

LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: Raising Readers in Story County (RRSC)

LIAISON: Sue Draper 10/21/20

Need for Program:

The mission of RRSC is to improve language and literacy development in children from birth to age eight and nurture healthy parent-child relationships.

Per our 9/29/20 virtual meeting with Lisa Reeves and Autumn Long, this committed human services program serves 300-350 children in their direct program a year and can also reach from 1,500 to 2,400 children with indirect programs like the Read Out and Read program.

The reading education priorities set by funders has been met with RRSC's services:

- Children enter school developmentally on track
- Provide resources and supports to families and caregivers that strengthen interactions and promote early learning in a home environment.
- Children exit 3rd grade reading at grade-level
- Involve the community to increase wrap-around supports as volunteers with reading
- Ensure families and/or support systems are engaged

Program Strengths:

The factor that contributes the most to positive outcomes is the in-person reading process where the student makes a connection with a volunteer that sparks their love of reading. There are a few new programs like the Harrison Barnes Reading Academies.

Many key members (Dr Jill Alexander, Principals and retired teachers) in the community are involved in selecting high quality and appropriate reading books. Positive data and outcomes are tracked on a scorecard.

Program Weaknesses:

The biggest hurdle is in finding volunteers to match the skill set needed in this time of pandemic and virtual learning because many are retired.

It is tough to continuously find ways and contacts to reach new groups of children in need of reading services. RRSC continues to reach out and works with YSS and teachers that can identify school children for the StoryPals program.

Financial Outlook:

With the unplanned pandemic this year, there have been more unbudgeted expenses due to APC needing to move into RRSC's space with new 50% hybrid student programs. RRSC has recently moved to a new central area in the North Grand Mall.

Also, another result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is that RRSC has gone to children meeting virtually with volunteers to read. This virtual process is reducing the number of children they can serve which is increasing their expenses.

Internal Management Practices:

Autumn has been a great asset for RRSC and has helped in many ways to further their support to children in need. There are two practicum students who are assisting in interviewing leads, selecting books and writing procedure manual.

I had the opportunity to attend their roughly 16-member Board meeting on 10/14/20. Their Board is very passionate and active in supporting RRSC services with many subject matter experts advising in areas like finance, community involvement and governance in policies/procedures. RRSC team is happy with their larger new office space located in Mall.

Agency Suggestions/Comments:

I was asked to relay that this has been a unique year with pandemic, new virtual reading process developed, reduced reach to students and this in turn has caused more unbudgeted expenses. Their moved up physical location change has also caused some unplanned expenses.

At the Board meeting it was asked if ASSET would consider moving the annual audit process which costs \$4,000 each year to every two years? Could a review be made in the off-audit year that would not be a full audit saving \$4,000?

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

Raising Readers team has graciously demonstrated how flexible and committed their team is to improving language and literacy to children in this unprecedented time of social distancing with COVID-19 and then the derecho disaster. Their summer reading program was successful as virtual format. They will be coding and rolling out this same virtual format to students this Fall.