

Eagle's Nest Early Learning Center
Rogers ISD

Project Proposal:

Storytime Spark: Growing a Love for Literacy

11/13/2024

GRANT NARRATIVE

1) Abstract:

This project aims to enhance early childhood literacy experiences by increasing access to diverse and age-appropriate reading materials, supporting educators, and fostering a literacy-rich environment both inside and outside. The primary objectives include the acquisition and distribution of books, flannel board stories, puppets, and other literacy-enhancing tools to classrooms and reading areas, ensuring all children have access to resources that promote early literacy development. Additionally, the project seeks to equip teachers and caregivers with the necessary resources and professional development to engage children in high-quality reading experiences, including effective reading strategies and the creation of literacy-friendly environments. A key component of the initiative is the establishment of an inviting outdoor reading space, designed to promote reading sessions in a relaxed, natural setting. This space will be equipped with weather-resistant furniture, a selection of books, and sensory-friendly materials to engage children in outdoor reading. Through interactive storytime sessions and the integration of reading into daily routines, the project aims to foster language development, cognitive skills, and social-emotional learning, ensuring that reading becomes an integral part of children's everyday experiences.

2) Eligibility Requirements:

- a) Is literacy based and improves participants' literacy skills
- b) Rogers Elementary school is a Title 1 school which means at least 40% of children enrolled are economically disadvantaged.

3) Need:

- **Title 1 School:** Rogers Elementary school is a Title 1 school which means many students are from low income families. According to an article in the Michigan Journal of Economics titled "The Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Literacy: How Literacy is Influenced by and Influences SES," "A strong positive correlation is found between literacy and SES, with higher income being linked to higher literacy."
- **Early Intervention is key:** Literacy programs targeting early grades, can dramatically affect long-term educational outcomes. Students struggling with reading in early grades are less likely to meet academic standards in later years, which can affect graduation rates and future academic success. "Evidence shows that children with well-developed language and literacy skills enter kindergarten poised to acquire the alphabetic principle and to apply this principle to two key aspects of reading development: word recognition and reading

comprehension” (Chaney, 1998; Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network [ECCRN], 2005; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002)

(4) PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(a) Target Population:

The project will serve infants and toddlers from birth to age 4 in Rogers, Texas who are enrolled in the Eagle’s Nest Early Learning Center, with a focus on providing high-quality reading experiences and early literacy development for all children in this age group.

(b) Objectives:

The primary goals of this project are:

- 1. Increase Access to Books and Literacy Materials:**
To acquire and distribute a variety of age-appropriate books, flannel board stories, puppets, and other literacy-enhancing materials to classrooms and reading areas, ensuring that every child has access to diverse resources to support early literacy development.
- 2. Support Educators and Teaching Staff:**
To provide teachers and caregivers with the resources and training necessary to engage children in high-quality reading experiences. This includes professional development in effective reading strategies, the creation of literacy-rich environments, and guidance on how to incorporate reading into daily routines.
- 3. Create a Literacy-Friendly Outdoor Reading Space:**
To establish an inviting outdoor reading area on the patio of the early childhood center. This space will be equipped with weather-resistant furniture, a variety of books, and sensory-friendly materials to promote outdoor reading sessions and foster a love for books in a natural, relaxed setting.
- 4. Foster Early Literacy Skills:**
To enhance language development, cognitive skills, and social-emotional learning through interactive reading sessions. This will also involve integrating storytime into various activities throughout the day, ensuring that reading is a daily experience for children, both indoors and outdoors.

(C) Methods of Implementation:

The project will be carried out through the following steps:

- 1. Book & Literacy Material Acquisition:**
 - Partner with local bookstores, libraries, and community organizations to acquire a diverse set of books and literacy materials for infants and toddlers.
 - Prioritize materials that are age-appropriate, culturally diverse, and offer extension opportunities to story time such as flannel board stories, puppets, etc.
- 2. Professional Development for Teaching Staff:**
 - Organize workshops and training sessions for educators on effective reading techniques for young children, including shared reading, interactive storytelling, and engaging infants and toddlers through songs and rhymes.
 - Train staff on creating print-rich environments and how to integrate books into various activities, from playtime to mealtime, to reinforce literacy learning throughout the day.
- 3. Outdoor Reading Area Development:**
 - Designate a quiet, safe, and sheltered outdoor patio area where children can explore books in an open-air environment.
 - Purchase and set up weather-resistant furniture, such as benches and child-sized chairs, as well as storage solutions for the books.
 - Use durable, outdoor-friendly materials to create sensory and interactive elements within the reading area (e.g., textured books, water-resistant board books, soft mats, and nature-themed reading materials).
- 4. Ongoing Evaluation and Feedback:**
 - Implement regular observation and assessment of the effectiveness of the reading sessions, both in the indoor and outdoor areas.
 - Collect feedback from teachers, parents, and children about the reading materials and the outdoor reading space to ensure that the project continues to meet the needs of the children and staff.

(D) Expected Benefits and Results:

- 1. Enhanced Literacy Development:**

By providing a wide range of engaging books and literacy materials, children will have more opportunities to develop essential early literacy skills, including vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and listening skills. Early exposure to books helps foster a love of reading and supports brain development during this critical stage.
- 2. Improved Teaching Practices:**

Teaching staff will gain confidence and skills in using books, flannel board stories, puppets, and finger plays as tools for promoting literacy development. Through professional development, educators will be better equipped to implement evidence-based strategies for interactive and engaging storytime sessions. This will not

only benefit literacy but also enhance social-emotional learning, cognitive development, and critical thinking skills in young children.

3. Creation of a Literacy Rich Environment:

The addition of an outdoor reading area will provide a unique space where children can engage with books in a natural setting, helping to build positive associations with reading. This environment will also allow children to experience a variety of stimuli that support their sensory development (e.g., listening to birds, feeling the texture of outdoor materials, and interacting with tactile books).

4. Long-term Educational Impact:

The project aims to establish a foundation for lifelong learning by instilling a love of reading from an early age. By engaging children in high-quality literacy experiences in their formative years, the project will help prepare them for success in school and beyond.

(5) ALTRUSAN INVOLVEMENT:

While the program could be self-sustaining, we would welcome members of Altrusa to come and read to our kids. Research in *Developmental Psychology* (Bohannon, 2004) emphasizes that exposure to a range of speakers and dialects enhances children's vocabulary and language comprehension, boosting their overall communication skills. There could also be opportunities to help set up our outdoor reading area and help put together purchased furniture to store materials.

(6) PROJECT TIMELINE:

This timeline ensures that activities are well-distributed across the year, with adequate time for planning, implementation, and evaluation. It also builds in opportunities for continuous support and adjustment to meet the needs of teachers and children.

Summary of Quarterly Activities

Quarter 1 (Months 1-3):

- Planning, purchasing books, preparing for and organizing staff training opportunities, and designing outdoor space.

Quarter 2 (Months 4-6):

- Organize and distribute materials, conduct staff training, and set up the outdoor reading space.
- Continue staff support and begin outdoor reading sessions.

Quarter 3 & 4 (Months 7-12):

- Evaluate the project's success, engage the community, and finalize plans for sustaining the project.

7) EVALUATION:

Success will be evaluated through both direct and indirect measures of early literacy engagement and development. The project's success will be assessed based on:

1. Increased Engagement in Reading:

- **Indicator:** Increased frequency and duration of reading sessions with infants and toddlers, both indoors and outdoors.
- **Tool:** Teacher observation logs, anecdotal notes, and a teacher survey at the end of the school year seeking feedback on whether there was increased engagement during read alouds and increased visits to library center both inside and outside.
- **Success Criteria:** Teachers will note an increase in the time children spent engaged in read alouds each day and the number of children actively participating in reading activities (ie.visiting the library center more frequently or recalling stories on flannel board during centers).

2. Increased Availability of Literacy Materials:

- **Indicator:** Acquisition and distribution of new, age-appropriate books and materials for classrooms and the creation of the outdoor reading area.
- **Tool:** Inventory tracking of purchased materials and material usage recorded on teacher lesson plans.
- **Success Criteria:** A designated inventory of at least 100 new books and learning materials in the classrooms, with flannel board stories, puppets, and other literacy enhancing materials being actively used during story time and read alouds.

3. Increased Literacy Skills in Children:

- **Indicator:** Improvement in early literacy skills such as vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, and engagement with books.
- **Tool:** Informal and formal literacy assessments (ecircle assessment for PreK 3, and an informal assessment checklist for Infants & toddlers) as well as teacher observations
- **Success Criteria:** At least 80% of children will show observable signs of increasing language development, including a larger vocabulary and more verbal participation in reading sessions. For PreK3 kids, 80% will show measurable improvement on formal assessment tools (e-circle).

Impact on Target Audience and Community:

Children (Birth-4 years old):

- **Expected Impact:** Enhanced vocabulary, improved listening and comprehension skills, and a greater interest in books and reading.
- **Evaluation Tools:** Informal and formal literacy assessments and teacher observations.

Teachers and Educators:

- **Expected Impact:** Improved instructional practices, greater confidence in promoting early literacy, and the ability to engage children more effectively in reading activities.
- **Evaluation Tools:** Teacher surveys, classroom observations, and professional development assessments.

Community:

- **Expected Impact:** Strengthened partnerships between the school and community members, greater awareness of the importance of early literacy, and potential increases in community involvement in supporting early childhood education.
- **Evaluation Tools:** Parent surveys, event attendance, and feedback from families.

8) Sustainability Plan:

The "**Storytime Spark**" project is designed with sustainability in mind, ensuring that the impact on early literacy and reading culture extends beyond the initial grant funding. We will do this by continuing to utilize enhanced reading materials in lesson planning and coaching and role modeling for staff that may need refreshing. We will ensure the outdoor reading area is open and available on a daily basis for children. This project is a one time project since once the requested materials are obtained there will be no need to request additional materials.

9) Publicity Plan:

To ensure the "**Storytime Spark**" project gains visibility, we will implement a publicity strategy that involves both local and regional outreach, leveraging social media and community connections.

1. Local and Regional Publicity:

- **Altrusa Publicity Channels:**
 - As an Altrusa project, we will leverage Altrusa's regional network to share our progress, highlight key milestones, and celebrate successes.
- **Local Press Coverage:**
 - **Press Releases:** Send press releases to local newspapers to raise awareness about the project and its positive impact on early literacy in the community. This could include feature stories about the project's launch, book donations, or events like the opening of the outdoor reading space.

2. Social Media:

- **Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter:** Utilize Eagle's Nest Early Learning Center and Rogers ISD social media accounts to:
 - Share photos, success stories, and highlights from the outdoor reading space and classroom activities.

- Post testimonials from parents, teachers, and community members about the positive impact of the project.

3. Community Outreach and Engagement:

- **Literacy Events and Storytime:** Hosting regular community events such as storytime sessions or literacy workshops, open to families in Rogers, will help keep the community engaged. These events can be advertised through the school websites and social media channels.
- **School Newsletters and Parent Communications:** Use school newsletters to keep families informed about the project's activities and achievements, reinforcing the importance of early literacy.

10) Budget Narrative- See attached.

With enrollment numbers growing, we realized the need for additional books and materials to ensure each classroom had the materials necessary to provide high quality programming. This prompted us to seek out additional funding from community organizations to help us bridge this gap.