

SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



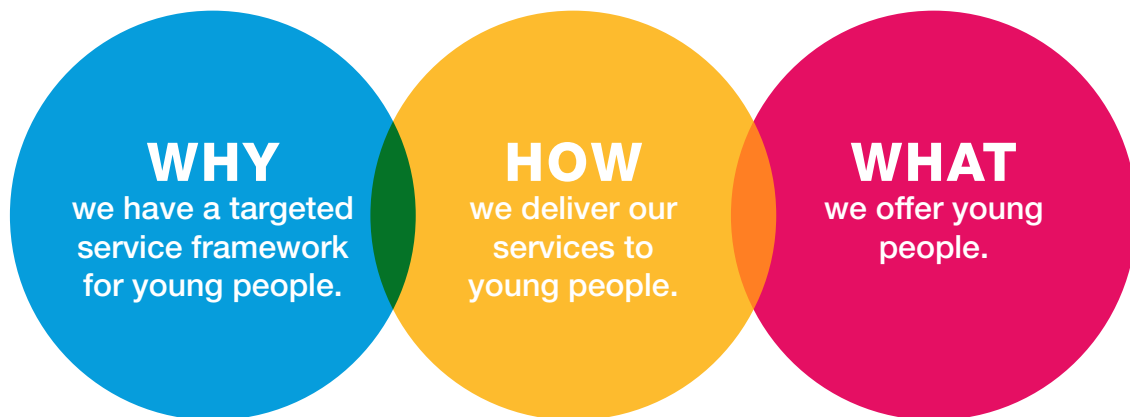
INVESTING IN EDMONTON'S FUTURE

The Edmonton Public Library's (EPL) Services for Young People reaffirms the Library's commitment to supporting children's healthy development, from birth through to preschool, and elementary school through to the end of the teen years.

Recognizing the unique needs of children as they age, this framework addresses two distinct age groups: ages 0-5 and ages 6-18. It also considers parents, educators and other adults that care for children to maximize the impact the Library can have in a child's life.

OUR FRAMEWORK

Together with EPL's Values, Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals, and under the leadership of the EPL Executive Team and Board, this document guides the delivery of services to young people. It outlines the overarching beliefs, intentions and tools used to guide EPL service decisions and practices for youth from birth through the teen years.



All EPL staff are expected to understand and uphold this framework. Customer-facing staff, in particular, are vital in implementing it to ensure EPL provides exemplary service for children.

“I received the fundamentals of my education in school, but that was not enough. My real education, the super structure, the details, the true architecture, I got out of the public library. For an impoverished child whose family could not afford to buy books, the library was the open door to wonder and achievement, and I can never be sufficiently grateful that I had the wit to charge through that door and make the most of it.”

ISAAC ASIMOV, Author

WHY

EPL focuses on young people because:

Children are essential members of the community.

Adults have a responsibility to act in the best interest of children, taking into account their views and upholding their fundamental rights, including their right to education, rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and “to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”¹

Children need a strong start.

The quality of a child’s earliest experiences forms the foundation for their life path.² The first five years is a critical time for developing strong skills in early literacy, including print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness and letter knowledge. These pre-reading skills set the foundation for strong language and literacy.

Society needs healthy kids.

With strong literacy skills, children are more likely to go further and succeed in school, find future employment, have a higher income and be healthier and happier throughout life. That’s why “a vital and productive society with a prosperous and sustainable future is built on a foundation of healthy child development.”³ When we invest in children, everyone wins.

Parents can’t do it alone.

Starting from birth, children need quality and reliable relationships as part of their healthy and happy development. Relationships with important people, inside and outside the family, help children “define who they are, what they can become and how and why they are important to other people.”⁴

“In general, kids learn a lot more in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade than kids in middle school or high school, because learning follows a curve where it’s accelerated early in life and then plateaus.”

JAMES KIM, ED.D., Assistant Professor of Education at Harvard University

Our view of learning has changed.

As children face a complex and rapidly changing future, lifelong learning (the ongoing, self-motivated pursuit of knowledge) is increasingly important. Today, learning is a continuum—it involves starting young and skilling up.⁵ Schools continue to form an important part of a child’s learning ecosystem; however, with children outside formal education 85% of the time, “schools can only satisfy a small part of a child’s learning appetite.”⁶

Children’s experiences from 6-18 years old set a strong foundation for their life as learners, not only continuing the process of learning to read but also adding the excitement of discovering information and works of the imagination. Elementary-aged children are at a particularly crucial stage in their development so many of our programs and services are designed to engage this age group.



EPL is uniquely positioned to support children’s healthy development because:

EPL is a fundamental educational, cultural and social institution with extensive reach throughout the city.

Offering free and welcoming spaces in multiple locations across the city, convenient hours and a 24/7 online presence, EPL is available for all families in Edmonton to enjoy. For children and families, the Library serves as an important “relationship environment” outside the home that promotes belonging, helps form identity, encourages discovery and exploration, and provides a network of support. For caregivers, educators and organizations that serve children, the Library is a vital partner and connector, filling in gaps and amplifying other services in the community.

EPL is community-led and research driven.

The Library actively engages with the community, constantly seeking to improve and remove barriers, to ensure we remain responsive, flexible and adaptable to the needs and interests of all customers, including the littlest. Our services are informed by research and trends in disciplines such as education, child development, early learning, family literacy and digital literacy. We consider parents, caregivers and teachers our partners in the services we provide.

EPL respects parents—the child’s first and best teacher—and supports them by modeling and articulating important literacy behaviours, recommending resources and

providing tools they can use to extend their child’s learning and development at home.

In consultation with caregivers and educators, EPL develops resources and services specifically designed to enhance classroom instruction and provide experiential learning opportunities.

EPL has the skills, tools and spaces to help children reach their full potential.

EPL staff provide expert, non-judgemental customer service, enriching in-person and virtual experiences, and age and interest-based reading suggestions.

EPL supports skill development and mastery in an informal environment by intentionally embedding learning opportunities and key literacy concepts across all aspects of service. As children become more independent, letting them choose which activities to pursue makes learning more personal, potentially igniting a genuine and sustained interest in the topic.⁷

Like our collections, our spaces and services are intentionally designed and integrated to *scaffold learning*—that is, to help children develop skills and progress in their understanding of concepts with increasing independence. Dedicated children’s areas nurture and provoke the curiosity of young children and spark play and skill development. For school-aged children, EPL’s spaces encourage exploration and discovery in a caring environment where they are surrounded by adults who want to see them succeed.



Our Commitment In Numbers

1 Youth Services Manager

1 Dedicated Collections Librarian

6 Youth Services Librarians

17 Welcome Baby volunteers

21 Children's areas

40 Staff members serving on 4 Youth Services teams

790 Hours of early literacy training

17,470 Hours of programs for children

66,315 Hours open

Millions of smiles from 222 Library Assistants

+ **Endless** support from the Library Board and Executive

**INFINITE opportunities to help children
reach their full potential**

HOW

These guiding principles inform our work:

Services for young people reflect the belief that children have infinite potential and rights as citizens.

At EPL, children are:

- regarded and treated as important customers who are “mighty learners”;⁸
- entitled to the full range of library service, materials, formats and technologies as guided by their parents or caregivers;
- provided respectful, non-judgmental service within the context of their developmental stage and ability.

Services for young people are informed by expert research and delivered by expert staff. At EPL, our services are:

- informed by and evolve based on community need and interest, feedback, data, research and best practices;
- guided by an established process that ensures classes are vetted, tested and regularly evaluated, from an initial pilot phase through to the designation as a foundational class or program;
- strengthened by relationships with organizations, schools, teachers, caregivers and other groups working to advance and support young people;

- regularly reviewed to ensure priorities are established and resources are secured;
- guided by trained and qualified staff.

Services for young people address the whole child. At EPL, our services:

- foster young people’s need for security and comfort while encouraging and providing opportunities for growing independence;
- support the diverse and changing needs of young people at different developmental stages;
- stimulate all domains of development and learning: physical, social and emotional, and cognitive;
- support the wide range of literacies and competencies that young people require to develop to their full potential and become active contributors in their communities;
- encourage children’s curiosity and questions about the wider world while helping them develop information-seeking skills and connecting them with resources that match their interests;
- provide opportunities for leisure and social and community connections among young people and families.

Services for young people meet children and families where they are.
At EPL, our services are:

- widely available—many offered multiple times a week across all EPL locations throughout the year—to support families with different schedules;
- delivered through various channels including:
 - in person at 21 EPL locations across the city;
 - online at epl.ca and other platforms, to reach families in their homes;
 - in the community at places such as early learning and care centres and schools, to connect with customers outside our buildings;
- intentionally designed and integrated across all aspects of service (people, programs, spaces and collections) to ensure learning opportunities are maximized;
- tailored to meet the needs of children and regularly reviewed to be responsive to customer needs.



WHAT



PEOPLE



PROGRAMS



SPACES



COLLECTIONS

EPL provides free, fun, high-quality classes, immersive spaces and essential resources in a supportive environment.

Young children and their parents or caregivers are encouraged to play and connect with others to create community.

School-aged children have opportunities for self-directed, interest-driven learning that sparks the imagination and helps them develop reading, experimentation and critical thinking skills—crucial for success in school and life.

In everything we do, we support families, caregivers and the work of schools and educators to ensure the Library is an essential part of a child's educational ecosystem. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to actively participate in their child's learning and literacy journey.

People, programs, spaces and collections are the backbone of services for young people at EPL. Our approach ensures they work together to maximize the benefits library services can have in a child's life.



“You have helped me escape my dull life and encourage my imagination to the point where now I can create worlds at my fingertips.

You gave me the books that contained my early knowledge and helped me to be in the advanced class I’m in now.

My school uses your books to teach us about the horrors mankind can do, which fueled my sense of social justice to where now I have plans to help spread healthy morals. My friends and I read your books and connect over the hardships and crazy emotion that happens throughout the tales so like ours.

You shaped who I am considerably throughout my whole life. I believe that what your organization is doing is honourable and quite unique. Only a few organizations help kids using programs and opportunities like you do.

Your strengths are your kids’ programs and the fact that you are so widespread. You don’t discriminate and everyone gets a fair chance.”

EMMA MALIN, 13-year-old Junior High student



PEOPLE

Day in and day out, EPL staff provide exceptional customer service, deliver programs and share their expertise with children and their families. Staff regularly upgrade their skills through training and mentorship. They also use what they learn to improve the services we provide. All customer-facing staff undertake early literacy training to ensure a baseline of knowledge and are supported by branch and system-level leadership.

Our commitment to young people permeates all aspects of the organization. Highly skilled, committed individuals in all departments at all levels support the staff and teams directly serving children and families. Youth Services Librarians provide system-wide leadership in services for young people both within the Library and in the community. Youth Services teams are the engine behind system-wide services for young people. They develop programs and classes, design training, provide ongoing oversight and coordination, find new ways to innovate—then share across EPL. Each team focuses on a particular age division and/or program.

EPL's children's and teen collections are overseen by expert Librarians to ensure a wide variety of topics and perspectives are available at every stage of a child's literacy journey. EPL staff provide suggestions to help children and their families choose appropriate reading material that meets their needs and interests.

Volunteers extend EPL's capacity, helping operationalize large initiatives such as **Welcome Baby** or programs such as **Reading Rockstars**, an after-school reading program offered in schools, and **Reading Buddies**, a class that provides service-minded teens the unique opportunity to pair up to model and practice reading with a little buddy.

We partner with like-minded external agencies and organizations to provide complementary literacy, homework help and tutoring, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math)-based services and programs.

Parents and caregivers support their children's healthy and happy development at home or in the early learning and care setting with resources and encouragement from EPL. Educators in schools share resources with parents that encourage them to further support their child's education through EPL services that directly relate to their child's studies.



**“The most important asset
of any library goes home at
night – the library staff.”**

TIMOTHY HEALY,

Former President of the
New York Public Library



PROGRAMS

EPL develops, delivers and collaborates on classes at library locations and online that support the development of multiple literacies and prepare children for a lifetime of learning.



AGES 0-5

All early literacy classes are suitable for a range of abilities and developmental stages and encourage interaction between little ones and the adults who care for them. Classes emphasize literacy, numeracy and inquiry supported through play.

Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn, a foundational class available through every EPL location, is offered in partnership with the Alberta Health Services Edmonton Early Intervention Program. It places particular emphasis on the use of functional language and visual strategies, including sign language, to develop vocabulary and communication skills in all children, including those with developmental delays.

We also host special events and activities at various times throughout the year in support of national programs such as National Child Day and National PlayDay.

As part of our ongoing commitment to early literacy and our focus on removing barriers to accessing our services, EPL offers book gifting programs to provide parents with tools to support their child’s language development at home and foster a lifelong love of reading.

Welcome Baby gifts all babies admitted to an Edmonton neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) or immunized at public health centres in Edmonton or Enoch with a free early literacy package, including a board book. **Ready. Set. READ!** allows us to get even more books in children’s hands, starting in neighbourhoods where families need books the most. **Ready. Set. READ!** is delivered in partnership with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, a successful book gifting program that provides children one book a month from birth to five years old.

156,030 children and their families attended 6,690 in-person early literacy classes.

EPL made 2,830 visits in the community, reaching 43,630 young children.

10,220 Welcome Baby kits were delivered to babies.

All data from 2019.



AGES 6-18

As a foundational skill, reading is central in the provision of library services for school-aged children. Many of EPL's programs are designed to boost reading skills and promote reading for pleasure, including **Summer Starts at EPL** and **Young Reader's Choice Award**.

Other classes let kids and teens experiment with STEAM activities, hands-on electronics, coding, robotics and more.

We also host special events and activities at key periods during the school year.

Recognizing the importance of schools during this period of a child's life, we host classes on homework help and tutoring. EPL also develops programs in collaboration and consultation with school partners, including **Reading Rockstars**, an in-school reading program and **How to Be an Information Ninja**, an information literacy presentation.

76,640 school-aged children and teens attended 5,250 in-person classes.

EPL made 4,400 visits in the community, reaching 147,400 school-aged children and teens.

Kids read for 138,840 hours as part of EPL's annual summer reading challenge.

All data from 2019.



SPACES

Libraries are important public spaces for children—places that nurture and provoke the curiosity of young children and spark play and learning. That’s why every EPL branch has dedicated areas for our youngest customers. Children’s unique needs are considered in everything from the design and layout, to the underlying policies and practices, in order to create a developmentally appropriate and welcoming environment.

**“The only thing that you absolutely have to know,
is the location of the library.”**

ALBERT EINSTEIN, Physicist



AGES 0-5

EPL makes it fun for children and their accompanying adults to visit the Library. All EPL locations have areas where children can read, play and discover all year round. Each space provides opportunities for self-directed and hands-on learning, creative expression, free play and discovery. We provide toys, manipulatives and age appropriate technology (such as early literacy computers and iPads) that encourage play and inspire delight and discovery.

At the Library, each child has agency. They can play and express themselves, free of prejudice or discrimination, see their own and other children’s work reflected, and even temporarily customize the space.

Families can also experience the Library online at epl.ca where staff suggestions, videos and virtual programming are always available.



AGES 6-18

All EPL locations have spaces to meet the needs of school-aged children, including study, collaboration and entertainment. Computers, iPads and WiFi help address disparities in home and school access to technology. We support STEAM learning and provide board games, specially designed activities, gaming consoles, robots, Makerspace tools and equipment, and other devices that encourage children to explore their interests and view different perspectives.

Kids and teens can read, do homework, research, ask for advice, play video games, make a DIY project, meet new friends or just hang out in a space they trust to be inclusive and welcoming. Parents can have confidence that caring adults are around when their children visit the Library.

The Library is also available online at epl.ca where kids and teens will find staff suggestions, STEAM challenges, virtual programming and more.



COLLECTIONS

EPL's children's and teen collections provide engaging material for all ages, developmental stages and abilities. EPL strives to maintain a collection that will assist in the development and growth of literacy skills and inspire learning and reading for pleasure.

Our collection includes physical and digital items such as board books, concept books, picture books and read-alongs for our littlest customers and easy readers, beginning chapter books, children's non-fiction and young adult fiction for school-aged children. Children and families also have access to movies, music, online resources (including homework help and language learning) and a variety of kits (including family language and book club kits).

Resources connect and expand on concepts covered through school curriculum, as well as in EPL literacy-based classes, to extend learning into the home.

Material for young people accounted for 47% of EPL's circulation.

Children's items were checked out 2,959,700 times.

Teen items were checked out 529,400 times.

All data from 2019.



**“There is no
substitute for
books in the
life of a child.”**

MARY ELLEN CHASE,
Educator and Writer



APPENDIX

SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Services for young people are led by highly skilled, committed individuals and cross-functional teams across EPL.

Reporting to the Executive Director, Customer Experience, **the Manager, Youth Services** oversees the development and delivery of all services for young people, including responsibility for the Youth Services teams and strategic partnerships.

Reporting to the Manager, **Youth Services teams** are the engine behind system-wide services for young people. They develop programs and classes, design training, provide ongoing oversight and coordination, find new ways to innovate—then share across EPL. Team membership spans all roles at the Library. Each team focuses on a particular age division and/or program.

Services for children from birth to age five are supported by the **Early Literacy and Family Services (ELF) Team**. ELF focuses on forging relationships with families and caregivers and promoting the power of the five practices (reading, talking, playing, singing, writing) and life-changing benefits of early literacy to customers and staff.

There are three teams that support services for school-aged children:

- **School-Aged Services (SAS)** focuses on building relationships with schools and educators and supporting school-aged learners and their families, particularly in the areas of reading, inquiry and problem solving skill development, digital literacy and information literacy.
- **Seasonal Team (SEA)** promotes reading and informal learning by planning and coordinating entertaining and educational classes and activities for children and families in spring and summer.
- **Young Reader's Choice Award (YRCA)** promotes children's and teen fiction and reading for pleasure to school-aged readers and teachers by running the Pacific Northwest Library Association's Young Reader's Choice Award (YRCA).

Youth Services Librarians provide system-wide leadership in services for young people both within the Library and in the community. They connect with customers to identify gaps, interests and needs and share their insights and expertise with branch staff. Each Youth Services Librarian is a member of one or more of the Youth Services teams.

Branch teams ensure services for young people are delivered in EPL branches and the community in alignment with the plans, direction and best practices set out by the Youth Services teams.

- **Library Assistants** and **Community Librarians** are the face of the Library for most children and families that enter EPL's spaces. They lead classes, help find reading material and deliver superior customer service.





**“The public library
is where place and
possibility meet.”**

STUART DYBEK, Author

ENDNOTES

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