

*A Synopsis of the 2006 Early Reading First Project Grantees*

**CFDA# 84.359B**

Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs  
**Office of Elementary and Secondary Education**  
**U.S. Department of Education**



U.S. Department of Education  
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## *Summary of the 2006 Early Reading First Program*

The ultimate goal of the Early Reading First Program, authorized by *No Child Left Behind, Title I, Part B, Subpart 2*, is to improve the school readiness of our nation's young children, especially those from low-income families, by providing support for early childhood education programs serving preschool-age children so they may become centers of educational excellence. This goal supports *Good Start, Grow Smart*, the President's Early Childhood Initiative to improve early childhood education and strengthen early learning for young children.

The Early Reading First Program brings a unique and bold approach to improving preschool programs for our nation's at-risk children, including children with disabilities and limited English proficiency. Early Reading First provides funding and support to turn preschool programs into centers of excellence by improving instruction and classroom environments through scientific research-based practices in language, cognition and early reading.

Many of America's children face daunting challenges as they enter kindergarten lacking the necessary skills to learn how to read. Early Reading First offers an exciting opportunity to meet this challenge by helping to ensure that children are provided with a high-quality preschool education.

Eligible applicants for Early Reading First include local educational agencies (LEAs) and public and private organizations that meet the following criteria:

1. One or more local educational agencies (LEAs) that are eligible to receive a subgrant under the Reading First program (*Title I, Part B, Subpart 1, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA)*).
2. One or more public or private organizations or agencies (including faith based organizations) located in a community served by an eligible LEA. Unless the public or private organization is a preschool program applying on its own behalf, it must apply on behalf of one or more programs that serve preschool-age children (such as a Head Start program, a child care program, a family literacy program such as Even Start, or a lab school at a university).
3. One or more of the eligible LEAs, applying in collaboration with one or more of the eligible organizations or agencies.

Specifically, Early Reading First grants will provide funds to:

- Support local efforts to enhance the early language, cognitive, and early reading development of preschool-age children, particularly those from low-income families, through strategies and professional development that are based on scientifically based reading research;
- Provide preschool-age children with cognitive learning opportunities in high-quality language and print-rich environments so that they can attain the

fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for optimal reading development in kindergarten and beyond;

- Use language and literacy activities based on scientifically based reading research to support the age-appropriate development of oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabet knowledge;
- Use screening assessments or other appropriate measures to identify preschool-age children who may be at risk for reading failure, and to determine whether those children are developing the language, cognitive, and early reading skills they need for later reading success; and
- Integrate instructional materials and programs based on scientifically based reading research into existing preschool programs.

Through multi-year awards to eligible LEAs with at-risk children, and public and private organizations located in communities served by those eligible LEAs, the Early Reading First Program is intended to ensure that preschool-age children have the instruction, experiences, and environment that they need to ensure that they enter kindergarten prepared for continued learning. These grants complement the Reading First State Grants Program, which provides support for high-quality, scientifically based classroom-focused reading instruction for kindergarten through grade three.

**Alabama**

**Project Name:** Project SEES (Start Education Early for Success)

**Project Director:** Charlotte Campbell

**Funding:** \$1,895,395

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** \_\_\_\_

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** \_\_\_\_

**Grantee:** Gadsden City Board of Education

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Project Start Education Early for Success (SEES) will introduce a model to improve oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabetic knowledge for the existing preschool programs in the Gadsden City School District through the implementation of *Reading Mastery Plus, Level K*, a research based language and pre-reading skills program. To ensure that all learning styles are integrated in the language and reading programs, a research based technology program, *Waterford Early Learning Program*, will provide an auditory and kinesthetic experience with pre-reading skills and literature.

To encourage fidelity to program implementation and ensure a successful outcome, professional development will be provided for all staff and key personnel prior to implementation and monthly embedded coaching will take place in the classroom through the three years of Early Reading First.

More specifically, Project SEES aims to:

1. Integrate scientific reading research based instructional materials and literacy activities with existing programs of preschools, child care agencies and programs, Head Start centers, and family literary services by supporting and improving six literacy services.
2. Demonstrate language and literacy activities based on scientifically based reading research that supports age appropriate development through the before mentioned curriculums/programs.
3. Provide preschool-age children with cognitive learning opportunities in high-quality language and literature rich environments, so that children can attain the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for optimal reading development in kindergarten and beyond.
4. Support local efforts to enhance the early language, literacy, and pre-reading development of preschool-age children, particularly those from low-income families, through strategies and professional development that are based on scientifically based reading research.
5. Use screening reading assessments to effectively identify preschool-age children who may be at risk for reading failure (i.e. PPVT-III, ELLCO, *Get it, Got it, Go!*).

## **California**

**Project Name:** The California Early Reading and Literacy Project (CERLP)

**Project Director:** Paula Brown-Almond

**Funding:** \$2,202,738

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 8

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 80

**Grantee:** Tehama County Department of Education

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*The California Early Reading and Literacy Project (CERLP)* is a model Early Reading First project that targets children and families who live below the federal poverty line in Northern California. *CERLP* is a scientifically based instructional program that intentionally addresses the development of a) oral language and vocabulary skills, b) alphabet knowledge, c) phonological processing, d) print awareness, and e) emergent writing skills through a comprehensive research-based curriculum, *Doors to Discovery*. Additionally, *CERLP* provides high quality, intensive professional development to teachers, as well as parenting programs that promote parental involvement in the early reading and language development of their children.

*CERLP* is building upon its existing validated program by proposing three new research-based components at four new sites: a) Afternoon enrichment sessions that provide small group and one-to-one intentional instruction; b) ViewPoints – a Teacher Observation System used to record classroom teachers' progress toward meeting specific benchmarks identified by the teacher and *CERLP* Early Literacy Coach; and c) Libros y Más Summer Reading Program - children, parents, and project staff participate in engaging center-base and home literacy activities.

How effective is *CERLP*? *CERLP* instituted a randomized experimental design to determine the impact of its research-based strategies. Results demonstrated that children in *CERLP*'s "Centers of Excellence" outperformed ( $p < .05$ ) children in regular state preschool classrooms, after controlling for initial language and literacy levels, on measures of oral language, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and letter knowledge. Similarly, parents of children in *CERLP* classrooms showed higher levels of involvement in home literacy activities in addition to higher levels of satisfaction with their child's preschool experience. The *CERLP* study was presented at the 2005 American Educational Research Association's Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada. The new *CERLP* with its additional three components promises to further increase literacy and language gains of children, make a measurable impact in the instructional skills of teachers, and engage parents even more in the education of their children.

## **Colorado**

**Project Name:** Project REAL: Results through Early Advantages in Learning

**Project Director:** Chris Sciarrino

**Funding:** \$3,598,734

**Grantee:** Clayton College

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**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 30

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 160

The Clayton Foundation's Early Childhood Resources Institute (The Institute) will collaborate with four participating agencies (Clayton Family Futures, Adams County Head Start, Rocky Mountain SER, and the Community College of Denver's Children's College) to implement Project REAL: *Results through Early Advantages in Learning*. These diverse agencies offer a range of implementation settings, characteristics and capacities.

Project REAL will use Scholastic's *Building Language and Learning*, and two instruments developed by the Institute (The *Clayton CHILD*, a curriculum-embedded observational readiness tool, and the *Clayton CLIP*, an inventory of practices that helps teachers organize literacy-rich environments and interactions with children), to equip teachers to provide intentional and explicit instruction in oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge to the children in their care. Teachers will also learn to provide embedded literacy opportunities within meaningful classroom routines and to provide explicit small group and individual instruction that responds to children's developmental needs.

The design of Project REAL leverages expertise and learning gleaned by the Clayton Institute through a precursor Early Reading First grant (2002-2005), building on the successful momentum of that project to evolve an even more effective and sustainable program design. The project's intensive professional development program features outcomes-based classroom coaching. As teachers integrate new content into their teaching repertoires and classroom environments, the literacy coaches will provide individualized support through an ongoing cycle of demonstration, opportunities for supervised practice, monitoring, course correction, and links to *BLL* curriculum. Project REAL includes a purposeful focus on developing instructional leadership. It also seeks to enhance classroom-family connections to foster parent involvement and increase the quality and intensity of home-based language and literacy development activities. Finally, it incorporates an English Language Acquisition Plan that will help all students grow the strong language base they need to develop pre-literacy and literacy skills.

## Connecticut

**Project Name:** Knowing Instruction Develops Success (KIDS)

**Project Director:** Deborah P. Watson

**Funding:** \$2,888,208

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 36

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 209

**Grantee:** Bridgeport Public Schools

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In 2003, Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) put into place a widely touted research-based, comprehensive literacy plan for kindergarten through grade 6. Parts of this plan (phonemic awareness/phonological awareness, shared reading, read alouds, literacy centers, language development) have been modified appropriately and extended to preschool classrooms. Based on a pilot project funded by an ELOA grant, BPS has arranged a consortium of four preschool agencies and several supporting partners to develop *KIDS*.

*KIDS* has set high expectations and will have significant impact on 209 preschool children, approximately 30 preschool educators, one program facilitator, three coaches, a speech and language clinician and an outreach worker (TOTS). *KIDS*' basic tenet for new learners is rooted in the *to-with-by* strategy through the *Doors to Discovery* curriculum. *To* includes the explicit and intentional introduction of new knowledge and/or skills. *With* comprises of learner practice under supervision of teacher/consultant. *By* is the assumption of full responsibility of implementation – independent practice. This *to-with-by* strategy ensures a gradual and efficient release of responsibility to *all* learners, whether s/he is an adult or child.

It is *KIDS*' firm belief that by improving the instructional delivery of all educators, children are better prepared, and thus more successful, upon entering kindergarten. Therefore, all classrooms utilize research-based core resources. After training, coaches and a speech and language clinician provide teachers support in implementation. Ongoing assessments and screenings are scheduled to monitor progress as well as to guide future instruction/professional development for both educators and children.

Recognizing that parents are also educators and that children learn in all environments, *KIDS* assigns highly trained outreach workers to collaborate with families to ensure that home environments also stimulate language development. As all educators know more about instruction, students become thriving learners in all domains: social, emotional, cognitive, and physical.

**Florida**

**Project Name:** Prescription for Reading Excellence (Rx)

**Project Director:** Hilde Reno

**Funding:** \$1,933,435

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 24

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 240

**Grantee:** Nova Southeastern University

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The *Prescription for Reading Excellence (Rx)* program is a partnership between the Mailman Segal Institute for Early Childhood Studies at Nova Southeastern University (MSI) and the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners Head Start program to build literacy competence and increase school readiness in twelve classrooms serving a diverse population of 240 children from low-income families. The goal of Rx is to build Centers of Educational Excellence through improvements in early childhood instruction, enriched classroom environments, and language supportive interactions that infuse literacy into every part of a child's preschool experience.

Rx will provide literacy-based SBRR college-level coursework while mentoring and coaching Head Start teachers and assistants to infuse literacy and learning into all activities, interactions, and environments in their classrooms. Using the *Opening the World of Learning* curriculum, classroom staff will create an enriched learning environment that supports the essential elements of literacy, oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and motivation to learn. Rx staff will provide intensive classroom-based mentoring to support teachers as they implement the curriculum and guide them in making adaptations to meet the special needs of children.

Evaluation will be completed using IGDI and Galileo to continuously monitor child progress, ELLCO, ELBO, and a curriculum implementation checklist to evaluate program elements, and PPVT and PALS to measure child growth. Workshops on assessment and how to use the above instruments will give teachers the tools needed to appropriately assess children's learning and literacy development, individualize curriculum, and incorporate the results of a sound evaluative process into continuous program improvements.



## **Georgia**

**Project Name:** Talbot County Early Reading First (TCERF)

**Project Director:** Flora M Lindsey

**Funding:** \$2,824,270

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 6

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 104

**Grantee:** Talbot County Board of Education

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Talbot County School System (TCSS) operates one public school, Central Elementary (CE)/High School (school-wide Title I), for grades k-12 with enrollment of approximately 743 students. It is considered one of the poorest counties in Georgia (Georgia Facts and Figures, 2003). As defined under IDEA, 19% of the students have been identified as students with disabilities – there are limited opportunities for academic support beyond the regular school day. The children leave school with limited or no supervised academic or youth development support.

In 2001, an Even Start grant was awarded which provided much needed parent education, adult education, and P.A.C.T. (1 in 3 do not have a high school diploma) to help curb the downward spiral creating a cycle of poverty. The significance of Early Reading First (ERF) for Talbot County is that it will provide the foundation so desperately needed for the children to succeed by giving them a solid foundation in SBRR literacy development and a blueprint for parents in the ways that they can become their child's first teacher. *TCERF's* goals are to:

1. Demonstrate language and literacy activities based on SBRR that support the age appropriate development of young children's oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge.
2. Provide cognitive learning opportunities in high quality language and literature rich environments with the use of the *Open Court Reading Pre-K* and *Language for Learning* curriculums.
3. Provide all staff with systemic, ongoing professional development based on SBRR.
4. Use valid and reliable screenings, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome early literacy measures to identify students at-risk, guide instructional decisions, and evaluate program effectiveness.
5. Coordinate ERF with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, state, and federal resources.

*TCERF's* proposal features a literacy team at one site (Pre-k, HS, ES are housed in one building) lead by an expert literacy coach and family literacy coordinator that will serve approximately 100 children (10 hr/--5/week--46 wk). The team will implement a program of intentional instruction and a research-based design for PD in which preschool staff learn and work together with families. The chosen curricula will provide a continuous foundation from preschool to elementary school. By unifying classroom instruction, professional development, parent involvement, and coordination with the existing kindergarten program, *TCERF* will serve as a national model for the development of cognition, language, and literacy in children.

## **Georgia**

**Project Name:** Reinforce, Educate, and Develop Early Readers Successfully (READERS)

**Project Director:** Sharen Hausmann

**Funding:** \$4,489,815

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 52

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 359

**Grantee:** United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Smart Start Georgia

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Under the leadership of United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA), Smart Start Georgia formed a coalition of five DeKalb County preschools to create an innovative Early Reading First project, *READERS: Reinforce, Educate, and Develop Early Readers Successfully*. Our program will focus on 359 low-income, preschool children with special needs and risks for reading difficulties. Over 80% of children in the school attendance areas of our targeted preschool programs qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 33% are English Language Learners. *READERS* will transform existing good programs into preschools that exemplify best practices and produce measurable gains in language and literacy for young children through the *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)* curriculum.

*READERS* goals are:

- Improve children's oral language skills (expressive and receptive language and vocabulary development);
- Build children's alphabet knowledge (letter recognition);
- Develop children's phonological awareness (rhyming, blending segmenting);
- Increase children's print awareness;
- Implement and maintain an SBRR, language and print-rich preschool environment to provide abundant opportunities for children to use print and practice literacy skills; and
- Increase preschool teacher knowledge and use of SBRR to systematically address early literacy skills essential to future reading success including print awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language.

Professional development methods include intensive in-class coaching, study groups, training institutes and seminars, and model classroom observation. Under the leadership of Early Literacy Coaches, teachers will become skilled in gathering high-quality data from progress monitoring tools and in using that data to inform instruction. Key assessment tools include the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Third Edition (PPVT-III); Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS) Pre-K; the Work Sampling System (WSS); OWL curriculum-embedded assessment; and the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO). *READERS* will empower teachers to implement high quality classroom instruction so children excel in early literacy development and experience a smooth transition into elementary school.

## Illinois

**Project Name:** The Hull House ERF Project

**Project Director:** Barbara Becker

**Funding:** \$3,188,611

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 20

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 200

**Grantee:** Hull House Association

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Jane Addams Hull House Association in partnership with Chicago State University, University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Literacy, and, OER LLP will work with 200 children 3 to 5 years of age from five (5) center based preschools within the City of Chicago who are at risk for future reading difficulties as predicted by low socio-economic status, low-literacy levels of parents, lack of parental education achievement and lack of familiarity with the English language. This project will counter and respond to these at-risk indicators.

Hull House's vision is to create early learning environments using *Opening the World of Learning Curriculum (OWL)* within both the classroom and the home to enhance each child's advancement towards cognitive, linguistic and early reading and writing skills. This ERF Project will build on core practices predictive of reading success, including alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary, concepts of print, discourse, and the continuum of phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness.

Project goals are to:

- 1) Create scientifically based print and oral-language-rich preschool environments to ensure optimal learning of emergent literacy skills.
- 2) Provide preschoolers with print and oral-language rich experiences to support attainment of the necessary early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills they need to enter kindergarten prepared for continued learning.
- 3) Support preschoolers' attainment of the necessary early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills to enter kindergarten.
- 4) Increase parent knowledge of and support for their child's literacy development.

Professional development will be intensive, sustained, contextualized, and classroom-focused to increase teacher knowledge for enhancing the early language, literacy, and pre-reading development of preschoolers, and the utilization of SBRR and strategies to enhance language and literacy instruction.

## Illinois

**Project Name:** Community Connections Early Reading First Program (CCERF)

**Grantee:** Illinois Action for Children

**Project Director:** Renee DeBerry

**Funding:** \$3,203,051

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**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 18

**Number of School Districts Served:** 2

**Number of Students Served:** 320

Action for Children proposes to implement the Community Connections Early Reading First Project (CCERF) to transform three early childhood programs into centers of excellence for promoting language and early literacy development among 320 children of very low-income, African-American families Chicago and Markham, Illinois. Of the 15 classrooms to be served, 12 are full day, full-year, and 3 are half-day programs linked to wrap around home childcare through bi-weekly home visits to the childcare providers.

The goal of the Community Connections Early Reading First Project is to increase language and early literacy skills of these preschool children. Specifically, project participants will demonstrate an increase in vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter knowledge and understanding of the alphabetic principal, and knowledge about print.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Intensify the literacy environment by adding high-quality books and early literacy materials to each classroom.
- Implement the *Building Language for Literacy* and *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* curricula in these classrooms.
- Increase staff knowledge about early literacy and language development through intensive staff development, including college-level coursework through Kendall College.
- Increase implementation of research-based literacy-building strategies through in-classroom coaching of teachers.
- Screen all children using the PALS – Pre-K and Fluharty and identify those with delays/deficits in speech-language and early literacy development.
- Provide sufficiently intensive speech-language intervention to students with delays/deficits in speech-language and phonemic awareness through direct therapeutic services and classroom consultation.
- Increase early literacy activities in the children's home (and home childcare) environment, including increasing: the number of children's books at home, the number of times per week children are to read at home, and the number of parents using the dialogic reading approach to storybook reading.
- Support effective transitions into kindergarten for all children.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Project in partnership with Learning Points Associates.

## Illinois

**Project Name:** Charting a Course to Literacy (CCL)

**Project Director:** William Teale

**Funding:** \$2,733,637

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 12

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 360

**Grantee:** The University of Illinois at Chicago

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*Charting a Course to Literacy (CCL)* is a partnership of Passages Charter School, LEARN Charter School, Chicago International Charter School–Basil, and the University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Literacy designed to create early education centers of excellence that provide low-income, culturally diverse, urban children with a program centered on high quality oral language and print-rich environments. These environments will help them acquire oral language skills, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge so that they enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills for continued success in school.

*CCL* will serve approximately 360 children, almost all of whom are considered at-risk; the families of the children; and 6 classroom teachers and 6 assistant teachers. The proposed program is grounded in scientifically based reading research and provides services and literacy instructional materials and activities (including explicit and contextualized instruction) facilitated by the adoption of the *Opening the World of Learning* curriculum.

Teachers and classroom assistants will participate in extensive professional development to establish the program at the highest levels of effectiveness. The professional development will include regularly scheduled group sessions and also ongoing modeling, observation, and feedback sessions conducted by full-time school-based mentors with expertise in early education and literacy.

*CCL* also features a comprehensive assessment program using content appropriate and psychometrically sound instruments for three main purposes: identify children at risk for delays in oral language and early literacy skills; continuously monitor children's progress in early language and literacy; and use individual and aggregate assessment data at the classroom level to make informed judgments about appropriate instruction.

Finally, *Charting a Course to Literacy* includes an evaluation plan that will be carried out by professionals expert in early childhood education and literacy that is designed to assess program effectiveness and contribute to on-going formative development of the program.

## Kansas

**Project Name:** Topeka Creating Access to Reading Excellence and Success (CARES)

**Project Director:** Martina M Thompson

**Funding:** \$3,342,279

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 12

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 150

**Grantee:** Topeka Public Schools

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Unequivocally, research literature provides strong evidence of the value of early language and literacy interventions that facilitate later school success. Current data from USD 501, 2002 Early Reading First (ERF) program, *Prepared Preschoolers*, support these findings. USD 501 proposes the Topeka Creating Access to Reading Excellence and Success (CARES) collaborative to build on the success achieved by *Prepared Preschoolers*. CARES will develop centers of excellence where high quality services are available for large numbers of impoverished, at-risk preschoolers. CARES includes three community child care classrooms and one classroom each from Head Start, special education, and at-risk, school-based programs, each of which traditionally operates independently. The purpose of this configuration of classrooms is to build the USD 501 capacity for ongoing cross-program adoption of language and literacy focused preschools. This cooperative model of early literacy intervention, unprecedented in this region, could be of interest to public school educators nationwide.

CARES has three primary goals:

- Its first goal is to improve young children's oral language, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge using a research-based curriculum called *Harcourt TROPHIES*.
- A second goal is to improve teacher competencies in creating environments that maximize opportunities for children to develop literacy skills.
- A third goal is to provide intense, sustained quality professional development to support teachers' daily practice.

Pre-post analyses of the language and literacy practices of 12 teachers and the achievement of age appropriate benchmarks on standardized measures of oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge by 150 preschool age children are planned to evaluate the success of CARES. Teacher and child performance data of comparison groups will help to gauge the significance of these findings.

## Maine

**Project Name:** Supporting Preschoolers in Reading and Language Success (SPIRALS)

**Project Director:** Ruth Southworth

**Funding:** \$3,118,048

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 18

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 160

**Grantee:** Waldo County Preschool & Family Services

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Waldo County Preschool & Family Services (WCPFS) builds upon two decades of national reading research and three years of local ERF success to improve upon an already exceptional science-based preschool emergent literacy model, widely acclaimed both state and nationwide. Integral to the project, is an innovative and comprehensive professional development component with a capacity to train hundreds of preschool teachers across the state. Moreover, the ERF 2006 proposal describes the substantial collaborative efforts of a statewide coalition of partners, including WCPFS, the Maine Department of Education, the University of Maine System, Head Start, Maine Roads to Quality (Maine's other ERF recipient), to closely examine and address the literacy challenges surrounding at-risk preschoolers.

Specifically, *Supporting Preschoolers in Reading and Language Success (SPIRALS)*, over a three-year period will transform four early childhood programs, in two rural Maine counties, into centers of early literacy excellence to:

- 1) Build language and literacy skills for 160 preschoolers yearly, most of whom are at-risk for reading failure;
- 2) Increase teachers' demonstrated skills to deliver evidence-based literacy instruction;
- 3) Intensify early literacy instruction through the *High/Scope* and *Creative Curriculums*;
- 4) Improve instruction, professional development and program delivery through independent analysis of on-going child/ teacher/ classroom/ program assessment; and
- 5) Coordinate with local school districts and statewide early childhood education partners.

The impact high-quality preschools produce upon children's love for learning is directly related to their literacy skill development during their birth-five years. In its first ERF grant, WCPFS guided hundreds of children in developing crucial literacy skills, all the while igniting their love for the written and spoken word. This ERF *SPIRALS* project promises to lead many more children through the doors of kindergarten, confidently carrying the skills they need for a lifetime of success.

## **Maryland**

**Project Name:** Johns Hopkins Language and Literacy Project (JHLLP)

**Project Director:** Barbara Wasik

**Funding:** \$4,100,110

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 38

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 819

**Grantee:** Johns Hopkins University

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Fifty-nine percent of all third-graders in Baltimore City, MD Public Schools are performing below national norms for reading (BCPSS, 2006). In the poorest neighborhoods, which are the target for the proposed Early Reading First sites, 65% of the children are reading below the national norms, suggesting a crisis in these schools and a significant need for early intervention.

To help prevent this high rate of literacy problems, the Johns Hopkins Language and Literacy Project (JHLLP), which is a collaboration between Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore City Head Start (BCHS), and Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), is designed to develop centers of educational excellence in four Baltimore City Head Start centers to prepare preschoolers to enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills to prevent reading difficulties and ensure school success.

This proposal meets the individual priorities--targeting intensive programs and low-income children, serving 3- to 5-year-olds, who all are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and are enrolled in full-day programs for two years before they enter kindergarten.

The goals of this proposed ERF project are to:

- Implement a scientifically-based language and literacy curriculum (the JHLLP curriculum) which includes instruction on a) alphabet recognition; b) knowledge of letter sounds, the blending of sounds, and phonological awareness; c) development of spoken language, oral comprehension and vocabulary development; and d) knowledge of the purpose and conventions of print.
- Implement a scientifically based professional development program to support readiness and to promote print and language rich centers.
- Incorporate the use of assessment data to improve classroom instruction.
- Provide a powerful family support program that is aligned with the language and literacy intervention.
- Create a seamless transition program linking ERF Head Start centers and public kindergarten.



## Massachusetts

**Project Name:** Project Sprout-Out

**Project Director:** Meghan McGinley-Crowe

**Funding:** \$3,499,386

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 28

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 260

**Grantee:** Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Centers

354 Merrimack Street

Lawrence, MA 01843

Tel. #: (978) 683-3804

Fax #: (978) 688-0461

MCROWE@LITTLESPOUTS.COM

Little Sprouts Child Enrichment Centers (“LSCEC”) serves 670 children and employs 125 teachers in four Massachusetts cities within a ten-mile radius- Lawrence, Lowell, Methuen, and Haverhill, all eligible LEA’s with Reading First schools in at-risk communities. LSCEC’S scientifically reading research-based literacy initiative, *Project Sprout-Out*, seeks to transform four existing early childhood centers including 14 classrooms and 28 teachers into “Preschool Centers of Excellence.” *Sprout-Out* will enrich early language and literacy development in 260 preschool age children per year ensuring they enter kindergarten with the language, cognitive and early reading skills needed for highly successful learning. A comparison group of 4 classrooms, 8 teachers, and 78 children will allow *Sprout-Out* to study the effect of explicit instruction and a comprehensive, coherent professional development plan.

*Sprout-Out* exceeds all three invitational priorities established by the Secretary and will implement the recommendations summarized in the report of the *National Reading Panel* and in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* and will to adopt the *We Can!* curriculum to create inclusive classrooms that are safe, stimulating, active learning and print-rich environments that showcase literacy. *Sprout-Out*, will achieve four goals:

1. *Sprout-Out* graduates will achieve the language, and early literacy skills predictive of later reading achievement.
2. *Sprout-Out* classrooms will be print- and language- rich.
3. *Sprout-Out* will provide comprehensive, coherent professional development that enhances staff ability to cultivate early literacy development.
4. *Sprout-Out* will use screening assessments to effectively identify students at-risk for reading failure and provide supportive instruction that will reduce the percentage of children designated at-risk by valid reliable assessments.

*Sprout-Out* is an innovative, comprehensive program built on a solid foundation of literacy, community involvement, and professional development.

## Michigan

**Project Name:** Kalkaska CARES – Children Acquiring Reading Readiness Essential Skills

**Project Director:** Marsh Miller

**Funding:** \$3,123,520

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 36

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 160

**Grantee:** Northwest Michigan Human Services Agency

3963 Three Mile Road

Traverse City, MI 49686

Tel. #: (231) 947-3780

Fax #: (231) 933-0013

MCRZMILLER@AOL.COM

Northwest Michigan Human Services Agency (NMHSA), a Head Start grantee, will partner with Kalkaska Public Schools (KPS), an eligible LEA, and Kalkaska Intergenerational Center (KIC), a hospital based childcare facility, to transform existing preschool programs into Early Literacy Centers of Excellence through *Kalkaska CARES*. Research based and community focused, *Kalkaska CARES* ensures all preschoolers in this rural school district a high quality, literacy intense preschool experience, intentionally and explicitly taught by well prepared and knowledgeable staff, to develop the predictive skills needed to transition to the district's Reading First program and become fluent, motivated readers.

A growing body of research indicates that for children coming from low income and at-risk homes, waiting until school entry is too late. Kalkaska ranks 77 / 82 counties in Michigan for free & reduced lunch; 66/82 children living in poverty, and 82/83 children in investigated (abuse & neglect) families. Lack of access to resources, magnified by poverty, too often sends Kalkaska children to school ill prepared for educational success. *Kalkaska CARES* aims to change all that by:

- Expanding existing part day sessions to 5 full day/school year programs.
- Implementing research based curricula to intentionally and explicitly teach predictive skills (through *Ladders to Literacy*, *Language for Learning*, and *Open Court Reading Pre-K* with the current *Creative Curriculum*).
- Implementing research based Parent Mentor Program (NCFL), and home visiting program, to support parents working with Kalkaska CARES to provide daily experiences to expand curricula exposure throughout the school year (4 weeks).
- Offering research based, intense, ongoing professional development over 200 hours/year to *Kalkaska CARES* staff to include: teachers, assistants, mentor coaches, and family literacy coordinators. PD time will be built into the program schedule on an annual basis and college credit will be sought.
- Developing, through *Steps to Success*, the early literacy mentor coach role so that they have the knowledge and tools to support teachers in implementing curricula, ensuring fidelity to the model.
- Using valid and reliable assessments and screening to ensure individual needs are met, interventions are timely, and inform and guide instruction.
- Developing a *Kalkaska CARES* transition to school team comprised of ERF, RF, school administrators, parents, and community stakeholders to create ongoing activities that reflect a shared vision and investment in reading achievement and school success.

## **Michigan**

**Project Name:** I Can Read!

**Project Director:** Esther M Newlin-Haus

**Funding:** \$3,404,136

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 12

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 380

**Grantee:** Western Michigan University

175 Main Street

Battle Creek, MI 49016-1026

Tel. #: (269) 387-6864

Fax #: (269) 387-6868

ESTHER.NEWLIN-HAUS@WMICH.EDU

The Special Education/Literacy Studies and Family & Consumer Science departments of Western Michigan University propose a partnership with the Battle Creek, Michigan Head Start to develop 5 ERF preschool centers of excellence. This high quality Head Start program serves approximately 380 3 and 4 year olds every year; 26% of their students have special needs or are English Language Learners, and 91% are children of poverty. Regular workshops and weekly, intensive coaching by project faculty (literacy, special education, bilingual studies, evaluation) and literacy coaches will facilitate implementation of research-based instructional strategies in oral language, phonological and print awareness, concepts about books, and alphabet knowledge.

The project will integrate *The Creative Curriculum* with the *Vaughan Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts Texas Preschool Literacy* curriculum; teachers will deliver literacy instruction within project-based curriculum units. *Ladders to Literacy* activities will further enrich literacy instruction for children with special needs. ERF funds will also contribute to a 5-week summer school. Student and teacher progress will be monitored with both monitoring and screening measures including the *PPVT-III*, *PALS Pre-K*, *Get It Got It GO!*, *The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System* and the *ELLCO*. Assessments will guide individualization of curriculum and instruction. Home Literacy Specialists will conduct home visits, develop monthly Family Literacy Nights, send home weekly books with parent suggestions, and design a library of literacy kits with books, CD players/audio books, props, and activities to send home with children.

For summative evaluation, *I Can Read!* will use a quasi-experimental, matched subjects random sampling design with two treatment levels and a control level. To evaluate the impact of the early literacy interventions for children at high risk of low literacy achievement (e.g., children with special needs and English Language Learners), *I Can Read!* will use a series of single-subject designs (e.g., multiple baseline). The project will also use a graphic analysis worksheet (GAW), goal attainment scaling (GAS), and an examination of effect size estimates.

## Minnesota

**Project Name:** Duluth Head Start ERF

**Project Director:** Marilyn Larson

**Funding:** \$4,408,617

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 38

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 298

**Grantee:** Independent School District  
#709 – Duluth Public Schools

215 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. E

Duluth, MN 55802

Tel. #: (218) 733-2084

Fax #: (218) 733-2088

MARILYN.LARSON@DULUTH.K12.MN.US

Duluth Public Schools Head Start Program will create Early Reading First (ERF) Centers of Literacy Excellence programs at all five existing Head Start preschool sites, expanding from 10 classrooms to 19, to provide a full-day program for all participants. The project will both expand and enhance the intensity of literacy services at the sites, providing targeted services to low-income children with significant learning challenges, including poverty (over 95%) and special physical, mental, or emotional needs (over 15%), helping Head Start sites to implement curriculum and instructional strategies that are based on best practices, founded on scientific reading research, and driven by ongoing assessment and progress monitoring.

Through ERF, each site will expand to a full-day, full-year early childhood educational program, providing literacy-based preschool education 6.5 hours per day, 5 days per week, 46 weeks per year, creating a program of explicit, intentional skill-based literacy instruction to ensure that students begin kindergarten with the skills they need to be successful in school. The project will serve a total of 298 children a year, and an estimated 600 children over the project period. Each class will be limited to 16 children.

All Head Start ERF sites will use a literacy framework developed by the Center for Early Education and Development at the University of MN Twin Cities, that provides research-based training and coaching to help all instructional staff acquire the knowledge and skills they need to increase early literacy and language development in the classroom and use assessment and progress monitoring data to drive instruction for individual students. The project will build on this framework by implementing *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*, a nationally recognized, research-based curriculum shown to improve the literacy skills of diverse preschool children.

Assessment and ongoing progress monitoring, conducted in partnership with an outside evaluator, and using the ERF-required instruments, will drive classroom instruction and help those involved evaluate the success of proposed strategies.

## **Minnesota**

**Project Name:** Saint Paul Public Schools' Project Early Reading First (Project ERF)

**Project Director:** Ann Lovrien

**Funding:** \$3,817,043

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 20

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 152

**Grantee:** Saint Paul Public Schools

360 Colborne Street

Saint Paul, MN 55102

Tel. #: (651) 767-8127

Fax #: (651) 767-8367

ANN.LOVRIEN@SPPS.ORG

Saint Paul Public Schools' Project Early Reading First (ERF) aims to expand and enhance opportunities for low-income preschool-age children to participate in rigorous, high quality, literacy-based early childhood programs at four preschool sites – two district school sites and two center-based partner sites. The sites serve a diverse group of preschool age children with high percentages of low-income and English language learner children and children of color. The proposed project will provide intensive professional development and literacy-rich programming for 152 at-risk children for each of 3 years, 20 early childhood educators, a literacy coach and parent educator, 4 site administrators, 3 project staff, and 4 different program sites.

Project ERF increases school readiness of Saint Paul children by:

- Increasing the intensity of programs with a formalized literacy curriculum (including research-based literacy curriculum Doors to Discovery), literacy-rich preschool environments, extended hours for programs, and two years of instruction for pre-school-age children prior to entering kindergarten;
- Providing access to a high-quality preschool program that is targeted towards low-income (programs with at least 75% of children from low-income families), special needs, and English language learner children;
- Increasing capacity of early childhood educators through comprehensive, on-going professional development; and
- Developing and nurturing strong partnerships between school-based and center-based programs in order to align preschool programs in Saint Paul with Saint Paul Public Schools standards-based K-6 program and create a smooth transition into kindergarten. The partnership and alignment between schools and childcare centers are key aspects of the project. As stated in the National Research Council report on early childhood education, "care and education cannot be thought of as separate entities in dealing with young children."

Project ERF provides important resources, focus, and a well-developed plan that will make an impact on the children, families, and early childhood educators who are served and influence district, community, and state early childhood programs and policy.

## Missouri

**Project Name:** Early Reading First St. Louis (ERFSL)

**Project Director:** Nahid Nader-Hashemi

**Funding:** \$4,276,926

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 50

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 405

**Grantee:** Board of Education of the city of St. Louis

801 North 11<sup>th</sup> Street

St. Louis, MO 63101

Tel. #: (314) 345-4433

Fax #: (314) 345-4440

NAHID.HASEHMI@SLPS.ORG

It is well documented that the successful acquisition of early reading skills plays a critical role in whether or not children learn to read, how well they will read later, and their later success in school and in life. In this context, many young children face significant obstacles to reading success, such as attending schools in which achievement is chronically low, residing in low-income families, living in poor neighborhoods, and having limited English proficiency. Early Reading First St. Louis (ERFSL) will focus on children representing these groups who are at a high risk for failure in reading and other important school and life skills. The overarching goal of ERFSL is to prepare low-income preschool children with the language, cognitive, and early reading skills required for reading success in kindergarten and beyond.

ERFSL activities will be carried out in five centers of educational excellence serving low-income children: a Title I center (150 children); a district/Head Start collaboration center (140 children); an English language learner (ELL) center (20 children); a magnet center (20 children); and a community-based center (75 children). A total of 405 preschool children, 25 teachers, and 25 teacher assistants will participate. Preschool classrooms in 14 of the district's 15 Reading First schools will be included, ensuring a strong literacy foundation among preschoolers entering Reading First kindergartens.

Activities will include:

- Integrating scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) into the existing preschool curriculum with a focus on oral language skills, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge (*Open Court Reading Pre-K, Language for Learning, Ladders to Literacy*);
- Establishing and maintaining high-quality language and literature-rich environments to enhance cognitive learning;
- Providing intensive, ongoing SBRR-based professional development for teachers;
- Providing support and mentoring for teachers through highly qualified literacy coaches, one for every three-to-four teachers; and
- Providing valid, reliable, and ongoing screening and assessment to identify students at risk, guide instructional decisions, and evaluate program effectiveness [*PALS Pre-K, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III, Pre-LAS, Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)*].

## **Missouri**

**Project Name:** RURAL Excellence – Readiness Umbrella for Reading and Language     **Grantee:** Boone Early Childhood Partners

**Project Director:** Lana Poole

**Funding:** \$2,706,477

1400 Rock Quarry Road  
Columbia, MO 65211-3280

Tel. #: (573) 884-1799

Fax #: (573) 884-0598

POOLEL@MISSOURI.EDU

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 18

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 168

The RURAL Excellence initiative is a partnership between Boone Early Childhood Partners, five preschool centers and three eligible LEAs that serve a high proportion of at-risk, rural children in central Missouri. The vision for RURAL Excellence is to create preschool “Centers of Excellence” that support children’s development of oral language and literacy skills, thinking and mathematical skills, and social skills, so children experience a successful transition to kindergarten. The goals of RURAL Excellence practices and the *Emerging Language and Literacy Curriculum (ELLC)* include the following:

- Children experience significant gains in oral language skills, phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and cognitive development.
- Children experience “hands on” learning designed to support curricular objectives.
- Educators are knowledgeable and skilled in instructional methods to facilitate language, literacy, and cognitive development in young children.
- Ongoing progress monitoring is used to inform instructional practices.
- Classrooms will be high quality language and literacy-rich environments.
- Materials, activities, and the physical environment enhance learning opportunities.
- Families are involved in their child’s school readiness activities.
- Kindergarten transition plans are developed for all children and are coordinated with local LEAs.

*ELLC*) curriculum-based progress monitoring system supports educators’ use of appropriate teaching strategies for large- and small-group settings as well as individualized instruction for children who may be at-risk for language or reading difficulties. The University of Missouri-Columbia’s Center for Family Policy and Research will be RURAL Excellence’s featured advisory council that will coordinate such evaluations.

## **Ohio**

**Project Name:** Lorain's Centers for Early Literacy Excellence (LCELE)

**Project Director:** Bonnie Strykowski

**Funding:** \$3,265,856

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 10

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 196

**Grantee:** Lorain City Schools

2350 Pole Avenue

Lorain, OH 44052-4301

Tel. #: (440) 233-2268

Fax #: N/A

BSTRYK@LORAINSCHOOLS.ORG

The Lorain City Schools (LCS) will develop the *Lorain's Centers for Early Literacy Excellence (LCELE)*, to serve an estimated 200 children in five racially mixed public pre-school programs currently partnering in a Head Start Collaborative. The LCS will build the capacity of its current public preschool programs to incorporate scientifically research-based early literacy curriculum and instruction into their existing educational services. They will implement a comprehensive early literacy curriculum centered on *Trophies Pre-Kindergarten* and *Tools of the Mind* using systematic, sequential instruction in group- and center-based learning activities.

*LCELE* will deploy a cadre of Early Literacy Specialists (ELS) trained by Kathleen Roskos and her professional staff to provide site-based professional development (PD) for teachers and paraprofessionals. This PD will help them learn teaching strategies and facilitation techniques to design, organize and manage strong language and literacy environments. The *LCELE* will stock each classroom with high quality children's books. In-school and out-of-school experiences will enable staff to create content and language rich experiences for their preschoolers and families. *LCELE* will enhance their highly successful parent program by adding more family-school experiences, and providing in-home parent training to help strengthen family literacy practices.

*LCELE* will establish a multi-purpose early literacy assessment system that coordinates measures and methods aligned with SBRR on early literacy learning and Ohio's Academic Content Standards to screen, monitor progress and measure outcomes. The *LCELE* program will seek to establish clear, strong connections with the LCS's three-year RF sub-grant in key areas of curriculum, assessment, and PD.

*LCELE* will conduct external evaluations using formative research techniques to adjust, modify and improve project implementation and summative research techniques to monitor performance data. The external evaluator will also assess impact measures to determine the progress toward student mastery of the five essential elements of early literacy.



## **Oklahoma**

**Project Name:** Project LEARN! (Literacy and Excellence to Achieve [school] Readiness Now!)

**Project Director:** Anita Zurline

**Funding:** \$1,301,509

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 18

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 513

**Grantee:** Atoka Choctaw Headstart Center

711 Greathouse Drive

P.O. Box 516

Atoka, OK 74525

Tel. #: (580) 889-7054

Fax #: (580) 889-7054

Two local education (LEA) Preschool Centers and three Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Head Start Centers located in the eligible Districts of Atoka and Antlers in southeastern Oklahoma have formed a consortium Early Reading First program, *Project Literacy and Excellence to Achieve [school] Readiness Now! (LEARN)* Under *Project LEARN*, the five Centers of Excellence will provide high quality education for 513 low-income children (82% average free/reduced lunch, 58% Native American) to improve their early literacy and reading readiness so they enter kindergarten with the necessary skills to succeed in school.

*Project LEARN* will base its program of excellence on:

- Implementing a scientifically research based early childhood instructional program, *Breakthrough to Literacy (BL)*, that integrates extensive language and literacy development in oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge in order to equip preschool children with the necessary skills to be successful readers who are able to enter kindergarten at desired benchmark levels.
- Creating high quality language and print-rich learning environments that integrate and intensify literacy development in each classroom.
- Providing intensive, ongoing professional development in order to build teachers literacy knowledge, skills, and practice by participating in 1) a three credit hour college course “Steps to Literacy” taught by the University of Oklahoma’s Early childhood Development Center, 2) weekly in class mentoring by literacy coaches, 3) extensive three-year *BL* curriculum training, and 4) a series of specialized workshops conducted by experts (e.g. early literacy classroom environment and student assessment and instruction improvement specialists).

The project will also improve the coordination between the Centers and the school systems in order to align instruction (Reading First) and ensure seamless transitions for the children served.

## **Pennsylvania**

**Project Name:** Success Starts Early (SSE)

**Project Director:** Barbara Willard

**Funding:** \$1,887,754

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 14

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 91

**Grantee:** Heritage Health Foundation, Inc.

445 Fourth Street

Braddock, PA 15104

Tel. #: (412) 351-0535

Fax #: (412) 351-0509

BWILLARD@HHFI.ORG

The *Success Starts Early* Initiative (*SSE*) is an Early Reading First partnership of the Woodland Hills School District (WHSD) and Heritage Health Foundation's 4 Kids Early Learning Program. 4 Kids is a full-time, full-year, early childhood educational program that offers developmentally appropriate activities to ensure that children are ready to succeed in school as they enter kindergarten. Children who attend 4 Kids live in the lowest income neighborhoods of WHSD (79% of our children qualify to receive free/reduced meals). The *SSE* partnership between WHSD and 4 Kids will improve the school readiness of over 150 children by preparing them with the cognitive and oral language skills, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge they need to be successful in kindergarten.

Activities implemented through *SSE* will tie into WHSD's Reading First project and will be guided by the latest scientifically based reading research, including that of the *National Reading Panel*, *National Association for the Education of Young Children*, and *PA Early Learning Standards*. Specifically, *SSE* will:

- Enhance the 7 preschool classrooms at 4 Kids by integrating additional language/literacy resources and implementing Harcourt *Trophies* Pre-K and SRA *Language for Learning* (for more challenging learners);
- Enhance 4 Kids' professional development component by providing preschool teaching staff with on-site language/literacy mentors, tuition support to increase their early childhood/literacy credentials, and training/support from University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University, WHSD, and other qualified professional development providers; and
- Create a formalized kindergarten transition plan between 4 Kids and WHSD.

The language and print-richness of each classroom and the effectiveness of the professional development component will be assessed using the *ELLCO*. Children's baseline performance, continued progress, and outcomes will be measured utilizing built-in screening/ assessment tools from *Trophies* and *Language for Learning*, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III, the PALS Pre-K assessment, and the DIBELS.

## Pennsylvania

**Project Name:** Lebanon Early Reading First

**Project Director:** Sandra Strunk

**Funding:** \$3,080,059

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 34

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 344

**Grantee:** Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate  
Unit 13

1110 Enterprise Road

East Petersburg, PA 17520

Tel. #: (717) 569-7331

Fax #: (717) 560-6110

SANDY\_STRUNK@IU13.ORG

Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU 13) aims to utilize Early Reading First (ERF) funds in Lebanon, PA, to support, integrate and significantly improve preschool instruction offered by Lebanon School District, Lebanon Head Start, the Lebanon Family Literacy program and the Lebanon Early Intervention program. The Goodling Institute for Family Literacy and faculty from the Pennsylvania State University will provide leadership related to project evaluation and research-based professional development.

ERF funds will be used to establish three Centers for Preschool Excellence. These will be 1.) Northwest Center for 106 four-year-old children, 2.) Cumberland Center for approximately 120 three-year-old Head Start and Early Intervention children, and 3.) South Lebanon Center for approximately 118 four-year-old children. Approximately 81% of the children are living in poverty, 19% are limited English proficient, and 19% have documented disabilities.

Project goals include:

- 1.) Implementing Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards across all partner programs;
- 2.) Increasing student achievement in oral language skills, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabetic knowledge through the *Open Court Reading* curriculum;
- 3.) Increasing intensity and duration in targeted classrooms;
- 4.) Improving the language and print richness of existing classrooms;
- 5.) Providing high-quality professional development activities including a Research to-Practice Institute, Center-based differentiated coaching, in-depth SBRI training, support for continuing higher education and regular team meetings.

Our evaluation has two purposes. First, we will use formative evaluation as a mechanism for continually improving the sustainability of SBRI practices. Second, we will use summative evaluation to establish the effectiveness of two-tiered intervention by minimizing the likelihood of rival explanations.

## **Rhode Island**

**Project Name:** Ready to Learn Providence

**Project Director:** Joyce Butler

**Funding:** \$3,659,640

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 39

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 230

**Grantee:** The Providence Plan

56 Pine Street, Suite 3B

Providence, RI 02903

Tel. #: (401) 490-9960

Fax #: NA

[JBUTLER@PROVPLAN.ORG](mailto:JBUTLER@PROVPLAN.ORG)

Ready to Learn Providence (R2LP) is a 4-year-old initiative of The Providence Plan, a nonprofit with a mission to build local capacity to reduce poverty and urban decline. R2LP seeks to “change the developmental trajectory and school readiness status” of 230 children a year who exhibit characteristics that put them most at-risk for early reading difficulty. As a 2004 ERF grantee, R2LP has indeed demonstrated the positive impact of their work on the early education system in the city through statistically significant data. This time around, R2LP used a competitive process to select four preschool sites to serve as ERF partners. These sites (13 classrooms) serve children from low-income families and are located close to Reading First schools - creating unique opportunities for joint professional development and continuous intervention for children.

Project goals include:

- Integrating a research-based early literacy curriculum (*Building Language for Literacy*) into the sites’ existing curricula to support the development of children’s oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge.
- Creating classrooms that provide rich environments of print and non-print experiences related to language and literacy development to improve preschoolers’ early reading and early writing skills.
- Providing teachers with a scientifically based professional development scope and sequence that equips them with the skills needed to provide the environments and high quality instruction children need to develop language and literacy skills necessary to begin school.

Teachers will learn and apply explicit instructional techniques to support children’s development of language and early literacy skills. With support from Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches, sites will learn how to support English Language Learners and use assessment tools to identify and help children who are most at risk of early reading difficulty. The Education Alliance at Brown University will conduct all evaluations.

## **South Carolina**

**Project Name:** Building Literacy Opportunities for Coastal Kindergartens (BLOCK)

**Project Director:** Pat Strickland

**Funding:** \$2,650,870

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 6

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 160

**Grantee:** Georgetown County United Way, Inc.

515 Front Street

Georgetown, SC 29440-3621

Tel. #: (843) 546-6317

Fax #: (843) 527-3213

PAT-GCUW@SC.RR.COM

Led by the United Way of Georgetown County, a coalition of early childhood advocates and professionals--First Steps of Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties, Little Smurfs Child Care Center; and the Georgetown and Williamsburg County School Districts--have joined forces to implement *Building Literacy Opportunities for Coastal Kindergartens (BLOCK)*. *BLOCK's* efforts focus on ensuring that students in the rural, poverty-stricken area of coastal South Carolina receive the types of enhanced learning opportunities that will lead to future academic success. Key *BLOCK* goals include:

- Improving children's oral language skills.
- Building children's alphabet knowledge skills (letter recognition).
- Developing children's phonological awareness skills (rhyming, blending, segmenting).
- Increasing children's print awareness skills.
- Implementing and maintaining scientifically based research language and print-rich preschool environment to provide abundant opportunities for children to use print and practice literacy skills.
- Increasing preschool teacher knowledge and use of scientifically based reading research to systematically address early literacy skills essential to future reading success.

In order to transform four existing, good early childhood programs into centers of excellence, *BLOCK* proposes a literacy focused, scientifically based curricula, *Ready, Set, Leap! (RSL)* and the expansion of current early childhood programs to 6.5 hours a day, 5 days per week, and 46 weeks per year to serve a total of 160 students. *BLOCK* also addresses the special instructional needs of the English language learner population through the comprehensive English language acquisition plan.

*BLOCK's* comprehensive early childhood literacy program aims to establish a firm foundation for ensuring that their students achieve early literacy and academic success for a lifetime—child-by-child, and *BLOCK*-by-*BLOCK*.

**Tennessee**

**Project Name:** The Literacy Environment Enrichment Project (LEEP)

**Grantee:** Knox County Schools

**Project Director:** Marilyn Davidson

**Funding:** \$1,450,080

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 24

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 432

912 S. Gay Street

P.O. Box 2188

Knoxville, TN 37901-2188

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Knox County School, the Local Educational Agency, and two non-profit agencies have collaborated to create the *Literacy Environment Enrichment Project* to prevent later reading and literacy difficulties for 432 children. Driven by the *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)* early literacy curriculum and supported by an intensive and coherent professional development program for project staff, the *Literacy Environment Enrichment Project* will be implemented in 4 well-established preschool centers that operate 6.5+ hours/day, 5 days/week, and 46+ weeks/year. All sites serve children predominantly from low-income families.

The *Opening the World of Learning* curriculum and *Literacy Environment Enrichment Project* are founded upon thorough knowledge of the scientific research on early language and literacy development. Utilization of these programs will provide children with an intense, intentional, age-appropriate development of oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet recognition and understanding. The program training will facilitate teacher knowledge necessary for success as the children enter kindergarten. Following assessments that include progress monitoring and screening, each child will have a plan for developing his/her emerging literacy (including those who are English Limited Learners or special needs children). Independent evaluators will assist in tracking each child's skills annually, as they transition into Knox County public kindergartens. This Early Reading First project is designed to ensure that Knox County's 5,125 very young children of poverty will have access to state-of-the-art instruction necessary for ensuring that *no child is left behind*.

## Texas

**Project Name:** Ready to Read, Preparing to Lead (R2R-P2L)

**Project Director:** Mourette Hodge

**Funding:** \$4,500,000

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 12

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 245

**Grantee:** South San Antonio Independent School District

2515 Bobcat Lane

San Antonio, TX 78224

Tel. #: (210) 977-7125

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South San Antonio Independent School District (SSAISD) educators believe the root of so many children struggling to read lies in the lack of school readiness among the youngest and least advantaged students. Using guidance from *The National Reading Panel*, the Early Reading First (ERF) Initiative, and implementing scientifically based reading research (SBRR), District leaders will reduce and/or eliminate the need for extra support programs in later grades by reaching approximately 245 vulnerable children in 5 SSAISD elementary school campuses before kindergarten via the R2R-P2L Program. The model presented by R2R-P2L has 6 major components with each building long-range capacity and sustainability:

- Intense Professional Development (PD) designed to build capacity, not dependence upon consultants, within the teaching staff.
- PD that includes hands-on workshops addressing classroom environments, assessments, use of standards, and weekly classroom demonstrations in oral language development, phonological/phonemic awareness, print awareness and alphabetic knowledge.
- PD schedule that incorporates extensive professional development in Year 1, coaching in Year 2, and allowing the teachers to become trainers in Year 3.
- Classroom environments rich with books, real-life print, and student work.
- Integration of the *Open Court Reading* (OCR) curriculum with Texas Pre-K guidelines and SBRR into SSAISD's existing Early Childhood Education and Pre-K Programs.
- Research based assessments with predetermined achievement benchmarks.
- Partnering with parents for increased and improved home reading and early literacy skills, leading to a seamless Kindergarten transition.
- Extending the Pre-K school year from 40 weeks to 46 weeks.

## Utah

**Project Name:** Rural Utah's Central and Eastern Centers of Early Childhood Excellence (RUC3E3)

**Project Director:** Maria Snyder

**Funding:** \$3,947,241

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 24

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 135

**Grantee:** Rural Utah Child Development

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Wellington, UT 84542

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Fax #: N/A

Rural Utah Child Development (RUCD) and the Ute Indian Tribe (UIT) partnered to design *Rural Utah's Central and Eastern Centers of Early Childhood Excellence (RUC3E3)*. Located in a geographical region rich in both cultural heritage and history, each of the 8 Head Start classrooms serve a diverse population of 3 and 4 year-old children, including an ethnic population of Navajo and Ute. Based on the review of research, best practice, existing programs and strategies the partners developed a child-centered interactive learning model designed to improve pre reading readiness and help reduce reading difficulties.

The traditional Navajo medicine wheel and the sacred 4 directions of a "Beauty Way of Life" symbolize the *RUC3E3* interactive model. The 4 components include: a scientifically based research reading (SBRR) curriculum; literacy rich classrooms and home environments; an English Language Acquisition Plan for English language learners; and SBRR philosophies and strategies. Four highly-trained Literacy Coaches will facilitate *RUC3E3* through extensive classroom-centered professional development and support for 24 Head Start teachers and teacher aides to ensure 135 children attain strong foundational skills to transition successfully into formal education annually.

*The We Can!* curriculum, aligned with Head Start Outcomes Framework, will provide a logical combination with the *High/Scope* and/or *Creative Curriculum* philosophies currently utilized in the participating classrooms. The *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)* will be used to ensure systematic continuous improvement of *RUC3E3* literacy rich classrooms. Support and training for parents to provide a literacy-rich home environment will also be a vital component. Finally, the *Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence's (CREDE)* research-based *Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)* will guide teachers through an explicit *model of sheltered instruction as part of the English Language Acquisition Plan (ELAP)*. The *RUC3E3* Project will ensure that "No Child Is Left Behind" in rural central and eastern Utah.



## Virginia

**Project Name:** Richmond's Partnership for Excellence in Early Language and Literacy Skills (PEELLS)

**Grantee:** Virginia Commonwealth University

**Project Director:** Joan A Rhodes

**Funding:** \$4,471,558

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 24

**Number of School Districts Served:** 1

**Number of Students Served:** 253

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Richmond's Partnership for Excellence in Early Language and Literacy Skills (PEELLS), an interdisciplinary, university-community partnership will enhance the Richmond Public Schools' Head Start and Virginia Preschool Initiative programs by creating centers of excellence that provide high quality preschool education focusing on early language and literacy development. This partnership includes the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education's Department of Teaching and Learning and Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, The Literacy Institute at VCU, and Richmond Public Schools. Through instructional strategies, curricula (*Houghton Mifflin Pre K: Where Bright Futures Begin*), and staff development based on scientifically-based reading research, increased parental involvement, and enhanced support for children with limited English proficiency and special needs, the program will promote preschoolers' successful transition to kindergarten with the early language and literacy skills necessary for future success.

The goals of PEELLS are to:

- Provide high-quality, print- and language-rich preschool environments for *all* students.
- Provide intensive, ongoing professional development, coaching and formal educational opportunities to increase teachers' knowledge and application of SBRR in their instructional and assessment practices.
- Enhance home literacy environments through parent workshops and consultation.
- Provide individualized instruction for students identified as at risk for reading difficulties and/or with special needs or LEP.
- Equip preschool children with the early language and literacy skills needed for successful reading development.
- Conduct ongoing evaluations to inform literacy instruction and professional development.

## Washington, DC

**Project Name:** The Literacy Partnership

**Project Director:** Carol Osborn

**Funding:** \$2,527,746

**Grantee:** Bridges Public Charter School

1250 Taylor St., NW

Washington, DC 20011

Tel. #: (703) 753-9703

Fax #: N/A

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 44

**Number of School Districts Served:** 3

**Number of Students Served:** 151

Tri-Community Public Charter School, E.L. Haynes Public Charter School, and Bridges Public Charter School, The Chesapeake Center, Inc., University of Maryland Hearing and Speech Sciences Department, and Educational Solutions, LLC collaborated to form a *Literacy Partnership (LP)* to deliver high-quality early childhood education programs to at-risk preschoolers. The project is designed to support meaningful changes in instruction, curriculum, professional development, and classroom environment. These goals will be accomplished by:

- Providing theoretically sound and scientifically motivated classroom-based literacy instruction.
- Administering assessments and on-going progress monitoring to identify at risk students.
- Providing ongoing professional development.

Multi-disciplinary teams including classroom teachers, speech-language pathologists (SLPs), and literacy experts will implement programs to create preschool centers of excellence that will endure well beyond the grant period.

All program components are designed to improve children's oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and cognitive development. The proposed *LP* will utilize a 3-Tiered Response to Intervention model:

- In Tier 1, teachers collaborate with SLPs and literacy experts to assess students as a means to inform high quality, explicit, and comprehensive classroom-wide instruction using the *Creative Curriculum*-Preschool augmented by instructional supplements.
- In Tier 2, children with known risk factors or those unresponsive to Tier 1 activities will participate in small group or one-on-one instruction in the *Promoting Awareness in Speech Sounds (PASS)* Program and vocabulary enhancements.
- Tier 3 students not progressing in Tier 2 will receive additional intensive instruction.
- Tier 3 students that do not respond to further intensive instruction will be referred for evaluation by a multi-disciplinary team to determine eligibility for special education services.

Student learning will be systematically monitored on a frequent schedule using Individual Growth and Development Indicators (*IGDIs*). Teacher learning will be monitored on an ongoing basis using the *ELLCO* and other CBMs.

## Wisconsin

**Project Name:** Building Blocks to Literacy

**Project Director:** Sandra Ivers

**Funding:** \$4,190,467

**Number of Teachers/Assistants Served:** 18

**Number of School Districts Served:** 3

**Number of Students Served:** 360

**Grantee:** Milwaukee Public Schools

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Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is highly committed to improving school readiness skills for preschoolers. MPS is an urban school district serving over 93,500 students with diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Over 78% of the students come from families in poverty. MPS *Building Blocks to Literacy* will support the President's Early Childhood "Good Start, Grow Smart" Initiative and the "No Child Left Behind" Act, by improving the instruction and learning environment of pre-school programs through the implementation of a scientifically based reading program that prepares students, especially at-risk students, for kindergarten and beyond. *Building Blocks to Literacy* will also support the MPS Division of Early Childhood's mission of "promoting and providing high quality, developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate education programming and services responsive to the needs of all children and families within the community." The selected preschool sites will include three district schools, a faith-based child development center that partners with one of the selected schools and an MPS charter school. The following project goals will guide the improvement of preschool instructional practices and classroom environments in creating "Centers of Excellence."

The project goals are to:

- Show 12 months improvement during the regular school year for ELL, special education and low-income children in oral language, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge as measured by PALS, PPVT, TROLL, and IGDI.
- Immerse children in literacy with classrooms that promote print awareness and oral language and build on background knowledge as measured by achieving a score of 41 on the ELLCO classroom environment section.
- Have teachers understand and apply research-based practices as a result of at least 60 annual hours of diverse professional development as documented by ELLCO assessment, E-LOT assessment and classroom observation by ERF grant staff, and literacy coaches.
- Ensure instructional strategies are meeting the academic needs of all students through ongoing monitoring and assessment as measured by assessment schedules and instructional plans that reflect assessment results.
- Establish a structure for a seamless transition into kindergarten as measured by follow up with teachers and longitudinal data.
- Empower parents to become actively involved in early literacy as measured by Family Literacy Pack feedback forms, attendance at parent trainings, and parent participation in home activities.