

THOMAS C. LEPPERT
MAYOR



CITY OF DALLAS

NEWS RELEASE

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MAYOR TOM LEPPERT LAUNCHES READY TO READ @ DALLAS Mayor's 2nd Education Initiative Will Reach 10,000 Preschoolers in the First Year

Mayor Tom Leppert today launched the second of his initiatives to help improve education in Dallas: **Ready to Read @ Dallas**. The Mayor was joined by Councilmembers, Library officials, and several key partners in the kick off at the Dallas West Branch Library.

The program will train an army of professionals to prepare preschoolers to be ready to learn and read by the time they enter kindergarten. Experts have long known that children who start school knowing the core elements of reading - even before they've learned to read - stand a greater chance of excelling in all areas of learning.

There are far too many homes in Dallas, where parents don't read to their children, homes without books for kids.

As the name suggests, **Ready to Read** does not train kids to read, but instead prepares their minds for learning.

The program, which is heavily grounded in the arts, focuses on six key areas:

- **Print Motivation:** Getting kids interested in and enjoying books. (*Art emphasis: bookmaking and related crafts.*)
- **Print Awareness:** Holding a book, noticing and following print and words on a page. (*Art emphasis: drawing*)
- **Letter Knowledge:** Knowing letters are different from each other and recognizing letters everywhere. (*Art emphasis: shapes, spatial relationship.*)
- **Vocabulary:** Knowing the names of things. (*Art emphasis: theatre & drama.*)
- **Narrative Skills:** Being able to describe things and events and tell stories. (*Art emphasis: storytelling.*)
- **Phonological Awareness:** Hearing and playing with smaller sounds in words. (*Art emphasis: Music & poetry.*)

Ready to Read @ Dallas has already begun training its first tier trainers - Librarians & Teachers. They in turn will train the next tier - Partner Volunteers who will then train the first and most important teachers that young children have - parents and primary caregivers.

The Dallas Public Library will administer the program, but **Ready to Read @ Dallas** will reach well beyond library doors. Training sessions will take place in homes, recreation centers, day care facilities, faith-based institutions, health care clinics. Wherever new parents tend to gather the trainers will reach out and teach them why it's important to stimulate and prepare children before they enter school, and exactly how to do it.

To help extend the outreach into communities that might not normally be served, **the Library** is partnering with the **United Way, Avance, Big Thought, Dallas Parks & Recreation, DISD**, faith-based organizations and others.

Ready to Read @ Dallas is part of the larger **Dallas Arts Learning Initiative (DALI)** which is managed by the group, **Big Thought**. **DALI** elevates the arts in children's education both in and outside school and with their families.

Timeline:

- Dec 2007-2008 Training the Professionals
- Feb 22, 2008 Kick off Ready to Read @ Dallas
Training librarians, DALI Personnel, cultural center staff,
Recreation Center and DISD staff
- March, 2008 Training of Parents and Caregivers

Training Locations:

- 25 library branches, Central Library and bookmobile
- 4 Cultural Centers
- 47 recreation centers
- 8 Parkland COPC clinics
- Faith-based institutions.
- WIC clinics
- Childcare centers and preschools throughout Dallas

Website: <http://dallaslibrary2.org/ecrr/ecrr.htm>

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