

Memo

To: Montana State Library Network Advisory Council

From: Sara Groves

Date: November 5, 2012

Re: Early Literacy Report

We hosted the Ready 2 Read Rendezvous in Helena, MT at the Lewis & Clark Library on October 5 – 7, 2012. A total of 50 librarians attended, representing 42 different libraries. Libraries represented both large (Billings, Bozeman, Helena, Flathead County, Butte, Missoula, Great Falls) and small populations (Winifred, Big Sandy, Valier, etc.). We also had great representation from libraries all over the state – east and west, and also had multiple tribal libraries and a few school/community libraries in attendance as well.

Our speakers were taken directly from suggestions that we have received from libraries about the things they need to know more about. Our first speaker addressed children’s social/emotional behavior and how librarians can help address it in the library (for a more peaceful library setting) but also how they can help parents and other caregivers manage children’s behaviors more effectively.

For our second session, we brought in two of the nation’s most respected authorities on how libraries can help children get ready for school, Dorothy Stoltz and Connie Wilson. They presented on “Every Child Ready for School Through Play” and focused on how libraries can incorporate quality play into their buildings to help children get ready for school and to help parents and caregivers understand the value of quality play.

For our third session, we brought in two of the nation’s experts on creating quality children’s play spaces. They focused on how libraries could improve their spaces and make them more inviting to children no matter the size of the room or their budget. Libraries saw a number of spaces that worked well and many librarians talked about how they left the Rendezvous with ideas they would incorporate immediately.

Our last session focused on the science of children’s behaviors and provided an overview on how to incorporate the most recent scientific findings into your existing storytimes and “Books and Babies” programs and how to talk with parents about these.

Besides the informative sessions, we also provided many opportunities for networking and socializing. This was identified as an important and valuable part of the first Ready 2 Read Rendezvous.

We closed the weekend by talking about the next steps for the early literacy program (more training, more materials (like books and toys) for libraries, more outreach materials, more partnerships on the statewide level that trickle down to the community level) and about their evaluation projects. We

completed a basic evaluation form, but to evaluate the program this year, we have asked each attendee to develop a year-long project that they would incorporate into their library based on something that they learned during the Rendezvous. The projects include everything from developing more community partnerships and doing more outreach to developing a more effective children's area. Cindy Christin and I will work to help attendees develop these projects effectively throughout the course of the year via webinars, email updates and phone calls.

The email (highlighted below) that I received last week illustrates the value of the Rendezvous as it highlights just how important a library can be as part of a community-wide effort that values quality early learning opportunities.

The 2012, "Ready-2-Read Rendezvous" was once again very personally inspiring. Since the Helena workshop, I have collaborated with several people in the community. First, I spoke with Chip Reese, that owns the Livingston Kite Shop, here in Livingston. He has donated three kites to the Easy and Junior libraries. The two for the easy library are very colorful; one is of a cat and the other a dog; these will be placed on the ceiling over the PlaySpace. The third kite is a huge sunburst with a 35 foot tail that will drape across the ceiling of the junior library.

He also has the same line of puppets that are used in the "Growing Up Wild Trunks" and will let me borrow them as needed. I am putting together a wish list for the holidays and hoping that some of my parents, friends, and the board, will get some of the items for our PlaySpace.

Second, I have visited with Cathy Jackson, the Head Start director for Park County and have set a schedule for story time once a month at the center and the students will also visit the library once a month. Third, I got in touch with Ted Madden and ask to be placed on the list and to participate with the early beginnings meetings, here in Park County to collaborate about early childhood literacy. And the most recent activity that I was able to implement was a family read "Block Party", using the unit blocks and the materials the families were able to construct buildings using the blueprints and free building. The party was a huge success. The ideas that I obtained from the workshop and collaborating with other children's librarians were priceless. Again thank you for all you put into the Ready-2-Read and us.

Melanie Roberts SLMS, Children's Librarian, Livingston-Park County Public Library