An Evaluation of Every Child Ready to Read: A Parent Education Initiative

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the Every Child Ready to Read program, a parent education initiative. Based on the assumption that libraries can be an integral part of the educational community, the program was designed to use tested, research-based materials to help families and caregivers make a difference in preparing their children for successful reading achievement.

The evaluation conducted an extensive literature review on latest research in early literacy development. It highlighted the skills of letter name knowledge, phonological awareness, concepts of print—acquired early on, as well as skills that are associated with longer-term success in reading, vocabulary, comprehension, and background knowledge. It also described key best practices used in exemplary early literacy programs throughout the country, and described areas that might aid in updating current ECRR parent workshops for the future.

Five surveys were developed to measure the impact of the ECRR initiative and to tap the beliefs and practices of different constituencies within the library community: Directors and children's librarians, participants in training, state librarians, graduate library programs, as well as those who had decided not to use the materials. Placed on SurveyMonkey, the survey included open-ended and closed responses. Focus groups were also conducted to obtain qualitative responses to the initiative.

Results indicated both successes and challenges in the implementation of the initiative. The program was very successful and had great appeal to many users who have been seeking better efforts to reach out to parents. The materials were well received and regarded of high quality. Many participants appreciated the training that accompanied the materials. Overall, ECRR participants appreciated the impact the program has generated for the library community as well as the relationships and linkages it helped to establish to other educational institutions.

There were challenges, however, in the implementation of the program. Common responses included the cost, difficulties associated with the recruitment, retention, and the level of engagement of parents in the program. Some clearly questioned its relevance to their mission, indicating that other priorities took precedence. Others were not aware of the initiative, suggesting that further efforts are needed to enhance the visibility of this important program. Based on respondents' comments in surveys and focus groups, a series of recommendations for potential revisions and clarifications are made.

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This evaluation first reviews the latest research in early literacy development. This literature review examines critical skills as well as best practices used in exemplary early literacy programs throughout the country, and highlights areas that might aid in updating current ECRR parent workshops. It provides an analysis of a detailed survey designed to examine the impact of ECRR on five key audiences: Directors and children's librarians from public libraries (ECRR users); trained participants; directors and children's librarians (ECRR non-users); state libraries and state library associations; and graduate library schools**.** Finally, it examines through focus groups participants' qualitative responses toward the initiative. Together evidence from these data sources offers a rich examination into ECRR's successes and challenges in helping public libraries work with families to improve children's early literacy opportunities and enhance their reading success.

I.   Literature Review

The last decade has brought a growing consensus on the range of skills that serve as the foundation for reading and writing ability (Dickinson & Neuman, 2006; National Reading Panel Report, 2000; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).   To become a skilled reader, children need a rich language and conceptual knowledge base, a broad and deep vocabulary, and verbal reasoning abilities to understand messages that are conveyed through print. Children also must develop code-related skills, an understanding that spoken words are composed of smaller elements of speech (phonological awareness); the idea that letters represent these sounds (the alphabetic principle), the many systematic correspondences between sounds and spellings, and a repertoire of highly familiar words that can be easily and automatically recognized (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004; McCardle, Scarborough, & Catts, 2001).

But to attain a high level of skill, young children need opportunities to develop these strands, not in isolation, but interactively. Meaning, not sounds or letters, motivates children's earliest experiences with print (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Given the tremendous attention that early literacy has received recently in policy circles (Roskos & Vukelich, 2006), and the increasing diversity of our child population, it is important and timely to take stock of these critical dimensions as well as the strengths and gaps in our ability to measure these skills effectively.

In the following sections, we first review the important skills that are related to early language and literacy achievement. We then provide recommendations for updating ECRR workshops.

I.1   The Critical Dimensions of Language and Literacy in Early Childhood

Language. Verbal abilities are consistently the best predictors of later reading achievement (Scarborough, 2001). Skilled readers typically draw upon multiple levels of the language system (Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg, & Poe, 2003), with abilities encompassing vocabulary, syntax, and discourse. Vocabulary size in optimal settings may increase exponentially in the early years (some estimate about seven words a day) (Snow et al., 1998), with children learning to comprehend words spoken to them before they are able to produce them on their own. Word knowledge, however, is not just developed through exposure to increasingly complex language, but to knowledge-building language experiences (Neuman, 2001) that involve children in developing and refining networks of categorically-related concepts.

With opportunity and practice, children's word knowledge is put to use in syntactic structures that grow in length and complexity. Children's sentences often start at two words (Bloom, 1970), but quickly lengthen to four or more words as children communicate their ideas increasingly through language. Snow and colleagues (Snow, Baines, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991) have shown that conversations that are physically removed from immediate objects or events (i.e., 'what if?') are tied to the development of abstract reasoning and related to literacy skills like print production and narrative competence.

With word learning occurring so rapidly, children begin to make increasingly fine distinctions of words not only based on their meaning but also based on their sound. They begin to make implicit comparisons between similar sounding words, a phenomenon described by linguists as lexical restructuring (Goswami, 2001; Metsala, 1999). For example, a two-year old child probably knows the words "cat" from "cut;" "hot" from "not." Distinguishing between these similar sounding words both quickly and accurately, children begin to hear sequences of sound that constitute each known word. Children with large vocabularies become attuned to these segments and acquire new words rapidly; children with smaller vocabularies may be limited to more global distinctions. Consequently, vocabulary size and vocabulary rate are important for lexical restructuring (i.e., making sound distinctions between words) (Goswami, 2001), and are strongly tied to the emergence of phonological awareness.

Recent analyses (Dickinson et al., 2003) have made it abundantly clear, however, that oral language skills, and more specifically vocabulary development, not only play a role in phonological awareness but also are critical skills for the development of reading comprehension later on. Therefore, it is essential for quality indicators in early childhood programs to recognize that oral language and vocabulary development is the foundation for all other skills critical to successful reading.

Phonological awareness. Based on a massive body of research (Burgess, 2006; Lonigan, 2006), phonological awareness is a critical precursor, correlate, and predictor of children's reading achievement. Discriminating units of language (i.e., words, segments,

phonemes) is strongly linked to successful reading (National Reading Panel Report, 2000). It is, however, as described above, both a cause and a consequence of vocabulary development and learning to read (Ehri & Roberts, 2006). Typically developing children begin first to discriminate among units of language (i.e., phonological awareness), then within these units (i.e., phonemic awareness). Phonological awareness refers to the general ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning. Phonemic awareness is the insight that every spoken word can be conceived as units of sounds that are represented by the letter of an alphabet (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Evidence (Lonigan, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998) suggests that children achieve syllabic sensitivity earlier than they achieve sensitivity to phonemes, and sensitivity to rhyme before sensitivity to phonemes. Children's entry to these skills typically begins with linguistic activities such as language games and nursery rhymes (Maclean, Bryant, & Bradley, 1987) that implicitly compare and contrast the sounds of words, and include alliterative phrases (i.e., bibbily bobbily boo begins with /b/). But implicit comparisons, alone, may be insufficient. Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are meta-linguistic abilities (Adams, 1990). Children must not only be able to recite and play with sound units, they must also develop an understanding that sound units map onto whole or parts of written language.

Phonological awareness should not be confused with phonics. The term phonics, or decoding, assumes that children understand the phonemic composition of words, and the phoneme-grapheme (sound/letter) relationship. Studies that have attempted to accelerate learning through early phonics training have shown no effects (Snow et al., 1998); in fact, evidence suggests that such training, without a firm understanding of phonemic awareness, may be detrimental to remembering words and learning to spell.

Recent reviews and analyses (Dickinson et al., 2003; Scarborough, 2001) have placed phonological awareness as a critical part of a complex braid of language abilities which include strands of phonology, semantics, syntax, pragmatics, and discourse. Its tie to children's ability to decode has been clearly established. At the same time, quality indicators would do well to recognize that phonological awareness skills are integrally connected to other important language skills which need to be strongly bolstered in these early education and care programs.

Letter knowledge: Knowledge of the alphabet letters is a strong predictor of short- and long-term reading success (Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Chall, 1967). However, its influence on later reading is not about knowing the letter names, per se. Rather, the learning of letter names mediates the ability to remember the sounds associated with the letters (Ehri, 1979). Once again, there is a reciprocal relationship between skills: Letter knowledge plays an influential role in the development of phonological awareness, and higher levels of letter knowledge are associated with children's abilities to detect and manipulate phonemes. For example, the child who knows the letter 'b' is likely to remember the sound of /b/. Consequently, letter knowledge may reflect a greater underlying knowledge and familiarity with literacy related skills such as language and print.

Research (Gibson & Levin, 1975) indicates that children differentiate letters according to their visual form, that is, their horizontal, vertical and diagonal segments. Given the complexities of the visually distinct forms of letters (upper case, lower case, printed form), current learning theory (Adams, 1990) suggests that simultaneously

teaching two versions of letters with their confusable sounds and labels may be overwhelming to the young child. However, there is no substantial evidence to suggest which particular form (upper or lower case) should be taught first.

A growing body of research suggests that a variety of extrinsic and intrinsic factors influence the development of letter knowledge. Exposure to letters is a primary vehicle for alphabet knowledge. Children who participate frequently in adult-child writing activities that include a deliberate focus on print have better alphabet knowledge relative to those who may spend time on other activities like shared reading (Aram & Levin, 2004). Further, some letters tend to be learned earlier by children than others. In a recent investigation, Justice and her colleagues (Justice, Pence, Bowles, & Wiggins, 2006) reported that the single largest advantage for learning letters were the child's first initials, compared to the lesser advantage of phonological features of the letters themselves. Given the variability among children in the specific letters they know, multiple methods for gaining letter knowledge are recommended.

Background Knowledge. For children to become skilled readers (Neuman & Celano, 2006), they will also need to develop a rich conceptual knowledge base and verbal reasoning abilities to understand messages conveyed through print. Successful reading ultimately consists of knowing a relatively small tool kit of unconscious procedural skills, accompanied by a massive and slowly built-up store of conscious content knowledge. It is the higher-order thinking skills, knowledge, and dispositional capabilities that enable young children to come to understand what they are reading.

Children's earliest experiences become organized or structured into schemas, building blocks of cognition. Schemas (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) provide children with the conceptual apparatus for making sense of the world around them by classifying incoming bits of information into similar groupings. Stein and Glenn (1979), for example, provided a compelling case for schemas and their usefulness for recalling information about stories. Well-read to children internalize a form of story grammar, a set of expectations of how stories are told which enhances their understanding. Knowledge becomes easier to access (Neuman, 2001), producing more knowledge networks. And those with a rich knowledge base find it easier to learn and remember.

Quality indicators of a rich content base for instruction in early childhood programs include a content-rich curriculum in which children have opportunities for sustained and in-depth learning (Neuman, Dwyer, & Newman, submitted for publication), including play; different levels of guidance to meet the needs of individual children; a masterful orchestration of activity that supports content learning and social-emotional development; and time, materials and resources that actively build verbal reasoning skills and conceptual knowledge.

Print conventions. Recognizing that concepts about print in the English language are not intuitive, Marie Clay (1979), in her pioneering work with Maori children in New Zealand, identified a set of conventions that could be understood without being able to read. These conventions included, among others, the directionality of print in a book (left-to-right, top-to-bottom, front-to-back), differences between pictures and print, uses of punctuation, and definitional characteristics of a letter and a word. Knowing these conventions, she found, helped in the process of learning to read.

With the exception of a study by Tunmer and colleagues (Tunmer, Herriman, & Nesdale, 1988) demonstrating the relationship of these skills to later reading success, however, there is little evidence to suggest the predictive power of these skills on later achievement. Rather, print conventions act as an immediate indicator of children's familiarity with text, and are not integrally related to the other language based skills associated with reading success. Therefore, while such conventions might be helpful to young children in navigating through books, these skills may not in the long run play a powerful role in learning to read.

Children who are English language learners experience each of these critical dimensions in the context of learning two languages, which only increases the complexity of the processes of language and literacy development. In order to become proficient in their second language, young children will need to familiarity with the phonology to the [second language], its vocabulary (typical everyday discourse as well as academic vocabulary, its morphology and grammar (Geva, 1006). Further, to become literate in a second language, it is important to have an adequate level of oral proficiency in that language (Bialystock, 2007). Research with second language learners has shown that oral language and literacy skills in the first language contribute to the development of those skills in the second language. For example, phonological awareness skills in the first language have been found to predict phonological awareness sand word recognition in the second language (Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Cisero & Royer, 1995; Durgunglu, 1998). Although much more research is still needed about the ways in which English language learners develop literacy skills, this knowledge can help guide the development of further interventions.

In sum, research supports a particularly strong linkage between oral language, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, background knowledge, and to a much lesser extent, print conventions, in the preschool years. These skills are highly interdependent. Phonological awareness appears to influence vocabulary development and vocabulary rate. Letter knowledge supports phonological awareness. Code-related skills are highly predictive of children's initial early reading success while oral language skills and background knowledge become highly predictive of comprehension abilities and later reading achievement. Each of these skills, when integrated in meaningful activity, has an important role to play in children's literacy development.

I. 2   Research on Constrained/Unconstrained Skills

In 2002, the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP, 2008) was convened to conduct a synthesis of the scientific research in the development of early reading skills for children ages 2-5. Their report, recently issued (2008), indicated that the most powerful predictors of reading achievement were alphabet knowledge, phonological awarness, rapid automatic naming, and that oral language and vocabulary were only moderate predictors of achievement.

Paris (2005), however, has most recently demonstrated the flaws in what has come to be understood as this traditional view. Early literacy skills, such as letter knowledge (knowing the letters of the alphabet), phonological awareness (sensitivity to the sounds in words), and concepts of print are best described as constrained skills—

skills that predict later achievement early on but that quickly asymptote after the age of 5. Contrary to constrained skills are vocabulary, comprehension and background knowledge; these skills are unconstrained, essentially never asymptote as children get older. These skills have the potential to grow throughout one's lifetime, and can dramatically influence children's long-term abilities both in reading and content areas.

This research has significant implications for teaching and our focus on the skills necessary for children to read. It suggests that although letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and concepts of print are initially important and should be taught, they lead only to temporary gains on skills, and do not predict long-term outcomes. The critical skills are vocabulary, comprehension, and background knowledge—skills that take more time to teach and review and these skills should be a major focus in helping children learn how to read.

I.3   Features of the Environment that Support Literacy Development

The environment can play a major role in promoting these critical skills for literacy development. The organization, structure, and complexity of the early childhood setting influence patterns of activity and engagement. For example, a fairly sizable number of studies (Morrow, 1990; Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1997; Vukelich, 1994) have revealed the powerful influence of access to literacy tools on young children's involvement in literacy activities. This research indicates that in settings carefully constructed to include a wide access of literacy tools, books, and play materials, children read more (Neuman & Roskos, 1992), and engage more in literacy-related play themes (Morrow, 1990), with resulting effects on literacy improvement (Neuman & Roskos, 1990).

The use of space in settings influences learning (Roskos & Neuman, 2001). Children use space and its boundaries to regulate and guide their own responses. For example, studies (Morrow, 1988; Neuman & Roskos, 1997) find that smaller, well defined niches and nooks seem to encourage greater language and collaboration with peers and adults. Children are likely to use these more intimate settings to interact in longer and richer conversation with others.

Relatedly, studies (Fernie, 1985) show evidence that the physical environment can have behavioral consequences. Some materials seem to encourage more sustained activity than others and invoke children's attention at different ages. Materials that involve children in constructive activity, for example, tend to generate more language than "pull toys" (Rosenthal, 1973). Some materials elicit greater social interaction and cooperation, like block building, whereas others encourage more solitary and or parallel play, such as puzzles (see review, Roskos & Neuman, 2001).

The physical placement of objects, as well, influences children's engagement in literacy-related activity. Children become more involved in sustained literacy play when objects are clustered together to create a schema or meaning network. For example, in one study (Neuman & Roskos, 1993), placing props associated with mailing letters together in a play setting (envelopes, writing instruments, stamps and stationary) led to longer play episodes than when these props were scattered throughout the room. Further, props that were authentic, familiar and useful to common literacy contexts, like

telephones in the kitchen area, or mailboxes in the office area, encouraged more complex language interactions and routines.

The proximity of quality books at children's eye view supports involvement in literacy-like enactments (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986; Neuman, 1999). In one of the first intervention studies of its type, Morrow and Weinstein (1986) examined the influence of creating library corners in early childhood settings. These library corners were specially constructed to include the following elements: (a) a clear location with well-defined borders; (b) comfortable seating and cozy spots for privacy; (c) accessible, organized materials; and (d) related activities that extended whole- and small-group book activities. Morrow and Weinstein (1986) found that the frequency of use rose significantly when library corners were made more visibly accessible and attractive. Similarly, in a large-scale study in 500 child care settings (Neuman, 1999), library settings were created to "put books in children's hands" (p. 286). Observations indicated that children spent significantly more time interacting with books when they were placed in close proximity to children's play activities.

Consequently, there is clear and abundant evidence that certain physical design features in environments support young children's literacy engagement and subsequent achievement. Physical design features, uses of space, and resources, may help to focus and sustain children's literacy activity, providing greater opportunity to engage in language and literacy behaviors. This research indicates, therefore, that a more deliberate approach to the selection and arrangement of materials according to specific design criteria may enhance children's uses of literacy objects and related print resources.

Libraries might benefit from this research on the ecological features of environment. Creating cozy areas for children to sit and read together; constructing play spaces that help them learn to engage in playful behaviors that mimic library activities; and clustering objects such as books, toys, and writing implements together to encourage their sustained use of materials might enhance children's independent engagement in the library areas.

I.4   *Interactional Supports for Literacy Learning*

Environments include not only physical settings, but psychological settings for literacy learning as well (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Children are influenced by the participants present in a setting, their background experiences, their values and it is the integration of place, people, and occasion that support opportunities for learning. These individuals act as social and psychological resources that provide information and feedback through demonstrations and interactions. From a Vygotskian perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), the participants in the setting have the potential to help children perform at a higher level than they would be able to by interacting with their physical environment alone. It is the contrast between assisted and unassisted performance that differentiates learning from development.

A great corpus of research (Dickinson & Neuman, 2006; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001) identifies the types of supports that promote children's language and literacy development. Essentially, they highlight both instructional and relational components. Since language represents the foundational basis for literacy learning in the early years, there is evidence that the amount of verbal input in settings enhances children's language

development (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991). Children whose teachers engage them in rich dialogues have higher scores on tests of both verbal and general ability (Whitehurst et al., 1994). This is especially the case when discussions consist of adults encouraging, questioning, predicting and guiding children's exploration and problem-solving (Palinscar, Brown, & Campione, 1993). Such verbal interactions contribute to children's vocabulary growth which, in turn, is strongly correlated with phonological awareness, comprehension, and subsequent reading achievement.

Adults also engage in activities that are highly supportive of literacy development. Reading stories to children on a regular basis is regarded as one of the more potent supports for literacy learning (Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995). Studies (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998) have shown that a parent's style or approach to reading storybooks to children has both short-term and long-term effects on language and literacy development. Shared book reading activities, such as dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1994), for example, and repeated readings (Biemiller, 2006) have been widely studied and identified as an important source of knowledge about vocabulary, about letters, and about the characteristics of written language. Recent studies (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Duke, 2000) also highlight the importance of introducing children to a wide variety of books in different genres such as information books, poetry, and popular folk tales.

Attention to and support of emergent writing (Clay, 1991) has also been shown to strongly connect with children's developing phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and readiness skills. Activities involve 'driting (drawing and writing), and adult scaffolding help to build the alphabetic principle (Adams, 1990). Further, interactions in literacy-related play have been shown to relate to children's length of utterances, and sustainability in play themes (Neuman & Roskos, 1992). Taken together, activities that engage children in reading, writing, talking, and playing create occasions for meaningful communicative interactions involving language and print.

This research highlights the central role of the caregiver who evokes children's interest and engagement in literacy learning. According to Bus, Van Ijzendoorn, and Pellegrini (1995), children build a mental representation of their interactions with caregivers that influence their expectations and responses to activities. When children feel secure, they engage in learning; when insecure in situations, they may use digressive tactics to avoid activity. For example, in a cross-sectional study of interactive reading with 18-, 32-, and 66-month children, Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1995) found that the atmosphere surrounding book reading was more positive among securely attached caregiver-child dyads than anxiously attached dyads. For securely attached children, book reading was ultimately an enjoyable task, tied to learning improvement; for insecurely attached children, it was negative, with caregivers often using verbal and nonverbal cues to discipline behavior.

Other studies (Blair, 2002; Blair & Razza, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002), as well, support the linkage between children's emotional security and cognitive activity. For example, Howes and Smith (1995) report that in settings rich with creative play activities and staffed by adults who provide children with emotional security, children not only thrive socially but cognitively as well. Similarly Peisner-Feinberg and her colleagues (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001) found that the influence of close attachments between caregivers and children

yielded even stronger positive effects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds than for children from more advantaged backgrounds. Recent studies (Hamre & Pianta, 2005) have shown that these emotional supports may have important moderating effects during the elementary school years as well. Shown in a recent study by Powell and his colleagues (Powell, Burchinal, File & Kontos, 2008), these types of supportive adult interactions are more likely to occur in small group and one-to-one instructional settings, rather than in whole group instruction.

1.5   *Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners*

        All of these environmental supports are especially important for young English language learners (ELL). Their numbers have increased dramatically in the past 15 years in the United States. For example, in 1990, 1 in every 20 children was ELL, that is, a student who speaks English either not at all or with enough limitations that he or she can not fully participate in mainstream English instruction. Today the figure is 1 in 9 (Goldenberg, 2008). Although these children come from over 400 different language backgrounds, by far the largest proportions of students are Spanish-speakers (over 80%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).
        Recent syntheses of research (August & Shanahan, 2006; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005) suggest that when feasible, children should be taught in their primary language. Primary language instruction helps to promote bilingualism and, eventually, biliteracy. Further, children will need support in transferring what they know in their first language to learning tasks presented in English. Engaging children actively in meaningful tasks and providing many opportunities for them to participate at their functional levels will enable children to feel more efficacious, and to become contributing members in mainstream classrooms.
        Adults will need to make adjustments and accommodations—sometimes described as 'instructional scaffolding'—to support children who are beginning English speakers (Goldenberg, 2008). They may have to speak slowly and somewhat deliberately, with clear vocabulary and diction; they may need to use pictures or other objects to illustrate the content being taught; or ask for children to respond either non-verbally (e.g., pointing or signaling) or in one- or two-word utterances (Snow et al., 1998).   ELL's language needs are complex. These young children are not only learning a new language, but also a new set of social rules and behaviors that may be different from their home. Given the great variability among ELL children, adults will need to know the different stages of language learning to be able to implement the most appropriate accommodations (for addition information on accommodations (see Carlo et al., 2004; Francis et al., 2006; Vaughn et al., 2006). Consequently, these and other factors are especially important to ensure that these ELL children have many opportunities to use their second language (i.e., English) and their native language in meaningful and motivating situations.
        From an ecological perspective, therefore, the physical and psychological environments play vital roles in children's learning about literacy. These supports mediate opportunities for literacy engagement and practice, and will likely influence children's attitudes and efforts to engage in literacy activities despite difficulties they may encounter as they learning to read proficiently.

To summarize, program features that support literacy development include:

- A supportive learning environment in which children have access to a wide variety of reading and writing resources.
- Developmentally appropriate practices that actively engages children's minds and builds language and conceptual development.
- Adult engagement in children's learning through conversations, discussions, and contingent responses to children's questions and queries.
- A daily interactive book reading routine that introduces children to multiple genre, including information books, narrative, poetry, and alphabet books.
- Activities that support small group and one-to-one interactions and differing levels of guidance to meet the needs of individual children.
- A masterful orchestration of activities that supports play, learning and social-emotional development.
- Adjustments and accommodations for English Language Learners that allow them to successfully engage in learning activities in the classroom.

1.6   *Potential Avenues for Revisions of ECRR materials*

The ECRR kit includes activities that support six critical skills: Print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness, and letter knowledge. All of these skills are important. At the same time, however, the library community might wish to do the following:

- Rename some of the skills to be better aligned with current research. This would include: phonological awareness, vocabulary and oral language development, print concepts that include letter knowledge and specific concepts about print, and background knowledge and comprehension. Specifically, the library community would be wise to emphasize the informational aspects of book reading and its important relationship to background knowledge and conceptual development.
- Some skills, particularly in these early years are more important than others. The library community might consider focusing on language, vocabulary and its relationship to comprehension and reading success. Letter knowledge, print concepts are constrained skills, with limited predictive power in the long-run for children's achievement.
- The research literature clearly focuses on the importance of materials and interactions, as well as the social components in learning. The library community might consider adding these ecological factors which are critical for literacy motivation and learning.

II.   Survey

We developed five surveys to measure the impact of the ECRR initiative. These surveys were designed to tap the beliefs and practices of different constituencies within the library community. Specifically, our goal was to examine the views of Directors and

children's librarians, participants in training, state librarians, graduate library programs, as well as those who had decided not to use the materials.

Questions targeting each population were developed and piloted locally to refine the questioning stream. We used open-ended think aloud protocols to ensure that the questions were specific, and targeted to meet our goals. Sections in the survey included: demographics, questions about ECRR training, quality of materials, strategies used during the workshops, the perceived effects of ECRR, as well as their desire for future programs. Surveys were then given to an outside editor who reviewed each question for the clarity of language.

We consulted with the Institute for Social Research Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan to sample the population of librarians in each of the five categories. Once a random sample had been selected, we developed an Excel sheet with contact information for each sample population.

The questionnaire was placed on SurveyMonkey, and an email was sent to each participant, with several reminders for those who failed to complete the survey in several weeks. Response rate was 73%, considered highly acceptable for survey results. A total of 350 surveys were collected.

III.   Analysis Strategy

In our analysis, we first describe the results of the overall survey, focusing on the quantitative evidence followed by qualitative responses designed to provide additional information related to the key questions of interest. Then, we examine issues particular to each constituent group: Directors and children's librarians; state librarians, graduate library programs, as well as nonusers. Here, we also focus on more detailed and elaborated comments described in meetings from the focus groups. Therefore, using a mosaic of methodologies, this evaluation is designed to examine the impact of ECRR on the library community and suggest ways in which the initiative might be revised in the future.

IV.   Key Themes Emerging Among ECRR Participants

IV.1   The Quality of ECRR Training

Seventy-eight percent of our sample indicated receiving some level of training in the initiative. Of those reported, there was striking consensus on the quality of training: 96% reportedly found it highly useful; 96% learned a great deal, and 94% found it interesting and motivating.

How would you best describe the training you received on ECRR?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I found the training very useful.	2%	2%	54%	42%
I learned a great deal.	2%	2%	49%	47%
The training was motivating.	2%	4%	48%	46%
The amount of training was sufficient.	2%	18%	62%	18%
I would have liked more training.	2%	40%	48%	10%
I feel that I need a refresher course.	8%	38%	46%	8%
The information was new to me.	8%	31%	41%	20%
As a result of the training I was able to implement the ECRR parent workshop successfully in my library.	4%	28%	46%	22%

However, a substantial percentage of librarians reported that the information was new to them and would have enjoyed additional training. For example, less than two-thirds of the respondents felt confident that they could train others. The following comments reflected their concerns:

- I'm still learning myself
- I feel the need for an additional course
- I need to be more confident in speaking in front of adults. I'm cool with kids-- it's the big people that scare me.
- The information was explained well and I felt I had a grasp on the information to implement the ideas into programming, but I don't feel I could train others without a refresher course.

Further, some respondents indicated that while the trainings focused on the content of the workshop, they needed further training on the implementation of the program. Some would have liked to learn about "how to make all this happen" in terms of scheduling and recruitment. Several comments suggested that they would like further workshops once the program was in place to better calibrate its effectiveness and to provide additional suggestions for integrating the three groups of materials. The integration of materials for different age groups might be a topic for future revisions for the initiative.

Amount of training during the past three years:

	Never	Only once	Once per year	Once per month	Once per week or more
Emergent Literacy	11%	19%	59%	11%	0%
New Technologies	11%	16%	48%	22%	3%
Parent Involvement	19%	34%	31%	11%	5%
Strategies for Outreach	14%	33%	40%	10%	3%
Fundraising	63%	18%	14%	5%	0%
Children's Literature	5%	5%	63%	21%	6%

| Management | 33% | 20% | 28% | 14% | 5% |

IV.2   The Quality of the ECRR Materials

As shown below, the ECRR materials were rated very highly. Over 84% thought the scripted lessons were good to high quality; similarly, 87% and 86% respectively believed that the brochures and website was helpful.

How would you rate the quality of materials?

	poor quality	fair quality	good quality	high quality
Scripted lessons	4%	12%	66%	18%
Videos	6%	19%	60%	15%
Brochures	4%	9%	54%	33%
Website	3%	11%	59%	27%

A smaller percentage, however, regarded the videos of good to high quality. One respondent, for example, indicated, "The videos do seem dated. We get snickers from the audience sometimes about this."

When asked about suggested revisions for materials, librarians highlighted several key issues. The first focused on 'terminology.' Clearly some believed that words like "phonological awareness" were oft-putting to parents. Further, some indicated that the materials seemed insensitive to their diverse populations and needed to be adapted to their local culture.

What revisions do you think should be made in the materials?

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Simpler terminology	19%	31%	35%	15%
Less scripted lesson plans	26%	43%	29%	1%
Greater focus on cultural diversity	20%	29%	38%	13%
More hands-on activities	7%	9%	57%	27%
More take-home materials	9%	16%	48%	27%
Greater focus on computer technology	20%	52%	29%	0%

Primary suggestions for revision, nevertheless, focused on the need for more 'hand-on materials' that could be used both in and outside the library. Librarians felt that parents would be more engaged if they actually had materials to interact with. One professional, for example, suggested the strategy of the "toy library" based on Phyllis Levenstein's work, which combined both lecture and educational toy-making for their young children.

In each case, librarians suggested that the workshops needed more opportunities for interaction. One thought computer activities might help. Others simply felt that more

chances for the workshop participants (parents and caregivers) to interact with each other and the presenters might keep them more interested during the workshops.

Another suggested that materials were needed for parents who had children at different ages: "I frequently present workshops to groups that have a variety of ages of children. I have worked out a combination from the three workshops that works for me, but I'd like to have guidance from an expert."

Several participants asked for the materials to be translated in Spanish.

IV.3   The ECRR Workshops

The actual implementation of ECRR and its workshops varied dramatically across settings. The number of workshops ranged from 0-80, with the most frequent score being 0 or 1. Some libraries conducted many, many workshops—in fact one mentioned 30-50, and another, 80 workshops, but the more common response was that they were planning to do so yet had not gotten 'around to it.' One person replied that "family literacy has taken over," suggesting the similarities between the two programs.
Programs were scheduled at different times in the day. Most frequent, as shown by the graph below, was early morning and evening. However, some libraries varied their schedule in order to attract more people to the program.
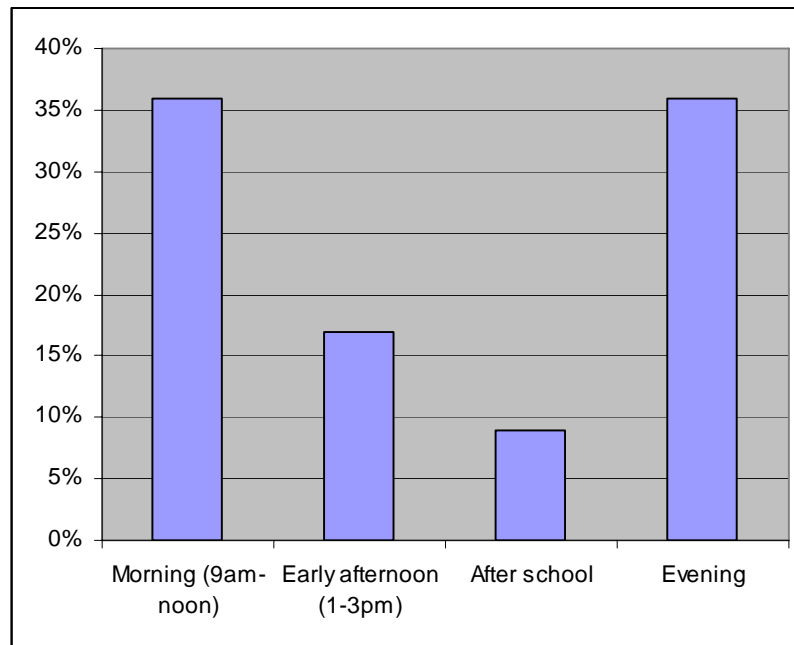
Recruitment of parents into the program was also modest. Some recruited at the local Head Start sites; others used announcements at a regular Saturday story-hour as a technique. Others held workshops at a local conference to encourage neighborhood libraries to involve parents. Still, few librarians could provide any specific recruitment strategy, suggesting that few parents might have been aware of the initiative.
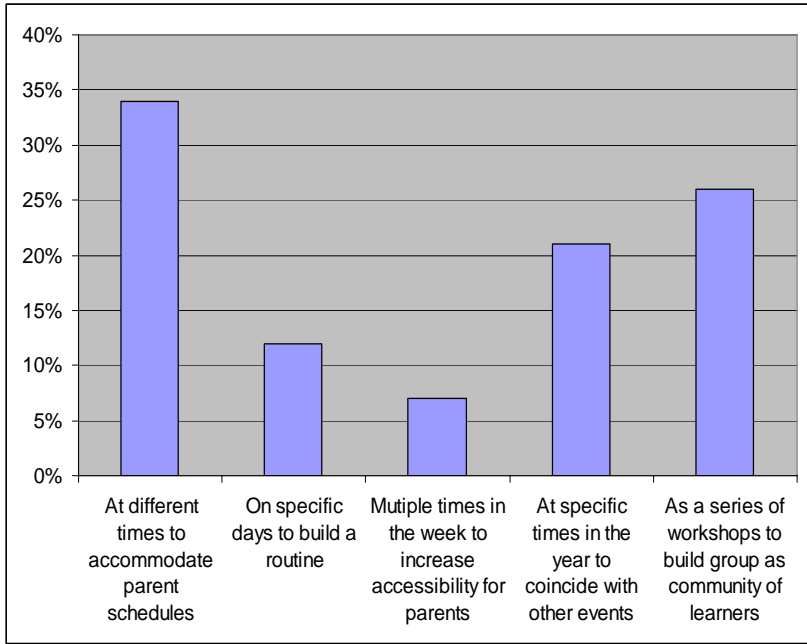
As a result, the average number of people attending the workshops was small. The mean was 14 people. However, once again this number did not reflect the wide range of participation. In many cases, workshops were scheduled and cancelled due to lack of enrollment; in other cases, there were as many as 20 parents at a workshop. Therefore, despite librarians' belief in the quality of the materials, the actual number of workshops devoted to the initiative appeared to be rather modest. Further, most librarians could not give an accurate total count of the number of participants in the workshops.

Those parents that did attend were generally enthusiastic about the initiative, with 76% of the participants finding the workshop helpful, and 85% feeling that the library supported their child's education.

How did parents or caregivers respond to the workshops?

	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Enthusiastic about the training	17%	6%	66%	11%
Interested in their child's education	17%	0%	43%	40%
Interested in additional workshops	20%	22%	52%	6%
Involved in learning, asking questions, and making comments	19%	11%	57%	13%
Appeared to be supported by the library in their child's education	13%	2%	65%	20%

However, the fact that a smaller percentage, 58% indicated interest in attending additional workshops, and only 70% interacted during the workshops is somewhat telling. It suggests that although parents were inclined to rate these workshops highly

they appeared to be less interested in further participation. These data might indicate that further revisions (such as supporting greater interaction and greater hand-on efforts) are needed to attract a wider and more sustained support for the program.

Over 28% of the participant librarians indicated that they modified the ECRR program. These modifications included:

- Using their own books and materials to illustrate concepts
- One participant mentioned, "As our attendance/success in offering parenting workshops has been dismal, we have decided to piggyback onto other community agencies programming. Public Health programs are very successful in attracting a committed group of parents and we hope to combine our information session on Ready for Reading (ECRR) with their program."
- More ice-breakers, designed to focus on sharing books as a good bonding experience for parents/ caregivers and children.
- One participant suggested, "We add tidbits from our own lives and experiences with reading and ask the participants about their own experiences. We talk about our own favorite books. We don't show much of the videos."

In addition, 21% evaluated their own workshops and some reported:

"Registrants were happy with the training. Though some of the material overlapped from one age group to another, overall it was informative and useful."

"The scripted parenting workshops were not suited to our caregivers. They were too formal in nature (power point), did not address the diversity of our communities and were not available in the multiple languages required for our city."

"Generally I received favorable comments from parents regarding the program. Some with educational backgrounds found it less helpful. The biggest misconception was that despite efforts to explain that we were emphasizing pre-literacy skills, a few parents thought that they were going to be shown how to teach their preschooler to read."

IV. 4   The Impact of ECRR

When asked what factors appealed to them the most about the ECRR program, respondents overwhelmingly indicated, "A way to promote the library as a key partner in children's education." Ninety-two percent of the respondents reported this factor as the key reason for their interest in the initiative.

Overall, participants reported that the initiative had an impact on their library. 76% believed ECRR had 'some' or a "substantial' role, helping the library address caregivers' needs and providing an important function for educating parents about the power of reading. One participant mentioned, "It gives the parents/caregivers the basic skills to encourage their child to become a reader. It empowers children to play and have

fun with books. It shows caregivers/parents how the little things build into the bigger picture in developing a reader." Another indicated that "ECRR is incorporated into every story time program. Staff often refer to the six skills when helping parents/adults choose books for children. Non-English speaking parents are glad to learn they can use the language they are most comfortable with."

There was little evidence of 'displacement." Rather, one librarian noted, "In reality it has caused our library to be more specific as to the age levels for various programs for children from birth through age 5; we are now offering more infant times, toddler times and very specific age preschool story times."

Overall, how would you describe the impact of the ECRR program in your library?
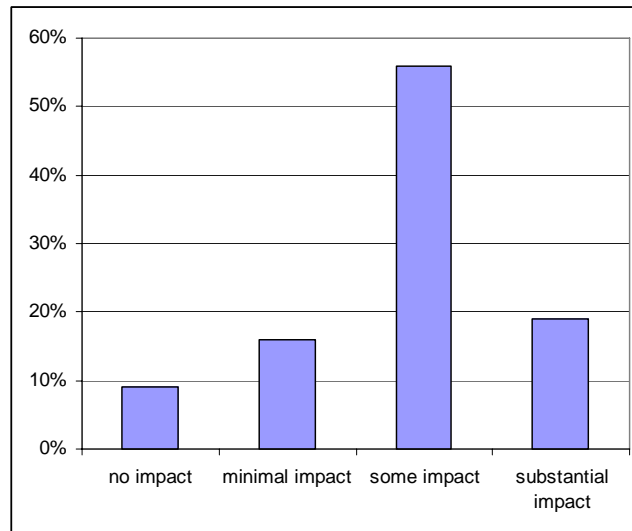
A number of respondents were very enthusiastic about the program. Their comments included:

> *"We provided a training session to the Head Start parents which had never been done before."*

> *"I have worked with my branches to change how they conduct their story time sessions. I do a better job at helping the patrons find books at the right level for their children.*

> *"Parents and grandparents are excited to bring their child/grandchild to the library. Caregivers are enthusiastic to share books and learning more about the ECCR program. It provides an excellent opportunity to share the love of books, reading, and learning with the six skills at an early age."*

> *"I know that several people in my workshops that have begun to use the library more frequently. Several people have commented to me that hearing the information I presented in the workshops helped them know that they were doing the best thing for their child/children."*

"We now reach 150 children per month with outreach early literacy story times; many of these children and their families do not get to the library."
"It provided greater visibility/understanding in the community for the library's role as a partner in early education. It established partnerships with local schools and other community entities (Head Start, local clinics, etc.)"

"We started doing story times when we started ECRR and because of both we have seen an increase in children in the library, in circulation in children's materials, and in summer reading program participation. Also we go out to tribal libraries across the state and perform ECRR workshops for other communities and some of these have started to do their own early literacy programs."

However there were challenges in the implementation of the program. In fact, over 55% reported difficulties ranging from minor issues, such as space to more major concerns such as funding. Specifically, the following examples highlight some of these challenges:

- The school corporation has not been as helpful or excited about the program as I would have thought. They had problems with the flash card activity (they don't like cards in any sense), and although they express interest in collaborating they do not go beyond that.
- Our meeting room is often booked. Had to find other locations. One of the trainings we had only one parent show.
- Targeting outreach to the right audience.
- Funding
- Attracting parents. Most parents aren't interested in attending workshops in order to change their lifestyle or increase their time spent on educational activities. Parents who are already involved in such things will continue and will be gratified to learn about the effects of what they are doing.
- One of the biggest challenges is finding ways to impact the people who are not already coming to the library. It has been fairly easy to incorporate ECRR principles into our story-times and to do the workshops. However, reaching people who do not currently have contact with the library is an enormous challenge.
- Low attendance, due to the ethnic diversity and language barriers in our neighborhood communities and because the scripted materials did not suit our specific needs.
- Parents know on some level that the library is filled with "book experts" but they don't realize that the library is also filled with trained early literacy "experts." Getting the word out and having parents choose the librarians as a source for training has been a challenge.

Yet there were a number of programs that made efforts to address these challenges. In fact, over 54% of the participants indicated that they were somewhat able to deal with the problems facing the implementation of the program. For example, some programs

integrated ECRR and other educational programs. Other programs found a more responsive audience among preschool caregivers rather than parents. Given that early educators were often required to attend professional development or clock hours for accreditation, preschool caregivers were more likely to attend programs than parents were. Finally, programs found that working with other community agencies provided opportunity for spreading the word about these workshops.

Overall the majority of participants rated their experience with ECRR as "good" (58%), compared to 29% who thought it was excellent, and 13% who thought it was fair. No one cited that the initiative was poor.
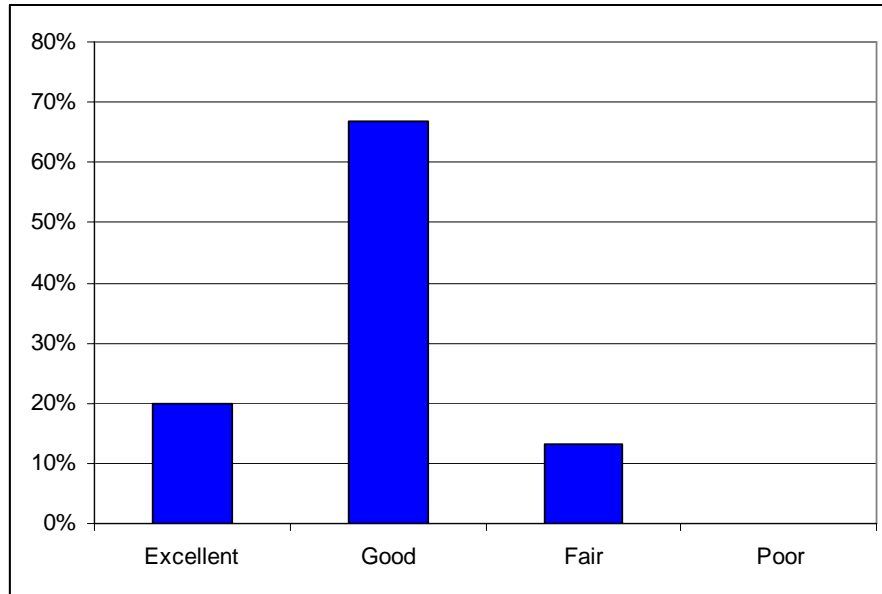
In all, survey participants believed that the program was an important component in the library program. Almost 48% considered it essential to the library's mission. Others still found it important, yet to a lesser degree than other traditional initiatives such as storytime.
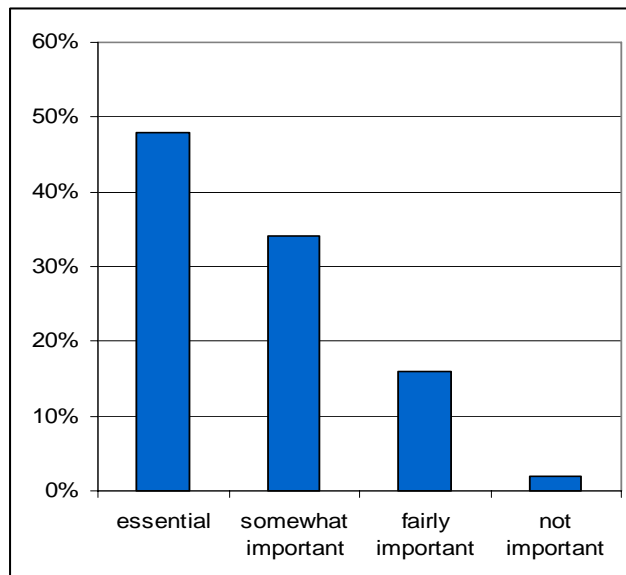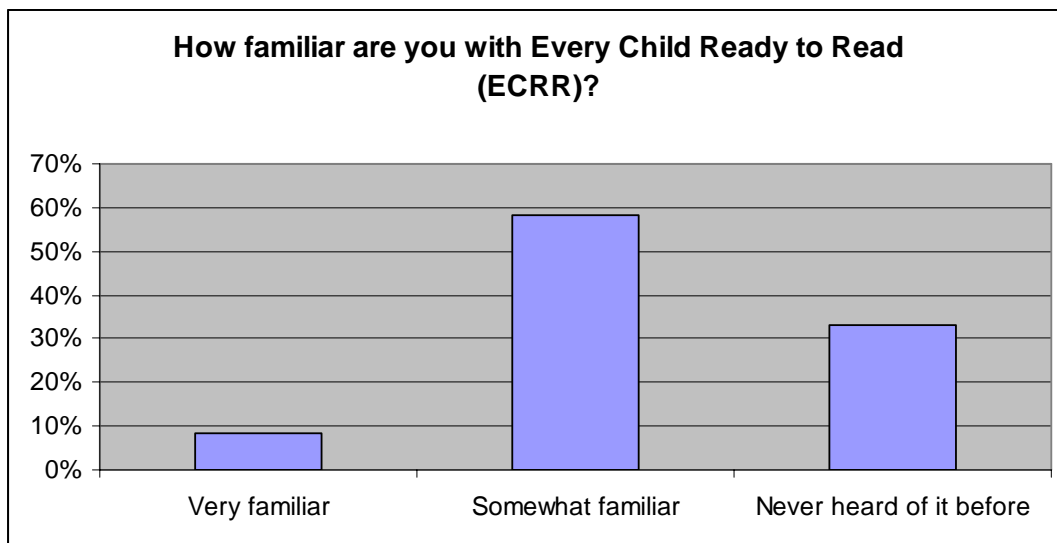
IV.5   *Library Leaders*

The evaluation was also designed to examine the views of library leaders. These individuals tended to hold the roles of Directors, Head Librarians, and Youth Service Coordinators. Consequently, many did not have a direct role in using the materials. Most had been in the field for over 20 years, and worked out of the Central library in their system. As shown in the Table, 50% had never had training in parent involvement strategies, or strategies for outreach.

For each of the following topics, how much training have you had in the past THREE years?

	Never	Only once	Once per year	Once per month	Once per week or more
Emergent literacy	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
New technologies	0.0%	25.0%	58.3%	16.7%	0.0%
Parent involvement	50.0%	25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
Strategies for outreach	16.7%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	8.3%
Fund raising	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
Children's literature	8.3%	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%	0.0%
Management	8.3%	25.0%	58.3%	0.0%	8.3%

Further, only 8% of these leaders were very familiar with the ECRR initiative; 58% somewhat familiar, and a striking 33%, not familiar at all.

Most likely, then, the reason for its lack of use was due to limited familiarity with the materials. Based on the table below, it did not appear to be due only to displacement; less than half of the programs had early literacy initiatives. Most simply, participants indicate that their time and priorities were focused on other issues. In addition, there

were limits to staff resources. Rather, it seemed as if librarians were more interested in initiatives that were more traditionally associated with their roles: Focusing on the needs for more technology, information, and supportive programming for children.

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Our library has a comparable early literacy program.	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%
Our library has too many other priorities.	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	0.0%
The program is too structured and too prescribed.	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%	0.0%
The program is too expensive.	30.0%	50.0%	20.0%	0.0%
I don't have time.	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	0.0%
I could not attend training sessions.	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%
It is too parent-driven.	88.9%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
It is not culturally sensitive for our population.	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%

V.   Users: Directors

To better understand the motivations and interests among users, Directors of library systems that had purchased the toolkit and received ECRR training also participated in a focus group. In this session, directors discussed what drew them to adopt ECRR, as well as how their staff had incorporated it into their libraries' services.

What attracted you to ECRR?

a) "**It validated what we were already doing**." Many of the directors recounted how their libraries actually predated ECRR with early literacy initiatives, so they were already committed to the concept. "This is an area near and dear to my heart, so I knew it was a big part of what we're about," explained one director. Many felt a great push from the children's librarians on their staff. "It was my staff who really got me into it," said one director. "It really resonated with them! They could say, 'See, we told you so!'"   Still others found that ECRR validated their focus on early literacy by putting what they were already doing into a nicely packaged program: "It was what the youth services librarians were doing, but it wasn't in a programmatic, purposeful way. Although the youth librarians were doing much of it of what (ECRR) called for and they already knew a number of markers and behaviors, this really organized it in a wonderful way. As a director, this allowed me to understand it, talk about it, call it out, and require it." And still others found that although they had a long history of early literacy in their system, ECRR showed them that perhaps it was time for some changes: "We thought we had all the best practices, but we some things were contrary to what we learned (from ECRR). As administrators, we said it's time to really look at the research and make a bit of a change here."

b) "**It was research-based.**" Many directors value the "research-based best practices" that ECRR offers. "I saw all the research and it was really convincing. I figured it was something we really wanted," said one library director. Using research-based best practices was particularly important when librarians dealt with child care workers. "Our librarians were having a hard time with the child care providers," said one director. "They would tell them things to do, but it wasn't research-based." ECRR, she said, "is very exciting to me because I wanted to see our youth services staff do stuff that was research-based, and not just 'stuff.'"

c) "**It gave us 'cache' in the community:"**   Many directors recognized how ECRR could elevate libraries' visibility in the community's eye. "ECRR helped give many children's librarians and directors the self-confidence to go out in the community and declare the library a leader in early literacy, not just the supporter." Another added, "it gave us the educational niche. Librarians who used this could then leverage their system in the community." Many directors cited examples of their growing importance in the community: "The county commissions put me on the economic development planning commission because they emergent literacy is in the plan as a building block," reported one director. "The idea is that we won't be able to sustain business with a literate population." Another reported, "Politicians are very enamored of us. We use the same language." Still others said that that the research and information ECRR provided was a huge help in applying for grants. "I was able to use the research as a basis for some very successful grant proposals," reported one director.   "We just got a $1 million grant for early literacy," gushed another. "It's just so cool!"

How has your library system adopted ECRR?

a) "**They always have to tinker."** Nearly all the directors report that their youth services staff were willing to adopt ECRR, but they all made modifications to the program to suit their needs. "We have this in several libraries," said one director, "and I have not had the experience of youth services staff being willing to adopt the package as it exists. They always have to tweak it." Many directors opposed the changes initially: "I argued at first. I said it exists and it's already done for us. Finally, I said 'Whatever you want to do!' And they did wonderful, wonderful programs. They're probably right." Still other suggest that only larger systems, with more resources and staff, were able to adapt ECRR, while smaller systems probably used the program as is.

b) "**The language was too technical, so we changed it."** Perhaps the biggest change directors report that their staff made involved the language in the scripted workshops, brochures, and other materials. "Some of the terminology is awkward," said one director. "It's not accessible. " The language was especially a problem with immigrant families and low-income families. "Much of the terminology did not seem relevant especially as we began translating into five other languages," reported one director. Another added: "If you are talking to

low-income families who don't use the library much, you can't use a word that is impossible to pronounce." By contrast, many praised the language used to present the six reading skills as appropriate for their audiences. "The six reading skills segment is really excellent – identify them, call them out, give them short, snappy definitions, and then build programs around them."

c) **"Concepts work, but people make a program."** Many directors report using ECRR research and information as a springboard for developing their own programs and materials. As one director explained, "We used the training, the knowledge, the research, and the information, but we then just branded it and made it our own."

i. *"We developed a booklet. We took a lot of materials and changed them around. We also suggested books that go along with them. Our foundation printed thousands of these booklets and we did another version in Spanish.*

ii. *"We developed early literacy kiosks based on the six skills. We have them in six of our libraries. They have shapes, wooden games, board books.*

iii. *"We created a whole early learning department from it. We had been delivering books to child care centers, but then we got a grant to work with the health department to start trainings, so we wove the two together and now we're the big trainers for literacy in our community."*

Summary

As library administrators, directors offer a comprehensive view on why their systems embraced ECRR. Many report they accepted the program because ECRR validated initiatives their libraries had already started, offering a nicely packaged product that gave their own ideas scope and purpose. Other directors adopted ECRR after persistent requests by their youth services staff. Still others were swayed by the convincing research ECRR on the effect early literacy programs have on children's brains.

By far, the most significant reason to adopt ECRR is the visibility the program gave to their library systems. As administrators, directors must focus on the larger role libraries play in the community. ECRR, as a national initiative, has had a tremendous impact on this role. Directors emphatically noted that ECRR has helped libraries emerge as the community leader in early literacy. Many reported improved collaborations with political and education leaders, while others recounted economic benefits gleaned from successful grant proposals. All these changes, the directors said, are direct results of ECRR.

While the benefits have been great, many directors were quick to note that the program itself was not without fault. All directors reported that their librarians embraced the research, concepts, and ideas as presented, but all modified the scripted lessons and

other materials to fit their communities' needs. Many directors reported that the terminology and language used was too technical for many parents and child care workers. Others were glad to take basic ECRR ideas and concepts and weave them into materials and programs of their own. For directors, ECRR's value lies not in the program's details, but in the foundation on which it is built.

VI.   Users: Children's Librarians

Similarly, children's librarians who had purchased the toolkit and received ECRR training also participated in focus groups. Through these sessions, we gathered information on what attracted this important user group to ECRR, as well as their insights into how the program was serving their needs.

What attracted you to ECRR?
Our goal was to glean what participants viewed as the most attractive aspects of ECRR. Their responses indicate a deep knowledge into the fundamental underpinnings of the program.

a. **"It was the whole contextual package:"** Most user librarians praised ECRR for validating a new direction in library service, that of focusing on parents as their children's first teacher.   As one librarian explained, "Previously we concentrated on serving the children, the preschool children. And now, this brought parents into the picture." Prior to ECRR, many children's librarians understood the fundamental change in mission, but where unsure how to go about it. "We knew that doing this was inherently right, but where do you start? (ECRR) gave us the jumping off point."

b.   **"It goes across income and educational levels:"** Many librarians noted that the basic concepts that ECRR preaches relates to all populations – doctors, teen parents, immigrants, low- and middle income parents. "I've found that across income groups and ages, there are people who are not reading to their kids. I had one man, he's a Columbia MBA and I gave him some books for his child, and he said, 'You can read to little kids?'" Another librarian echoed the need for ECRR throughout many of today's diverse urban communities: "I'm at a district library and we have a huge multi-cultural community of new immigrants and people with PhDs. This is something you can use in all situations and with all people."

c.   **"It gives the library credibility with other community agencies:"** Many user librarians praised ECRR for positioning librarians as the community leaders in early literacy. "It gives me credibility with the principals in the elementary schools," explained one librarian. "When they heard us talk about it, they said, 'Oh, right. You are part of the educational thing." Another librarian noted increased visibility with other community leaders: "It gives us some leverage to talk with Congressional leaders. They see us as the children's first teachers in a public setting."

What about the training?

Participating librarians overwhelmingly approved of the initial training sessions. Many found the trainings useful and well-run. Still, several comments surfaced during focus groups sessions when the librarians were asked about improving the training workshops.

a. "**Keep it interactive:**" Of the few comments about improving training, several librarians suggested that the best training involved getting the staff involved. "We have two separate trainings," reported one focus group participant. "One presenter did a much better job than the other. The same materials were covered but there was a lot more interactivity."

b. **"We need additional training as our program grows:"** Although most said that their training was sufficient, there are some indications that participants have a need for more training. One librarian's experience indicates that libraries might benefit from additional training as they adapt ECRR to accommodate their individual system's unique needs: "This is something that comes in waves, because we had the initial training for our staff several years ago. Then we had another training as we morphed and ebbed and flowed and grew in the process. Now we're talking about possibly doing another training next year as we take it along in steps. It's like a continuum. So you start at a certain point and then you move on and move on…"

c. **"Update research findings:"** One librarian suggested that the research findings should be updated: "Do you have plans to keep up with the research?" she asked. "I'm sure the research is ongoing and I've looked at the dates on some things and they are starting to look a little old."

d. **"Offer different sessions for different librarians:"** Several librarians suggested ECRR offer two different kinds of trainings: one for staff who will do the parent workshops and one for staff will implement ideas in their day-to-day jobs as librarians. "I've sent 13 or 14 staff members through this training," said one children's librarian. "I don't expect them all to represent the library doing workshops, but I do expect them to incorporate all this stuff into their work. I had to be very clear with my staff so they would understand that I wouldn't send them to stand up in front of 50 parents or teachers." Another explained, "The trainings are really backwards. The first session is set up as if the person in the session is going to be the workshop leader. And that's not true in many cases." Others note that the real training needs to focus on administrators. As one librarian explained, "I have a director right now and it's not a priority for her. She doesn't understand; she doesn't get it as much as I try to explain. There needs to be a training for directors and department managers so that they understand what the children's staff is doing and why it is important."

Have you implemented parent workshops at your library?

Many librarians report success in moving from the initial ECRR training workshops to providing parents workshops in their own libraries. At the same time, focus group findings indicate a few issues librarians are having in transferring what they have learned at ECRR training workshops into successful parent workshops:

a. **"We're having a tough time getting organized:"** Many focus group participants mentioned that they left the initial trainings energized and eager to start ECRR parent workshops, only to run into logistical problems in their libraries.   As one librarian recounted: "It's been a very, very slow process. I went to training and when I came back, we started to integrate it into our story times. Hopefully, in the spring we'll be offering the workshops but it's extremely slow going with setting things up. We got on board very quickly with the story times, the little games, and the early literacy stuff, but its' been extremely slow going with setting things up, and dealing with the higher ups and the meeting room space and all that."

b. **"We can't get parents to sign up:"**   Perhaps the biggest problem lies in getting parents to attend workshops at their local libraries. While childcare workers sign up for workshops in droves, getting harried parents to attend a three-hour library event remains quite a challenge, as shown in the following comments from user librarians:

  i.   *"We had two sessions, and the one with childcare providers was a three hour session. That was very popular because they got three credits. They need those credits to continue their licensing so people would actually call up and ask when were having it and how they could get there. It was much harder to bring in the parents."*

  ii.   *"I had a couple of sessions with parents and I had two or three parents there. Then, of course, you offer the one for childcare (workers) and you are turning people away. It's funny because some of the parents are saying "Oh, we'd love to learn more about that," but when it comes down to it, they think they don't have time."*

When it comes to reaching parents, free food always seems to work:

  iii. *"We've worked with parents through the child care agencies catching them at the end of the day when they are picking up their kids. It gets expensive because the way to do that is to have pizza or something. Feed the parents because the kids can still be with the childcare providers."*

  iv.   *"We had an 'Action for Children' grant where we provided free lunch or dinner. The parents got the food and then they got the free tote. It was still a push to get parents to commit so we put on our flyers "Free Food and Activity Kit." It's sad, but seeing the "free" really draws some of the parents in. They would come just for the food!"*

Others believe the difficulty in recruiting parents for workshops is related more to childcare issues. Parents, they say, do not have the means to attend sessions without their children, especially if they are asked to attend different sessions for the children of various ages. In addition, libraries do not have the resources to provide child care during the parent workshops.

  v. *"We originally tried parent training back to back for the three different groups. We'd get one person here and one person there. Then we had a parent say, 'If you could just do it all at once! I have three kids, all different ages. I can't get a babysitter each time. If I could get it all done at once, that would be great."*

  vi. *"One thing that does not work with our program is being to offer childcare while we're providing the programs for the parents," she explains. "It's just not something our library is able to do. You have the volunteers, but they might not be necessarily interested in doing childcare."*

c. **"We've partnered with community agencies in order to reach parents:"** Many librarians found greater success is spreading the ECRR message by partnering with other community agencies. Rather than relying solely on providing in-library workshops for parents, many librarians have joined with other organizations that serve the needs of parents with young children:

  i. *"We have a Ready to Read Task force that goes and trains the youth services staff as they come in.*

  ii. *"We do a regular program at our hospital for teen parents who are getting ready to give birth. We do a session with them about the importance of reading to your baby. We talk about the skills and we model reading to their babies."*

  iii. *"We partner with some of our schools that have preschool programs built into their school district systems."*

  iv. *"Another thing we did is an active "Reach Out and Read" group in the Kansas City area. I've been on the board there for years so it's a natural fit. We trained the staff there who then trained some of their volunteers.*

  v. *"I've joined with a local hospital and they have a Bright Beginnings to Terrific Toddlers, regularly every six weeks. I go to Bright Beginnings and talk the baby talk and then the Terrific Toddlers through the pre-readers. I get 15-25 people at the Bright Beginnings and 5-10 at Terrific Toddlers. "*

What ECRR materials have been most useful to you? How do you use the scripted lessons. ?

ECRR materials scored very high marks with participating children's librarians. Findings show that participants generally rated the scripted lessons, videos, brochures, and website as both useful and high quality. In the user focus group, the scripted lessons generated the most discussion.

a.   **"We like the scripted lessons, but we don't use them word for word:"** Many users report that the most attractive aspect of ECRR materials was the scripted lessons. As one librarian noted, the scripts "gave me words to say something that I wanted to say for a long time." Further discussion in focus groups reveals that many librarians value the scripted lessons, but very few use them entirely as they are written. As one participant explained, ""I use the scripts regularly, but word for word? No. I adapt it to whatever group I am talking to.."   As one participant summed up in a manner that might make many librarians shriek: "The script is kind of my 'cliff notes' before I go into a program."

b.   **"I like having a template but I don't have three hours to do a workshop"** For many, the value of the scripts lies not in having a prescribed set of words to say, but in having a template to use in adapting to the libraries' changing publics. Few of these publics, they have found, have the requisite three hours to spare for an entire training session:

   i.   *"I'm doing a pre-kindergarten orientation and the principals let me speak to those parents for an hour. I basically take the 5 year old script, reread it, get the handouts and everything, and do my version of the script. But if it weren't for that script, I wouldn't be nearly as comfortable speaking."*

   ii.   *"We do so many childcare providers and groups around the city that we use the script but we adapt from it. We rarely get a three-hour block of time, so it's figuring out which things to do for which group. But if that script weren't there, it would be a lot harder to pull it all together. We really pick and choose from it and are constantly adapting. It's not that we are changing it, but we're just not using everything."*

c.   **"Our librarians don't want to be told what to say:"** While many praised the value of having a planned set of words and activities, other librarians cited difficulties in getting fellow librarians in their systems to adapt to the scripts. "We have lots of librarians and they really don't like the changes to story time," reported one focus group participant. "They don't like the scripts and they don't like to address the parents." Another librarian dismissed the scripted lessons as an ineffective way to present. "We have found that if people don't take personal ownership of the way they are delivering information, it's not a natural and useful process. It's very stilted."

What changes have you made in the programs/materials?

Perhaps the program's greatest asset that librarians value has been the ability to adapt ECRR to fit their individual libraries' needs. For many, ECRR has provided inspiration and support, but at the same time, the opportunity to tailor a high quality program in a way that retains the program's essence. Librarians enthusiastically report on the ways they have adapted ECRR:

a. ***"We've added parts of ECRR to programs we are running at the library:*** ECRR materials and training are showing up in other services that libraries offer:

    i. *"This fall, we're going to start something that we call "Explorer Time" instead of story time. We are opening up our story time room one morning a week and we're putting out little collections, little stations of different things like narrative skills with puppets.*

    ii. *"We've also added a special component to our summer reading club this year; it's a special reading club for preschool, toddlers, and babies with a game board where they can move ahead as they gain a ready to read skill."*

b. ***"We've developed take-home kits using ECRR ideas and materials:"*** Many librarians are encouraging parents to read and do literacy activities with their children by offering take-home materials. These kits, librarians say, are directing related to concepts ECRR promotes:

    i. *"We have also put together Ready to Read totes that have magnetic letters, dry erase boards – the things parents can use at home to practice their Ready to Ready skills at home. We have made baby packets and preschool packets and we give them to new mothers that come in."*

    ii. *"We received a community foundation grant, a three-year, renewable grant. We have over 100 kits that are all based on Every Child Ready to Read. The pamphlets are in there. When parents check them out, we give them a two-minute spiel about "here are the six skills and here are a couple of ways to use it." Every kit has an activity guide with an activity for every skill that has been addressed.*

Summary

Focus group discussion among children's librarians who have adopted and use ECRR reveal exceptional insights into the program's successful elements. User librarians praise ECRR for giving them a platform to perform what they inherently knew was a key shift in service: focusing on the caregiver instead of the child. Many librarians recognized the need to focus on parents and childcare workers as children's first teachers; ECRR provided them a means to do this.

This shift in service has helped elevate the library's status as an important community leader. Recognizing that the need to encourage pre-literacy skills exists for all children regardless of parental education or income, the library has taken up the challenge of kick-starting the educational preparation of the next generation of U.S. citizens. By embracing this challenge, the library has earned increased respect from educational and political leaders as a major player in the community. Focus group participants attribute this respect to ECRR, which gently nudges libraries and librarians to focus time and energy on areas where young children need it most.

At the same, this seismic shift in library service has revealed several faults in the ECRR program. Service Librarians praise initial training workshops, but feel the "one size fits all" approach does not always serve their needs. They would like to see separate trainings for librarians who will conduct parent workshop, and those who only implement ECRR principals into their daily routines. Others suggest different workshops for administrators and directors. Still others see the need for additional trainings as their own programs emerge.

User librarians report being highly energized by initial trainings, only to feel deflated when faced with actually implementing the program at home. Administrative issues, such as gaining director's acceptance or renting meeting space, have prevented full-scale implementation. Running successful parent workshops in the library has is a particular challenge: parent attendance is spotty, possibly related to issues such as parent motivation, time constraints, or child care issues. Childcare workers are more likely to attend workshops, motivated by the reward of training credits.

Still, librarians are resourceful, and many have taken the ECRR "template" and adapted it to fit their publics' needs. ECRR librarians have joined with community agencies, such as youth programs, hospitals, schools, health agencies and other organizations that have greater success attracting parents. Undaunted by the three-hour constraints of the parent workshops, many users have condensed trainings to fit the time allotted by these agencies – a one-hour parent orientation at a school or a 30-minute session with teen parents at a hospital. Other librarians have incorporated ECRR concepts into existing programs at their libraries, including story hours or summer reading programs. Still others have included ECRR materials in take-home kits. These adaptations reveal that the major structure of ECRR works well for these users, offering a model based on a strong foundation, but one that is flexible enough to accommodate the many publics who need it.

VIII. State Libraries

State librarians were clearly familiar with the ECRR initiative. Still, it would appear that additional promotion of materials might enhance its visibility: only 45% were highly familiar, 40% somewhat familiar, and 15% had never heard of the initiative before. Of those that were familiar, 68% had heard about it through the website. Other successful strategies included conferences, brochures, and learning from colleagues. Traditional media approaches, such as newsletters, journals, and press releases seemed ineffective, garnering less than 3-10% of awareness. Therefore, the library community might consider more nontraditional methods to publicize the initiative.

Approximately half of the state librarians were active in the implementation of the initiative. Some actively participated in workshops; others focused on awareness activities. Regardless of their role, however, most of the respondents viewed the initiative as an important addition to the activities of the library.

Nevertheless, many believed that modifications were necessary to better match the population diversity in their states. For example, one very articulate respondent put it this way:

> *"I have long been an advocate of a strong role for public libraries in early childhood activities and instituted the first parents' and twos and infant and toddler programs in the state when I was in the public library. I started my career in the 1970's in two rural public library systems that had huge R&D USDOE early childhood projects, so was glad to see PLA and ALSC involved with this project. However, we had used the materials and done presentations on ECRR, but feel that it needs to be modified somewhat to meet the needs of our very diverse populations that in some areas speak Alaska indigenous languages or where English is not yet the primary language for recent immigrants. The emphasis on English-language phonological awareness is OK, but not always appropriate when we have parents who have very limited English themselves. We do not have a fully implemented ECRR in our state, but we are using the materials in conjunction with an Early Learning Resource Center that we are implementing with a contract to the largest public library in the state. We have also presented conference programs on ECRR, have attended ALA and PLA pre-conferences and brought back materials developed by other libraries to share, and at our first youth services workshop ever held in our state profiled the program and showed the materials. We are in a state where there are no roads, so we do not have yearly or quarterly meetings of children's librarians, so we do not have enough venues to deliver the training or to demonstrate how ECRR could be modified. Most of our library staff in public libraries has never had any formal training in youth services; many of our libraries are one-person or two-person libraries and often depend on volunteers to organize children's programs. Some of our communities are very small, so library programs have to be geared toward all ages."*

Time limits and other priorities were the chief reasons for not participating in the initiative.

If you have chosen not to implement ECRR in your state, please indicate how strongly you agree with each reason for this decision?

I could not attend training sessions.	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%
It is too parent-driven.	88.9%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
It is not culturally sensitive for our population.	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Our library has too many other priorities.	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	0.0%
The program is too structured and too prescribed.	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%	0.0%
The program is too expensive.	30.0%	50.0%	20.0%	0.0%
I don't have time.	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	0.0%

However, there were other reasons as well. For example, in one state, funds were cut, thereby stopping the planned program short. In other case, the program became embedded in an individual state initiative. Finally, some were put off by the scriptedness of the program. One person said it like this:

> *"Some of the trained children's librarians were very turned off by the scripting offered. They felt that they had strong enough backgrounds in children's services and in literacy to follow the precepts without the scripts. Although I realize that these would be very useful for people who have little background in reading or early childhood, the packaging was a great turn-off for some of the experienced folks who could actually implement the ECRR with little problem."*

State leaders thought the program materials were of good to high quality. Yet many already had state programs in place. For example, a number of participants listed their ongoing state initiatives:

- State funded Family Literacy Library Services Program Grants to Public Libraries and Public Library Systems
- The Mother Goose Program from the Vermont Center for the Book
- Read to me
- Wisconsin Early Learning Initiative
- Every Child Reads in 2000-3-5
- Winter Reading Program
- Emergent Literacy Traing (Designed by CCPL staff)

Many of the State Libraries have developed powerful partnerships with other organizations. They organize these partnerships in several ways. For example, in one state, librarians have partnered with Ready 4K, an early childhood education policy group. In another case, the state collaborates with the local National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the Head Start, and Even Start Associations. The State Library of Iowa has partnered with the Iowa Department of Education, as well as the Department of Human Resources which run the day care centers, and afterschool programs. The State Library's partnership with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services certifies the programs offered by ECRR trained staff for CEU contact hours. And finally, one state helped community developers to create a high-performing county-wide school readiness team with the school system, family literacy, child care agencies, Head Start, and other family serving agencies focused on parents and young children.

Yet the critical barriers to all these initiatives remain: Respondents highlight cost factors, time limitations, and staff available for the initiative. Some respondents describe a number of strategies for leveraging the program with additional resources. These included:

- LSTA funds and Gates funds
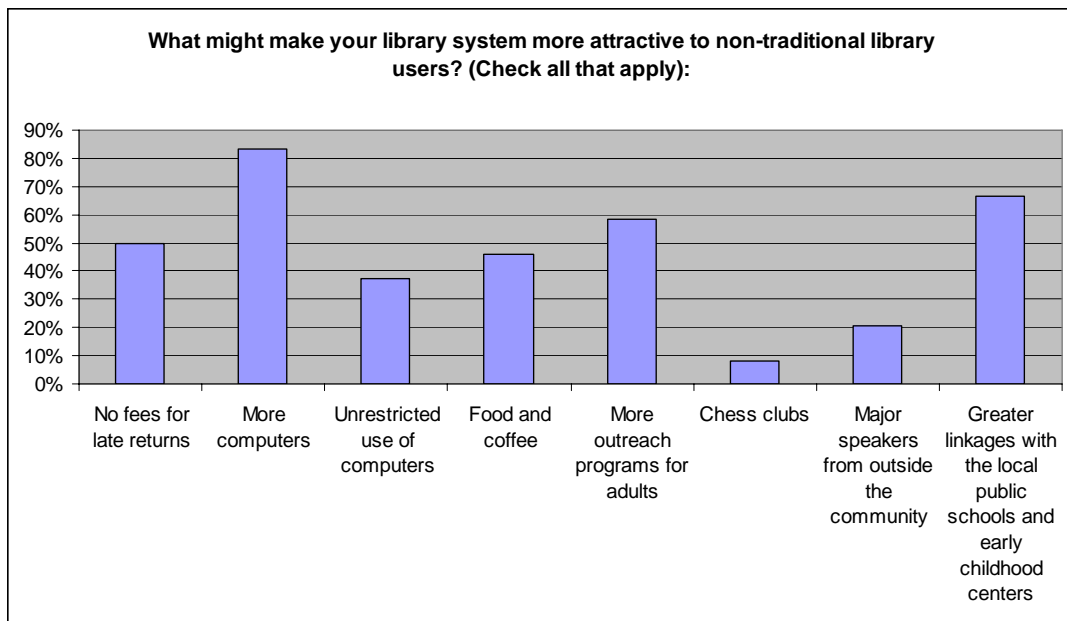- Combining staff positions

- Private foundation grant
- Several regional systems offered ECRR training for their librarians. One library linked to the ECRR web page.
- Combining story time and parent/child reading together time

When asked, "How might the library expand/enhance/add/complement the existing ECRR initiative," state leaders provided a wide variety of responses. Some suggested increasing state funds and LSTA funding. But others provided a host of responses in addition to funding:

- I would like to target specific libraries that I know were interested when the materials were initially sent to them and follow through with them. Updating the scripts and giving lots of examples of how the materials could be used might increase the use of the ECRR initiative in NJ libraries.
- Develop workshops on how to integrate ECRR into library story-times, how to integrate ECRR other programming for 0-5 year olds, creating a library environment that supports ECRR, strategies to break down barriers (the parents who need ECRR most aren't the ones coming to the library, how do we break down the barriers preventing the most needy parents from getting these library services), and ECRR has scripts in other languages but we need and ECRR has scripts in other languages but we need more guidance on how English speakers can provide ECRR to non-English speakers (ideally a library would hire a native speaker to do this, but in our smaller communities this isn't usually possible).
- Provide more bibliographies of suggested books to use in the different trainings
- Work on advocacy with other statewide organizations like the governor's office
- Provide more publicity materials to help recruit families
- Need materials in Spanish
- Provide follow-up training

VIII.1 Priorities

Lastly, we queried state librarians regarding the programs they would like to see in the future, and their importance in broadening the reach of libraries for a growing population. These results may relate to why the initiative was not adopted enthusiastically in some states, despite the view that parent involvement was important. For example, in answer to the question, "What might make your library system more attractive to non-traditional library users?" 83% reported that "more computers" would be the so-called 'best buy for the money."

What might make your library system more attractive to non-traditional library users? (Check all that apply):

The bar chart shows the following approximate percentages:
- No fees for late returns: 50%
- More computers: 83%
- Unrestricted use of computers: 37%
- Food and coffee: 46%
- More outreach programs for adults: 59%
- Chess clubs: 8%
- Major speakers from outside the community: 21%
- Greater linkages with the local public schools and early childhood centers: 66%

Further, they continued to be interested in new technologies and closing the digital divide, which might reflect their comfort zone in comparison to motivating parents to read to their children. While they view this goal as critical, they may believe that they are not in a position to affect parents as much as they are to work with children.

IX.1   What is state libraries' involvement in ECRR?

Our findings indicate a wide range of adoption throughout the states. State librarians offered their insights into how the program is running in their state, as well as the level of their own involvement in the program. Their involvement ranged from significant to nonexistent.

a. "**Our state has been very encouraging and proactive:"** Many state librarians report that they were heavily involved in bringing ECRR to their state, and ultimately with promoting it throughout their state's library system. As one state librarian commented, "We have done a lot of PR with it. We made pins and welcome mats and translated many of the materials into Spanish. So we've been involved in implementing the general outreach." Another recounted how she herself was responsible for bringing ECRR to their state:

> *"When I came to the state library four years ago, our state librarian asked me to come up with an early literacy initiative that would be LST funded. And so I checked around and decided that Every Child Ready to Read would be the program that we would use. We have done 24 trainings for libraries and their staff members."*

Others report the programs are underway, but plans are still in the formative stage:

> *"We started about a year ago with getting the brochures printed with our information on them and distributing them to childcare centers and preschools,*

and also to parents that come into the state library for the programs that we offer there. During the next year, we will be holding training sessions for early childhood education centers, such as Head Start and day care centers."

b. **"We are really a minimal adopter**." Many states have adopted the program, but have done little more than order materials. As one state librarian recounted, **"**We ordered the literacy kits and distributed them to 52 libraries." Others reported issues after setting up the training for staff as the reason for not taking the program further, as one librarian from a remote state recounts**:**

> *"In our state, we did order the kits at the state level and then the larger libraries ordered the kits. But they all felt there needed to be training to go with it and I really don't have opportunities for statewide training because of transportation problems."*

Others report that initial efforts started strong, but petered out after libraries realized how much effort was involved. As one mid-Atlantic librarian recalls:

> *"We've been involved since the beginning. Our state tested kindergartners before No Child Left Behind, so we already had seven literacy behaviors that were tested. We even started before the tool kit came out, taking the sheets that were first released by the PLA and integrating those with the seven literacy standards. Our training is based on that. But many of our libraries have opted out when they saw how much work it is."*

In some states, libraries were given the option of using ECRR or another program, leading to sporadic use across the state:

> **"***Some of our libraries have been pursuing the program and some have not, independently of our state–wide initiative. We have a series of different practices and we leave it up to the individual libraries to determine which of those models would be the most effective for them to incorporate into their classes.*

c. "**We don't use it at all":** A small, but vocal minority, of state librarians report that their state did not adopt ECRR at all, based mainly on the following factors:

> *"It was very daunting"*
> Some libraries report difficulty in adopting to the program due to librarians' fears of treading into unfamiliar waters, as shown in these librarians' comments:

> *"We did a presentation at a state library conference and it was targeted towards smaller libraries. They felt very daunted by the amount of material they saw in the notebook. They thought they would have to become educators."*

> *"Many of our libraries opted out when they saw the amount of work that was involved and how scripted the dialogic components were."*

Another librarian cited fears about the scripted materials on another level:

> *"In our state there was a strong reaction to No Child Left Behind. And when people saw the scripted materials, they immediately reacted negatively. it didn't matter whether it was effective or not. It was a program that they didn't like creeping into the family level."*

d. **"It's just too expensive":** Cost appeared to be a major reason why some state librarians did not get involved in ECRR:

> *"We have a large state and transportation is an issue. We haven't figured out a way to effectively deliver the kind of training that people would really feel comfortable in implementing. "*

> *"We have more than 500 independent public libraries with the vast majority in communities of less than 2500 people. These libraries are open maybe 10, 15, or 20 hours a week, and trying to be a good library on top of all that. It's just too cost prohibitive to buy 543 copies of this and distribute it."*

e. **"We have another program":** States who did not adopt ECRR also said that they had committed to another early literacy initiative and did not want to switch programs. At least one program, it appears, might be based on ECRR concepts:

> *"Our state started its own initiative called Every Child Reads in 2000. Our Youth services person at the state library sat down with the committee and wrote the curriculum. It has a very strong library component, and our person became a trainer not only training libraries, but also helping train Head Start and teachers. I do know they look at ECRR when they wrote the program, but I'm not sure how much they incorporated into it. We do have two copies at the state library which people can check out."*

> *"We had trouble implementing the training, but we said "Oh, well, don't worry. It (ECRR) is still here as a resource. We've been working it into our state lead initiative called 'Best Beginnings.' It's a campaign for reading and language experiences. We have a massive amount of materials to send out to libraries and to non-library locations, such as Head Start Centers and churches."*

> *"We let our libraries choose their programs."*

IX.2 What materials have been effective?

The materials in the toolkit generated a great deal of discussion among state librarians who have adopted ECRR. Many offered praise as well as suggestions for improvement:

a) **Videos:** State librarians reported heavy use of ECRR videos. "There was great usage of the video. They use it often," was a sample comment. And: "The video has been one of the most popular aspects of the toolkit."

b) **Website:** State librarians also praised the website, saying it was informative and user-friendly: **"**The availability on the Web is really good. There is no way you can say 'I can't find the information.'"

c) **Brochures:** While state librarians found the videos and website useful, they questioned the need for brochures: "They are very attractive, and they have a lot of good information, but I'm sure the rest of you have a drawer full of brochures and never use them," explained one participant. Another found that brochures did not fit ECRR's missions:

> *"The truth is, the brochures are counterintuitive to this program. It might be attractive, and you might pick it up, but if you have a squirming toddler, or if English isn't your first language, you won't read it. You will politely take it, but that's it."*

Others tried to limit their use. As one librarian explained, "We encourage our libraries not to jut give away all the brochures, but to use them as a back-up piece with the training. Finally, some have done without brochures at all:

> *"In our state, we haven't bought any brochures, and no one has complained."*

d) **Scripted lessons:** The scripted lessons also sparked many comments from state librarians. As mentioned above, some librarians felt intimidated by the scripted nature, and some just refused to do them. As one librarian said, **"**The scripted manuals are a problem. We gave them all out but many people said they were not using them as much. They were adapting them or changing them to make them more comfortable in way they could use them." One librarian put it more simply: "They like the videos, but no one uses the scripted components."

e) **Terminology, language:** Several librarians complained that the language in the brochures, workshops, and other materials was not geared to the populations that ECRR was trying to reach, especially low-income and non-native English speakers:

> *"We have a lot of non-English speakers and, unlike most states, Spanish is one of the smaller languages. We have a lot of questions about how you use precepts that are based on the English language with other languages. We have people speaking many new Asian languages, so there's been kind of a push back because it is so obviously not geared towards non-English speaking families.*

> *"The language is just too academic for many of our families."*

IX.3   What is the status of parent workshops?

Despite their enthusiastic praise for many parts of ECRR, few state librarians could report that parent workshops were successfully running in their libraries. While they support and promote the program, many state librarians seemed unsure of how ECRR was operating at the local level. **"**We've done 24 trainings for libraries and their staff members," said one librarian, "but I don't think any of the librarians have done trainings for the parents. Another East Coast librarian also reported that things are not moving smoothly with parent workshops:

> *"I sent the libraries materials and I made them sign a contract saying they would do a minimum of three training sessions and send us any of the press releases from any of the programs. The libraries signed the contracts and sent them back, but we did not receive any press releases. So I know the kits went out, but they have not reported to me about what they are doing."*

Summary

State librarians represent some of the most enthusiastic supporters of ECRR. Many reported devoting great time and energy to bring ECRR to their states. Once adopted, many played major roles in promoting the program throughout their library systems. Other state librarians report less participation, perhaps only sending out materials, while others have not adopted it at all.

The reasons for not using ECRR were varied: Many report the program is too expensive, particularly for states with many small, rural libraries that operate part-time hours. Others from larger systems say that librarians were intimidated by the scripted nature or by the increased workload the program created. Others mentioned "pushback" from librarians who did not want to leave their "comfort zone" of serving children and now focus on the parents. Still others were comfortable with their own early literacy initiatives and did not see the need to change. More than one librarian noted that some of these home grown programs may be based on ECRR's concepts.

Those who do use the program offered praise and suggestions for certain ECRR components. As echoed by other focus groups, these librarians gave high marks to the materials and to the website. Several criticized the scripted workshops, and many did not see the need for brochures. In addition, many librarians felt the language and terminology used in materials and in trainings was too academic for the many non-English speakers and low-income families.

Despite their efforts to promote ECRR throughout the state, few state librarians could report that the next step in the program, the parent workshops, was running smoothly. Most said that they had sent out materials to libraries and held staff trainings, but that parent workshops had not yet been scheduled. A few said the trainings were planned for the coming year. From the state librarians' view, ECRR is a quality program that in many cases has not reached its full potential.

Graduate Schools for Library Services. Responses were received from 24 graduate library programs throughout the country. The majority of the programs offered multiple

degree and career goals, including administration, public library, school library, and specialized library systems.

Graduate school programs appeared to be familiar with the ECRR initiative: 25% were very familiar; 50% somewhat familiar. However, 25% had never heard of the program before. Unlike library leaders, the major source of information about the initiative appeared to come from journals, with 80% reporting to learn from this source, with the second most frequent response, 60% from conferences. Once again, newsletters and brochures were the least effective means for communicating information about ECRR.

Most respondents thought the program was most applicable to public libraries and as a result, not relevant to the graduate studies in the school. One program cited a course in Early Literacy that included information about ECRR but the bulk of the programs did not. Less than one-quarter of the respondents had ever seen the ECRR materials. When they did, they reportedly believed the materials were of good quality.

As shown in the table, topics most cited in graduate classes included children's literacy and community outreach. Forty percent of the programs focused on adult literacy and family literacy skills. Future outreach strategies might consider describing the ECRR initiative as a critical feature in early literacy programs and early childhood education. Neither the ECRR program nor any other comparable program was reported to be included in syllabi.
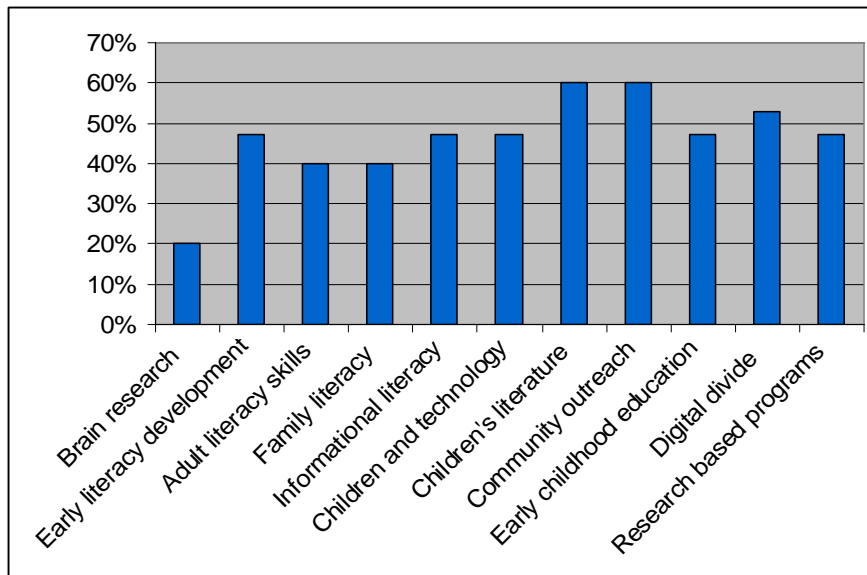
Topics most relevant for library schools in the future focused on helping students search for information and use the internet. As shown in the table, family literacy was seen as a less compelling topic for future librarians. Similarly, in answer to the question, "What might make libraries of the future more attractive to non-traditional library users?" programs agreed that more computers were a key to their future. Outreach to parents was only reported by 33% of the respondents.

What might make libraries of the future more attractive to non-traditional library users? (Check all that apply):

|	**Agree**
No fees for late returns	66%
More computers	100%
Unrestricted use of computers	66%
Food and coffee	83%
More outreach for adults	33%
Chess clubs	16%
Major speakers from outside the community	16%
Greater linkages with the local public schools and early childhood centers	33%

Which of the following program types do you think are most the important for the library?

In summary, the data suggest that graduate library schools did not appear to view the ECRR initiative as particularly relevant to their program. Most often, these programs

	Disagree	**Somewhat disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Helping children use the internet	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Basic computer skills	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%
Family literacy activities	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
Teaching children how to search for information	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	83.3%
Outreach	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Fund raising	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Grant writing	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%

focused on topics of technology, information, children's literacy, and children's programs. Further, these programs did not appear to see the initiative as one that might attract future patrons.

Nonusers. Least likely to respond to the survey, non-users were a more difficult audience to examine. Over two-thirds of the respondents indicated familiarity with the materials. Less than a third had never heard of the initiative before.

How familiar are you with Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR)?
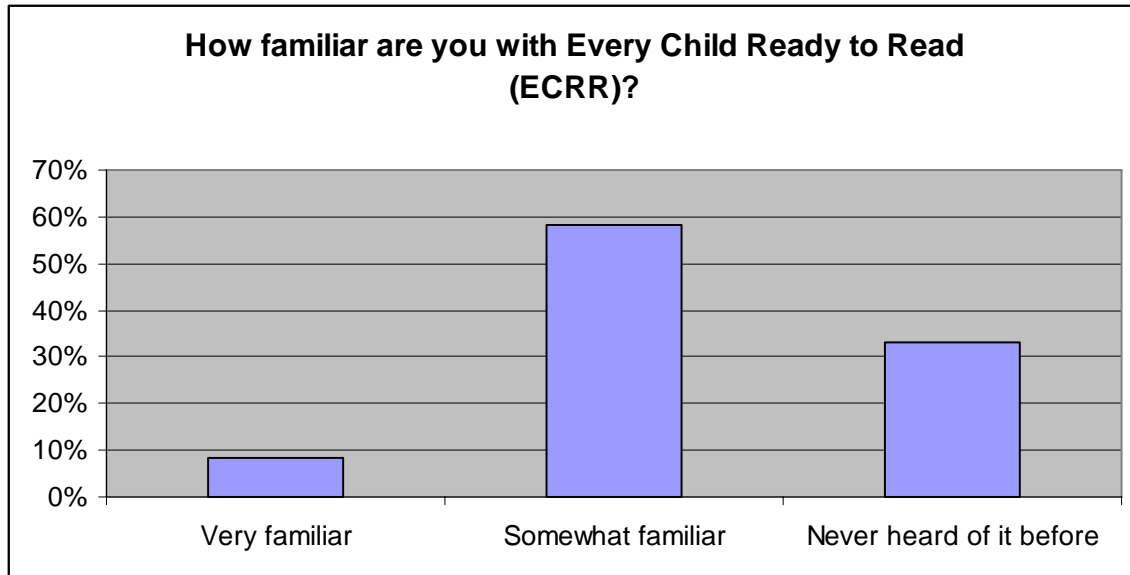
Interestingly, however, and perhaps a reason for their lack of enthusiasm for the program, was to their lack of training in the field.

For each of the following topics, how much training have you had in the past THREE years?

	Never	Only once	Once per year	Once per month	Once per week or more
Emergent literacy	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
New technologies	0.0%	25.0%	58.3%	16.7%	0.0%
Parent involvement	50.0%	25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
Strategies for outreach	16.7%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	8.3%
Fund raising	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
Children's literature	8.3%	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%	0.0%
Management	8.3%	25.0%	58.3%	0.0%	8.3%

For example, few of these respondents had received any training in emergent literacy or parent involvement. This lack of training stood in stark contrast to their training in new technologies, or children's literacy. Consequently, their lack of interest could have been due to their lack of efficacy in these fields, feeling poorly trained to conduct such workshops. In addition it could be that their library administration just did not place an emphasis on emergent literacy, focusing instead on technology.

Like others, however, non-users suggested that time, priorities, and limited staff were the reasons for not participating in the program.

How strongly do you agree with each of the following reasons for NOT implementing the ECRR program?

	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Our library has a comparable early literacy program.	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%
Our library has too many other priorities.	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	0.0%
The program is too structured and too prescribed.	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%	0.0%
The program is too expensive.	30.0%	50.0%	20.0%	0.0%
I don't have time.	36.4%	27.3%	36.4%	0.0%
I could not attend training sessions.	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%
It is too parent-driven.	88.9%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
It is not culturally sensitive for our population.	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%

In addition, focus group information provided a more nuanced analysis of this group than from the surveys themselves.

What did non-users know about ECRR?

Was participants' failure to use ECRR related to their lack of knowledge about the program? The answer is a resounding "no." Very few participants have never heard of the program. By contrast, nearly all of our research indicates that non-users are well aware of ECRR. When asked to describe what they know about ECRR, their perceptions were very detailed:

a. PLA is involved
b. It is an early literacy program
c. It contains a whole curriculum, including scripts
d. ECCR features high- quality materials: "The materials are top quality, with great artwork – not just hokey-pokey," one participant explained.
e. It involves attending training sessions.
f. It cost a lot of money
g. The program was piloted tested, with certain test sites.
h. A well-established agency conducted the initial research, although opinions varied on what agency it was -- "National Institute for Health" or "Children's Health" were offered. In any case, the program is well-regarded for being comprehensive, well-organized, and research-based.
i. ECRR earned high marks for bringing an awareness to the profession that did not exist 18 years ago. "ECRR changed the focus from the librarian to the child to the librarian to the caregiver. You can put a gazillion hours into presenting a program and a kid is not going to remember it in 10 years. But if you teach the parent or caregiver, they are there every day and that's the impact."

Why Did Non-Users Did Adopt ECRR?:

Subsequent questions focused on the reasons why respondents did not use the program. There reasons were varied:

a. *"We already have another program running:"* Early literacy is the focus of many library programs, and many respondents said they have a different early literacy curriculum running in their systems. Many are proud of their own programs and were not ready to give them up. "We have our own system and it's working just great," said one librarian. Programs mentioned by respondents include:

   i. "**Early Learning for Families**," a program run by the California state library system is, in one librarian's view "takes a piece of Every Child Ready to Read and a piece of other programs to create an array of ideas for people to pick up and adapt as they go along."

   ii. "**Reading Rocks**:" Orange County, CA, librarians spoke about this program that targets low-income families with children under age five. Although it operates out of the public libraries, "Reading Rocks" is actually a separate family literacy program. It includes "literacy-based games, reading sessions, and free books for children" one librarian explained. "Reading Rocks" offers training and materials to parents so they can "continue the whole literacy fun thing at home. For example, we give them ideas on what to do when they are grocery shopping. Name and point out items."

   iii. "**Family Place,"** a program focused on "collaboration, early learning and play." One librarian recounted how the program started with "dialogic reading training," but has mushroomed into the library becoming "Family Place, which really changed the culture of our organization. It created a focus in all of the libraries for early childhood and parent participation. We now have a section in each library with books and toys and it's just very family friendly. It just creates an atmosphere that welcomes young children and creates opportunities for families and young children to learn." Another librarian added, "We have a space for parents and children to sit and play. Now, instead of hearing kids screaming in the library because they are bored, they are sitting there playing with their parents, reading with their parents. Now, if they cry, it's about having to go home!"

   iv. "**Playbreak**," a joint initiative with Children's Home Society. According to respondents, it includes a curriculum designed for ages birth through three, preschool lesson plans, and different books and materials as giveaways to parents and children.

   v. "**Success By Six**," a United Way initiative that gives away books.

vi. "**FRED: Fathers Reading Every Day**," involves getting fathers to read to their children. It also includes free books and materials to encourage parental reading to children.

vii. "*I wouldn't say we have a program, but we do early literacy activities.*"
While not all respondents have a formal program running, all of the librarians indicated that their libraries have taken on the cause of providing some early literacy initiative. One explained how a corner of the children's room has been designated the "Early Literacy Center." The library has hired an early childhood specialist, who does not have an MLS. This has elicited a "funny reaction" from other librarians who resented a staff member who is not trained as a librarian. "They were a little miffed," the woman explained, "but I said, 'she's got the early child development skills so she can make sure our programs are developmentally appropriate. Many of us who did our MLS's 20 years ago are not trained in this area." Another library pays 'Roscoe the Clown," a popular local children's entertainer, to do storybook reading sessions with children.

viii.   "*It costs too much to go to the training*:" Many respondents mentioned cost issues involved in attending the initial training. As one librarian said, "We only have so many dollars and you have to make choices." Several said they would rather attend the ALA convention than pay to go to another training. "I went to the 'Born to Read' program here at ALA one year because it was a Friday at the convention and it was really easy to come to." Another said, "If it was in my state I would probably send people, but not when it involves a plane trip and a hotel. There are just other trainings and conferences we can get too much easily." "It's got to be close and convenient, or we're just not going," said another. "If they did it here at ALA, then maybe I would come," "If they did do it here, I just wasn't aware of it," said another.

ix. "*I come from a large library system, and it's just too structured for us:*"
Several mentioned that the difficulty of having large systems adapt to a "one-size-fits all" program. "We have 85 branches and we can't 'cookie cutter' anything," said one respondent. "We are a system but we are all independent. We all do our own thing and we kind of like it that way.

x. "*We didn't take the whole program, but we do use certain pieces*:" Several librarians reported that while they did not adopt the whole ECRR program, they did pick and choose portions and have incorporated them into their own early literacy programs:

> i. "**We use the dialogic reading piece**." Many mentioned dialogic reading as a valuable part of the ECRR. "We incorporated the dialogic reading piece and did some training on that," said one librarian.

ii. "**We use the website**." Several mentioned that they did go the ECRR website for information and ideas. Here again, several mentioned the cost factors involved in ECRR, in this case, the cost of printing colored materials off the Web: "They all seem to be four-colored, and we just can't print in color. We can do colored ink on white paper, or black ink on colored paper, but we can't print off four-colored materials." Others mentioned that the website offered valuable information based on research. "We have a strong early childhood program and certain information off the website is incorporated into what we do." Another mentioned even if they do not hand out the materials to parents, they do use the information on the website to train their own staff. "Whether we hand out the flyers or not, the (ECRR website information) is one of the tools in our tool kit that use to train staff and build our program around," explained one participant. Still another responded that they use the website information to supplement what they already know. "If I am developing my story time, and I want to incorporate some other stuff for parents to use with their children at home, I'll go to the website. Or if I am trying to do something slightly more complicated than a regular picture book, I'll go to the website and I'll do a little bit of research. " For some librarians, the website offers a chance to catch up on skills that may need updating. "Sometimes I go to the website and I'll read about something I'm not as comfortable with. Doing my MLS 20 years ago, we all have to update our skills!"

Summary

 Research on non-participants views on ECRR reveal that non-use is not related to negative perceptions regarding the quality, scope, or direction of the program. In contrast, nearly all non-users gave ECRR high marks for basing the program on highly regarded research findings and using top-quality materials. What's more, ECRR is lauded as being a catalyst in the field to move library service in a new direction. ECRR, non-users say, is highly regarded as encouraging libraries to shift focus in children's services from the child to the caregiver.

Image aside, adopting ECRR presents a challenge for many libraries to rank as a priority. Many non-users already have an early literacy program in place and do not see the need to change. Indeed, many librarians are quite proud of their programs and feel a sense of ownership. Still others do not offer an entire program with curriculum and materials, but they do provide certain aspects which seem to preclude them from adopting ECRR.

While many librarians enthusiastically support quality early literacy programs, one aspect of ECRR seems to really deter them: the cost of training. Nearly all mentioned that sending someone to receive ECRR training was a financial strain. Many mentioned having to choose going to ECRR training over going to the ALA convention. Others said they would consider the training if it were closer to home.

Finally, several mentioned that the entire program might be too large in scope to adopt, but they do benefit from adapting certain pieces to fit their needs, such as the research information offered on the website. The librarian from the large library sentiment echoes this sentiment. Rather than embracing the entire program, many librarians have chosen to incorporate certain aspects of ECRR. By doing so, they feel their patrons can benefit from the best parts of ECRR without sacrificing their own system's identity.

Summary and Recommendations for Future Directions

It is clear that the ECRR initiative has made significant inroads within the library community. The program has had great appeal to many users who have been seeking better efforts to reach out to parents. The materials have been well received and are regarded of high quality. Many have appreciated the training that has accompanied the materials. Overall, ECRR participants have appreciated the impact the program has generated for the library community as well as the relationships and linkages it has helped to establish to other educational institutions.

Still, however, participants suggested a number of key recommendations for the revision of materials. These include:

- Simpler terminology; less educational jargon in the materials
- Greater sensitivity to culture and diversity in the local community
- Better integration of materials for children of different ages
- More hands-on activities and a bit less lecture
- Materials in multiple languages, preferably Spanish
- Materials updated with more recent research

In addition, users had recommendations for additional training. Among them:

- More training. For many, early literacy, family literacy, and parent outreach are topics that have not been covered in traditional library school programs. Additional hours of training were recommended
- Refresher courses along the way. Mid-course training was also recommended to work out the glitches of the program along the way.
- Implementation training. It was clear from many of the comments that people were not quite sure how to implement the program: How to recruit; how to maintain interest among families; how to entice people to attend workshops. This area of training seemed to be sorely missing.

The initiative has clearly resonated with some audiences more than others. Supervisors, directors, children's librarians, and state leaders all seemed to recognize the importance of reaching out to parents. However, those in the graduate school programs did not see its relevance to their programs. The ECRR team, therefore, might consider:

- A public relations message specific to the graduate library community, focusing on the importance of parent outreach
- Samples of materials which library faculty might use to demonstrate in classes on emergent literacy and parent involvement.
- Modules on strategies for parent outreach that could be used in graduate classrooms. Information on family literacy was not very prevalent in most of the graduate programs.
- Brochures targeted to graduate school programs to make them aware of the initiative.

Finally, the audience that was least responsive to the initiative, the nonusers, suggested some needed revisions in 'packaging' the materials. Some suggestions include:

- A clear message that materials should be adapted to meet the needs of the local population. (Many non-users believed that the script constrained their ability to adapt the program).
- A greater focus on the child. (Many non-users believed that their central focus should not be on the parent, but on the child. Re-writing materials to support the goal that the child is a focus might engage them more in the initiative).
- A focus on individual workshops, rather than on a program series. Many libraries lacked the staff and time that would be necessary to devote to the ECRR initiative. Stand-alone workshops might be a little less daunting for them to do.
- A greater focus on hands-on materials or involvement with computers.

Lastly, it was clear that a sizeable portion of the library community was not familiar with the ECRR initiative. Some strategies for publicizing the efforts were better than others. For example, brochures and other traditional mechanisms seemed to not have much of an impact. The PLA might consider additional strategies to ensure that the library community has greater information and awareness of this innovative initiative.

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