

“ . . . I am issuing a challenge to our states. Develop a cutting-edge plan to raise the quality of your early learning programs. Show us how you’ll work to ensure that children are better prepared for success by the time they enter kindergarten. If you do, we will support you with an Early Learning Challenge Grant that I call on Congress to enact. That is how we will reward quality, incentivize excellence, and make a down payment on the success of the next generation.”

President Barack Obama
March 10, 2009



Ready 2 Read Early Learning Statewide Initiative

Proposal to Montana State Library

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1. Why is there an increased emphasis on early learning?

- **Infant brain research** has grown because of new technologies, such as MRI and PET scans. Research shows that an infant's earliest experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain. This means that parents and caregivers play a crucial role in their child's cognitive development starting from birth. A child's brain forms 700 new neural connections every second for the first few years, building their emotional foundations, language development and motor skills.
- Studies have found that **investing in our youngest children** is an investment in our future. Supporting early education can yield a return that far exceeds the return on most public spending. One study documents a return to society of more than \$17 for every dollar invested in early education. Much of what libraries do is *after* the time when we can have the greatest impact.

([www.highscope.org/Research/Perry Project/PerryAge40SumWeb.pdf](http://www.highscope.org/Research/Perry%20Project/PerryAge40SumWeb.pdf).)

- **We need to address the needs of disadvantaged children**--in urban areas, rural communities, small towns, and our reservations. According to James Heckman, Nobel Prize-winning economist, the "most economically efficient way to remediate the disadvantage caused by adverse family environments is to invest in children when they are young. . . . Neglecting the early years creates an underclass that is arguably growing in the United States."

(www.minneapolisfed.org)

2. What role can the State Library play?

- **Libraries are in a unique position** to reach parents and caregivers in these important first years. Libraries are available in almost every community, are free, and provide books, resources, and support to encourage the nurturing, conversation-rich interactions between a child and a caregiver.
- **Librarians** can easily pass along information about child development and literacy skills to parents and caregivers who visit the Library.
- **Books are the tools** to reach families. They are multi-purpose, tangible, and cost-effective; sharing them with young children provides all the early literacy skills needed for healthy brain development.

- **If a parent has access** to a program that encourages parent-infant interaction, there's a good chance that the baby may get important stimulation necessary for language development: repetition, consistency, parent gazing, acknowledgment and mimicry of babbling, active listening, verbal labeling of objects, and formalized reading in a dialogue fashion.
- **Reaching out to parents of infants** can bring non-library users into the Library by offering them a welcoming, child-friendly environment where they can relax and meet other parents.
- **The State Library** can launch this as part of the Ready 2 Read Campaign by coordinating and implementing a statewide early literacy effort in every Montana public library over the next two years. The effort includes
 1. a survey of what public libraries are currently offering to families of young children age 0-5;
 2. a collection of board books, parenting materials and other resources for each library to serve this age group;
 3. a visit or online consulting by the Children's Services Consultant or other children's librarian to help libraries plan an infant/toddler program such as "Books & Babies";
 4. "Ready 2 Read" publicity materials provided by the State Library, including a website to be linked on each public library homepage with information for parents and caregivers;
 5. Continued training and workshops for all public librarians working with families.
 - Library STAR (Sure They Are Ready) www.librarystar.org
 - Every Child Ready to Read
 - Mother Goose Time
- **We can look at surrounding states** to see models of what Montana can do to promote early learning statewide. We can design an early learning initiative based on our needs and abilities. We might start with encouraging every public library to have a weekly or monthly infant program, and build from there.

3. What will it cost?

- Collection of board books, song sheets, print resources and other materials in a plastic tub with “Ready 2 Read” logo
\$150 – 200 for each of 90 libraries **\$18,000**
- Children’s consultant (2 trips at 4 days each per year)
Salary \$18/hour (8 days total) **\$1152**
Transportation Costs: rental car: \$36/day + 500 miles
round trip at .585 per mile x 2 **\$873**
Food and Lodging: Montana Per Diem rate of \$109/day x 2 **\$872**
ESTIMATED TOTAL \$2897
- OR workshops at annual Federation meetings
Salary for six one-day trainings **\$864**
Transportation costs (rental car \$36/day + 500 miles
round trip at .585 per mile x 6 **\$1971**
ESTIMATED TOTAL \$2835
- Additional costs might include planning time and money for other presenters

4. Other considerations

- Are there restrictions to working with the tribal libraries? These are an important piece of early learning efforts.
- Follow up: pictures on the State Library website of baby programs, perhaps a Services to Children Honor Roll awarded at MLA

