



BOOKS FOR KIDS



December 2024

1000 Books Before Kindergarten

"1000 Books Before Kindergarten" is a free nationwide reading program designed to help parents and/or caregivers prepare their children for kindergarten by reading together. This program is available to all families between the ages of birth through 5 years.

Reading strengthens bonds between parents and children while building early literacy skills.

This program is available at the Blue Earth County Library and the North Mankato Taylor Library.

Sign up in person at either library to track your child's reading progress. Some finish in months, others in a few years. There is no wrong way to read with your child!

Every book counts, even rereading the same one!

Check with your library for full details and prize information.

Brrr! Winter Fun for Young Children

Winter is a great time for young kids to play outside and have fun! They can build a snowman or fort, make snow angels, or look for animal tracks during a walk. Sledding on small hills is exciting, and games like snowball toss or a treasure hunt in the snow keep kids busy and happy.

Make sure they wear warm clothes, like hats, coats, boots, and waterproof gloves to stay cozy. Outdoor play in winter helps kids stay active, use their imagination, and enjoy nature—even when it's cold!

- Articles provided by Early Learning Department:
Mankato Area Public Schools

Serve and Return: Building Connections & Skills!

"Serve and return" is a simple yet powerful way for parents to help their children grow. It happens when a child sends a signal, like smiling, pointing, or babbling, and the parent responds in a warm, caring way. These back-and-forth interactions help a child's brain grow strong and healthy. This lays the foundation for learning, social skills, and emotional well-being.

Think of it like playing catch. A baby might "serve" by saying, "ba-ba." The parent "returns" by saying, "Yes, here's your bottle!" These exchanges not only help the child understand their world but also create a close bond between parent and child.

For parents, "serve and return" has a big impact on their own development. Responding to their child's needs helps parents become more in tune with their child's emotions and signals. Over time, this strengthens their confidence and skills as caregivers. Parents often find joy and pride in seeing their child respond, which deepens their connection. It also builds a positive parenting experience.

When parents consistently engage in "serve and return," children feel safe and valued. This supports healthy brain growth in areas like memory, language, and emotions. But if a child's signals are ignored, they may feel stressed or disconnected, which can make it harder for their brains to grow properly.

Parents can practice "serve and return" in everyday moments. When a toddler shows you their toy, you can say, "Wow, I see you love your red car!" When your child asks a question, take time to answer. These small interactions help children grow and give parents a chance to connect and learn about their child.

"Serve and return" not only builds strong, healthy brains but also strengthens the parent-child bond, helping families grow together.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Greater Mankato Area
United Way

Wednesdays (except federal Holidays and Winter Break) - Newborn Discovery: 9:00-10:30 AM at **Center for Learning**. An inclusive and informative class designed specifically for newborns aged 0-12 weeks and their parents or caregivers. No registration required. Drop in. Free sibling care. Please call in advance if sibling care is needed: 507-625-4620.

12/2-2/24 - Read and Play: Mondays and Tuesdays, 10:00 AM at **North Mankato Taylor Library**. Join us for stories, learning activities, and playing with friends! Ages 1-5. Free.

12/27 - Family Free Fridays: Friday, 4:00–8:00 PM at **River Hills Mall, Mankato**. Enjoy two free carousel rides for riders 12 and under. This is a year-round event, occurring the last Friday every month.

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1/9 & 1/23 - Family Open Gym and Playtime: Thursdays, 5:30-7:00 PM at **Center for Learning**. Free. No need to register.

1/10 & 1/24 - Family Open Gym and Playtime: Fridays, 9:30-11:30 AM at **Center for Learning**. Free. No need to register.

1/11 - Family Music Fun with Will! Saturday, 1:00-2:00 PM at **Blue Earth County Library**. Have a blast with us as we sing and dance along with Will Sings Songs! This awesome performance focuses on audience participation, positivity, curiosity, and learning through fun.

1/11 - 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program relaunches at **Blue Earth County Library**. It will be a different program than previous ones, and people who have completed it once are welcome to do it again.

1/11 - Paw Patrol Saturday Shenanigans: Saturday, 9:00-11:00 AM at **North Mankato Taylor Library**. Calling all pups to this come-and-go event! Ages 1-5.

1/14-1/23 - Early Literacy Storytime: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in January, 10:30 AM at **Blue Earth County Library**. Join us as we sing, play, rhyme, and practice fun early literacy skills together. Special guest dates: Wednesday, January 15 and Thursday, January 23. Free!

1/25 - Puzzle Fun Saturday Shenanigans: Saturday, 9:00-11:00 AM at **North Mankato Taylor Library**. Join us for a come and go event featuring different puzzle activities for kids! Ages 1-5.

1/27- Decorate Your Own Exploding Cupcakes: Monday, 4:00 PM at **North Mankato Police Annex**. Decorate your own exploding cupcakes with Tina from Sugar Belly Desserts! Ages 10 and under. Registration required.



KINDNESS ACTIVITY KIT

Download the **FREE** pdf activity kit based on *The Kindness Booth* book! Visit MankatoUnitedWay.org/Book or scan the QR code.

The Kindness Booth is Greater Mankato Area United Way early learning and literacy initiative. It was released in 2024 through Capstone. Proceeds benefit our United Way! The book follows a group of friends who set out to make the day brighter through acts of kindness. The kit includes a coloring page, kindness cards, and more.

