of building, modifying, or repairing things without the direct aid of experts or professionals.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_it_yourself

**Early Childhood Learning Framework**
In 2017 MLD’s Early Learning Taskforce conducted a series of internal and external environmental scans that helped identify needs and develop a strategic direction for services to children ages 0-5 and their caregivers.

**Early Literacy**
“Literacy development begins at birth and is closely linked to a baby’s earliest experiences with books and stories. Babies learn language through social literacy experiences – parents interacting with them using books.”
http://www.ala.org/units/products_services/booksforbabies/earlyliteracy

**Early Literacy Practices**
There are multiple ways to help with your child’s cognitive, physical, language, social, and emotional development. Singing, Talking, Reading, Writing, and Playing are the five foundations on which literacy is based.
http://everychildreadytoread.org/about/

**The “Hill”**
An innovative collaboration of the Treasure Valley Family YMCA, the West Ada School District, St. Luke’s Health System, the City of Meridian Parks and Recreation Department and the Meridian Library District. It’s where families, the community, and people of all ages can come together to have fun, be active, learn from each other, and achieve their potential through learning, wellness and fitness.
https://www.thehillmeridian.org/

**Idaho Statute 33-2724 (4)**
The board of trustees of a library district may establish a capital assets replacement and repair fund within the library district budget for which district moneys may be budgeted and carried over from year to year. [...] Moneys from the capital assets replacement and repair fund may not be used for the purchase of land or to build new library facilities or to build additions to current library facilities.
https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/title33/t33ch27/sect33-2724/

**Kits**
MLD circulates kits, devices, and objects in addition to traditional library materials. The kits were designed to be convenient “grab and go” selections on a range of topics that include a variety of formats. See all offerings at https://www.mld.org/kits-devices-and-objects.

**meeScan**
The Tiny Library’s self-checkout system is powered by meeScan. Using the app, patrons can check out the branch’s collection of materials via the built-in barcode scanner.
(City of) Meridian
Located in Ada County about 10 miles west of Boise, Idaho’s state capital. Population estimates in 2016 were 95,623. It is the second-largest city in Idaho and has remained the fastest-growing since 1994, more than doubling in population from 2000-2007. https://meridiancity.org/

Meridian Library District
Started by the Occident Club in 1924 and established as the Meridian Free Library District in 1975, MLD is a publicly funded library that supports its community by enriching lives, igniting curiosity, and cultivating connections.
Current operations include:
• Cherry Lane: main location, opened in 1997
• Outreach: operates a bookmobile and sprinter van, visiting schools, retirement facilities, homes, neighborhoods, and community events year-round
• Silverstone: small full-service branch location, leased and opened in 2007
• Tiny Library: materials for ages 0-5 and their caregivers, opened in 2018
• unBound: technology branch based in downtown Meridian, opened in 2015
Learn more at www.mld.org.

Plan A
We ran a capital funding measure in 2016 to build a full-service branch location at “The Hill” but fell just short of the supermajority required to pass.

Polaris
The Integrated Library System (ILS) utilized by the LYNX Consortium of 11 public libraries, of which MLD is a member. https://www.iii.com/products/polaris-ils/

Rascal
Rascal the dog is Meridian Library District’s mascot.

Shipping Container
A container designed to be moved from one mode of transport to another without unloading and reloading. The widespread availability and relative cheapness of used intermodal shipping containers meant that architects began to consider them as an alternative to traditional building materials. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shipping_container#Re-use

Tiny House Movement
An architectural and social movement that advocates living simply in small homes. A residential structure under 400 sq. ft is generally considered a tiny home. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiny_house_movement
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Meridian Library District Staff & Trustees
It is not an exaggeration to state that every member of our staff contributed to the success of the Tiny Library in one way or another. From the initial planning stages at our branch library, to the hardwork of our collections team, and our Outreach team adopting it into their department, - our Tiny Library is still staffed, planned, and made possible by people from all departments. Their collaboration, flexibility, and teamwork made this dream happen. Thank you to the Library Board of Trustees who supported this dream and helped it become a reality.

Partners at The Hill
YMCA Treasure Valley
St. Luke’s Hospital
Hillsdale Elementary School (West Ada School District)
City of Meridian Parks and Recreation

Donors and Grants
Lila Hill – Private Donor
Meridian Recycling Fund Grant
First Interstate Bank Foundation
Penguin Random House Innovation Award
ALA Fellowship for the Future of Libraries
Friends of Meridian Library

Toolkit Design
Jenaleigh Kiebert
Alex Johnataxis
RESOURCES

Collection
CLEL Bell Awards | https://www.clel.org/clelbellawards

Planning and Design
Shelf Shuffler | http://spreadsheetsforlibrarians.blogspot.com
Floorplanner | www.floorplanner.com
Design Thinking for Libraries Toolkit | www.designthinkingforlibraries.com
The Logic Model | https://www.cdc.gov/eval/logicmodels/index.htm
Canva | canva.com

Inspirations

Appendix Items

Budget
Architectural Drawings
Short Patron Survey
Tiny Tips Calendar
Tiny Library FAQ
Tiny Library and Early Literacy Training Checklist
REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING


# MLD Tiny Library at the Hill Budget

*Project budget approved by the Library Board of Trustees May 16, 2018*

## General Contractor Project Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Conditions</td>
<td>$12,350.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Work</td>
<td>$9,380.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>$15,035.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metals</td>
<td>$18,595.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal &amp; Moisture Protection</td>
<td>$3,450.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors and Windows</td>
<td>$6,216.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishes</td>
<td>$20,369.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialties</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>$11,814.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>$18,201.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal Building Costs: $117,410.00

Contractor Costs: $18,947.00

## Owner's Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Container Purchase + Improvements</td>
<td>$14,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing and Inspection</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;E Fees</td>
<td>$12,618.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF&amp;E; shelving, desk, etc</td>
<td>$12,799.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>$7,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal: $60,217.00

The Hill Partner Cost-Share*: $12,300.00

## Total Project Budget

Total Project Budget: $208,874.00

Contingency: $11,126.00

Board Approved: $220,000.00

*Cost-share is an annual cost paid to the property owners at The Hill to cover shared costs such as water, sewer, trash, and other maintenance items.*
1. See geotechnical report for underslab and footing requirements.
2. Finish floor reference elevation (FFE) = 100'-0".
3. Coordinate top of footing location per coordinate column locations with architect.

Foundation notes:

- HSS 4x2 1/2x5/16
- 4' x 4' x 1'

Foundation details:

- Concrete pier, typ each corner of container, see 1'-2" x 1'-2" x as required
- Required concrete pier, typ each corner of container, see
- 3/S5.01
- __________ TYP at foundation

Column details:

- HSS 4x4x5/16
- 3/S5.01
- __________ TYP at column

Deck details:

- 1 1/2", 20 GA B DECK, typ
- HSS 3x2x1/4
- Low
- 6'-2" max
- TOS = 108'-4 5/8"

Roof notes:

- All dimensions and elevations on the structural plans shall be verified by the contractor with the latest architectural drawings prior to construction. Any discrepancies shall be brought to the attention of the architect and engineer immediately.

- Contractor shall field verify existing structural conditions. If any discrepancy occurs between existing conditions and proposed alterations, contractor shall contact architect and structural engineer before performing alteration work.

- For general notes:
  - Series sheets
  - Concrete standard details: S5.00 series sheets
  - Steel standard details: S5.30 series sheets

- These record drawings have been prepared, in part, on the basis of information compiled and furnished by others. Therefore, the architect and other design consultants involved in this project shall not be responsible for any errors or omissions which have been incorporated into these documents as a result of documents and/or information provided from other sources.
WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE TINY LIBRARY?

Tell Us Your Tiny Story

PLEASE FILL OUT OUR BRIEF SURVEY AND HAND IT TO ANY STAFF MEMBER. WE’LL TRADE YOU FOR A YUMMY THANKS!
The Story Of My Visit

I visited the Tiny Library on (circle all that apply): MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

I come to the Tiny library (circle one): RARELY ONCE A WEEK MULTIPLE TIMES A WEEK

When we are at the Tiny Library we (circle all that apply):

CHECKED OUT BOOKS
READ BOOKS INSIDE
PLAYED
WENT TO A PROGRAM
LEARNED SOMETHING NEW ABOUT HOW TO SUPPORT MY CHILD’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY):

I (we) especially liked ____________________________

but wish that

________________

________________

________________

________________

Thank you for being part of our new, TINY adventure!
What is it?
An interactive learning library aimed at children ages 0-5 to help kids be ready to read when they enter kindergarten.
Items and activities are focused on ages 0-5 (board books, Easy Readers and picture books) with a small Parent-Teacher collection.
Collections and interactive activities are focused on the five early learning practices: talk, play, sing, write, read.

What are the hours of operation?
Monday 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Tuesday 9:00 - noon
Wednesday 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Thursday 9:00 - noon
Friday 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Saturday 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Where can I find a current list of programs?
www.mld.org/tiny-library
Y Lobby Kiosk - MLD program brochures

Can people pick up holds and return books there?
No holds at this location.
Returns are available only during open hours.

For holds and returning materials when closed, the three closest locations are:
Meridian Library, Silverstone Branch
3531 E Overland Road, Meridian, ID 83642
Ada Community Library - Lake Hazel
10489 Lake Hazel Rd, Boise, ID 83709
Ada Community Library - Victory
10664 W Victory Rd, Boise, ID 83709

How does the Y Lobby Book Collection work?
Visitors can take a book or leave a book.
It’s ok if the books do not come back.
Outreach Staff will monitor the collection and restock it - if patrons notice an issue with this area, they can notify MLD by either calling 208.888.4451 or emailing outreach@mld.org.

Whom do I contact with further questions?
tinylibrary@mld.org
Tiny Training Checklist

Opening and Closing Procedures:
- Opening and closing quick sheet
- Important numbers

Observe/Shadow Tiny:
- Tiny Tips and Tiny page
- An Idea a Day
- 1,000 BBK
- Deposit Collection in Y lobby
  - And where to get materials

Learning about early literacy:
- Read An Overview of Early Literacy
- Read Library Storytime: It’s a lot more than just the story
- Watch Why Storytime is Important
- Watch Storytime in the Library: Getting Ready to Read
- Fostering Readers (Literacy for K-3rd graders)

Idaho Resources
- Subscribe to The Bookworm
- Familiarize yourself with Idaho Commission for Libraries Read to Me Programs
- Check out DaybyDayID.org
- Subscribe to The Scoop Newsletter
- View our subject lists of children’s books

For further exploration
CLEL Bell Awards
Read about choosing books for storytime
- Storytime Secrets
- Future Librarian Superhero

Rhymes and Songs:
- Watch Making a Rhyme Interactive
- Read about options for songs in storytimes
- List of storytime rhymes

**Fingerplays/Flannelboards/puppets:**
- Read and watch Don’t be Shy: Using Puppets in Storytimes
- Five Posts About Flannelboard
- Watch Using Flannelboard Activities to build Background Knowledge
- Read and Watch Baby Storytime: Favorite Fingerplays and Tickles

**Parent asides:**
- Read and watch Early Literacy Messages in Action
- Watch early literacy aside videos