



Early Childhood Education



Topeka Public Schools

Success Starts Here!

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Active Grants

Early Reading First

Purpose

This [federal grant](#) provides funding to prepare preschoolers to become good readers and writers in school. Tools the grant provides include: alphabet charts and rugs; colorful posters with print; books, books, books; listening centers; magnetic letters; dramatic play centers; and writing centers...all the wonderful learning materials children love. Through 13 classrooms and 13 teachers, approximately 175 preschool students in the Topeka area are gaining early literacy skills necessary for success in school.

Partners

Five classrooms at Lakeshore Learning Centers and eight classrooms in Topeka Public Schools are included as partners. Our preschool partners are committed to ensuring that their schools continue to be "centers of excellence" after the grant ends. Other partners and services they provide are:

- University of Kansas - Assessment and Evaluation, Emerging Bilingual Support, Music and Literacy Support
- Family Service and Guidance, Inc. - Professional Development
- ERC – Literacy environment and parent support
- Parents As Teachers – Parent support
- Washburn University – Students serve as substitutes during seminars and opportunities to work toward degree completion

Professional Development



Through monthly two-hour seminars, teachers are learning how to implement a specialized literacy curriculum, "Building Early Language and Literacy Skills," (BELLS) published by Neuhaus Education Center. BELLS is a series of four thematic units: The Kitchen; The Farm; People, People Everywhere; Me and the World

Around Me—all developed for three-and four-year old children. Each unit introduces activities that develop the important pre-literacy skills of phonological awareness, print awareness, letter recognition, and oral language.

The teacher plans a daily, 15-20 minute language and literacy lesson for small groups of students. Two to five activities from the manual are planned for each lesson. At the end of the lesson, the teacher reads a book or part of a book. The reading of a book at this time is intended to reinforce and extend the language skills that have been introduced. The reading of these books is not intended to replace the read-aloud time but rather to complement it. A suggested list of books is included within each section. Books can

Early Reading First Learning

Children are learning:



New vocabulary to talk about experiences;



Good listening skills;



How to play with sounds through rhyming, clapping out syllables in words and blending sounds to make new words;



How books are organized, recognizing that print in stories and in the environment represent words, discovering that print is "speech written down";



Naming of letters in the alphabet, recognizing upper and lower case letters and connecting letters to speech sounds.

Kansas Children's Cabinet Pre-K Pilot Learning



Woven Word: Early Literacy for Life combines early literacy and social and emotional skill instruction in one program. Using modeling, coaching, and practice, social workers and teachers help children develop

and should be reread. Any related books may be used in addition to or in place of these suggestions.

The manual provides models of activities that should be incorporated into the daily routines of the classroom. Throughout the day, the teacher calls attention to rhyming words, colors, shapes, and letters. The teacher claps out the syllables in words or calls attention to the initial sound of a word. Repeated exposures heighten the awareness and enrich the development of the pre-literacy skills that lead to reading success.

In addition to monthly seminars, teacher development is supported through weekly classroom visits, curriculum coaching, and peer observations.



Senator Laura Kelly visits Scott Pre-K Pilot classroom



Kansas Children's Cabinet Pre-K Pilot

Purpose

This grant is designed to provide several different types of support to preschool classroom teachers and children. Two social workers spend approximately 20-30 hours per week in assigned classrooms. They plan lessons, along with the teacher, that support the social and emotional growth of children. Social workers also work with parents to forge strong connections between home and school. They plan 2-3 parent evening events per year so that parents can learn more about what their children are learning at school and how to best support that learning at home. In addition to having social workers in each classroom, Pre-K Pilot classrooms also have extended learning days. All of the Pilot classrooms in Topeka Public Schools are now operating on a full day schedule, from 8:30-3:30.

Partners

Shawnee County Pre-K Pilot partners include Auburn Washburn, USD 437; Topeka Public Schools, USD 501; Countryside United Methodist Preschool; and Community Action Head Start. Partners meet monthly to discuss project goals, communicate their concerns, and share ideas.

social and emotional skills such as waiting, planning, noticing, and inviting. Teachers read aloud to children from beautifully written and illustrated children's books, incorporating discussion and open-ended questions into the reading sessions. Preschoolers and kindergartners begin to put themselves in the characters' shoes, wondering, for example, how Leo Lionni's *Swimmy* can convince the other fish to work together, or what Gloria (in *Gloria's First Day* by Wendie Bramwell) must be feeling as a Spanish-speaking student on her first day in an English-language classroom.

Teachers learn this shared reading technique, called "dialogic reading," through scripted lessons and video-based training. Parents learn dialogic reading through a video-based training and take-home materials so they can help kids practice their new skills at home.

Professional Development

Teachers are given opportunities to participate in evening professional development courses at no cost to them. Conscious Discipline, a widely respected preschool program developed by Dr. Becky Bailey, is the course that teachers will be able to attend in 2007-2008.