American Dream Literacy Initiative

How 10 YEARS OF FUNDING has helped libraries transform THOUSANDS OF LIVES
American Dream Literacy Initiative: Lessons from 10 Years Serving Adult English Language Learners

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Program History

- Partnership with Dollar General

7 rounds

230 grants
 to urban, suburban, and rural libraries

200 libraries
 In 35 states

More than $1.8 million
 granted to libraries

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10-Year Retrospective Report

- Multi-year impact study
  - Rounds 1-4
- External evaluations by round
- Libraries’ reports
- Interviews
- Advocacy tool
Through the round five grants alone, nearly 15,000 students participated in ESL classes. In rounds one through four, more than 8,000 English language learners completed courses.
Libraries as Community Centers

Top 6 Reasons English Language Learners Access the Library

1. Employment
2. Support children in school
3. Language acquisition
4. Computer/internet use
5. Education
6. Citizenship

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Curating a 21st-century Collection

Increased Access

87% of libraries report the grant funding helped increase English language learner access to print and digital resources.

Sterling Municipal Library
Baytown, Texas
GRANT ROUND 1

- Literacy computer usage doubled from 384 hours to 770 hours
- Number of users increased 43 percent to 522 users
- Usage of Rosetta Stone software increased from 252 hours to 426 hours

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Building Sustainable Partnerships

More than 65% of libraries reported that the grant funding improved networking with community partners and other libraries.

Grantees that developed partnerships were 7 times more likely to have sustained their ELL services.
Best Practices

1. Partner with other organizations
2. Develop an organizational infrastructure
3. Find ways to reach your target market
4. Build a strong volunteer base
5. Be flexible and assess to continually adapt to market needs

Library Factors for Success

- Organizational capacity building
- Providing classes
- Building community partnerships
- Citizenship programming

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Greenwood County Library
Libraries as Community Centers

- Safe place for ESL/EFL students to gather and meet each other
- Adult Literacy, ESL and Citizenship Prep
- Community meeting spaces
- Community computer lab with free internet access
- Children’s programs now offer:
  - Nutrition program site providing lunch in the summers and afterschool snacks through the school year
  - Vision screenings
  - Dental screenings Sensory Story Times
  - Past summer, provided interactive playtime for children of Thursday morning ESL class participants
- Dedicated digital learning lab and classroom
Partnerships

- **Episcopal Church of the Resurrection** – After school tutoring, elementary aged children; parents have opportunity to attend Literacy or ESL classes while child is being tutored
- **Destiny of Greenwood** – Private non-profit which provides food for the nutrition programs and secures State funding through grants
- **Public School District Adult Education Program** – Student referrals between the two programs and information sharing
- **Greenwood County Humane Society** – Monthly Furry Tales Story Time with an animal friend on site
- **Future Partnership with Greenwood Arts Council (Spring 2020)** – International themed exhibit and activities in the main gallery featuring art work, music and foods from residents from other countries currently living in Greenwood. Will include many of the library’s students.
Best Practices

- Strong patron base from diverse sectors of the community that helps to get the word out about library activities and programs
- Good working relationships with the local newspaper and radio stations
- Personal relationships with staff from many of the NPO’s and agencies in the community
- Extensive volunteer training for Literacy and ESL volunteers before they begin tutoring a student
- Continuing education for current volunteers
Discussion: Partnerships

• What have you found to be effective strategies for forming partnerships?
• What barriers have you encountered in trying to form partnerships?
• How have you addressed these barriers?
Discussion: Best Practices

• What are some best practices for volunteer recruitment and retention?
• What are successful strategies for securing grants and for leveraging small grants?
  ○ sustainability
• Any additional best practices from your adult literacy services/programming?
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