

June 19, 2012

LSTA Grant Project Evaluation
Grant Project #LB 11S1 (FFY 2011)
“Kit & Kid-Oodles of Books”
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Summary of Evaluation

Tualatin Public Library’s “Kit & Kid-Oodles of Books” project had clear objectives that were successfully addressed during the grant year. The children’s services librarian worked with the consultant hired using grant funds to develop a year-long strategy to produce kits for home day care providers, publicize the program, and provide training for caregivers.

The kits offer a rich variety of books for the children, along with many useful resources for day care providers. Training for caregivers is provided through an effective combination of instruction and modeling.

The library made effective adjustments to the project as it progressed, including the development of bilingual kits to support the needs of Spanish speaking kids and caregivers. Feedback from home day care providers has been overwhelmingly positive.

The project has not reached as many kids as anticipated, but numbers are growing steadily. The library is well positioned to continue the project after the end of the grant period, with plans in place for funding materials and for training volunteers to provide visits.

“Kit & Kid-Oodles of Books” is successfully meeting the need for books and high quality story times in home daycare settings in Tualatin. It serves as an effective outreach model that other Oregon libraries could replicate in part or in full.

Project Objectives

The “Kid & Kid-Oodles of Books” project is designed to provide sustainable early literacy outreach services to daycare providers in Tualatin. The key objectives are:

1) Create 12 kits containing books and early literacy resource materials for children ages birth to five.

The kits will assist care providers in presenting reading opportunities for the children and a regular story time experience that replicates the qualities of an in-house library story time.

2) Publicize program to the daycare community in Tualatin, Oregon.

The target group consists of the 25 home day care providers in the library service area.

3) Provide materials and in-home instruction to caregivers on story time presentation and early literacy teaching techniques.

A consultant trained in early literacy and/or library childhood services will develop materials for providers and administer the training.

Project Methods

Hire Consultant: Library staff recruited and hired Josephine Dix as consultant for the project. Dix and Children's Services Librarian Jaime Thoreson worked together to select books and instructional materials to use in the kits. Dix consulted with Jody Westerman of Cedar Mills Community Library to gather ideas and strategies from that library's long-running home-based literacy program.

Promote Program with Target Group: As the kits were being developed, the library began contacting day care providers within the target group. The Oregon Child Care Resource and Referral Network provided contact information. Publicity materials for the program were sent to local media and child-serving agencies. An introductory letter was sent to all eligible local providers, followed by phone calls to make direct contact.

Introduce Kits to Providers: The consultant delivered one kit to each day care provider taking part in the program. Caregivers keep the kit in their home for four weeks.

Train Providers in Early Literacy and Story Time Presentation: During the visit in which the kits are delivered, the consultant provides in-home training for the caregiver. This includes sharing the resources from the kit and demonstrating effective story time presentation.

Project Results

The library developed 15 high quality kits that will enhance the work of child care providers in a variety of ways. Each kit contains 31 books. The original goal of 46 books per kit was reduced in order to keep the weight low enough to carry easily. By choosing not to group them by theme or age level, the materials in the kits provide maximum variety, which is appropriate considering the wide range of situations in which day care providers work. The kits include non-fiction titles, a high interest area often overlooked by caregivers. Kids in the child care settings that receive the kits now have a rich variety of print material to learn from and enjoy, which is a key overriding goal of this grant. A decision to produce additional kits with bilingual materials was made during the grant period based on high numbers for the library's Spanish storytime and Spanish book collection.

To promote the Kit & Kid-Oodles of Books program, the library followed a publicity plan timeline, which included creation of a program logo, printing a brochure, and sending out press releases to local media. Direct contacts to targeted sites were made through an introductory letter and follow-up phone calls.

Through April 30th, 2012, the project has reached 59 children in eight different home day care settings. Because kit development and community contacts had to take place before the first visits, it makes sense that this number is still well short of the original goal of 150. Visits in late spring and early summer will certainly increase the total, and although it seems likely that the goal of 150 will not be reached, the numbers are still positive. The library's strategy for reaching providers has been thorough and flexible. After introductory letters produced disappointing

results, follow-up phone calls have proved much more effective; in several cases multiple calls were required before direct contact was made. Since 12 of the target day care providers are Spanish speaking, the library has been working with Annie Lewis, the library's bilingual Outreach Librarian, to make those contacts. All targeted English speaking sites and nearly half of the Spanish speaking sites have been contacted.

In addition to the books for children that are provided in the kits, day care providers also receive valuable resources to help them present effective story times with strong early literacy content. Josie and Jaime developed a story time binder, which included an innovative flip chart that guides the provider through a sample storytime session. The binder provides words and instructions for fingerplays and other activities. Tips for presenters appear on one side of the flip chart, with words or pictures for the kids on the other. Providers can present the binder from start to finish or select parts of it to use. The binder also includes early literacy tips, suggested storytime formats, and lists of additional resources. This tool is especially appropriate for the target group of in-home day care providers. Some are highly competent story time presenters, while others have little or no experience, and the flexibility of the binder will serve both. The binder serves as an example of what an effective library story time looks like, but gives room for the provider to adapt according to her own style, situation, and level of experience.

When Josie visited in-home daycares she also provided training for the providers. Since providers are caring for several children, full-time, training typically has to happen on the fly. The storytime binder is an effective tool. Paging through the contents gives a good overview of story time components and structure. In outreach settings like these, the most effective training method is often modeling and Josie used this approach. She typically did not try to provide a full story time to the kids, but presented samples of book reading, finger plays, and other components. This demonstrates to the provider the importance of mixing in a variety of methods within a single session. While presenting to the children, she also shared brief tips and advice to the caregiver. Josie often asked the provider to co-present the session, an excellent strategy to keep the caregiver engaged and motivated. Josie made a conscious effort not to overwhelm the caregivers with resources. If the caregiver is inspired to present dynamic story times and recognizes that the storytime binder provides useful resources, she will explore those resources in more depth over time.

The kits were originally conceived with an English speaking population in mind, but the need for Spanish materials soon became apparent. After the English kits were in process, the library began developing a bilingual kit to use with Spanish speaking day care providers. Since neither Josie nor Jaime is bilingual, they began working with the library's bilingual Outreach Librarian, who is now in the process of contacting those providers.

Project Impact

The Kit and Kid-Oodles project has had a positive impact on the children in Tualatin home day care settings. The training and kits provided through the grant give caregivers easy, effective tools to present high quality story times on a regular basis. Feedback from providers has been completely positive to this point. One provider reported that after experiencing a presentation, several of her children used the story time binder to set up their own story time, using the

pictures from the binder as a guide. Another noted that the older kids she cares for have used the materials to share stories with the younger children.

Through the creation of the kits and the establishment of contacts with day care providers, the library has reached an important underserved segment of the population. Developing kits and training materials and establishing initial contacts was the most staff intensive portion of the project; with those accomplished, the project can continue with limited use of staff resources once the grant period is completed. Funding for replacement of lost or damaged materials from the kids will be provided by the Friends of the Library. The library is already working with a volunteer to take over the visits and contacts once the grant period ends. The volunteer has been trained and has been joining Josie on site visits.

Kit & Kid-Oodles of Books is a project that other libraries in Oregon should be aware of. It successfully addresses several of the barriers that prevent most libraries from providing full service to children in home daycare settings:

- **Staff time:** A trained volunteer could run most of the program. The story time binder is a useful tool to help guide a learning volunteer through the process of introducing the program to caregivers.
- **Development of training materials:** The story time binder is an accessible, effective tool to share with providers, offering multiple resources in a highly appealing format. It can be easily duplicated or adapted by libraries at a reasonable cost.
- **Identifying quality books to purchase:** Assembling multiple kits with affordable, high quality books that reach a variety of ages and interests can be a challenging, time consuming project. Libraries could use the kit inventories from this project as a starting point for ordering materials.

The multiple components of this project make it well suited for adaptation by other libraries, even if they cannot manage every piece. The story time binder, for example, could be shared with caregivers even without the kits. It is an excellent teaching tool and a useful starting point for sharing information about early literacy and story time presentations to caregivers.

While many Oregon libraries offer programs and services targeting in-home day care providers, this project features a combination of components that make it especially adaptable:

- The kits provide a full month's worth of books. While many libraries circulate story time kits designed for a single story time presentation, the kits here act more as a loaned mini-library of books that kids and caregivers can select from over several weeks
- The training materials are easy to use and work in combination with the books from the kits. With Kits and Kid-Oodles, the training is combined with the delivery of the kit. Though it's not in-depth training, it clearly provides caregivers with motivation and materials to begin presenting story times on their own.
- The target audience is clearly identified. Local home day care providers are the only target audience. The kits are circulated only through the Kit & Kid-Oodles program. Since they are not being used for additional settings, such as preschools, large day care centers, or single

families, changes and improvements to the kits can be based on the needs and feedback of home day care providers.

Suggestions for Improvement

This project has been extremely effective. The library clearly recognized the needs of the target audience and developed a program and materials to directly address those needs. Staff did a good job of providing meaningful, useful content without overreaching, and the project is well positioned to continue smoothly after the grant period ends. Some areas for improvement arose during the grant year, and several were addressed along the way:

- **Serving Spanish speakers:** Nearly half of the local home day care providers targeted speak Spanish. Developing bilingual kits and including some bilingual materials in all kits would make the materials more useful to providers. The library began producing bilingual kits midway through the grant year to address this. The library is already working with the bilingual Outreach Librarian to meet this need.
- **Delivery of kits to and by caregivers:** A library staff person delivers the first kit to each provider and provides kit instructions and early literacy training on that same visit. Providers must visit the library to return the kit and check out a new one. While the kit return rate has been excellent, it would be ideal if the library could provide pick up and delivery to keep the kit rotation going seamlessly for each provider.
- **Follow up training:** Introducing the kits, sharing tips and techniques, and modeling a story time session provides just the right amount of training to kick off the program with each caregiver. As participation numbers level out, the library might consider developing a follow up or refresher training session aimed at providers who have been using the kits for several months.
- **Reaching older kids:** Many providers serving children within the targeted age group of 0 – 5 years also care for older kids. Adapting the kits to include some materials for older kids, or perhaps offering small supplemental kits with older materials, could expand the reach of the program.

Respectfully submitted,

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