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The Burleson Public Library launched the first of its Family Place Parent/Child workshops on May 3. The class is full, but you can sign up now for the September workshop.

Family Place Libraries™ is a network of children's librarians nationwide who believe that literacy begins at birth, and that libraries can help build healthy communities by nourishing healthy families. The Family Place Libraries network currently includes more than 400 sites in 27 states (Texas has 38 sites).

Michele Wilson is the Burleson Public Library's children's librarian.

"I had been in Burleson for a year and I had been asked a lot about various things related to literacy issues," Wilson said. "The Texas Library Association in Austin had a program about The Family Place that was making itself known across the country. I said I was interested in contacting the state library for more information. Two weeks later I got an email saying that we were approved for a \$16,000 grant and the training in New York."

Wilson and Amanda Cadenhead, community engagement librarian, made the trip to New York where they learned about the core components of a Family Place Library:

- Collections of books, toys, music and multimedia materials for babies, toddlers, parents and service providers;
- A specially designed, welcoming space within the children's area for families with young children;
- The Parent/Child Workshop;
- Developmentally appropriate programming for very young children and their parents;
- And, Library staff trained in family support, child development, parent education and best practices.

According to the Family Place Libraries website, the initiative "promotes a national model for transforming public libraries into welcoming, developmentally appropriate early learning environments for very young children, their parents and caregivers. The Family Place Library supports the essential role of parents

as first teachers and addresses the physical, social, emotional and cognitive aspects of child development to help build a foundation for learning during the critical first years of life. By partnering and working with other social, health and educational services providers, the Family Place model aims to ensure that all children enter school ready and able to learn and positions libraries as key early childhood and family support organizations within the local community.”

Since the New York training, the Burleson Public Library staff rearranged the children’s area to include an Early Childhood Area with a toddler-sized table and chairs, couch, and toys.

“We have moved some of the parenting books to that area, and made sure to leave a few adult-sized chairs in the area for parents and caregivers,” Cadenhead said.

May’s 75-minute workshops are on Tuesdays, at 9 a.m., in the library’s meeting room. Parent-Child Play and Learn is a 5-week workshop that provides an environment rich with toys, books, and art activities and an opportunity for families to spend time together, make friends, and talk one-on-one with resource professionals concerning various aspects of child development, parenting, and early literacy. Each workshop has different experts and different themes.

If you are interested in the September Parent-Child Play and Learn workshop, call Michele Wilson at 817-426-9204 or email her at mwilson@burlesonlibrary.com.