



# STEP INTO STORYBOOKS

## Program Guide

Parents are children’s first teachers. This annual event provides fun literacy-rich experiences to inspire families to enjoy reading and related activities at home with their babies, toddlers and preschoolers and older siblings. It builds positive relationships and promotes brain development when children’s brains are making connections faster than any other time. Ames’ Step into Storybooks is held at the Ames Public Library. Eastern Story County Step into Storybooks is held at Central Elementary School in the town of Nevada.



# CONTENTS

- The Need for Step into Storybooks 3
- Story County Step into Storybooks 3
  - Mission 3
  - Vision 3
  - Target Audience 4
  - Desired Outcomes and Indicators 4
  - Performance Measures Examples 4
- RRSC Five Steps to Start a Gift Books Program 5
  - Identify Early Literacy Needs 5
  - Plan 5
  - Implement 6
  - Assess 6
  - Revise 7
- Benefits of Step into Storybooks 7
- Possible Challenges of Step into Storybooks 7
- Origins of Step into Storybooks in Ames 7
- Themes of Step into Storybooks Events 8
- Appendix A: Step into Storybooks Organization and Roles 9
- Appendix B: Sample Station: Three Little Pigs “Build It” 15

## The Need for Step into Storybooks (SIS)

All families can benefit from participating in SIS because they learn new ideas for interacting with their children. However, we make a concerted effort to attract vulnerable families whose children are often at risk for delayed language and literacy development, including families with low incomes, minority status, and English language learners. These children are more likely than their middle class peers to not grow up in a literacy-rich environment, to fall short of their potentials, to enter school behind their peers, and to fall further behind in successive years.

National studies show that many parents aren't aware of the importance of nurturing their children's development in the early years and don't know how to promote language and literacy growth. This is especially true for families living with low incomes.

Locally, it is unacceptable that 20 percent of children entering kindergarten in Ames lack basic literacy skills and are likely to fall further behind in reading in future years.

## RRSC Step into Storybooks (SIS)

### Mission

The mission of Step into Storybooks is to promote language and literacy development in children from birth to age eight through engaging child-centered experiences, while supporting healthy adult-child interactions and book reading.

### Vision

We see a future in which fun book-related activities that are the hallmark of SIS are available on a rotating basis year-round to families and caregivers and their young children. Participants appreciate receiving ongoing information about other resources and opportunities for their children and themselves.

There may be one Story County central SIS destination or multiple destinations, such as libraries, where families and caregivers can learn and practice nurturing their children's development with support from caring, experienced adults. Some SIS stations are mobile and can be set up in locations convenient to families, including small rural towns and low-income neighborhoods. Station supplies, equipment, books, and costumes are stored in a safe climate-controlled place when not in use.

A child's first 2,000 days (the first five years) are a critical period for building a foundation for reading and learning. SIS is a free community event that shows

caring adults easy ways to use good quality children’s books and related activities to stimulate the developing brains of babies, toddlers and preschoolers. SIS provides access to good books by encouraging use of the public library, and each child can choose a free book to take home, compliments of Ames Morning Rotary. The event also brings people from all walks of life together and contributes to mutual support and a healthy sense of belonging.

## **Target Audience**

SIS activities are planned for children from birth to age five and their parents, guardians, grandparents, siblings, caregivers, and neighbors. A concerted effort is made to attract families living with low incomes, minorities, and English language learners, since these are the subgroups of students who often arrive at school behind and who achieve at lower levels in school.

## **Desired Outcomes and Indicator**

Our community’s desired outcome or end result is all “Story County Children Read to Succeed.” A specific goal is that by 2020 all children enter kindergarten with a proficient level of early literacy skills as measured by school districts. Milestone indicators of our collective impact and progress over time is the percent of children entering kindergarten with basic language and literacy skills, as measured by school districts in the fall.

SIS contributes to this outcome by: (1) raising awareness of the importance of early literacy; (2) providing the opportunity for families to practice everyday ways to nurture language and literacy; and (3) giving books for families to take home to enjoy together. We make a concerted effort to include disadvantaged families in the event. This gives them a chance to practice everyday ways they can nurture their children’s early development. Story County is a great place to raise a family.

## **Performance Measures: Examples for Step into Storybooks**

1. Number of books distributed by Ames Morning Rotary at the event
2. Number of families that get a new library card
3. Cost of the SIS event
4. Number of guests participating
5. Number of communities represented by guest families
6. Number of community organizations involved as sponsors or volunteers
7. Number of volunteers and number of volunteer hours

8. Number and percent of adult reporting on surveys that SIS improved their understanding and will increase what they do to promote literacy at home
9. Quotes and photos of staff, children, and families enjoying SIS

## Five Steps to Start Step into Storybooks

### RRSC Step 1: Identify early literacy needs

1. How many new babies does your community have each year? How many children from birth to age five are there?
2. What is the rate of poverty of families with children from birth to age five?
3. What is the number and percent of children who enter kindergarten lacking basic literacy skills?
4. What is the number and percent of children who attend preschool?
5. Does your community have neighborhoods with a concentration of families with low incomes?
6. What local organizations serve disadvantaged families? What are their clients' languages and races? Will the organizations help promote SIS?
7. What local organizations and businesses care about young children and early literacy?

### RRSC Step 2: Plan

1. Identify a representative from your sponsoring organizations.
2. Recruit a SIS planning team, starting with co-chairs from the sponsoring organizations, which in Ames are Ames Morning Rotary, Ames Public Library, and Raising Readers in Story County. Include people with various perspectives and expertise. Our 2017 team includes parents of young children, a preschool teacher, a preschool principal, welfare and healthcare organizations, the business community, city staff, a United Way VISTA, and community volunteers. Since our theme this year is "Farm Tales and Tails," representatives of Farm Bureau and farmers market are also involved.
3. Agree on the purpose of your event, the target audiences, the desired outcomes, the goals, and what measures you will use.
4. Choose a name for your event. If you wish to use "Step into Storybooks," you could personalize it by adding your community name, for instance: "Eastern Story County Step into Storybooks."
5. Decide a location. Seek a site that is safe, has a clear entrance and exit, and is able to be supervised. It should be accessible by public transportation, if that is available. There should be adequate parking and a separate space for outdoor exhibits, if you choose to have them. Inside there should be enough space for interactive stations

- and for families to navigate with strollers. Ideally, there should be an option to bring outdoor stations inside in case of bad weather. Finally, the site should be affordable.
6. Decide on a date and time. Ames Step into Storybooks has been held in the spring because the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) designated April as the Month of the Young Child. The Ames event is scheduled for a Saturday morning from 9 a.m. to noon. Families (and volunteers) enjoy the activities and can then go home for lunch and naps.
  7. Decide on a theme to guide the selection of books and interactive station activities. We often select an early literacy skill to focus on at each station
  8. Determine how to organize your team and specific roles and subcommittees in order to divide up responsibilities. See **Appendix A** for an Ames SIS example.
  9. Create an action plan with a timeline, budget and individual responsibilities.

### RRSC Step 3: Implement

1. Design a series of interactive stations to give babies, toddlers, preschoolers and adults a chance to explore together. Involve people with expertise in the theme topic.
2. Recruit people to either financially sponsor or host each station during the event.
3. Choose one or more high quality children's books to feature at each station. We often choose books appropriate for different developmental stages.
4. If you have funding, select and order a collection of books so each child can take one home after attending the event.
5. Create publicity materials, such as a flyer about the event and social media and local media announcements.
6. Design and print book labels that acknowledge community donors.
7. Design event materials, such as signs to direct traffic, posters for stations, and maybe a program for attendees.
8. Create a list of jobs for volunteers, including set up and clean up. Recruit volunteers. Service clubs, retired teachers, faith groups, book clubs, high school and youth groups, businesses, preschools, and parent groups are all good sources. Register and orient volunteers with an overview of the event and expectations. Assign jobs.
9. Decide if you want costumes, decorations and music. Young children enjoy costumes such as animals, characters from Dr. Seuss and nursery rhyme books, etc. We avoid characters only found in screen media. Plywood or cardboard shapes painted as storybook characters and with cut-out openings for children's faces make fun photo ops for families. Children's songs played on a keyboard, guitar or accordion or a sing-a-long station can add a festive note. However, keep the volume low. One year we had a drumming station to promote early math skills. It was popular with preschoolers, but scary for toddlers and distracting to nearby stations.

## **RRSC Step 4: Assess**

1. Count the number of attendees.
2. If you are at a library, count the number of new library cards issued.
3. Create an evaluation form for families to complete before leaving the event.
4. Create an evaluation form for volunteers to complete after the event.
5. Record the number of books distributed to children.
6. Record funds raised and funds spent.
7. Share successes publicly. Thank everyone for participating.

## **RRSC Step 5: Revise**

1. Convene the planning team to celebrate, review feedback, and consider how to make improvements to the event. Set a time and place for the next year's event.
2. If you collected contact information from families, consider how to promote their ongoing involvement in community literacy activities and resources.
3. Consider how to attract even more disadvantaged families next year.

## **Benefits of a Step into Storybooks Event**

1. Families and children have fun exploring activities and books together.
2. Families are exposed to easy, everyday ways to nurture their young children's development.
3. Children learn from interesting and enriching experiences.
4. The event is relatively inexpensive to produce and provided at no cost to the participants. Books for the stations could be borrowed from the public library.
5. This free and conveniently located event levels the playing field and brings families from all walks of life together.
6. Volunteers can choose among ongoing, short-term or one-time options.
7. Involving local agencies and volunteers raises the awareness of the importance of early literacy and how communities can make a difference.

## **Possible Challenges of a Step into Storybooks Event**

1. If you choose to give books to children, funding is needed.
2. Finding a local site to meet the criteria can be challenging.
3. Communities may have many activities and events competing for available dates.
4. Having an event only once a year won't have as much impact on changing the literacy-related behaviors of parents as more regular exposure to literacy-rich activities would have.

## **Origins of Step into Storybooks in Ames**

Ames Morning Rotary Club launched the first Ames Step into Storybooks event in 2009 with support from a Rotary District 6000 grant. The planning team also involved representatives of the Rotary Club of Ames, Raising Readers in Story County, and Ames Public Library. Interactive stations featured children's books and encouraged adults and children to explore literacy-related activities together. The first event was held in the high school cafeteria. Later, it was held in the middle school gymnasiums and Ames Community Preschool Center, before settling in the newly renovated Ames Public Library in 2015.

## **Themes of Step into Storybooks in Ames**

These are the themes we have adopted to guide selection of books and activities for the annual events.

**2009: Community Vehicles and Animals**

**2010: Six Early Literacy Skills (from American Library Association)**

**2011: Exploring Math through Books**

**2012: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds**

**2013: I Can Be a Super Friend (Social-Emotional Development)**

**2014: Exploring Science through Books**

**2015: Read, Discover, Play**

**2016: Imagination Station: Where Rhymes and Tales Come to Life**

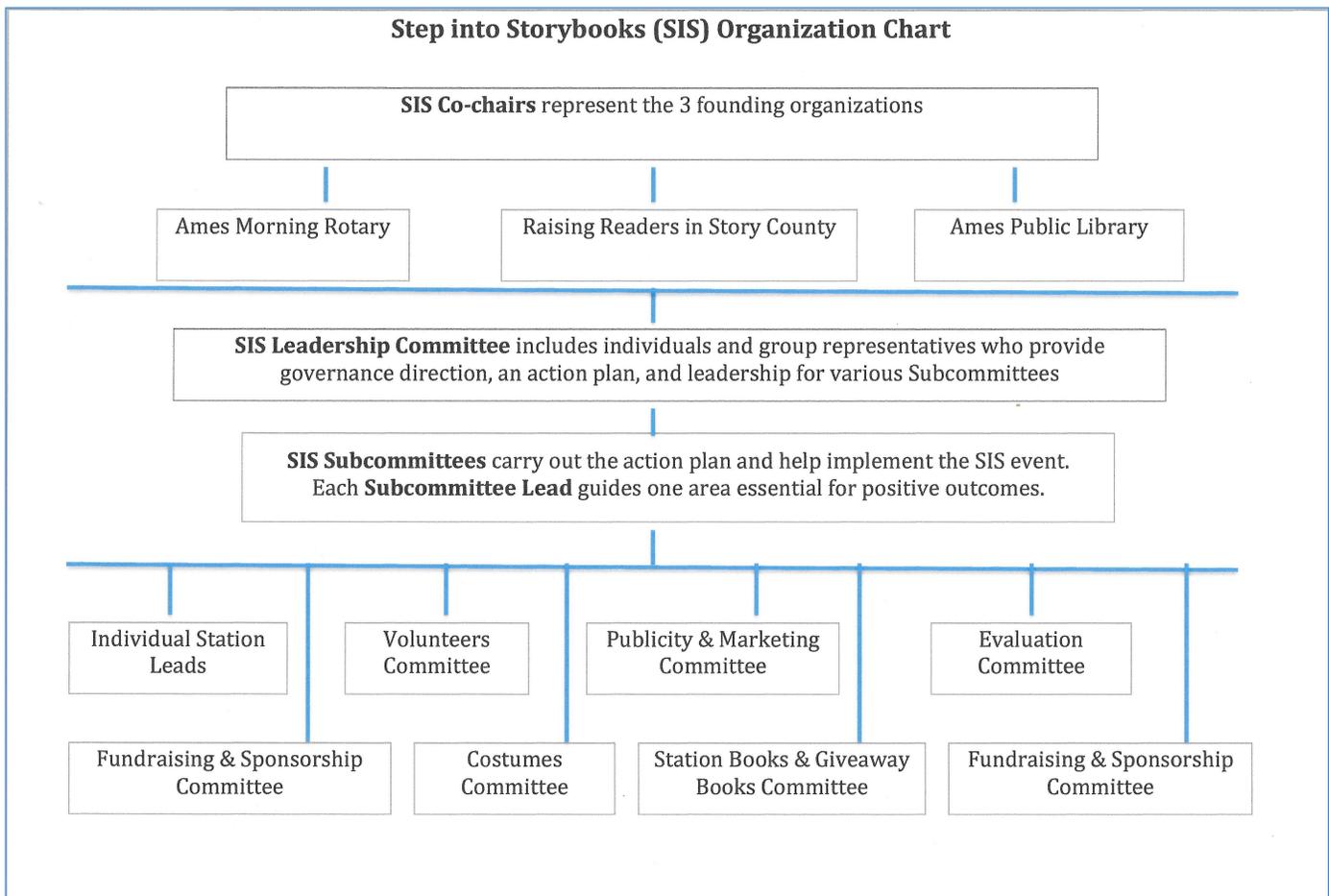
**2017: Farm Tales and Tails**



“Helping Children Grow Up with Books and a Love of Reading”

## Step into Storybooks Organization and Roles

### SIS Organization Chart



### SIS Roles and Responsibilities

Ames partners updated these roles and responsibilities in 2017.

## SIS Co-chairs

Representatives of each of the three founding organizations serve at co-chairs. These are their collective duties which can be divided up each year:

1. Facilitate a 2016-17 process with a Leadership Committee to approve a written SIS mission and vision and a strategic plan with outcomes, goals, target audiences, and guidelines.
2. Annually recruit members for a Leadership Committee to plan the next event.
3. Support the Leadership Committee with job descriptions, regularly scheduled meetings, a facilitator, shared minutes, and Subcommittee update.
4. List desired SIS Subcommittees, job descriptions, and determine a leader or co-leaders for each one.
5. Support Subcommittees by ensuring financial and human resources and supervise them by attending meetings or receiving regular reports.
6. Ensure each annual event reflects the SIS mission and goals and follows the guidelines.
7. Ensure all stations have (1) developmentally appropriate books that reflect the theme and (2) activities that are likely to contribute to desired outcomes for attendees.
8. Ensure sufficient fiscal and in-kind resources.
9. Ensure sufficient human resources (station hosts, station volunteers, general event volunteers) and provide training.
10. Create a marketing plan that reaches targeted populations and uses a variety of communication tools.
11. Create an evaluation plan that assesses the degree to which the event is well-implemented and desired outcomes are achieved.
12. Ensure sustainability of SIS events by reporting positive outcomes, attracting reliable funding, and maintaining reusable equipment, supplies and costumes.
13. Scale up by expanding the reach of SIS events in Story County and promoting SIS events in other communities through an online RRSC Toolkit.

## Station Coordinator

This position ensures that stations and books reflect the theme and that activities are likely to contribute to the desired outcomes. The duties include:

1. Provide a variety of station options that reflect the theme and are likely to accomplish the desired outcomes
2. Collaborate with potential station hosts who have other ideas for books and activities
3. Determine the specific stations with the Leadership Committee
4. Collect information for each station about needed funding, supplies, and human resources

5. Communicate with station hosts and volunteers before and after the event in order to provide orientation, training, and support as appropriate
6. Co-facilitate workshops for books and activities
7. Supervise other assigned subcommittees, such as Evaluation
8. Help arrange for safe storage of station equipment, supplies and books that will be owned by Raising Readers in Story County

### **Site Logistics Coordinator**

This position maximizes the use of library spaces and resources to enhance the SIS event. The duties include:

1. Manage library logistics
2. Determine locations of stations
3. Create spreadsheets showing stations and activities
4. Arrange for signage
5. Write procedures for accessing the library and set up and clean up
6. Co-Facilitate a workshop for books and activities
7. Ensure books for the stations are reserved from the library's collection or ordered

### **Treasurer**

This position establishes a budget, oversees fundraising, manages income and expenditures, and provides a final report. The duties include:

1. Develop a budget.
2. Coordinate solicitations
3. Track donations of cash and in-kind
4. Adopt procedures for approving and tracking expenditures. Create a separate checking account or have a nonprofit fiscal agent.
5. Communicate with and thank sponsors
6. Create a final report with required documentation for grants and funders

### **Secretary**

This position provides internal communications. The duties include:

1. Maintain names and contact information of Leadership Committee and Subcommittees
2. Email the agenda before each Leadership meeting and include subcommittee updates
3. Write and distribute by email the Leadership Committee minutes

### **SIS Leadership committee**

1. Meets monthly as whole group
2. Make governance decisions related to SIS
3. Plans the annual SIS event
4. Suggests individuals with skills and interests for subcommittees
5. Provides leadership for subcommittees and learns how people want to contribute

### **Subcommittees and Leaders**

Each Subcommittee Leader (or co-leaders) is responsible for one aspect of planning and conducting a successful SIS event. Specific duties vary according to the area of responsibility.

**Individual Station Lead** is the main contact person who works with the Overall Station Coordinator to create and carry out one SIS station plan.

The duties include:

1. Participate in training for stations
2. Choose books and activities related to the annual theme for their station. It can be one of the ideas shared by the Overall Station Coordinator or an original idea approved by the Coordinator
3. Recruit or request station volunteers and provide orientation
4. Set up, host, and clean up each station according to SIS guidelines

### **Volunteers Lead(s)**

The duties include:

1. Coordinate recruiting of volunteers and maintain a list with contact information
2. List all volunteer jobs and costumes
3. Assign volunteers
4. Work with Overall Station Coordinator to assign, orient and train volunteers
5. Maintain records of volunteer participation
6. Arrange volunteer check-in, check-out and evaluation feedback
7. Follow-up with a thank you and report of event successes

### **Publicity & Marketing Lead(s)**

The duties include:

1. Plan a publicity campaign to promote the event and raise public awareness of early literacy.
2. Use contact information to market the event to families and caregivers with children from birth to age five.

3. Make additional personal contacts in low income neighborhoods and with agencies serving disadvantaged families.
4. Arrange to take photos of the event to post online, use in social media, and include in thank you messages to volunteers and funders.
5. Collect quotes from participants and volunteers.
6. Submit a publicity report to the event co-chairs.

### **Evaluation Lead(s)**

The duties include:

1. Coordinate with the Publicity Team for photos of stations and for videos and quotes.
2. Arrange for handouts for families with useful information and tips.
3. Collect data on number of participants and volunteers.
4. Establish a process for families to sign up with RRSC to connect with local services.
5. Survey attendees and volunteers to assess the event's impact.
  - a. Ask how interested children were in the activities and books.
  - b. Ask if families planned to increase their reading and literacy-related activities.
  - c. Ask if participants would recommend SIS to others.
6. Arrange for follow-up communication with families (emails, texting and social media).

### **Fundraising & Sponsorships Lead(s)**

The duties include:

1. Create and implement a fundraising plan reflecting the budget
2. Recruit sponsors to support either the SIS event or individual stations
3. Invite sponsors and funders to attend, ensure recognition, and provide thank yous

### **Site Logistics Lead(s)**

The duties include:

1. Transportation to the event (CyRide passes?)
2. Parking
3. Drop off of supplies/station needs and pick up
4. Closing the road
5. Decorations
6. Signage

### **Costumes Lead(s)**

Volunteers dressed in costumes add to the festive atmosphere and remind both adults and children of storybook characters. Costumes can also reinforce the theme of the event. The duties include:

1. Decide if costumes related to the theme will be made or purchased.
2. Follow up with options to borrow costumes.

### **Station Books & Giveaway Books Lead(s)**

The duties include:

1. Ensure books for the stations are reserved from the library collection or ordered
2. Order developmentally appropriate books (many related to the theme), label books, store books, and arrange tables of gift books
3. Involve Rotarians in labeling and helping children choose books to keep
4. Encourage thank you pictures and notes from recipients



“Helping Children Grow Up with Books and a Love of Reading”

## Step into Storybooks Imagination Station: Where Rhymes and Tales Come to Life!

STEP INTO STORYBOOKS

**ALL ABOARD**

The Imagination Station...

Where Rhymes and Tales Come to Life!



Destination: Ames Public Library  
Date: April 16, 2016  
Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.  
Cost: FREE!

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	2016					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
				19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		

PROVIDED BY:



Raising Readers in Story County | Ames PUBLIC LIBRARY | Ames Morning Rotary

## Three Little Pigs “Build It” Station

### Goals:

1. Increase parent-child interactions and communication through book reading and play.
2. Increase processing skills that support each child’s learning. These skills include observing, exploring, making connections, problem solving, organizing, communicating, and documenting.
3. Increase overall vocabulary of children.

**Station hosts:** Interact with children and families and share books.

- Volunteers dress as 3 pigs and the wolf.
- Volunteer dresses as Bob the Builder.
- Volunteers encourage imaginative building with boxes.

**Station Sponsors:** Provide funding or in-kind donations for activities

### Books:

- The Three Little Pigs
- Bob the Builder
- Not a Box by Antoinette Portis

### Take-aways:

Children learn vocabulary.

Children enjoy storytelling and acting out fairy tales.

Children learn to be careful and do a good job so your creation will last.

### Activities:

The Three Little Pigs: Act out the Three Little Pigs story. Build with materials like blocks and Lincoln Logs.

Bob the Builder: Hammer nails into lumber.

Not a Box: Put together unique creations with different sized boxes, tapes, and “stuff.”

### Decorations:

Cottage backdrop

Props: bundles of straw, sticks, and bricks

### Costumes:

3 Pig kits: ears on headband, tail, snouts

Pig 1: Bundle of straw: farmer bib overalls, shirt

Pig 2: Bundle of sticks: lumberjack jeans, plaid shirt

Fig 3: Bundle of bricks: preppy or business casual



Wolf: wolf nose and ears or wolf hat, furry grey tail; grey gloves with claws for paws; grey shoe coverings with claws

Bob the Builder: hard hat, tool belt; scrap lumber, nails, child-sized hammers