

Introduction

This problem-solution report addresses the issue with literacy among adults and children in the West Lafayette area. Understanding that funding might be an issue for large projects, I am suggesting a way that Purdue University can help the situation without spending a large amount of money.

The purpose of this report is to propose a solution and to make it possible for those in need of literary help to find it. I understand the audience of this report to be major decision makers like Dean Hynd, stakeholders including the illiterate children and adults in the West Lafayette community, and the faculty of the College of Education at Purdue.

The goal of this report is to inform the community that literacy is a problem, and we need to do something to improve it. If individuals are able to gain knowledge, understanding, and confidence from this program, the result will excel Purdue in the field of education, while still benefiting the community.

In the next section, I will inform you of the basics of my proposed solution.

Solution Overview

To improve the literacy of the West Lafayette community, I propose that Purdue University should start a literacy program that works through the Education Department. This program will include many important aspects regarding literacy. I understand that there are many different types of literacy. This program, however, will specifically work to improve an individuals reading, writing, and comprehension skills.

If the program should be implemented Purdue would work with Education majors through the Education Department. These Purdue students would actively participate in the program as tutors. This program would benefit the children who need tutoring, and the Purdue students who need experience in the classroom.

The next section covers the problems with literacy in the community and the United States.

Background

Literacy is a problem in the United States, whether we want to believe it or not. According to Sarah Mahurt, a Purdue University professor specializing in literacy, twenty six percent of eighth graders in 2003 lacked basic reading skills (Mahurt, Enns 76). The National Assessment of Adult Literacy says that in 2005 fourteen percent of adults in the United States lack basic literary skills (O'Connell B5). Both children and adults are affected by problems with literacy.

I do not know if it is possible to eliminate the problem with literacy; however, I do believe that we can improve the situation. Many of the individuals struggling with literacy issues are simply

in need of one-on-one assistance. They need someone to teach them to read, write or understand something. With help from others, I believe we could help many people lead better lives.

I learned much of this background information through initial research. I will provide you with some of this information in the next section.

Initial Research

I have used numerous search engines like Academic Search Premier, Lexis Nexis, and Google for information concerning literacy. With the search engines provided by the Purdue University Library site, the information was much more specific and relevant to the topic. The Google search included many unrelated links which made the process frustrating. However, many links to homepages and sites that help with literacy issues popped up. There were too many to choose from, and that can make the process of finding help even more difficult. Purdue and the community need to personally reach out and provide the help necessary. This way, those in need of help will have a readily available source to start their learning process.

I surveyed 25 students to find the following:

- If they believe literacy is a problem
- If they actually know what literacy is
- How much knowledge they know about literacy
- Their views on its importance.

The results and findings from the survey are outlined in the next section.

Survey Results

This survey had both open and closed questions. Forced choice, multiple choice, rating and essay types of questions were used. I chose to conduct this survey in order to get a perspective on how college students perceive literacy. I interviewed random students from Purdue University. I chose to do this randomly so I would get a true perspective into how many different people think about literacy. The results showed that college students believe that literacy is a problem. This feedback was helpful in letting me know that literacy is an issue that needs to have more consideration and be a higher priority.

Ninety two percent of students surveyed believe that literacy is a problem in the United States. When asked how important literacy is in our society today, the students responded with an average score of seven point six four on a one to ten scale. To test the understanding of the meaning of literacy, I asked the students to define literacy in their own terms. The number one response was, "Being able to read and write." According to *Merriam-Webster Online*, the actual definition for literacy is the quality or state of being literate. They define literate as able to read and write ("Merriam-Webster Online"). I think that college students have a pretty good grasp on the definition of literacy.

I asked the students surveyed if they knew the percentage of adults in the United States that lacked basic literary skills. Thirty six percent of the students believed that fourteen percent of adults in the U.S. lack basic literary skills. This answer correlates with the response given about literacy being a problem.

On the survey, students were asked to give suggestions on ways to improve literacy throughout the United States. Most responded with providing more classes and programs to those with literacy problems.

The table below represents the answers given by 25 college students surveyed.

Question	Response	
Is literacy a problem?	92% Yes	8% No
What percent of adults lack basic literary skills?	36% Correct Answer (14%)	64 % Incorrect Answer
How important is the issue of literacy?	Average answer = 7.64/10	

Figure 1

In the next section, I will describe in detail my proposed plan to help improve the literacy of the West Lafayette community.

Proposal

In order to help children and adults with literacy problems, I am proposing to implement a program that will help to benefit these individuals in the future. This program will be a part of an already instituted course at Purdue University and will be available to anyone in the Lafayette area who asks for help. It is important that Purdue get involved because it will greatly benefit the community and its residences.

There are many literacy programs already instituted in the United States. The problem is that they lack funding, staff or tutors, and availability. Both Purdue and the community would benefit from instituting this program into the education curriculum.

I am proposing to start a literacy program that would reach out to the children of the community. I believe that turning this program into a course project for education majors is the most beneficial way. The project will be cost efficient and there is no need to find volunteers if the students are involved.

The project will take place at the West Lafayette Public Library (WLPL). This is a good location because it is located near campus and is in the West Lafayette area. The Purdue University students who will be tutoring and the children being tutored will easily be able to meet at this location. The others students coming from neighboring areas will easily be able to access this site as well.

The literacy project will help the Purdue University Education majors as well. They will have the opportunity to have students of their own. While having the responsibility of teaching reading, writing, and comprehension skills, the Purdue students will have to prepare weekly schedules and plans for the children they are tutoring. These Purdue students will gain teaching experience and knowledge for the work force.

To push the Purdue students to strive for the best, they will be graded on a variety of different things. First, the students will have to turning their lesson plans for the week. They are not required to cover a certain amount of material, for the children's sake. However, they will be graded on content and development. Second, the students will be given a grade on how well they interact with the children. This is done through an observational visit by the instructor or TA.

Lastly, a small portion of the student's grade will be determined by the child and parent of the child being tutored. A questionnaire will be sent to the families of children participating with the project. They will score you based on how well the child feels he/she connects with the Purdue student as well as the parent's observations of the child's progress. I recognize that this program will not significantly reduce literacy rates or get rid of the literacy problem all together; however, this is a start to improving literacy in the West Lafayette community and surrounding areas.

The next section helps to outline the events I have taken in order to make this proposal relevant and credible.

Method

I started researching this project through the work of an inquiry paper. I began with the question, "How can we improve literacy in West Lafayette and surrounding areas?" From there, I did inquiry research and followed my way through large amounts of information. That information lead me to this problem-solution report.

While working on the problem-solution report, I began doing empirical research. I planned out the steps on how to investigate my topic further with the help of a research methodology worksheet and map. I needed electronic and empirical sources to use in the report.

The electronic sources I had already acquired during my inquiry research. I still, however, had to research deeper into some subjects. I did this by using Google and the Purdue website. I decided to conduct a survey to fulfill the need for empirical sources. This survey informed me about literacy awareness. Once I had completed my empirical research, I began writing the problem-solution report.

In the next section, I will outline the necessary events to accomplish the project.

Timeline

The following tasks need to be completed:

Task	Time
Arrange a time and space for meeting with the children at the West Lafayette Public Library	2 weeks
Contact local elementary schools about perspective students	4 weeks
Purchase supplies for project	2 weeks
Place students and tutors together	3 weeks
Assign child to Purdue student at beginning of semester	1 week
Have the Purdue students prepare a lesson plan for their students	Week by week basis
Have Purdue students teach for the semester	14 weeks
Total Time	~25 weeks (some overlapping events)

Figure 2

The timeline I have set up for this program has been estimated based on the difficulty of each task and how detailed each step needs to be. When contacting the West Lafayette Public Library, it is crucial to set up a time that will not conflict with the tutor or the child. Also, someone should inquire about a specific room that might be available for the tutoring to take place. This will eliminate distractions and help the process go much more smoothly.

Contacting the elementary schools in order to find children who need help with their literary skills is important. This could take a considerable amount of time if done properly. Each student needs to be evaluated based on need. The children with more need will be submitted into the program for assistance.

Purchasing supplies won't take long at all. All that is necessary is to make a few phone calls and consult the budget. Assigning children to tutors will be a considerable task. The schedule must make it possible for each student and child to have a set meeting time. With varying schedules this could prove to be a difficulty.

The rest of the semester and program should go by pretty smoothly. The Purdue students will have to take it upon themselves to compile lesson plans that adhere to the child's needs. The last thing that needs to be done is the session observations. This task will be about scheduling, and it will all be a great profit in the end.

Everything necessary to make this literacy program a success is compiled into a budget. The main costs come from the teaching materials required by the tutors.

Budget

I have composed a budget for the creation of this literacy program. The total cost for establishing this program is estimated to be \$3,500 per year. This cost is very small compared to what Purdue spends each year on other programs.

In order for this program to be successful, there are a number of materials that are needed. We will need to buy materials that enable the tutors and children to achieve their goals. I am estimating that approximately one hundred children will be involved in this program each semester. The following table outlines the materials that are necessary throughout the semester.

Material	Individual Cost	Amount	Cost for semester
Paper	\$3.00/ 500 sheets	100,000 sheets	\$600
Ink	\$60/ cartridge	10 cartridges	\$600
Notebooks	\$1.00/ notebook	200 notebooks	\$200
Pencils	\$0.78/ dozen pencils	40 dozen pencils	\$375
Total Cost per semester			\$1,775
Total Cost per year			\$3,550

Figure 3

I acquired all of the cost information through research done on the web. The paper and ink researched are the prices for the products that Purdue University uses first hand on campus (i.e. HP8100DN printer and Xerox printer paper).

Paper and ink are necessary because the tutors will need to print out worksheets to help the children with tasks such as the following: comprehension questions after reading a book, a template for practicing their writing, and for creating spellings tests or quizzes of some sort. The notebooks will be used for the child to write down note or questions for the tutor, and pencils will of course be used for writing on the worksheets or in the notebooks.

Because the project takes place at the WLPL, the location will help cut costs. This is because all of the literature is conveniently located in the same place, and there is no fee if you have a library card. Also, the library has computers that are available for the children and tutors to use. The Purdue students can easily access the WLPL by riding on the campus loop. The loop is free to Purdue University students and faculty, so this will also help cut back on cost.

The next section on staffing will go into detail on why this report is credible and workable.

Staffing

Ellen Stewart
First year Pre-Pharmacy major

My educational background gives me credibility. I have had four years of high school English, two of which were advanced courses. The current course I am enrolled in, ENGL106, has greatly improved my writing and research skills.

I also have a background in teaching. Over the summer I was a daycare teacher at Beginning Steps Daycare in Plainfield, IN. This job experience gave me insight into teaching methods and a child's ability to learn.

Conclusion

This problem-solution report addresses how to improve literacy rates and education levels in the West Lafayette area with the help of Purdue University and the community. It is important to know about literacy and to help solve the problem among children and adults.

My proposal to increase awareness about literacy and find a way to solve the problem with literacy will benefit Purdue University and the West Lafayette community in many ways. This proposal will not solve literacy problems throughout the United States. It will, however, spread awareness to neighboring communities and then hopefully make an even greater difference.

Purdue University stresses the importance of education through its mission statement: "...engagement through exchange of knowledge." This proposal stands to help Purdue fulfill its mission statement and help the students who attend Purdue take steps toward a brighter future.

The next step of this project is to accept my proposal and make this literacy program possible. It will contribute to the continued success Purdue University exhibits on a yearly basis. I can be reached through my email address at ecstewar@purdue.edu. I recommend you consider my proposal. In order for Purdue to benefit from this program, it has to be operational and effective.

Works Cited

“Discount Office Supplies.” Discountofficesupplies.com. 2003. 25 Apr. 2006

<<http://www.discountofficesupplies.com/ce/shop/ui?refr=www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=Andsafe=off&rls=HPIA2CHPIA3A2005-212CHPIA3Aen&q=copy%20paper>>.

“Merriam-Webster Online.” Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2006. 25 Apr. 2006 <<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>>.

Mahurt, Sarah, and Beverly Enns. “How To Improve Reading Instruction.” District Administration 41.10 (2005): 76.

“Notebooks-Wirebound.” Staples. 2006. 27 Apr. 2006

<<http://www.staples.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?ts=1146196893923&storeId=10001&categoryId=10184&cmArea=SEARCH&catalogId=10051&langId=-1>>.

O’Connell, Brenda Green. “Time, Money Will Improve Literacy.” South Bend Tribune 30 Dec. 2005: B5.

“Search Results.” Databazaar.com. 2006. 27 Apr. 2006

<<http://www.databazaar.com/databazaar.storefront/EN/usertemplate/35/UserTemplate/506>>.

“Staples® #2 Yellow Pencils.” Staples. 2006. 27 Apr. 2006

<<http://www.staples.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/StaplesProductDisplay?ts=1146196692824&storeId=10001&productId=111424&catalogId=10051&langId=-1&cmArea=SEARCH>>.

Appendix A

Survey

For: College students
Re: General knowledge of literacy

1. Is literacy a problem in the United States? (Circle one) Yes No

2. What percent of adults in the United States lack basic literary skills?
 - a. 5%
 - b. 14%
 - c. 27%
 - d. 50%

3. How would you define literacy?

4. How important do you think the issue of literacy is in our society on a scale of 1-10?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. What would you suggest society do to improve literacy?

Appendix B

P-S Report Writing Log

Task/ Reflection	Date	Time	Comments
Filled out Empirical worksheet and map.	4/11/2006	1 hour	
Prepared outline following rubric guidelines.	4/12/2006	1 hour	Easy with the help of the rubric.
Meeting with Allen about my solution	4/14/2006	20 min.	Gave me a better idea with the limited budget
Extra research	4/21/2006	1.5 hours	
Letter of Transmittal and Audience Analysis	4/23/2006	2 hours	Example online really helped and so did the assignment sheet
Cover page, title page, table of contents, introduction, and background	4/24/2006	2.5 hours	
Survey and survey results	4/25/2006	2 hours	Coming up with questions that everyone would interpret the same was a little intimidating at first
Initial research, proposal, and part of method	4/26/2006	2 hours	
Worked on final from peer edit comments and finishing sections	4/27/2006	5 hours	Page numbers are a pain!
Power point slides	4/27/2006	1 hour	
Meeting with Allen	4/28/2006	20 min.	Comments were helpful
Final revision of P-S Report	4/28/2006	1 hour	
	Total time:	19 hours and 40 min.	at \$25/ hour ~ \$490