

Recommendations to the Oregon State Library Board of Trustees
From the Library and Early Childhood Communities
Presented by Sara Behrman, Consultant
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Introduction

Oregon's public libraries have the ability to greatly impact the early reading experiences of preschool children by reaching thousands of parents, caregivers, and children. Oregon's public libraries can offer opportunities for families and child care providers to learn best practices in readiness techniques for infants and toddlers. Oregon's public librarians can help their local communities identify gaps in early literacy readiness and determine the most effective ways to address them. Oregon's public librarians can help increase access to exemplary "ready to learn" programs. Oregon's public libraries have the research, strategies, organizational skills, and creativity that are highly valued by community partners. Oregon's public librarians can provide continuing education for caregivers who need licensing or re-licensing. Oregon's public librarians can offer programs to parents that reaffirm messages delivered by caregivers, develop booklists, plan opportunities to learn about and visit the library, explicitly model early literacy behaviors, and provide easy strategies for parents to use at home. Oregon's libraries big and small have a key role to play in their communities, disseminating early literacy information to parents, child care providers, early childhood educators, children's advocates, and political decision makers. However, a lack of statewide coordinated efforts, hesitancy by public librarians to take a leadership role as promoters of early literacy skills, staff inexperience regarding how best to train parents and caregivers in these skills, unstable funding, and a widespread uncertainty about how to locally use the many evidence-based approaches, hampers consistent improvement in positive reading outcomes for Oregon's children.

The purpose of this LSTA 2005 grant project, "*Planning for a Statewide Early Literacy Initiative*" was to develop a coordinated statewide early literacy initiative plan featuring public libraries as the leaders in the implementation of the best evidence-based practices. A team of sixteen project advisors guided the work of project consultant, Sara Behrman. During nine meetings held from August to October in key regions of the state, hundreds attended and thousands others were invited to help answer the question of how best to work together to ensure that public libraries can lead early literacy efforts. A framework for coordinated action is being released during this project's final quarter to encourage further local action, gather additional public comments, and to begin to implement successful strategies that will launch a successful Oregon early literacy initiative.

Our post-grant vision is that Oregon's public librarians will begin to take more responsibility for sharing important information about early literacy research with parents and child care providers. Oregon's public librarians will begin to recognize the important role they play and become passionate about this role. Oregon's public librarians will begin to do more outreach to find out what their local community needs, and will translate the latest early literacy research and best practices into their daily service. Oregon's public librarians will receive the recognition they deserve as a key community partner and as a resource that their community cannot do without. Consistent public messages will

reinforce their leadership role, as more experienced librarians respectfully mentor and coach others that are newer to practices that nurture early literacy. Future funding to implement certain strategies identified during this planning grant will be needed, including funds from state and federal government, corporate and private foundations.

We are pleased to report that, as a result of coordinated efforts to identify and invite early literacy community stakeholders to our regional meetings, we have received invaluable input from partners, such as:

- State agencies (Dept of Education; Dept of Employment, Child Care Division; Dept of Health and Human Services; Dept of Health; Child Welfare Division; Oregon Commission on Children and Families);
- County agencies (Commissions on Children and Families; Child Care Referral Networks; County Health Departments)
- Local childcare providers (private daycare centers; Migrant Head Start; Head Start; Healthy Start; Even Start; Cobb Street Learning Center);
- Organizations and services catering to young children (OMSI; Small Talk Learning; Salvation Army; Reading is Fundamental; First Book; Eastern Libraries Literacy League; SMART; Ocean Spray Family Center; United Way; Success by Six; EC Cares; OASIS; Melrose Reading Station)
- Tribal partners (Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde)
- School Districts and Educational School Districts (Harney County ESD; Council of Oregon School Administrators; Association for Child Educators International; Great Expectations; After Words)
- Programs helping parents of young children (Recovery Village; Family Resource Centers; Family Nursery; Family Development Center; White Shield Center)
- Universities and community colleges (OSU Extension Family & Community Development program leaders & 4-H staff; Early Childhood Education programs; Eastern Oregon University; Blue Mountain Community College, Clatsop County Community College; Oregon Coast Community College; Benton Community College; University of Oregon; Western Oregon Center for Child Development, Portland State University; Portland Community College);
- Private Foundations (e.g. Oregon Community Foundation has invited their past grantees funded through their early literacy initiatives); and
- Corporations and Media partners (Oregon Public Broadcasting, Comcast, Family Talk Show).

The Recommendations to the Oregon State Library Board From the Library and Early Childhood Communities

Please note: These recommendations are numbered for discussion purposes and are presented in no particular priority order.

I. Recommendation: To promote early literacy for Oregon’s children, seek a statutory change to focus the Ready to Read Grant program more narrowly “to establish, develop, or improve public library services to children 0-4, and to support evidence-based programs for their parents and caregivers.” This recommendation addresses:

- Oregon State Library Goal 3: Lead public libraries to achieve excellence in services to children.
- Oregon Benchmark #18: Percent of Oregon children entering school ready-to-learn.
- Future Challenges identified in Oregon State Library’s Annual Performance Report, FY 2003-04: How to continue to effectively leverage local public library efforts to improve library services to children, especially preschool children from low-income families?
- 2005-07 State Library Agency Initiatives: Continue basic youth services training and efforts to educate on best practices; use recommendations of the Ready to Read Task Force to improve the program.
- Vision 2010: Children and adults have access to quality educational programs at all levels; libraries promote the joy and lifelong benefits of reading; Oregonians consider libraries an essential community service; Oregon libraries collaboratively develop relevant continuing education opportunities to address needs in Oregon communities; the people of Oregon recognize libraries as key in the development of the love of reading and lifelong learning; Oregon libraries design and target services in response to community needs.
- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Serve Every Child—Nurture the joy of reading by providing every child in Oregon with quality library services from both public and school libraries.

II. Recommendation: To encourage the developing literacy skills of children and promote a love of reading, seek a statutory change to focus the Ready to Read Grant program more narrowly to support the Summer Reading Program for children ages 0-12. This recommendation addresses:

- Oregon State Library Goal 3: Lead public libraries to achieve excellence in services to children.
- Oregon Benchmark #18: Percent of Oregon children entering school ready-to-learn.
- Oregon Benchmark #19: Percent of third graders who achieve established skill levels: a. reading.

- 2005-07 State Library Agency Initiatives: Continue basic youth services training and efforts to educate on best practices; use recommendations of the Ready to Read Task Force to improve the program.
- Vision 2010: Children and adults have access to quality educational programs at all levels; libraries promote the joy and lifelong benefits of reading; Oregonians consider libraries an essential community service; Oregon libraries design and target services in response to community needs.
- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Serve Every Child—Nurture the joy of reading by providing every child in Oregon with quality library services from both public and school libraries.

III. Recommendation: To eliminate barriers of access to borrowing public library materials, implement a statewide library card (Kids Card) for children under 14 and their parents. This recommendation addresses:

- Oregon State Library Goal 3: Lead public libraries to achieve excellence in services to children.
- Oregon State Library Goal 4: Take a leadership role in developing a comprehensive statewide library resource sharing networking, including citizen access to government information.
- Oregon State Library Goal 5: Assist local communities to develop school and public library services for unserved and underserved Oregonians.
- Oregon Benchmark #18: Percent of Oregon children entering school ready-to-learn.
- Oregon Benchmark #19: Percent of third graders who achieve established skill levels: a. reading.
- Oregon Benchmark #20: Percent of eighth graders who achieve established skill levels: a. reading.
- Oregon Benchmark #38: Percent of Oregonians served by a public library that meets minimum service criteria.
- High-Level Outcome C: Percent of Oregonians who are able to access information from any Oregon library.
- Future Challenges identified in Oregon State Library's Annual Performance Report, FY 2003-04: How to increase cooperation among all types of libraries and begin progress on developing a statewide library catalog that makes library materials from every library accessible to every Oregonian?
- 2005-07 State Library Agency Initiatives: In partnership with the Oregon Library Association, plan for statewide library catalog access and borrowing.
- Vision 2010: Children and adults have access to quality educational programs at all levels; libraries promote the joy and lifelong benefits of reading; Oregonians consider libraries an essential community service; libraries are the leading advocates for equity in access to information; libraries are recognized as one of the best values in government service; Oregon libraries collaborate to pilot innovative ways of sharing resources throughout Oregon and beyond our borders; Oregon libraries design and target services in response to community needs.

- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Statewide Library Card—Sweep away regional, jurisdictional and procedural boundaries so every Oregonian has a library card that works at any publicly supported library.
- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Serve Every Child—Nurture the joy of reading by providing every child in Oregon with quality library services from both public and school libraries.

IV. Recommendation: To address the need for continual learning and the development of new skills in the area of early literacy, create an Early Literacy Trainer/Coordinator position at the Oregon State Library to provide and/or support ongoing early literacy training and information dissemination to library staff, leadership in other state agency partnerships, and to encourage library participation in local and regional comprehensive planning for children and families through active participation on early childhood teams. This recommendation addresses:

- Oregon State Library Goal 3: Lead public libraries to achieve excellence in services to children.
- Oregon State Library Goal 5: Assist local communities to develop school and public library services for unserved and underserved Oregonians.
- Oregon State Library Goal 6: Support staff development, participation, and innovation to achieve continuous quality improvement.
- Oregon Benchmark #18: Percent of Oregon children entering school ready-to-learn.
- Future Challenges identified in Oregon State Library’s Annual Performance Report, FY 2003-04: How to continue to effectively leverage local public library efforts to improve library services to children, especially preschool children from low-income families?
- 2005-07 State Library Agency Initiatives: Continue basic youth services training and efforts to educate on best practices.
- Vision 2010: Children and adults have access to quality educational programs at all levels; libraries promote the joy and lifelong benefits of reading; Oregon libraries collaboratively develop relevant continuing education opportunities to address needs in Oregon communities; the people of Oregon recognize libraries as key in the development of the love of reading and lifelong learning; Oregon libraries design and target services in response to community needs.
- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Serve Every Child—Nurture the joy of reading by providing every child in Oregon with quality library services from both public and school libraries.
- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Strong and Diverse Workforce —Bring the highest caliber of leadership to every Oregon library.

V. Recommendation: To increase cooperation among the various state agencies around early literacy and early childhood issues, seek a statutory change to name the Oregon State Library as a mandated partner in joint efforts undertaken by Oregon Commission on

Children and Families, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Department of Human Services, and the Oregon Department of Employment. This recommendation addresses:

- Oregon State Library Goal 1: Improve library services to state government; increase usage and user satisfaction.
- Oregon State Library Goal 3: Lead public libraries to achieve excellence in services to children.
- Oregon Benchmark #18: Percent of Oregon children entering school ready-to-learn.
- Oregon Benchmark #19: Percent of third graders who achieve established skill levels: a. reading.
- High-Level Outcome A: Percent of Oregon state government employees who use information provided by the State Library for planning service delivery.
- Future Challenges identified in Oregon State Library's Annual Performance Report, FY 2003-04: How to continue to effectively leverage local public library efforts to improve library services to children, especially preschool children from low-income families?
- Vision 2010: Children and adults have access to quality educational programs at all levels; the people of Oregon recognize libraries as key in the development of the love of reading and lifelong learning; Oregon libraries design and target services in response to community needs; Oregon libraries collaboratively develop relevant continuing education opportunities to address needs in Oregon communities.
- Vision 2010 Call to Action: Serve Every Child—Nurture the joy of reading by providing every child in Oregon with quality library services from both public and school libraries.

The Recommendations for the new Oregon Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Five-Year State Plan 2009-2013:

- Use LSTA funds for a statewide marketing and public awareness campaign: Libraries are the key to early literacy.
- Use LSTA funds to support statewide collections of children's resources in other languages.
- Use LSTA funds to support outreach efforts to parents, caregivers, and early literacy community partners.