

The Chester County Library System: An Essential Resource for Education



Education is a cornerstone of a strong community and essential to its advancement. The core values of opportunity and advancement resonate with people because they are at the heart of the American dream. In **Chester County**, our young people need increasing support and resources to help them succeed in school and in life. There are dramatic economic costs when students are not prepared for school. In fact, the National Governors Association reports these costs are as high as \$16 billion annually.

The **Chester County Library System** plays a vital role in meeting formal and informal learning needs. Early childhood education and literacy are critical for building a foundation for a lifetime. While many factors influence a child's classroom success, early intellectual growth and opportunity play a particularly crucial role. In fact, children who are exposed to reading at an early age are more likely to be reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Students who don't read over the summer enter school in the fall one full grade behind their peers who are active summer readers.

The Institute for Learning Innovation tells us that in an information society, learning throughout the lifespan is critical and education should not end when school does. While adult literacy rates generally rose between 1992 and 2003, one in seven adults still has a literacy level defined as "below basic." Adults face daily learning challenges, and today's world demands confident, curious minds and the ability to adapt quickly to change.

A study by the Gates Foundation found that 50 percent of children surveyed use library computers to do their schoolwork and that youth from low-income families are more likely to use library computing resources. The **Chester County Library System** helps bridge this gap by providing what is often the only access to computers and the Internet for many people in our community.

The **Chester County Library System** values learning and recognizes its importance to a vital, stable community. That's why we are actively working to support the education and lifelong learning needs of our community through book clubs; storytime and other early literacy programs; homework help and homework centers/ homework collections; homework and testing databases such as SAT, civil service, etc.; classes on learning to use the Internet/email, researching your family tree, interlibrary loan, tax assistance, readers' advisory, literacy; and much more.

JUST THE FACTS

- **In an information society, learning across the lifespan is critical.**

Institute for Learning Innovation

- **Public libraries provide the only access to computers and the Internet for many people who otherwise would not have access.**

Pew Internet and American Life Project

- **Children who are exposed to reading at an early age are more likely to be reading at the appropriate level by the end of third grade.**

National Research Council Study

- **Researchers estimate that 95 percent of children with proper exposure and systematic opportunities to develop foundational skills during early childhood will be successful readers.**

U.S. Department of Education

- **Students who are poorly prepared for school cost the nation as much as \$16 billion annually.**

National Governors Association

- **A study by the Gates Foundation found that 50 percent of children surveyed use library computers to do their schoolwork.**

Gates Foundation

- **Success in today's society requires information literacy, a spirit of self-reliance, and a strong ability to collaborate, communicate effectively, and solve problems. Combining strengths in traditional learning with robust investment in technology, public libraries are well-equipped to build the skills Americans need in the 21st century.**

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Chester County Library System
Value to the County

Individuals • Community • Economy