

Chat Contributions from the SPELL Webinar: A dialogue on engaging parents in early literacy

Colorado State Library and Esteemed Panelists, December 13, 2012

Note: Audience questions and comments are from the session's text chat; answers are summarized from the panelists' verbal answers (view the webinar archive for the complete answers).

Questions and comments on Panelist Pamela Martin-Díaz's presentation on the ACPL Library Outreach to WIC Centers program:

- Love the logo
- I like the dice idea
- **Q:** Do all WIC programs have the quarterly meetings for families? Or is this a requirement you worked out with your local agency?
A: For Allen County, PA (not speaking for the national program as a whole or other local areas), the WIC offices schedule the meetings; the library staff are special guests at the regular WIC program. The number of meetings may vary locally.
- **Q:** How long are the classes? Parents and children together?
A: The classes are 30 minutes long, which also includes WIC business—they aren't solely for the library presentations. There may or may not be children present at any meeting. Games for children are available for those that do show up to help keep them engaged during the classes. Children attend with parents sometimes because they must be measured and weighed regularly as part of the WIC program.
- **Q:** I'm concerned about the attendance being tied to WIC benefits. There are many reasons one might not be able to attend. What do those who don't attend lose access to?
A: Having attendance tied to WIC benefits is a WIC policy; it has nothing to do with the library's program or involvement. The library staff are guests and so have to abide by the WIC office's policies.
- **Q:** Did you have a positive interaction with the WIC parents or did the resent being asked to participate in the program?
A: The interaction with parents has been very positive. Parents are interested in libraries, and we encourage them to bring their children to storytimes and to use library in general.
- Pamela ~ thank you this sounds like a fantastic program to reach the sometimes hard to reach population
- Partnering with WIC is a great idea!

Questions and comments on Panelist Tomás Mejía's presentation on the Migrant Education Program (MEP):

- **Q:** Do you provide MEP services to families who request it or do you introduce it to all registered migrant families?
A: MEP provides services to all migrant families with children 0-5 and encourages them to accept the services, but it's their choice to participate.
- **Q:** What's the attrition rate for the bin program if any?
A: Being a migrant means that these families move a lot, so yes, there's attrition. But the program gains a lot of new families as well. The program loses a lot of bins, but for the program that's not a bad thing as it gets educational material into homes of the target population.
- **Q:** Would love to hear examples or a list of the bins' contents.
A: For math, for instance, there will be books on adding and subtracting, building blocks, worksheets, manipulatives that address math skills, a booklet for parents to explain the background and activities. A literacy kit will include a worksheet, books, alphabet manipulatives like spongy letters. We're aware of choking hazards and appropriately sized items when assembling the kits. Each is focused on one topic and includes everything needed for the family to successfully complete all the activities, including pencils and blank paper.
- **Q:** What specifically do libraries do to contribute to the MEP program support?
A: There are many mutual benefits. The program brings lots of new people into libraries. One of our programs last summer had 6 literacy workshops in a library in the evenings—it was a partnership with MEP, the public library and the school district. Why not take the school people into the library? The library gave tours, storytimes, workshops, tech time, and all partners collaborated on the planning.
- That's a great partnership with libraries--good cross-promotion of services
- **Q:** How do you identify or reach migrant families in order to introduce them into the MEP program? Is there resistance to joining that program?
A: This is the biggest challenge to program--how to find families and provide services quickly before families move on. MEP has 25-30 recruiters who identify and recruit families into the program. MEP spends a lot of money and time to recruit families. Families sign FERPA forms so MEP can use data for certain educational purposes.
- **Q:** Do migrants worry about their legal status and, if so, how do you educate them on the value of your program?
A: The Supreme Court case Plyler v. Doe in 1982 ruled that all k-12 children receive free public education regardless of legal status. MEP does not ask about legal status—it has no bearing on services they receive from the program.

- **Q:** Can you say more about the recruiters? How do they find participants?
A: There are specific criteria that families have to meet to qualify for the program. There are 10 days of training for recruiters. The website is a key source for information on policies and recruiting (http://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/elau_migrant.htm).
- SI SAIL video at: <http://spellproject.weebly.com/webinars.html>. This shows the program in action and some of the many partners, including libraries.

Questions and comments on Panelist Dragana Saas's presentation on the Ready to Read Corps Project:

- **Q:** What do you put in the literacy kit? That seems like a great way to get materials into parents' hands.
A: You can see what's in a kit at http://spellproject.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/3/3/15331602/readytoread_mini_kits_5practices_20120702.pdf, along with the accompanying activities suggested for parents.
- **Q:** Are the literacy kits given to the families or checked out for a short time?
A: The kits are given to families, not checked out.
- **Q:** Dragana, please repeat how the kits are funded.
A: Through grants and our library foundation.
- **Q:** Could we hear more about the teen program? Do you work with agencies other than the schools to reach teen parents?
A: We mostly work with schools that have high school dropout recovery programs. The teens that participate support each other, too.
- **Q:** What staff go on the home visits?
A: It varies.
- **Q:** Did you go along with different agency personnel when they conducted home visits.
A: Some staff from partner agencies prefer to accompany library staff on visits, sometimes library staff go on their own.
- **Q:** How large is your Ready to Read staff? Do you use volunteers or are they all librarians?
A: It started with 1 team of 2 people; now have 13 full time staff people. It's a diverse group including librarians and people with backgrounds in public health, human development, and more; what connects us all is a passion for early literacy and making a difference in these people's lives.

Questions and comments on Panelist Megan Wilson's presentation on the Reach Out and Read Program:

- For the One Book 4 CO project, we bought over 70,000 copies of *Maybe a Bear Ate It!*, for literally each 4 year old in Colorado! We gave them out in public libraries and Reach Out and Read clinics throughout the state.
- That's AWESOME!!!!
- Robie Harris must be a great fan of Colorado!
- :) yes, I think she is! She appeared in CO for a few events in conjunction with the project
- **Q:** I am very excited about the possibility of investigating the Reach Out and Read program availability in my area. Do you have any recommendations as to how to approach adopting and introducing this program in an area that does not currently have it?

A: To connect with your local Reach Out and Read program, look on the national website (<http://www.reachoutandread.org/>). Check there to see if there's a coalition for your area, which is the best place to start. If not, contact a participating clinic in your area. Clinics are usually very enthusiastic to reach out. You can contact me if you need help [Megan Wilson, megan@reachoutandreadco.org].

- Ready to Read and Reach Out and Read videos are available at: <http://spellproject.weebly.com/webinars.html>
- Reach Out and Read website: <http://www.reachoutandread.org>
- **Q:** How is Reach out and Read funded?

A: It varies locally but as a nonprofit, funding relies on local funding, foundations, individuals, fundraising events, and other common ways nonprofits raise money. Some states provide some of the funding to the programs in their states.

There's a lot more info on the programs from all of our panelists available at <http://spellproject.weebly.com/webinars.html>