

## **Children's Learning through Play and Stories**

During these months as we ease into fall and then into winter, the library turns its focus to the umbrella offering we refer to as "storytimes." Storytimes aren't just educational; they are fun, offering a sense of enjoyment and play for both children and their caregivers. Research shows that one of the most effective ways children can learn is through this type of playfulness. It helps to nurture imagination and give a child a sense of adventure. Through play, children can learn essential skills such as problem solving, working with others, sharing, and much more.

Beyond storytimes, the library offers a safe and welcome space to encourage play any time that the library building is open. According to the Office of Commonwealth Libraries quarterly snapshot survey of 273 public libraries in PA, the majority of libraries are open between 36-50 hours. Many of these libraries have worked hard over the last year to rebuild their operational base status and services following the most extreme circumstances of 2020 related to the pandemic. These libraries offer varied hours, daytime along with some evenings and weekends to accommodate users' working schedules.

The inherent playfulness of sharing and adventuring through stories as a family has perhaps the most impact in learning. A simple library card provides access to limitless story possibilities. Stories are one of the most fundamental ways in which we communicate and can be a key player in how children develop their perspectives of the world. Beyond teaching children valuable skills relating to words and language, stories spark children's imagination and stimulate curiosity. They help children understand new or frightening events, and the strong emotions that come with them. They help children learn not only about their own world, but others' worlds and cultures.

As the days grow colder and shorter, the library invites families to what we like to think of as a cozy destination where children's imagination can take shape through embracing play and stories. The Murrysville Community Library is happy to be back to offering a community play hour on Tuesdays at 10:00 AM in November, during which we bring out the best of all our educational toys, from dramatic play materials to simple puzzles and games to building sets. I also encourage you, if you haven't yet done so, to sign your child up for their own library card, a tool that you can use together to fuel lifelong learning, exploration, and adventure.

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