

# Literacy Outreach: From the School Library Information Centre to Home and Community

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*“We have usually thought of the library as the ‘hub of the school’, a place where everyone comes to get materials and equipment. Now, however, in the age of technology, the library becomes ‘Network Central’ with its tentacles reaching from a single nucleus into every space of the school and beyond into the home. The necessity of building a strong reading program in an information world is more critical today than ever before... Each young person needs to be literate as well as logged on.”*  
~Dr. David Loertscher (1999)

**H**ow can the school library program support reading, writing and research beyond the classroom and into the home? How can home and community work together with teacher-librarians and teachers to create avid readers, writers and researchers? Research shows that the very early years are critical to laying solid literacy foundations. Schools should be seeking out ways to work with the families of young children.

Margie Mayfield, professor of early childhood education from the University of Victoria, broadens the term family literacy. In her recent feature article “Family Literacy and the School Library” published in *School Libraries in Canada*, (vol. 18, # 3, 1998), she invites grandparents, siblings, family friends or neighbours to join with parents in becoming literacy role models for children. Mayfield states that family literacy and the school library are natural partners. She suggests that school libraries can:

- Promote and encourage family literacy
- Provide materials and resources to support family literacy
- Help families work with their children
- Establish collaborative relationships with other groups interested in family literacy

## LITERACY: A LIFELONG SKILL

Literacy is a lifelong skill, not just something students need to do well at in school. Just like every other skill, students need to know how it is important and how it relates to the rest of their world. The school library can be the bridge to help students connect literacy at school, literacy at home and literacy for life.