

Seeds of Promise
September 1999-June 2000

PROPOSAL

Project Description

Seeds of Promise is a research dissemination project designed to educate and motivate people at all levels about the kind of family and community support children need to succeed in life. The project takes the form of photo/editorial reports that focus on critical issues facing Minnesota children and families. Using the popular photojournalistic style, the reports weave together key research findings, public policy trends, community resources, and model programs that are reaching families in new ways. This compelling format has the capacity to reach audiences in ways that monographs, white papers, and other public reports may not.

Past *Seeds of Promise* reports—produced in 1996-97 and distributed for the past three years-- have focused on these topics: protective factors all children need to succeed in life; the importance of parental attachment and relationships; the role of fathers in children's lives; and how communities are supporting families in the healthy development of children and youth. The two current reports under development will focus on early literacy and language, and family-school partnerships. The research and development stage, begun in June, will be completed by mid-December; and the first phase of the distribution plan will begin with media coverage in January 2000 and continue through June 2000. The Consortium will continue distributing copies on-goingly, as long as there is community interest and project resources.

The report on “Early Literacy and Language” will address these and other questions:

- How can parents, teachers, and community organizations work together to provide opportunities for children to become literate, thoughtful adults?
- What can be done to encourage literacy and language skills among very young children?
- Why are there big gaps in reading and test scores for children from communities of color and those who live in poverty; what solutions are proving effective?
- What are key research findings that suggest how to enhance early literacy and language and why reaching children early is important?

The report on “Family-School Partnerships” will investigate these key questions:

- How can parents, teachers, and community organizations work together to reinforce clear messages about children’s learning and academic success?
- How can families contribute to children’s learning at every step in their development and in their school experiences, from pre-K through 12th grade?
- What are the key research findings and the model programs that relate to family-school partnerships?
- How can we understand and overcome the barriers to family-school partnerships, including high family mobility, a school culture that may not welcome parents, varying assumptions about the responsibilities of parents and teachers, etc.?

Distribution and Target Audience

The Star Tribune editorial staff has made a commitment to publish highlights of each report in its “Commentary” section during January 2000, and we expect that local family publications, including Family Times and Minnesota Parent, will do the same. The reports will be actively promoted on our web site (www.cyfc.umn.edu) and by our community and university partner organizations. Past *Seeds* reports have been used as resources and teaching tools at parent-teacher conferences, professional workshops, community meetings, and trainings for family-school liaisons, youth workers, and parent educators. Public health professionals have carried the reports into homes and clinics, and faculty members have used them in classrooms to prepare the next generation of human service professionals, social workers, and teachers. Policy makers at all levels of government and those who implement policy at the county and local level have frequently requested copies of the reports for their staffs.

In phase one of the distribution plan, January – June 2000, the Consortium will mail the reports to a list of 8,000 individuals and drop-ship 5,000 more copies, in bulk quantities, to sponsoring organizations that will distribute them to their own membership. The remaining 7,000 will be distributed through the Consortium office as requests come to us as a result of the media campaign. 20,000 copies of each of the two reports, 40,000 in all, will be printed and distributed.

Distribution will be targeted to these individuals and organizations:

- Parents, parent organizations, literacy groups, community-based organizations;
- Teachers, principals, family-school liaisons, school social workers and psychologists;
- School boards, county commissioners, and other policy makers and their staff, along with those who implement policies at the state and local level;
- Public health workers, home visiting professionals, and those who serve families at clinics and community centers.

Personnel

Project Director

Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D. (Educational Psychology), has been the director of the Children, Youth & Family Consortium since its inception in 1991. She has a long history as a child advocate and researcher on preventative intervention with children and families at risk. She serves as an advisor to a variety of policy makers, including Vice President Al Gore, writes a weekly parenting column Growing Concerns, appears weekly on KARE 11's Today Show as a child and family expert, and is a regular contributor to "Whatever," a TV magazine show produced by and for teenagers. Dr. Erickson is involved in overseeing the research and writing of *Seeds of Promise*, and will author the introductory article for each report and the Commentary piece for the Star Tribune.

Project Administration

Jenny Keyser, Ph.D. (Comparative Literature), the Consortium's Associate Director, brings experience in literacy, community education, program development and evaluation, and interdisciplinary research and teaching to the project. She administers the *Seeds of Promise* project, oversees the personnel and budget, and will coordinate the disseminate plan.

Writer and Production Manager

Lynn Ingrid Nelson, MA (Public Policy), the project's principal writer and production manager, is a skilled journalist and public relations consultant with graduate work in business communications and public policy. She wrote and produced the first series of *Seeds* reports in 1996-97, and is currently directing a communications plan for the University of Minnesota's Institute on Race and Poverty.

Photographer

Kate Maxwell Williams, the project photographer, holds a BA in Photo and Broadcast Journalism and is a free lance photographer. She has been involved with a number of photographic projects for adolescents and teens, including teaching photography to homeless teens as part of the Off-Streets, "Kulture Klub" program.

Designer/Creative Consultant

Brett Olson of Geografix, Inc. will work closely with the writer and photographer to produce a report that has high production standards and a compelling style, and an on-line version of the report that will fit into the Consortium's web site design and organization.

Budget

I. ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

Project director, Project administrator, 20,000
Budget administration

Sub-Total: \$20,000*

***In-kind expenses provided by CYFC**

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT (July 1 – December 31, 1999)

Writer/Production management
(100 hours @ nonprofit rate \$60/hr) 6,000

Photographer
(30 hours @ nonprofit rate \$40/hr) 1,200

Design/Layout 2,600

Photographic supplies 54

Printing, xeroxing, media kits 2,750

Mailing, postage 1,000

Sub-Total: \$13, 604 **

****This phase is funded by the Danforth Foundation**

III. PROJECT DISSEMINATION (January-June 2000)

Printing 10,000
20,000 copies of each of two reports;
2 color, 4-6 pages, 11 x 14 format, folded.

Mailing, handling & postage 9,800

Sub-Total: \$19,800