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**EVALUATION OF
BETWEEN THE LIONS OUTREACH INITIATIVES**

Executive Summary

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30 JFK STREET, FLOOR 3, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138 PHONE 617-491-7033 FAX 617-864-2399
WWW.GRGINC.COM

EVALUATION OF *BETWEEN THE LIONS* OUTREACH INITIATIVES

Executive Summary

WGBH-TV Boston contracted with Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) to conduct external evaluation of several components of the BETWEEN THE LIONS (BTL) Outreach Campaign. GRG is a research firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts that specializes in the evaluation of educational programs, materials, and services. The BTL outreach campaign included the work of the Founding Partners, the pilot projects of the American Library Association and Reading is Fundamental, the Kindergarten Teachers Guide, and the Viewing Project. Evaluation of these components has been ongoing over the past two years, and GRG has submitted reports throughout that period.

This summary gives an overview of the evaluation goals, methods, and samples, and highlights the major findings with respect to each outreach component. The summary originally appeared along with a compendium of the reports on each outreach initiative included in the evaluation. The reports included in the compendium were:

- Report on First Round Telephone Interviews with BETWEEN THE LIONS Founding Partners
- Results of a Survey of the BETWEEN THE LIONS Founding Partners' Membership
- The American Library Association BTL Project: Report of Telephone Interviews with Grant Recipients (Librarians)
- ALA Family Workshop Survey Results
- An Evaluation of the RIF Book Cubs Pilot Program
- Focus Groups with Teachers and RTL Coordinators About a Teacher's Guide for Early Literacy
- Get Wild About Reading – A Guide for Kindergarten Teachers from BETWEEN THE LIONS: Results of a Survey of Recipients
- The BETWEEN THE LIONS Viewing Project: Findings from Interviews with Participating Teachers

The table below summarizes the evaluation efforts corresponding to each outreach component. It is followed by the key findings and recommendations from each project.

Evaluation of BTL Outreach Initiatives

Outreach Component	Goal of Evaluation	Method	Sample	Date
Founding Partners	Process evaluation: to document the collaborative process between the WGBH BTL team and their Founding Partners, focusing on the benefits of the collaboration and the effectiveness of the Founding Partner model of outreach	Telephone interviews	15 partners	Summer 2000
	Outcome evaluation: to assess the effectiveness of the efforts of WGBH and their Founding Partners in creating awareness of BTL	Mail survey	597 members, representing six Founding Partner organizations	April 2001
American Library Association (ALA) Pilot Project	to document the pilot project process	Telephone interviews	23 pilot project grant recipients (librarians)	Summer 2001
	to assess the success of the ALA family workshops in meeting its goals	Survey of workshop participants	386 parents and educators	2000-2001
Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF) Book Cubs Pilot Project	to elucidate the successes and challenges of the Book Cubs Pilot Project, with an eye toward future outreach of this type	Telephone interviews Site visits Home visits	10 Den Advisors 5 Book Cubs sites 6 participating families	Summer 2001
Kindergarten Teachers Guide	Formative evaluation: to solicit ideas and recommendations from teachers and RTL Coordinators to guide the development of the print material*	Three focus groups	9 preschool teachers 9 Kindergarten teachers 8 RTL Coordinators	February 2000
	Summative evaluation: to assess the use, appeal and helpfulness of the guide, and to explore its efficacy as a BTL awareness-building mechanism	Mail survey	502 guide recipients	April 2001
BTL Viewing Project	to investigate teachers' use of BTL in the classroom and its influence on students' literacy skills	Telephone Interviews	18 participating teachers	August-October 2001

*Findings from the formative evaluation are not included in the key findings that follow.

Founding Partners

Findings about Process

Feedback from 15 Between the Lions Founding Partners interviewed during the summer and fall of 2000 indicated the partners were very positive about their involvement in the outreach campaign. They enjoyed the project and they had high regard for the project team, the series itself, and the outreach components. They perceived the project team as responsive to their input and found their interactions with the team useful. They also expressed satisfaction with the project materials. According to the partners, the group generally reached a consensus on issues of importance; it appeared that the only divisive issue faced by the group was the Designated Reader concept. Some partners were clearly more involved and invested in the initiative than were others.

It is clear that partner organizations made specific contributions during the development phase of this project. However, at the time of our interviews, three to six months after the premiere of the television series, there was not a great deal of evidence to suggest that organizations had moved beyond promotion of the series and the outreach campaign to specific and concrete outreach efforts of their own. Partners sensed that the project had great potential (e.g., for BTL to become a signature program like Sesame Street, for partners to use BTL and their involvement in the project to enhance their own work), but they could not point to actual accomplishments.

Without substantive outreach efforts at the time of our interviews, partners' feedback about benefits and challenges had more to do with the development phase of the project than with the implementation phase. Nevertheless, the partners' perceptions of the project's benefits and challenges hold lessons for future outreach campaigns. Lessons learned include:

- Involving partners in the beginning stages of a lengthy project ensures that they will help to shape the vision for the project. However, a project of three plus years is bound to have some down time, so keeping momentum going is important.
- Offer ample opportunities for partners to collaborate rather than compete with one another. While some partners advocated small group work for this type of project, the whole group approach taken at the working meetings seemed to foster collaboration and help guard against competition.
- Choosing organizations with stable membership and with demonstrated success reaching their target audiences is likely to facilitate awareness building among their constituents.
- The buy-in of senior management is key to an organization's contribution to this type of project. It is equally important, however, that the project team engages

partners who actually have time to devote to a project like this. A balance between buy-in and ability to commit are important considerations for the project team and should be discussed up-front at the beginning of a project.

- The *staff* of partnering organizations is likely to be more effective in carrying out project work than are *members* of the organization. In addition, working with local chapters, rather than the national office, of an organization, may better ensure that work gets done.
- Having more than one person from an organization involved in a group may help to counteract the problems associated with inevitable turnover, especially in a long-term project with periods of inactivity.
- Partners want credit for their contributions therefore, publicly recognizing their efforts whenever possible may effectively encourage active involvement.

Findings about Outcomes

The survey of Founding Partners membership provided limited support for the overall effectiveness of the Founding Partners as an outreach mechanism, particularly given the duration of their involvement in the project, and the project's size and scope. Key findings that support this conclusion are summarized below:

- A majority (70%) of responding members reported they had not received BTL materials in the mail.
- Of those who were aware of BTL before receiving the survey, 41% percent knew their organizations were involved in the project.
- Of those who knew about BTL prior to the survey, about a quarter had *first* been introduced to the project either through the pre-broadcast brochure (28%) or through their organizations (19%).
- Two-thirds of the members who were aware of BTL prior to the survey had not used, and did not plan to use, BTL in their work.

The results indicated that ALA, RIF, the State Centers for the Book, and Title I were more effective in promoting and raising awareness of BTL than were the NAESP and NCLD. Results suggest that the first four organizations did a better job of mailing the pre-broadcast brochure (or had better mailing lists) and including BTL in conferences. However, there were no notable differences among these groups in terms of either educating their members of the organization's own involvement in the project or motivating their members to use BTL.

In addition to the major findings, the survey yielded information that can be applied to current and future outreach. Some members had learned about BTL through their

organization, yet were unaware of their organizations' own involvement in the project. In projects like this, an organization's focus may be on promoting the "product" and they may need reminding or encouragement to promote their own contributions to the project. Of the various ways members *did* find out about their organizations' involvement in the project, newsletters appear to have been the most effective vehicle.

The survey provided evidence that seeing conference presentations and viewing the show promotes use of the series and materials. WGBH might consider sharing this information with the organizations currently involved in the outreach campaign and increasing any ongoing efforts to encourage them to incorporate BTL into their conferences.

The American Library Association Pilot Project

Feedback from Grant Recipients

Twenty-one libraries or library systems across the United States participated in the BTL Outreach Campaign mini-grant project. Libraries offered workshops to parents, children, and early childhood professionals, as well as interested members of the general public. They aimed primarily to convey a sense of the importance of literacy and to increase comfort, knowledge and skill levels with literacy-building.

In general, grant recipients found creative and thoughtful ways to tailor their programs to the particular characteristics of their own organizations and communities, although they noted their target audiences had a need for bilingual programs. Most used multiple means to recruit participants for their workshops, and found collaboration with partner organizations to be most useful in this respect.

The grant recipients used most of the Outreach Kit materials and generally found those materials to be very helpful in shaping and conducting their workshops. They noted that the materials and the training session provided a clear and comprehensive foundation from which to launch the workshop programs. They also appreciated the flexibility and independence they had in developing their programs and in allocating funds, as well as the public visibility and prestige associated with being a recipient of a national grant such as this one. This combination of guidelines, freedom, and visibility allowed the grant recipients to reach a wider variety of people and to create an adaptable and portable product with their workshop programs.

Success of the Projects

Many factors contributed to the success of these multipurpose projects. These included careful preparation and organization, clear communication, and strong collaboration among community organizations. Grant recipients considered their programs to be successful in achieving the three main objectives of the project, as well as beneficial in multiple ways to all those who participated. More personalized connections were made between libraries and "hard-to-reach" populations. Knowledge about and skills for supporting literacy were shared.

BTL was introduced and endorsed as a valuable educational resource. Many productive partnerships were established between libraries and other organizations in their communities. We can conclude that—if the precedent of flexibility and adaptation set during this pilot project is maintained—this component of the BTL Outreach Campaign has established an effective method for developing multi-level partnerships that can achieve a range of literacy-building objectives.

Collaborations

The collaborations were deemed effective by the grant recipients and contributed greatly to the success of the projects. When grant recipients incorporated workshops into preexisting meetings and events at their partnering organizations, projects were especially productive. Partnerships that allowed grant recipients to forge connections with hard-to-reach and/or nontraditional library users also had the benefit of helping them to learn about special concerns held by those populations. One compelling lesson learned was that in reaching out to new users, partners should assume a cross-cultural sameness with regard to perceptions and understanding of the library's role. However, the freedom to be creative and adaptive with program design allowed grant recipients to be responsive to the unique needs of their target audiences.

We recommend that grant recipients continue to anticipate variance in degree of success when implementing multipurpose, multi-targeted programs. They should also anticipate that the identity of the “right” organization for collaboration will likely vary by location, circumstances, and individual differences among contact persons.

Collaborative partnerships offer a unique opportunity to offer workshops off-site. However, grant recipients should be encouraged to consider the pros and cons of off-site versus on-site workshop programs. While off-site programs allow access to “hard-to-reach” populations, on-site programs, in addition to being more convenient, offer a more tangible and practical experience of the library. On the other hand, audiences for on-site programs tend to be more self-selecting. They usually have a pre-existing knowledge base, comfort with the library and an investment in learning and literacy.

The ultimate decision may be influenced by the specific goals of the workshop program. That is, on-site workshops may be preferable to increase familiarity with the library, while off-site workshops may be preferable to reach as-yet underserved, potential library users.

Other challenges within the collaborations had to do with communication and coordination among partner organizations. Specific training on how to establish strong and positive communication and coordination channels with community partners should be included for future projects. Though not necessarily one of the top priorities of this mini-grant project, it was clear that the creation of strong partnerships between libraries and other community organizations was one of its most powerful effects, and such

partnerships appear at this time to represent the best avenue for independent continuation of BTL Outreach workshops.

The BTL Series

The BTL series appeared to be a valuable way to reach target audiences. Most interviewees appreciated the series on several different levels. On one level, many felt a strong, shared mission of literacy promotion between their libraries and BTL. On another level, BTL served as a tool for librarians to achieve that mission by providing an entertaining means to promote and support literacy and to appeal across age and education levels. Lastly, BTL provided organized themes on which grant recipients could elaborate in creative ways in their workshops.

Many grant recipients noted that BTL holds an appeal beyond the 4 – 7 year old target audience. Among the varied audiences, they found that older children (ages 7 - 10), younger children (ages 2 - 4) and children with special needs could enjoy and benefit from watching the show.

Suggestions for Improvement

Most grant recipients' suggestions for improvement involved either addressing logistical issues or enhancing the existing structure and format of the mini-grant project.

Training. Though the flexibility of the grant was an overall benefit to grant recipients, some indicated a need for specific training on the special considerations and necessary adaptations for programs in either very small branches (e.g., one staff member) or very large districts. Some grant recipients also needed training to make decisions about how to allocate funds and budgeting for their programs. In addition, several grant recipients felt that the training and the relevant materials came too late in the process, and that they needed a longer period of time to work with the information provided before they were expected to begin their programs.

Outreach Kit. A primary suggestion was to provide materials in other languages, particularly Spanish (though some mentioned that Asian languages and even Bosnian would be useful to programs in their communities). Other suggestions included putting a "Sample Workshop" in the Outreach Kit materials, developing an activity guidebook based on the experiences and work of grant recipients from this project, and making videos of sample episodes more readily available to grant recipients. One interviewee suggested that a "First Library Card" box be developed with a BTL theme that could be widely used in children's libraries. Another suggested that re-usable materials, such as "wipe-off" boards, would be especially helpful as handouts to low-income families in which many materials must be shared.

Scheduling. Careful consideration of scheduling and timing can impact the success of programs. Future grant recipients should find times and locations that would be most convenient to audience members. Confirmation phone calls to participants the night before a scheduled workshop may ensure better participation rates. Providing a family

meal and/or childcare for toddlers during workshop programs may lessen the burden of attending and maximize participants' ability to absorb the content offered.

For grant recipients who wish to connect with hard-to-reach populations, consideration of special needs when developing and scheduling programs represents an investment in their successful implementation. For example, when working with teen parents, interviewees found they needed to schedule workshops around high school classes, to communicate clearly the purpose of the workshop ahead of time, to make the content relevant to their concerns, and to make the mode of presentation enjoyable as well as useful. One site found that teen mothers were reluctant to attend when they mistakenly assumed that the program was for their toddler-age children (whom they felt were too young to participate).

In conclusion, grant recipients were satisfied with their programs and considered them very successful. They reported that participation in this program was beneficial in many ways both to them as individuals and to their libraries or library systems. Almost all of the grant recipients reported they hoped or planned to continue to offer their workshop programs in the future.

Feedback from ALA Family Workshop Participants

The typical attendee of an ALA pilot project workshop was a parent with two children who had heard about the workshops at her school or library but had not attended a previous workshop in the series. The parent and her children each had library cards and visited the library together at least once a week. They also read, watched TV, and did other activities together nearly every day. Workshop participants were equally split on whether or not they had heard of the BTL TV show. Most were not aware of the BTL website.

The workshops overall, and the video and activities components, more specifically, were appealing to participants. As an added measure of enthusiasm, more than half of the respondents planned to attend at least one other workshop in the series.

The workshops attracted participants interested in learning more about reading to children and about BTL. Learning more about the library was generally less important to them. As a result of the workshops, respondents felt more comfortable reading to children, more knowledgeable about the library, and more interested in BTL. Nearly all respondents showed some interest in the website. Respondents were even more positive in each of these three areas (i.e., reading, the library, and BTL) if they had actually attended the workshops for this reason. Respondents whose children were between four and seven years old knew more about the library after the sessions than did respondents whose children were not in the target audience. Furthermore, the results indicate that if a participant left feeling more knowledgeable about the library, she was more apt to attend a future workshop.

The survey results suggested that parents might have found the workshops more appealing and derived greater benefits from the sessions than did caregivers. A higher percentage of parents than caregivers left the sessions feeling more knowledgeable about the library and more comfortable reading to their children, and more parents than caregivers planned to attend future workshops. Differences between parents' and caregivers' reasons for attending the workshops helped explain these findings; parents were more interested than caregivers from the start in finding out more about the library and about reading. Caregivers most likely felt more skilled in these areas before coming into the workshops.

In contrast to the areas of reading and the library, there were no differences between parents and caregivers in terms of interest in BTL. Equal proportions of parents and caregivers attended to find out more about BTL, showed increased interest in BTL after the workshops, and were interested in the BTL website.

The Reading is Fundamental Book Cubs Pilot Project

Reports from Den Advisors, parents, and children lent support to the efficacy of the Book Cubs program in increasing participants' enjoyment of reading and providing educators with literacy resources for their work with children and families. Both Den Advisors and parents believed that Book Cubs had positively influenced children's enjoyment of books and reading. Parents reported that children wanted to read and to be read to by others more often as a result of the program, and Den Advisors confirmed this with reports of their own that children were spending more time reading. Children's own reports of their Book Cubs experience also centered on reading, and their recall of specific titles was a testimony to their enjoyment of the books they read during the club.

Den Advisor and parent reports also were fairly congruent regarding perceived program benefits to participating parents. Benefits included learning and reinforcing the importance of reading and of certain "best practices" with respect to family literacy (i.e., letting children choose their own books). As self-reported by Den Advisors, personal benefits involved taking on new or different roles, getting new ideas for their work, and having existing ideas or practices reinforced.

The biggest challenge for the Book Cubs pilot program was the Mane Reader component. Moreover, observations in the homes of participating families, while indicating that the environments are supportive for children, pointed to a lack of adult literacy material; this might pose a challenge in terms of the Book Cubs objective of encouraging parents to serve as reading role models for their children. In addition, observations showed that the program materials were more likely to be used in the club setting by Den Advisors than in the home by parents.

In order for this program, and for future similar programs, to be successful with a parent or "at home" component, we believe parents will need more support than they received during this pilot. While Book Cubs included a Mane Reader orientation and a booklet,

much of the parents' involvement was dependent upon their own motivation. Future programs should consider incorporating activities to directly support the goal of parent involvement, such as an adult literacy component. Furthermore, Den Advisors (or facilitators of similar programs) need a feedback mechanism for assessing parent involvement (whether they are reading daily to their children, using the Mane Reader menus, etc.) so that they have a handle on how the program is working in this area and can make adjustments accordingly.

While the frequency of the den meetings, the club-like nature of the program and the Lending Library concept all differentiate Book Cubs from standard RIF programs, it is the Mane Reader component that, perhaps above all others, makes the program unique. This makes it all the more important to work to develop this aspect of Book Cubs.

Our observations before, during, and after the reading in den meetings provided evidence that Den Advisors prepared for and were comfortable with the straightforward aspects of opening the meetings, reading the books, and interacting with the children (e.g., asking questions, about topics and characters). Most meetings (three of five) also included a follow-up activity. In contrast, Den Advisors took a less active part in the actual readings, for example, by contributing what they knew about a topic, changing their voices to animate the reading, or encouraging children's more active involvement (e.g., making predictions, identifying problems and solutions).

There are several possible reasons for this: the facilitators might not have felt confident in these areas, they might not have had the time to do more than the "basics" with the featured texts, or some of the books might not have lent themselves as well as others to these practices (e.g., using different voices or identifying problems and solutions). These findings and possible explanations require further consideration by the program developers. Regardless of the explanation, some of the intended outcomes for participating children might warrant rethinking based on the extent to which the facilitators implemented or delivered the program as RIF had planned.

Finally, the model for this project prompts reflection on the connection between the Book Cubs pilot program and the *Between the Lions* series. Originally, there was going to be a more prominent link between the program and series. Book Cubs sites were going to receive BTL videotapes and have the option of watching the episodes during their den meetings. Ultimately, however, the series was not incorporated in this way into the Book Cubs pilot.

The BTL characters and the "language" of the pilot program provided some connection between the program and the series (e.g., some of the follow-up activities and some of the program materials referenced or featured BTL characters, word plays such as *Book Cubs*, *Mane Readers*, *Den* meetings were used); however, the main connection between the two was their shared goal of encouraging children's love of reading. While the connection between the program and the series could have been more clearly delineated and the pilot program could have accomplished its goal without incorporating BTL, it was the evaluators' impression that having a foothold in BTL ultimately enhanced the Book Cubs

program because the program was able to build on children's established relationship with and enthusiasm for BTL.

Kindergarten Teachers Guide

GRG mailed a written survey to 3,733 kindergarten Teachers Guide recipients and received back 502 for a 14% response rate. The percentage of respondents who either used or planned to use the guide was fairly high (about two-thirds), while the percentage that had actually used it at the time of our survey was just under thirty percent. In addition, only one in three users had used the guide with children in the classroom. Respondents were more likely to use it on their own as a teaching resource.

Survey results suggested the guide played a role in raising awareness of and involvement in BTL and supported the educational value of the guide. About four in ten recipients first heard about BTL from the guide, four in ten decided to use BTL in the classroom and six in ten decided to watch BTL after receiving the guide. The respondents believed it was a very good tool for promoting children's enjoyment of and interest in reading and being read to as well as promoting literacy skills. They also found the guide very helpful in their literacy teaching, especially in providing them with strategies for using the whole-part-whole approach and for reinforcing the importance of print.

Of concern was that more than half of the survey respondents indicated they did not receive the guide. If respondents did receive the guide but did not recall receiving it, it may be because the guide was not intended for them. About three-quarters of the respondents were *not* kindergarten teachers, the target audience for the guide.

The BTL Viewing Project

WGBH involved 23 teachers from around the country in a Viewing Project. Teacher participants showed BTL to their students and used supplementary materials. GRG interviewed 18 of the teachers. The typical Viewing Project participant had been teaching for 12 years and had never used other video products in her teaching. She used BTL twice a week in her classroom (as WGBH requested), over 11 weeks. She used the series with her whole class, in a variety of supplemental ways, and carried out some discussion after viewing. About half did and half did not use the BTL book collection. The typical participant tended *not* to use the teachers guide, the web site or the CD ROM. Some teachers found the guide too advanced for their children, and too labor intensive or lacking in structure for classroom use.

Teachers reported that the series complemented their own language arts teaching philosophies and reinforced many of the skills they were teaching their students. About half of the teachers had considered BTL in the context of state standards and benchmarks, and found the series was a good tool for helping fulfill the standards.

In about half of the cases, teachers said that school administrators knew about their use of BTL and were very interested in and supportive of the initiative. Likewise, parents who knew about the project (in more than half of the sites) had a positive response to it.

Teachers reported that students were engaged in and very enthusiastic about the show. Nearly all the participants reported that viewing BTL had a positive influence on children's literacy skills and interests, for the most part reinforcing skills they address in their language arts program. Most of the teachers felt that stronger students benefited more from the series than did less advanced students.

Findings from these interviews point to three key recommendations for the future of WGBH's Viewing Project:

- Teachers need either more instruction or more support around using the supplemental Viewing Project materials with the episodes, or suggestions for modifying the materials (e.g., the guide) for use in Kindergarten classrooms.
- WGBH might wish to consider providing Viewing Project teachers with materials prepared specifically for school administrators and parents, to increase awareness and support of classroom use of the series.
- Teachers' perceptions of the differences between more and less advanced students might warrant attention in the project materials, for instance, different ideas for follow-up activities depending upon the skill levels of the students.