

READY TO LEARN PROVIDENCE IS CHANGING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Since 2003, Ready to Learn Providence has trained nearly 2,000 early childhood educators (both center-based teachers and home providers), most of whom work in Providence.

The impact of this professional development is now readily apparent. The classrooms and home-care settings of these educators feature materials and activities supporting early-literacy skills, the providers are holding themselves accountable for literacy outcomes, and the city's children are entering kindergarten better prepared.

The majority of R2LP's work has been funded with three federal programs – the Early Learning Opportunities Act, Early Reading First and Early Childhood Educator Professional Development.

These federal grants have differed in scope, but, like every R2LP intervention, all have stressed **depth, dosage and duration**. Participants received rigorous, scientifically-based coursework (coupled with on-site mentoring) that allowed time for reflection, collaboration with peers, and the application of new skills.

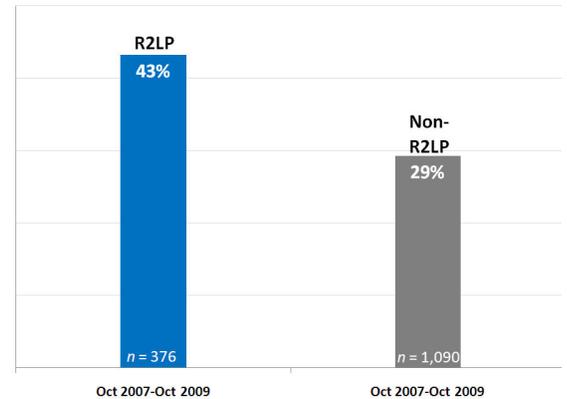
R2LP Children Outperform Peers

Figures 1 and 2 display differences in early-literacy abilities at the start of kindergarten between children who had participated in an R2LP program prior to kindergarten and their peers who had never participated in an R2LP program.

Figure 1 shows that R2LP children were more likely to exhibit grade-level early-literacy skills than non-R2LP children. These data present an average across three years of kindergarten assessments – given in October of 2007, 2008 and 2009 – and provide compelling evidence of R2LP's impact on the early-literacy skills of kindergartners.

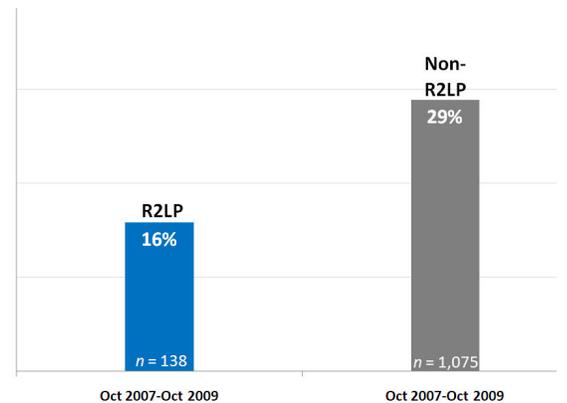
Figure 2 shows that within the same cohorts of students, R2LP children were much less likely to need intensive early-literacy support in

Figure 1
PPSD Kindergartners Meeting DIBELS Literacy Benchmarks, 2007-2009 Average



Sources: PPSD, R2LP

Figure 2
PPSD Kindergartners Requiring Intensive Early Literacy Support, 2007-2009 Average



Sources: PPSD, R2LP

their kindergarten year than their non-R2LP peers.

The Providence Public School Department uses the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, or DIBELS, to measure early-literacy abilities.

For details on the methodology for this analysis, please go to www.r2lp.org.

Scores Point to Positive Impact

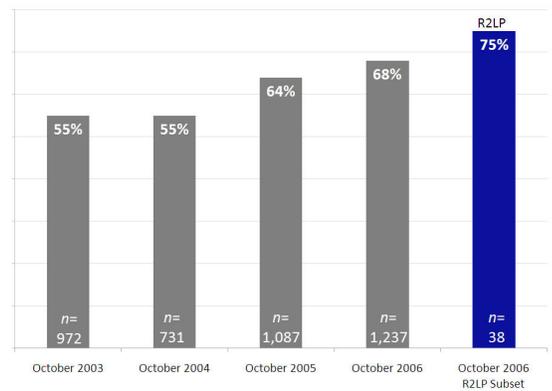
R2LP's professional development investments began in 2003. By October 2005, improvements in early-literacy skills of PPSD kindergartners pointed to a positive impact of R2LP's efforts. (See Figure 3.) Between 2003 and 2006, the district witnessed an increase of 24% in the percentage of Providence children meeting benchmarks for early literacy upon kindergarten entry. A small subset of the kindergartners screened in October 2006 included children who had been enrolled in an early-care setting supported by R2LP's Early Reading First program prior to kindergarten entry. This subset of children outperformed their peers, with 75% meeting early-literacy benchmarks.

From 2002 to 2006, PPSD administered the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening-Kindergarten (PALS-K) to children twice each school year – fall and spring. DIBELS replaced PALS in fall 2007. PALS-K comprises five sections – phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, concept of word, and word recognition in isolation.

It is important to note that there is no established comparability between the DIBELS and PALS-K. Each instrument was developed uniquely and they share no similarities in scale or measurement. The findings from the two instruments presented here are intended only to demonstrate the trend in early-literacy skills of incoming kindergartners.

Figure 3

PPSD Kindergartners Meeting PALS-K Literacy Benchmarks, 2003-2006



Sources: PPSD, R2LP

Implications for Future Work

High-Quality Professional Development Makes a Difference

The findings in this report support R2LP's conviction that high-quality professional development – training that stresses depth, dosage and duration – can change the behaviors of educators and the outcomes of children. On-site mentoring, which provides the linkage between knowledge acquired in an academic setting and the actual implementation of that knowledge, is also crucial. While all the programs described in this report included a mentoring component, R2LP found that children in the programs with the most intensive mentoring support had the strongest outcomes.

Leadership Matters

When directors or head teachers took the classes themselves, provided intentional support to their teaching staff and fostered learning communities within their sites, results were stronger. The classroom environment and teaching strategies improved at greater rates.

All Learning Environments Benefit from Intervention

Findings such as those presented in this report confirm R2LP's commitment to a diverse-delivery early-care system. Data showed statistically significant growth in all learning environments – Head Start classrooms, community-based programs and family child-care homes – and among both English- and Spanish-speaking providers.

On-going Professional Support Is Needed to Sustain Growth

In our ECEPD program, family child-care providers made significant changes in their settings and teaching strategies as measured by the Child/Home Early Learning and Literacy Observation. Unlike center-based providers, however, family providers (who are more isolated professionally) did not sustain these changes when the intervention ended and there was no follow-up. It's a call for continued investment to support the early care and education workforce.

READY TO LEARN PROVIDENCE

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Ready to Learn Providence is a program of The Providence Plan