



PRIME TIME

FAMILY READING TIME

What is Prime Time?

Prime Time Family Reading Time® is an innovative family reading program designed for low-income families in communities where student reading scores do not meet Nebraska state standards. The six-week program is led by a storyteller and a discussion leader. The storyteller begins each week by reading aloud from award-winning children's books. Storytelling is followed by a facilitated discussion among parents and children, ages six to ten years, with questions that encourage critical thinking and develop connections between storybooks and real-life situations. *Prime Time* is offered in two formats: monolingual for English-speaking and bilingual for Spanish-speaking families. In the bilingual format, all books are presented and discussed in both Spanish and English.

What are the goals of Prime Time?

Prime Time encourages parents and children to bond around the activity of reading rather than passively watching television during prime time hours. It shows parents and children how to read together and discuss important topics such as fairness, greed, responsibility and honor. It helps parents and children learn how to select books and become active users of their libraries, encouraging families to view reading and education as a fun and important part of their lives. *Prime Time* fosters high academic expectations and achievement for children in low-literacy, low-income families.

What is the history of Prime Time?

Prime Time Family Reading Time® was created in 1991 by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Since then, it has reached more than 40,000 participants nationally. In 2001, *Prime Time* gained national sponsorship from the American Library Association.

Prime Time has reached more than 6,000 people in Nebraska since 2002 when the **Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC)** co-sponsored the state's first *Prime Time* series. In 2004, the NHC developed a Spanish/English bilingual series based on the English-only model. NHC began sponsoring English-only *Prime Time* series in 2007. Thanks to generous funding from the **State of Nebraska** and local organizations, more than 75 *Prime Time* series have been held in 14 public libraries, eight elementary schools and two community centers in Alliance, Columbus, Crete, Gering, Gibbon, Grand Island, Hastings, Lexington, Lincoln, Norfolk, Omaha, Schuyler, Scottsbluff, and South Sioux City.

For more information please contact Erika Hamilton, state coordinator of *Prime Time Family Reading Time*®, at (402) 474-2131 ext. 104 or erika@nebraskahumanities.org.

Why is a bilingual Prime Time needed in Nebraska?

The Nebraska Humanities Council provides the bilingual version of *Prime Time Family Reading Time*® to the many communities throughout Nebraska that have seen an influx of Spanish-speaking workers in the past decade. Studies and statistics show that Hispanic students in Nebraska are less likely to graduate from high school than their Anglo counterparts. The need for *Prime Time* is critical for these communities.

Recent studies have shown that:

- 1) The high school dropout rate for Mexican-Americans is almost 31% and rises to 61% for Mexican immigrants;
- 2) 64% of immigrant children have parents who struggle with English and 40% have parents who never finished high school;
- 3) One of the most important predictors of success for Hispanic immigrant children is the ability to read, write, and speak English;
- 4) Children who cannot read proficiently by age 9 are likely to struggle academically for the rest of their lives;
- 5) Children who grow up in a family where reading is a daily activity are more likely to succeed in school and graduate from high school; and
- 6) Nebraska is classified as one of 13 “new growth” states in terms of immigrant populations. English Language Learner enrollment in Nebraska grew by 227% between 1995 and 2005.

To remove primary barriers for consistent participation by low-income families, the Nebraska Humanities Council provides a nutritious meal for the families, transportation to and from the program, and preschool reading activities for children ages three to five years.

What are the results of Prime Time?

A 10-year impact study, published in 2010, found that students who participated in *Prime Time Family Reading Time*® during their early elementary years outperformed their peers on grade level content in standardized exams. *Prime Time* students scored higher in language arts and reading, mathematics, science, life science and other subjects.

In a 2009 survey of more than 85 Nebraska families who participated in *Prime Time*, 88% said they spend more time reading now as a family, 91% said the program improved the way they read and discuss books together, 76% improved their attitude toward the library, and 100% showed interest in participating again in *Prime Time* or similar family reading and educational programs.

Evaluations of more than a decade of *Prime Time* in Louisiana show that 100% of the families who attend *Prime Time* in libraries have library cards by the sixth week. In 90-day follow-up evaluations of the program, 74% of respondents could name the title of the last book they read with their children. Of those respondents, 88% named a title not on the *Prime Time* reading list, an indication that these families have found new books to read together and are using their library as a continuing educational resource.