Preparing African American Children for Kindergarten Readiness Project

Key Findings

I wasn't on a routine as a kid. I try to put my son on a routine so he knows what is coming next. He knows when it is time to do homework. I sit with him when he does his homework.

The best time to read to your child is to take advantage of a situation. At the grocery store, talk about the colors in the produce department; ask them to find something green, or ask them to count the apples going into the bag.

I've learned by watching other parents, trying something new, I don't want to be stuck in the same spot. My oldest daughter says she sees the difference. I have friends who are very impatient. They say, "how can you be so patient with your kids". I say, "I have learned to be patient". A lot of parents are learning from other parents.

If African American parents are worrying about paying the rent, buying food it is a big wall in being a one on one parent. Survival comes first. If they are not trained or educated to get a job it is hard to be worrying about school for their kids.

– comments made by parents during focus group sessions

Input Process To-Date

Focus Groups with 52 African American parents and grandparents were held at North Portland Library, Healthy Birth Initiative (HBI), Albina Early Head Start, PCRI Community Development Corporation, Department of Human Services/Child Welfare Division.

Parent Survey was completed by 31 parents and grandparents during Albina Early Head Start Parent Orientation session and on-line. Focus group participants were asked to distribute cards to friends and family with information on how to complete the on-line survey and enter into a drawing for a $50 gift certificate.

Key Interviews were conducted with Tony Hopson, SEI; Maxine Fitzpatrick and Deborah Turner, PCRI; Cornetta Smith, Tameka Brazile, and Aisha Campbell, Healthy Birth Initiative (HBI); Adrienne Livingston, Black United Fund; Elaine Harrison, Albina Early Head Start; Larry Dalton, Jennifer Bren, DHS, Child Welfare; Carol Cheney, State Health Division, Office of Multi-Cultural Health.

Meetings were held with library supervisors, managers, and library staff.

Findings compiled from input process

<u>Barriers to African American children being ready for kindergarten</u> *(all input sources)*

- Time to read – immediacy of situation dealing with food, shelter, clothing – parents meeting basic needs
- Message of importance of parents reading to children doesn't get to parents
- Parents who have low functioning in reading – shy away from teaching their children
- Literacy is not a good name – it's what library uses but it scares parents away
- Parents having age-appropriate tools
- Lack of recognition of African Americans in books, library, schools
- Lack of support networks – to provide mentors and role models for children
- Lack of information – parents not aware of available resources
- Structural barriers – environmental, financial, racism, schools
- Transportation to resources; library events
- Number of kids to teacher in schools a problem
- Communication between teachers and parents – need to change parents/grandparents fears of what happened when they went to school
- No minorities as teachers
- Different learning styles – there should be more learning through interaction
- Need more African American parents active in the schools/parent involvement
- Grandparents raising grandchildren need help for kids with homework

<u>Who African American parents of young children look to for guidance</u> *(parent survey and focus groups)*

- Parents (62%) Grandparents (31%)
- Preschool teacher/child care provider (55%)
- TV Programs (37%)
- Relatives (41%)
- Friends (31%)
- Websites (31%)
- Neighbors (27%)
- Churches (24%)
- Library (17%)
- Sports "stars", coaches, players
- Hip Hop musicians

<u>Radio stations listen to and frequent use of social media and other sources of information</u> *(parent survey and focus groups)*

- KBMB, KBOO, The Fish, 107.5, Z100
- Facebook (48%), Web searches (72%)
- Texting

- Email
- Portland Observer, Skanner
- Community Center at apartment building
- NW Magazine

<u>When to start reading to child (</u>*Parent Survey)*

- Soon as child is born (84%)
- 3 months old (3%)
- 1 year (3%)
- 18 months (6%)
- 3 years (3%)

<u>Information/help useful to prepare child to succeed in school</u> *(Parent Survey, Key Interviews, Focus Groups)*

- List of what kids need to know when they enter school – what to expect manuals – examples of what's appropriate by age
- Information on what I can do at home
- Fun, educational activities – books, flash cards, educational videos, music CDs
- Parent orientations, classes, group discussions – but don't call it a parenting class
- Reading with your child at home
- Playing school with kids at home
- Have ABC's on walls in bedroom
- Play games such as "where is the red apple"
- Parents learn from each other – watch what other parents do---learn from what they do right and what they do wrong
- Be a support system when your child goes to school – show teachers you are interested
- Expose child to other children before they go to school so they learn to get along/to interact with other kids
- Sit with them when they are doing homework
- Get your kids used to a routine

<u>Best conversations/communications/time to read to your kids</u> *(focus groups)*

- Take advantage of situation – at grocery store talk about colors; at home talk about what's in the house
- Best conversation time is meal time
- Best conversation time is right after school
- Have books in the car for kids to read when you are driving around
- Choose one day a week to get together and talk about everything
- Have family meetings twice a week
- Read before bed
- Anytime you have spare time
- When you are getting dressed in morning, getting ready for bath

- Anytime they ask a question

<u>Ideas for how library can reach African American families</u> *(all community input sources)*
On-site library programs

- Reach parents in order to reach children -- parents learn how to work with child while child learns -- Parents and children learning together – combine adult literacy and child literacy parents come to library to study for GED – engage in message of parents reading to children
- Involve men (Display books/materials with African American men reading to children; make men feel comfortable at libraries; make link with sports activities; make link with barber shops)
- Increase library selection of books of interest to Black community
- More games and puzzles
- Involve grandparents
- Parent engagement – children act in plays involving reading – invite parents and use as opportunity to get message of importance of parents reading to children;
- Hip Kid Hop – Hip Hop LLCoolJ type library reading program for kids
- Black story time taught by African American librarian at branch libraries with high population of African American families using Hip Hop, having fun
- Free books – get info out about Tidal Wave
- Area in library for kids to dress up, act out books, do a play
- Spruce up library community board
- Need more computers for kids
- More African American employees at Library
- Have African American writers come to library
- Schedule events on weekends and evenings
- More family nights
- Advertise storytime and have more consistent schedule
- Send flyers out from schools
- Use Facebook to send a message about storytime, post updates
- Use incentives to get parents who don't participate – free books; link up with ice cream parlor

<u>Outreach</u> *(all community input sources)*

- Barber/hair salons – books in tubs – info on parents/children reading together (PSU program)
- Baby College offered with library partnering with non-profit agencies – taught by someone you can relate to culturally
- DHS social service assistants opportunity for home coaching/modeling reading – tell people about library services
- DHS Self Sufficiency/TANF – meets weekly with parents, possibility of handing out info about the library
- DHS – Books While You Wait include flyer on library programs

- Public media campaign (Social Media; Slogan – Prepare kids for college by getting them read for kindergarten)
- Tutors for children of grandparents raising grandchildren
- Library go to people in community centers at Community Development Corporations and HAP housing
- More in depth training for HBI home health visitors on modeling reading
- Work with PCRI's Thriving Families program to include reading goals
- Everybody's texting – could have a message and ask people to pass it on
- Library button on Facebook to post information
- African American and African women's group – talk about everything – mental health, parenting
- "Google" African American Community Portland and get info about what is going on in Portland
- Have storytimes at the park
- Form a partnership with the churches
- Advertise on bus