



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Don't Miss!



50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are **\$1** each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Choptank Ballroom



SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10:45 a.m. on Friday, May 8th.**



KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 11:00 p.m.
Windjammer



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

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“Stories Bring us Together: Connections through the Family Literacy Pilot”

PRESENTERS:

**Mary Rayme, Grants Coordinator &
Carrie Sanders, Youth Services Coordinator
Maryland State Library Agency**

Agenda

Background & Context

Promoting Family Literacy - Pilot Program

Maryland Libraries - Connections through Literacy

Questions, Thoughts

Learning Goals

- Name at least two adverse effects of incarceration that impact children with an incarcerated parent
- Name at least one benefit of literacy programs to the incarcerated parent and to the child of the incarcerated parent
- Describe at least one literacy initiative being implemented by Maryland libraries or the Maryland State Library Agency to help families stay connected who have an incarcerated family member

Do You Know?

Q1

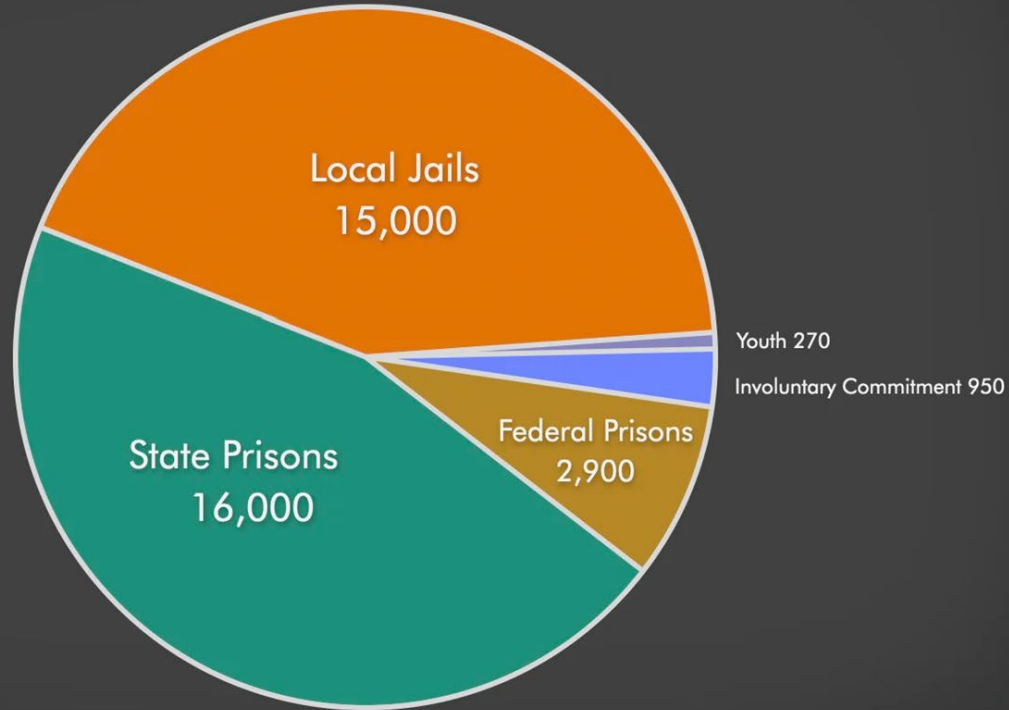
**How many people are incarcerated
in US prisons?**

A1

Almost 2 Million people are housed in US prisons.

How many Maryland residents are locked up and where?

36,000 of Maryland's residents are locked up in various kinds of facilities.



Q2

Which country has the highest rate of incarceration?

A2 (2026)

Ranking	Title	Prison Population Total
1	United States of America	1 833 700
2	China	1 690 000
3	Brazil	909 067
4	India	530 333
5	Russian Federation	433 006
6	Turkey	402 014
7	Thailand	277 475
8	Indonesia	276 136
9	Mexico	255 190
10	Iran	189 000

In 2026, the United States has the highest incarceration level of any democratic nation in the world.

Q3

What is the cost of incarceration in the USA?

A3

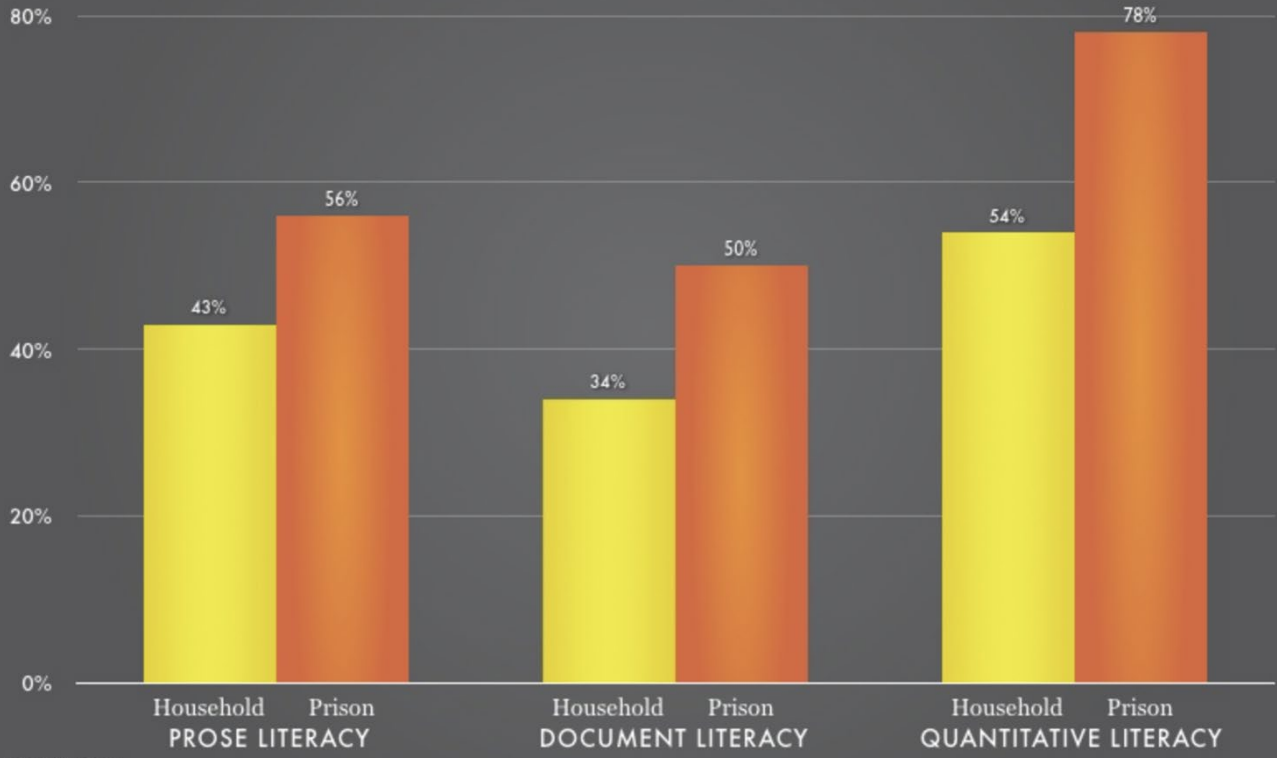
\$417 Billion per year

Q4

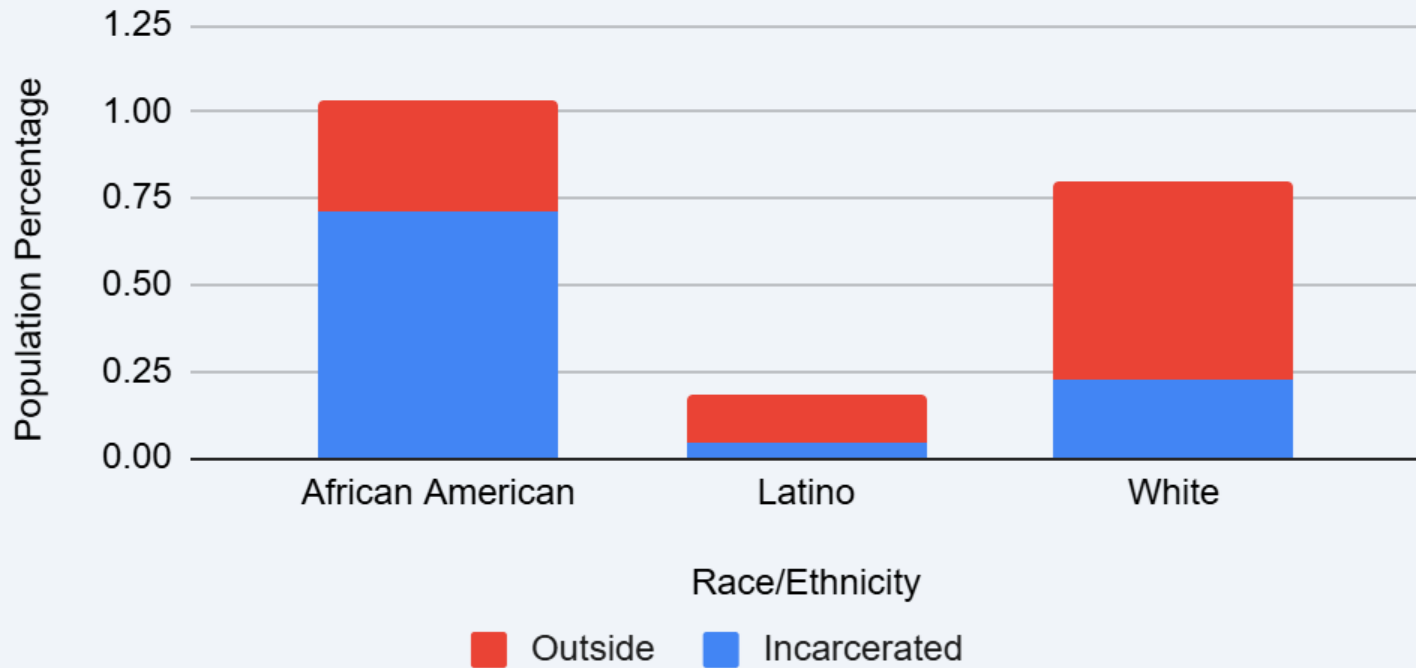
What is the average literacy rate in incarcerated individuals?

PEOPLE IN PRISON ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY ILLITERATE

Percent of adult prison and household populations that are "below basic" or "basic" on the literacy scale, 2003



Racial Composition of Incarcerated vs. General Population in Maryland



Children Also Serve Time

Effects of Parental Incarceration:

Psychological

Behavioral

Social

Emotional

Developmental



Impact of Incarceration on Children

- Trauma and Grief
- Mental Health Challenges
 - “The chaos and upheaval that many children of incarcerated parents face make them especially vulnerable to myriad mental health challenges such as : Low self esteem, Depression, Greater risk of ADD/ADHD, Sleep Disorders, Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” (Source)
- Poverty & family instability
- Stigma & social isolation (Source)
- Poor academic outcomes
 - “Across Various studies, adolescents with an incarcerated parent were more likely than others to experience problems in school...” (Source)

Prisons, Detention Centers, Jails

Prisons are for sentenced incarcerated individuals who are serving a longer sentence for felony conviction(s). There are 12 Maryland prisons that have a library and librarian providing service to the incarcerated but outside programming from a public library may still be welcomed. There are 4 more prisons and pre-release centers that may or may not have a library or librarians. Security in prison is Very High and may be a barrier to partnerships.

Jails & Detention Centers are for people awaiting trial and can't make bail, or may be a flight risk. Sometimes, convicted felons perceived as a low security risk are allowed to serve out their sentence in a detention center. Most of these places have no dedicated library professional. Security at these locations may be less intense.

Promoting Family Literacy Pilot Program



Promoting Family Literacy Overview

- HB415 was passed earlier this year.
- The admin of the program is led by the Maryland State Library Agency and is in partnership with the Department of Corrections and Public Safety (DPSCS) and the Department of Labor's prison librarians.
- This program will pilot incarcerated individuals reading & recording a book out loud. The recording and book are then mailed home to the II's child/children.
- The program will run for three years and then be assessed and evaluated for continuation.

Promoting Family Literacy - Pilot Details

- Prefer to find an II who is Spanish-speaking
- Prefer to find an II who is visually impaired or blind
- Working with children ages 0-10
- II needs to have a basic level of literacy, 4th grade level of reading
- Books: soft cover, board books, bilingual
- One prison in the east, one prison in the west, and the women's prison
- MSLA sends package to families: letter, book, and local library info

Promoting Family Literacy - Book Selection

Goodnight Moon, by Margaret Wise Brown

I Need a Hug / Necesito Un Abrazo, by Aaron Blabey

Just a Minute, by Yuri Morales

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, by Bill Martin, Jr.

Hooray for Hat, by Brian Won

Feast For Ten, by Cathryn Farwell

Max and the Tag-along Moon, by

Floyd Cooper

My Colors, My World/Mis Colores, Mi Mundo,

by Maya Gonzalez

Besos for Babies, by Jen Arena & Blanca Gomez



Promoting Family Literacy - Observations

- Partner Challenges
 - coordinating schedules
 - reluctance
 - ironing out roles and responsibilities
 - agency staff turnover
- Logistics
 - lots of meetings and phone calls
 - details about recordings
 - security restrictions in prison environments
- Legislative funding surprise!
- Opportunity for increased and/or unique agency cross-collaboration

Promoting Family Literacy - Our Goals

- Connecting families to their local public library through an additional communication, one-pager, QR code, etc.
- Multi-faceted assessment of the program
- Would like this program to become a research paper that may be shared
- Improve family ties
- Improve literacy, knowledge of public library, inspire love of reading and learning
- Extend and fund the program after the pilot

Maryland Public Libraries - Connections through Literacy

Karen Earp - Storybook Program



Storybook: High Level

- Twice a month
- Up to six participants
- My Recordable Storytime books
- Distributed via Priority Mail
- Extras:
 - Sesame Street
 - Library information
 - Contact information
 - Extra books
 - Wonky bears



Sarah Joseph - Open Book Program



Open Book Family Reading Program

- What is Open Book?
 - An early literacy program for incarcerated individuals and their families – began originally in 2013
- Frequency & Participants
 - Twice a year for 3 sessions
 - 8-10 participants
- Who's involved?
 - Ordnance Road Correctional Facility
 - Anne Arundel County Public Library
 - Anne Arundel County Literacy Council
 - Anne Arundel County Community College



Open Book Family Reading Program: Sessions

- Session 1:
 - Introductions
 - Discuss Early Literacy Best Practices
 - Stations
 - Share
- Session 2:
 - Welcome and Group Storytime
 - Family Time
 - Book Selection and Giveaways
- Session 3
 - Feedback/Survey
 - Review of Skills
 - Letter to Family
- Success Story



Questions, Thoughts?



Final Thoughts

- Partnerships are hard!
- Each correctional facility may have different governance and culture (Just like a library)
- Working with the incarcerated is part of inclusion



Thank you!

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Karen Earp

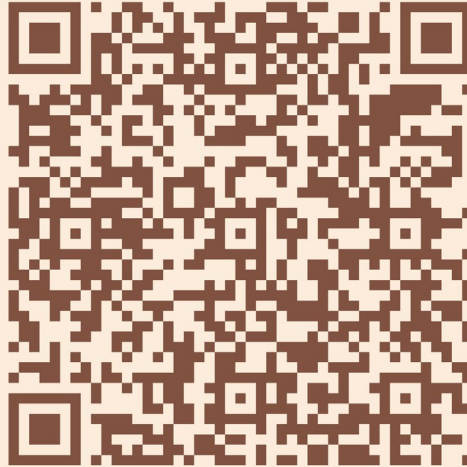
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**Please take a moment to
complete the survey for this Conference session.**



SCAN ME!



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