

# Reading Rockets Evaluation Executive Summary

*Prepared by*  
Jennifer Beck, Ph.D.  
Claire T. Brown, B.A.

*Submitted to*  
Susan Petroff  
Reading Rockets  
WETA

**June 7, 2004**

## INTRODUCTION

Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG), an independent research firm that specializes in the evaluation of educational programs, materials, and services, was contracted by WETA to evaluate Reading Rockets, a national multimedia project designed to disseminate research findings on early diagnosis, intervention, and effective strategies for teaching young children how to read.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide a rich description of the Reading Rockets program and to supplement that description by telling the stories of the people who have used and continue to use the Reading Rockets resources.

The goals of this evaluation were to:

- Assess users' opinions of the content presented on the Reading Rockets and Colorín Colorado Web sites;
- Describe PBS Ready to Learn Coordinators' and partnering organizations' opinions of Reading Rockets resources;
- Describe the outcomes for *A Tale of Two Schools* outreach and advertising grants; and
- Document participating individuals' opinions of the Reading Rockets teleconferences.

GRG collected quantitative and qualitative data on each of the Reading Rockets resources and employed multiple data collection methods, including Web and print surveys, telephone interviews, and document reviews in order to create a comprehensive understanding of people's use of and opinions of the Reading Rockets resources.

This document highlights the major findings and recommendations from this evaluation.

## KEY FINDINGS

### READING ROCKETS WEB SITE

- ❑ The Reading Rockets Web site reached its target audience, in that 71% of the respondents were working with children who had learning disabilities, 72% were working with children who qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 50% worked with children for whom English was a second language.
- ❑ Respondents reported that the Reading Rockets Web site was a credible, high-quality, accessible, and motivating source for information that bridged the gap between research and practice.
- ❑ The respondents were primarily using the Reading Rockets Web site as an informational source for their own learning. Second to this, the respondents were sharing the information with others. Fewer respondents appeared to be directly using the information in classrooms or for training purposes.

- ❑ Certain features on the Web site were used and accessed by visitors to a lesser extent than others. Although respondents reported that the features were useful, the Get Ready to Read Screening Tool, the Forums, the Ask Reading Rockets service, and the videos of author interviews were used much less often than the articles and the e-Newsletter.

## **COLORÍN COLORADO WEB SITE**

- ❑ Forty-two percent of Colorín Colorado survey respondents described themselves as Latino or Hispanic, compared to the 4% of Reading Rockets Web site visitors who described themselves as Latino or Hispanic.
- ❑ While the majority of the respondents were working with ELL children, far fewer were working with children with learning disabilities compared to the Reading Rockets Web site visitors. One interpretation of this finding is that visitors may have been drawn to the Reading Rockets site for the assistance it offers to struggling readers while the Colorín Colorado site met the need of providing information and resources to ELL parents and their children.
- ❑ The equal numbers of teachers, parents, and community outreach professionals who visited Colorín Colorado, combined with the finding that the site was being used simultaneously in English and Spanish, suggests that the site served as communication tool between adults who speak different languages.
- ❑ Demonstrating the usefulness of the Colorín Colorado Web site, 98% of respondents indicated that they would visit the Colorín Colorado Web site again, and 100% of respondents reported that they planned to recommend the Colorín Colorado Web site to others.

## **RTL COORDINATORS & READING ROCKETS**

- ❑ At 10%, the response rate for the survey of RTL coordinators was significantly lower than the response rate for evaluation activities with other Reading Rockets audiences.
- ❑ Overall, RTL Coordinators indicated that they were very satisfied with the Reading Rockets resources. Compared to other literacy-based resources, respondents found Reading Rockets to be equally informative and useful and much more interesting.
- ❑ RTL coordinators were familiar with a range of Reading Rockets resources, in particular the Reading Rockets Web site, the Toolkit, and the e-Newsletter. Respondents were less familiar with the Colorín Colorado Web site and the Reading Rockets teleconferences.
- ❑ Respondents appeared to be using the Reading Rockets resources primarily for their own professional development and for sharing the resources with others. Respondents were using the resources to plan and deliver workshops to a lesser extent.

## READING ROCKETS PARTNERSHIPS

- ❑ Survey respondents indicated that overall, they were *very* and *extremely* satisfied with the partnership, and that the most beneficial aspect of the partnership was that they valued being able to share high quality information and resources with their members and that the Reading Rockets materials were consistently top quality and easily accessible.

## A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS GRANTS

- ❑ Respondents attended the community events for a variety of reasons, including: to obtain strategies and ideas to use in helping kids learn to read (57%), to get information about how kids learn to read (53%), to talk with others in their communities about literacy issues (52%), and to view the documentary (38%).
- ❑ Respondents agreed that the events helped to raise people's awareness of literacy issues in their communities and inspired them to get involved.
- ❑ The events benefited the respondents in several ways, and several respondents provided statements that underscored the value of the events in motivating people to strengthen their community partnerships in service of helping children learn to read.

## READING ROCKETS TELECONFERENCES

- ❑ Based on respondents' descriptions of the roles and perspectives that they bring to the teleconferences, Reading Rockets is drawing an audience that is on the front lines of reading instruction.
- ❑ The teleconferences appear to be accomplishing the following: they are providing the public with current, up-to-date research-based information about reading, they are providing people with practical ideas and strategies for helping children learn to read, and they are a source of motivation for individuals who are committed to helping struggling readers.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ Based on respondents' suggestions, GRG recommends that Reading Rockets consider adding a greater number of print-ready exercises and activities to the Reading Rockets Web site.
- ❑ Given that respondents indicated several features on the Reading Rockets Web site that were very useful but infrequently accessed (e.g., the Get Ready to Read Screening Tool), GRG recommends that Reading Rockets consider ways to increase the Web presence of such features on the site.

- ❑ GRG recommends that Reading Rockets consider ways to further promote the Colorín Colorado Web site. For example, the e-Newsletter was extremely successful in promoting the Reading Rockets Web site and keeping the site front and center in people's minds on a regular, ongoing basis.
- ❑ If the goal is for PBS RTL Coordinators to use the Reading Rockets resources in workshops, consider ways to facilitate greater implementation of the resources in planning and delivering workshops by RTL coordinators.