

Date: July 2, 2009  
To: ALSC and PLA Boards of Directors  
From: Every Child Ready to Read Evaluation Task Force  
Subject: Evaluation Summary and Recommended Next Steps

**Task Force Charge:** to evaluate the impact of the Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) initiative. The seven member task force will be comprised of the three initiators of the ECRR evaluation proposal and up to two representatives from both PLA and ALSC. The responsibilities of the task force include developing an RFP for the selection of research partners and guiding the project toward goals or benchmarks as outlined in the ECRR evaluation proposal. The task force will convene and moderate a stakeholders' audio conference, solicit input from practitioners and provide recommendations regarding next steps based on impact evaluation results, review of current research in the field of early literacy, and stakeholder/practitioner input.

**Overview of Task Force Work Plan:** Based on the initial evaluation proposal approved by the ALSC/PLA Boards, the task force developed and issued a RFP for an evaluator/research partner. Proposals received were reviewed and rated, resulting in the selection of Dr. Susan Neuman/Dr. Donna Celano. The task force worked in an advisory capacity to the researchers, and also solicited and reviewed input from the authorized ECRR trainers (see attached). This report, which outlines recommendations for next steps, concludes the work of the task force.

### **ECRR Evaluation:**

In June 2009, Susan B. Neuman (University of Michigan) and Donna Celano (LaSalle University) presented to the ECRR Evaluation Task Force their findings and recommendations (see attached). Members of the ALSC and PLA Boards are advised that the report is considered a work for hire and proprietary in that it will serve as the basis for future curriculum revision and development of the initiative.

The key segments of the evaluation include a literature review of research, survey of stakeholders including directors, children's librarians, participants in training, state libraries, graduate library programs and non-participants, and recommendations. This research is based on the assumption that public libraries can be an integral part of the educational community. Key findings that were particularly of interest to the task force, as we were developing our recommendations, include:

- Incorporate new research in the revision of existing ECRR materials by using the framework of constrained (short duration benefits) and unconstrained (long term predictors of success) skills and better align skill terminology with current research.
- Emphasize the informational aspects of reading and its important relationship to background knowledge and conceptual development and focus on language and vocabulary and its relationship to comprehension and reading success.
- Acknowledge and incorporate the importance of ecological factors which are critical for literacy motivation and learning.
- Incorporate a more modular structure in the curriculum that provides flexibility in time segmentation, message delivery and audience composition including adult and adult/child.

- Incorporate a greater sensitivity to culture and diversity within local communities.
- Create new marketing tools for all levels within public libraries from decision makers to program implementers.
- Create training strategies to infuse graduate education, professional development and partnership development.
- Address needs of non-English speaking parents and caregivers.

## **Task Force Recommendations:**

Based on a review of the evaluation findings, new research, an in-depth conversation with the evaluators, input from the ECRR trainers and task force discussion, we recommend the following:

**Recommendation #1:** Retain *Every Child Ready to Read @ the library* as product name/brand that is associated with research and quality.

**Recommendation #2:** Continue the ALSC/PLA divisional partnership that combines library leadership and practice necessary for sustainability and scale.

**Recommendation #3:** Support of the following **core values** for the ECRR initiative:

1. Parents/caregivers are the child's first and best teacher.
2. Play provides a wide range of benefits and opportunities for the young child.
3. Reading is an essential life skill.
4. Lifelong learning is a primary role of the public library and this learning begins at birth.

**Recommendation #4:** The evaluation study represents a significant investment towards the next generation of materials for the ECRR initiative. Support for the following revisions/enhancements to the ECRR curriculum:

1. Incorporate the new research using the framework of constrained and unconstrained skills, which are translated into practical applications for both parents and public library staff. The current curriculum is nearing 10 years old.
2. Emphasize the informational aspects of book reading and its important relationship to background knowledge and conceptual development within the curriculum thus focusing on language and vocabulary and its relationship to comprehension and reading success.
3. Develop a modular structure that provides flexibility in time segmentation, message delivery and audience composition including both adult and adult/child.
4. Talking points oriented rather than prescribed scripts.
5. A more interactive format for parent and staff training rather than lecture.
6. Continue to maintain a "turnkey" approach to the materials.
7. Sensitivity to cultural, economic, educational and linguistic diversity.
8. A simple evaluation system to track outcomes and outputs.
9. Handouts of simple parent tips and activities for home use.
10. Addressing ecological factors, including simple guidelines for public library spaces that enhance literacy development and training room set-up options.
11. Booklists and reading recommendations which support the revised curriculum.

**Recommendation #5:** Contract with Dr. Susan Neuman to develop the new curriculum at a cost not to exceed \$50,000.00 to be shared equally by the two divisions. Dr. Neuman has expressed interest in the project. Curriculum development should take about 6 months from the time the contract is issued.

**Recommendation #6:** Appoint the existing task force members to a new task force with the following charge:

**New Charge for Task Force:**

1. Work in an advisory capacity with the person contracted to develop a new/updated ECRR curriculum based on new early literacy research and the ECRR evaluation findings, including input from trainers.
2. Create training guidelines on how to implement/market the ECRR curriculum for staff at leadership and practitioner levels.
3. Recommend how training will be handled for the new curriculum building on the successes and lessons of the current training model.
4. Recommend opportunities for institutionalizing aspects of the ECRR initiative within the divisions to extend/keep fresh the life of curriculum related materials. Example: Assigning an existing ALSC committee to keep all the booklists and reading recommendations updated on some type of periodic basis.
5. Recommend to ALSC/PLA staff opportunities for marketing the new curriculum/initiative.
6. Organize a program for the PLA National Conference in March 2010 and the ALSC National Institute in September 2010 on the evaluation findings, new research and direction of the new curriculum.
7. Seek additional funding to support training, marketing, implementation and multi-lingual/culturally sensitive adaptations of the revised ECRR curriculum/materials.

As a point of information, the task force has access to a grant writer at no charge. The task force will continue to keep ALSC/PLA staff involvement to a minimum. The task force will continue to work virtually and during ALA conferences, as much as possible.

**Recommendation #7:** The ALSC/PLA Boards and/or divisional staff convey to existing trainers that any training conducted under the ECRR brand **must** continue to follow the existing training materials, curriculum and protocols until such a time that the new curriculum is made available.

**Action To Be Taken:** The Task Force asks the ALSC/PLA Boards to adopt the seven recommendations, which includes funding the curriculum revision.

Thank you for your consideration. Member(s) will be present at your Board meeting at Annual Conference.

Viki Ash (ALSC), Clara Bohrer (Chair), Sari Feldman (PLA), Toni Garvey, Elaine Meyers, Kathleen Reif (PLA), Virginia Walter (ALSC)