

## **Education and Literacy: Arizona State Library Supports Early Education**

Regional partnerships have been forming across the state to promote collaboration within communities between agencies serving preschool children and their families. With the passage of Proposition 203 (First Things First) and creation of the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board to oversee distribution of funds through statewide and regional grants, new Regional Partnership Councils are being selected according to the terms of the proposition.

*Building a New Generation of Readers*, a statewide early literacy project designed by State Library, provides public and school librarians with the training and materials to teach parents and childcare providers strategies for preparing children to come to school ready to read. The Arizona State Library supplies libraries with Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library materials that are based on current federally funded research and have been evaluated and found to have significant influence on the early literacy behaviors of parents and childcare providers. Workshops in Phoenix, Tucson, Bisbee, and Safford trained 107 additional librarians and their community partners during the 2006-2007 year. The State Library also provided more materials to libraries that had received training previously for them to offer workshops to parents and childcare providers.

The Chandler Education Foundation applied for and received a 5-year grant for \$3.5 million from the U.S. Department of Education to establish Parent Information Resource Centers in Arizona, with the Arizona State Library as a partner. State Library's role is to provide early literacy information and training to parents, working with local public and school librarians. Planning is underway, and training will begin in the fall of 2007.

State Library staff has provided information to librarians across the state about the partnerships and have encouraged them to attend community forums held by the Early Childhood Development and Health Board. The forums have given librarians opportunities to publicly express how their work with early literacy aligns to the mission of First Things First to increase the quality of, and access to, early childhood programs that will ensure a child entering school comes healthy and ready to succeed.

The Arizona State Library leveraged a grant from the WebJunction Rural Library Sustainability (RLS) program to develop a customized workshop-based program. This 1.5 day workshop, called *PALS – Promoting Arizona Library Sustainability*, was offered in six rural locations. The program extended RLS to 86 participants, representing all 15 Arizona counties.

In addition to its statewide work with early literacy, the Arizona State Library awarded Library Services and Technology Act funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to Phoenix Public Library and Scottsdale Public Library for projects to enhance spaces in their libraries that will promote early literacy by providing interactive experiences for parents and children from birth through five years of age.