



FACT SHEET

PORTLAND EARLY LITERACY COLLABORATIVE

early reading first

OBJECTIVES

Early Reading First is a project of the U.S. Department of Education, which provides funding to transform existing early childhood education programs into preschool centers of educational excellence. The mission of Early Reading First "is to ensure that all children enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills for continued success in school." Many children enter school without the foundations in vocabulary, ability to attune to the sounds of language, knowledge of the alphabet, and the world of print. Research shows these are critical precursors to reading proficiency. This foundation is particularly lacking in many children from low-income families or those who are English language learners.

Maine Roads to Quality, the Early Care and Education Center of the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine, has received a \$2.9 million dollar grant from the US Department of Education and will partner with the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies of the University of Maine at Orono, Portland Public Schools, Child Development Services, and local literacy initiatives to form the *Portland Early Literacy Collaborative*.

The *Collaborative* will work to support reading success for at-risk preschoolers, significantly strengthen the linkages between these entities and preschool programs, and coordinate existing training and technical assistance. Research shows that children who enter school with fully developed early literacy skills become successful readers and do not need remedial services in kindergarten and beyond.

Scope of Work

Early childhood teachers will implement a scientifically researched-based early literacy curriculum by Judith Schickedanz, Ph.D. and David Dickinson, Ed.D. Early Literacy Coaches will utilize coaching, an adult learning method where they will work side by side with classroom teachers to model, question, jointly plan, and help to evaluate the curriculum implementation. There will be nine Portland preschool classrooms totaling 127 three-and four-year-old children and twenty-one teachers participating in the grant.

- Each classroom will receive up to \$7000 dollars to purchase early literacy materials.
- Teachers will receive \$2000 dollars per year and 6 hours of release time per week to participate in training, meet with coaches, and plan the implementation of the curriculum.
- Children will be assessed and screened on a regular basis to determine their early literacy development, and project staff will work closely with teachers to develop plans for all children.
- Each child will leave preschool with an *Early Reading First* portfolio to ensure a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten.
- Kindergarten teachers in Reiche and Adams Schools will participate in joint training and classroom observations in order to bridge the gap between preschool and public school admission.
- Web-based technology will be developed to share with the partners and other *Early Reading First* projects throughout the country.

Project time period

10/1/05 through 9/30/08

Preschool Programs

Preble Learning Center
PROP-Deering Place-Classroom B & C
PROP-East End Children's Workshop
PROP-Riverton Head Start
St. Elizabeth's Child Development Center

Project Grantee

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