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# Massachusetts Early Literacy Action Plan

## Pittsfield

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Date: August 31, 2010



## **Acknowledgements**

The Massachusetts District Literacy Action Plan found in this document was created using literacy partnership grant funds provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Special Education Planning and Policy Development Office. As part of that project, PCG Education prepared the *Guidelines for Developing an Effective District Literacy Action Plan* for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Fall 2009. This plan was developed in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Literacy. This plan template corresponds to the *Guidelines* document.

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## **Executive Summary**

The overarching goal of this plan is to improve family and community involvement birth through school age by providing, promoting and supporting literacy rich environments and activities.

- Section 1: Connection Between the District Literacy Action Plan and Other District Improvement Plans
- Section 2: Why a District Literacy Plan is Needed in Our District
- Section 3: Literacy Vision Statement
- Section 4: District Literacy Improvement Goals
- Section 5: Action Plan Maps
- Section 6: Plan for Assessing and Reporting District Progress
- Section 7: District Expectations and Supports for Schools
- Section 8: District Literacy Team Membership, Development Process, and Plan for Monitoring Implementation

**Section 1: Connection Between the District Literacy Action Plan and Other District Improvement Plans**

*The Early Literacy Action plan links directly with Pittsfield Public Schools' District Literacy Action Plan (6/2010) and the Pittsfield Public School District Improvement Plan (2009-2011). Our focus is on community engagement.*

*Members of the Early Literacy Team also serve on Berkshire United Way's Community Impact Study, Berkshire Compact for Education, Western Mass Association for the Education of Young Children, Pittsfield Transition Team, Western Mass Professional Development group and other civic organizations.*

## **Section 2: Why a District Literacy Plan is Needed in Our District**

*Pittsfield Public Schools has been tracking the Daberon scores of children as they enter Kindergarten. There has been a noticeable decrease in Daberon scores for the last several years. Results of this Kindergarten screening indicate that children are entering school with lower oral language skills, which is one indicator of literacy.*

*Of entering Kindergartners in September 2009 The Daberon scores show*

- 1. The gap between the lowest school in 2003 and the highest was 14.79 months. This year the gap is 22.64 months.*
- 2. Since 2003 the readiness level has declined by 3.54 months at Morningside and 8.65 months at Conte.*
- 3. The readiness level for the city has dropped by almost 2 months.*

*Pittsfield serves 6100 students in the public school system. Of these, 50.1% are considered Low Income and qualify for Free/Reduced lunch.*

*16.3% receive Special education services*

*5.6% have First Language not English*

### **Teen Pregnancy**

The likelihood of teenage girls (15-19 years) in Berkshire County giving birth increased 20.5% in the past decade. During this same time period, the rate in the state has steadily decreased 21.7%. Teen girls in the Berkshires are 23% more likely to have a baby while a teenager than in the state as a whole. (from Berkshire United Way)

## **EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON EARLY LITERACY**

**SKILL ACQUISITION** (\*from Reading Success by 4th Grade:A Blueprint for Springfield, June 2010. P 10)

■ *Research indicates that low-income parents, on average, speak to and talk with their children much less than higher-income parents. The average low-income child has heard 30 million fewer words than his or her higher income peers by the age of four. In one key study, the vocabulary gap at age three predicted language scores in third grade.\**

■ *Only 36% of low-income Kindergartners are read to every day.\**

■ *A child from a middle-income family typically enters first grade with about 1,000 hours of one-on-one picture book reading time with parents, other*

*relatives, or teachers, compared with a child from a low-income family, who averages fewer than 100 hours.\**

■ *First graders from lower-income families have a vocabulary half the size of children from higher-income families.\**

■ *The average middle-income home has 54 age-appropriate books for children, while a low-income home has 0-2.\**

■ *The summer learning shortfall experienced by low-income children over the elementary grades has consequences that reverberate throughout their education, and can impact whether a child ultimately earns a high school diploma and continues on to college.\**

*Poor early literacy skills negatively impact elementary academic outcomes: The impact of these difficult circumstances is evident when children enroll in school.*

*Now is the time to educate parents, early childhood providers and the community of the importance of quality early childhood experiences. Our community is fairly well connected and it is time to strengthen our collaborations and have a clearly defined unified plan to direct our efforts. Having a plan demonstrates the importance of literacy in the City of Pittsfield.*

*In addition to public awareness of early literacy skills, it is essential that we engage parents, providers and the community in our efforts to increase the literacy skills of our youngest community members*

**Section 3: Literacy Vision Statement**

*We envision creating a culture of literacy for all of Pittsfield's children and families. We aim to improve family and community involvement for children birth through school age by providing, promoting and supporting literacy rich environments and activities.*

*Literacy is the ability to experience and apply reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking strategies in order to learn across all content areas, to demonstrate and communicate learning, and to transfer that learning to new situations.*

**Section 4: District Literacy Improvement Goals**

*The Pittsfield Public School District Literacy plan has as its goal **Overall Goal:** The goal is that 100% of the students will show individual growth toward established district benchmarks in reading and writing skills. By spring 2012, 80% of students will be proficient in reading as measured by grade 3 and grade 10 MCAS. In addition, 80% of students in grade 7 will average a 2 or above in ELA open-response on MCAS.*

*Our early literacy goal is to increase the readiness of children entering Kindergarten in Pittsfield (as measured by the Daberon screening) and the DIBELs scores of children entering Kindergarten by an average of 2 months per year for the next several years. We feel this can be accomplished by educating and involving families and the community.*

**Section 5: Action Plan Maps**

**Goal 1 Action Map**

Goal Statement: Increase knowledge of early literacy to parents, providers and community

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
<b>→ Action Step</b>	Promote early literacy skills in media (Local Cable TV regular show)	Promote early literacy skills especially for infant/toddler providers and parents	Promote early literacy skills via public library
1. Timeline	Beginning Sept 2010	September 2010 through June 2011 And beyond	Beginning Sept 2010
2. Lead Person(s)	Early Literacy Action Team members	Donna Cimini and Penny Evans	Nan Pearson, Children’s librarian
3. Resources Needed	<p>“Language is the Key” videos and Parents Action for Children videos (purchased with funds provided by DESE Special Ed Dept) PCTV</p> <p>Print literature Develop pre/post surveys that will be used consistently for all events.</p>	<p>Link with: WIC Family child care providers Berkshire Health Systems, Berkshire Children and Families and PPS staff that train/run parent groups</p> <p>Print literature</p>	<p>“Language is the Key” videos and Parents Action for Children videos (purchased with funds provided by DESE Special Ed Dept)</p> <p>Library Print literature Develop pre/post surveys that will be used consistently for all events.</p>
4. Specifics of Implementation	<p>1.) “Language is the Key” video shown on local cable TV 2.) Parents Action for Children videos shown on local TV</p>	<p>1.) Promote 8/7/10 Help Me Get Ready to Read workshops with providers and parents 2.) Connect with WIC to promote activities and ask Michelle Sylvester to join this</p>	<p>1.) 8/7/10 Help Me Get Ready to Read workshops @ Public library 2.) “Language is the Key” video available and promoted at library for use by providers and parents 3.) Parents Action for Children videos available and promoted at the library</p>

		team. 3.) Partner with “Active Parenting” lunch program offered through Berkshire Health Systems and expand this program to other agencies.	
5. Measure of Success	<p>Sign in sheets at events where video is shown</p> <p>Evaluation survey (to be developed) by participants</p> <p>*** (Possibly) link video to library website (and others??)—track the number of “hits” and/ or online survey</p>	<p>Number of parents viewing, reading discussing early literacy at Active Parenting lunch.</p> <p>survey</p>	<p>Number of times items are checked out.</p> <p>Number of requests for more items.</p> <p>Pre/post survey for items when checking out materials at library</p> <p>*** (Possibly) link video to library website (and others??)—track the number of “hits” and/ or online survey</p> <p>Number of new children’s library cards/patrons increasing</p>
6. Check in/review date	Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly

## Goal 2 Action Map

Goal Statement

Provide, promote and support literacy activities birth through school age

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
→ Action Step	World Breastfeeding Day 8/6/10 Show "Language is the Key" video, distribute other literacy literature	StoryWalk™	Align with and support other agencies/organizations (ie: Unity Way, Compact)
1. Timeline	August 6, 2010 Whitney's Farm, Lanesborough	3rd Thursdays in Downtown Pittsfield. Aug-Oct 2010 April-Oct 2011	Begun in June 2010 Throughout the school year
2. Lead Person(s)	Deb O'Handley, Penny Evans, Donna Cimini	WMAEYC and Early Literacy Action Team	Sue Doucette, Maggie Steele, Deb O'Handley (already on these committees)
3. Resources Needed	Persons to man booth at event. Video Handouts/literature	Book, laminate, personnel to post Businesses to allow postings Raffle prizes at end (optional) Publicity	Availability to attend meetings
4. Specifics of Implementation	Provide information to parents who attend event.  survey	Post pages of book on storefronts along North Street. Develop survey for families to complete at end (Chapters Bookstore)	Contribute to county -wide discussions of early literacy. Help plan and implement action steps for the community
5. Measure of Success	Number in attendance # who view video/receive handouts	Use StoryWalk™ evaluation. Leave at end of walk (Bookstore)	Planning ends and implementation begins
6. Check in/review date	Meeting on August 19, 2010	Monthly beginning September 2010	At regularly scheduled meetings, at least quarterly

## **Section 6: Plan for Assessing and Reporting District Progress**

We will tabulate pre/post evaluations and surveys at events and with DVD's checked out of library

Relevant information for parents/providers/community will be posted on Berkshire Athenaeum website and we will monitor/tabulate the numbers of "hits".

We will include number of requests received at children's department for more on the topic of early literacy.

We plan to establish a regular television program that promotes/supports early literacy skill development. We will ask parents to complete on-line surveys and provide feedback.

Using 2010 Daberon scores as a baseline, children's progress can be measured annually.

## **Section 7: District Expectations and Supports for Schools**

We expect continued dialogue between school, community, providers and parents around current practices and approaches to increase the early literacy skills of all Pittsfield's children birth through school age.

Through expanded collaboration with community agencies we expect increased access/opportunities for families and children to a variety of literacy based activities and events throughout the city.

## **Section 8: District Literacy Team Membership, Development Process, and Plan for Monitoring Implementation**

- 1. Describe the process the team used for developing the plan (including data gathering and collecting feedback). This team began preparing and collaborating when the grant was initially posted. We have met every other week since May. We distributed to all members a packet of research including Reading Success by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: A Blueprint for Springfield and Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success. We used the Guideline template provided by the state and used by Pittsfield Public Schools to develop the plan.*
- 2. Describe how the team will communicate the plan. This plan will be presented to the Administration of Pittsfield Public Schools, the school committee and brought to the public via PCTV (the local community television station). It will be made available to the public at the local library. We have developed a logo and slogan to be used to “market” future endeavors by this group.*
- 3. Describe the importance of a focus on literacy to stakeholders (post on web, share at faculty meetings, etc. including any brand statement and messaging). We have begun to get inquiries about joining the early literacy effort from concerned parents and community members. They will be encouraged to join our efforts to reach all members of the community. A special effort will be made to reach early childhood professional care-givers at centers and family day cares*
- 4. Describe how the team plans to monitor implementation of the plan over the next year (schedule of meetings, setting up Task Forces to get specific tasks completed, etc.)]We will set up a task force for each goal and will meet at least monthly to review progress and accomplishments and implement the action steps. Each task force will also meet monthly to review and interpret data and report out to the Early Literacy action*

*team. Our meetings have been held at the public library in the late afternoon to encourage participation by many.*

**District Literacy Team Membership**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Role</b>	<b>School (if school based)</b>	<b>Email</b>
Sue Doucette	Early Childhood Coordinator	Pittsfield Public Schools	<a href="mailto:sdoucette@pittsfield.net">sdoucette@pittsfield.net</a>
Maggie Steele	CFCE Coordinator	Berkshire County Head Start	<a href="mailto:cpc@berkhs.org">cpc@berkhs.org</a>
Kelley DeLorenzo	Assistant Program Director	Berkshire Children and Families	<a href="mailto:kdelorenzo@bcfcma.org">kdelorenzo@bcfcma.org</a>
Karen Vogel	Preschool Director/Teacher	KidZone	<a href="mailto:Kvogel17@gmail.com">Kvogel17@gmail.com</a>
Pat Pellegrino	Early Intervention Director	Pediatric Development Center	<a href="mailto:phppdc@berkshire.rr.com">phppdc@berkshire.rr.com</a>
Deb O’Handley	Family Literacy Coordinator	Family Literacy Program (BCF)	<a href="mailto:dohandley@bcfcma.org">dohandley@bcfcma.org</a>
Roseanne McDevitt	Parent Child Home Program Coordinator	Pittsfield Public Schools	<a href="mailto:mcdevitt@pittsfield.net">mcdevitt@pittsfield.net</a>
Donna Cimini	Program Manager	Berkshire Children and Families	<a href="mailto:dcimini@bcfcma.org">dcimini@bcfcma.org</a>
Nan Pearson	Children’s Librarian	Berkshire Athenaeum	<a href="mailto:jpearson@cwmail.org">jpearson@cwmail.org</a>
Penny Evans	Education Manager	Berkshire County Head Start	<a href="mailto:pevans@berkhs.org">pevans@berkhs.org</a>
Deirdre Bairstow-Allen	Coordinator of Financial Aid & Work-Study Programs	Berkshire Community College	<a href="mailto:dbairsto@berkshirecc.edu">dbairsto@berkshirecc.edu</a>
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## Appendices

*\* The first StoryWalk™ Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, Vermont and developed in collaboration with the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition and the Kellogg-Hubbard Library.*

*StoryWalk™ is an exciting initiative that combines a fun children's story with a popular walking route and connects families to their local business community.*

*Wee Read of Pittsfield is excited to sponsor our very first StoryWalk™. The chosen story, "Duck on a Bike," will be displayed page by page in downtown Pittsfield business windows.*

*The self-guided walk will start at Chapters Bookstore on North Street and will continue north to the Berkshire Juvenile Court building on the same side of the street.*

*StoryWalk™ is designed to build children's interest in reading while encouraging healthy outdoor activity for both young and old.*

*It is also a way to inspire parents, teachers, and caregivers to take young children on a short stroll that will be fun for all!*

*The kick off will be Thursday, August 19th from 5:00pm-8:00pm during Pittsfield's 3rd Thursday event.*

*The book features 16 pages that families will read together. The story will remain displayed in the business windows until Thursday, September 2.*

*Other fun prizes for every participating child!  
Other books will be featured during subsequent Third Thursday celebrations in Pittsfield April-October. Other possible locations for StoryWalk™ include the Berkshire Mall in Lanesborough.*