



Reciprocal Relationships: A Community Vision

SHERESA BOONE BLANCHARD 

SHAWNICE JOHNSON

JENNIFER STONE

KAITLYN SEAY CALL

*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

**UNIVERSITY-
COMMUNITY
COLLABORATIONS
PORTAL (COMMUNITY
PORTAL)**



ABSTRACT

Community initiatives are started in a variety of ways including tackling tenacious community issues and addressing persistent disparities across residents. An urban/rural, county-wide initiative in the southeastern United States, gathered a cross-sector group to create a culture of literacy. Armed with an “all children are our children” attitude, stakeholders transformed thoughts into programs and initiatives (i.e., Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and Campaign for Grade Level Reading) by cultivating reciprocal relationships and partnerships. Through chronicling the history of the coalition and analyzing interviews with 19 foundational community stakeholders, this paper will discuss how the partnership formed and how individual motivations reinforced stakeholders’ investment of time and commitment to the cause, becoming a springboard into a more permanent community initiative.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Sheresa Boone Blanchard

East Carolina University, US
sbbblanch2014@gmail.com

KEYWORDS:

partnership; early literacy;
stakeholder perspectives;
community

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Blanchard, S. B., Johnson, S.,
Stone, J., & Call, K. S. (2023).
Reciprocal Relationships:
A Community Vision.
*Collaborations: A Journal of
Community-Based Research
and Practice*, 6(1): 2, pp. 1–9.
DOI: [https://doi.org/10.33596/
coll.100](https://doi.org/10.33596/coll.100)

Literacy is strongly correlated with academic success. Furthermore, early literacy skills are essential for children to learn to read, communicate, and succeed in life (Anderson et al., 1985). Early literacy skills, like sound-letter identification and rhyming, are often developed in the first years of schooling and are necessary precursors to literacy achievement. Research suggests a greater risk of poor academic performance if a child does not learn to read well during the first years of school (National Institute for Literacy, 2008). Emergent literacy skills, like reading motivation and phonological awareness, that often develop in the preschool years with book exposure, are important foundations for early literacy skills, and thus crucial for academic success (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Therefore, it is troubling that 35% of children in the United States begin kindergarten without the necessary emergent literacy skills needed to learn to read (Chaney, 2014). Similarly, in 2017, only 37% of fourth graders were at or above proficiency in reading (National Association of Educational Progress, 2021). Starting school without foundational emergent literacy skills increases the likelihood that kindergarteners may be identified as needing remediation due to delay or disability.

Poor literacy skills impact lives far beyond kindergarten. In addition to being identified and treated for delay or disability, students who lack reading competence are more likely to drop out of school (Hernandez, 2012). Additionally, adults who lack literacy skills are more likely to report poor health status (Lunze & Paasche-Orlow, 2014). The importance of emergent and early literacy skill development to lifelong trajectories cannot be understated. Yet, many parents across socio-demographic spectra continue to lack the information necessary to consider prioritizing reading aloud as a part of daily routines beginning at birth (Sinclair et al., 2018). The impact of this lack of awareness impacts communities as well as individuals (Knudsen et al., 2006). To create communities that nurture health outcomes for all children and their families, effective community partnerships are key (Miller et al., 2012). Quality of life within a community is improved as a result of community involvement and collaboration (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010). Therefore, additional programming and awareness campaigns to support all families to concentrate on emergent and early literacy have the potential to transform communities. Effective partnerships between universities, agencies, businesses and community residents are an integral part of community growth. These collaborations allow communities to make better use of resources and more effectively handle issues faced within communities (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). To our point, community partnerships provide the potential to produce effective and sustainable emergent and early literacy interventions built by invested individuals for all citizens (Derose et al., 2014).

For this reason, community stakeholders created a coalition to share ideas, challenges, and solutions for

developing a county-wide culture of literacy targeted at increasing school readiness. They quickly recognized the unique synergy of their work and contacted university researchers to participate in and document their collaboration. This qualitative inquiry explored the perspectives of community stakeholders concerning emergent and early literacy, school readiness, and literacy initiatives upon the creation of a community literacy coalition. The purpose of this study was to understand how the perspectives of cross-sector stakeholders involved in this collaborative targeting of emergent and early literacy and school readiness shaped community partnership sustainability. The stakeholders' perspectives document how individual motivations provide a foundation for reciprocal partnerships. Their perspectives also serve to inform practitioners and other communities about what might be done to enhance emergent and early literacy practices at a community level, so that all children start school with the skills required to achieve success in literacy, school, and life.

CONTEXT FOR COALITION

The literacy coalition represented in this study was located in a county in the southeastern United States characterized as a relatively large hub and destination for surrounding counties as it housed a university, with its collegiate athletics, and the regional hospital. At the inception of the coalition efforts in 2016, the county had an estimated population of 177, 220. Fifty-two and one-half percent were female and 47.5 % were male. White Americans were 58.9% of the population, while African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans were 34.1%, 5.5%, and 1.6 % of the population respectively. Additionally, 25.5% of residents lived at or below the poverty level. The unemployment rate was 10.2%. Of the 52,539 households, 29.9% had children under the age of 18 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2016). According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, one in five adults in this county were illiterate, higher than the state average of one in seven (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Roughly half of entering kindergarteners at the time met the benchmarks for early literacy, and third-grade reading proficiency was below the statewide average (Literacy Volunteers of Anonymous County, 2017).

THE FORMATION OF THE BOOKS FROM BIRTH COALITION

Before the formation of the early literacy coalition, this county had not taken previous efforts at scale to address the literacy issues within the community. Individual agencies addressed emergent and early

literacy as a small part of their broader missions with families, but no coordinated effort to equip parents with books and information about reading aloud had been attempted. Literacy was seen as a parental responsibility and not as a community collaboration. At the state and national levels, early literacy efforts had started to take root via the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CfGLR). The CfGLR was adopted in larger, metropolitan parts of the state in 2015, but the focus county was not part of the CfGLR movement at the time. The focus county joined years later in 2017, to achieve a goal established by the literacy coalition. Given the noted importance of early literacy on school readiness, health and career trajectories, and societal outcomes, community members created what became known as Books from Birth Early Literacy (BfB). BfB began through the impassioned networking and collaboration of a co-author (referred to as *Amanda), a local private speech-language pathologist in early intervention. As an early interventionist targeting children's language skills, she incorporated books in all of her therapy sessions to ensure families understood the power of reading aloud to grow the vocabulary, book affinity, and phonological skills measured to support later literacy success. In 2015, she noticed several early literacy-related issues in the community: (a) some of the homes she visited were lacking books, (b) many parents across sociodemographic categories were unaware of the importance of reading aloud from infancy, and (c) local parents of young children did not have a centralized, easily accessible way to get resources and information they might need. Dismayed by these issues, she began making calls and asking questions of local families and early childhood-focused organizations within the county to identify any early literacy resources available in the community, then reached beyond the community to identify resources to model a literacy coalition she had supported in another state. These leaders introduced her to literature on collective impact and community economic outcomes related to emergent literacy practices.

Through multiple conversations and employment of collective impact strategies, a wide-range of cross-sector collaborators were inspired to join the coalition as it gained momentum. Many were interested in the potential for improving early literacy to enrich school readiness and support economic prosperity in their community. Amanda became the spearhead of a movement to ignite public action surrounding the concerns of early literacy within the community. She addressed community needs by acting as the linchpin, helping each individual recognize his or her personal interest in, and ability to contribute to, improving long-term community outcomes for all citizens by investing resources into early literacy. She focused on building connections within the local community and to the

larger, existing efforts throughout the state and country for models and mentors to guide local efforts. One early critical connection was the state lead for the CfGLR. This person provided needed information regarding statewide resources including information about affiliating with the national literacy effort. Amanda also connected with local library leadership, the United Way, public school teachers and administrators, and university researchers to identify and gather existing early literacy resources. Many she contacted either joined the coalition themselves as active members or recommended others and resources that could help.

Discussions continued with local stakeholders at the parks and recreation department, business leadership organizations, local school district, community college, and university. As the coalition gained momentum, during large group meetings, information was presented about the importance of early brain development and language exposure. Local employers connected early development to graduation rates and later the lack of a prepared workforce as a primary barrier to economic development in the region. These employers recognized the power of ensuring that every child is prepared for kindergarten by empowering caregivers with the tools and information to prioritize reading aloud to their children beginning at birth. They appreciated the research from an economic, medical, and educational standpoint indicating that the best time to invest in 'human capital' is at birth (Knudsen et al., 2006) and the best way to prepare a child for a lifetime of learning is to create a loving, language-rich environment during the earliest days of development (Suskind, 2015).

Questions about how to support caregivers in the daily practice of reading aloud persisted. Amanda consulted early literacy advocates to learn more about their efforts and help inform her work. She conferred with three upstate New York residents had led successful community efforts around early literacy. All encouraged a community-based, collective impact effort in which citizens were included in identifying community needs and potential solutions, then supported in choosing a solution that would work in their community. They suggested readings and models focused on creating community around books. Amanda also valued research and inclusion and sought collaborators who reflected her values. Next steps included a series of 'community conversations' organized in collaboration with the United Way. Over 50 community members from diverse backgrounds attended each of the three meetings to identify needs and existing resources within the community, explore solutions that could be implemented in other communities, and then imagine what could be done if every member of the community worked together toward a shared vision of '100% literacy through 100% community engagement.'

The community dialogue surrounding Books from Birth began in February 2015 and developed into an

official coalition when a group committed to leading the effort convened over several months in a local cafe. The United Way chose to initiate Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, even before a statewide launch, and the coalition leadership agreed to support their efforts. In 2016, the group's work attracted the attention of the university's provost. He became deeply involved in the coalition and provided personal and institutional support for the community efforts, including financial and motivational support to the five university faculty who had been involved in the coalition building to that point. The financial resources provided support for baseline and ongoing research. In addition, he rallied his personal efforts behind the work by reaching out to community leaders to convene an 'investors group' and then an executive committee composed of leaders from diverse agencies throughout the community. Government, education, industry, community, and philanthropic groups were represented. These leaders collaborated to create bylaws and envision an organizational structure for the early literacy coalition. They also identified inclusiveness of all citizens, abundance mindset, and commitment to research as crucial elements in their work.

Many aspects of Books from Birth (BfB) have changed since its inception, including the name and the leadership. Additionally, a few years after the community initiated Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), it became a state-funded effort. Research regarding the inception of the coalition and the impact of ongoing efforts and current initiatives continues, including measuring the impact of DPIL, investigating parent perspectives and parent needs, providing professional development for early educators, and collaborating with investigators outside the county. This grassroots organization grew out of a small, committed group of individuals who recognized the synergistic timing of scientific research results and needs impacting local society at all levels. Such issues can act as catalysts to bring people together by bridging issues that might otherwise divide them. BfB can be defined as a campus-community partnership. These partnerships oftentimes incorporate members who are not employed by the community organization or affiliated college campus (Malm et al., 2012). BfB leaders purposefully sought to create such a partnership by focusing on creating win-win collaborations for all members that would benefit the wider community. Based on this priority, the group includes representatives from organizations such as the development commission, local utilities, university, medical center, parks and recreation, and local business owners. The organizations involved are not directly related to early literacy or the university but see the potential impact of BfB's mission. Such diverse organizational relationships are known to yield the resources and support (e.g., space to hold meetings, committing time, recruiting others to join, financial resources) that make effective partnerships

feasible (Malm et al., 2012). Their common goal will allow them to work within their individual spheres of influence to have a greater impact than one person or organization taking on the mission alone. For this qualitative study, we documented the formation of the university-community partnership and the history of the coalition to better understand stakeholders' perspectives and motivations.

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP MODEL

A coalition as a partnership allows a community to create a broad network, leverage unique capacities, and formulate original ideas to succeed. Working alongside one's community members provides opportunity to think outside of one's own classroom, workplace, or interests. The networking theory describes how campus-community partnerships symbolize a relationship with an entire community instead of a community-based organization (Malm et al., 2012). This relationship allows the coalition to witness the structure of the community as the partnership begins to form. The network normally operates on a similar foundation of shared values and intrinsic motivation to make a commitment based on individual academic, vocational, or personal reasons. Networking can be formal or informal depending on the coalition or partnership (Malm et al., 2012). According to Malm and colleagues (2012), well-connected communities involve a network of people working together to complete a common goal that could not be accomplished separately. High quality ongoing work and results occur when the well-connected community has a desire, as well as additional motivation, to work together (Malm et al., 2012).

The members of the early literacy coalition often represented their positions, programs, or agencies in paid employment or as a volunteer, but also served as individual community members representing personal interests. Therefore, many collaborators had dual motivations for participating – such as organizational and individual (Malm et al., 2012). While individual motivation is often tied to one's ability to have a personal gain from an experience, sharing one's knowledge and time for the greater good can also be considered, particularly around topics that are of personal interest. For the current study, we considered how the work and involvement of the stakeholders goes beyond their participation based on their organizational position to span several individual motivations for their investment of time and expertise as partners toward a greater goal.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

Nineteen community stakeholders in a southeastern United States county participated (see Table 1).¹ This

| # | EMPLOYER | TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT | ROLE IN EARLY LITERACY COALITION |
|----|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Self-employed therapist | Private | Executive Committee Member |
| 2 | United Way | Non-Profit | Executive Committee Member |
| 3 | United Way | Non-Profit | Executive Committee Member |
| 4 | Library representative | City | Executive Committee Member |
| 5 | Partnership for Children | Non-Profit | Coalition Member |
| 6 | United Way | Non-Profit | Coalition Member |
| 7 | Children's librarian | City | Coalition Member |
| 8 | Children's librarian | City | Coalition Member |
| 9 | Community Action Representative | Private | Coalition Member |
| 10 | Development Commission | County | Coalition Member |
| 12 | City Council and university | City; State | Coalition Member |
| 13 | Children's librarian | County | Coalition Member |
| 14 | Community-focused business owner | Non-profit | Coalition Member |
| 15 | Hospital administrator | Private | Coalition Member |
| 16 | Director of State Latino Org | Non-profit | Coalition Member |
| 17 | University administrator | State | Coalition Member |
| 18 | Educator/Founder of local non-profit | Non-profit | Coalition Member |
| 19 | Children's librarian | County | Coalition Member |
| 20 | Local business executive | Private | Executive Committee Member |

Table 1 Participant Information.

Note: Types of employment = city, county, state, non-profit, private; Role in Early Literacy Coalition = coalition member or executive committee member.

study underwent university institutional review board (IRB) approval so in order to maintain the confidentiality of participants, the county where the study occurred, and other identifying information will be withheld. Approximately, 50 concerned citizens attended each community meeting that occurred in the planning stages of the coalition and were the primary source for participants. Those invited for interviews were chosen because of their early, ongoing, and deep commitment (e.g., more than 6 months to a year) and contribution of time and expertise to the effort. The participant recruitment list was created through Amanda's nomination of people who were highly involved and committed to the work and compiled by the principal investigator. In addition, each person interviewed was asked to review the most current nomination list and nominate anyone else they felt should be on the list as a founding stakeholder but was not. A total of 27 community members were contacted for an interview. Of those who were not interviewed, most were due to time and schedule conflicts. A small number of possible participants did not respond to phone or email attempts to schedule a time to talk. The stakeholders came from an array of employment backgrounds, with the majority stemming from the nonprofit sector ($n = 7$). Four

stakeholders were from the city sector, three originated from the county sector, one was from the state sector, and four stakeholders were from the private sector. Stakeholders represent various employers including early intervention, non-profit agencies, community organizations, the university, and persistently committed volunteers. It is important to note participant number 11 was omitted because although they completed the consent forms, they did not complete an interview to participate in the study.

DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and conducted with each community stakeholder, averaging 50 minutes (range 30 – 105 minutes) in length. Questions were related to personal history and beliefs concerning reading aloud, early literacy and school readiness, current community initiatives and programs to support early literacy, personal motivation for joining the coalition, and ways in which we can improve school readiness for children by creating a culture of literacy across the region (See Appendix A). Additional demographic questions were also addressed. All interviews were conducted by the principal investigator. Interviews were converted to transcripts through high quality transcription and field

notes were typed by the principal investigator during and after each interview. An Excel file was compiled to organize interviewees by participant ID, name, transcription date, and employer.

The first author, an African American community participant and faculty member, was a PhD-level researcher and completed all of the interviews. The second author was an African American Masters student, community member and parent who was deeply involved in data collection and analysis and supervised by the first author. The third author, a Caucasian speech-language pathologist, was the person who helped to start the Coalition (“Amanda”) and also one of those interviewed. Finally, author four was a Caucasian Masters’s student and community member.

Data Analysis

The process of developing codes for potential themes was thorough to ensure all codes were captured. First, two of the authors read four of the interviews and documented potential codes. After comparing potential codes during team meetings, the two authors developed an initial coding index for the data. Next, another author reviewed the same four interviews, noting and discussing any new codes that may need to be created. This process provided an exhaustive list of codes that were explicitly defined by all authors. The final list of primary codes included: (a) Books from Birth involvement/role, (b) reasons for involvement, (c) Imagination Library, (d) importance of reading to young children, (e) forming of coalition (June 2016 and forward), (f) coalition (before June 2016), and (g) looking ahead/forward.

The codes and sub-codes were entered into NVivo (version 11) for formal coding. First, two of the authors coded the first four interviews and percent agreement was assessed to confirm acceptable inter-rater reliability (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Patton, 1990). The pair had over 90% agreement across all codes. They then divided the remaining transcripts between themselves and coded them independently. Once the coding was complete, the first two authors reviewed the coding across all units to ensure consistency.

RESULTS

To align with understanding individual’s motives for participation in the formation of the early literacy coalition, the focus for the current paper was data coded “reasons for involvement” and “the importance of early literacy”. These two codes focus on (a) why stakeholders decided to get involved in the coalition and (b) the impacts of early literacy and school readiness at the societal level. When reflecting on why they became involved in the early literacy coalition, responses varied. Four participants described how their current

employment or position led them to become involved in the coalition’s work. A United Way representative shared how his involvement was a logical step in his work, since early literacy was already organizationally identified as important, stating,

I started to recognize that one of our goals was to increase kindergarten readiness, but we were only giving a very small grant to Nurse Family Partnership, and it was the only early literacy program that we were funding.

Another stakeholder from the United Way shared how the collaborative focus of the early literacy coalition was central to their mission, “...from the organization’s perspective, you know, these are the kinds of things, we say...our current business model says, we can be the neutral table for the community to come together.”

However, many shared motivators beyond the goals of their organization or employer. They discussed a greater, more personal motivation for their work with the early literacy coalition. Most stakeholders reflected on how the opportunity to be involved was a merging of personal interests and professional goals. One children’s librarian said,

I actually have a degree in elementary ed. I’ve worked in the library, pretty much started volunteering when I was in middle school, just reading to kids that I would see, just helping out. Having that love for books, it starts early.

Several stakeholders discussed how their personal lives and relationships, either as a child or adult, impacted the way they prioritize the importance of early literacy and reading aloud. A United Way representative shared,

So, it was definitely... it was a passion of mine. My mom’s a school teacher, 3rd grade, my sister is too, so I think that’s kind of helped me with this role and being able to understand the big picture and how teachers are affected. So, it’s always been a passion of mine, and I value education.

Another stakeholder, who identified as a science educator, shared about how a personal early literacy connection really struck a chord and motivated her to join in, stating:

Well, this is more personal. When I had kids, I used to read to them every night. It was kind of part of our routine, and I even read to them when they were in their teens, because it was just our time together, and we just read more difficult books as they got older, but it’s a really cool family time. So, I love the concept. And that’s how she presented

it – the fact that we need to get people to read to their kids.

Stakeholders also discussed the potential damaging effects of illiteracy throughout the lifespan. One community action representative stated:

Books are just such a principal part of my life and have been since I was a little kid. Libraries are where I used to go hang out. So to think about that piece missing from someone's life, and people, kids actually showing up to school not knowing how to, you know that a book would be a foreign thing to them. That was incredibly compelling, and I thought if there's a way that I can be beneficial and have an impact, this is one way.

Another participant, who owns a community-focused business, shared,

I got young people that are 21 years old and struggling to get their license, but I understand that they're struggling to read and understand the problems, so reading at that basic level is kind of the platform that we're going to build a brain and a mind and a future off of, so I easily get it. It's necessary.

Finally, one participant, a local business executive, reflected upon the promise of books and literacy:

I think education obviously is a key piece of it, and that's a very broad term, I understand. But kind of underneath that, I think it opens minds, it opens hearts, it opens windows to opportunity, and certainly I don't read as much as I probably should, but growing up there was an almost compulsive need to read in our house, so I'm sort of singularly obsessed, as a reading specialist [their mother]. She just really will beat that drum consistently, and I can say that there's probably no better.

Stakeholders stressed the importance of early literacy and school readiness in the county. Many mentioned how literacy has impacts at the societal level, while others referenced research to support their stance. Three are shared here:

So, this is not just a "do-gooder" kind of thing, (she later went on to say) It is good for the community, it's good for the individual, but it's also good for all of us. We (the Community Development Commission) really do have a vested interest here. If our children can't do well, if they can't read and master other materials, then all the work that we do is useless (Development Commission).

You know the research keeps painting out the first 2000 days are important (Partnership Representative).

[The local hospital]'s becoming much more interested in the health disparities of our population and those factors that lead to better health, and we feel like having access to nutritious food, having access to education, being able to finish school, and this was the research related to Books from Birth. So we felt like that even though it might not seem intuitive to some people, but Dr. and I really believed that in our population we have a great opportunity to improve health outcomes (Hospital administrator).

Through interviews with key stakeholders, we discovered a deep personal commitment to the work that went beyond participants' paid positions. The personal commitment was driven by their experiences as a child, raising their own children, and valuing the benefits of early literacy to the society.

DISCUSSION

The impact of poor early literacy and school readiness within a community can be detrimental to the individual and the wider society. Each high school dropout costs a community \$260,000 in lost earnings, tax revenues and productivity (Annual Report, pg. 5) and individuals with low literacy skills are more than four times as likely to report low health status as those with high levels of literacy skills (Hernandez, 2012). Contrary to this, investments in early childhood education show a return on investment of 13% (García et al., 2017). This may be where community partnerships can assist with changing trajectories. Effective partnerships ultimately improve health outcomes for children and families (Miller et al., 2012). With this in mind, community members in the focus county came together to increase early literacy and school readiness in their region by partnering and creating a literacy coalition.

Successful partnerships call for a deep understanding and respect of each partner's goals and skills, resource-sharing, and commitment to the project (Miller et al., 2012). In fact, the main focus of a reciprocal partnership is the sharing of resources to assist each other in achieving the stated goals for the partnership. In this study, the stakeholders were knowledgeable of this, and expressed the need to connect organizations and share resources in order to reach their shared goal. The primary goal of this partnership was to obtain the most optimal impact on cultivating a culture of literacy and aiding with school readiness within the county. Stakeholders also expressed the need to find additional community partners who are not yet involved so

that they could contribute by assisting in spreading awareness of the coalition's mission, and possibly by serving as funders or collaborators. Additionally, partnering with the community has the potential to yield more effective and sustainable interventions for establishing a culture of literacy (Derosé et al., 2014). This potential has become evident with the stakeholders who have formed a local coalition of partnerships. Many of the members voiced how the utilization of the existing partnerships can serve as a gateway for future interventions, in addition to the enhancement of current literacy and school readiness efforts already in place. Building the programming core at the local libraries to make them more inclusive of other age ranges, placing more emphasis on providing more awareness to parents, focusing on populations that are not being reached, and making early literacy a community-wide effort were specific recommendations mentioned by stakeholders to intervene at the community level and become more effective in achieving the coalition's mission. Lastly, through this study, stakeholder motivations for involvement in the literacy coalition were expressed. Stakeholders were motivated by both individual passion and potential impacts on the community. It is important to note, motivations such as these are necessary in order to maintain the drive and patience required to bring the coalition's mission into fruition.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study is an example of how building a coalition of concerned citizens can illustrate the impact of reciprocal relationships, more can be learned about the maintenance of cross-sector partnerships and how roles and membership change over time. Future research could include follow-up interviews with stakeholders to see if individual motivations have changed, and whether or not the recommendations provided in the initial interviews were taken into consideration and attempted or even amended. Furthermore, additional stakeholders who did not take part in the first round of interviews could be contacted and interviewed about their participation and motivations.

When families, schools, and community institutions create goals and collectively decide how to reach them, everyone benefits. Through collaborative efforts, families are given opportunities to contribute to their children's education, community institutions anticipate educated and better-equipped citizens, and schools gain the informed support of both families and community members. Involving the community in literacy initiatives can potentially extend opportunities to children and their families. By working together, schools, families, and communities can prepare for a more promising future. Functional, passionate partnerships are key.

NOTE

- ¹ Authors are happy to share the de-identified data sets for the anonymous county upon request.

ADDITIONAL FILE

The additional file for this article can be found as follows:

- **Appendix A.** Interview questions. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33596/coll.100.s1>

FUNDING INFORMATION

This research is funded by East Carolina University's Engagement and Outreach Scholars Academy (EOSA) Program and the Office of Academic Affairs.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Sheresa Boone Blanchard  orcid.org/0000-0002-4205-685X
East Carolina University, US

Shawnice Johnson
Virginia Tech, IN

Jennifer Stone
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, USA

Kaitlyn Seay Call
East Carolina University, US

REFERENCES

- Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G.** (1985). On Becoming A Nation Of Readers: The Report of The Commission on Reading. National Institute of Education.
- Bringle, R., & Steinberg, K.** (2010). Educating for informed community involvement. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(3), 428–441.
- Buys, N., & Bursnall, S.** (2007). Establishing university–community partnerships: Processes and benefits. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 29(1), 73–86.
- Chaney, C.** (2014). Bridging the gap: Promoting intergenerational family literacy among low-income, African American families. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 83(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.1.0029>
- Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L.** (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124–131. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

- Derose, K., Marsh, T., Mariscal, M., Pina-Cortez, S., & Cohen, D.** (2014). Involving community stakeholders to increase park use and physical activity. *Preventive Medicine*, 64, 14-19.
- Dickinson, D. K., & Tabors, P. O.** (Eds.). (2001). *Building literacy with language: Young children learning at home and school*. Baltimore: Brookes. <https://www.amazon.com/Beginning-Literacy-Language-Children-Learning/dp/155766479X>
- García, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J.** (2017). *Quantifying the life-cycle benefits of a prototypical early childhood program* (No. w23479). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Hernandez, D. J.** (2012). *Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved September 20, 2017 from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy/>
- Knudsen, E. I., Heckman, J. J., Cameron, J. L., & Shonkoff, J. P.** (2006). Economic, neurobiological, and behavioral perspectives on building America's future workforce. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 103(27), 10155-10162. doi:10.1073/pnas.0600888103
- Literacy Volunteers of Anonymous.** (2017). Anonymous Literacy. Retrieved from [Anonymous]
- Lunze, K., & Paasche-Orlow, M. K.** (2014). Limited literacy and poor health: The role of social mobility in Germany and the United States. *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(2), 15-18.
- Malm, E., Eberle, S., Calamia, J., & Prete, G.** (2012). Building Sustainable Campus-Community Partnerships: A Reciprocal-Relationship Model. *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*, 3(2), 78-98.
- Miller, A., Krusky, A., Franzen, S., Cochran, S., & Zimmerman, M.** (2012). Partnering to translate evidence-based programs to community settings: Bridging the gap between research and practice. *Health Promotion Practice*, 13(4), 559-566.
- National Association of Educational Progress**, 2021. National Achievement-Level Results https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/nation/achievement/?grade=4
- National Center for Educational Statistics.** (2016). *National Assessment of Adult Literacy*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/>.
- National Institute for Literacy.** (2008). *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel – A Scientific Synthesis of Early Literacy Development and Implications for Intervention*. Retrieved from <https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf>.
- Patton, M.** (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Sinclair, E. M., McCleery, E. J., Koepsell, L., Zuckerman, K. E., & Stevenson, E. B.** (2018). Home literacy environment and shared reading in the newborn period. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 39(1), 66-71. doi:10.1097/DBP.0000000000000521
- Suskind, D.** (2015). *Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain*. New York, New York: Dutton.
- U.S. Census Bureau.** (2016). *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016*. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Blanchard, S. B., Johnson, S., Stone, J., & Call, K. S. (2023). Reciprocal Relationships: A Community Vision. *Collaborations: A Journal of Community-Based Research and Practice*, 6(1): 2, pp. 1-9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33596/coll.100>

Published: 06 March 2023

COPYRIGHT:

© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Collaborations: A Journal of Community-Based Research and Practice is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by University of Miami Libraries.

