

# New York State Library *Ready to Read at New York Libraries:* Public Library Surveys Spring 2013 and Summer 2014

## KEY RESULTS

### Background

In 2013, the New York State Library surveyed public library staff to gather information about current practices, perceived training needs, and preferred modes of training about early childhood development and literacy services. The results of this survey indicated that there was a need for an early literacy staff program training in New York State. The 2013 survey was refined and a follow-up was conducted in the summer of 2014. Key data from both surveys are summarized herein.

Some questions in the 2014 survey elaborated on basic questions asked in 2013. Therefore, not all questions are comparable.

### DATA COLLECTED

QUESTION	2013 RESPONSES	2014 RESPONSES
Total responses	695	794
<b>Population served</b>		
< 7,500	239 (35.5%)	256 (20.3)
7,500-25,000	182 (27.1%)	172 (23.0%)
25,000-49,999	112 (16.7%)	115 (15.4%)
50,000-100,000	189 (18.2)	64 (8.6%)
>500,000	31 (4.6%)	69 (9.2%) <sup>note 1</sup>
<b>Staffing</b>		
Director/Sr. manager <sup>note 2</sup>	269 (30.2%)	321 (52.6%)
Number of library staff – PT&FT	10 or less - 332(56.1%)	10 or less - 309 (48.4 %)
	11 to 20 – 159 (23.1%)	11 to 20 - 123 (19.3%)
	25 to 30 – 43 (6.3%) <sup>note3</sup>	20-30 - 57 (7.8%)
	Over 30 – 197 (28.7%)	Over 30 – 145 (22.7%)
Number who use volunteers for EL	560 (82.7%)	447 (68.8%)

**NOTES:**

1. Included 500,000 to 999,999 and 1 million or over.

2. The 2013 survey asked about ‘Director’ only. Responses to the questions answered by directors did not deviate from the total responses in a statistically significant way in either survey.

3. In 2013 the survey jumped from 16 to 20 staff members to 25-30, omitting 21-24.

### Community Characteristics

The 2013 questionnaire asked questions about staff perception of their communities in terms of readiness of children for reading success when they reach kindergarten and whether children were reading at grade level by the third grade. Only 35-36% of the respondents thought their communities achieved these levels.

When asked about the number of students likely to finish high school, only 70.8% of respondents agreed. Sixty-two percent of respondents thought that 25% or fewer of families in their communities were not proficient in English.

### **Early Literacy Training**

Both years of surveys asked about the pre-school programs and the staff preparedness in various activities. Although questions were worded differently, the following activities were most frequently offered by a majority of libraries and for which they felt that staff members were sufficiently trained: Preschool storytime, toddler storytime, family storytime, and babytime/lapsits.

In 2013 the activities/programs that were not offered in the majority of libraries were the same as those in 2014, and were mentioned as most desirable for future staff training. These were, in rank order of importance:

- Every Child Ready to Read (50.6%)
- Family Place (44.9%)
- Parent/Caregiver education (43.9%)
- Mother Goose on the Loose (42.0%)
- Storytime in non-library settings such as Head Start, WIC, clinics, etc. (29.9 %)

Other training needs reported were for developing partnerships for early literacy programs, early childhood spaces, grant writing and outreach to underserved community segments.

In both surveys a majority of libraries reported using volunteers with early literacy skills to help with activities such as reading and craft programs, storytimes, and English language classes.

In the 2013 survey, 70% of respondents indicated that face-to-face workshops would be preferred, with webinars following as the next most desirable format. It was also indicated that half-days would be the most realistic length of time for in-person training (59.9%). The 2014 survey probed about the ability of staff to attend sessions at their public library system headquarters or other central location and 95% indicated that they could do so. Of the five percent who answered 'no' to the question, they indicated that webinars could be a delivery venue that would enable them to take the workshop.

The 2014 survey probed further by asking which time of day, days of the week, and months of the year would be the best times to offer workshops. Mornings were favored by 83.9% of respondents, Monday through Thursdays by just over 50%, and all months of the year except July and August were favored by at least 50% of respondents.

Survey respondents indicated that lack of time and resources were the major barriers/obstacles for them to provide quality early childhood services. When asked about what would help them to

acquire the time and resources they needed to provide quality early childhood services, content analysis of their responses indicated the following:

- Time – adding staff, training volunteers, funding, dedicated staff, staff to cover/help when absent, programs
- Resources – funding, book budgets, staff training, materials, space, supplies, families [who don't come to libraries]

## **Partnerships**

The 2014 survey asked about the organizations that libraries were currently partnering with in respect to early childhood services. Seventy-two percent indicated working with local schools on early literacy initiatives, 45.7% with school districts or school boards, 42.7% with Head Start and 33% with childcare agencies.

Data generated by New York State Education Department from the 2012 public library annual reports indicated that out of 2,001 high-needs school districts in the state, 110 public libraries served the same county as did these schools. These public libraries offered 97,128 pre-kindergarten literacy workshops for children and parents /caregivers with total attendance for the year reaching 1,961,890.

## **Added Comments**

In the 2014 survey, over 200 respondents made suggestions on how to ensure that all of New York's communities receive enhanced quality services from their public libraries. These comments form a rich and informative expression of concerns about current and future needs. These responses, taken directly from the survey, are attached below (NYSL Ready to Read at New York Libraries: Public Library Survey 2014 – final comments).