

**Governor Granholm's Early Childhood Challenge**  
**accepted by**  
**Eaton Intermediate School District**

In response to the questions from the MAISA:

Current parent education and reading to all kids initiatives:

1. ECC distributes books and reading tips at community events such as County Fair, Frontier Days, Yankee Doodle Days, parenting fairs, and business openings that cater to the families of birth to five year olds.
2. Packets with literacy tips, books, and/or other pre-literacy items are provided to children and parents at Early Childhood Literacy Week(s) character events in conjunction with the Early Childhood Literacy Coalition and WKAR.
3. "Reading is Cool" packets with a small cooler, children's book, and information were given out at the Eaton County Parks during July to encourage parents to read to their children during the summer months.
4. Frolic In The Park is a partnership with the Eaton County Parks in which ECC staff provide literacy-based activities, books, and information in the park's natural environment. This enables parents and caregivers to experience ways to utilize their county parks in a way that can encourage pre-literacy skills with their children.
5. ECC participates in the WKAR/Ready to Learn program that helps parents connect literacy activities and reading to many of the cartoons and shows children are watching on television.
6. A variety of story time activities are taking place throughout the EISD service area that are open to all. These include :
  - Toddler Time – a story and activity time for birth to three year olds and their parents or caregiver. These happen once weekly in all five local school districts.
  - Story Stops – a story and activity time for birth to five-year-olds and their parents or caregiver. The intent of these are to promote literacy at what would be seen as non-traditional times and non-traditional places where parents are likely to stop during a busy day or where other activities may be inaccessible – McDonalds, Burger King, Thornapple Estates mobile home community, etc.
  - Story Time – many of our local libraries provide story hours for toddlers and preschoolers in their area. In libraries where this was not happening, ECC has collaborated to start local story hours.
  - My Father and Me Breakfast – Through a mini-grant supplied by ECC, MSU Extension conducts a monthly meeting that is just for children birth to five and their dads. During this Saturday morning time, breakfast is provided by a local restaurant, information is shared, and activities that will strengthen relationships and promote literacy are conveyed and practiced.
  - Building Strong Families holds a monthly parent group that includes information sharing, shared parent-child activities, and parent support.
  - Parents As Teachers holds a monthly parent meeting that is thematic in presentation and includes parent information, activities, and networking.
7. ECC hosts a web-site – [earlyconnections.org](http://earlyconnections.org) – on which parents and others can check out the types of activities going on in the area.
8. A bi-monthly newsletter is published by ECC that includes information on literacy, helpful information for parents, activity schedules, special guest articles, and book suggestions from local libraries and bookstores. This is FREE to all families enrolled with ECC.
9. "Wonder Years", a bi-monthly publication produced by Partnership For Learning, is sent to all families enrolled with ECC. This publication gives lots of information and ideas to parents and

caregivers on ways to “help parents and caregivers make the most of a child’s early years.”

Articles have included information on brain research, movement, discovering the outdoors, health issues, toys, and books. All important for development of those brain cells that will eventually connect sights, sounds, words, books, concepts, emotions, and all that life presents.

10. ECC has provided information, examples, and books at such events as MiAEYC to help care providers, professionals, and parents consider all the ways reading and literacy can be explored by young children.
11. Family Fun Nights have been hosted in our local schools to help orient children birth to five and their parents to their local schools. Among other age-appropriate activities and information provided were story times and literacy tips for parents.
12. Fun2BFour – was hosted in the local elementary schools for four-year-olds. Again, the intent was to connect children to their schools prior to kindergarten. Activity centers were used that promoted literacy development and school readiness. Each child received a bag of items to take home that included what they would need to duplicate the centers at home – magnetic letters, play dough, book, scissors, crayons, etc.
13. Newborn baby visits are offered to all newborns in the EISD. Included in the materials they receive are Michigan Ready Kits, Ready To Learn materials, “Building Your Baby’s Brain” booklet, a children’s book, a toy (stuffed animal), and information regarding immunizations, screenings, car seats, nutrition, SIDS, local services, childcare, and much, much more.
14. Special packets are mailed to all 18 and 36 month old children enrolled at ECC. These mailings include an offer for a home visit, a children’s book, and information that is appropriate for parents of children at these ages.
15. Parent Education is a component of all the ECC partners. Levels of contact range from mailings to weekly contacts. Levels of intervention range from general information to intense services such as parent-child mental health counseling.
16. ECC supports the Imagination Library through the Eaton County United Way. The goal of this project is to have each child receive an age appropriate book monthly via mail. So far, two communities and three townships have successfully funded this endeavor for each one of the children living in their jurisdictions.
17. Wide Eyed Owl Early Learning Programs were made available to all childcare providers in our service area. The kits included various books and literacy-based resources for the providers to use during their sessions with children, and a take-home kit for parents to use to interact with their children and extend activities provided by the childcare provider. These were provided to ECC by Michigan Friends of Education, and were FREE to any provider who chose to pick them up at the ECC office.
18. “Teaching Our Youngest”, a booklet of ideas, information and resources was provided to all childcare providers on the ECC mailing list. Extra copies were requested by some providers for all their staff.
19. The Professional and Program Services Department at Eaton ISD provides the WKAR Ready to Learn program which focuses on reading with young children (ages 0-7 or 8). The content of this program is woven into existing six-week classes and used with high risk populations at sites like Siren, Eaton Co. Jail, etc. Parents leave the class with a free book to share with their children.
20. The "You Make the Difference" Program is a community based education program for groups of parents and their children ages birth to 4 years. It is a 9-week program focusing on the kinds of interactions that help children learn to explore, communicate and understand the world around them by linking with everyday activities, routines and conversations with the child. Reading to children is the focus of session #6. Currently we are running this class in Eaton Co. in Grand Ledge and in Ingham Co. in Holt. These are the classes we collaborate with Head Start. This has been necessary as this is costly. It involves purchasing many materials, video equipment, tapes, and food, books, etc. Parents leave this class with many free materials.

21. We also provide a number of one-time video based programs that address things like homework help, teachers learning secrets to do at home, ways busy parents can help children succeed in school, and parents are teacher's too. However, these do not necessarily focus on reading. They show parents how to help their children learn. We are loaning these tapes to some of the Lansing schools currently. They are showing them at parent teacher conferences and have received favorable feedback from parents

Our future plans:

- It is our intent to continue, enhance, and improve what has begun in the first two years of this project. Including expanding ideas that promote reading, literacy activities, and school readiness.
- Our challenge is to find ways to proceed with limited funding.
- A goal: Our source for free books has had to limit the number of books distributed to each agency, so we are endeavoring to find new sources of free and reduced priced quality reading materials for children birth to five so all children can experience the joy of touching, holding, mouthing, teething on, and sleeping with a book that is “all mine”.
- It is the intent of the Professional and Program Services Department to continue providing programs that focus on the needs of parents with children 0-5. We will also continue to collaborate with the Eaton County Early Childhood Center staff in exploring ways to support parents and their children.