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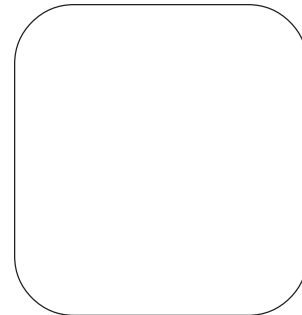


Cambridge ELOA Program Accelerating Early Language and Literacy for Children, Families & Providers

“Through the course I learned that we have a duty to introduce a variety of literature to children—story books, expository books, nursery rhymes, making up silly words, using different sounds, and storytelling. All of these are vital for literacy development of young children.”
 —Home visitor, Literacy and Language Development course

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“Because of English class I can understand many more things when my daughter’s teacher writes letters home. My children speak English very fast. Now I understand them better. My daughter helps me with my homework, and I can help her a little too!”

—Parent, Adult Basic Education class

Program Goals

- Enhance early education, childcare and family services
- Integrate services for children, families, and providers
- Serve high-risk, low-income children and families
- Support professional development
- Provide parenting education and activities
- Provide adult education
- Share materials and resources
- Promote collaboration between child care and education providers
- Track early educational interventions

Program Purpose

In response to the needs of a diverse population of infants, toddlers and young children, their parents, teachers and child care providers, the Cambridge Early Learning Opportunities Act Program (ELOA) is dedicated to providing integrated services and programs that promote and encourage early learning and literacy.

Thanks to a grant from the Child Care Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, several members of the 0-8 Council created the program, *Accelerating Early Language and Literacy for Children, Families and Providers*, a comprehensive approach to educating young children and those who care for them. These early education specialists work within the Cambridge Public Schools, the Department of Human Services, the

“Our children’s success in school and life depends on it. So read, read, and read some more.”

Public Health Department and related organizations. The grant has increased collaboration throughout the early childhood community and has led to the development of innovative activities throughout Cambridge.

To address the school achievement gap for low-income, high-risk populations, ELOA partners have been collaborating on new ways to affect early education through refining and expanding quality learning and literacy experiences for children in home-based and center-based settings. These include curriculum development for children and adults, college-level professional development courses, family support, parent-child activities, adult basic education, multilingual home visiting, child care education for pregnant and new mothers, and community access to curriculum and technology.

ELOA Program Partners

Agenda for Children

Cambridge Health Alliance, Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge Police Department, Department of Human Services Programs

Center for Families

Department of Human Services, Childcare and Family Support Division

Child Care Resource Center

Nonprofit Resource & Referral Agency

Community Learning Center

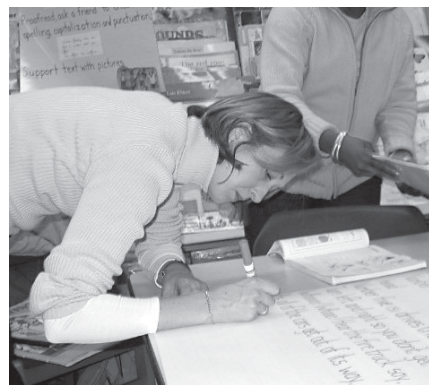
Department of Human Services

Early Childhood Connections/

Cambridge Community Partnerships for Children
 Cambridge Public Schools

English Language Learners Home-Based Program
 (formerly Bilingual Home-Based Program)
 Cambridge Public Schools

Read to Me/First Steps Early Care Internship Program
 Cambridge Public Schools



Assessment Tools & Enhanced Curriculum

The ELOA Program is developing two assessment tools to measure literacy and learning levels of young children—

- The AELL (Assessment of Early Language and Literacy Development) is designed to assist teachers in assessing what children know and implementing curriculum to meet the needs of all the children.
- The BELA (Bilingual Early Language and Literacy Assessment) will be used to assess children's early learning and literacy skills in English and their home language. It can be administered in home-based and in family child care settings. The BELA is being developed in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole and Mandarin.



"I learned to do a lot more writing for and with children. I have come to understand that language and literacy are not separate skills. They are developing at the same time, and we, as educators of young children, must encourage all aspects of learning to read and write."

—Child care provider about ESOL program



"The experience of administering the AELL assessment tool led us to listen more actively to children's language during all aspects of the program and to be aware of appropriate goals for all our four-year-olds."

—Preschool Teacher/Director,
Department of Human Services

Mini-Grants

ELOA Mini-Grants support innovative projects in a variety of settings, including child care centers, family child care and preschools, programs for homeless families, and social service agencies. Projects have included writing new curriculum, building small libraries, technology training for providers, arts education, and accreditation support for staff.

The following organizations received ELOA Mini-Grants to expand resources, introduce curriculum, and support training for children, parents, and providers—

- Bigelow Cooperative Day Care Center
- The Cambridge Hospital
- Cambridge/Somerville Family Child Care Accreditation Support Group
- Catholic Charities
- East Cambridge Preschool
- The Family Center
- Garden Nursery School
- Harvard Yard Child Care Center
- Jam'Nastics, Inc.
- King Open Preschool
- Peabody Terrace Children's Center
- Salvation Army/Our Place Child Care Center for Homeless Families

"Ninety percent of our children are bilingual. Since starting the training I am listening harder to what children say. I have learned to rephrase and prompt them more. For example, "Tell me more" and "What do you think?" I have adjusted what I say to individual children's language ability levels."

—Preschool Teacher about ESOL class for staff development

The Cambridge ELOA Program is funded through a grant to the Cambridge 0-8 Council from the US Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Bureau under the Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA).

The Cambridge Public Schools serves as the fiscal agent for the ELOA Program, which began in September 2002 and will end in September 2004.

Direct Services to Young Children

Infants, toddlers and young children benefit from the ELOA Program at child care and preschool, in playgroups, at home and in the community. Improved teaching skills contribute to more understanding of childhood development, refined curriculum and more appropriate plans and programs. Several parent-child playgroups have been added citywide as a result of joint efforts among agencies, including the Early Intervention Program. Children have had opportunities to attend parent-child activities, including reading parties and events with art and literacy activities. Through collaborations between the ELOA Partners, more books and computers are available to more children in many settings. Children also benefit from inter-generational learning, a key component in any successful family literacy program.



"As a bilingual parent, I was most interested in how to support my child's native language development and have my child be proud to be raised in a non-English speaking country."

—Parent whose family received home-based services



"Having this group helped me and my daughter integrate into a new community, and it gave me really important information about child development. As a new parent, I recommend this type of group as an essential part of parenting."

—Mother in Infant Support Group

Parent Supports

ELOA involves parents in many ways. Parents are offered classes in Adult Basic Education classes, GED preparation, ESOL and computer skills. Parents and children are involved in learning together through home visits to recently immigrated families by multilingual literacy staff. In prenatal classes and mother support groups, on maternity wards and through newborn visits, parents-to-be and new parents learn about the importance of talking to infants to build early literacy skills.

Teen parents and students interested in caring for young children have had classes at the high school on infant literacy education taught by an artist and an author of children's books. The students learned how to read to infants and babies and how to make books, and the children received gift books from local publishers.



"I appreciate the numerous discussions around assessment that have helped teachers in setting goals for the language program in their preschool rooms. Teachers enjoy the one-on-one time with children while doing the assessment. It is precious time."

—Assistant Child Care Center Director in Early Childhood Connections class.



"I want to improve my English to be able to communicate with parents about their children's day."

—Child care provider enrolled in Adult Basic Education Class

Database/ Web-Based Application

ELOA has been working closely with the Cambridge Public Schools Office of Technology to design an integrated web-based collection system. The database application will make it possible to collect data on children's earliest experiences, confidentially and securely. Data may be used to compare the effects of early learning on later school success or to learn about program effectiveness and the influence of parent involvement, staff development, adult literacy and related issues.

