

Abbey's Head Start Library

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HDFS 461: Program Design and Grant Proposal Writing

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Host Organization Description

Bates Hall Center

OSU Child Development Center

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The Bates Hall mission statement reads:

“The Child Development Center is dedicated to discovering and communicating knowledge that contributes to the optimal development and well-being of young children and their families. As part of the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, the Child Development Center prepares professionals in early childhood development and family services; generates and transmits knowledge on family-focused early childhood programs through research, program development, and evaluation; and provides a developmental program of the highest quality for young children and their families that serves as a resource for the community-at-large.”

The Bates Hall Child Development Center officially opened during the 1990s, but the center has been a work in progress for OSU faculty and students since the 1920s. Throughout the decades, the program has moved several times while meeting children’s nutritional, physical, and developmental needs. The program has been awarded an Oregon Head Start PreKindergarten Program grant, become accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and developed into a research and student teaching center for Human Development and Family Science [HDFS] students at Oregon State University. The Child Development Center houses a number of innovative outreach programs including “Health in Action” – an early childhood approach to nutrition and physical activity, designed by the director and on site nutritionist. Furthermore, the Children Development Center participates in the

Linn/Benton/Lincoln ESD Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Program in order to provide services to children with disabilities.

The program is run by twelve paid staff in collaboration with three to six HDFS student teachers, offering six preschool classes to a total of 120 students. Through the Head Start grant, 70 spots are reserved for low-income students, and the remaining 50 spots are for students of community families. Students are selected on a first-come-first-serve basis and come from a number of neighboring communities, some as far as 20 miles away. Bates offers two Spanish-speaking classes, because many of the Head Start students do not know English, though it is encouraged through their curriculum. Overall, the program has only grown from its origins, and has served thousands.

Statement of Need

The United States Department of Education defines literacy as “the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (White & McCloskey, 2003). Literacy is the core of a successful future and must be fostered in the early childhood years. Studies have shown that children who are read to by their parents on a regular basis tend to become better readers and perform better in school (U.S. Department of Education [ED], National, 2006). The relationship lies in their listening comprehension, which is a strong predictor of later reading skills (Developing, 2008). For this reason, it is necessary to incorporate parent-child reading activities into all families. In the Head Start Center at Bates Hall in Corvallis, Oregon, the proposed project will create a family library in order to promote home based literacy activities. With a classroom of 25 students from low-income families, there is greater risk of illiteracy, because living in poverty is Oregon’s top indicator of students who are most prone to an achievement gap in literacy, followed by being

Native American, Hispanic, African-American, an English Language Learner, or having a disability (Oregon, 2005). The issue of illiteracy must be addressed during the preschool years, specifically targeting low income children and families in order to promote literacy in later years of life. This goal can be reached through *Abbey's Head Start Library* program, where families in the Bates Hall Program will have access to a library to provide them with resources to read to their children at home.

Literacy rates vary by location and with demographics. Nationally, 86% of American citizens above the age of sixteen have basic or better prose literacy skills (ED, Institute, 2003). For Oregon, the rates are slightly higher, with 90% of the citizen population having at least basic literacy skills (ED, Institute, 2003). Furthermore, Benton County is yet higher with 93% of the citizens having basic literacy skills; this number could be skewed, however, due to the high population of university students in the county (ED, Institute, 2003). Though the levels of literate adults are considerably high in Oregon and Benton County, 7% are still illiterate, and in these pockets, the occurrence of illiteracy in the sixteen-plus population needs to be prevented long before adulthood is reached.

Early childhood literacy is the key to future success, and 35% of American children arrive at kindergarten without the basic language skills they will need to learn to read (Reach, 2008). There are many indicators and correlating factors that are precursors to literacy. Two positive factors include parents that have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and children who are white (not Black or Hispanic) (ED, National, 2006). Children from Black or Hispanic families are more than three times as likely to be in poverty as children from White families and are therefore more at risk for illiteracy (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau, 1994). Also, children who are read to regularly (3-5 times a week) by a family member tend to

become better readers and students in the long run (ED, National, 2006). The amount of children meeting this standard has been increasing over the years. In 1993, only 78% of children were receiving this activity, whereas in 2003, 86% of children were being read to regularly (ED, National, 2006). However, children from low SES families are still being read to less (78%) than children from middle or upper SES families (90%) (ED, National, 2006).

There are a number of negative factors that predict illiteracy. The number of family risk factors is negatively associated with children's literacy success, and the more risk factors per child, the smaller the gains the child will make in literacy during the first four years of school. Family risk factors include poverty, non-English primary home language, low maternal education level, and single-parent households (ED, National, 2004). Once the gap is made in a child's literacy skills, it is difficult for that child to catch back up. Eighty-eight percent of first graders who are below grade level in reading will continue to read below grade level in the fourth grade (Reach, 2008).

Illiteracy predicts several long term negative outcomes, including high school dropout and incarceration. In 2007, 8.8% of students from low-income families dropped out of school (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2007). Furthermore, the effects of poverty are correlated with race. 5.25% of white students dropped out of school in 2007, but 21.35% of Hispanic students dropped out (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census, 2007). High school drop out rates are also directly linked to incarceration, where illiteracy thrives (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). Prisons in the United States have an extremely high percentage of illiteracy, with 58% of inmates earning less than a high school education and not acquiring basic literacy skills (ED, Institute, 2003). Literacy increased as educational levels increased, with more educated prisoners achieving the federal level of basic literacy. The link between illiteracy and incarceration is high school

dropout. Thirty percent of federal prisons, forty percent of state prisons, and fifty percent of death row inmates are high school dropouts (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). The long term negative outcomes illustrate the value and importance of literacy activities in the early years.

There are many organizations and programs that promote the involvement of parents in early, home-based literacy activities. The National Reading Convention has a policy recommendation that states: “Parent involvement programs should have a strong early literacy component that guides parents and caregivers in providing early literacy experiences at home” (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Strickland & Barnett, 2003; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). Given the evidence that early learning experiences are linked to later school achievement, emotional and social well-being, fewer grade retentions, and reduced incidences of juvenile delinquency, programs such as *Reading is Fundamental* and *Reach Out and Read* have put the focus of their programs on getting books into the hands of parents and children to promote these vital reading experiences (Barnett, 2002; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; Heckman, 2006; Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Tabors, Snow, & Dickenson, 2001). Both programs focus on providing free books and literacy resources to children and families that need them most (“About RIF”, 2010; Reach, 2008).

Abbey’s Head Start Library, modeled similarly to projects such as *Reading is Fundamental* and *Reach Out and Read*, focuses on providing low-income families with reading resources. With risk factors such as poverty to combat, providing families with tools to fight illiteracy is key. Paired with current research and evidence-based models that are proven to help children develop linguistically, the library will serve along side families to nurture young children. Through consistent access to books and media, parents can enhance their children’s literacy experiences.

Project Description

- **Objective:** Preschoolers will demonstrate pre-emergent literacy skills by earning a base score of 10-24 in Initial Sound Fluency, 29-39 in Letter Naming Fluency, 10-34 in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, and 15-24 in Nonsense Word Fluency on the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) achievement assessment by the end of the school year (DIBELS).
 - **Activity:** Families will check out at least two books per week from *Abbey's Head Start Library*.
 - **Activity:** Parents will sign a weekly reading log illustrating they have read with their child for at least 20 minutes or five books per week.
 - **Activity:** Students will participate in at least three literacy activities in the classroom per week.
 - The literacy activities must focus on one of the four areas being tested by the DIBELS assessment: initial sounds, letter naming, phoneme segmentation, or nonsense words.
- **Evaluation:** The *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) achievement assessment will be administered tri-annually according to the kindergarten level of testing. Students will be scored according to kindergarten standards, but will meet only the middle benchmark of “some risk” and “emerging” literacy skills because of the age and schooling discrepancy.

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