

THE EARLY LITERACY LANDSCAPE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THEIR PARTNERS

September 2010

Additions January 2011

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Preparation supported by

Project VIEWS: Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning that Work Successfully

A National Leadership Collaborative Planning Grant

Institute for Museum and Library Services

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Section 1: Introduction

As part of fulfilling the commitment to Project VIEWS: Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning That Work Successfully (VIEWS), this White Paper provides a comprehensive overview of early literacy practices, programs, and services related to public libraries and their partners in the U.S. nationally (Section 3) and in the state of Washington (Section 4) from 2000 through 2010 as drawn from published and unpublished literature and reports. The assumption is made that reviewing the past decade will provide a reasonably accurate basis for discussing current and future needs and issues.

In addition, the White Paper documents what is known from early literacy research conducted approximately during this same decade that is relevant for public libraries and their partners (Section 2).

Then it moves on to identify three key concepts: core knowledge, implementation, and impact/outcomes; and five strategic strands that cut across these key concepts (assessment; communities; education and training; partnerships; programs and resources) as suggested components to consider as aspects of an ideal or model situation for public libraries engaged in early literacy (Section 5). These key concepts and strategic strands are presented as a matrix model with individual cells containing a few-word summary of the 'ideal' as drawn from the previous sections of the White Paper and the literature upon which it is based.

These sections of the White Paper provided the foundation for the Project VIEWS planning meeting where stakeholders will meet to chart a course to follow in applying for a National Leadership Demonstration Grant. Revisions to these sections were made occur after the meeting and subsequent conference call to reflect the contributions of community stakeholders.

The final section of the White Paper was written after the Planning Meeting, held on September 9 and 10, 2010, and summarizes the collective decisions about the goals for the Demonstration Grant. The national and state review point to several unique strengths that Washington public libraries and WA Early Learning partners have crafted and refined over the past decade, which make WA State an ideal place for a training grant. Planning Meeting participants determined how to move forward strategically from this position of established strength in order to provide a replicable model of excellence that others across the U.S. can emulate in different contexts.

It should be noted that while the term early learning is used in the title of the project and in the titles of a number of partner organizations, the focus for this White Paper and this project is on early literacy, particularly related to print literacy. The broader term early learning is used throughout the paper because that is how it appears in the literature, but the reader should keep in mind that early literacy in public libraries is the focus of the current and future grant and of this White Paper. Early literacy in this White Paper refers to the learning that prepares children for reading and that takes place for children from birth until they enter five-year-old kindergarten. That learning takes place in both informal and formal settings (Davidson, 2006; National Research Council, 2000; Van Dusen Howell, 2007). Emergent literacy is another term that is used interchangeably with early literacy. Best practices in early literacy are defined as those that are developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and evidence-based (Hirsch-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003).

Section 2: The Early Literacy National Research Landscape

This section of the White Paper establishes, as far is known, the state of experimental and quasi-experimental early literacy research in the United States as relevant to public libraries and their partners.¹ The discussion starts with the release of the Report of the National Reading Panel (NRP): *Teaching Children to Read*, continues with a look at the early literacy research landscape, introduces the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) Report: *Developing Early Literacy*, and then concludes with future early literacy research implications.

Report of the National Reading Panel (NRP): *Teaching Children to Read*

At the turn of this century, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at the National Institutes of Health released an evidenced-based assessment of the scientific, research-based literature related to teaching reading. In 1997, Congress had asked the Director of the NICHD, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to convene a national panel to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach children to read. The result was the report of the National Reading Panel (NRP): *Teaching Children to Read* (NICHD, 2000, p. vi). Producing the NRP report highlighted a lack of agreement related to what constituted valid reading research. The panel was charged with eliminating misinformation by defining reading instruction and by clarifying how the research translated into best practice (NRPI, 1999). Reporting on the volume of studies within the broad reading domain, the panel noted that "an examination of a variety of public databases by Panel staff revealed that approximately 100,000 research studies on reading have been published since 1966, with perhaps another 15,000 appearing before that time" (NRP, 2000, p. 1-1). A well-defined set of research methodology criteria was developed that included only experimental and quasi-experimental designs in the analysis. To constrain the retrieved documents, the NRP report synthesized the research-based knowledge with a focus on instructional topics related to teaching children to read. Additional details related to the development and adoption of the NRP's rigorous research methodological standards are available in the full Report of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000).

Though primarily centered on conventional literacy, which is promoted by decoding, reading comprehension, spelling and writing skills, the panel included phonemic awareness instruction and alphabet knowledge research. Addressing the report scope decisions, the Panel wrote, "correlational studies have identified phonemic awareness and letter knowledge as the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during their first 2 years in school" (NRP, 2000, p. 2-1). Phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are both foundational to the emergent literacy domain. As described by Whitehurst and Lonigan, "Emergent literacy involves the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing" (1998, p. 848). Justice and Pullen posit, "Emergent literacy is best represented as a sociocultural process whereby emergent literacy development is highly influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which children are reared" (2003, p. 99). For clarity, the terms *emergent literacy* and *early literacy* are supported in the literature and are often used interchangeably within this area of research.

An Introduction to the Early Literacy Research Landscape

The NRP report influenced policy and funding opportunities in early literacy development research as well as facilitating changes in educational policy and instruction. The diversity of the questions posed and the rigor of the study designs were indicative of the inter-disciplinary nature of this still fledgling field.

¹ The application of these research findings to early literacy practices in public libraries is further explicated in Section 3 Background: the National Landscape.

The evidence-based standards typical for psychological and medical intervention research were not highly used in reading education research. As the studies were examined, the early literacy landscape began to emerge and the common evidenced-based domain across fields was defined, e.g., effectiveness of intervention approaches.

Intervention studies constitute a large percentage of the early literacy research. The research topography for interventions is often approached from the physical place of *where* the literacy development activities occur. Broadly categorized, these locations include:

- the classroom, e.g., preschool or childcare centers (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004; Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Connor, Morrison, & Slominski, 2006; Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005; Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008; Justice, 2006; Justice & Kaderavek, 2004; Korat, 2005; Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Missall, McConnell, & Cadigan, 2006; Simmons et al., 2007),
- home (Britto, Brooks-Gunn, & Griffin, 2006; Fletcher, Cross, Tanney, Schneider, & Finch, 2008; Foster, Lambert, Abbott-Shim, McCarty, & Franze, 2005; Gonzalez & Uhing, 2008; Justice, Kaderavek, Bowles, & Grimm, 2005; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005), and
- out-of-school or informal learning environments, e.g., libraries, museums, and physician waiting rooms (Needlman & Silverstein, 2004; Willis, Kabler-Babbitt, & Zuckerman, 2007).

It is important to note, however, that these physical categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, home interventions may include a classroom environment (Constantine, 2004; Curenton, Craig, & Flanigan, 2008; Farver, Xu, Epe, & Lonigan, 2006; National Research Council, 2009).

Early literacy interventions may also be grouped by *what* type of activity occurs. Interventions are designed to impact positively future decoding, reading comprehension, spelling and writing skills related to conventional literacy development. Code-focused interventions, for example, typically include phonological awareness instruction. These studies may also include designs aimed at helping a child develop alphabetic knowledge, print-awareness, and vocabulary.

In addition to code-focused interventions, enriched play settings (e.g., clapping and singing of letter-word sounds) and shared-reading interventions are prevalent in the literature. Dialogic reading is an example of an enhanced shared-reading intervention (Blom-Hoffman, O'Neil-Pirozzi, & Cutting, 2006; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2003; Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005; Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield, Dyer, & Samwel, 1999; Mol, Bus, de Jong, & Smeets, 2008). This technique equalizes the shared-reading role of the adult with the child, so that the adult relates to the child more like a peer would. Lonigan and Whitehurst state that during this enhanced activity "the adult assumes the role of an active listener, asking questions, adding information, and prompting the child to increase the sophistication of her or his descriptions of the material in the picture book" (1998, p. 265).

Shared-reading interventions may also be used to demonstrate the complexities related to conducting early literacy research (Curenton & Justice, 2008; de Long & Leseman, 2001; Deckner, Adamson, & Bakeman, 2006; Fletcher & Reese, 2005; Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich, & Welsh, 2004; Hammett, Van Kleeck, & Huberty, 2003; Huebner & Meltzoff, 2005; Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005; Justice, Pullen, & Pence, 2008; Kaderavek & Justice, 2005; Lachner, Zevenbergen, & Zevenbergen, 2008; Lonigan, et al., 1999; Mansell, Evans, & Hamilton-Hulak, 2005; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007; Moschovaki, Meadows, & Pellegrini, 2007; Murray, Stahl, & Ivey, 1996; Shamir, Korat, & Barbi, 2008). These shared-reading studies are diverse in the physical settings as well as the variables that are being measured.

For example, what are the effects of *who* is reading to the child (e.g., a librarian or a parent), *what* kind of book is being used (e.g., a text-salient book or a picture salient book or an alphabet book versus a storybook), *how* is the book being read (e.g., with finger-guides or interactive discussions), or *what* are children attending to during shared-reading (e.g., the text or the pictures). There are still many additional variables to consider (e.g., the number of books read and length of shared-reading time per reading session, per week, etc.). If training is involved in the interventions, knowing *who* conducted the training, *what* training materials were used, *how much* training was provided, and whether and if adherence to the training model were measured are also important factors to determine. Demographics variables are also embedded in the various studies, e.g., SES (education and income), rural or urban.

Added to the innate complexities of conducting early literacy research are inconsistencies of applied research methods and a wide range of statistical analyses. All of these factors necessitate an inventory of early literacy research in order to identify the early literacy skills that are most predictive of later conventional school-aged literacy. This need, as well as the focus on school-age children by the NRP, was addressed by a call for the National Early Literacy Panel to conduct a meta-analysis of the early literacy research.

Report of the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP): *Developing Early Literacy*

Early literacy researchers made major advances during the past two decades in identifying factors that are predictive of literacy successes in school-aged children. However, there were still gaps in the research related to early literacy development of children from birth through age five.

The National Institute for Literacy (NIL) funded the National Early Literacy Panel's (NELP) work in consultation with the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Office of Head Start in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), working closely with the NIL, coordinated NELP's work. NELP was charged with conducting empirical research to discover the factors that support early literacy development and the influences of the home and family on this development. NELP (2008a) focused their attention on answering four questions:

1. What are the skills and abilities of young children (age birth through five years or kindergarten) that predict later reading, writing, or spelling outcomes?
2. Which programs, interventions, and other instructional approaches or procedures have contributed to or inhibited gains in child outcomes in reading, writing, or spelling?
3. What environments and settings have contributed to or inhibited gains in child outcomes in reading, writing, or spelling?
4. What child characteristics have contributed to or inhibited gains in child outcomes in reading, writing, or spelling? (p. vi)

Although NELP reported a shortage in scientific studies that could demonstrate correlational evidence between early literacy skills and later predictive literacy development, they did identify six variables that can provide some correlational value between early literacy skills and later literacy development as follows (2008a) (Note that the first two were as stated above the most predictive found in the NRP report):

- alphabet knowledge (AK): knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters;

- phonological awareness (PA): the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning;
- rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits;
- RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., “car,” “tree,” “house,” “man”) or colors;
- writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one’s own name; and
- phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time.
(p.vii)

It should be noted that the ‘rapid automatic naming’ of letters, digits, colors, and sequences as described above as well as phonological memory are assessments, not skills to be taught. Attempting to teach them could destroy their predictive value.

Lonigan and Shanahan, in the Executive Summary, outlined five additional early literacy skills identified by NELP that were “moderately correlated with at least one measure of later literacy achievement but either did not maintain this predictive power when other important contextual variables were accounted for or have not yet been evaluated by researchers in this way” (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008b, p. 3). The Panel released an additional list of potentially important variables as (2008a):

- concepts about print: knowledge of print conventions (e.g., left–right, front–back) and concepts (book cover, author, text);
- print knowledge: a combination of elements of AK [Alphabet Knowledge], concepts about print, and early decoding;
- reading readiness: usually a combination of AK, concepts of print, vocabulary, memory and PA [Phonological Awareness];
- oral language: the ability to produce or comprehend spoken language;
- vocabulary and grammar; and
- visual processing: the ability to match or discriminate visually presented symbols. (p. viii)

The NELP Report research methodology selection criteria were similar to the rigorous standards set in the earlier NRP Report. The NELP high standards of including only experimental and quasi-experimental designs substantially reduced the number of studies that were included in the analysis.

As with the earlier NRP Report, some of the NELP Report commentaries reflect differences among researchers in the theoretical approaches and the appropriate statistical methods that are acceptable for supporting early literacy evidenced-based effects as reflected in the post-report commentaries and

analyses (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2010; Neuman, 2010; Paris & Luo, 2010; Schatschneider & Lonigan, 2010; Schickedanz & McGee, 2010).

Early Literacy is still an emerging inter-disciplinary domain that is accompanied by debate (Pressley, Duke, & Boling, 2004; Schuele & Boudreau, 2008). Commentaries on the NELP report reflect an understanding that more research is still needed in the area of early literacy (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; Gutiérrez, Zepeda, & Castro, 2010; Pearson & Hiebert, 2010; Teale, Hoffman, & Paciga, 2010). For example, Dail and Payne "argue that the findings from the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP; 2008) report related to parent involvement and family literacy programs require further clarification" (2010, p. abstract).

Early Literacy Research Conducted in Libraries

Libraries are invested in providing early literacy programs. These programs are often measured by numerical outputs, e.g., in changes in program attendance, circulation, library use (Gonzalez & Uhing, 2008; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000), and new library card numbers (Bailey, Harrison, & Brooks, 2002). One alternative measurement method that has been implemented during baby and toddler storytimes in public library settings involved participant observation (McKechnie, 2006). Supported through audio-recordings and field notes, McKechnie attempted to capture the children's perspective of storytimes by observing their naturally occurring behavior (2006).

Public libraries have been used in other early literacy investigations; however, they are mostly of a sociocultural perspective and they are not designed as program outcome measurement studies. For example, Van Dusen Howell examined "how literacy practices in each setting are shaped by interrelated factors, including conceptions of literacy, goals, and cultural and social affordances and constraints" and stated that the "sociocultural perspective illuminated how literacy is social practice: children, as younger members of a literate society, are enculturated through parents' mediation of children's participation in a particular setting" (2007, p. 239). Based on a sociocultural framework, VanDusen Howell used multiple qualitative methods to examine family literacy practices at home and at the public library. The impact of these early literacy information programs on long-term, sustainable changes in literacy rates has not been seriously addressed by library researchers. Within the peer-reviewed literature, there is a complete absence of experimental or quasi-experimental research related to public libraries and to outcomes.

Another Relevant Researched Issue: Are Play and Early Literacy Principles Compatible?

Librarians are also adapting to recent efforts to focus on early literacy outcomes and skills in young learners. In a 2010 national electronic conversation on ALSC-L among librarians, there was a debate about whether or not story time programs should be explicitly geared towards early literacy skills and measured in terms of outcomes for young children. The crux of the debate was that story time programs should be about fun, play and the enjoyment of stories for early learners and that these attributes might be threatened by a focus on measuring outcomes in an effort to gain support from administrators and funders for this program. This debate parallels a debate among preschool teachers who are also adjusting to a new focus on assessment (National Research Council, 2008).

There is a common misconception among early learning educators that play and early learning are mutually exclusive (Singer, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). This probably stems from the fact that for adults learning and enjoyment are too often separate and learning new information and skills usually involves highly formalized settings and highly specialized content. However, early learning is inherently playful and for early learners play is an important arena for the development and refinement of their skills and competencies (Ginsburg, 2007; Singer, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). For example, early learners discover the causal properties of novel objects and problems (Schulz, Standing, & Bonawitz, 2008), dramatic play to learn about social roles (Singer & Singer, 2005), active play to develop their gross motor

skills (Ginsburg, 2007), and language in the context of play, experimentation with language, and book reading to develop early literacy skills (Davidson, 2006). Play allows children to negotiate the world on their own terms, develop social skills, believe in their abilities, and adjust within more academic settings (Ginsburg, 2007; Christie & Johnson, 1983). Most importantly, play develops and integrates many different types of academic skills in an efficient manner (Christie & Johnson, 1983).

While play and learning are not mutually exclusive, it is true that traditional approaches to standardized individualized assessments break some of the covenants of play. More specifically, that play be child-directed and open-ended in terms of form and function. Therefore, it is important that approaches to assessment that are utilized in informal learning environments, like museums and libraries, preserve the covenants of play, which are inherent to informal learning environments that are “are typically characterized as learner-motivated, guided by learner interests, voluntary, personal, ongoing, contextually relevant, collaborative, nonlinear, and open-ended” (National Research Council, 2009, pg. 11). Therefore, it is important that approaches to assessment preserve these values.

Recent approaches to assessment are amenable to the values that preserve play for young children (National Research Council, 2008). For example, authentic or ecological assessments, like work sampling, focus on observing children’s activity within naturalistic settings and early learning environments instead of administering assessments within more decontextualized settings (Meisels, Bickel, Nicholson, Xue, & Atkins-Burnett, 2001). Indeed, some argue that observing children’s play is a developmentally appropriate way to assess their developing skills (Fewell & Glick, 1993). Approaches to assessment that are introduced on a large scale in informal learning environments should draw on these approaches in order to protect the values that preserve play.

Section 3: Early Learning and Literacy in the National Landscape

This section of the White Paper establishes, as far as is known, the state of early learning in the United States as relevant to public libraries and their partners. In order to describe what public libraries in the nation are doing, it is necessary to document the background of early learning in the nation as the two are intricately interrelated. After discussing the past decade of early literacy program and resource development, including the Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR), the state of research, including the assessment of the ECRR pilot projects, reports of the National Reading Panel (NRP) and National Early Literacy Panel, and the recent evaluation of the ECRR by Dr. Susan B. Neuman, this section concludes with an overview of Neuman's evaluation of ECRR's impact on public library practice and a summary of the recommendations of the ECRR Task Force.

Public Libraries and Early Learning

Public libraries have a long history of providing collections, services, and programs, such as such as story hours, book talks, puppetry, and crafts to support early learning by preschool children. In 2008, the *Public Libraries Survey* reported that attendance at children's programs increased 13.9% between 1999 and 2008 (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2010). A more recent development is programming to support literacy development in children under the age of five, also known as early literacy or emergent literacy programming. In 2010, the Children's Services Special Section of the *Public Library Survey* (Public Library Data Services, 2010) included for the first time a question regarding the provision of such programs. Sixty-two percent (552 of 889 library systems) reported that they provided literacy programs for children age five and under.

Unfortunately, this data raises more questions than it answers. First of all, since this question was not included in previous surveys, it is impossible to determine whether this represents a growth, decline, or static state in the offering of programs targeted at preparing preschool children to read. The survey questionnaire provided neither a definition of "literacy program" nor guidelines for differentiating literacy program from other preschool program initiatives. It is possible that some libraries responding "yes" did so because they offered preschool storytimes, regardless of whether their staff had been trained in early literacy principles skills or used techniques or materials that have been demonstrated to support early literacy skills acquisition. It is equally possible that some libraries responding "no" have unknowingly provided programs with strong early literacy elements.

Since it is not currently possible to measure change in the services and resources to support the early literacy missions and objectives of public libraries from the *Public Library Survey*, another source of data was identified to gain a consistent national overview of public libraries' early literacy activities. In its role as the administrator of federal funding to the state libraries, the IMLS collects both evaluative and projective data from each state every five years. While it is important to note that these data may not reflect the full-range of early literacy activities within a state,² they are good indicators of trends since funding must be tightly tied to state-level missions and goals, enhance statewide infrastructure, and be used to advance service and resource provision. Two reports were examined for each state: a 5-year evaluation (2003-2007) and a 5-year plan (2008-2012).³ Early literacy did not appear in either report for 22 states (Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri,

² Early learning services and resources funded by other governmental (e.g., the U.S. Department of Education) or philanthropic sources (e.g., the Bill & Melinda Gates and Paul Allen foundations), or through general operating budgets may not be reflected in the states' plans or evaluations.

³ For the 5-year evaluation reports, see <http://www.imls.gov/programs/5yearevals.shtm>. For the 5-year plans, see <http://www.imls.gov/programs/5yearplans.shtm>.

Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming). The appearance of early literacy in statewide missions and goals nearly tripled between the two reports. In the retrospective report, just 10 states included early literacy in their state-level missions and goals (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania).⁴ In the prospective plan 28 states, including 18 new states, prioritized early literacy sufficiently that it appeared in the mission or goals (Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin). Further analysis of the strategic plans of the states in which early literacy has not been established as a mission-critical priority may provide evidence of lower levels of early literacy interest and activity in those states. It is significant that the majority of states now recognize the provision of early literacy programs as a statewide priority for public libraries. Coupled with the lack of information on the structure of these newly appearing programs and whether or not staff were adequately trained to incorporate early literacy skills and principles this proliferation of early literacy programs creates a national need to identify accessible, replicable, and value-sensitive approaches to assessment and professional development that can be used to enhance and support the existence of these programs (Gross, 2009).

Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR)

In 2000, the Public Library Association (PLA) and ALSC (the Association for Library Service to Children), divisions of the American Library Association, initiated an early literacy project in partnership with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), which had just released the National Reading Panel's (NRP) report providing research-based findings on children's reading development in the United States (see Section 2 of this White Paper). In 2000, the NRP had submitted the National Reading Panel Report: *Teaching Children to Read* to Congress.

The coalition of PLA, ALSC, and NICHD contracted with Dr. Grover C. Whitehurst and Dr. Christopher Lonigan to develop a model program for parents and caregivers, the purpose of which was "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" (Meyers & Henderson, 2004). Members of PLA and ALSC worked with Whitehurst and Lonigan, well-known researchers in early literacy⁵. The model program was known as Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library (ECRR). ECRR drew heavily upon the two literacy skills identified in the NRP Report (see Section 2 of this White Paper) with the most predictive value for reading success as well as other skills highlighted in the NRP Report. Drs. Whitehurst and Lonigan were able to extract the six most important early literacy skills to integrate with the curriculum.

ECRR, emphasizes six skills:

- print motivation
- phonological awareness
- vocabulary
- narrative skills
- print awareness
- letter knowledge

⁴ Washington State had spent over \$776,000 of LSTA funds on early learning in the period just preceding the 2003 - 2008 report, so its absence as a state goal in this report is somewhat misleading.

⁵ Dr. Lonigan subsequently was selected and served as a member of the National Early Literacy Panel.

In subsequent years, ECRR expanded with the testing of this researched-based parent-caregiver program model developed by emergent literacy experts Whitehurst and Lonigan (Meyers & Henderson, 2004). This study contributed dramatically to the increased number of libraries initiating research-based emergent literacy programs. To test the effectiveness of the program, PLA and ALSC conducted pilot programs in 34 public libraries between 2001 and 2002. Evaluation was conducted both years, but, because of problems with the data collection in the first year, only the results of the second year (14 libraries) were made public. The fourteen public libraries involved in this study were literally spread coast to coast across America. Among the results reported, it is important to note that parents made very significant gains in sharing books with their children: every day sharing by parents of 0-23 month olds increased 24.5%, 10.1% by parents of 2-3 year olds; and 13.5% by parents for 4-5 year olds. Furthermore, attending an early learning session increased the use of libraries by both parents and caregivers: 22.4% and 15.6% respectively for parents and caregivers of 0-23 month olds; 23.1% and 9.6% respectively for parents and caregivers of 2-3 year olds; and 7.3% and 1.7% respectively for parents and caregivers of 4-5 year olds (ALSC & PLA, 2003a). One evaluator recommendation, among others, was that “libraries can become the provider of early literacy training for those who lack this training. They can provide continuing education for caregivers who need licensing or re-licensing. Libraries can offer programs to parents which confirm the messages already delivered by caregivers, develop booklists, plan opportunities to learn about and visit the library, explicitly model early literacy behaviors and provide easy strategies for parents to use at home” (ALSC & PLA, 2003b).

Members of the committee who worked with Drs. Whitehurst and Lonigan were invited to stay on as ECRR trainers. The six trainers worked with both individual systems and statewide programs across the country. Saroj Ghoting was the ECRR trainer who worked with the state of Washington (see Section 4 of this White Paper).

At least one additional study emerged to measure public library early literacy outreach programs that were based on the premises of the NRP report. Martinez (2005) investigated twenty-six Maryland public libraries in an attempt to measure the level at which the information from early literacy training programs for reading readiness transferred into the library outreach programs. Based on the data collected over eight months through observations and interviews, Martinez reports that “librarians were implementing the information obtained during the training session into their story-time and outreach practices, thereby incorporating current standards for kindergarten readiness” (2005, p. ii).

However, between the pilot project assessment in 2001-2002 and 2008, no assessments were conducted by ALSC & PLA to determine whether the training of children’s librarians across the U.S. had made a difference.

In addition to implementing early literacy principles and activities into library programs for preschool children, many public libraries have reached out to form partnerships with daycare providers and other child-focused agencies in their service area. Training has been provided to family members, daycare providers, and other adults who may influence early literacy development of young children. No assessment has been conducted on the outcomes of these efforts on children’s readiness to read. How do literacy rates within these areas compare to those where such efforts have not been undertaken? Is there a measurable improvement in children’s readiness for kindergarten?

While ECRR is not the only early literacy program available to libraries, it appears to be the most widely disseminated. Librarians across the nation have received ECRR training, often on a statewide basis, funded either by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) or through other philanthropic sources. Other competing programs have found some currency in libraries, e.g. Mother Goose on the

Loose.⁶ In addition, libraries have formed partnerships, with other libraries (e.g., working with the Family Place Libraries Network) or community programs (e.g., Motherhead, and coalitions, Reach Out and Read) to increase their capacity to serve the early literacy development needs of the communities they serve.

Research & Assessment of Early Literacy Programs in Public Libraries

As noted in this White Paper Section 2 Background: the Research Landscape, the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) was convened in 2002 by the National Institute for Literacy, in consultation with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, the Head Start Bureau, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The NELP was directed to apply a methodological review process similar to that used by the NRP. In 2008, the NELP released a meta-analysis of approximately 500 experimental and quasi-experimental studies conducted with children prior to entry in the K-12 school system (ages 0-5)(Shanahan and Lonigan, 2010). While the research analyzed in this report clearly demonstrates that exposure to research-based early literacy interventions is a strong predictor of preparedness for kindergarten and success in elementary education, very little scientific research, almost none in public libraries, has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of the early literacy programs and services provided through public libraries in the United States.

The Carroll County Public Library in Carroll County, Maryland conducted an evaluation of their Emergent Literacy Training Assessment Project. This program focused on in-home child-care persons who were trained by library personnel in the early literacy principles of ECRR.

Two main components were included in the project development: 1) a pre-post survey of childcare providers on their knowledge of early literacy development and the activities/materials they used to foster this development in their childcare setting; and 2) a pre-post assessment of the three and four year olds in their care on the key areas of early literacy. The training, or treatment, consisted of four main components: 1) a fall and a spring workshop (4.5 total hours) based on MMSR (Maryland Model for School Readiness) principles in the seven domains, but focusing on language and literacy; 2) early literacy materials for the providers to use in their childcare homes to help implement the training, i.e., books, puppets, magnetic letters, flannel boards, CDs of children's songs, etc.; 3) periodic newsletters to help the providers implement the training with their new materials; and 4) phone conversations to give the providers the opportunity to discuss the new activities they were trying, ask questions, etc. (Czarnecki, 2006).⁷

Only four early literacy principles were incorporated into the pre and post tests (alphabetic knowledge, comprehension, phonological awareness, and print awareness) and significant change occurred in the experimental versus the control group on three of the four principles (all except alphabetic knowledge).

Among those interviewed for this paper was Saroj Ghoting, an Early Childhood Literacy consultant <http://www.earlylit.net/>. She conducted an informal survey, posting on public electronic discussion groups two questions "What are you doing in your library related to early childhood literacy programs?" and "What are you doing in your library to assess the impact of early childhood literacy programs?" She

⁶ The developer of Mother Goose on the Loose, Betsy Diamant-Cohen, has contacted one of the author's of this paper (Dresang) about her interest in developing an impact assessment of her program, as she, as is documented in ? realizes how little has been done to assess outcomes of early literacy programs in libraries. (personal communication, January 2010). See Section 2 of the White paper and the Research & Assessment portions of Sections 3 & 4.

⁷ The Pierce County, Washington Public Library System is currently replicating this study.

received many responses to the first but almost none to the second (personal communication, July 13, 2010). The only assessment related response came from the Columbus OH Public Library and their Ready to Read Program.

<http://www.library.ohio.gov/marketing/Newsletters/TheNews/2010/April/Ready2ReadOutsideCML>)

They plotted the Kindergarten Readiness Scores on a map of Columbus showing where children had the most need; the library then worked with agencies in those areas to extend their programs. Librarians expressed interest in and need for assessment but were not themselves engaged in it in any formal manner.

In 2008 PLA and ALSC contracted with Dr. Susan Neuman for a comprehensive evaluation of ECRR's impact on public library practice, including the extent of its institutionalization in public libraries; a literature review to identify key research,⁸ information and practice; and recommendation for next steps. The final report of the ECRR Evaluation Task Force, appointed to work with Dr. Neuman and chaired by Clara Bohrer, was adopted by the PLA and ALSC Boards at the 2009 ALA Annual Conference. The Task Force members were reappointed to work on the new curriculum. Dr. Neuman's report is considered proprietary and will not be made public until the new curriculum is released. However, an update on her evaluation was presented at the March 2010 PLA National Conference, at the June 2010 ALA Annual Conference, and will be presented again at the September 2010 ALSC National Conference. The Task Force recommended that:

The ECRR brand and division partnership be continued. More specifically,

1. Support for the core values of the ECRR initiative be continued
2. The curriculum be revised
3. PLA and ALSC contract with Susan B. Neuman for the curriculum revision
4. Opportunities to institutionalize the initiative be identified
5. Marketing/communication and implementation information be developed
6. Training be handled based on successes and lessons learned from the current training model (see Neuman & Celano 2010)

The Task Force expects to develop a research-based turnkey product for use in educating parents and caregivers. The product will include: marketing/communication and implementation plans, additional handouts and background reading, and a simple evaluation system to track outcomes/outputs of diversity-sensitive cross-age interactive workshops. The workshops will be delivered through power point slides with talking points rather than scripts. The major change in the content will be differentiation of constrained and unconstrained skills, identified by Paris and Luo (2010) in their criticism of the National Early Literacy Panel Report.⁹

Summary

Nationally, public libraries are playing a significant role in providing early literacy services to pre-kindergarten children, their families, and caregivers. At the beginning of the decade, responding to the National Reading Panel report, PLA and ALSC provided leadership in the development of an early literacy program (ECRR), and since that time have provided training and resources to support the delivery through public libraries across the nation of education and training to families and caregivers to support

⁸ Including the research reviewed in the NELP Report.

⁹ Schatsneider and Lonigan (2010b) state that: "there are many things with which we could take exception in the Paris and Luo commentary, from the erroneous statement that we combined measures of constrained and unconstrained skills (we didn't) to the claim that we invited causal interpretations from correlational data—despite our explicit caution against doing so (again, we didn't). However, we will restrict our discussion to the empirical, statistical, and conceptual basis of CST, which we believe, as detailed below, is based on a flawed understanding of statistics, an idiosyncratic notion of causation, and assertions that are not borne out by the evidence."

early literacy development of pre-kindergarten children. In 2008, concurrent with the publication of the NELP report, PLA and ALSC continued their leadership role through establishment of an Evaluation Task Force to review the role of public libraries in early literacy program implementation and make recommendations for future directions. The evaluation report (by Dr. Susan B. Neuman, not yet released to the public) and the final report of the Task Force reaffirm the principles of ECRR and recommend revisions to the curriculum.

Section 4: Background on Early Learning and Literacy in Washington State

This section of the White Paper establishes, as far as is known, the state of early learning in the state of Washington as relevant to public libraries and their partners. In order to describe what public libraries in the state of Washington are doing, it is necessary to document the background of early learning in the state as the two are intricately interrelated. After discussing the past decade of early learning emerging leadership in Washington, the parallel growth of leadership in public libraries and early literacy is explained, followed by an overview of research and assessment activities in Washington.

Establishing Washington's Leadership in Early Learning

Over the past decade the state of Washington has established itself as a national leader in the area of early learning as will be demonstrated below. The roots of this status can be traced to at least two sources. In 1998 the Washington State Governor's Commission on Early Learning was convened. It was chaired by Mona Lee Locke, the wife of the governor of Washington, and Melinda Gates, wife of Bill Gates and former Microsoft executive. They formed a coalition of business officials, childcare licensing officials, service organizations, educators, and researchers in the field of brain development—everyone who had a stake in identifying and solving problems involving early childhood learning. Everyone that is except librarians, Librarians were not included in the commission although they sought to take part (Nelson, 2001, 42). The need to assert the expertise and place of libraries in early learning was clear and actions to meet that need were influenced by the statewide interest, even though libraries were initially left out of official planning.

The State of Washington's leadership position in early learning was also partially inspired and is sustained by research taking place on the campus of the University of Washington at the close of the 20th century. Ground-breaking research on early learning conducted by Drs. Andrew Meltzoff and Patricia K. Kuhl, co-directors of the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS) and co-authors with Dr. Alison Gopnik, of the seminal work on babies' brain development, *The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind*, emphasized the vast learning capacity of very young children. Recently I-LABS has taken another giant step forward in early learning. In 2010 the I-LABS opened the new \$7 million MEG Brain Imaging Center, housing the first brain imaging device in the world optimized for neuroscientific study in infants and young children. Preceding this initiation, Legislative leaders from 10 states came together with scientists in Seattle for a symposium entitled "Applying the Science of Early Childhood Development to State Policy." MEG is helping make Washington State a national leader in this arena. Stated in the I-LABS mission is the commitment to incorporate the science of learning with the practice of learning. Fortunately, Drs. Meltzoff and Kuhl have over the years recognized libraries and librarians as important partners who are deeply engaged in the practice of learning.

Before focusing on what public librarians did to compensate for not being included in the 1998 Commission, it is important to note a few results of this Commission that have also placed Washington distinctively in the forefront of Early Learning.

The Foundation for Early Learning (<http://www.earlylearning.org>), unique in its mission and operation, was founded in 2000 as a result of the Governor's Commission and with a start-up gift of \$10 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; within five years, the Foundation had both spent the start-up funds and raised its own funds to continue fiscally sound operation. Through partnerships that it fosters, the Foundation provides early learning coalition-building grants around four stages, starting with planning and ending with implementation, to groups interested in early learning throughout the state of Washington. To date the Foundation has funded projects in all 39 counties. But the reach of the Foundation for Early Learning goes far beyond this. It has been instrumental in multiple early learning

projects, coalitions, and community building in the decade of its existence. “The Foundation believes that an initiative/project provides better results when more stakeholders are involved. Hence, among the grant making requirements, a key criteria that the Foundation adopted is that the grant application reflects evidence of collaboration among the many different organizations in a community.” Dr. Andrew Meltzoff, mentioned above, served for several years on the Foundation’s Board of Directors and is currently on its Board of Ambassadors. The Foundation is clearly a leader among leaders in early learning in Washington including in the world of libraries as will be explained below. A more detailed history of the Foundation and its widespread influence can be found on its website (<http://earlylearning.org/about-us/history>). Other states would do well to have such an organization.

Governor Christine Gregoire continued support for early learning at the state level. Thrive by Five Washington,¹⁰ is a Washington non-profit public/private organization founded in 2006 with a statewide scope whose origin was inspired by the Washington Learns Initiative created by the Governor to make recommendations about strengthening the education system from birth-higher education and from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which was launching an early learning initiative in Washington at the time. The Foundation for Early Learning was an early supporter of Thrive by Five and pivotal to its development. Thrive by Five raises funds that carry out initiatives demonstrating best practices in early learning and it supports the work of the Department of Early Learning (see below). In 2008, Thrive by Five Washington produced a concept paper on the Culture of Literacy Initiative (Thrive), stating that to facilitate meaningful learning, both family and community culture must be acknowledged. The Culture of Literacy Initiative is built upon the same six literacy principles that the American Library Association’s Every Child Read to Read incorporates. The Culture of Literacy initiative also emphasizes the assessment of literacy experiences as follows:

On-going assessment is used to continuously improve families’, professionals’, schools’, and communities’ ability to provide culturally and developmentally appropriate early learning experiences for all children. In order to do this, the assessment practices themselves must be culturally appropriate.

Three strategic goals of Thrive by Five are:

- To help create the environment to support early learning and positive child development (public awareness & parent information);
- To make effective early learning programs more available (Thrive Demonstration Communities; Exemplary Programs and Practices); and
- To be a voice for and assist in building early learning systems (Washington Statewide Early Learning Plan and influencing public policy)

Thrive by Five Washington and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation gave support to two five-year Thrive Demonstration Communities at White Center, south of Seattle, and East Yakima. These Thrive communities are local partnerships designed to serve as models for how a community-wide approach to early learning can improve the development of all children birth to age 5 and their readiness to enter school. A key strategic shift of the Thrive by Five Washington strategic plan is to improve strategic partnerships to increase alignment of strategic initiatives and collaboration. Another is to develop culturally relevant community based programs.

Another ‘multiple-step’ long term outcome of the 1998 Governor’s Commission was the Department of Early Learning, (<http://www.del.wa.gov/>), along with Thrive by Five, established in 2006. In 2006, the Division of Child Care and Early Learning, formerly (DSHS), the Early Childhood Education and

¹⁰ Thrive by Five Washington is not affiliated with a national organization known as Thrive by Five.

Assistance Program (ECEAP), which used to be part of the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED), and the Early Reading Initiative, formerly part of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), merged to create the Department of Early Learning (DEL). Washington is the only state known to the authors of this White Paper with such a dedicated cabinet level department. Thrive by Five Washington and The Department of Early Learning are partners, often with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in a number of statewide efforts. One example is the creation of the Washington State Early Learning Plan (<http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx>) and another is the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) that will report results of interventions in 120 districts across the state in 2012 (<http://www.childcarenet.org/kindergarten-readiness-pilot-wakids>). One of the four areas to be assessed for readiness is literacy. While these two types of initiatives are not unique to Washington, in that many states are planning for or have kindergarten assessments, the agencies and partnerships and the approaches are.

In 2010 the Early Childhood Collaborative (E2C) was established on the University of Washington (UW) Seattle campus. The results of the Collaborative are a website with numerous community resources and a faculty directory listing all research projects on campus related to early childhood.

With this ten year retrospective and brief overview of the build-up of leadership in Early Learning in Washington, we turn to the role that public libraries have played and continue to play, particularly in the area of early and emerging literacy.

Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks

The Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks were developed by OSPI in 2005 in order to provide a common early learning framework for educator and caregivers across Washington State (Kagan, Britts, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2005). A panel of developmental experts from different intellectual traditions developed the benchmarks so they represent a diversity of approaches to child development, are linked to Head Start and K-12 standards, and span five domains of child development that align with domains addressed by the National Educational Goals Panel (NEGP, 1995). In contrast to the benchmarks from other states, the WA benchmarks are more mature in that they address five domains of child development (Physical; Social and Emotional; Approaches Toward Learning; Cognition and General Knowledge; Language, Literacy and Communication) and four age groups that span the Birth to Kindergarten age range (Birth-18 months, 18-36 months, 36-60 months, 60-Kindergarten). Currently, all 50 states have some system of benchmarks or standards in place as a way to unite their early learning efforts (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004), although they differ in terms of the age range and the domains of child development that they address (Azzi-Lessing, 2009). Thrive by Five and the Department of Early Learning have incorporated the benchmarks into their Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) (Joseph, Feldman, Brennan & Cerros, 2010). In sum, Washington State's benchmarks also make it a national leader in Early Learning and an ideal place to pilot early learning and literacy initiatives that can provide a model for other states.

Public Libraries and Early Learning in Washington

Determined to demonstrate the value of libraries in spite of the fact that they were not included in the 1998 Governor's Commission on Early Learning, a group of resourceful Washington public librarians applied for Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) funds through the State Library, which administers them. They gained support from the State Library to carry out their own initiative in early learning education and services known as the Washington Early Learning Initiative (2000-2003). Judy Nelson served as initial Project Manager from her (then) position as Lead Children's Librarian at the Bellevue Regional Library/King County Library System. The Initiative funded multiple projects, laying a

strong foundation in early childhood education for Washington libraries. The projects, which remain a core focus to this day, are as follows:

1. Training (2000) (enabling librarians to incorporate the emerging early learning brain research into their programs and partnerships with other community groups utilizing library programs and services in their early learning activities.)
2. Core Collections (2001) (providing collections consisting of more than 300 books, tapes, and professional materials targeted to the needs of babies and toddlers to 31 libraries, stipulating that libraries receiving such collections would provide training on storytimes and would actively collaborate with community partners.)
3. Demonstration Grants (2001 – 2002) (awarding of 13 demonstration grants with the requirement to partner with local community agencies in the development and implementation of early learning projects. An extremely successful example of one of the grant-funded projects is the *Read to Your Baby* booklet, which was developed by the Pierce County Library System (PCLS) Youth Services Department in 2001 and which includes the 6 skills from *Every Child Ready to Read*. The Washington State Library continues to make this booklet available and has had it translated into 7 languages to make it more accessible to the state's diverse populations. To date, well over 390,000 copies have been distributed to groups around the state working with young children and families.)

Nelson oversaw a training program, formed coalitions and partnerships, and developed individual library programs (Nelson, 2001, p. 42).¹¹ According to Nelson

We may not have been at the first table, the governor's commission, but we had succeeded in bringing members of this group and others to our table and opening a dialogue with organizations and agencies previously unfamiliar with public library service (p. 45)

Over \$776,000 of Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) funds were expended in this initiative, the details of which can be found in a report from the Washington State Library in the Washington Library Association journal, Alki (Shinners, 2009).

Others took notice. From 2005-2008 the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation awarded an early literacy grant of \$250,000 to the Washington State Library. Thanks to this funding, the State Library was able to provide regional training to 21 public libraries in Washington in 2006 and 11 partnered workshops in 2007 in the American Library Association's *Every Child Ready to Read* (ECRR) program. In addition to training 742 library and partner staff members, the Washington State Library used the grant to provide comprehensive resource collections for migrant, tribal, and AmeriCorp/Vista sites, support 138 child care providers in receiving STARS (State Training and Registry System) credits, award 8 libraries with early literacy grants (which required a community partner and a community match for funding), and purchase books for distribution by the Indian Education Office at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by leveraging remaining grant funds as a match for grants from the Libri Foundation. In addition, using funds from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation grant, the Washington State Library revised the English version of the *Read to Your Baby* booklet to include the six skills from ALA's *Every Child Ready to Read* and distributed 50,000 copies.

¹¹ As noted in the national background section, the timing of this initiative meant that it did not appear in the LSTA retrospective report of statewide goals 2003-2008, making it seem as if the Washington State Library might not have considered early learning a priority even though the \$776,000 LSTA initiative had just concluded and during this 2003-2008 period the Paul G. Allen Foundation funding for statewide ECRR training, appropriately not included in an LSTA report, extended the LSTA effort.

The LSTA and Allen Foundation funded resources and training were essential foundation pieces for making public libraries viable partners in early literacy initiatives, but public libraries still felt the need for a more permanent partnership in order to solidify their strength and increase the impact of their services through collaborative efforts with each other and others, a need to be part of the infrastructure of early learning across the state. In 2007 and 2008 under the leadership of Neel Parikh, Director of the Pierce County Library and other enterprising librarians the Early Learning Public Library Partnership (<http://earlylearning.org/about-us/early-learning-public-library-partnership>) was formed.

The Early Learning Public Library Partnership (ELPLP) consists of 26 member libraries (approximately half of the Washington library systems including 5 of the 6 serving populations of 250,000 or more) that contribute an agreed upon percentage of their operating budget to contract with the Foundation for Early Learning. The Foundation, in turn, assists public libraries and other entities and organizations interested in early learning efforts to form partnerships throughout the state. The ELPLP has libraries of all sizes in all geographic regions and income levels and with extremely diverse populations. The Steering Committee of the ELPLP has representation from these diverse geographic areas (Whitman County Library, Pierce County Library System, Fort Vancouver Regional Library, Yakima Valley Regional Library, and Seattle Public Library). For example, Whitman County, one of the most rural counties in Washington and a county that produces more barley, wheat, dry peas and lentils than any other county in the US, is spread over 2178 miles with 13 libraries. Yet through partnerships this rural library provides excellent early learning services. In contrast, Seattle Public Library serves one of the major metropolitan areas in the US with an award-winning central library building and 26 new or completely remodeled branches. Libraries of all sizes are actively engaged in early learning activities.

Moreover, libraries throughout the ELPLP region serve an extremely diverse population from many countries of origin. Many had considered the cultural relevancy of early literacy activities mentioned in the Thrive by Five Washington Report. King County (surrounding Seattle), for example, offers story hours in six different languages and has early literacy materials translated into Spanish. In March 2009 the ELPLP organized a conference to focus on diverse populations who need extra encouragement to use libraries.

The ELPLP has assisted public libraries in Washington to move into the mainstream of early learning efforts throughout the state. In the two and a half years that it has existed, it has become involved in numerous early learning initiatives including the following:

- Supporting early learning advocacy efforts, including testifying on behalf of including at risk 3- to 4- year olds in the definition of basic education, and preserving early learning funding during the past few years;
- Supporting the development of, and giving feedback, on the Washington State Early Learning Plan;
- Providing important feedback to ParentHelp123.org on how they could develop outreach materials. Several libraries have put the ParentHelp icon on their home pages;
- Hosting and partnering on the statewide Early Learning Community Fairs;
- Serving as members of early learning coalitions and, in Whitman County, helped to start and serve as the fiscal sponsor of the coalition;
- Commissioning a pilot evaluation study of the effectiveness of storytimes in libraries. Results are forthcoming.

The Washington State Library, as noted in relation to the LSTA and Paul Allen grants above, is also a key player in the support and development of early literacy in public libraries. The current widespread interest in early learning in public libraries in the state of Washington is documented by a needs

assessment survey conducted by the Washington State Library in 2008 as part of their Library Services and Technology Plan for 2008 - 2012. The State Library is required to submit a five-year State Plan to the Director of IMLS to be eligible to receive grants under LSTA. In the 2008 - 2012 Plan, librarians and trustees indicated a high degree of interest in three initiatives of the Washington State Library, including early learning initiatives (75.6%), literacy initiatives (75.3%), and multilanguage library services (67.1%) (Washington State Library, 2008c, p. 9).

Early learning initiatives in Washington have always given consideration to the special needs of specific populations. As part of this five-year plan, and based on the very extensive needs assessment mentioned above, the Washington State Library developed eight vision statements were developed. One of them is "Library staff and services reflect the racial/ethnic and cultural diversity of their communities" (p. 10).

As mentioned earlier, the Washington State Library has translated the very successful *Read to Your Baby* booklet into 7 languages to ensure that this information reaches as broad an audience as possible. Tribal libraries were partners with public libraries in the early literacy training administered with the Allen grant. The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) has published 15 new CELL practice guides with adaptations for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, which show how to adapt early literacy activities so that young children with disabilities can participate.

The University of Washington Information School, ranked second in the nation in children's and youth services, has recently infused education in early literacy into its educational program for aspiring librarians. This will better prepare librarians entering the rich early learning environment that awaits them in Washington. Also, the University of Washington is the lead on a National Leadership Planning Grant, Project VIEWS: Valuable Initiatives for Early Learning that Work Successfully, from the Institute for Museum and Library Services partnering with the Foundation for Early Learning, the Early Learning Public Library Partnership, and the Florida State University. This Planning Grant will bring these partners and other key stakeholders, e.g., the Washington State Library, the Department of Early Learning, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the UW Early Childhood Collaborative, Reach Out and Read, the UW I-LABS, other community organizations, plus funding agencies and state legislators, together to plan for aspects of early learning that are needed for further development of early literacy in Washington libraries.

Research & Assessment of Early Literacy Programs in Washington's Public Libraries

In 2006 Public Library Directors in Washington formed a Task Force to examine how public libraries interact with the early childhood system that was flourishing in Washington State. The Task Force identified the lack of outcome based evaluation models and the lack of documentation of best practices in public libraries as a significant problem. Public libraries had not traditionally felt the need to assess outcomes of their preschool programs, but the culture of literacy, as documented in the Thrive by Five Washington Concept Paper, required considering assessment as a part of providing literacy programs. In addition there was no research about the effectiveness of various collaboration models between libraries and other agencies and organizations. These issues had likely kept public libraries from being taken seriously as partners as well as preventing them from securing further local, state, and national funds (Personal conversation, Neel Parikh, December 2008).

Three surveys of libraries have been conducted in the past decade to determine what materials, programs and services that Washington public libraries offer related to early literacy. A question about early literacy training was added in 2008. The results below come from a report prepared by the Washington State Library for the Paul Allen Foundation (2008). A sizeable increase occurred in all but one area.

QUESTION	Libraries answering "Yes"	
	2000	2008
1. Do you offer preschool storytime?	87%	91%
2. Do you offer toddler storytime?	56%	69%
3. Do you offer lapsit programs?	27%	47%
4. Do you offer parenting classes?	23%	42%
5. Do you offer programs for children under age 7?	75%	87%
6. Do you offer preschool daycare programs?	63%	64%
7. Do you provide services for preschool daycare?	47%	67%
8. Do you have special collections for children under age 7?	87%	84%
9. Do you offer other services/materials not mentioned?	57%	64%
10. Do you have existing partnerships for children's services?	58%	71%
11. Have staff members in your library received ECRR or other early literacy training?	n/a	69%

In 2008, shortly after the ELPLP was formed, the Foundation for Early Learning conducted a third survey, this time of the initial 21 member libraries. The survey was an environmental scan of services and programs offered by these libraries and are updated periodically. It gathered numbers and types of early learning programs and services offered and the types of reading materials. One service the survey addressed was whether the libraries had provided *Every Child Ready to Read* training to parents, an important focus of the program. All but 5 of the responding libraries stated they provided this training to parents; however 3 libraries did not respond. All but one library (system) reported preschool storytimes and all but two toddler storytimes. Fifteen of the libraries reported lapsits and babytimes. Eight had early childhood specialists on the staff, while only two had bilingual specialists. Nonetheless, 11 reported bilingual storytimes and 19 stated they had bilingual materials in their collections. Almost all had board books and picture books but only a few had kits for young children. In terms of outreach, 12 had delivery to day care centers and 17 conducted storytimes outside the library. Because of the more general nature of the environmental scan, no questions were asked on this survey about training of library staff in early literacy principles.

None of these three surveys asked about assessment of impact of programs.

As noted nationally, although there is a need for it, very little research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of the early literacy programs and services provided through public libraries. As mentioned in the national background of this paper, in the summer and fall of 2010, the Emergent Literacy Training Assessment Project that took place in Carroll County Public Library, Maryland, is being replicated in Pierce County Washington. The Pierce County Library contracted with researchers from the University of Washington (UW) to participate in the assessment of the knowledge of early literacy principles of children studied. The study design is the same as that in Carroll County except that Pierce County Library staff trained by the UW faculty, rather than a hired consultant, is conducting the pretest and the posttest with the children. Thirty-three in-home daycare workers were trained by Pierce Co library early learning staff. Ninety-five three and four year olds were assessed in the pretest. The instrument used, known as the ELSA (Early Literacy Skills Assessment), is a picture book with embedded questions based on early literacy principles and produced by the High Scope Corporation. These two projects are the only known experimental designs involving libraries and early literacy that the authors of this White Paper could locate.

A great deal of interest in program and impact assessment exists in Washington. Various library systems are developing measurements, none of which have yet been validated and none of which require an experimental design. The Fort Vancouver Regional Library System applied for a Library Services and Technology (LSTA) Grant from the Washington State Library for an early literacy project called Connecting the Dots. At the time the Connecting the Dots project was proposed, the State Library was involved with Project VIEWS and noted that both projects had very similar goals and, as written, had a great deal of overlap between them. The State Library looked at ways in which the projects complemented each other and could be best coordinated to avoid duplication of efforts and to strengthen the overall outcome of both. The Connecting the Dots project, which will be coordinated by the Washington State Library, will commence on October 1, 2010, and will continue the work begun by Project VIEWS, using that project's findings to develop and implement evidence-based, replicable methodologies and assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of emergent literacy programs and the level of knowledge of core competencies possessed by library staff delivering those programs in Washington's public libraries. This will position Washington's public libraries to be full partners in the Washington State Early Learning Plan which states in "Strategy #10. Early Literacy,"

Increase the use of research-based, developmentally and culturally competent early literacy programs and practices for birth through third grade by parents, families, caregivers, early learning professionals and health care providers (Washington State Department of Early Learning, 2010, p. 92)

The ELPLP and the Foundation asked a doctoral researcher, Erika Feldman, from the College of Education, at the University of Washington if she would conduct a small pilot study using an assessment methodology, the Benchmarks Curricular Planning and Assessment Framework (BCPAF), she developed at The Children's Museum, Seattle. This methodology assesses group rather than individual behavior in terms of the number and distribution of WA State Early Learning and Development benchmarks across five domains of child development, including Language, Literacy and Communication, and four age groups spanning the Birth to Kindergarten years. BCPAF uses the WA Benchmarks as an umbrella framework that can be used in both curricular planning and assessment, and supports an iterative feedback cycle between planning and assessment. This is important because most assessments do not directly inform instruction (Kallemeyn & DeStefano, 2009). Two measures are made based on educator plans in comparison to the observations of the trained and reliable observers – one of the predicated rates of accomplishing benchmarks by the educator in the situation and the other is the benchmarks that occur in children's behavior that were not predicted (Feldman, 2010). Feldman used her methodology in a pilot study conducted in two individual ELPLP libraries. Results of the studies suggest that BCPAF can be used in libraries to document and improve the efficacy of storytime programs for early learners (Feldman, under review). The preliminary results appeared in a technical report for ELPLP members and is now under review for publication in an academic journal. ELPLP members are very enthusiastic about this work and request that it be continued on a larger scale as soon as possible. From these preliminary results, this method seems a promising way to assess impact of storytimes or other public library activities for a group of children. Feldman is currently using a quasi-experimental design to investigate the impact of the BCPAF approach in preschool classrooms and to examine the concurrent validity of BCPAF as it relates to more established measures of classroom quality that have been linked to gains in individual child outcomes. The next step in the development and refinement of the BCPAF approach is to see if it is significantly related to individual measures of child outcomes as a measure of curricular quality. If it is, then this will legitimize and support its use in lieu of individualized child-specific measures, which are costly to administer for individual libraries and not necessarily aligned with the values of the informal learning environments, across the country.

At the Seattle Public Library, the Children's Services Coordinator and the Early Literacy Program Manager worked with an intern from the University of Washington Information School and School of

Public Administration during the summer 2010 to develop an instrument to evaluate storytime activities. This instrument is in the trial stage and no definitive results are yet available.

Other than the LSTA grant, no assessments of core knowledge were located and no other formal assessments of programs or impact on children were located. Other systematic program assessments may be occurring in Washington but they have not yet been widely disseminated.

Summary

The state of Washington has a number of unique governmental, public, and private organizations that promote early childhood learning including literacy. Although for a number of years public libraries infused early literacy principles into their programs and then started training others, they only recently have been brought to the table as a viable partner in early literacy education. In some other states public libraries are still not at the center of early literacy activities, even though there is widespread interest. There is a great deal of attention in libraries and in universities given to finding ways to measure the impact of early literacy programs and services in libraries. Perhaps before that, core knowledge about early literacy needs to be assessed. The time seems ripe for moving forward in this area. There are also many opportunities for developing appropriate means for libraries and other early learning stakeholders to develop strengthening partnerships. Project VIEWS: Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning that Work Successfully, is a partnership formed to develop the outstanding model of early learning already begun in Washington and to determine what additional work needs to be done to make Washington a truly exemplary model that can be replicated elsewhere. That is what will be addressed in the remainder of this White Paper.

Section 5: Model Matrix, Key Concepts, and Strategic Strands

A draft of the Model Matrix was developed to provide a basis for the Planning Meeting and the submission of an Institute for Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant. The Key Concepts and Strategic Strands were developed based on the national and Washington landscapes and the early literacy research described in this White Paper as well as on results of a November 2 Planning Meeting of a 12 member Project VIEWS Steering Committee (who are continuing members of the Core Planning Team).

At the November 2 meeting, the Steering Committee was asked to brainstorm in small groups and discuss in the whole group the following question: What would a coherent, flexible, multi-option, research-based demonstration model of successful early learning practices, outcome-based assessments, and partnerships developed in the state of Washington, replicable in other states in whole or in part be like? (The adjectives were suggested by the Steering Committee). An analysis of the 12 pages of notes from that November meeting in addition to the landscape sections guided the development of the Model Matrix and the descriptions of Key Concepts and Strategic Strands, which depend heavily on the Steering Committee meeting discussion.

Model Matrix

A reproduction of the Model Matrix is inserted on the two unnumbered pages following p. 25 (the current page)

Following the Model Matrix is a description of its components as used in this White Paper.

**Project VIEWS: Early Learning Initiatives That Work Successfully
Model Matrix**

STRATEGIC STRANDS		KEY CONCEPTS		
		Core Knowledge	Implementation	Outcomes/Impacts
Assessment	Professionals	Concept Inventory	Peer Observation Instrument for Early Literacy Skills Implementation	
	Family	Concept Inventory	Diaries or Survey of Early Literacy Skills Implementation	
	Caregivers	Concept Inventory	Diaries or Survey of Early Learning Skills Implementation	
	Children	Reading Readiness Assessment: Kindergarten Standards	Participation	
Communities	Geography	Recognition of the Need to Provide Early Literacy Services and Programs that Meet the Needs of Geographically Diverse Communities	Provision of Early Literacy Services and Programs that Meet the Needs of Geographically Diverse Communities	Equitable Early Literacy Access & Services Across All Service Areas
	Family SES	Recognition of the Need to Provide Early Literacy Services and Programs that Meet the Needs of Socio-Economically Diverse Communities	Provision of Early Literacy Services and Programs that Meet the Needs of Socio-Economically Diverse Communities	Equitable Early Literacy Access & Services Regardless of Family SES
	Culture & Ability	Recognition of the Need to Provide Early Literacy Services and Programs that Meet the Needs of Culturally and Ability Diverse Communities	Provision of Early Literacy Services and Programs that Meet the Needs of Culturally and Ability Diverse Communities	Equitable Early Literacy Access & Services Regardless of Culture or Ability
Education & Training	Professionals	Early Literacy Included in Qualifying and Continuing Education Curricula for Library Staff & Administrators	Training in State-adopted Early Literacy Skills-based Programs	Implementation of Services and Programs, Including Training of Community Partners (Families & Daycare Workers)
	Family	Training in State-adopted Early Literacy Skills	Training in Implementation of State-adopted Early Literacy Skills	Demonstrated Use of Early Literacy Skills in Activities with Children
	Caregivers	Training in State-adopted Early Literacy Skills	Training in Implementation of State-adopted Early Literacy Skills	Demonstrated Use of Early Literacy Skills in Activities with Children

**Project VIEWS: Early Learning Initiatives That Work Successfully
Model Matrix**

Partnerships	Community	Collaborative Partnerships with Parks & Recreation, School Districts, Daycare providers, K-2 Teachers	Collaborative Partnerships with Parks & Recreation, School Districts, Daycare providers, K-2 Teachers	Coordinated Action to Improve Early Literacy
	Educational (incl. research)	Collaborative Partnerships with Researchers, institutions, and institutes	Collaborative Partnerships with Researchers, Institutions, and Institutes	Coordinated Action to Improve Early Literacy
	Government	Collaborative Partnerships with State Agencies	Collaborative Partnerships with State Agencies	Coordinated Action to Improve Early Literacy
	Organizations	Collaborative Partnerships with Health & Philanthropic Organizations; Childcare Networks, Library Networks, Early Learning, Professional Library & Literacy Associations	Collaborative Partnerships with Health & Philanthropic Organizations; Childcare Networks, Library Networks, Early Learning, Professional Library & Literacy Associations	Coordinated Action to Improve Early Literacy
Programs & Resources	Professionals	Developed from Evidence-based Early Literacy Skills	Developed from Evidence-based Early Literacy Skills	Professionals Have Evidence-based Programs & Resources to Train Families & Daycare Workers and Implement Library Programs for Pre-K Children
	Families	Developed from Evidence-based Early Literacy Skills	Developed from Evidence-based Early Literacy Skills	Families Have Evidence-Based Programs & Resources to Help Children Develop Early Literacy Skills
	Caregivers	Developed from Evidence-based Early Literacy Skills	Developed from Evidence-based Early Literacy Skills	Caregivers Have Evidence-Based Programs & Resources to Help Children Develop Early Literacy Skills

Key Concepts

Core Knowledge: The content and process knowledge needed in relation to various strategic strands for different persons involved in early literacy related to public library programs and services.

Implementation: Use of the core knowledge in informal or formal training, education, programs, services, or material selection.

Outcomes/Impacts: The effect or result of programs, services, or material selection for persons involved. Differentiated from outputs, which are often quantitative, e.g., number of participants in programs or circulation of types of items in a collection, and can be used as one of a number of indicators of possible outcomes/impacts but are not the effect itself.

Strategic Strands

Assessment: Appraisal or evaluation intended to measure the key concepts. In early literacy in public libraries there has been little formal assessment of either core knowledge or outcomes/impact. There have been some assessments of opinion about implementation, but most were neither systematically conducted nor conducted across geographic areas or populations. According to the Steering Committee assessment is the area of greatest need.

Communities: Inclusion of various demographic groups including geographic, socio-economic, cultural, and ability in all key concept areas. Culture,” within the context of communities, is defined broadly to include, but is not limited to: language, ethnic or racial background, gender, place of origin, and religion.

Education and Training: Includes formal and informal, but purposeful, education & training related to key concepts.

Partnerships: Collaborative relationships between two or more organizations, associations, or other groups carrying on a joint venture with a view to achieving mutually agreed upon goals or outcomes relating to the key concepts. These partnerships are strategic in that they lead from the status quo to a greater synergy. A partner differs from a stakeholder as a stakeholder is interested in the work of early learning or literacy carried on by another organization, may agree with its goals and/or feel affected by its outcome, but is not committed to any particular mutual effort.

Programs and Resources: Optimal inputs in order to accomplish all desired results for the key concepts.

A discussion guide for each strategic strand related to the key concepts was developed for the small groups at the September 9 and 10 Planning Meeting, where it was used.

Section 6 Issues: Identification and Possible Solutions
(This Section Is Based on Results of September Planning Meeting)
Added January 2011

This extensive review of early literacy research related to libraries and their partners and of professional priorities and practice has revealed a deep commitment and interest in the topic, with national and local actions to carry them out. The White Paper up to this Section was distributed before the Planning Meeting with the Model Matrix. The discussions revolved around the components of the Matrix. Originally it was thought the Matrix might emerge as a template upon which to build a model of Early Literacy in Washington. However, the priorities established in the planning meeting called for a more focused approach that would involve research rather than demonstration (with demonstration coming as part of the research). The 40 partners at the Planning meeting, with the assistance of a skilled leader, identified their top priorities for importance of issues and possible solutions in order of importance.

Assessment/Evaluation/Measurement

- Identify, align and adopt replicable tools for evaluation/measurement—of providers’ knowledge, program content, and outcomes/impact for children
- Implement and establish impact of research based interventions and how to integrate this into library programs—especially impact on children.

Partnerships

- Develop Strategic Partnerships – identify and share leveraging partnership opportunities
- Promote concept that Early Literacy contributes to healthy child and family development (early literacy is part of the whole child approach) – libraries as leaders in this

Communities

- Concentrate on libraries as community hubs – activate buildings – library/community childcare/social services
- Use State reading standards and developmental benchmarks to guide practice, including sensitivity to culture of communities -- Libraries and their partners.
-

Programs/Resources/Education/Training

- Involve Family/Friends/Neighbors (caregivers) – libraries provide training in core knowledge in research-based Early Literacy Best practices, training in research-based Early Literacy best practices, demonstrated use of Early Literacy best practices
- Include Early literacy in qualifying and continuing education curricula for library staff, administration and governing bodies (Professionals, paraprofessionals, volunteers), trainings in research-based Early literacy best practices, increased access to training around research-based Early Literacy best practices

The authors of this White Paper took the issues that surfaced under the topics of assessment and partnership and developed them into a response, i.e., a way to at least begin to find solutions to these issues. The lack of robust research in this area also inspired them to propose an experimental design in 30 Washington libraries using researcher-developed early literacy assessment tools. The grant will be submitted as a collaborative National Leadership Research Grant project in February 2011. We encourage others to join in the effort to build up a base of robust research around early literacy in libraries. The intense nationwide interest provides ample research venues.

Two other significant events have happened since the Planning Meeting that will alter the landscape for public libraries nationally (in the first case) and in Washington (in both cases). The US Department of Education (USDOE) has asked all 50 states to turn in a Birth-to-Literacy Plan as part of the USDOE Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Initiative. One of the authors, Dr. Dresang, was selected as a member of Washington's State Literacy Team as was another Project VIEWS partner, Neel Parikh, Chair of the Early Learning Public Library Partnership and Director of the Pierce Co Library. This official inclusion of K-12 educators in the early literacy community provides unparalleled opportunities for developing the strategic partnerships sought by the partners in Project VIEWS and for many others across the nation. The inclusion of persons with a library perspective on the Washington Literacy Team is a significant move toward partnership. It should be noted also that the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) in Washington was invited to send a representative to the Project VIEWS Planning Meeting, which they did so OSPI was part of selecting the priorities stated above.

In the fall the Washington Department of Early Learning (DEL) released two extremely significant plans, the Washington Early Learning Plan <http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx> and the Birth-to-Three Plan <http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/research/docs/Birthto3Plan.pdf>. These are ten year plans. A Steering Committee with the heads of OSPI, OSPI, and Thrive by Five Washington will develop annual action plans for implementation of these comprehensive plans. The plans could serve as a model for other states as they develop their Birth-to-12 plans. A representative from the Department of Early Learning also took part in the Project VIEWS Planning Meeting.

Results of this grant and efforts of the partners with and without the grant will be reported regularly on the Cleary Community for 21st Century Youth Literacy website <https://cleary.ischool.uw.edu/> We invite readers of this White Paper to join the conversation there.

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