



Supporting Parent Success: Insights From GLR Communities

DRAFT Prepared for Discussion and Development

PRACTICE BRIEF #3

THE PROBLEM

Parents play the most powerful and influential role in their children's lives. As their children's first teacher, brain builder, tech navigator, advocate and coach, parents set the stage for success in the early years and early grades. Yet too little support is provided to parents to help them succeed in these roles, especially in the earliest years when the foundation for children's learning is set. Further, low-income families — particularly low-income parents of color — are often blamed and judged; viewed with a deficit lens; and rarely engaged as partners.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's (CGLR's) core belief is that parents love their children more than anyone else, and only when we tap into that force and provide parents with supports and resources, embrace parents as essential partners and recognize them as co-producers of good outcomes will they achieve their potential — and our collective aspiration — to ensure their children more hopeful futures.

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18^{TO} 29%

3 essential actions: 1) inspiring parents to envision bold goals for their children; 2) supporting parents in achieving those goals; and 3) joining parents in marking progress and celebrating success

The Campaign for
**GRADE-LEVEL
READING**

In prioritizing parents as a “big bet,” CGLR shaped its Successful Parents Initiatives around three essential actions: 1) inspiring parents to envision bold goals for their children; 2) supporting parents in achieving those goals; and 3) joining parents in marking progress and celebrating success. With this as our starting point, communities across the GLR Network have embraced the critical role parents play in their children’s success. In the *What’s Working Community Challenge*, the majority of the stories submitted fell under the category of Parent Success, suggesting that our “big bet” on parents has resonated and together we are building a movement that is lifting up parents.

72 STORIES FILED BY 48 COMMUNITIES IN 22 STATES AND ONE CANADIAN PROVINCE THAT FOCUS SPECIFICALLY ON WHAT GLR COMMUNITIES ARE DOING TO SUPPORT PARENT SUCCESS.

SOLUTIONS: WHAT’S WORKING IN GLR COMMUNITIES

This brief provides an analysis of 72 stories filed by 48 communities in 22 states and one Canadian province that focus specifically on what GLR communities are doing to support parent success. The solutions that communities are carrying out vary widely. Some disseminate books and advice, while others aim to change policies. Some focus on children’s early years, while others feature two-generation interventions and supports. As a whole, however, the practices cluster around a set of strategies that respond to CGLR’s core objectives of informing, equipping, engaging and supporting parents as essential partners and co-producers of good outcomes for their children. Those strategies include:

Strategy 1: Leveraging strategic, cross-sector partnerships involves collaborating with leaders in and across multiple systems and sectors that work with families in an effort to extend the reach and deepen supports.

Strategy 2: Reaching and supporting parents where they are refers to resources and supports that are made available to parents in locations they frequent or where they live.

Strategy 3: Embracing parents’ assets and leadership builds on the belief that parents hold innate wisdom, bring “funds of knowledge” and have untapped leadership potential.

Strategy 4: Blending, stacking, targeting and saturating services and supports refers to the layering and saturating of supports and services, and carefully targeting efforts to reach a critical population.

Strategy 5: Using technology to expand reach and access leverages tools such as apps, websites, social media, broadcast media, tele-home-visiting, etc., to extend the reach and increase access to resources.

STEWART COUNTY, GA

In this rural county, the number of lending libraries doubled from 10 to 20 and the percentage of parents saying they had 20 picture books in their homes increased from 25% to 44%.

Strategy 1: Leveraging strategic, cross-sector partnerships acknowledges that no one program, sector or entity can reach and support parents at scale or meet their varied needs. It also recognizes that partners have different strengths and assets that, when brought together, can help reduce fragmentation and bring the best thinking and solutions, particularly when those partners are parents themselves. This work involves building trust, collaborating and holding each other accountable for results. The examples below highlight strong collaborative efforts aligned to ensure parent success.

- In rural Stewart County, Georgia, the GetLit Coalition made up of Stewart County Schools, the Stewart County Commission, Family Connections, libraries, Early Head Start and local agencies came together to develop a more coordinated, less fragmented approach to creating greater access to print and digital materials for parents and their children. As a result, the number of lending libraries doubled from 10 to 20 and the percentage of parents saying they had 20 picture books in their homes increased from 25% to 44%. [Read the story here.](#)
- In Stockton-San Joaquin County, California, the University of the Pacific formed a coalition to explore the implementation LENA — a technology-based program to support parents in promoting early language development. With support from local funders, and in partnership with the County Office of Education and the Public Library, LENA was launched within those two systems. The County Office of Education is now exploring a partnership with the Child Abuse Prevention Council and Early Head Start to take LENA countywide. [Read the story here.](#)
- Suncoast, Florida, a four-county regional effort, including Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota, has built a Vroom movement around parent success, bringing the science of early learning into the hands of parents. In partnership with hundreds of community partners, including schools, nonprofit agencies, retailers, colleges, places of worship, food pantries and others, this engagement and educational tool is scaling and reaching thousands of families throughout the region. [Read the story here.](#)

Strategy 2: Reaching and supporting parents where they are is a reminder that serving “hard to reach parents” is not so hard. It simply requires effort, imagination and thinking out of the box to confront the challenges that prevent many parents from accessing supports, including transportation, time constraints and a lack of access to information. The examples below are both creative and inspiring.

- Durham, North Carolina, has taken its commitment to ensure that every parent has a book to read to their child by going to the place where parents spend many hours: the laundromat! The Book Harvest team offers regular story times and literacy programming as well as bookshelves filled with free children’s books at various Durham laundromats. In 2019, almost 11,000 parents took home books for their children. [Read the story here.](#)
- Omaha, Nebraska, is planning for the installation of Playful Learning Landscapes — an effort to reinvent everyday experiences as fun learning opportunities. The installations will begin at bus stops throughout the city — a strategy that will lift up the essential nature of parent-child conversations and play at locations where parents frequent on a daily basis. Modeled after Philadelphia, this effort has engaged local residents, artists, recreation and parks, public health, colleges, businesses and the City of Omaha. [Read the story here.](#)
- The commitment of Shawnee County, Kansas, to reaching parents where they are is evident in two innovative efforts. The “Learn & Play Bus” travels weekly, countywide, through neighborhoods providing health screenings and health services, developmental toys, art activities and story times. Additionally, to ensure that incarcerated mothers can spend time with their young children, the Kansas City Discovery Center offers Play Free in partnership with the federal prison, making its museum available for mothers to share a full day together with their children. [Read the story here](#) and [here.](#)

DURHAM, NC,

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draft

Since 2014, Salt Lake City’s dyad reading program resulted in third-grade proficiency

BOOSTED BY SIX POINTS

Strategy 3: Embracing parents’ assets and leadership recognizes that parents bring great insight and wisdom, referred to as “funds of knowledge,” and that their greatest asset is their love for their children. When we engage and support parents through this lens and see parents as co-producers of good outcomes for their children, we foster greater partnerships and stronger results. The examples below underscore this core belief.

- In Baltimore, Maryland, the school district learned that their parent tip sheets, developed in alignment with their new literacy curriculum to engage parents with activities to help their children at home, were not well known or effective. After speaking to parents throughout the community, the district went back to the drawing board. Parents wanted concrete activities to do with their children and encouraged the district to make the tip sheets more interactive and visually appealing. With this feedback and input, the district redesigned the tip sheets, which are now part of their COVID grades K–2 reading packets. [Read the story here.](#)
- In Nash and Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina, the Down East Partnership for Children set out to address the severe shortage of formal early education opportunities and lack of staff to expand existing playgroup options. The Partnership recruits and trains parents to serve as Kaleidoscope Play and Learn playgroup leaders who recruit participants in their community, create lesson plans and earn a stipend for their work. This shift has recognized and empowered parents as leaders, while increasing access to learning opportunities for more children. The goal is to have a playgroup in every small community — urban and rural — in the region. [Read the story here.](#)
- Salt Lake City, Utah, trains teachers and parents to engage in dyad reading, an effort that has boosted third-grade proficiency across a six-district region by six points since 2014. The idea of training parents was brought to the district by a parent who learned about the power of dyad reading while attending a PTA convention. With the support of her principal, literacy coach and librarian, she trained nine parents who over the summer trained 79 parents. The experience has energized families to see themselves as essential partners in their kids’ success. [Read the story here.](#)

EMBRACING PARENTS’ ASSETS AND LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZES THAT PARENTS BRING GREAT INSIGHT AND WISDOM, REFERRED TO AS “FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE.”

Strategy 4: Blending, stacking, targeting and saturating supports and services refers to strategies needed to scale and address the multiple needs parents have to help their children succeed. This often means blending or braiding funding sources, targeting resources to a particular population and saturating a community across a neighborhood, a set of ZIP codes or a region in order to reach scale. The following stories offer examples of these key strategies.

- Earl Boyles, Oregon, provides comprehensive supports to families whose children attend Earl Boyles Elementary School. The new Neighborhood Center includes an early learning wing, a food pantry and lending library. The playgroups for parents with infants and toddlers offer an opportunity for adult learning and parent support. Housing and health advocates, including a parent-led advocacy group, are addressing the health needs of the families and their children. Ten years into the initiative, this high-poverty school community with language barriers now scores above state averages in literacy and numeracy skills. [Read the story here.](#)
- Palm Beach, Florida, is striving for population-level change around parents' essential role as their baby's brain builder. In 2019, the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County partnered with the TMW Center for Early Learning on a community-wide roll-out of the TMW initiative, starting in birthing hospitals and extending into pediatric clinics and community-based organizations. This approach, which includes videos viewed post-partem at the hospital, four 10-minute videos seen during well-baby visits and parent groups in community-based settings, harnesses technology, works across systems and informs how to bring best practices to scale. By year end, 474 families were offered the video; 56% completed it and met with the hospital liaison and nearly 70% signed up for additional information. The goal is to reach at least 60% of families with children from birth to age 3 in nine targeted ZIP codes by the end of 2023. [Read the story here.](#)
- In Tempe, Arizona, the Acceleration Zone team has targeted 395 families and 758 children under age 6 living in the highest-poverty region in the city. Their efforts to saturate the community with literacy opportunities and family support include providing 1,000 books to 200 children, offering six literacy programs offered by the library and having 100 adults participating in Triple P classes. The results show an increase in ELA passing rates growing from 21% to 32% and from 18% to 29% for students on the free and reduced-price lunch program. [Read the story here.](#)

PRACTICES CLUSTER AROUND A SET OF STRATEGIES THAT RESPOND TO CGLR'S CORE OBJECTIVES OF INFORMING, EQUIPPING AND SUPPORTING PARENTS AS ESSENTIAL PARTNERS AND CO-PRODUCERS OF GOOD OUTCOMES FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

Strategy 5: Using technology to expand reach and access refers to leveraging technology tools to significantly increase the numbers of parents that are supported, equipped and engaged. Through innovative technology devices, responsive apps, websites, social media, broadcast media, etc., we can reach and make resources more accessible to more parents. The examples below give us a glimpse of the power of technology.

- Arizona launched the Make Way for Books app to ensure that families have access to quality bilingual books, literacy activities and educational videos they can access anytime, anywhere. The companion tool, Make Way for Online Story Time Group provides bilingual story times and encourages connection and interaction between families and the app. Within two weeks of the launch, 400 members signed on, connecting families and their children to others across Arizona, the United States, Mexico and Guatemala. [Read the story here.](#)
- Indian River, Florida, is using mass media to extend their reach in ensuring that parents have insightful and expert information about early childhood development. In partnership with Planet Vero and PNC, the Kindergarten Readiness Collaborative launched Moonshot Radio featuring topics such as child care, parenting, education and helpful resources. The show's mantra, Where Every Moment Is an Opportunity to Learn, has resonated far and wide with a reach of over 36,000 in the first season. [Read the story here.](#)
- In Miami, Florida, Háblame Bebé is shattering English-only ideologies and embracing the science that talking to your baby in your native language helps improve language development, promote bilingualism and monitor developmental milestones. The Háblame Bebé app, developed as part of a federal competition conducted by HRSA, Maternal Child Health Bureau, is introduced to Spanish-speaking families by the Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program. Results show improved child language outcomes. [Read the story here.](#)
- In 2016, Virginia Beach, Virginia, the city's GrowSmart collaborative led by the Department of Economic Development launched LENA, a technology-based program to support parents in promoting early language development. On average, families increased adult words by 19 percentage points and conversational turns by 6 points. Seeing this impact, LENA Home was added, embedding the "talk pedometer" technology into home visiting programs. Within five years, the gap scores on the PALS assessment narrowed to just 4% percent for participating children. [Read the story here.](#)

TAKEAWAYS

Below are key insights gained from our review of these stories:

1

Parents are essential partners in ensuring early school success for their children. When we tap into their greatest asset — their love for their children — when we partner with them in authentic ways and when we give them leadership opportunities, we see stronger impacts and greater results. This approach helps change the narrative of blame and judgement to one that acknowledges that parents are co-producers of good outcomes.

2

Serving families holistically and more effectively requires working with partners across systems and sectors, with usual suspects and unlikely allies. Such cross-sector partnerships can help us overcome the “brakes on progress,” especially when these partnerships also commit to reducing fragmentation and increasing data sharing, mutual accountability and co-investment.

3

Delivering supports and services to parents where they are ensures that challenges and obstacles such as transportation, hours or cost do not become barriers to parents in their efforts to carry out their essential roles as first teacher, brain builder, advocate or coach.

4

Serving families comprehensively, stacking supports and services, and scaling throughout a targeted area are essential strategies to achieving greater outcomes and population-level change.

5

Technology is a powerful lever to reaching more parents and putting information in their hands when they need it. When we harness technology tools such as apps, social media, websites, social and broadcast media, tele-home visiting, etc., we can magnify our reach and scale our efforts.

- The GLR *What's Working Practice Briefs* are designed to be an actionable resource for GLR coalitions and leaders in communities and states across the network that are looking for relevant examples and ideas about what to implement, adapt, improve and expand as they seek to move the needle on key measures of early school success.
- The Briefs in this collection contain curated content from 112 communities that filed more than 320 stories in early 2020 about what's working well and why. Each of the six Briefs is organized around one of the key impact areas that have been part of the GLR Campaign's Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP) framework used by 300+ communities since 2012.
- The authors of each brief have both subject-matter expertise and extensive experience working with and supporting GLR communities. In compiling these Briefs, we view our roles as that of active listeners, aggregators and guides to the rich reservoir of content thoughtfully submitted by GLR coalitions. Our aspiration is to add value by making the lessons learned from communities involved in this work more accessible to and usable by others across the country.
- The Briefs are part of an overall strategy of the GLR Support Center to play an active role in lowering the geographic barriers to learning and reduce the high costs of duplicative trial-and-error that currently exist within the network.
- The Briefs contain a range of on-the-ground, illustrative examples of strategies, practices and programs that have been implemented in all types and sizes of communities across the network. CGLR values both what can be learned from empirical research evidence as well as the wisdom derived from lived experience. The Briefs tilt more toward the latter.
- Rather than serving as an exhaustive, how-to guide on implementation, the Briefs should be used to prompt further exploration and inquiry. We anticipate that the content will be used to instigate a series of Roundtable Conversations and Communities of Practice in the months ahead as we delve deeply into the What's Working question and encourage more ongoing rigorous analyses of what we've done, what we've accomplished, and what we've learned as a network.
- We intentionally include a "draft" stamp on all of the Briefs to signal our commitment to continue to refine and strengthen these publications over time.