

2018 LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	HS-6
Title of Program	Kindergarten Readiness: ABC Craft and Learn
Program Category	
Submission Date	5/31/2018 6:29:20 PM
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Implementation Date	Jan-17
FLSA Designation	Both (if applicable to a team)
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Description of Productivity Improvement

Serving the Young Child

Wake County Public Libraries provides preschoolers and their caregivers with literacy-based programs to develop pre-reading skills for a successful launch to kindergarten and a foundation for reading success. Following the concepts of the American Library Association's Every Child Ready to Read (everychildreadytoread.org), WCPL offers more than 200 storytimes each week for the young child. These popular programs draw 7,000 to 8,000 participants weekly and are clearly valued by the community.

The bookmobile provides outreach services at 35 childcare centers in eastern Wake County and central Raleigh. These child care centers are in areas with lower socioeconomic indicators and serve more children living in high risk. The bookmobile offers high quality programs and enriching literature for the young child, as well as curriculum-centered materials and recommend books to their teachers. The bookmobile reaches approximately 9,000 children and care providers each annually.

School Readiness Programs for Vulnerable Populations

In addition to traditional library services, WCPL recognized more could be done to help better prepare preschool children and their families for kindergarten, especially in communities where access to high quality child care services or pre-kinder experiences is limited. Key statistics to support this interest include:

- Research shows that reading proficiency by the end of third grade is the most important indicator that a child is on track to graduate from high school on time, college and career ready. About 67 percent of all children (and 80 percent of low income children) fail to achieve this important milestone. Early childhood reading experiences and exposure to books are key components to achieving reading proficiency.
- Currently 17 percent of children in Wake County live below the poverty line and 7 percent attend state subsidized child care. Further, up to 2/3 of children living in poverty come from families where English is a second language. The majority of these children reside in eastern Wake County and central Raleigh.

This leaves a significant gap for these students who are often unable to access quality preschool educational services, placing them behind their peers.

WCPL set out to strategically expand and enhance opportunities for this targeted population, rolling out the kindergarten readiness program ABC Craft and Learn. Grounded on elements from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the Wake County Public School System, this alphabet-based program simulates an early education classroom environment focusing on emergent literacy, fine motor control practice and social/emotional skill building. Designed for children ages 3-5, their adult caregivers and family members, the program is offered in 10 libraries closest to schools:

- Where 60 percent or more of students receive free/reduced priced lunch
- With the largest percentage of English Language Learners
- That are selected by WCPSS as elementary support model schools' facilities that receive additional funding to ensure student success.

Participation at these programs is free, is open to all and requires no registration. Families are also given school readiness materials to spark continued learning at home.

Description of why this project was initiated

Wake County is consistently rated as one of the best places to live in the U.S. and frequently receives accolades from national media. The unique blend of urban, suburban and rural communities that make up the county offers something for every lifestyle. Wake's population has grown exponentially over the last 40 years and now totals more than 1 million. The population continues to grow at a rate of 64 new residents each day" 11 of whom immigrate from other countries and are English language learners. Overall, the county is affluent and its residents are well educated, with more than 50 percent holding bachelor's degrees or higher, compared to 30 percent for the U.S.

The poverty rate has dropped from a high in 2014 of 12 percent to 9 percent. However, there is an increasing gap between the affluent and well-educated residents and those living in more vulnerable communities. Residents of suburban Western Wake County generally have ties to the Research Triangle Park, the largest high tech and bio-tech research center in the United States. Communities in Eastern Wake County are more rural and urban, and employment is often tied to service industries or agriculture. These jobs can be lower paying and lack long-term stability. Families are working multiple jobs and longer, less traditional hours. The cost of more highly-rated child care centers is out of reach.

Community Partners:

In 2015, WCPL joined key stakeholders with an interest in the education of young children to discuss strategies addressing the achievement gap for families in vulnerable communities. These organizations included:

- Marbles Kids Museum: a nonprofit children's museum located in downtown Raleigh with a mission to spark imagination, discovery and learning through play. Marbles provides unique hands-on, interactive experiences that inspire young children to be creative thinkers and active learners.
- Wake County Public School System: the largest public school system in North Carolina and the 16th largest in the nation.
- Wake County Smart Start: a non-profit organization that works to ensure Wake County's children birth to age 5 are prepared for success in school and life.

The discussion focused on possible community programs to serve high-risk pre-school students and their families. The overarching goal was to develop opportunities to foster school readiness, reaching people where they live. WCPL partnered with Marbles to bring some of the programming offered at the museum to selected library branches. WCPL also worked with WCPSS and Smart Start to get the word out to families about library services. Then library staff created programs to specifically address the achievement gap.

ABC Craft and Learn:

WCPL developed ABC Craft and Learn, a program that supports emergent literacy by utilizing books, reading and related school readiness activities. Offered at selective libraries on Saturdays, these programs ensure community members have weekly access to high quality school readiness programs at a convenient time. Grounded on elements from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the Wake County Public School System, this alphabet-based program is designed to simulate an early education classroom environment focusing on emergent literacy, fine motor control practice and social/emotional skill building. The target audience is children ages 3-5, their adult caregivers and family members.

Initially offered as a pilot in January 2017 at eight locations, ABC Craft and Learn expanded to 10 libraries by September, and an eleventh library will offer the program in fall 2018. The program takes place in libraries closest to schools with populations with more critical needs and areas with lower income levels, meeting the criteria delineated in the description of productivity improvement.

Designed by professional youth services librarians including those with a background in early childhood education, the program consists of:

- A welcome and introduction
- Circle time (focus on books)

- Craft and manipulative time
- Circle time wrap-up
- Distribution of parent tip cards to adult caregivers

Each program features a letter of the day with books, activities and materials centered on the letter. Key school readiness program components include participating in a group, following directions, transitioning from one activity to another, and working with manipulatives and scissors to practice fine motor control. Activities all tie back to circle time, books and reading.

Further, ABC Craft and Learn focuses on young children and their adult caregivers. In addition to supporting students, the interactive program encourages the engagement of caregivers by presenting tips and resources to continue the learning process at home. It provides an opportunity for families who may not have access to high quality pre-kinder experiences to close the learning gap. Additionally, it gives caregivers a basis and knowledge of expectations for kindergarten and a more informed position from which to support their children.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

ABC Craft and Learn has been well received by members of the targeted communities. More than 3,500 participants attended these programs in 2017, and over 2,000 have participated so far in 2018 (as of April). With demand exceeding expectations, WCPL expanded the program from eight to 10 libraries in its inaugural year, and an 11th library will be added in fall 2018. Anticipated attendance for 2018 is 6,500.

ABC Craft and Learn is highly cost effective. The biggest cost to design, develop and deliver the program was staff time or human resources. This expense was part of the normal course of business, and staff time was shifted to establish the program. The collaborative nature of the project required less time than normal, as a team of librarians worked together to create uniform programs to be offered at all participating libraries. A one-time startup cost of \$500 per location covered long range supplies (e.g., manipulative toys, scissors, supply carts). Consumable products like craft supplies were purchased for approximately \$1,500 in 2017 and are anticipated to cost \$2,500 in 2018. That breaks down to less than 40 cents per attendee.

Other descriptive information

The program has been recognized on the state level within the profession:

- In October 2017 staff presented a workshop at the North Carolina Library Association's Biennial Conference sharing the concepts and success of ABC Craft and Learn. More than 50 library staff from across the state attended the session, and several library systems have contacted WCPL for further information.

- In December 2017 the program received an award as the Best New Program for Children and Families for large libraries from the North Carolina Library Directors' Association.

The success of ABC Craft and Learn has spurred staff at WCPL to do even more. In 2018 staff have explored expanded and enhanced opportunities beyond traditional programming to support school age children in their educational success. These include offering special family events like educational movies and discussions, hosting authors and performers, and working with summer food site locations.