



# The Literacy Link

CONNECTING CHILDREN AND PARENTS IN JUSTICE-INVOLVED FAMILIES THROUGH LITERACY-RICH EXPERIENCES

A program of the University of Wisconsin - Madison Division of Extension

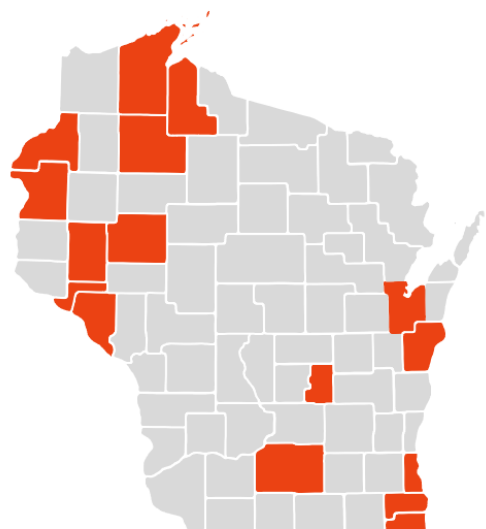


## About Us

The Literacy Link is a program of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension. We bring evidence-informed literacy and learning opportunities to young children who have a parent or caregiver involved in the local justice system.

We partner with jails, criminal justice organizations, libraries, and others to:

- **Foster healthy family relationships** by promoting positive, literacy-focused interactions between children and their justice-involved parents and caregivers
- **Promote language and literacy skills** in children by creating literacy rich experiences in jail and justice settings that extend into the home.



## Why It Matters

- Having a parent incarcerated is a stressful experience for children that, on average, can increase the risk for negative long-term impacts.
- The trauma of separation, without additional support, can contribute to behavioral health issues and interfere with educational achievement.
- Safe, stable nurturing relationships help buffer children against the damaging impact of too much stress.
- Early literacy skills are an important way to build a foundation of success for all children.



<https://theliteracylink.extension.wisc.edu/>

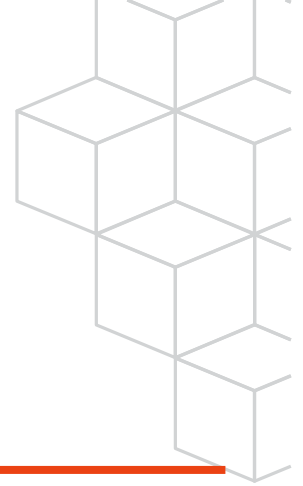
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# The Literacy Link in Dane County

January 2023 – December 2023



## Current Programs



### MAKING READING MEMORIES

Justice involved parents are recorded reading a book they select for their child. The book and video are shared so the child can watch at home.



### PARENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION & SUPPORT

A variety of classes and resources help parents in jail and caregivers at home learn about child development, the importance of reading with children and ways to support children emotionally.



### SPATIAL CHANGES

Extension educators enhance local justice spaces to create child-sensitive environments that promote family engagement, literacy and learning.

## MAKING READING MEMORIES

**26** MRM Videos Sent to

**26** Children

**12** Parents

**26** Books Distributed

Program started September 2023

## PARENT EDUCATION & SUPPORT

6 week PIO Workshops



8-10 Parents per session - male



Being taught and supported by Dane County Jail – Sheriff’s Office

“This is a beautiful workshop for parents and children.” - Parent in Literacy Link Program

“[The program] got me out of my comfort zone.” - Parent in Literacy Link Program

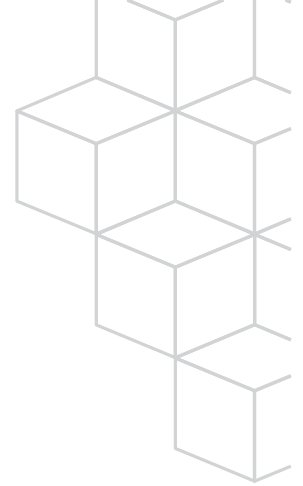
“It made me proud to do something for my kids.” - Parent in Literacy Link Program

“It helped me to have a connection with my kids and express my love to them in other ways.” - Parent in Literacy Link Program



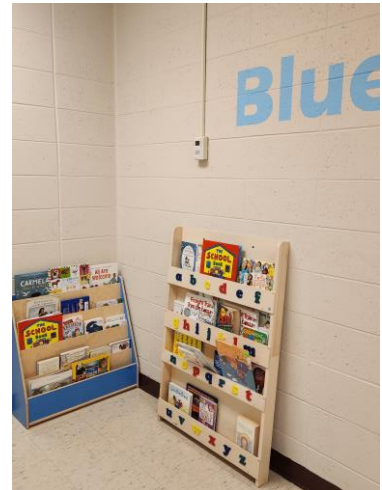
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January 2023 – December 2023



## SPATIAL CHANGES

Recent visitation area at Dane County Public Services Building jail...



“The kids really looked forward to...having fun, just coming into a place... **the atmosphere is very child friendly.** It's not a traumatic time for them to come in and they love to be able to play... play with the little toys that we have.”

-Justice programming coordinator

## Quarterly Program Highlights (since program started)

Sent ~26 books and videos to families involved in legal justice system



200+ children books has been distributed via book vending machines and taken by families during visits

Incarcerated family members and caregivers gain positive parenting skills via Literacy Link workshops to help them grow as better parents and caregivers

