

A Synopsis of the 2008 Early Reading First Project Grantees

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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 2008 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, particularly 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 skills.

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 of 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.

California

Project Name: SPARKLE Project - Student Pre-K Acquisition of Reading Knowledge and Language Excellence

Project Director: Heather Senske (.25 FTE)

Funding: \$3,532,656

Number of teachers/assistants served: 12

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 192/year

Grantee: Butte County Office of Education

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Oroville, CA 95965

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Butte County Office of Education's *SPARKLE Project (Student Pre-K Acquisition of Reading Knowledge and Language Excellence)* will accelerate the oral language, cognitive, and early reading skills of 192 children annually attending four preschools which demonstrate high readiness to become centers of learning excellence. Project features include: (1) enhanced classroom environments to promote oral language, preliteracy and cognitive skills; (2) comprehensive professional development through classroom-based instruction, engaging online learning, and intensive, on-site literacy mentor services to improve instructional knowledge and practice with emphasis on the needs of English language learners and low income children; (3) screening and progress monitoring assessments to determine preschool children's progress toward the language and early literacy skills necessary for later school success; (4) implementation of the research-based *Houghton Mifflin PRE-K: Where Bright Futures Begin* curriculum; and (5) implementation of a parent involvement program including home visitation, Family Literacy Nights, and literacy materials and supports to enrich home environments.

Project goals include the following: (1) to demonstrate significant improvements in oral language, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge among participating children; (2) to demonstrate substantially improved language and literacy environments to encourage teacher-child and peer interactions, dramatic play, cognitive development, and individual and small group reading and writing; (3) to improve staff knowledge and skills in research, instruction, assessment, and preschool standards to improve early language and literacy development among diverse children; and (4) to support families in integrating early language and literacy experiences into the home.

California

Project Name: Ready to Read Plus (RR+)

Project Director: Antonia Zupanich

Funding: \$3,425,061

Number of teachers/assistants served: 16

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 150/year

Grantee: Imperial County Office of Education

1398 Sperber Road

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The Imperial County Early Reading First Project – *Ready to Read Plus (RR+)* is based on the existing exemplary Early Reading First (ERF) project, Ready to Read. It will target children and families who live below the federal poverty line along the Mexican-American border in Imperial County, California. *Ready to Read Plus* is a scientifically-based instructional program designed to address the development of a) oral language and vocabulary skills, b) alphabet knowledge, c) phonological processing, d) print awareness, and e) emergent writing skills. Additionally, *Ready to Read Plus* provides high quality, intensive professional development to educators (teachers and aides), as well as parenting programs that promote parental involvement in the early reading and language development of their children. Imperial County's existing Early Reading First Project has been validated through a rigorous research study which shows that children in the program outperformed their preschool peers on assessments of oral language, alphabet recognition, and phonemic awareness (IESD, 2007). *Ready to Read Plus* will use the *Scholastic Early Childhood Program*.

Ready to Read Plus builds upon its existing validated program by proposing the addition of the following five new, research-based components in four full-day preschool centers of excellence: (1) Parent Involvement Plan – an intensive and interactive parent-child home based program conducted the Home Literacy Aides; (2) An articulation system that uses innovative, culturally appropriate approaches to connect parents and children to kindergarten classrooms; (3) Integrated Child Assessment System (ICAS) to monitor children's mastery of new state learning foundations; (4) an ongoing accredited professional development program that integrates university learning and in-classroom practice, through the University of Houston's C.I.R.C.L.E. Training; and (5) instruction and early literacy based assessment training and coaching.

California

Project Name: Smart Start Early Learning Program (SSELP)

Project Director: Lynne Rodezno (.10 FTE)

Funding: \$3,967,979

Number of teachers/assistants served: 32

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 208/year

Grantee: Oakland Unified School District

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Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) proposes the *Smart Start Early Learning Program (SSELP)*. OUSD is a large, urban school district located in Alameda County, California, that is home to 47,012 students in grades Pre-K through 12th. Outside its boundaries, many perceive the State of California as an economic giant that has high priced homes, high paying salaries, and beautiful weather; the reality is a bit different in Oakland. Over the course of the past few decades, the community has experienced significant and profound social and economic changes. Specifically, OUSD is home to growing populations of English Language Learners (ELL), students that are classified as economically disadvantaged, and students living in environments that place them "at-risk" of academic failure. Despite these conditions, the Oakland community is dedicated to ensuring that every child, regardless of English language ability or economic condition, is provided with a quality education.

The goal of *SSELP*, which is designed using the latest in scientifically-based reading research, is to improve the literacy and pre-literacy skills of the 3 through 5 year old youths in the community. The *SSELP* will provide: (1) Intense professional development, including providing in classroom Literacy Coaches, to help teachers implement scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) into the classroom during the school day; (2) Classroom environments rich with books, real-life print, and student work; (3) Integration of the *Open Court Pre-K* (OCR) curriculum into OUSD's existing early childhood development programs; (4) Screenings and assessments on every child multiple times a year to assist with differential instruction; (5) Expanding the school day to 9-hours a day, 12-months a year; and (6) An in-home literacy development program for partnering with parents.

California

Project Name: ERF OSD Early Literacy Project

Project Director: Diane Wallace (.10 FTE)

Funding: \$1,733,892

Grantee: Oxnard School District

1051 South Street

Oxnard, CA 93030

Tel. #: (805) 487-3918 ext. 202

Number of teachers/assistants served: 13

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 100

The Oxnard School District is a large, Pre-K - 8th grade school district, with nearly all high poverty and English Learners, located in an agricultural area on the central coast of California. This proposal represents the district's serious focus on early literacy and the improvement of pre-school education, and is an integral part of the district plan to significantly improve student achievement. As a result of Reading First, improved achievement in language arts among K-3 students confirms the district's capacity to coordinate efforts, implement research-based strategies and materials, and demonstrate positive results. The need is clear and urgent. Between 80-85% of students in grades two through eight are below proficient on the California Standards Test in Language Arts.

The goal of the *ERF OSD Early Literacy Project* is to reduce the gap between at-risk and on target early learners before they enter Kindergarten. The project will be implemented in three preschool centers with the capacity to become centers of excellence and is designed to implement a high quality, research based intensive pre-literacy development program. The curriculum will include a research-based Pre-K language development program, an early literacy software program, and a parent-child home reading program. The *OSD Early Literacy Project* will establish print rich learning environments in each center. Periodic meetings and professional development will support communication between the Pre-K and K teachers. Professional development will focus on teacher/staff acquisition of research knowledge, development of skills to implement research-based curriculum, and ability to use data to drive instruction. Parent education will encourage pre-reading and language development in the home. The project addresses transition to Kindergarten by incorporating district Kindergarten staff in project activities and by scheduling school visitations and conferences with receiving teachers, Pre-K teachers, a parent and the preschool student. All students will be assessed initially and periodic formative assessments will monitor improvement in prereading and English Learners will be assessed and monitored for second language acquisition. The instructional materials selected for the Early Reading First project include *Opening a World of Learning* and the *Waterford Early Reading and Early Math and Science Programs (WERP & WEMS)*.

California

Project Name: Project READ

Project Director: Raul Anthony Garcia (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$3,298,475

Number of teachers/assistants served: 14

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 208/year

Grantee: Riverside County Office of Education

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The Riverside County Early Reading First Project (*Project READ*) is a research-based, model program that restructures four Head Start preschool centers serving 208 children and families in Riverside County, California. These centers serve only low-income children, most of whom are limited English proficient and/or have an identifiable disability.

Project READ 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. Additionally, Project READ 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. *READ* classrooms will use the *Houghton Mifflin's Where Bright Futures Begin (HM PREK)* - a comprehensive integrated Pre-K program that is based on scientific research and aligned with key critical Pre-K learning goals, including those defined by Early Reading First, Head Start, and California's Preschool Foundations.

Project READ has developed the following goals: (1) Provide 3 to 5-year old preschool children, including those with limited English proficiency, identified developmental disabilities, and those at significant risk for not acquiring school readiness skills, with a high-quality, literacy-rich learning environment designed to foster the language and literacy skills necessary for them to meet or exceed California's preschool and kindergarten content standards; (2) Provide ongoing professional development and training for teachers to gain mastery of research-based theory and instruction; (3) Engage parents in their own and their children's learning and provide them with skills to extend language and literacy development in the home; (4) Establish a permanent, articulated educational system for a seamless transition into kindergarten; and (5) Use multiple assessments to measure, monitor and support children's development and literacy learning.

Connecticut

Project Name: Connecticut is Reading First

Project Director: Debbie Plourde (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$3,113,058

Number of teachers/assistants served: 23

Number of school districts served: 2

Number of children served: 170/year

Grantee: Catholic Charities, Inc. –
Archdiocese of Hartford

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Meriden, CT 06451

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Connecticut is Reading First (CRF) is a partnership between Catholic Charities, Oldham Innovative Research, Yale's Haskins Laboratories and other literacy experts that will develop new best practices in early childhood and make dramatic improvements in preparing young children from low-income families to enter kindergarten with the necessary cognitive, early language and literacy skills for success in school. This innovative model will create four centers of educational excellence; and serve as a statewide model for educators. *CRF* will enhance 4 existing CT School Readiness (SR) preschool centers in Hartford and Waterbury, two of Connecticut's poorest urban cities with disproportionately high levels of school drop out rates; poverty; dual language learners; low academic performance and literacy rates; and underachieving schools.

In partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education and Local Education Authorities since 1998, Catholic Charities provides comprehensive full year early childhood education services in centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. *CRF's* exceptional approach includes intensive professional development, teacher mentoring, integration of new skills and knowledge into classroom teaching, ongoing screening assessments, progress monitoring, individualized planning for each child, enhanced opportunities for discovery and constructive play, and coherent language and literacy teaching, including skills based instruction in early reading and writing. *CRF* will work with Reading First schools to ensure the curriculum is aligned and assist in smooth transitions. Increased knowledge and expertise in integrating scientifically based reading researched curriculum and teaching strategies into faith and community based early childhood programs will be instrumental in addressing literacy and preparation for kindergarten for low income children including English learners moving toward closing the achievement gap. *CRF* will integrate the *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)* with *Creative Curriculum*.

Connecticut

Project Name: Community Partners for Early Literacy (CPEL)

Project Director: Maureen Ruby (.50 FTE)

Funding: \$1,409,697.40

Number of teachers/assistants served: 41

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 253/year

Grantee: Eastern Connecticut State University

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Connecticut has some of the most deeply impoverished communities in the country; its schools serve some of the neediest children. *CPEL* will improve the lives of approximately 506 of these high-need, at-risk children and their families, through an intensive, bilingual, family-based language and literacy preschool intervention. Partnering with two high-quality, community-based centers, nationally-recognized faculty from Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) will support 15 preschool classrooms serving low-income families to become sites of excellence. Four classrooms will become a model bilingual program. *CPEL* will use advanced video technology to create video archives and trainings of research-based early literacy practices.

CPEL will increase the time spent in systematic literacy instruction to improve children's oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and early writing by integrating literacy within the total curriculum. Students will be engaged in literacy activities for up to 3½ hours each day. Additionally, *CPEL* will improve home and school language/ literacy environments through improvements in discourse, materials, activities, background knowledge enhancement, and a comprehensive family literacy program.

To achieve these goals, *CPEL* will implement the *Scholastic Early Childhood Program*; utilize *Read Together, Talk Together* (dialogic home literacy support); and provide intensive, sustained, classroom-focused professional development, including 220 hours of coaching and 144 hours of professional development for all teachers and assistants. Screening assessments and progress monitoring tools will provide formative data to guide instructional planning, decision making, and tracking of student progress. *CPEL* will complement and extend the local school district's Reading First K-3 program, and coordinate with similar efforts by sharing findings, lessons learned, and video clips from *CPEL*'s classrooms locally, regionally, and nationally.

Connecticut

Project Name: WE Read First

Project Director: Paul Sequeira (no ERF funds)

Funding: \$3,111,516

Grantee: Waterbury School District

30B Church Street

Waterbury, CT 06702

Tel. #: (203) 574-8005

Number of teachers/assistants served: 21

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 216/year

With the support of our School Board and community, the Waterbury School District is in an ideal position to implement Centers of Excellence focused particularly on bilingual and special needs children. Immigrants are attracted to Waterbury because of a tolerant community demeanor, a perceived wealth of entry-level jobs and a supportive Student Intake Center. Our school Board embraces the idea that early education is the foundation to future learning for *all* children and its support is limited only by lack of funding. In the past 10 years, the Board has added inclusion classes and bilingual aides, provided for co-teachers in all special education classes and supported joint planning among all sites. Also in the past 10 years, the total student population has grown from approximately 14,000 to 18,223. Today 43% are Hispanic students, 28.6% are Black, 26.2% are White, 1.8% are Asian American, and .3% are American Indian. Demand for pre-K exceeds supply and we screen applicants, accepting those who are lowest in speech and predictive literacy skills.

Now Waterbury proposes to provide new services to our urban children who face significant learning challenges, including poverty, English as a second language, and special physical, mental, or emotional needs. The project will meet all invitational priorities and serve 216 preschool children/year in 9 classrooms with an equivalent of 6.5 hours per day, 5 days per week, 46 weeks per year, in classrooms led by highly qualified teachers. *WE Read First*, grounded in scientifically based reading research, utilizes *Harcourt Trophies for Pre-K* and *Breakthrough to Literacy Pre-K*, an extensive curriculum of explicit, intentional skill-based instruction in language and literacy development. The project will involve parents and families. It will be distinguished by a dual language approach in some classes and a 'push-in' ESL support model in others. Classroom staff will participate in extensive and ongoing professional development and will use on-going assessments to drive instruction. *WE Read First* includes an evaluation plan to be carried out by an independent evaluator. Significant gains in the oral language skills of Pre-K students are expected.

District of Columbia

Project Name: DC Partnership for Early Literacy

Project Director: Mary Anne Lesiak (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$4,341,750

Number of teachers/assistants served: 42

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 286

Grantee: AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation

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Young children in DC, like those enrolled at our partner schools, are at the greatest risk for educational failure of any children in the United States. The 2004 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) documents that 69% of DC fourth-graders do not exhibit even the most basic-level reading skills and only 10% read on grade level. Among African-American students (85% of children in DC) a staggering 73% of fourth-graders fail to achieve basic-level reading. NAEP's Trial Urban District Assessment demonstrates that DC performs last in 4th and 8th grade reading when compared with participating urban school districts, including Los Angeles, New York, Cleveland and San Antonio (USED).

Additionally, DC has one of the highest special education placement rates in the nation with nearly 1 in 5 students qualifying. AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation is the lead applicant for a partnership among Septima Clark Public Charter School for Boys, Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School, and the District of Columbia Public Schools. The project meets all three of the Secretary's invitational priorities and will transform five existing preschools into centers of educational excellence that will serve approximately 300 young children annually at-risk of reading failure per year in the District of Columbia.

The *DC Partnership for Early Literacy* features a standards-based instructional program grounded in scientifically-based reading research that uses *Opening the World of Learning* as its core curriculum and adds *PreK Mathematics* to strengthen children's language and background knowledge. The project will implement a multi-tiered Response to Intervention instructional model that relies on providing additional support for children before they fail in the context of engaging, suitably challenging and developmentally appropriate instruction. Print rich, center-based classrooms that meet the standards outlined in the ELLCO will provide the backdrop for a balance of direct instruction and child-centered exploratory activities.

Families will participate in family fieldtrips, receive books and activities for each content them and participate in empirically-based training on supporting their children's developing language and literacy. Annually, teachers, apprentice teachers and paraprofessionals will participate in a 56-hour Institute, 22 hours of workshop and 160 hours of in-classroom coaching. The project will support teachers in assessing children's progress using the PPVT-IV, EVT-II and the TOPEL, and the PALSPreK for baseline and outcome assessments and the IGDIs, the GRTR and a letter identification/ letter sound task for progress monitoring.

District of Columbia

Project Name: DC Early Success (DC-ES)

Project Director: Nicol Christie (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$2,980,010

Number of teachers/assistants served: 35

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 311/year

Grantee: Hope Community
Charter School

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Washington, DC 20001

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DC's public schools are in crisis. Although preschool enrollment in the nation's capitol is among the highest in the nation (67% of children attend), according to the latest Quality Counts, DC is failing young children in preparation for school. In response to the area's education crisis, *DC Early Success (DC-ES)* will establish three Early Reading First Centers of Excellence at public charter schools in Washington, DC, that will enrich the early literacy skills of up to 500 students. Hope Community Public Charter School will collaborate with Ideal Academy PCS and William E. Doar Jr. PCS to demonstrate how to overcome barriers to school success and achieve outstanding results with urban youth living in poverty. The Success for All Foundation (SFAF) and the Student Support Center (SSC) will provide professional development, technical assistance, and Mentor-Coaching. Non-certified teachers will have the opportunity to participate in George Mason University's Early Childhood Certification program. A School Leader Coach will provide technical assistance and mentor school administrators, and a Transition Mentor-Coach will assist students with the transition from preschool to Kindergarten. Home visitors will support families and facilitate literacy outreach, and *Ladders to Literacy* will supplement the literacy curriculum for at-risk students needing more intensive help.

Four research-based elements will transform all three schools into ERF Centers of Excellence. The components are: 1) The *Success for All Curiosity Corner (SFACC)* program, including its intensive professional development and rigorous plan for implementation; 2) Mentor-Coaching linked with professional development for Teachers and Aides; 3) Mentor coaching linked with professional development for Principals; and 4) Integrated Home-School Programming. Student gains will be assessed through an external evaluator using multiple measures, including EARLI probes, PPVT-III, DIBELS, PALS Pre-K, and Woodcock Johnson (WJ).

Florida

Project Name: LASER CAERS (Collaboration in Achieving Early Reading Success)

Project Director: Candice Harris (.40 FTE)

Funding: \$3,164,998

Number of teachers/assistants served:

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 150/year

Grantee: The Committee for Academic Excellence

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Riverview, FL 33578

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Project *LASER CAERS (Collaboration in Achieving Early Reading Success)* endeavors to develop two community and faith-based early childhood education centers of excellence in Hillsborough County, Florida. CAERS will serve 150 three- and four-year olds each year for at least two consecutive years prior to kindergarten. More than one-third of the students speak English as a second language, 94% of students qualify to receive free or reduced lunches, 63% of the students served are faith-based and 91% of the families served receive Title 20 subsidies. Annually CAERS will serve students year round, for at least seven hours per day, five days per week.

LASER CAERS will adopt *Scholastic's Early Childhood Program (SECP)* as its core scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) curriculum. Using SBRR *CAERS* will improve the programs by: (1) creating and designing literacy, language and print-rich classroom environments, (2) implementing structured, continuous and on-going professional development programs that will be sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused and will include strategies such as using certified Bilingual, Cross-cultural, Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) instructors, mentors and coaches and progressive pedagogy in special education, biliteracy, comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing in the emphasis language, (3) fostering collaboration between home and school to advance students' cognition and early reading skill growth and development using state-aligned, SBRR curricula and age/developmentally-appropriate instruction that embeds literacy and language across curriculum experiences (4) using screening assessments and progress monitoring to identify and work with children who may be at-risk for delayed development or reading failure and design goals and objectives to meet their needs, (5) building on current preschool and elementary school transition practices by supporting and promoting continuity of instruction between these preschools and the LEA elementary schools. Both centers have a coordinated direct feed into the LEA and are served by Reading First elementary schools within the Hillsborough County School District.

Florida

Project Name: Building Language and Literacy

Project Director: Claudia Dean (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$4,022,728

Number of teachers/assistants served: 52

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 451

Grantee: The School Board of Broward County

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The School Board of Broward County (SBBC), partnered with Nova Southeastern University (NSU), proposes a comprehensive Early Reading First (ERF) model titled *Building Language and Literacy (BLL)* to improve oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabetic knowledge for students in existing preschool programs. In 2006-2007, 45% of students entering kindergarten in Broward County were considered at-risk based on the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener. *BLL* will provide intense literacy support to five proposed ERF sites serving 451 low-income 3-4 year-old children. The five selected sites that will serve as ERF centers work with 25% of children who speak another language, 15% of students with disabilities and 95% of the children are from low-income families as determined by federal poverty guidelines. In an effort to create five centers of educational excellence, *Opening the World of Learning*, a scientifically based early literacy program, along with extensive professional development will be used to create a language and print-rich environment that supports the critical components of language and early literacy development.

BLL will provide integrated, intensive language and literacy-based services through the following goals: (1) Implement *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*, a scientifically-based language and literacy curriculum; (2) Provide families with information on language and early literacy skills; (3) Provide high-quality, ongoing classroom-focused professional development and continued support and mentoring throughout the year to increase preschool teacher knowledge; (4) Provide valid, reliable, and ongoing screening and assessment to identify students at-risk, guide individualized instruction, and evaluate program effectiveness; and (5) Coordinate efforts with appropriate community, state, and federal resources to ensure a smooth transition with Reading First elementary schools. Evaluation measurements used to assess and monitor student progress will include the PALS-PreK, PPVT, EOWPVT, ESI-R, CLASS, ELLCO, IGDIs and Creative Curriculum Assessments. Workshops and ongoing site mentoring will be conducted along with efforts to bridge learning into the home and community to meet the needs of all students. An English Language Acquisition Plan has been developed to support English Language Learners.

Georgia

Project Name: Great Beginnings

Project Director: Barbara Lundy

Funding: \$4,396,871

Number of teachers/assistants served: 21

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 210/year

Grantee: Wilkinson County Schools

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Irwinton, GA 31042

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Wilkinson County (WC) is one of the poorest counties in Georgia. Wilkinson County Schools (WCS) has one primary school (k-2) with a total enrollment of approximately 533 students. 17% of our students have been identified as students with disabilities as defined under IDEA, which is a concern. In 2005, an Even Start grant was awarded which provided much needed parent support to help curb the downward spiral creating a cycle of poverty. Early Reading First (ERF) for WC will provide the foundation we so desperately need for our 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.

The goal of *Great Beginnings (GB)* is to prepare children to enter kindergarten with the strong language and early literacy skills necessary for them to become successful readers. This will be accomplished by: 1) providing high-quality preschool instruction in a SBRR early literacy curriculum using valid and reliable assessments and interventions to improve school readiness; 2) training staff in SBRR teaching practices that target language and early literacy, as well as, cognitive, social, and emotional development; and 3) creating a family and community network that supports the school learning environment. Program outcomes for children will be aligned to Georgia pre-k and Head Start standards and Reading First. *GB's* project features a literacy team lead by an expert literacy coach (LC), family literacy coordinator (FLC), and parent educators (PE) that will serve approximately 210 children (7.5 hr/d, 5 d/w, 46 wks). *GB* 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 (*DLM Early Childhood Express, Imagine It, Language for Learning, and Breakthrough to Literacy*) will provide a continuous foundation for preschool to elementary school. By unifying classroom instruction, professional development, parent involvement, and coordination with the existing kindergarten program, *GB* will serve as a national model for the development of cognition, language, and literacy in children.

Iowa

Project Name: Preparing Early Readers for Kindergarten (PERK)

Project Director: Nancy Duey (.20 FTE – no ERF funds)

Funding: \$4,308,288

Number of teachers/assistants served: 41

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 426/year

Grantee: Des Moines Independent Community School District

1301 Second Avenue

Des Moines, IA 50314

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Fax #: (515) 242-7862

nancy.duey@dmps.k12.ia.us

A 2008 study conducted by the Child & Family Policy Center of Des Moines determined that only 29% of students in Des Moines enter kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school. Building on the success of a 2004 Early Reading First grant, Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) will implement the Preparing Early Readers for Kindergarten (PERK) project at five early childhood sites serving high-need neighborhoods in Des Moines. This project will serve 25 classrooms and 426 students (89% FRPL, 79% minority, 38% ELL, and 16% special education).

PERK strategies and materials are based on scientifically-based reading research and best practices to improve oral language, alphabet knowledge, phonological & print awareness. The PERK project will implement *Houghton Mifflin Pre-K*, a comprehensive preschool literacy curriculum that is based on scientific research and aligned with critical preschool learning goals. This curriculum will be supplemented with scientifically-based *Hampton-Brown Avenues* for ELL students. Instructional practices of PERK staff will be improved through professional development from *McREL Scaffolding Early Literacy*, a verified, research-based professional development program, and DMPS-led professional development sessions. Screening assessments and progress monitoring measures will be administered regularly to determine overall program success and continually monitor student progress. Assessments will include PPVT-III, PALS, ELLCO, ECERS, and G3.

Illinois

Project Name: Achieving Preschool Language & Literacy Excellence (APPLE)

Project Director: William Teale (.30 FTE)

Funding: \$3,791,672

Number of teachers/assistants served: 14

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 160/year

Grantee: University of Illinois at Chicago

Center for Literacy Mc 147
1040 West Harrison Street
Chicago, IL 60607

Tel. #: (312) 413-1423

Fax #: (312) 413-8083

wteale@uic.edu

Achieving Preschool Language & Literacy Excellence (APLLE) is a partnership involving seven Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic Schools preschool classrooms and the University of Illinois at Chicago designed to create early education centers of excellence. These classrooms will provide low-income, culturally diverse, urban children with an educational program centered on high quality language- and print-rich environments that foster oral language skills, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge enabling children to enter kindergarten with the language, cognitive, and early reading skills necessary for school success.

APLLE will serve approximately 450 children, over 85% of whom are considered at-risk for educational failure; the families of the children; 7 teachers and 7 teacher assistants; and 5 school principals. *APLLE*, grounded in scientifically-based reading research, will provide high quality materials and explicit and contextualized literacy instruction facilitated by implementing the *Opening the World of Learning* curriculum. The curriculum is supplemented by a) targeted instruction supporting English Language Learners and b) a multi-tiered instructional model that specific one-to-one tutoring for children shown by formal and classroom-based assessments to be not making sufficient developmental gains and are therefore most severely at risk for later literacy problems. Teachers and assistants will participate in extensive professional development (PD) to implement *APLLE* at the highest levels of effectiveness. PD will include regular group sessions and ongoing modeling, observation, and feedback conducted by on-site coaches. *APLLE* also will employ a comprehensive, psychometrically sound assessment program that (1) identifies children at risk for language/literacy delays; (2) continuously monitors children's progress; and (3) uses individual and aggregate assessment data to make informed judgments about appropriate instruction. Finally, *APLLE* includes an external evaluation that assesses program effectiveness and contributes to ongoing formative program development.

Louisiana

Project Name: Project Recovery
Project Director: Renée Casbergue (.50 FTE)
Funding: \$3,607,577

Number of teachers/assistants served: 12
Number of school districts served: 1
Number of children served: 140/year

Grantee: Louisiana State University
223 Peabody Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Tel. #: (225) 578-6660
Fax #: (225) 578-2941
rcasberg@lsu.edu

Project Recovery represents a partnership between the New Orleans Public Schools, Louisiana State University, and the University of New Orleans to support development of seven preschool classrooms serving 140 children each year as centers of educational excellence. While high quality basic preschool programs are now in place in those schools that have opened in Orleans Parish, the addition of the intensive developmentally appropriate early literacy program proposed here will help children and families regain educational ground lost in the disruptions related to the two storms. Each of the schools to be included in the project serve children with special needs through an inclusion model, reserving up to 10% of slots for children who qualify for special education services. The schools' populations range from 98-100% African American. All are considered low SES schools by virtue of proportion of children on free or reduced lunch ranging from 82 – 96%.

This Early Reading First Proposal has the following goals: (1) accelerate children's language and literacy development; (2) implement a content-enriched language and literacy curriculum that provides comprehensive instruction to enhance children's vocabulary, background knowledge and thinking skills; (3) increase the amount of time spent in daily planned scientifically research based language and literacy instruction, including explicit small group and individual instruction; (4) substantially improve the language-, literature-, and print-rich environments in all *Project Recovery* classrooms; (5) dramatically increase teachers' and assistants' effectiveness in delivering explicit language and literacy instruction in oral language, comprehension, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, alphabet recognition, and concepts about print; and (6) use screening and progress monitoring of age-appropriate language and literacy skills to identify children at risk and guide instructional planning. The curricula currently being implemented in these preexisting preschool classrooms will be supplemented with Pearson's *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)* program and five key research-based literacy routines. Systematic ongoing and comprehensive professional development activities will be conducted by experts in the field of early literacy and monitored using CLASS, a research tested observation instrument, as well as the ELLCO, PALS-PreK, PPVT and other assessments with the goal of sustaining implementation of scientifically-based practices over time.

Maine

Project Name: Early Literacy for Every Child

Project Director: Susan Reed (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$4,633,101

Number of teachers/assistants served: 32

Number of school districts served: 3

Number of children served: 280/year

Grantee: University of Southern
Maine

P.O. Box 9300

34 Bedford Street

Portland, ME 04104

Tel. #: (207) 780-5825

Fax #: (207) 780-5817

sreed@usm.maine.edu

Maine's educational communities have been challenged by the needs of a diverse population that includes a dramatic increase of immigrants and refugees. In Portland schools alone there is a 28% ELL population with over 50 languages spoken. Lewiston refugees and immigrants represent 8-10% of the population with 16 different languages spoken. The second wave of Somali immigrants, Bantu, brings specific challenges as they are illiterate in the written languages of Somali *and* English. The numbers of students who do not or only partially meet Maine third grade reading standards average 70% in the neighborhoods targeted for ERF. Additionally, the children entering elementary schools have high percentage of diagnosed special needs ranging from 19-42%.

The *Early Literacy for Every Child* project at the University of Southern Maine will collaborate with Androscoggin Head Start, Catholic Charities St. Louis Child Development Center, People's Regional Opportunity Program Head Start and three LEAs to transform sixteen preschool classrooms into programs of educational excellence. The project will implement activities to improve significantly: (1) Classroom language and literacy environments for 280 children annually; (2) 32 preschool teachers' capacity to deliver SBRR instruction and assessment (including regular, direct and explicit language and literacy activities that support oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness); (3) Preschool children's transition to kindergarten programs.

The project will implement the research-based curriculum, *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*, in order to support significant and sustainable change in curriculum, instruction, classroom environment, parental involvement, professional development and child and program level assessment require to meet the proposed goals. A professional development team comprised of Dr. Judy Schickedanz, early literacy expert and senior *OWL* curriculum author, multilingual specialists, speech therapists, an inclusion and a technology specialist will work with five early literacy coaches to ensure successful project outcomes and knowledge transfer to all teachers. Oldham Innovative Research will conduct the formal assessments and evaluation.

Massachusetts

Project Name: LEADER - Lowell's Enhanced Approach for Developing Early Readers

Project Director: Sheila Skiffington (.80 FTE)

Funding: \$2,766,184

Number of teachers/assistants served: 26

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 175/year

Grantee: Education Development Center

55 Chapel Street

Newton, MA 02458

Tel. #: (617) 969-7100

Fax #: (617) 244-3609

sskiffington@edc.org

Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in partnership with Community Teamwork Incorporated (CTI) is pleased to propose project *LEADER – Lowell's Enhanced Approach for Developing Early Readers* in Lowell, MA. EDC brings 5 decades of experience in leading widely-recognized national, state, and local early literacy initiatives and more than 20 years of working collaboratively with CTI on school improvement efforts. CTI has a record of quality and now seeks to work closely with EDC staff to fully implement an Early Reading First project, located at EDC's Lowell office. Together we have carefully crafted a multi-faceted intervention to elevate 2 of CTI's preschool centers from programs of quality to programs of educational excellence.

LEADER will institutionalize evidence-based instructional practices in 10 classrooms, potentially reaching 525 of Lowell's most vulnerable children during the 3 years of the project. All of these children are low-income and face other high risk factors for academic failure. The number of Lowell's ELL children exceeds the state average and their standardized test scores fall well below mean state assessment scores. *LEADER* will implement an intensive professional development program for nearly 30 Lowell staff—teaching teams, supervisors, and Reading First kindergarten teachers—consisting of evidence-based, credit-bearing courses, instructional coaching, adoption of a research-based curriculum, and parent training sessions. Over the 3 years of the grant, each participant will engage in 220 hours of coursework in early language/literacy development, formative assessment, and science, receiving 10 graduate or undergraduate credits. Weekly instructional coaching will enhance teachers' instructional practices, with a focus on the considerable population of English language learners. *LEADER* will give CTI the resources needed to coordinate its preschool services with its Reading First initiative and align practices across preschool and K classrooms. CTI has selected the scientific research-based *Building Language for Literacy (BLL)* curriculum in recognition that a strong literacy-based curriculum is essential and because of its rigorous scientific base and its coordination with the *Creative Curriculum* framework (CC).

Massachusetts

Project Name: EStRELLA - Early Steps towards Reading, Education, Language & Literacy Acquisition

Project Director: Gayle Williams (.25 FTE)

Funding: \$3,976,257

Number of teachers/assistants served: 33

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 235

Grantee: Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc.

305 Essex Street

Lawrence, MA 01840

Tel. #: (978) 681-4996

Fax #: (978) 681-4948

gwilliams@glcac.org

EStRELLA – Early Steps towards Reading, Education, Language & Literacy Acquisition is headed by the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council as fiscal and administrative lead for the local Community Partnerships for Children Program. *EStRELLA* is a partnership within a partnership. The centers that will participate in *EStRELLA* are already members of the CPC partnership, a group of 53 organizations that provide services related to early care and education in Greater Lawrence. Participating *EStRELLA* centers will be three sites of educational excellence, all in urban early childhood settings serving low income children, with 52% being English Language Learner (ELL) children.

The goals of *EStRELLA* are to: (1) Build Centers of Excellence through improvement in early childhood instruction, enriched classroom environments, and language supportive interactions that infuse literacy into every part of the child's preschool experience and (2) Improve children's phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge and oral language via a five prong approach using: a) explicit instruction, ELL & special needs strategies involving language extension and vocabulary development; b) best practices in print rich environments with teachers/families using the environment as a teaching/learning tool; c) teacher understanding and application of SBRR practices after 600 hours of professional development; d) valid and reliable screenings, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome literacy measures to identify children at risk; and e) collaboration and coordination of ERF with similar efforts and with other resources.

EStRELLA (10 hrs/5 days/12 months) is projected to serve 235 high poverty, at-risk children from 3 sites (2- YMCA, YWCA) in multi-age classrooms. Of the 206 students currently enrolled, 19 have identified special needs, 93% live in poverty & over 52% are non/limited English speaking. Classrooms are staffed with bi-lingual teachers or paraprofessionals. *EStRELLA* will use *Curiosity Corner* as the core curriculum with *Language for Learning* as a supplement and *Breakthrough to Literacy* for intervention.

Michigan

Project Name: EARLY – Early Accent on Reading and Learning for Young Children

Project Director: Rebecca Brinks (.25 FTE)

Funding: \$4,494,866

Number of teachers/assistants served: 15

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 144/year

Grantee: Grand Rapids

Community College

143 Bostwick NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Tel. #: (616) 234-4084

Fax #: (616) 234-3370

bbrinks@grcc.edu

Early Accent on Reading and Learning for Young Children (EARLY) will develop Centers of Early Childhood Educational Excellence at five sites that serve 144 children each year of the program in urban Grand Rapids, Michigan. EARLY is a partnership between Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS), and the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids (YMCA). The project is based upon a theory of change focusing on scientifically based reading research (SBRR) literacy practices and leading to school readiness for at-risk children. *EARLY* meets ERF Invitational Priority 1 as intensive full-time services are delivered to at-risk preschoolers; age's four to five, at sites that feed into Reading First schools. Priority 2 is met by focusing on increasing school readiness for children with limited English proficiency. Invitational Priority 3 is met through intentional inclusion of the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids, a non-profit, faith-based organization built on Christian principles. The emphasis of the project is to serve those children who are considered most at risk and in need of early intervention.

EARLY activities address the following ERF goals: (1) Classroom environments will be improved through use of the Classroom Literacy Enrichment Model (CLEM), grounded in SBRR, that infuses literacy into all aspects of the classroom environment and emphasizes assessment as a part of common classroom practice. This builds on the experience and success of the 2002 ERF grant and Great Start Professional Development Grant. (2) Professional development for educators will be provided through an initial coursework learning opportunities, cohort monthly workshops, site-based mentoring (coaching) and individualized education plans that will lead to improved instruction in oral language, phonological and print awareness, and alphabet knowledge. (3) Services and instructional materials will develop language, cognitive and early reading skills through use of the CLEM integrating SBRR literacy practices. (4) Screening assessments (Pre-LAS, PPVT III, Pals PreK, TROLL) will identify needs of individual children and drive instructional strategies. Classroom environments will be assessed using ELLCO and improved to ensure tools for learning are available. External evaluation will be conducted to provide on-going assessment data, assessment of change in educator knowledge and practice, and use of home literacy activities by families. Data will be used to ensure program efficacy and to improve the project on an ongoing basis.

Michigan

Project Name: Promising Beginnings
Project Director: Esther Newlin-Haus (1.0 FTE)
Funding: \$4,024,946

Number of teachers/assistants served: 40
Number of school districts served: 1
Number of children served: 350/year

Grantee: Western Michigan University
1903 W. Michigan Avenue
1202 Sangren Hall Mail Stop
5290
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
Tel. #: (269) 387-0728
esther.newlin-haus@wmich.edu

Promising Beginnings (PB) is a unique partnership between Western Michigan University (WMU), Kalamazoo Head Start (HS), Learning Village (LV), a state funded/tuition based program, and the YWCA Preschool in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The project seeks to improve school readiness of approximately 350 children annually from 12 classrooms. Seventy-six percent are eligible for free/reduced lunch and 18% are English Language Learners who speak Spanish, Arabic, and various Asian languages. A four-week summer program (LV & YWCA) and an intensive summer family program (HS) will increase intensity and extent of early literacy instruction.

PB will integrate *Creative Curriculum/High Scope* with *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*, an SBRR early literacy curriculum, providing intensive, thematic, integrated curriculum to increase early literacy skills in alphabet recognition, phonological awareness, print/book awareness, background knowledge, and oral language/vocabulary. *PB* will supplement OWL with rich classroom libraries and thematic “prop boxes.” Parent workshops, mentoring, and take-home books will increase the print-richness of children’s homes. *PB* is heavily weighted on parent/family and community (Parent to Parent of SW Michigan, the Hispanic American Council, and the national award-winning Kalamazoo Public Library) involvement. *PB* will also provide intensive professional development: workshops, small-group “coaching labs” and coaching, offering WMU credits for teachers. Weekly coaching of teachers will ensure high quality, explicit, data-driven instruction using valid and reliable outcome and ongoing progress/classroom monitoring instruments (PPVT, PALS Pre-K, CIRCLE, Monthly Benchmark Checklist, qualitative child profile data, and ELLCO).

Montana

Project Name: Rocky Boy Preschool Literacy Acquisition Coalition (RB Coalition)

Project Director: Voyd St. Pierre (.10 FTE)

Funding: \$2,251,690

Number of teachers/assistants served: 18

Number of school districts served: 2

Number of children served: 138

Grantee: Rocky Boy School Districts 87-J&L

RR 1, Box 620

Box Elder, MT 59521

Tel. # (406) 395-4291

Fax #: (406) 395-4829

voydsp@rockyboy.k12.mt.us

The *Rocky Boy Preschool Literacy Acquisition Coalition (RB Coalition)* is a partnership among local education agencies (Rocky Boy and Box Elder School Districts), local Head Start provider (Rocky Boy Head Start), and Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). The RB Coalition will improve the school readiness of 138 low-income, ethnically and language-diverse children in nine preschool classrooms throughout rural communities of the Chippewa Cree Indian Nation. While poverty is pervasive in this remote, rural area, the American Indian (AI) children to be served by the *RB Coalition* face additional educational challenges; they must learn to negotiate and integrate two worlds—the tribal and the surrounding communities. These challenges can be overcome with early intervention, most importantly, ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn.

RB Coalition will implement a curriculum, proven second language acquisition strategies, professional development, and valid and reliable assessments to create centers of excellence that increase children's language and literacy preparedness. The project addresses the two invitational priorities by providing a full day, full year program to at-risk children, many of whom have limited English proficiency. Teachers and aides will be provided with research-based curricular materials (Houghton Mifflin *Where Bright Futures Begin*), ongoing research-based professional development (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, *Scaffolding Early Literacy*), and instructional support via literacy coaches and model teachers to ensure that the children of the *RB Coalition* are prepared to enter kindergarten with the cognitive, early language and literacy skills needed for success in school: oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness.

New York

Project Name: BLAST Off– Build Literacy Awareness, Skills, and Training

Project Director: Deborah Flint (.10 FTE – no ERF funds)

Funding: \$2,769,345

Number of teachers/assistants served: 14

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 120

Grantee: Addison Central School District

7 Cleveland Street

Addison, NY 14801

Tel. #: (607) 359-2261

Fax #: (607) 359-2156

dflint@addisoncsd.org

The *BLAST Off* Program will partner the Addison Central School District with ProAction Head Start to deliver a high-quality, research-based Early Reading First program designed to accelerate language and literacy development for three- and four-year old, at-risk, children living in a rural, geographically isolated, economically-depressed community located in the Appalachian foothills in the southern tier of New York State. Twenty percent of district families have incomes below the federal poverty guidelines; 62% of students qualify for a free/reduced price lunch; 33% percent of parents have less than a high school education or GED; and 20% are illiterate/marginally literate. Thirty-nine percent of entering kindergarten students scored below benchmark for Letter Naming Fluency and 90% of students with no preschool experience score below benchmark. Additionally, rural isolation delays the development of social skills needed for success in school.

In order to address the impact of poverty and social isolation on early literacy development, the program partners will create two Early Reading First Centers; one at Tuscarora Elementary School and one at Valley Elementary School. The project will provide structured, systematic, explicit instruction in the four key literacy areas using the *Open Court Reading Pre-K* literacy curriculum, extend existing half-day programs to full-day, increase the number of children served from 87 to 120, add an additional four-year old class and three-year old class, extend the program year to 46 weeks, and implement a tiered system of intervention using the Response to Intervention Model. Teachers will participate in intensive, sustained classroom-focus professional development including coaching and mentoring provided by two Literacy Coaches. As a result of program participation, students will increase their alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, print awareness, and oral language skills; families will increase their skills for supporting early literacy skills; and teachers will increase their capacity to effectively integrate SBRR into classroom instruction.

North Dakota

Project Name: MiND PLACE – Minot, North Dakota
Preschool Literacy Acquisition Collaborative for Education

Project Director: Gail Schauer (.50 FTE)

Funding: \$5,601,655

Number of teachers/assistants served: 61

Number of school districts served: 2

Number of children served: 380

Grantee: North Dakota Department
of Public Instruction

600 East Boulevard Ave., Dept.
201

Bismarck, ND 58505

Tel. #: (701) 328-2285

Fax #: (701) 328-4770

gschauer@nd.gov

The *Minot, North Dakota Preschool Literacy Acquisition Collaborative for Education (MiND PLACE)* aims to improve the school readiness of 380 low-income, ethnically and language-diverse children attending three regional Head Start preschools (Minot Public Schools, Early Explorers, and Three Affiliated Tribes) located in Minot and Mohall-Lansford- Sherwood School Districts. This remote rural area faces numerous challenges to education, including pervasive poverty and unemployment. Approximately 79 percent of children in the proposed project are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 35% are English learners. Although growing up in remote, rural America presents a well documented set of educational challenges for young children, including pervasive poverty and limited opportunities,¹ these challenges can be overcome using strategies such as ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn. To address this condition, *MiND PLACE* will combine a curriculum, proven second language acquisition strategies, professional development, and valid and reliable assessments to create centers of excellence that increase children's language and literacy preparedness. The proposed project addresses the two invitational priorities by providing a full day, full year program to at-risk children, many of whom have limited English proficiency.

To help children acquire the cognitive, oral language, and early literacy skills needed for later success, *MiND PLACE* will use a multifaceted approach that is grounded in the science of reading and instructional best practices. The approach features eight strategies: (1) increased time for learning; (2) research-based literacy curriculum, Pearson's *Opening the World of Learning*; (3) print- and language-rich classrooms; (4) research-based instructional practices that support individual learning needs; (5) ongoing assessment and progress monitoring; (6) *Scaffolding Early Literacy*, research-based professional development led by Dr. Elena Bodrova and Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning; (7) home-school linkages; and (8) a comprehensive preschool to kindergarten transition program. Videoconferencing will supplement face-to-face professional development and curriculum planning. Formative and summative evaluation will guide program implementation and measure changes in teacher practice and child outcomes.

Oklahoma

Project Name: Project HOPE – Helping Oklahoma Preschoolers Excel

Project Director: Ruthie Tate (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$3,930,569

Number of teachers/assistants served: 36

Number of school districts served: 3

Number of children served: 310/year

Grantee: Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc.

209 North 4th Street

Hugo, OK 74743

Tel. #: (580) 326-3351

Fax #: (580) 326-2305

rtate@littledixie.org

Project HOPE, or *Helping Oklahoma Preschoolers Excel*, is the name of Little Dixie Community Action Agency's (LDCAA) Early Reading First initiative. LDCAA is a private, nonprofit community organization that operates Head Start classrooms in three rural Oklahoma counties (Choctaw, McCurtain, and Pushmataha), which have some of the highest poverty rates in the state. All three counties are included in the territory of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and have large Native American populations. The project will serve children attending preschool centers located within these poverty-stricken, rurally isolated counties.

Through *Project HOPE*, LDCAA will turn three rural preschool sites into model centers of excellence by implementing the Wright Group's *Breakthrough to Literacy (BtL)*, a comprehensive reading curriculum addressing essential Early Reading First (ERF) components. Assisting in this endeavor will be: local educational agencies and Head Start centers, families of the preschool children served, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Memphis, and the Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education/University of Texas Health Sciences Center. These and other partnerships will be established to build relationships with those involved in the project, and to ensure that *Project HOPE* is transitioned easily into the centers to be served. Through this funding opportunity, *Project HOPE* will address all three Invitational Priorities, which are: intensity of services provided through full-time early childhood education programs; an English Language Acquisition Plan for children served with limited English proficiency; and engaging faith-based or community organizations in the delivery of services under the Early Reading First Program. In addition, *Project HOPE* will include an equal balance of comprehensive, research-based, literacy-focused professional development, improved classroom environment and literacy instruction, assessment, and family involvement. Each of these components will be used to facilitate low-income children's language and literacy learning to prevent them from encountering reading difficulties once they enter school.

Pennsylvania

Project Name: Lancaster Early Reading First
Project Director: Traci Scott (.80 FTE - no ERF funds)
Funding: \$2,781,482

Number of teachers/assistants served: 14
Number of school districts served: 1
Number of children served: 250/year

Grantee: School District of Lancaster
251 South Prince Street, 3rd Floor
Lancaster, PA 17602
Tel. #: (717) 291-6264
Fax #: (717) 396-6817
tascott@lancaster.k12.pa.us

The School District of Lancaster is located in an urban center in rural Pennsylvania. Although our surrounding region is best known for its Amish population and picturesque farmlands, Lancaster City belies this marketing stereotype. We are a diverse urban community. Unfortunately, many of our children and youth are at risk of educational failure. Only 45% of students met state standards in reading on the 2007 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment; 52% met PSSA math standards. The achievement gap between Caucasian students and African-American and Latino students persists and widens as students age. While 58% of Caucasian 11th-grade students met PSSA reading standards, only 37% of African American and 33% of Hispanic students did so. In 2006-07, only 67% of students graduated; that percentage drops to 56% for Latino students. *Lancaster Early Reading First* is a communitywide effort to transform 4 urban preschool centers in the School District of Lancaster into models of early childhood literacy and language excellence, using scientifically based reading research (SBRR) as the foundation for this work. The 4 Lancaster centers serve a diverse population of 250 children: 85% of children receive free/reduced lunch; 67% are Latino, 20% African-American, 10% Caucasian, and 3% Asian; 68% of students are English language learners; and 5% of children have identified disabilities and receive special education services.

With support from Early Reading First, our centers will: (1) Implement strategies, materials and professional development that are grounded in SBRR. We will continue to implement *Building Language for Literacy* as the primary curriculum to address the four major areas of ERF: oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabet knowledge. *BLL* builds from the *Report of the National Reading Panel, Learning to Read and Write* and *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. (2) Operate full-day, full-year, consecutive-year programs in each of our target centers (Priority 1), allowing us to increase the intensity and depth of instruction and resulting in greater gains in language and literacy development among our at-risk students. (3) Offer a robust language acquisition program for our English language learners (Priority 2). Our language acquisition program will employ immersion to align it with the District's immersion-based ELL program. Students' knowledge of their native language, Spanish, will be built upon and supported as they acquire English language and literacy abilities. With these components in place, our centers will provide *all* children, with the language, cognitive and early reading skills necessary for future reading success.

South Carolina

Project Name: PEACH – Partnership for Educational Achievement in Centers and Homes

Project Director: Bridget Creel Clark (1.0 FTE)

Funding: \$3,948,791

Number of teachers/assistants served: 24

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 255/year

Grantee: The School District of Edgefield County

3 Par Drive

Edgefield, SC 29824

Tel. #: (803) 275-2755

Fax #: (803) 275-4426

bclark@edgefield.k12.sc.us

The School District of Edgefield County, in partnership with the GLEAMNS Head Start Program and Edgefield First Steps to School Readiness Program, has formed the *PEACH (Partnership for Educational Achievement in Centers and Homes)* Project to address the historical pattern of low educational achievement in this small, rural county where one in ten preschool children lives in abject poverty and one in four does not demonstrate readiness for first grade. Operating forty six weeks per year, the project will transform the county's four elementary schools and sole Head Start Program into preschool Centers of Excellence. The *PEACH Project* will ensure, due to its inclusion of all public providers, that every low-income, educationally disadvantaged three and four year old child has the opportunity to enter kindergarten with the cognitive and early literacy skills necessary to ensure reading success.

The *PEACH Project* will integrate an explicit, scientifically-based emerging literacy curriculum, *Building Language for Literacy*, into all centers to facilitate a two year continuum of intentional instruction in oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge. Instruction will be provided in thirteen classrooms rich in language and literature. All teachers will participate in rigorous and ongoing professional development in the continuum of reading that incorporates weekly embedded sessions to convert scientifically based reading research concepts to practice. The project will utilize criterion referenced and standardized instruments including the PALS PreK, PPVT-III, PEP, IGDI, ELLCO, and CLASS to measure progress and inform instruction and professional development at the student, classroom, and program levels. Community-based literacy teams, aligned to school attendance zones, will serve as vehicles for transitional planning and instructional continuity across providers. The *PEACH Project*, through its county-wide scope and research-based design, will ensure that every child has the necessary foundation to reach their full reading potential.

Tennessee

Project Name: Great Beginnings Early Literacy Initiative

Project Director: Brenda Benford (.20 FTE - no ERF funds)

Funding: \$3,938,734

Number of teachers/assistants served: 50

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 425

Grantee: Hamilton County
Department of Education
3074 Hickory Valley Road
Chattanooga, TN 37421
Tel. #: (423) 209-8563
Fax. # (423) 209-8494
benford_b@hcde.org

The *Great Beginnings Early Literacy Initiative* is collaboration between Hamilton County Department of Education, Chattanooga Human Services, City of Chattanooga Head Start, and Children's Home/Chambliss Shelter. The project will serve 425 3-5 year old children and 50 teachers and assistants in 1 Reading First school, 2 community based centers, and 2 Head Start centers. The selected sites are located in some of the most impoverished areas in the county. According to a survey conducted by the Southeast Tennessee Information Service, between 47% and 61% of the students in these communities scored in the "not ready to learn" section of the First Step readiness test and approximately 45% of the adults in these communities had the highest percentage of reading deficiencies in the county. Because of the extreme poverty (100% free/reduced lunch), chronically poor educational achievement, & high rate (50%) of entry into kindergarten with learning deficiencies, *Great Beginnings* (GB) will show what at-risk children can achieve in "centers of excellence." The project will serve sizable populations (over 15%) of children with special needs.

The initiative will allow the programs to effectively utilize literacy-based curricula and to create learning environments that would build a strong foundation of basic literacy skills by integrating SBRR strategies, instructional materials, and literacy activities into our existing programs. As part of the project the district will extend the number of weeks children are served to 46 and to hire support staff that would focus on assessment, curricula, instruction, and professional development for administrators, staff (teachers and assistants), and families. The project will provide literacy coaches, a family literacy coordinator, and a speech and language therapist. The initiative is designed to transform our existing preschool programs into centers of excellence that would provide a high-quality education for preschool children, who are considered at risk and are economically disadvantaged. The research based curricula are *DLM Early Childhood Express* for 3 year olds and *Opening the World of Learning* for 4 year olds. Assessments for screening, informing instruction, and monitoring student progress are First Step Screening Assessment, PALS Pre-K, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III (PPVT-III), IGDI (Get It, Got, Go) , and Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT). Work Sampling System and Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum will provide reports to families about student progress. The *ELLCO* and *E-LOT* will be used to evaluate classroom environments.

Tennessee

Project Name: Enhanced Language and Literacy Success (ELL Success)

Project Director: David Dickinson (.0625 FTE)

Funding: \$3,421,324

Grantee: Vanderbilt University

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Nashville, TN 37203

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Number of teachers/assistants served: 13

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 234

Enhanced Language and Literacy Success (ELL Success) is collaboration among the Department of Teaching and Learning at Vanderbilt's Peabody College, the Center for Evaluation Research and Methodology at the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies, the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), the YMCA of Middle Tennessee, and the Nashville Public Library. *ELL Success* is designed to ensure that all children in our preschool classrooms have the language, conceptual knowledge and emergent literacy skills required for long-term literacy success. It will be based in 13 classrooms in 7 MNPS schools. Several schools serve significant numbers of families who speak languages other than English. The percentage of ELL students being served by the MNPS has nearly doubled from 5% in 2000 to 9% in 2007 and this growth combined with the increase in the rapid growth in the total number of ELL children in MNPS Pre-K classrooms means that the system is facing dramatic growth in the overall number of ELL children. *ELL Success* will build on Reading First successes and provide a model for ways to enhance the quality of preschool classrooms and better integrate them into the school system.

Opening the World of Learning (OWL), will provide the foundation for the project, with methods for encouraging and teaching emergent writing augmenting OWL. Efforts to ensure high quality instruction will include professional development delivered in large and small groups and coaching. Children's learning and instructional quality will be monitored and improvement efforts guided by findings. Classroom experiences will be designed to intentionally build children's language and literacy skills in English as the program is designed to ensure success of children from all language backgrounds while also celebrating the fact the some children know more than one language. Classrooms will foster the learning of English while they also provide families with books and strategies that help them support their children's first languages and use those language skills as a resource for learning English in school. Library programs will be designed to help foster home literacy and a summer program operated by the YMCA will be developed to reduce summer learning loss.

Virginia

Project Name: Supporting and Ensuring Early Language and Literacy Success (SEELLS)

Project Director: Christopher Chin (.50 FTE)

Funding: \$4,492,920

Number of teachers/assistants served: 26

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 236/year

Grantee: Virginia Commonwealth University

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Supporting and Ensuring Early Language and Literacy Success (SEELLS), an interdisciplinary, university-community partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Education, The Literacy Institute at VCU, and Richmond Public Schools (RPS), will enhance the RPS Head Start program by creating centers of excellence that provide high quality preschool education focusing on early language and literacy development. Through instructional and assessment strategies, curricula, professional development based on scientifically-based reading research, a summer transition program, increased family involvement, and enhanced support for children with special needs and limited English proficiency, *SEELLS* will promote preschoolers' successful transition to kindergarten with the early language and literacy skills necessary for reading success. *SEELLS* sites will serve as a permanent model of scientifically-based early language and literacy instruction and assessment in Richmond and statewide. The RPS Director of Instruction, RPS HS Program Director, and *SEELLS* Project Director collaboratively identified five sites for *SEELLS*, which together serve 236 children (ages 3 to 5) in 13 classrooms. *SEELLS* sites serve 100% minority children, 100% low-income children (eligible for free lunch), and at least 10% children with special needs. *SEELLS* will provide daily, explicit, and systematic instruction targeting preschoolers' oral language skills, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge using the *Houghton Mifflin Pre-K: Where Bright Futures Begin (HM Pre-K)* curriculum.

The overarching goals of *SEELLS* include the following: (1) Provide high-quality learning environments for all preschoolers to acquire critical early language and literacy skills needed for successful transition to kindergarten; (2) Provide ongoing professional development, classroom-based coaching, and formal educational opportunities to increase mastery of research-based theory and instruction; (3) Provide research-based materials and activities that support the development of preschool students' cognitive and early language and literacy skills; (4) Enhance home literacy environments by engaging and educating parents and families and providing practical, home-based literacy resources and materials; and (5) Use screening and monitoring assessments to identify and individualize instruction for children at risk for reading failure.

Wisconsin

Project Name: Wisconsin Reading Acquisition Program (WRAP)

Project Director: Maura Moyle (.375 FTE)

Funding: \$4,034,108

Grantee: Marquette University

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Number of teachers/assistants served: 30

Number of school districts served: 1

Number of children served: 300/year

The *Wisconsin Reading Acquisition Program (WRAP)* is a collaboration between Marquette University and Day Care Services for Children, Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The need for this partnership is more crucial now than ever before. According to a recent report by the U.S. Department of Education, the average reading ability for fourth- and eighth grade African American students in Wisconsin is the worst in the nation. In addition, 70% of English language learners fall below the basic reading proficiency level by fourth grade. Coordination with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) will be a key point of this project, as 99% of children enrolled in DCSC preschool programs enter MPS at kindergarten. To prevent future MPS students from following the aforementioned trends, an effective, scientifically-based early literacy program will be implemented through this grant. The project will serve 300 at-risk, low-income children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (50% African American, 40% Hispanic/Latino, 40% English language learners, 10% special needs) that will enter the MPS.

The goals of *WRAP* are to improve children's oral language, phonological awareness, written language awareness, alphabet knowledge, development of background knowledge, verbal reasoning abilities, analytical thinking, and English language skills. Fifteen classrooms will implement *Opening the World of Learning (OWL)*, a scientifically based language- and literacy-based preschool curriculum, in conjunction with the *Creative Curriculum*®. Children will be screened using the PPVT-4 and PALS Pre-K. On-going assessments (IGDIs and curriculum based checklists) will be used to inform instruction. In addition, English language learners will be assessed using the Pre-IPT, ROWPVT: SBE, and various WIDA measures. Classrooms will be assessed using the ELLCO. A tiered approach will be implemented for children identified as needing more intensive, individualized instruction. In addition, *WRAP* includes a detailed plan for facilitating English language acquisition in children who are English Language Learners.

WRAP will provide intensive, on-going professional development, including regular mentoring by Literacy Coaches and Content Specialists, and annual teacher institutes featuring nationally-recognized experts on early literacy. Family Support workers will implement programs and strategies to increase family involvement in their children's reading readiness. In addition, project staff will work closely with MPS to oversee children's transition to kindergarten. The comprehensive evaluation plan includes regular Advisory Board meetings (including parents and members of the community), annual evaluations from an external evaluator, and the collection of follow-up data after children have entered kindergarten.