

# FACT SHEET

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## Mother Goose Asks “Why?”

### BACKGROUND

*Mother Goose Asks “Why?”* is a literacy project that empowers parents or other caregivers to share great children's books and related science activities with their children. Developed by the Vermont Center for the Book and originally funded for nationwide distribution by the National Science Foundation, the project comprises a set of nine picture books and a series of hands-on science activities.

In Massachusetts, the sessions are led by a librarian who introduces parents and caregivers to great picture books for children ages 3 to 7 and then extends the exploration of these books by engaging participants in related science experiments. The materials--books, science materials, and instructions--are presented in a tote bag that participants use in group sessions and/or at home with their children. The conversations and investigations that result increase positive interactions between adult and child while incorporating the process skills of science and enhancing language development.

*MGAW?* is designed to help preschool and primary-grades children use thought-provoking picture books, activities and discussion to engage in the process skills of science--making comparisons, gathering information, using the senses, and so on. The program is organized around four questions that are basic to scientific inquiry.

- What is it? Addresses issues of observation, scale, point of view, perspective and communication.
- How many? Addresses issues of scarcity and sharing, of overpopulation and crowding, and of measuring and counting. How do we divide things every day? How many is too many, and how many of what is too many?
- How do you do it? Examines the effects of trial and error, experimentation and the ways that air, weight, and shape affect falling objects.
- How does it grow? Examines insect behavior, seed growth, transformation, the difficulty and glory of new beginnings, and changes in climate.

The original NSF grant encouraged Vermont to extend the positive program experience to other states. To date, this exciting program has engaged more than 2,000 Vermont parents, child-care providers, preschool educators and primary-grades teachers in training programs. Participants have read and discussed books and conducted experiments in order to understand science in their everyday lives. Libraries in Rhode Island are currently in their fifth year of implementing this program. Two years ago, *MGAW?* was run as a pilot project in collaboration with the Massachusetts Center for the Book, the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System (CMRLS) and several public libraries in the state, and this past year seven additional Massachusetts libraries introduced the program into their communities. In all Massachusetts programs, *MGAW?* was adapted so that public libraries could "lend" rather than "give away" books and other materials to families.

### MASSACHUSETTS LONG RANGE PROGRAM GOAL/OBJECTIVE

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

**Objective 5:** Promote the development of family literacy programs that provide for both the emerging literacy skills of children and the parenting skills of low-literate adults.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Libraries that are accepted will receive grants of \$10,000 to plan and implement a project using the material developed for *MGAW?*. Grant funds may be used to support a limited number of staff hours, as well as program materials and outreach to communities. This program will be developed with training provided by the Massachusetts Center for the Book.

Components of the project will include the following:

- Agreement to utilize the *MGAW?* program model and to participate in the training sessions
- Contract individually with the Massachusetts Center for the Book for technical assistance in developing and implementing the program model
- Agreement to offer family programs to a minimum of fifteen families
- Agreement to publicize the program using brochures, posters, pamphlets and non print media, as appropriate
- Commitment to working in concert with local schools, museums and other agencies to extend the reading experience
- Agreement to participate in a statewide evaluation of *MGAW?* to determine the usefulness/effectiveness of the current delivery models of the program

## ELIGIBILITY

Open to public libraries that:

- Have identified a focus on early childhood/preschoolers or family literacy in their long-range plans
- Will agree to send at least one library staff member to a full day of training to be offered by the MBLC in concert with Massachusetts Center for the Book staff in Fall 2005
- Have 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
- Is a member of a regional library system and have been certified in the FY 2004 State Aid Program

## 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 a Mother Goose Asks "Why?" 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. If you need more information about this program, call Shelley Quezada at the MBLC, 1-800-952-7403 ext. 235 or e-mail [shelley.quezada@state.ma.us](mailto:shelley.quezada@state.ma.us).