

LSTA Grant Evaluation

Afterschool Resource Library Partnership – Grant Project Number 11-07-10

Submitted by: Sonja Somerville

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Summary of Evaluation

Project Objectives

Oregon Afterschool for Kids (Oregon ASK) is an organization devoted to improving the quality of afterschool programs by providing training and support for the childcare, recreation, education, and youth development organization workers responsible for programming for youth during off-school hours.

In working with these providers, Oregon ASK found that providers lacked resources that offered practical ideas for best practices in the field and ideas for what to do during programming times.

The purpose of the Afterschool Resources Library Partnership project was to provide resources to workers in afterschool organizations around the state by (a) creating a list of the 101 best resources for afterschool program workers, (b) working with local libraries to facilitate the purchase of the resources, and (c) providing training for afterschool program workers at the local libraries that promoted the books from the 101 best resources list and created a connection between the afterschool workers and their local library.

Project Method

To accomplish the goals, Oregon ASK planned and offered seven one-day workshops under the title “A ResourceFULL Day,” each hosted by an Oregon library. In addition, the project enhanced the resources available from partnering libraries by providing \$2,500 toward the purchase of materials related to the needs of afterschool program workers. Items purchased at each library came from a list of 101 Top Afterschool Resources compiled by Oregon ASK and provided to all libraries and participating afterschool program workers.

In order to serve afterschool programs from around the state, Oregon ASK partnered with libraries in each region of Oregon. Final locations were:

- Wallowa County Library (August 22, 2011)
- Jackson County Library (September 17, 2011)

- Springfield Public Library (September 24, 2011)
- Eugene Public Library (October 1, 2011)
- Downtown Bend Public Library (October 8, 2011)
- Gresham Public Library/Multnomah County Library (November 5, 2011)
- Salem Public Library (March 3, 2012)

Salem Public Library was not on the original list of sites, but was added after the Multnomah County Library declined the offer of \$2,500 in materials, preferring to purchase the items from available funds. Organizers then saw an opportunity to include an additional library and group of afterschool program workers in the program.

Oregon ASK energetically promoted these workshops within the afterschool program community in each region, sending print and electronic marketing materials to workers in 21st Century Schools, parks and recreation programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, child care providers, and more. Oregon ASK also planned a quality program that would qualify for continuing education credit for workers.

The full-day workshops were taught by a licensed teacher who also has experience as a school librarian, afterschool programs, and Start Making a Reader Today (SMART).

Each training was planned to provide participants with information about quality standards and best practices for afterschool programs, curriculum planning, creating integrated lessons, and a preview of top afterschool resources available in the hosting library.

Workshop attendees were able to see and preview a variety of resources, create curriculum plans relevant to their program, and hear and discuss plans developed by workers from other programs.

Project Results

The series of “A ResourceFULL Day” workshops attracted a total of 83 participants.

- Wallowa County Library – 8 participants
- Springfield Public Library – 11 participants
- Eugene Public Library – 5 participants
- Downtown Bend Public Library – 6 participants
- Gresham Public Library – 7 participants
- Jackson Public Library – 29 participants
- Salem Public Library – 17 participants

Six of the libraries (with the exception noted above of the Multnomah County Library system) each spent \$2,500 enhancing their collection of materials useful to afterschool program

workers, selecting items from the list of 101 Top Afterschool Resources compiled by Oregon ASK. The Multnomah County Library system did make purchases from the list to enhance their available resources, but preferred to do so from the existing materials budget.

These results match the objectives of the project, although participation numbers at most sites fell short of expectations and capacity. Project manager Beth Unverzagt indicated that it can be difficult to persuade busy afterschool program workers to step away from their programs for training, which was reflected in these results.

Project Impact

The series of “A ResourceFULL Day” workshops impacted both libraries and afterschool program workers in a variety of ways.

A key goal of the project was to increase the availability of materials relevant to afterschool programs workers at Oregon libraries. This was accomplished through the \$2,500 provided to each library for the purpose of these materials. Libraries were also given a copy of the 101 Top Afterschool Resources compiled by Oregon ASK which some used for additional collection development.

Having made materials available at libraries, it was then an important goal to make afterschool program workers aware that their library would have these materials and to persuade them to make use of the materials to increase the quality of their programs. According to participant evaluations, the project was fairly successful in meeting both of these goals. In a post-training survey taken about 4 weeks after each workshop, 53 percent of attendees said they use the local library resources more than before.

A comparison of pre- and post-workshop surveys showed an increase in awareness of resources available at the local libraries. Before the workshop, 37.7 percent of attendees felt they were aware or very aware of resources; after the workshop, that percentage increased to 72.8 percent.

There was a smaller increase in the number of workshop participants who said they considered themselves to have a working relationship with their local library, but the number did increase from 53 percent in pre-training to 63 percent post-training.

Oregon ASK also received high marks from participants for the overall quality and usefulness of the workshops:

- 92 percent of participants reported they were more aware of quality afterschool program standards
- 88.8 percent indicated a better understanding of the steps to curriculum planning
- 88.9 percent said they learned how to create thematic integrated lessons
- 89.9 percent agreed they had been introduced to “Top Afterschool Resources” in their own local library

- 92 percent felt the workshop was relevant to their job; although the remaining 8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement
- 88.5 percent of participants felt the course materials helped them in their learning; while 8 percent also disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement

Suggestions for Improvement

My overall assessment of this project is that it was well planned and well executed. The quality of the workshop instruction was high. The workshop offered a blend of general information about standards, available library materials, and Oregon ASK, as well as the opportunity to do some integrated curriculum planning on the spot that related directly to the particular structure and needs of each participants' afterschool program. The blend of the "use it now" practical and the theoretical was good, which was reflected in some of the participant comments:

"The workshop met my needs by showing me steps to create a well thought out curriculum. The best part was sharing ideas and hearing new ideas."

"The best part was learning what is being worked on at the state level."

"The workshop met my needs by giving me new ideas on stuff to do with kids. The best part was theme sharing."

"The best part was presentation and the wide variety of books."

The one shortcoming was the low participation numbers at some sites. Oregon ASK did market the opportunity to a broad range of afterschool program workers and also arranged to have the workshop count toward registry credit, which provided another level of incentive for attendance. Given that Oregon ASK is trying to connect with a worker group that is stretched very thin to do the work they do, it is difficult to pinpoint a marketing strategy that would be guaranteed to encourage workers to take time away from their day-to-day obligations.

Ms. Unverzagt indicated that Oregon ASK will pursue additional funding from another source in the future to offer similar training, adding a focus on particular topics (science, arts, children with special needs) and focus more on smaller communities, where training opportunities are more rare. This seems like a strong approach, as many of the more enthusiastic participants were in Wallowa and Jackson Counties, where they noted that it was extraordinary to have quality training made readily accessible to them.

In conclusion, I feel Oregon ASK should be commended for a strong project that increased resources for afterschool program workers at Oregon libraries, while also increasing awareness and use by afterschool program workers of those materials.