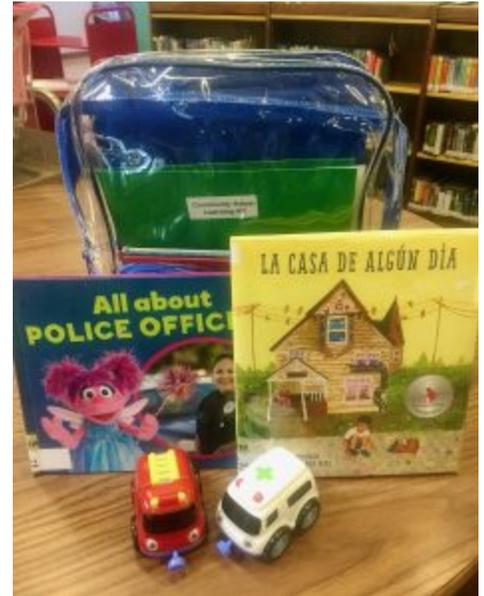


# County libraries, First 5 partner in kindergarten readiness program



By [Beverly Barela](#)



Learning kits with four to 10 books, including at least one bilingual story, are available from the Merced County Public Library for checkout through a program focused on early literacy.

A much needed kindergarten readiness program called Ready for Kinder Merced County, which is focused on literacy activities at home for children from birth to 5, is being launched through a community partnership.

First 5 Merced County, the Merced County Public Library and Friends of the Merced County Library are the partners making the program possible, and there are some pilot learning kits which parents can access now for their children.

It started when First 5's Needs Assessment in 2018 disclosed that only four out of 10 children living in Merced County achieved grade-level proficiency in English, while only three out of 10 achieved grade-level proficiency in Math.

The Needs Assessment also revealed that of the 24,918 children between the ages of birth and 5 living in Merced in 2018, only 26.4 percent had an adult reading books with them every day.

Research shows that kindergarten readiness lays the foundation for long-term school success, and early exposure to books is a key component in kindergarten readiness.

So First 5 Merced County and the Merced County Public Library got together to address this readiness gap by launching an early literacy campaign over a two-year period.

The Merced County Public Library applied to First 5 Merced County for a grant for early literacy for children, and the application was successful!

The Merced County Board of Supervisors accepted the grant award on February 9, 2021.

The Innovation grant will be used by the public library to implement Ready for Kinder Merced County to support early learning for children ages 0 to 5. The program will give parents ways to make learning fun for their kids at home.

Amy Taylor, Merced County Librarian, informed the Times, "The goal is to disseminate information on early literacy practices that help children gain a solid foundation and that give parents and caregivers concrete tools for literacy activities.

“What this program does is create learning kits.

“Each kit will be in a backpack that has four to 10 books on a particular topic. In each kit, there will be at least one bilingual book. The kit also includes a learning activity with manipulatives, such as a puzzle or a game activity using Legos; learning tips; and an activity or song with group lyrics that has a commonly known tune. It might be the tune from ‘Old MacDonald Had a Farm’, but the lyrics will be relevant to the theme.

“The kit’s learning tips, song and activity are available in four languages — English, Spanish, Hmong and Punjabi — the four languages most spoken in Merced County.

“We received funding from Friends of the Merced Library to do a pilot program on the kit. We created 20 pilot kits, and they are all checked out from the Merced main branch, so we see there’s a need by the community members for this type of activity, and we want to fill that need. These kits, when available for check out, can be delivered to other library branches if requested.

“To access a learning kit for their child ages birth to 5, a parent can call their local branch of the public library and request one, or go online to the library’s website at [www.mercedcountylibrary.org](http://www.mercedcountylibrary.org) and go to the online library catalogue. The parent would search for the Ready for Kinder learning kit, and place one on hold, and they will receive an e mail or phone call when the kit is available for pick up, and the parent can then make arrangements for curbside pickup.

“The Innovation grant will allow us to create 200 more kits. Those kits will be spread out among 12 public libraries throughout the County as well as the Book Mobile which travels to locations in the County such as parks.

“The goal is to make these kits available by the end of this year, and they will definitely be available at the seven libraries that offer curbside services if the County has not opened the other libraries by then.”