



Community Partners for Early Literacy

In August 2008, Eastern's Center for Early Childhood Education was awarded a three-year, \$3.9 million Early Reading First grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Under the Community Partners for Early Literacy (CPEL) project, the Center partnered with the Windham Public Schools' Early Childhood Center and with Eastern's Child and Family Development Resource Center. Over a three-year period, the project improved the language and literacy skills of nearly 600 preschool-aged children and improved their early literacy instruction by providing professional development to their teachers and paraprofessionals. Below are some of the project's major accomplishments.

1. Improved Children's Language and Early Literacy Skills

CPEL utilized a variety of screening and assessment tools to monitor children's progress and track changes in instructional strategies and classroom environments. Project staff conducted 3,683 early childhood assessments using the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)*, the *Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)*, and several subtasks of the *Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) PreK*. Assessment results show marked improvement in children's early literacy performance during the project. Highlights of children's gains include:

Making Gains: Receptive Vocabulary

- Each spring the average PPVT score was above the target score of 85. Children's average spring score increased by 4 points over the three years of the grant.

Average spring score:

Year 1: 89.70

Year 2: 90.92

Year 3: 93.71

- The average gain in children's receptive vocabulary from fall to spring was 6.89 standard score points in the third year of the grant. Spanish-speaking children made the greatest gains.

Making Gains: Rhyming

- By the project's third year, the average gain in rhyme awareness for Spanish-speaking 4-year-olds was 30% from fall to spring.

2. Improved the Home Literacy Environment

CPEL enhanced literacy activities in children's homes by engaging their families in a comprehensive family literacy program. Highlights of these efforts include:

- Hosted 14 family literacy events for parents and grandparents that featured demonstrations and hands-on practice in dialogic reading, rhyming games, and other activities.
- Distributed 6,000 books to children to build their home libraries.
- Sent home literacy lending kits each week to encourage reading at home.



3. Increased the Knowledge and Skills of Preschool Teachers and Paraprofessionals

CPEL provided ongoing, for-credit professional development to over 40 preschool teachers, assistant teachers, special education staff, and paraprofessionals in oral language, phonological awareness, vocabulary, early writing, and other topics related to language development and early literacy. Highlights of these efforts include:

- Provided 158 professional development sessions to teachers and paraprofessionals, totaling over 440 hours.
- Provided 37 professional development sessions in Spanish for Spanish-speaking paraprofessionals.
- Awarded 157 college credits to participating teachers/special educators and 189 credits to paraprofessionals who successfully completed course requirements.
- Provided nearly 4,000 hours of weekly, in-classroom coaching from highly qualified literacy coaches to teachers and paraprofessionals.

Making Gains: Literacy Knowledge

- Teachers improved their literacy knowledge by an average of 15% over the course of the project.
- Paraprofessionals improved their literacy knowledge by an average of 20% over the course of the project.

Making Gains: Classroom Literacy Environment

- At the beginning of the project, NO classrooms were rated as “strong” overall on the ELLCO (Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool).
- After 3 years, 60% of classrooms were rated as “strong” overall on the ELLCO.
- ELLCO scores improved by an average of 24 points over the course of the project.

Making Gains: Quality of Book Reading

- By the project’s third year, 92% of the classrooms were rated as “strong” or better on quality of book reading on the ELLCO, and 62% were rated as “exemplary.”

4. Involved Eastern Students in Important Experiential Learning Experiences

CPEL employed 38 Eastern undergraduate and graduate students from eight majors. The students worked as early literacy assessors, classroom substitutes, and literacy kit managers, and were a critical element in the project’s success. Students reported that the experience taught them how to work as professionals and helped them apply what they were learning in class to real-world settings.

Project Staff

Dr. Ann Anderberg and Dr. Maureen Ruby, Co-Principal Investigators

Julia DeLapp, Project Director

William Black, Project Manager

Audrey Cadarette, Sandra Granchelli, Emden Jimenez-Sifontes, and Janet Johnson, Literacy Coaches

Greg Hartzell and Kerin Jaros-Dressler, Videographers

Inspiring Lessons Video:

What We Learned from the Community Partners for Early Literacy Project

The Center for Early Childhood Education developed a video outlining the five main lessons learned from the project:

Lesson #1: Provide ongoing, differentiated professional development

Lesson #2: Invest in the professional development of paraprofessionals

Lesson #3: Use assessment to inspire change

Lesson #4: Involve families

Lesson #5: Inspire teachers to believe in children’s potential

For More Information

For more information about the Community Partners for Early Literacy project or to view/order *Inspiring Lessons*, contact Julia DeLapp, Director of the Center for Early Childhood Education, at delappj@easternct.edu or 860/465-0687, or visit www.easternct.edu/cece.