

Commonwealth Public Broadcasting Ready-to-Learn Project Description

Our Background

We began in 1964 when a group of community leaders saw in the new technology of television not only the power to entertain and inspire, but also to educate the children in our community beyond the walls of the classroom. Since then we have built upon that legacy. We became a founding member of PBS in 1968, providing national television programming that educates and entertains all ages, and we produce local programming that showcases the people and culture of our community. In 1988 public radio became a part of our organization when Union Theological Seminary could no longer support it. Throughout the past 40 years, education has been at the heart of our mission to advance education, culture and citizenship in our community through the use of technology and outreach services.

Ready to Learn is a national preschool education program that combines viewing of PBS children's programs with related educational activities and reading to ensure that young children are prepared for educational success. Commonwealth Public Broadcasting has been a PBS *Ready to Learn* participant since the program began in 1995. We offer free workshops and books to early childcare providers and to parents, teaching appropriate viewing habits and the learning technique of *View/Do/Read* to encourage emergent literacy skills.

The Need

Second only to parents, television is the young child's most influential teacher. Nothing else in our culture can match television's ability to influence how children learn, think, and act. Many studies show that with selective viewing, television can contribute to school readiness. To help children get the most from the TV they watch, parents and early childcare providers must take responsibility to supervise and guide their children's TV viewing.

The goal of *Ready to Learn* is to help parents and early childhood educators use the powerful tool of television combined with related educational activities and reading to prepare children for success in school. We call this learning technique the *View/Do/Read* triangle. National research has shown that after attending *Ready to Learn* workshops, parents and childcare providers have become better television gatekeepers, more time was spent doing education-related activities and reading. In addition, children watched less television overall, and the programs watched included more educational content.

Commonwealth Public Broadcasting has provided hundreds of *Ready to Learn* training workshops to parents and early childcare providers in central Virginia since the national PBS preschool education program began in 1995. Due to the accessibility of our television programming and free workshops, *Ready to Learn* has been particularly helpful for parents and early childcare providers from at-risk areas.

We hope that [Corporation] will partner with us to continue this successful model and sustain our vital *Ready to Learn* program. Thanks to a grant from the Robins Foundation in 2004, we have met our goals of significantly increasing the number of daycare providers, parents and ultimately children we serve, and ensuring that long-term change occurs in the way that television is used with children. We have begun to better publicize our services and more fully utilize our contacts with organizations that tend to the needs of at-risk populations such as Success by Six and Head Start so that those who can benefit the most will take advantage of our services. Most importantly, we have been able to provide the incentives of free books and learning activity kits to encourage participation in subsequent workshops so that *View/Do/Read* techniques become a regular part of workshop participants' routine.

We began the expansion plan by hiring and training additional trainers. We have created a pool of talented trainers available to conduct workshops, and have increased the number of workshops offered from 25 per

year to more than 75 per year. In addition, we have recently hired a Spanish-speaking trainer, so that we can begin offering Ready-to Learn workshops to our Hispanic community.

Once a participant has attended a workshop, an ongoing cycle of heavy follow up with incentives to encourage further participation will commence. All childcare providers receive quarterly newsletters with a coupon for a free learning activity kit that may be redeemed at the next workshop they attend. All parents receive a free learning activity kit with each workshop they attend.

In order to determine if we are successful, participants are required to fill out a pre-workshop survey at the beginning of each workshop they attend. Follow-up surveys are sent to workshop participants each quarter along with an offer of free books if they return the survey promptly. Through this method, we can measure changes in *View/Do/Read* habits in the home or childcare setting.

Because we are public broadcasting, free and available to all across our viewing area, our workshops include everyone who wishes to participate in central Virginia—Fredericksburg to North Carolina, Williamsburg to Staunton. We concentrate our personal outreach publicity with the organizations in which we are currently involved, and we get frequent requests from new organizations and care providers who have heard about the success of other Ready to Learn workshops.

During the past year, the U.S. Department of Education has expressed interest in measuring the impact the program has had on its participants. Our survey results indicating changed *View/Do/Read* habits will be shared on the national level. Locally the success of changed *View/Do/Read* habits will be shared in on-air spots and with early childcare partners in order to encourage further participation.

The Request

In order to continue the success that we have achieved in the past three years with our expanded Ready To Learn offerings, we ask that [Corporation] become the Exclusive Corporate Sponsor of Ready To Learn with a commitment of support in the amount of \$215,000 over three years; \$60,000 in 2007, \$70,000 in 2008 and \$85,000 in 2009. This increase in support over the three year time span will compensate for the decrease in funding we will see from a step-down grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (see program budget). Though we recognize that multi year requests are not normally entertained by [Corporation], we have received verbal approval from Amy Nisenson to make this request.

Personnel

Iris Beverly, Vice President for Educational Services

Iris Beverly is the Vice President for Educational Services with the Community Idea Stations. During ten years of service with the corporation, she has been promoted to several positions, working in various capacities with Educational Services. Under her management, the corporation provides staff development training, educational conferences and resources, and outreach programs to address family literacy and some of the professional development needs of pre-school and K-12 educators and administrators throughout 47 school divisions (over 500 schools) within the central Virginia area.

Iris' professional background includes experience in both the education and corporate arenas. Although she has a strong background in management, her diverse education and experience also supports education (pre-school through adult), training, and public information and communication platforms. During the early years of her career, she taught K-12 in various curriculum areas with special emphasis on secondary English. Prior to her employment with PBS, she served as the Training, Education and Information Supervisor for the Commonwealth's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. She has produced training and instructional television programs and has served as consultant and writer for their development. Additionally, she's developed, written and edited numerous publications and print materials to include instructional guides and manuals, brochures, newsletters, press releases, and fact sheets. Iris has been a member of various professional organizations including The Virginia Educational Media Association, the League of Professional

Journalists, the National Association of Female Executives and Partnerships for Training and Employment Careers.

Trish Reed, Ready to Learn Coordinator

Trish Reed holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Education in Early Childhood Education from Virginia Commonwealth University. Prior to coming to Commonwealth Public Broadcasting in December of 2004, she taught Kindergarten. She also has taught Junior Kindergarten and First Grade. She retired from teaching with 33 years of experience. Her first teaching years were in Richmond City at A. V. Norrell Elementary and the last were with Chesterfield County at C. C. Wells Elementary. During her teaching years, she was nominated twice for "Teacher of the Year". She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Southern Early Childhood Association, the Richmond Early Childhood Association, Chesterfield Retired Teachers Association, Chesterfield Education Association, Virginia Education Association, and the National Education Association. Since she began working with the Community Idea Stations, she has worked with Virginia Preschool Initiative, Success by Six, Virginia area Head Starts and Even Starts, Title I programs in schools and numerous K-3 groups in elementary schools.

Workshop Trainers are recruited through the Greater Richmond Early Childhood Development Coalition, as well as through schools and childcare centers with whom we are already working. We seek trainers who have experience in the early childhood field and who hold degrees in education. They must have excellent verbal, public speaking and presentation skills. Trainers include teachers who seek supplemental income, stay at home moms, retired teachers, and graduate students.

Recognizing [Corporation]

[Corporation] will be recognized as the Exclusive Sponsor of Ready To Learn in all on-air and off air promotion.

As part of our mission to expand access to and awareness of our programs, Commonwealth Public Broadcasting will be creating multiple on-air and off-air promotions to highlight the impact of Ready To Learn in our community, and will include [Corporation] in all of these materials. In addition, we look forward to discussing other co-branding opportunities and exploring opportunities for [Corporation] associates to become involved with Ready To Learn.