

Overview of Every Child Ready to Read @ your library®

Elaine Meyers and Harriet Henderson

The Public Library Association's Early Literacy Project began in 2000 with a partnership with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), a division of the National Institutes of Health. NICHD had just released the National Reading Panel's report, providing research-based findings concerning reading development in America's children.

The report, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, had information useful to parents, child care providers and public librarians. The first step in the partnership with NICHD was to help disseminate information about the report through our country's public libraries – a process that began with the 2001 PLA Spring Symposium programs and continues with all Initiative programs and publicity.

A more significant aspect of the partnership, also debuted at the PLA Spring Symposium, was to develop model public library programs incorporating this research. Public libraries have the ability to reach thousands of parents, caregivers and children and to greatly impact the early reading experiences of preschool children. PLA contracted with Dr. Grover C. Whitehurst and Dr. Christopher Lonigan, well-known researchers in emergent literacy, to develop a model program for parents and caregivers. The premise of these research-based materials is to enlist parents and caregivers as partners in preparing their children for learning to read and to provide the most effective methods to achieve this end. Whitehurst and Lonigan have created a unique structure for the distinctive phases of a young child's emergent literacy – pretalkers, talkers and pre-readers – that is developed on this website.

To broaden the dissemination of these materials and to test their effectiveness, PLA and ALSC formed a partnership to pilot these materials in public libraries across the country. In October 2001, twenty demonstration sites were selected representing a wide range of library size and demographics. Demonstration sites are testing the materials on a wide range of audiences within the library and the community, and they are using an evaluation method created by Dr. Virginia Walter, past president of ALSC and professor at UCLA. The evaluation includes standard output measures and pioneers an interview method for assessing the outcomes achieved in using the materials and methods. Parent/caregiver evaluations are specific to each of the three developmental stages of reading readiness and are designed to show whether parents incorporated needed skill-building activities into their time with their preschool children. Reports will be provided to the public library community concerning the status of the demonstration sites.

In October, 2002 a second year of pilot site testing was conducted with fourteen sites participating. Second year site participants received intensive training and practice in implementing all three levels of workshops, and instruction in implementing a refined outcome evaluation developed by Sara Laughlin and Associates. Parent/caregiver evaluations are specific to each of the three developmental stages of reading readiness and are designed to show whether parents incorporated needed skill-building activities into their time with their preschool children. Indeed, the evaluation shows that the information contained in these programs was incorporated into the behaviors of parents - helping them be more effective "first teachers" with their children, and increasing the public library's impact in early literacy development with children.

An additional resource has been developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities. Get Ready to Read! is a screening tool for parents to use with their four-year-old children. PLA is in partnership with NCLD to distribute this screening tool to the demonstration sites, and to provide information on the screening tool to public libraries. An online version of the screening tool is available, along with other related early literacy information.

The intent of these partnerships and programs is to firmly establish public libraries as a partner in the educational continuum, and to validate our contributions by linking our activities to relevant research and evaluation. Public librarians must agree to partner with the young child's most important teachers – parents and caregivers – and to leverage our work in influencing a child's development. We believe that these model programs will allow all libraries to be more productive and influential in our communities.

Steering Committee:

Elaine Meyers and Harriet Henderson, Co-Chairs

Ellen Fader

Sari Feldman

Floyd Dickman

Gretchen Wronka

Updated February 2004

Copyright 2007 ALSC and PLA

Every Child Ready to Read Partners

Public Library Association

The Public Library Association enhances the development and effectiveness of public library staff and public library services. Initiated Early Literacy Project and its evaluation. Website hosts materials for public libraries to conduct parent/caregiver workshop on early literacy. Workshop scripts, handouts, brochures, and additional materials to support parent/caregiver education. Division of American Library Association.

Association of Library Service to Children

Network of over 4,200 children's and youth librarians, children's literature experts, and publishers committed to improving and ensuring the future of the nation through exemplary library service to children, their families, and others who work with children. See also their Born to Read Program. Division of American Library Association.

National Institute for Child Health and Human Development

Partnered with libraries to help research reach parents and child care providers. An Institute of the National Institute of Health, works to ensure that every person is born healthy, and that all children have the chance to fulfill their potential for a productive life. The Child Development Branch of the Center for Research for Mothers and Children supports research and programs in language development. Describes its funded research projects and provides Reading Research Resources which includes policy statements by Dr. Reid Lyon.

National Center for Learning Disabilities

Information on learning disabilities (LD) from childhood through adulthood for individuals with LD, their families, educators, researchers, and others committed to increasing public awareness of and opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Developed "Get Ready to Read!" screening tool to assess language development in four-year-olds.

Abstract

The Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) formed a partnership to conduct a study of the impact of using research-based early literacy practices in public library programs for parents and caregivers. The study sought answers to two important questions: What effect do public libraries have on parent and caregiver education for early literacy? When parents and caregivers of low-income children participate in early literacy programs sponsored by the public library and designed by the PLA/ALSC Early Literacy Initiative, do parents and caregivers understand and use best practices presented in the programs?

Fourteen public libraries participated in the 2002-2003 evaluation: Allen County Public Library (IN), Baltimore County Public Library (MD), District of Columbia Public Library, Hennepin county Public Library (MN), King County Library System (WA), Metropolitan Library System (OK), Minneapolis Public Library (MN), Montgomery County Public Library (MD), Multnomah County Public Library (OR), Phoenix Public Library (AZ), Pierce County Public Library (WA), Provo City Library (UT), San Antonio Public Library (TX), and West Bloomfield Public Library (MI).

The report that follows:

- summarizes the evaluation design,
- details participation by library and by parent and caregiver groups,
- presents outcomes reported by parents who attended the sessions and compares responses from parents by age, education, income, race, and Hispanic or non-Hispanic background,
- presents outcomes reported by caregivers who attended the sessions and compares responses from caregivers by education and other training,
- reports on outcomes from using the short and long version of the session script,
- offers evidence of the impact of the programs on the participating libraries and their communities,
- draws conclusions, and
- makes recommendations.

Results from the evaluation, conducted by Sara Laughlin & Associates, show that parents—of every age, educational background, income level, and ethnicity—who participated in the public library early literacy programs significantly increased their literacy behaviors (see Charts 1,2 and 3). Especially notable are their dramatic gains in use of the library, the weakest area among all three age groups. Teen parents and low-education and low-income parents, who exhibited fewest of the literacy behaviors at the intake, showed significant improvement across all behaviors. One teen’s expectations at the intake interview were: “What books are good to read to them.” At the follow-up interview, she reported: “Using the library card, singing to my daughter more, play with her and talk to her about her toys.”

In many of the early literacy behaviors, caregivers were more knowledgeable than parents at the intake. Caregivers with other early literacy training were more likely to already use the behaviors. Caregivers’ frequency of using the early literacy behaviors did not change

significantly as a result of attending the program, with the exception of increased use of the library among caregivers who attended the 0-23 month program (see Chart 4, 5, and 6). In their follow-up comments, they use the language of the early literacy sessions in describing a more intentional, playful approach.

In their reports, the participating libraries noted systemic changes in their programs, collections, physical space, staff training, and in their communities as a result of their implementation of research-based literacy programs. Both library staff and community partners reported that the training worked best when it was delivered at schools, Head Start centers, teen parent program sites, prisons, hospitals, and other community locations. Given the low use of the library reported in the intake interviews, it is likely that the libraries would not have reached the target audience any other way.

The participating libraries and their partners described how they built on existing relationships. Several partners admitted that they had not been aware of the library's knowledge of research-based literacy practices. They were unabashedly enthusiastic about the impact of the library's use of research-based practices and were interested in continuing and expanding their partnerships.

Recommendations include:

- Continue to target teen parents and those with low education and low income.
- Target parents of 0-23 month olds.

Chart 1: Parents of 0-23 Month Olds

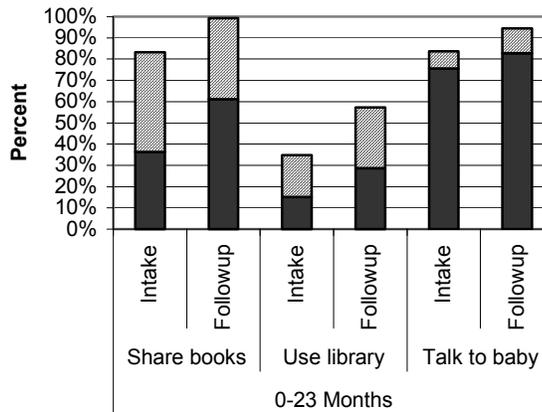


Chart 2: Parents of 2-3 Year Olds

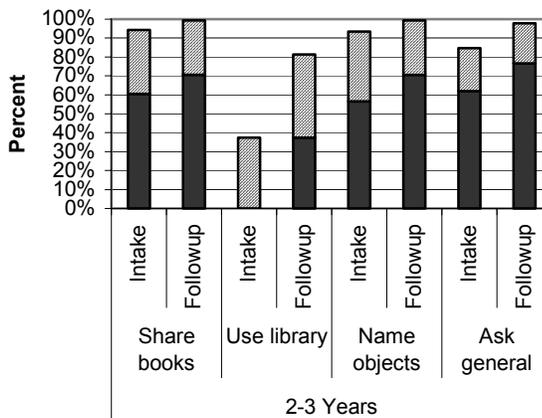
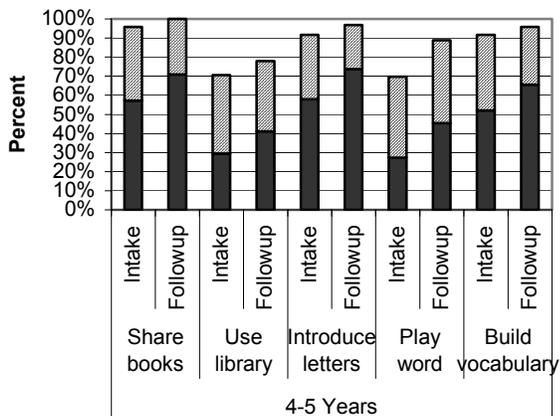


Chart 3: Parents of 4-5 Year Olds



In the three charts above, the black bars indicate daily use for all behaviors except using the library, where it indicates weekly use. The shaded bars indicate weekly (or in library use, monthly) use.

- Use non-traditional tactics to reach young, low-education, low-income parents who are not visiting the library.
- Incorporate word-of-mouth and third party endorsements as powerful tools for disseminating the early literacy message.
- Include booklists and opportunities to browse books and other early literacy materials in every session.
- Recognize that the benefits for parents are different for those for caregivers and incorporate these benefits in promotion.
- Reach out to parents whose first language is not English and incorporate multi-lingual strategies and materials into their programs.
- Continue to use the PLA scripts.
- Use the expanded scripts where time allows.
- Continue to align library systems—training, collection development, policies, programs, and partnerships—to focus on supporting early literacy development of children of the most needy parents.
- Reconsider library fine and card policies.
- Actively seek opportunities to partner with other agencies in the community who serve young, low-income, and low-education parents.
- Develop and serve several valuable roles in the childcare community.

Chart 4: Caregivers of 0-23 Month Olds

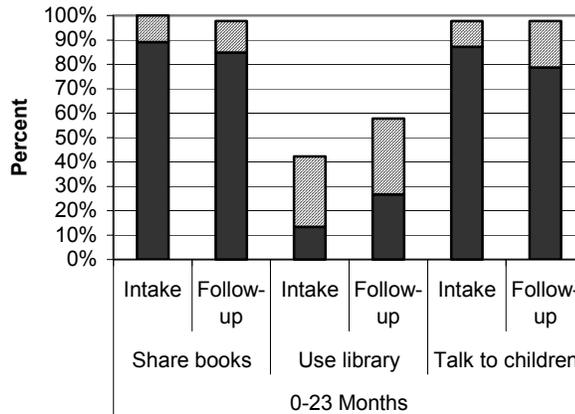


Chart 5: Caregivers of 2-3 Year Olds

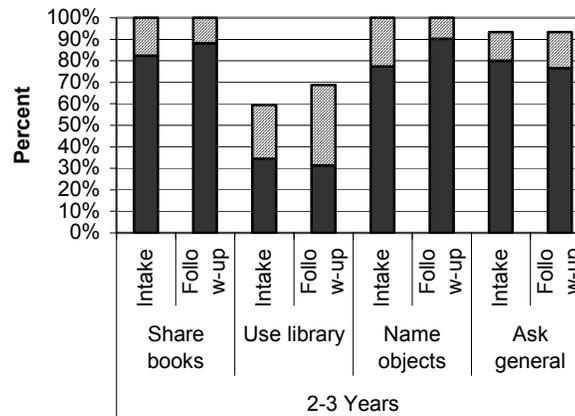
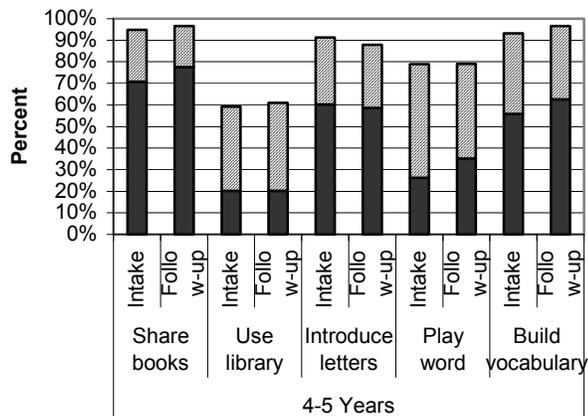


Chart 6: Caregivers of 4-5 Year Olds



In the three charts above, the black bars indicate daily use for all behaviors except using the library, where it indicates weekly use. The shaded bars indicate weekly (or in library use, monthly) use.

Every Child Ready to Read® Evaluation

The Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) are currently conducting an evaluation of the Every Child Ready to Read® parent education initiative.

PLA and ALSC jointly developed the Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® program to provide public libraries with vital tools to help prepare parents for their critical role as their child's first teacher. Based on research from the PLA/ALSC Early Literacy Initiative, the three Every Child Ready to Read® programs target parents and caregivers of children ages: 0-2 years-old (Early talkers), 2-3 years-old (Talkers), and 4-5 years-old (Pre-readers). Since the program's training and materials were introduced in 2004, hundreds of libraries have held programs for parents and caregivers to prepare them to help children get ready to read.

Susan B. Neuman, ED.D., currently a professor of educational studies at the University of Michigan specializing in early literacy development, has been selected to evaluate the impact the ECRR initiative has had on public library practice; evaluate the extent to which the ECRR initiative has been institutionalized and leveraged in public libraries; conduct a research/literature review to identify key research, information and practice in the area of early literacy relevant to the ECRR initiative; and recommend next steps for the ECRR initiative.

The results of the evaluation will be completed and ready for distribution at the 2009 Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

Status Reports

[2008 Annual Conference- ECRR Evaluation Update Report to the PLA and ALSC Board of Directors](#) (MS Word document)

[2008 Midwinter Meeting- ECRR Evaluation Update Report to the PLA and ALSC Board of Directors](#) (MS Word document)

Copyright 2007 [ALSC](#) and [PLA](#)

