Supporting Parents in Early Literacy through Libraries (SPELL): An Assessment of a Multi-Site Public Library Project

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Why SPELL?

Joan

Emily
Read. Learn. Grow.

The updated and expanded 2nd edition of Every Child Ready To Read incorporates simple practices, based on research, to help parents and other caregivers develop early literacy skills in children from birth to age five.

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Supporting Parents in Early Literacy Through Libraries (SPELL) Project Goals

- Research & test promising practices to support low-income parents of children birth through 3
- Provide knowledge & resources to encourage parents to make early literacy activities a daily habit
SPELL Timeline

2012
SPELL 1
Background research to develop blueprint

2013

2014

2015
SPELL 2
Test blueprint in 8 public libraries

2016
SPELL 1 (2012-2013)

- Literature review
- Environmental scan
- Parent surveys
- Parent focus groups
Research Recommendations

Partner, partner, partner

Work through existing infrastructures of organizations that support low-income families and young children
Putting SPELL Into Action (SPELL 2), 2014-2016

- 8 Colorado public libraries/partner organizations developed and tested prototypes
- Libraries selected based on demographics, geography
Cortez Public Library
CuddleUppets, Books, & Community
Denver Public Library
Working with Migrant Families
Montrose Regional Library District
Driving the Library to Families
Methodology

- Monthly statistics: Purchases, Programs, Attendance
- Parent surveys: One-time event, Pre/post
- Case studies: Observation, Interviews
Parent survey sample

- 181 pre-program survey respondents
- 102 post-program survey respondents
- 283 total caregivers

- 35% < 1 year old
- 42% 1 year old
- 43% 2 years old
- 60% 3 years old
Impact on families
From pre to post survey, parents reported significantly higher levels of agreement with the following (1=disagree, 3=agree):

I know how children **learn to read**.

I have a regular **routine for reading** books with my child(ren).

I know what **everyday activities** to do with my child(ren) to help them be ready to learn to read in kindergarten.

I'm **confident** that I can help my child(ren) be ready to learn to read in kindergarten.
From pre to post survey, parents reported doing the following more often (1=never, 6=several times per day):

- **Read** with my child(ren).  
  [2.4]  
  [4.0]

- **Play** with my children in a way that helps them explore their surroundings.  
  [2.0]  
  [4.4]

- **Encourage my child(ren) to play with their hands.**  
  [2.0]  
  [4.4]

- **Sing** with my child(ren).  
  [2.2]  
  [4.4]

- **Talk** to my baby/have conversations with my child(ren).  
  [1.8]  
  [4.4]
Parent Comments

This class has given me lots of great ideas for play & learning w/ my child. I have a better understanding of how she is learning.

At home we implement the same strategy with my children, same as you did. They learn much more rapidly!

I'm pretty sure this is why my child loves books.
Sharing Results
Driving the Library to Families: How Montrose Regional Library District Is Supporting Parents in Early Literacy

The SPELL blueprint (srls.org/blueprint) was created to assist library staff in their effort to support caregivers in practicing early literacy techniques with their children. In November 2014, eight libraries in Colorado were selected to implement the blueprint in their communities. Each library created a programming prototype that guided the library in collaborating with community partners, and providing outreach to low income and high need communities. One of the SPELL libraries was Montrose Regional Library District, located on Colorado’s Western Slope. Read on to learn about its prototype.

Community Profile - Montrose County, Colorado
- Population: 40,946
- Racial Makeup: 76% White, 21% Latino/a, 2% Two or More Races
- K-12% Minority: 42%
- Median Income: $33,750
- % Below Poverty Line: 15%

Prototype
- Weekly bookmobile visits to the Montrose Early Childhood Center during parent pickup.
- Elimination of fines on children's materials checked out on the bookmobile.
- Early literacy round table discussions with childcare center teachers.
- Parent Literacy Nights at childcare center that included early literacy trainings and demonstrations.

Partner
Montrose Early Childhood Center: A Head Start early childhood preschool center serving 230 preschoolers.

A non-native English speaking father came onto the bookmobile with his three-year-old son. Although his wife generally brings his son on Tuesdays, this week he was doing pickup and had never been to the bookmobile. He signed up for his very first library card and has become a library user - getting books for his young son as well as himself.

-Children’s Librarian

At home we implement the same strategy with my children, same as you did. They learn much more rapidly.

- Parent

Project Resources
- Funding: $23,789 (50% federal grant, 50% Montrose Regional Library District)
- Purchases included:
  - Bookmobile maintenance costs
  - 729 children’s books
  - 175 parent books
  - 345 manipulatives
  - Program materials (computer, prizes, puppets, etc.)
  - 1,590 early literacy games
  - 1,550 promotional materials
  - 780 informational materials

Activities
- 42 bookmobile visits
- 870 caregivers and 1,749 children visited the bookmobile
- 2 early literacy events for parents
- 2 roundtable meetings with preschool
- 144+ new library cards
- 95 onsite and 45 offsite parent consultations on early literacy

Outcomes
After participating in SPELL,
- 4 in 5 parent survey respondents have a regular routine for reading books,
- 7 in 10 parent survey respondents are more confident helping their child(ren) be ready to read in kindergarten, and
- 3 in 5 parent survey respondents read to their child(ren) daily.

More details about this prototype are available at spellproject.weebly.com/research.
What was the impact of SPELL?
Complete the crossword below

Across
2. Parents have a regular reading... (routine)
4. 95% of parents agree the library is a place they can come to do this with their children. (learn)
7. Parents know how children learn to... (read)
9. Parents are confident they can help their children learn to read by... (kindergarten)
10. In a 6-month period, one library had 72 checkouts of early literacy... (kits)

Down
1. This item, which one library gave to 240 families, helps families remember to read. (cuddleuppet)
3. Parents do this with their children more often. (sing)
5. One library made 42 visits with this to reach parents at the early childhood center. (bookmobile)
6. 2,032 of these were purchased. (games)
8. Parents more often encourage their children to play with their... (hands)
THE PARTNERSHIPS

Princeton Academy: a preschool and child care center serving infants to 12 year olds.

Parenting Matters: an organization that supports parenting practices and promotes the health and optimal development of children.
SPELL: Supporting Parents in Early Literacy Through Libraries

Worksheet for Evaluating Your Collection

Take some time to think about your current collection of materials for families with children birth through three.

1. Is your collection fresh and inviting with a need of some new materials? Are toys clean and attractive? Are books in good condition?
2. Do you have books in languages spoken by your customers? Do your materials reflect your community's arts, docs, cultural characters?
3. Do you have toddler picture books?
4. Will you provide literacy kits?
5. What will be the purpose of your kit? (Gardening? Parent checklist? School or child care checklist? Parent checklist?)
6. How many different kits do you want to offer? (Consider your storage space)
7. What will you store them in? Plastic bins? Large boxes? Book bags?
Challenges and limitations

- Coordination and buy-in across multiple sites
- Survey length
- Cultural distrust of surveys
- Prototype comparisons
Next Steps

- Prototype sustainability
- Buell Foundation grant
Thank You!

http://spellproject.weebly.com/

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