

Books Aloud! Improving Access to Literacy through School Libraries

A. Significance of the Project

Increasing access to a wide range of literacy resources and providing adult supports in research-based literacy activities are critical to ensure that all children learn how to read. This need is especially pressing for children who are English Language Learners or from low-income backgrounds as these children often face staggeringly high and persistent risks for reading disabilities. Previous studies (Neuman, 2001) have documented the striking differentials in access to print for those who come from low-income neighborhoods, and their detrimental consequences for children's achievement. This proposal addresses these critical issues in *Absolute Priority* and the *Competitive Priority (3)* by refining and expanding the *Books Aloud!* program, a well-researched early literacy initiative between libraries and early childhood centers in high-poverty, high minority communities (Neuman, 1999). With our collaborative partner, Dr. Susan Neuman at the University of Michigan, the proposed project will: (1) increase access to a wide range of high quality books through a lending library; (2) provide training to teachers, school leaders, and paraprofessionals on research-based early literacy activities targeted to improvements in oral vocabulary development; (3) foster collaboration between school librarians and teachers to support children's interest, engagement, and quality use of literacy resources; (4) engage parents in reading to their child through a *Build-a-Home-Library Program*; and (5) improve children's oral language skills and academic vocabulary (e.g. critical to understanding concepts and content in subject areas) as measured by curriculum-based assessments and standardized assessments in receptive and expressive language.

A.1 Significance of this Project. This project is based on the premise that vocabulary knowledge (oral language comprehension) is central to children's early and long-term literacy success (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). Studies have shown that the size of a child's vocabulary in

kindergarten is an effective predictor of reading comprehension in the middle elementary years (Biemiller & Boote, 2006), and vocabulary size at the end of Grade 1 is a significant predictor of reading fluency and comprehension in high school (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997).

Consequently, the well-documented gap in vocabulary knowledge between economically disadvantaged children and their middle-class peers prior to entering the elementary school years (Hart & Risley, 1995) becomes of critical concern if we are to improve reading achievement and decrease the knowledge disparities among poor and middle income children. Moats (1999), for example, estimates that the difference at entry into first grade may be as large as 15,000 words, with linguistically disadvantaged children knowing about 5,000 words, compared to their advantaged peers who have 20,000 words. Hart and Risley (2003) argue that the accumulated experiences with words for children who come from poor circumstances compared with children from professional families may constitute a 30-million-word catastrophe that is difficult, if not impossible to close over time.

Compelling as these figures are, they may actually underestimate the problems associated with vocabulary differentials and school learning. Not only do these numbers fail to capture differences in deeper conceptual knowledge and organization, but as children get older, they will increasingly need academic vocabularies that consist of words and precise meanings that are central to content area understanding and often differ from general meanings of even the same terms (e.g. operation has a very specific meaning in mathematics) (Beck & McKeown, 2007). These academic terms, and their specialized meanings may pose the greatest challenges to children who lack a rich storehouse of vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, as well as for those who face the additional challenges of learning a new language, and may be especially detrimental in meeting the demands of the new Common Core State Standards.

With this sense of urgency, this proposed project builds on a highly successful program designed to enrich the early language and literacy experiences for low-income preschoolers. It is based on an organizational structure that provides for greater access to high quality books, further enriched by two powerful predictors of quality in early care and education programs: training of staff and high quality parent involvement. Designed to enhance a model of access to books based on physical and psychological proximity, Books Aloud! will provide greater access to high interest books, material supplies, training to early childhood teachers and parents within an ongoing network of organizational support—the school library.

The **Books Aloud!** is a unique program because it has shown to improve a constellation of language and literacy skills for children, ages 3-4, who come from high-need circumstances through a unique collaboration among libraries and child care centers, which provided a book distribution system, collaborative activities between centers and libraries, and training to child care staff on read-aloud strategies and thematic activities. A randomized controlled trial (Neuman, 1999) including 500 children from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in a large urban city reported significant improvements in children's environmental print, rhyming, alphabetic skills, and developmental writing over the course of one year, with continuous improvements documented six months later. In addition, children's standardized scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, a receptive vocabulary measure increased substantially, exceeding expected learning by 150%. To our knowledge, Books Aloud! is the only model to date, designed to promote early literacy development through greater access to print that has demonstrated significant effects on children's achievement in top peer-review empirical journals.

At the heart of Books Aloud! is the ongoing relationship and collaboration between libraries and child care centers. In this proposal, we will build on this relationship by providing a

more intensive programmatic approach to improve access to literacy resources, quality teacher practices, parent involvement through school libraries to improve children's receptive and expressive language and academic vocabulary.

A.2. High-Need Limited Resource Communities. Of the approximately 14 million children (e.g. about 1 in every 5) growing up in a household in poverty, 49% are not proficient readers by fourth grade (Moore et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the statistics are particularly dismal for ethnic minority and linguistic minority children: According to the most recent reading assessment (NAEP, 2010) approximately 50% of Black and Hispanic children fall below the basic level for reading proficiency; even more striking, over 71% of English Language Learners read at below-basic levels (NCES, 2009). Without intensive intervention, this gap between weak and strong readers' is likely to increase over children's schooling careers so children who are poor readers in kindergarten rarely catch up and face higher risks for academic difficulty, grade retention, and special education services.

Consequently, this project will work in collaboration with four preschools within the attendance boundaries of high-need, limited resourced neighborhoods in Kings County, New York City: Bedford-Stuyvesant, located in the central portion of Brooklyn and its neighboring community, Williamsburg, and nearby Cypress Hills. Bedford-Stuyvesant is primarily Black, with over 72% of the local residents either African American or African Caribbean, whereas Williamsburg and Cypress Hills are primarily Latino with smaller enclaves of Hasidic and Italian communities. These neighborhoods suffer from the highest jobless rate in New York, as well as associated risks of poverty including crime, teenage pregnancy, and homelessness. A 2009 National Center for Education Statistics report (NCES, 2009) found that poor, minority students scored, on average, 26 points lower than white students on both reading and math tests.

These centers, supported by the State Education Agency and administered through the Administration for Children’s Services with additional funding from the state universal pre-K program, have established an ongoing partnership with the New York Department of Education to enhance instructional coherence and coordination for promoting school readiness. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, there is an increasing need to support rigorous, ongoing efforts to prepare children for achieving these standards in the early grades. Therefore, the need is strong to further strengthen the language and literacy program to promote achievement among these children growing up in poverty and learning English as a second language (see letters of commitment in appendix), and Books Aloud! has strong research evidence as an exceptionally promising intervention to meet this need (Neuman, 1999;2009).

Center	Number of Children	Poverty (FRPM)	ELLs %	Race			% of Children with access to books
				AA (%)	Latino	AA+ Car	
Mary McLeod Bethune Center and Head Start+	75+ 4-6 yrs	100%	10%	82%	18%		40%
Cypress Hills Center++	162 4-5 yrs	100%	99%	0%	99%		10%
Cooper Park+++	103 4-5 yrs	100%	19%	75%	19%	6%	50%
Marcy’s Children’s Center+	75+ 3-4 yrs	100%	20%	50%	30%	20%	10%

Budget for children’s books: [REDACTED]

We propose to work in all classrooms in these centers in project; they range from a low of 5 classrooms (Bethune) to a high of 9 classrooms (Cypress Hills). In total, there are 30 teachers (50% with B.A. degrees; 50% Associate degrees), and 35 paraprofessionals (70% H.S diploma; 30%, some high school). All Centers are full day, and run year-round programs.

A. 3. Books for Kids Commitment to Kings County and Progress to Date

Recognizing the tremendous need for access to quality books in these centers in Brooklyn, Books for Kids, in collaboration with state and Foundation initiatives, created school libraries in each of these four high-need centers in 2003. Each Books for Kids library contains a 700 book collection that is lending library-ready and features a wealth of classics, popular storybooks, and educational media (e.g. Leap Frog learning station). Print rich themed murals reflecting the culture of the local community, sturdy shelving, and child-friendly furniture are all designed to attract teachers to use these library resources, as well as to support parent and child engagement.

In this proposal, we seek to maximize the potential of these libraries to serve their local constituency, serving not only the 400 children and families that attend these centers, but the larger community that is within the attendance boundary of Kings County, representing 36,375 families with children under the ages of six years old in these areas. Building on our work in Books Aloud!, we propose to intensify the programmatic features in these libraries to support children's early language and literacy development by: i) increasing access to books through a lending library program; ii) providing training to teachers and paraprofessionals on research-based literacy activities; iii) fostering collaboration between school librarians and teachers, modeling storybook reading techniques and, iv) strengthening parent involvement through a *Build-a-Home-Library Program*. The proposed Books Aloud! project seeks to establish the school library as a center for innovative programs that promote early literacy for young children, and that offer high-quality opportunities for teacher and parent engagement in literacy-rich activities.

B. C. PROJECT DESIGN AND PROJECT SERVICES

B.1. Project Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes. The proposed project is an enhanced version of Books Aloud! designed to engage children in research-based early literacy activities to promote

monolingual English-speaking and ELL children's skills in oral language development and academic vocabulary. In collaboration with the four child care centers in Kings County, Books for Kids and our partners at the University of Michigan will conduct the following activities to achieve the five goals aligned to the Absolute Priority and Competitive Preference Priority 3 (Improving Early Childhood):

Goal 1: Create a lending library program which provides recreational and informational programming for children and their families.

Goal 2: Refine and expand training materials for child care staff (teachers, paraprofessionals) on research-based strategies for promoting oral language development and academic vocabulary.

Goal 3: Strengthen the connection between library services and classroom practices through collaboration and training between preschool specialists and teachers to support planning, preparation, and implementation of age-appropriate book reading materials, and modeling of effective read-aloud techniques.

Goal 4: Create a *Build-a-Home-Library Program* that distributes books to children to achieve a permanent print-rich environment in their homes.

Goal 5: Evaluate the Books Aloud! approach on changes in the quality of teacher practices, extent of parent involvement, and children's achievement as measured by gains in receptive and expressive language and academic vocabulary. [Goal 5 to be described under Project Evaluation].

Therefore, at the completion of the project, we will have a fully developed and evaluated innovative program that uses school libraries to provide for high quality research-based activities that have been demonstrated to increase children's oral language development and academic vocabulary. Further, it will serve as a model program for our national non-profit organization

which (to date) has built 72 libraries in 12 states to improve access to books and instructional materials for children who live in high-need, limited resources communities.

B.C. 2. Design and Specific Services

Goal 1. Create a lending library program which provides recreational and informational programming for children and their families. A primary goal of the program is to expose parents and children to the habits of using the library and to increase book reading at home. To support this goal, we will: a) develop a lending library program; b) organize recreational and informational programs to children and their families in the center as well as those not enrolled in the preschool; c) promote programs and services to generate increased usage in the library.

1a. Develop a lending library program. With the assistance of two school librarians (see appendix, job description) (one serving the needs of the Latino community; the other, serving African-American and Afro-Caribbean communities), we will add to the library collection in each center established through the organizational efforts of Books For Kids. To maintain the quality of the existing library while promoting lending, school library sources recommend a ratio of 10 books per child (PLA, 2010), or approximately 1000 books per collection for each center. These additional materials will include high-quality storybooks as well as an increased number of information books that will enable children to be exposed to the academic vocabulary in science, social studies, math, and the arts. Consistent with the Common Core State Standards, these books will include meaningful informational content to support children's comprehension of text and to prepare children for the challenging texts that will be exposed to in the early grades.

Each library will be provided with a lending library kit which includes library cards for each child, check-out slips, and book tracking tools and materials for recording over-due books. Based

on recommendations from school librarians, a penny per day will be charged for late fees to help children become attuned to the protocol of returning books on time. Families in the local area who may not attend the preschool will also be given library cards so that these libraries can become the hub of the local neighborhood preschool learning community.

1b. Organize recreational and informational programing. Each library will institute three weekly story hours, introducing children to high quality books and multiple genre (e.g. poetry; information books), as well as storytelling activities and rhymes and word play to expand children's vocabulary and listening comprehension skills. One story hour will also be devoted to babies and toddlers in the local community to encourage parents to read to their young child and to develop the reading habit early on. In addition, taking advantage of the tremendous resources available in New York, the school librarian will organize ongoing recreational and informational programs in the libraries. Once each month, there will be a special event (coinciding with the distribution program, described below) sponsoring a children's book author reading, professional storyteller, and family literacy activities involving parents and their children in the creation of educational toys which has shown to engage parents more actively in their child's education than traditional parent involvement programs (Levenstein et al.,1988). Open to the community, as well, these activities will further encourage regular uses of the lending library.

1c. Promote programs to support greater usage of the library. Children who live in communities which lack access to literacy materials often fail to thrive during the long summer months. Known as the 'summer slide' (Heyns, 1978), these children may slip back or forget what they have learned in vocabulary and other critical early literacy skills over the summer. To avoid the summer slide, each library will create a summer reading program. The summer program will include: Three weekly story hours, a sign-up system and a program to track, rate, and talk about

favorite books, along with badges and stickers that children can earn by reading (or having their parents read to them) 10 books. Prizes will be given for every 10 books read, followed at the end of the summer with a special “Breakfast of Champions” for the top readers (along with their parents). We will highlight all of these activities on the Books For Kids website including summer reading selections, great read for parents, and special events throughout the summer to keep children active and engaged in learning.

Performance feedback and Continuous Improvement for Goal 1. Using a strategy developed from previous research (Wright, 2011), our partners at the University of Michigan will monitor activities through the use of an online log, designed to capture the circulation of books, an indicator of the use of the lending library, number of storybook hours and special programs, and number of participants in the summer reading program. The online log is posted on Survey Monkey, and takes approximately five minutes to complete. The school librarian will record weekly reports of the frequency, quality, and detailed feedback of books selected in the library (e.g. informational; storybook, etc...), which provide instant feedback, allowing us to refine and potentially adjust activities throughout the project. If, for example, we find little activity in the lending library, we will conduct brief surveys to better tailor activities to address children and parent’s needs.

Goal 2. Refine and expand training materials for child care staff (teachers, paraprofessionals) on research-based strategies for promoting oral language development and academic vocabulary.

There is now a convergence of research on the characteristics of effective instruction on book reading techniques and the development of oral language and academic vocabulary for preschoolers (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Three meta-analyses (Marulis & Neuman, 2010; Mol et al., 2008; 2009), for example, have shown that providing children with explicit

definitions of words, discussing words in various contexts, and reviewing words on many occasions is associated with significant improvements in language development (e.g. an average effect size of .87, almost a full standard deviation) (Marulis & Neuman, 2010). Further, helping children pay attention to print (e.g. print referencing) while reading storybooks, and engaging them following the book reading in dialogic techniques has been shown to prevent reading difficulties. Therefore, to accomplish Goal 2, our partners at the University of Michigan will: a) update and expand Books Aloud! training to include the latest research aligned with the Common Core State Standards; and b) integrate ELL strategies into Books Aloud!

2a. Update and expand Books Aloud! training modules. Books Aloud! training program, originally designed to include modules on foundational practices related to storybook reading (Neuman, 1999) will be updated to reflect the most recent research on oral language and academic vocabulary closely aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Dr. Neuman and her team will develop 10 text sets (e.g. a collection of 5 books on a topic which includes multiple genre), along with a prototypical lesson plan that includes: introduction of new vocabulary (explicit explanation of academic vocabulary); guided instruction using words in context with attention to print references (Piasta et al., 2010), and dialogic techniques including open-ended questions for before, during and after the reading to engage children in using words in new contexts (Whitehurst et al., 1988). Book selection will be headed by the school librarian in each area (with an advisory group to reflect the community), and include information books that are challenging but achievable to children, predictable text, and storybook classics. The text sets will be developed around common preschool topics (and aligned with Head Start Early Childhood Outcomes), such as parts of the body, healthy foods, exercise etc... and include narrative and informational texts on the topic to guide teachers' activities during core language and literacy

times. These text sets will also be available in the lending library for parents to check out, and to extend the learning time at home.

2b. Integrate ELL strategies into Books Aloud! Given the substantial numbers of ELLs, Books Aloud! will not be effective without addressing the needs of these children. Books Aloud! will integrate *effective* research based instructional strategies throughout the materials and training program. Dr. Linda Espinosa, a national expert in curriculum for ELL preschoolers will assist us in this endeavor (see appendix for vitae). Studies (Tabors, 2008) have shown that ELL children benefit from small group readings where children may ask questions or make comments; picture walks where language is simplified and gestures are used to aid comprehension, and activities that encourage them to pantomime concepts and terms. These and other strategies will be included in materials, as well as suggestions for extensions in dramatic play centers using the terms introduced through the shared book readings. Previous research (Neuman, Newman, & Dwyer, 2011) has shown that teaching new words thematically through text sets provides ELL children with repeated encounters with targeted academic vocabulary immediately and over time, has demonstrated effects on their oral language development (effect size .86).

Feedback and Continuous Improvement for Goal 2. We will invite two teachers from each of our four sites to review materials (e.g. specific topics, key vocabulary, prototypical lesson), and provide feedback, and additional strategies on ways to enhance children's oral language and vocabulary throughout the curriculum. Revisions will be made on the basis of these comments.

Goal 3: Strengthen the connection between library services and classroom practices through collaboration and training between preschool specialists and teachers. An integral feature of Books Aloud! is the ongoing relationship between the school library services and daily classroom practices. The purpose of the relationship is to enhance the quality of early literacy

practices through the development of high quality book reading practices in classrooms, and to recognize how the assets of the school library might enhance the classroom curriculum. To do so, Books Aloud! will recruit 4 part-time preschool specialists, with qualifications and experience equivalent to master teachers, including BA degrees and master's degrees in early childhood education, to serve as liaisons between library and the child care classrooms. Working 15 hours a week, they will provide practice-based training, helping teachers to implement training materials in their curriculum. To accomplish this goal, the UM team will: a) train preschool specialists; b) provide on-site training to teachers and professionals; c) engage in ongoing curriculum improvements through greater uses of the school library.

3a. Train preschool specialists to deliver on-site professional development. Working with the school librarians, the UM team will conduct a day-long training with four preschool specialists (two to work in Bedford-Stuyvesant area; two, in Williamsburg area) on adult learning strategies, and effective techniques for demonstrating and modeling prototypical lessons in the text sets. Videotape lessons of exemplary practices will be shown. Following training, preschool specialists will give a demonstration lesson before preschoolers, which will be evaluated for fidelity and to determine if additional training is needed. All preschool specialists will be certified by UM prior to working in settings.

3b. Provide on-site professional development training to teachers and paraprofessionals.

Following training, a preschool specialist will be assigned to each center and will be responsible for providing practice-based training to teachers and paraprofessionals in their classrooms. The role of the preschool specialist will be to support teachers in their use of text sets, and to help teachers follow the prescribed order outlined in the prototypic lesson plan. Preschool specialists will spend between 1 and ½ hours in each classroom, providing demonstration lessons and

coaching to refine teacher practices and to enhance the interactional activities in lesson materials. Teachers will be asked to read a book twice a week from the text sets to ensure that children receive the full dosage of a 25-week intervention that includes high-quality books of multiple genre.

3c. Engage in ongoing curriculum improvements through greater uses of the school library.

Preschool specialists will also offer support in promoting other book-related activities in the classroom. As part of the school's lending library, they will work with teachers to regularly refresh the classroom library, knowing that the physical proximity to books is highly supportive of children's exposure to print, and that children are more likely to use their classroom library when books related to the themes they are engaged in are included. Further, the preschool specialist will help teachers plan how books can be used in other curricular activities, such as the science area, dramatic play, block-building areas to demonstrate ways in which books may serve children's interests and their need to know more about their world.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement for Goal 3. On two occasions the UM team will videotape a shared book lesson. They will develop an observational checklist to examine teachers' fidelity to the lesson plan format, measuring what elements are included in the lesson, as well as the quality of their implementation. This fidelity measure will be used by the preschool specialist to examine teacher videos focusing on areas that need to be further addressed throughout their ongoing sessions. In addition, the preschool specialist will monitor the circulation figures of the school library to determine the frequency of use by teachers, and will identify additional strategies to support greater activity, if necessary.

Goal 4. Create a *Build-a-Home-Library Program* that distributes books to children to achieve a permanent print-rich environment in their homes. An underlying assumption of Books Aloud! is

that access to books is based on physical and psychological proximity; that is, children must have easy access to print materials in their immediate environment, as well as psychological supports in the form of caring adults—parents and teachers—who engage them actively and supportively in their learning. Therefore, Goal 4 is designed to extend the relationship of the library and the child care center to home literacy activities, recognizing that parents are critical partners in children’s language development. To accomplish this goal, we will: a) create a distribution program which provides free books to children and their families; b) develop a book club with parents and their younger children in the library; and c) provide materials to extend children’s literacy learning at home.

4a. Create a distribution program. Our *Build-a-Home-Library Program* is designed to help children develop a permanent print-rich environment in their home. Based on recommendations from the school librarian and an advisory group of teachers and parents, children will receive one free book per month throughout the school year for a total of 12 books per child, considered by specialists as an adequate ‘starter’ library. In contrast to other distributional systems (e.g. RIF), our program will distribute *one* specific title per month. Recent research (Huberman, 2012) has shown that providing activities around one book title promotes more active engagement among children (since they have all read the same book), and often galvanizes other organizations in support of these literacy-related activities.

Associated with the give-away program, we will sponsor monthly celebratory activities in the school library, engaging parent volunteers in planning activities, such as motivational games, book author visits, and storytelling events. Other related book titles will be prominently displayed and available to children and their families through the lending library. Therefore the goal is to generate continuing enthusiasm and excitement about reading, and to become familiar

with some of the more prominent authors and illustrators in children's literature and informational text.

4.b Develop a book club with parents and their younger children in the library. To reach children and families who may not attend the center, we will establish a monthly book club modeled on an effective research-based approach developed by Neuman (1996). Once each month, parents will bring their children to the school library, and will engage in reading of the book of the month. The librarian will model the storybook reading strategies described above, and then encourage parents and children to read together on the spot. (Previous research indicated that 'trying it immediately' gives parents confidence that they can effectively read to their child). Following the reading, children will be given the book to take home. Therefore, the book club activities will extend the reach of the school library by engaging community members and younger children in the library activities.

4c. Provide materials to extend children's literacy learning at home. In addition to the book giveaways, we will provide a tip sheet of research-based strategies to extend children's learning at home. Adapting materials from Beginning with Books (Segel, 1994), a family literacy program from the Carnegie Public Library in Pittsburgh, the tip-sheet will highlight simple strategies that have been developed by librarians to enrich children's vocabulary and to enhance children's knowledge through text.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement for Goal 4: We will create an online tracking system to record the number of books children receive, the level of volunteer support from parents, and the attendance of parents and children in the monthly book clubs. If these numbers fall short of our expectations, we will conduct informal interviews with teachers, parents, and

administrators in the center and surrounding community to modify our procedures to maximize children's opportunities to build a library in their homes.

Consequently, building on the success of Books Aloud!, by the end of this project, we will have a fully developed innovative program that uses school libraries and their resources to provide access to books and materials that engage children, their families, and their teachers, in high quality research-based book reading activities that have been demonstrated to increase children's oral language development and academic vocabulary.

(c) ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

This project is designed to extend the considerable investments in school libraries that have been made through our efforts in Books For Kids, a 501 (c) 3, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1986. Kings County represents one of the densest populations of poor families in the New York City environs. Providing greater access to high quality books and instructional materials, therefore, has been our central mission—here and throughout the country (see appendix), leveraging funds from global corporations such as ING Direct/Capital One and Homewood Suites, as well individual Foundations (e.g. Tina Fey; Mario Batali), with each library estimated to cost [REDACTED]

Our purpose in this proposal is to extend the reach of these school libraries by providing greater programmatic services through the library, and by extending these services to families and young children to the local community. Consequently, this project is designed to serve not only the 400 children and families that attend these centers, but the larger community that immediately surround these centers of children under six and their parents.

The costs for Books Aloud! are modest relative to our objectives, design and potential significance for several reasons. First, our programmatic efforts are designed to promote greater

library use, a habit that can be instilled in children early on, and that will serve as a continual source of open and free information throughout their lives. Second, if our adaptation of Books Aloud! is shown to demonstrate positive effects on children's language and academic vocabulary, it will serve as a model for Books For Kids' 72 other libraries in 12 states, including 48 in the New York City region alone as well as a model for our new libraries (13 built in the last two years in 8 states and 5 in progress in 5 states). Third, the potential long-term economic savings in improving early language and literacy skills early on have been clearly documented (Reynolds et al., 2011), and have shown that high quality early childhood experiences can diminish the need for reading remediation, and special education services. With intensive intervention, we can essentially help to ameliorate deficits early on to ensure children's long term success in school.

(e). QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The management plan is designed to ensure that the program goals are accomplished in a timely and high quality manner. Shawna Doster, Esq., Executive Director of Books for Kids will serve as Principal Investigator and will be responsible for overseeing the entire project. Leading Books For Kids for the past 3 years (and serving as Chair of the Board for the previous 6 years), she has spear-headed its exponential growth, adding more than 15 libraries in 6 states in the last 3 years alone; she will devote 20% of their time to the project. Books For Kids, through its efforts to build community supports in high-poverty, low resource communities will provide ongoing web support, and public awareness efforts to extend the usage of these libraries to members of the local community who may not have children in these centers (e.g. family/group day care programs). Further, as a national organization, they are able to purchase books (hardback and paperback) at library rates, representing a significant cost benefit.

Susan B. Neuman, Professor at the University of Michigan and the lead developer of Books Aloud! in Philadelphia, will serve as Co-Principal Investigator. She is a national expert on early language and literacy interventions for children who are at-risk for school failure, and has extensive experience in curriculum and material development, and designing professional development for early childhood teachers (see vitae, appendix). She brings a rich history of working with schools and public libraries to promote greater access to books and materials for low-income children.

The project will be assisted by two School Librarians, who will head an advisory team responsible for making book selections (e.g. lending libraries; text sets; distribution program), maintain vendor contacts, and will work with preschool specialists and the Co-Principal Investigator on the training materials for teachers. This advisory team, including the Early Childhood Directors, representative parents from each of the centers, and representative teachers from each center will meet every other month to discuss upcoming events and to provide ongoing feedback on the activities of the project. Dr. Linda Espinosa, a nationally recognized authority on ELL issues for preschoolers and families will serve as a consultant, and review materials to integrate ELL strategies into Books Aloud! An independent evaluator, Dr. Donna Celano, will conduct a formative and summative evaluation. Table 1 identifies individuals in the project and their responsibilities for each program component.

(f) PROJECT EVALUATION

The key outcomes of the proposed project are to: (1) increase access to a wide range of high quality books through a lending library; (2) provide training to teachers, school leaders, and paraprofessionals on research-based early literacy activities targeted to improvements in oral language and academic vocabulary development; (3) foster collaboration between school

librarians and teachers to support children's interest, engagement, and quality use of literacy resources; (4) engage parents in reading to their child through a *Build-a-Home-Library Program*; and (5) improve children's oral language skills and academic vocabulary as measured by curriculum-based assessments and standardized assessments in receptive and expressive language development and vocabulary. (Personnel costs estimated in Year 1 are likely to increase [REDACTED] annually).

The evaluation will be conducted by Dr. Donna Celano, an independent evaluator with over 20 years of experience in program evaluation (see CV). She has evaluated numerous library programs throughout her consultant work with the William Penn Foundation, and specializes in focus group methodology, survey research, and statistical analyses of data. She served as a principal investigator in an evaluation of the Philadelphia public library's transition to technology to improve low-income children's achievement, and most recently, conducted an evaluation of West Virginia's First Book initiative, examining the effects of greater access to books on children's book reading habits.

Books Aloud! will be evaluated through a multi-method, iterative design. In Year 1, the evaluation will focus on the formative features of the program, and will provide ongoing feedback about the components of the program as they are developed. Activities will include monthly tallies of lending library use at each of the libraries, observations of parent involvement activity and interviews with parents to better understand how Books Aloud! may reach the larger community. In addition, teachers from each center will complete feedback forms on training materials, and selected teachers will participate in focus groups to identify needed revisions and refinements of the materials for Year 2.

Table 1. Responsibilities of Project Personnel and Tasks--Years 1 and Year 2

	Key Personnel Team				Collaborators		Year 1	Year 2
	Doster, PI	Neuman, Co-PI	School Librarian (2)	Preschool Specialist (4)	Evaluator	Advisory Team + Espinosa		
Goal 1: Create a lending library program which provides recreational and informational programming for children and their families								
1a. Develop and implement a lending library program	X	X	X			X	X*	X
1b. Organize a recreational and informational programming	X	X	X			X	X*	X
1c. Promote programs to support greater usage of the library	X	X	X			X	X*	X
Goal 2: Refine and expand training materials for child care staff (teachers, paraprofessionals) on research-based strategies for promoting oral language development and academic vocabulary.								
2a. Update and expand Books Aloud! Training modules		X	X			X	X	
2b. Integrate ELL strategies into Books Aloud!		X				X	X	
Goal 3: Strengthen the connection between library services and classroom practices through collaboration and training between preschool specialists and teachers								
3a. Train preschool specialist to deliver on-site professional development		X	X				X	
3b. Provide on-site professional development training to teachers and paraprofessionals		X	X	X			X*	X
3c. Engage in ongoing curriculum improvements through greater uses of the school library	X	X	X	X		X	X*	X
Goal 4: Create a Build-a-Home-Library Program that distributes books to children to achieve a permit print-rich environment in their homes.								
4a. Create a distribution program	X	X	X	X		X	X*	X
4b. Develop book clubs with parents and their younger children in the library	X	X	X	X		X	X*	X
4c. Provide materials to extend children's literacy learning at home	X	X	X	X		X	X*	X
Goal 5: Evaluate Program								
5a. Formative Evaluation					X		X	
5b. Summative Evaluation					X			X

X* Year 1 milestones: To develop and pilot selected materials in Year 1; Year 2 milestones: To implement and evaluate the fully-developed program

Interviews with preschool specialists will be conducted to examine trainers' perceptions, expectations, and specific challenges in their efforts to connect libraries and classroom activities. The independent evaluator will gather and analyze these data and share them with the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator who will work to refine Books Aloud!

In Year 2, the independent evaluator will conduct a quasi-experimental design study to examine the effects of the Books Aloud! model. This type of experiment is designed to make explicit connections between theory and field-based research: What works, why it works, and the underlying principles that might guide such interventions in the future. Consequently, the independent evaluator will use multiple and complementary methodologies that combine a controlled quasi-experimental study, with a collection of observational analyses (see below). Therefore, analyses of the project's impact will be based on many different indicators to examine whether greater access to books and training of child-care staff enhances children's receptive and expressive language and academic vocabulary. Specifically the following questions will be addressed: (1) Does greater access to books and materials through Books Aloud! improve the quantity and quality of children's early literacy experiences? (2) Do teachers who participate in Books Aloud! use higher quality language and literacy practices as compared to those in a control condition? (3) Does Books Aloud! impact parental patterns of reading with children compared to a control condition? (4) Do children who participate in Books Aloud! significantly improve their language and academic vocabulary outcomes compared to their peers in a control condition?

Thirty classrooms in all 4 centers will participate as the treatment group. At the same time, the independent evaluator will select comparable child-care centers (e.g. with Books For Kids

libraries) with a comparable number of classrooms that are not involved in the Books Aloud! program (e.g. there are 48 other Books For Kids libraries in New York City). Six children in each classroom will be randomly selected (an equal number of males and females) will be assessed (pre and posttests) (unless the parent does not give written consent) for a total of 360 children in treatment and comparison conditions. Parents will complete background questions addressing parental education, familiar characteristics, uses of the school and public libraries, and home language usage. Teachers and paraprofessionals will also complete a demographic profile indicating their educational background, years of experience, and professional development experience.

Classroom Measures: Fall classroom observations will be conducted by trained data collectors using the CLASS (Pianta, et al., 2006), the Language Interaction Snapshot (LISn Mathematica, 2009), and ELLCO-ELL extension (Castro, 2008). The CLASS is a commonly used observation tool designed to document overall quality of the instructional environment (e.g., emotional support, conceptual development, classroom organization, and instructional support). LISn is an observation instrument, used in studies such as FACES (2009) that captures the quality of the classroom language instruction. The ELLCO-ELL extension documents teachers' usage of strategies to promote second language learning abilities. These observations will be repeated in the Spring to examine gains over time.

Videotape Reading Sessions. Teachers in treatment and control conditions will be asked to submit three videotapes of whole class reading sessions (e.g. fall, winter, spring) (for a total 180 videotapes). These videotape sessions will be entered in CLAN (Computerized Language Analysis), a computer program which facilitates the analysis of language including frequency analyses, co-occurrence analyses, and interactional analyses. The independent evaluator will

examine interactive behaviors associated with language development: the degree to which teachers promote labeling, scaffolding and are contingently responsive to children's comments and questions.

Reading Logs. Teachers in treatment and control conditions will be asked to submit written reading logs that record all reading taken place in classrooms.

Parent participation logs and survey. Center directors in treatment and control conditions will be asked to maintain a monthly log of parent participation in the classroom, and parent participation in activities related to the libraries. In addition, pre- and post-circulation figures will be examined to measure parents' use of the lending library, and increases in the number of books checked out compared to the control condition. In addition, a survey of print exposure shown to be predictive of language development (Mol, in press) will examine how the distributional program may relate to reading behavior, and reading frequency.

Child Assessments. Trained data collectors will assess children's language development and academic vocabulary at the beginning and end of the school year (see below, Table 2). Because ELLs who speak various languages will participate and assessments are not available in languages other than Spanish, all children will be assessed in English.

Addressing the Research Questions: The independent evaluator will conduct statistical analyses estimating the effects of Books Aloud! on classroom practices, teacher interactive read-aloud strategies, parent participation and child outcomes. Multivariate multiple regression will be used to assess the impact of the intervention on teacher quality and quality measures. Specifically spring scores on teacher outcome measures (CLASS, LISn, and ELLCO-ELL Extension) will be regressed on a dummy variable indicating participation in the intervention while controlling for fall scores, as well as relevant teacher covariates, and degree of fidelity). Models for each

outcome variable will be estimate singularly and jointly through an omnibus test. To investigate changes in children’s skills, two level multilevel models (children nested within classrooms) will be used to assess the impact of the intervention on spring scores on the child outcome variables while controlling on measures such as fall scores, and child characteristics. In addition, the evaluator will examine mediators that might help to explain differences in the effects of the intervention for different characteristics. Examining these outcomes will serve to record changes in teacher practices and children’s outcomes.

Table 2. Outcome Measures Assessed

Language and Literacy Skill	Assessment	Reliability
Receptive language	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 2006)	Internal $\alpha=.81$
Expressive language	One-word Picture Vocabulary Test (Martin & Brownell, 2010)	Internal $\alpha=.94$
Oral language comprehension	Listening Comprehension, Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement (Woodcock & Mater, 2001)	Internal $\alpha=.85$
Academic vocabulary	Curriculum-based vocab. test	NA
Conceptual development	Boehm-3 Preschool (Boehm, 2000)	Internal $\alpha=.80-.91$
Concepts of information text	Concepts of comprehension assessment (Billman, et al, 2008)	Internal $\alpha=.85$

At the same time, videotape analyses and parent participation logs will provide us with additional information on the processes of change: What kinds of change may or may not occur as a result of a model of enhanced school library usage, and programmatic support through Books Aloud! Consequently, the evaluation will include measures that can detail processes related to change and outcomes. If children’s literacy activities increases and their developing skills improve compared to those in control sites, it can be argued with some assurance why, how, and to what extent greater access to books through school libraries and distribution programs, and teacher training can make a difference in children’s early literacy development.

[References included in appendix due to space restrictions]