Improving Early Childhood Literacy Rates and Kindergarten Readiness Through Parent Engagement

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Every year, 40% of children start school with skills one-to-three years behind.
Reading: Does it Matter?

A five-year range of literacy skills is common in elementary classrooms.

- Some students are functioning two years ahead.
- Some are at grade level.
- Sadly, some students have skills three years behind.

[Image of children in a classroom]
Why Literacy?

Reading is the foundational skill for all other learning.
Why do we care about parent engagement?
“Years and years of research has brought us to a very simple conclusion about what is needed for children to develop in healthy ways: stable, warm, nurturing relationships and a variety of rich learning opportunities that allow them to explore and configure the world.”

Jack P. Shonkoff, MD
Harvard University
Relationships are strengthened through everyday interactions, particularly play and conversation.

It is more about HOW materials are used, than WHAT the materials are.

Many products claim to “boost brain development,” but YOU are the best toy in the room.

University of Washington (I-LABS)
How the Role of Parent Affects Literacy?

- Parent are a child’s first and most influential teacher
- Learning begins at birth
- 85% of the human brain develops in the first 3 years of life
What is our community doing to make a difference?
Early Childhood Education Programs

- Head Start
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Full-day kindergarten
- READY! for Kindergarten®
- Reach Out and Read
- Dolly Parton Imagination Library
What do these programs have in common?
Parent Engagement

A shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.
Parent Engagement

Is continuous across a child’s life and entails enduring commitment, but changing parent roles as children mature into young adulthood.
Parent Engagement

Cuts across and reinforces learning in the multiple settings.

Children learn at home, in pre-kindergarten programs, in school, in after school programs, in faith-based institutions, and in the community.
Parent Engagement and Statewide Education Focus

- ThriveWA
  - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
  - Department for Early Learning
  - Gates Foundation

- Focused on creating opportunities for every child in our state to get a great start in life
• Vision: Every child in Washington state is ready to succeed in school and life.
• Mission: Build community-wide commitment to deliver a comprehensive, high-quality early learning environment that benefits every child and family in Washington state.
ThriveWA

How?

- Prepare every child for success
- Advance the field
- Build a thriving system
Approaching Parents Through Community Partnerships

- The Children’s Reading Foundation
- Educational Service District
- Partners for Early Learning
- Benton Franklin Early Learning Alliance
- Communities in Schools
- Leveraging Resources
Educational Service District Early Learning Department

- How does this apply to the teacher?
  - ECEAP Programs in districts
  - Kinder transition
  - P-3 alignment
  - WaKIDS
  - Full-day Kindergarten
  - TS Gold
  - READY! for Kindergarten®
  - READ Up℠
  - Other statewide initiatives
READY! for Kindergarten and Parent Engagement
READY! for Kindergarten
Home Visit Model

Partnership of READY! for Kindergarten, Educational Service District, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) classrooms

- Very low-income population
- ECEAP performance standards dictated parent education through home visits
- Statewide ECEAP system looking for credible and effective home visit tools for parent engagement
Week of the Young Child

- Served as our connection to the classroom
- Parent investment in the program prior to home visit
Home Visit

- Trained Family Support Staff as READY! for Kindergarten facilitators
- Introduced tools and how to work with families in a one-on-one scenario
- Developed script
- Developed evaluation tool
Outcomes

Parent feedback
ECEAP staff feedback
Evaluation results
What predominant skills are you not seeing in kindergartners?
Thank you!

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