

FACT SHEET

After School/Before School Reading

BACKGROUND

School library media centers have an important role in the success of local reading improvement efforts by increasing collaboration between instructional and school library media center staff, providing additional instructional materials and resources, and extending hours of operation during non-school hours. However, Massachusetts ranks only 41st in teachers surveyed who agree that school library materials are adequate to support objectives. Circulation statistics per pupil are at the lowest possible ranking. With the downturn in the economy, a large number of even the best school libraries are not accessible to children before school or after school is dismissed and free programming before or after school is rare.

A number of public library-based literacy programs have been offering direct services as part of a constellation of literacy activities for parents and children for more than ten years. A remaining piece in the delivery of literacy is the opportunity for children and young adults to practice and develop their reading skills, learn to love reading and open doors to which good reading skills are the key. A natural opportunity for these activities are the before and after school periods, when so many children are without other activities, often left to amuse themselves until a parent returns from work.

“Educators often consider recreational reading to be an effective method of connecting to students’ emotional and developmental needs. This ‘warm and fuzzy’ conception of reading has been recently overshadowed by the realization that recreational reading has a number of other benefits. For example, time spent reading correlates with academic success, vocabulary development, standardized-test performance, [improved] attitudes toward additional reading and the development of world knowledge (*Curriculum Review*, March 2003, p. 3 quoting Thomas W. Bean.)

Under the “Rubrics for Evaluating Model School Sites: Teaching and Learning,” a basic library media program “supports reading in an isolated way, offering occasional reading events,” and “few teachers work with LMS to integrate a reading focus with the rest of the school.” In a proficient program, “reading is a focus...with careful attention to integrating with classroom activities and motivating students to read on their own,” and “some teachers collaborate in expecting students to read for understanding and enjoyment.” An exemplary school library media program “promotes a school wide culture of reading and learning, in which all students read the target indicator, promotes reading for literacy and personal enjoyment.”

The **After School/Before School Reading Program** can help libraries in their efforts to become exemplary players in teaching and learning. It will make it possible for school and public libraries to offer free programs throughout the school year (before, during or after school) for K-12 students. The emphasis in this program is on **reading for pleasure and recreation**, *not* on drills or phonics exercises. While a variety of creative activities based on this literature may take place during the meetings, time will be devoted to reading aloud, independent reading of enjoyable and informational texts, writing, discussion, and exploration of literature.

MASSACHUSETTS LONG-RANGE PLAN GOAL/OBJECTIVE:

Goal 4: Strengthen the role libraries play in children’s and young adults’ learning and their success in life.

Objective 1: Encourage and support the development of children’s and young adults’ reading skills and an appreciation of literature through a variety of innovative programs, including after school reading programs in school and public libraries.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Prior to their application, libraries must have in place the following:

- A long-range plan on file at the MBLC by October 1 of the prior year (October 1, 2004 for the FY06 grant year), that meets the requirements of the *Massachusetts Long-Range Plan, 2003-2007* (see Appendix B). If a plan **is** already on file, an updated Action Plan must be on file by December 1 of the prior year. Note: School libraries may file either a district plan or an individual plan. An application from a school district must be signed by the superintendent. An individual school may not apply for a grant on its own unless it has filed its own plan
- The ability to allow library staff to attend one half-day grant application workshop in January 2005, and one half-day training workshop in October 2005
- Membership in a regional library system

Grant proposals **must** include the following:

- At least 20 minutes of each meeting devoted purely to the participants actually reading. It is also **highly** recommended that additional time be set aside for reading *to the participants* at each meeting
- The program should be offered throughout the school year, with sessions held **at least once per week for a school term (defined as a minimum of 8 weeks)**. This program is **NOT** intended to provide drop-in sessions for students to come “now and then.” Participants are expected to commit to attending a complete term.
- Creative literature-related programming for the children, e.g., author/illustrator visits, storytellers, performers, book-related videos, visiting “experts,” and craft, art and music; activities—as long as reading/literature remains the main focus of the sessions
- Outreach activities to the target groups at locations other than the library, as well as in-library events to which parents and other students may be invited
- Packets of information and ideas about reading, children and the library for parents
- Public relations materials for publicity and to keep parents informed about what their children are reading, i.e. newsletters, brochures, posters, pamphlets, bibliographies, listservs
- Multi-format collection development for children and young adults, as programming requires

ELIGIBILITY

Open to *public and school* libraries that have identified a focus on reading services to children in their long-range plans. School and public libraries will be selected to receive grants of up to \$10,000 each (over a one-year period) to plan and implement a project for school age children and young adults. Grant funds may be used to support staff costs for work done outside the regular school day, collection development and programming. The project should involve cooperation between the school and public library whenever possible.

INTERESTED?

Applicants must submit a **Letter of Intent** by the date on the LSTA announcement calendar with the “Open Grant” option checked off under **TYPE**. On a separate sheet of paper, applicants must indicate that they are interested in carrying out an After School/Before School Reading project and briefly describe some activities they would like to include. An informational workshop to assist applicants in completing an application for this program will be held in late January or early February of the grant year. A preliminary schedule is enclosed. For additional information on this program, contact Marlene Heroux at 1-800-952-7403 ext 250 or by email marlene.heroux@state.ma.us.