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**Building Strong Ready To
Learn Outreach**

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Executive Summary

In 1995, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), the Department of Education, and the U.S. Congress created the Ready To Learn Television Program with the goal of helping to prepare children to succeed in school. The original grant was awarded by the Department of Education to CPB with PBS serving as a subcontractor. That grant ended in March 2000, and in September 2000, the Department awarded PBS a new cooperative agreement to continue Ready To Learn.

PBS strives to help prepare children to succeed in school by broadcasting children's television programming and working with PBS member stations across the country to provide outreach to inform parents, caregivers, and teachers how to extend the lessons in the programs. The 133 participating Ready To Learn stations are required to broadcast a minimum of 6½ hours of Ready To Learn children's programming each weekday, as well as educational messages between programs. The Ready To Learn coordinator at each station is responsible for conducting 20 outreach workshops per year, distributing 300 children's books per month to low-income families, distributing a biannual magazine, and engaging in professional development training.

As part of the new cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, PBS contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of Ready To Learn. This report summarizes the findings from two sources: (1) the first of a planned series of five annual Ready To Learn coordinator surveys, and (2) a study of the 2001 Ready To Learn Professional Development Seminar. All the information in this report is based on data gathered from the Ready To Learn coordinators and covers a period early in the implementation of Ready To Learn under the new cooperative agreement.

APPROACHES TO CONDUCTING WORKSHOPS WERE DIVERSE

Coordinators reported using a variety of strategies to attract workshop participants, conduct workshops, and distribute children's books and materials. Many coordinators worked with community partners to attract participants for workshops and distribute children's books.

Many coordinators conducted all workshops themselves, but some supervised a group of facilitators who conducted them. Many coordinators reported meeting or exceeding the requirement of conducting 20 workshops per year, and most others were well on their way to meeting it.

COORDINATORS' SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE PROVIDED A STRONG FOUNDATION

As a group, the Ready To Learn coordinators reported an array of skills, experiences, and educational backgrounds. Coordinators were highly educated; most held degrees from four-year colleges, and many held graduate degrees. Most coordinators brought years of experience in early childhood education and/or children's television programming to their jobs. Coordinators also reported high satisfaction with most aspects of their Ready To Learn positions.

COORDINATORS RATED THE 2001 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT A SUCCESS AND OFFERED SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE IT MORE USEFUL

Overall, coordinators rated the 2001 Professional Development Seminar a success and reported that it met their needs. Coordinators found the concurrent sessions challenging and recommended changes to the overall structure of the seminar that would allow them to attend all the offered sessions. They also identified key areas they would like to learn more about, including how to conduct effective workshops and outreach and how to raise additional funds for Ready To Learn.

STATION SUPPORT AND COORDINATOR COMMUNICATION MAY STRENGTHEN READY TO LEARN

Coordinators must meet the Ready To Learn professional development training requirement, and they need the support of their station supervisors to do so. Coordinators reported benefiting from meeting with and learning from other coordinators. Efforts to continue cross-station communications and interactions between the annual professional development seminars may strengthen local Ready To Learn outreach.

MORE COORDINATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL MAY SUPPORT LOCAL READY TO LEARN PROGRAMS

Community partnerships are essential for local stations to gain workshop participants and reach target populations. Therefore, it may be beneficial to create national-level partnership agreements with partners such as Head Start and Even Start to facilitate partnerships at the local level. Coordinators may also benefit from PBS working with Ready To Learn television program producers to catalog outreach resources and materials and coordinate translations of materials into other languages for coordinators to use.

Coordinators reported that their most pressing needs were for ready-made workshops, orientation and support for new coordinators, and prompt communication between Ready To Learn stations and the PBS Ready To Learn Department staff members. The PBS Ready To Learn Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center could play a central role in facilitating coordination among all major Ready To Learn stakeholders.

Ready To Learn is an ambitious program to encourage and enhance children's learning. We found that the coordinators who implement the program are enthusiastic about their jobs and dedicated to being effective in them. PBS may be able to strengthen the program further and provide more support for the coordinators through expanded national leadership and coordination.

I

Introduction and Station Overview

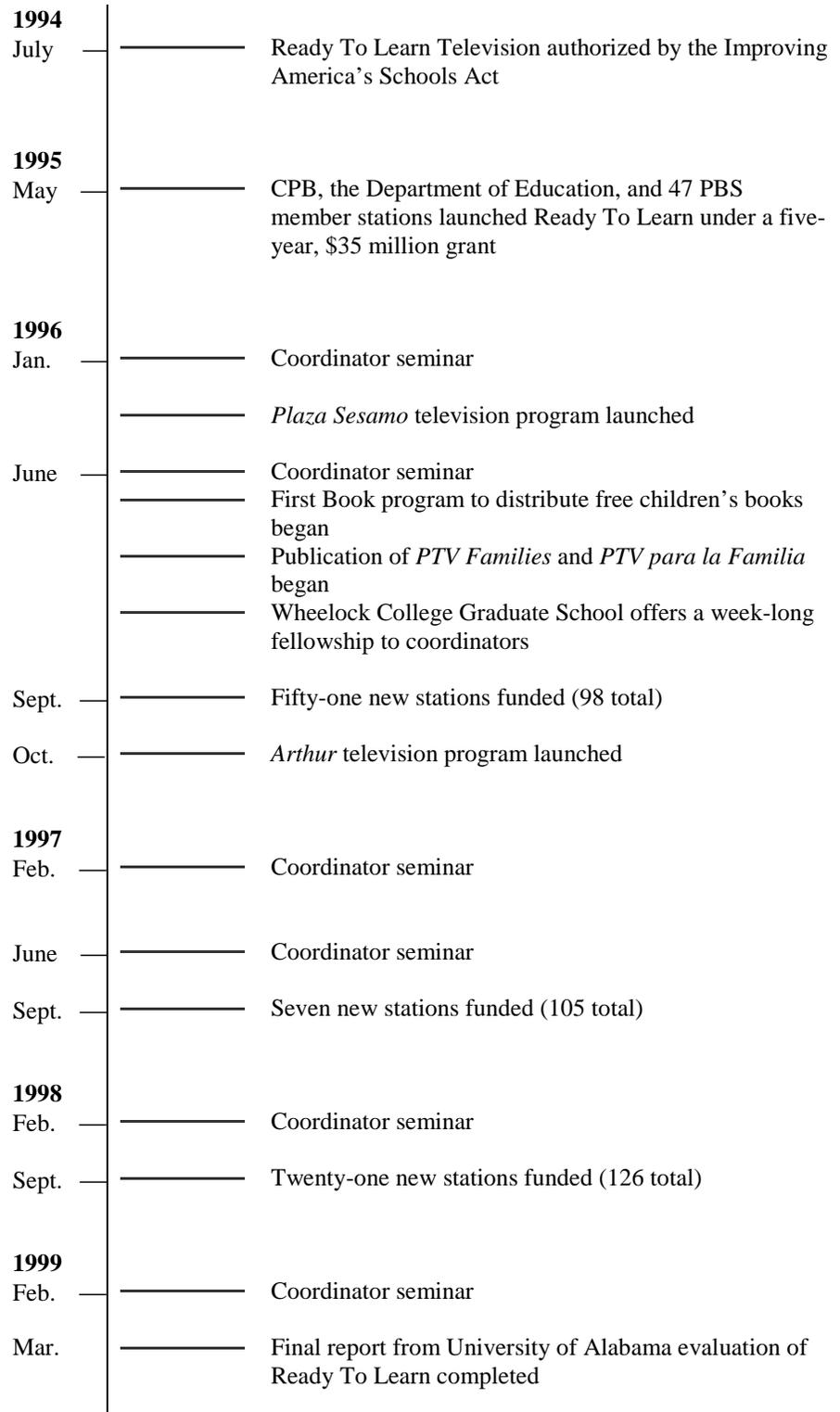
READY TO LEARN IS PUBLIC TELEVISION'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARD THE NATIONAL GOAL OF UNIVERSAL SCHOOL READINESS

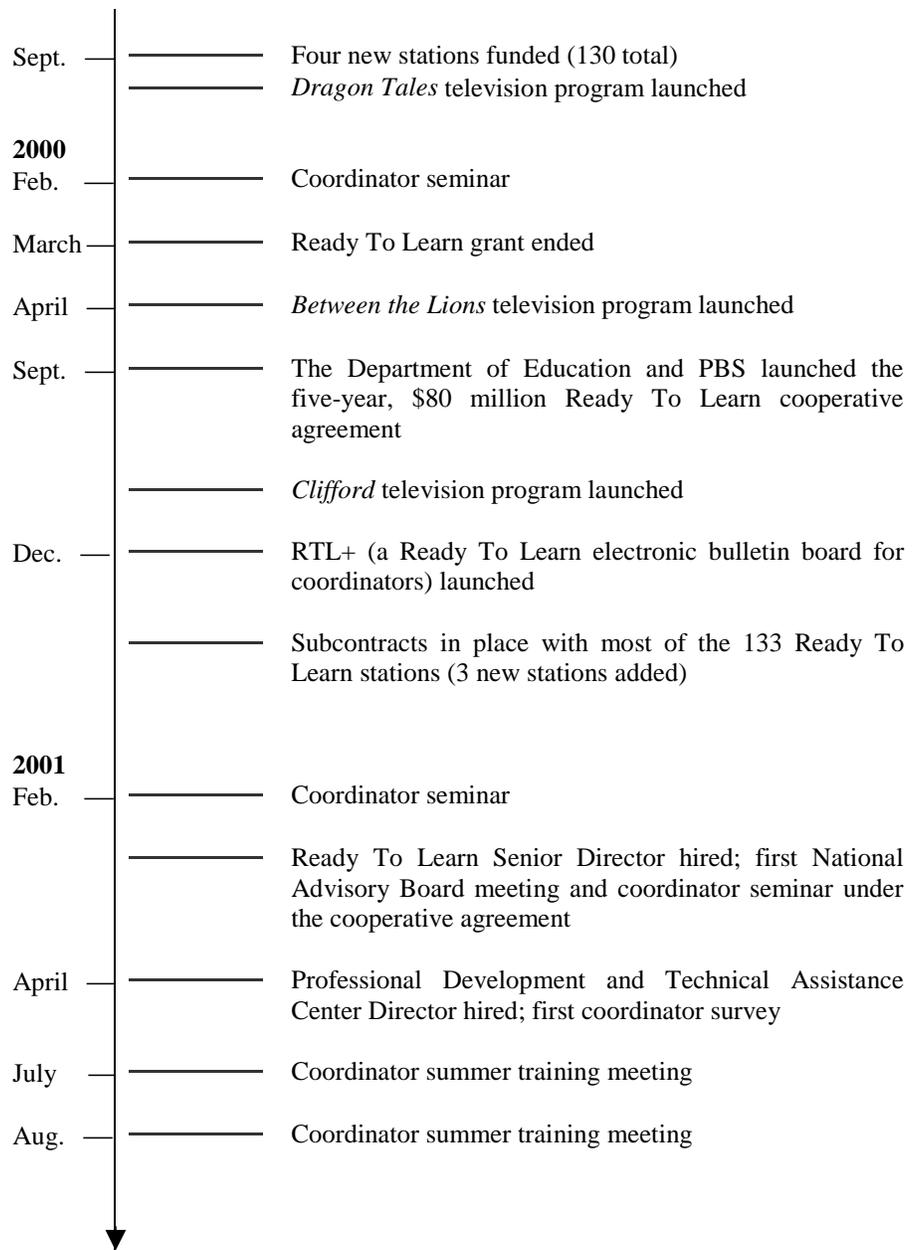
In 1995, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), the Department of Education, and the U.S. Congress created the Ready To Learn Television Program with the goal of helping to prepare children to succeed in school. Ready To Learn is based on the recommendations in Ernest Boyer's *Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation* (Boyer 1991). Ready To Learn has two primary components: (1) developing new children's educational television programming and online resources; and (2) supplementing new and existing children's television programs with outreach efforts to parents, caregivers, and teachers to help them use these programs as teaching tools with the children in their care. Outreach provided through Ready To Learn takes several forms, including conducting workshops and distributing the *PBS Families* and *PBS para la Familia* magazines and children's books (currently under the First Book program). The workshops themselves take many forms, although in general, the core goals are (1) to explain the curriculum within PBS children's programs, (2) to provide examples of how to extend the lessons in the programs, (3) to stress the importance of adult-child television covieing, and (4) to introduce ideas of media literacy and critical viewing. The program model has been dubbed the "View-Read-Do triangle" and refers to the idea that adult-child interaction following a workshop will involve viewing relevant programs or video clips, reading a children's book, and doing an activity, all of which have similar themes. The activities can be done in any order, although the adult is expected to make clear to the children the common themes and lessons among each of the activities.

The original five-year Ready To Learn grant was awarded by the Department of Education to CPB; PBS was a subcontractor to CPB. Over the course of the grant period, PBS assumed greater operational responsibility. The grant ended in March 2000, and the Department issued a request for proposals for a cooperative agreement to continue Ready To Learn. In September 2000, the Department awarded PBS a new cooperative agreement that contained new priorities and responsibilities. The agreement required a longitudinal, independent evaluation and specified the key elements to be included. See Figure I.1 for a timeline of key events.

FIGURE I.1

KEY EVENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READY TO LEARN





Under the cooperative agreement, PBS subcontracts with 133 local public television stations around the country (providing \$25,000 per station per year). Under the subcontract, Ready To Learn stations agree to broadcast 6½ hours of PBS children’s programming each weekday and to show Ready To Learn educational video spots between programs. Coordinators at each station are responsible for completing the following requirements under the cooperative agreement: (1) distribute *PBS Families* and *PBS para la Familia* magazine; (2) distribute 300 children’s books per month; (3) deliver at least 20 workshops per year to parents, caregivers/teachers, and others on ways to use television to enhance the learning of children ages 0 to 8; and (4) complete 40 hours

of professional development annually. Twenty hours of professional development can be completed through attendance at an annual, mandatory PBS Professional Development Seminar for Ready To Learn coordinators.

Ready To Learn will target the special needs of families that have limited proficiency in English or inadequate literacy skills, young children that have disabilities, and families that live in rural areas. One important way of reaching the target populations is through community partnerships with organizations already serving families, such as Head Start, Even Start, the 21st Century Learning Centers and Community Technology Centers, libraries, and other organizations.

Researchers at the University of Alabama evaluated Ready To Learn during the original five-year grant period (Bryant et al. 1999). The researchers followed a sample of respondents from nine stations and conducted a pre-post study (pretest measures were compared to posttest measures for people who did and did not attend a workshop). The study found that there were both short-term (one-month) and longer-term (six-month) positive effects of workshop attendance on adult-child covieing, setting rules about television viewing for children, frequency of children viewing educational programs, and reading to children (Bryant et al. 1999).

As part of the new cooperative agreement, PBS contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of Ready To Learn. The evaluation has two main components: (1) a process study that will describe Ready To Learn outreach initiatives and how they are implemented in stations across the country; and (2) an outcomes study that will describe the effects of Ready To Learn on coordinators, workshop participants, and the children in their care.

The process study will use information from the first of a planned series of five coordinator surveys. It will also include information from site visits to 20 Ready To Learn stations in summer 2001. The outcomes study will use data from a second round of site visits to 10 Ready To Learn stations in 2003, information from ongoing rounds of coordinator surveys, and telephone interviews with workshop participants. In addition, PBS requested that MPR evaluate its 2001 Professional Development Seminar and provide feedback to inform planning for the 2002 Seminar and for the new Ready To Learn Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center. The components of the study cited in this report allow us to describe Ready To Learn as it existed at the start of the cooperative agreement, and subsequent components will document how the initiative, the coordinators, the stations, and the workshop participants change over time. Although the

cooperative agreement began in September 2000, station subcontracts were not in place until approximately January 2001, and the first coordinator survey took place in April 2001. Therefore, coordinators' responses to questions may reflect their experiences under the old grant.

This report summarizes results of the baseline coordinator survey (Chapters I, II, and III) and MPR's evaluation of the 2001 Professional Development Seminar (Chapter IV). Finally, in Chapter V, it synthesizes the two to draw conclusions about coordinator strengths, as well as areas that need improvement (both for coordinators themselves and for Ready To Learn).

COORDINATOR SURVEY COVERED A BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS

"This has been a difficult survey to complete, but I am glad we are gathering the data. Thank you, and I am hopeful that this will help to improve the Ready To Learn services."

—Coordinator

We adapted the 2001 Ready To Learn coordinator baseline survey instrument from the Early Head Start staff survey, a proven measure of staff backgrounds and experiences developed for the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (Kisker et al. 1999). Because this was the first time coordinators have been surveyed, topic areas included (1) the coordinator's role in Ready To Learn, (2) outreach, (3) work environment, (4) education and professional development, and (5) background information. This Web-based survey was designed to be self-administered and to take approximately 40 minutes to complete. MPR created a Web-based program for survey administration. An institutional review board approved the survey instrument and consent materials, indicating that the procedures adequately protected coordinators' confidentiality and that participation in the research posed no risks.

NEARLY ALL COORDINATORS AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY

In winter 2001, PBS provided MPR with a list of 134 Ready To Learn stations, locations, and coordinator names. One station subsequently dropped out of Ready To Learn, bringing the total number of stations in the sample to 133. In February, we sent an advance letter describing the study and the consent form to the Ready To Learn coordinators. One hundred and thirty of these coordinators signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the coordinator survey. Coordinators from three stations did not return signed consent forms—two stations were without a Ready To Learn coordinator at the time of consent gathering, and one coordinator stated that she did not have sufficient time to complete the survey.

SURVEY RESPONSE RATES WERE HIGH

Data collection for the Web-based survey was April 9 through June 1, 2001. Most surveys (111, or 85 percent) were completed within the first four weeks. Telephone and e-mail messages were sent weekly to those who did not complete the survey within the first month. Of the 130 coordinators who completed a consent form, 98 percent (128

coordinators) fully or partially completed the survey. Of all 133 coordinators, 96 percent completed it.

Even among surveys we considered completed, some questions were not answered. Therefore, sample sizes for each item varied. In cases where there are large changes in sample size, it is noted in the text; otherwise, percentages refer to the full sample or to almost the full sample. We refer to those who responded to the survey as coordinators, because 66 percent indicated they were the Ready To Learn coordinator, and many others noted a job title, such as educational outreach coordinator, director of education, or director of outreach services, that suggests that they are the person we targeted at the station. The high response rate ensures that participating coordinators are representative of the entire group.

Although we had hoped the survey would take only 40 minutes to complete, our records indicated that coordinators logged on to the Web site an average of 1 hour and 44 minutes. However, this is a crude measure of how long it actually took to complete the survey. Coordinators could log out to look up needed information (which should count as time required to complete the survey) or could log in then leave the survey to do other activities (which should not count toward time required).

**STATIONS' READY TO
LEARN AND OVERALL
BUDGETS VARIED
WIDELY**

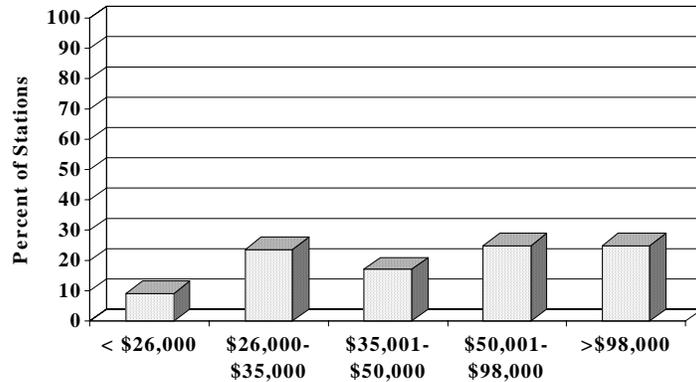
PBS provides \$25,000 annually to each Ready To Learn station through a subcontract. Stations are encouraged to use the funding to leverage additional funds from other sources, and two-thirds of Ready To Learn stations do so. These additional funds may come from outside sources (grants or underwriters) or from contributions from stations' general expense funds.

Based on the coordinators who responded, five indicated that they operated their Ready To Learn programs on the \$25,000 base grant (one station received \$12,000).¹ The remaining 70 stations reported total Ready To Learn budgets over \$25,000, ranging from \$25,900 to \$325,000. The average Ready To Learn budget was nearly \$77,000. Fifty percent of stations had Ready To Learn budgets under \$51,800 (see Figure I.2).

¹Many coordinators (41 percent) did not answer this question, so all percentages are based on the 76 coordinators who did. It is not clear whether the information was unknown or if coordinators felt it was too sensitive to report. In addition, stations often provide in-kind support to their Ready To Learn programs, a factor not included in this budget question (although some coordinators may have included it in their totals).

FIGURE I.2

DISTRIBUTION OF STATIONS' READY TO LEARN BUDGETS



Sample Size = 76

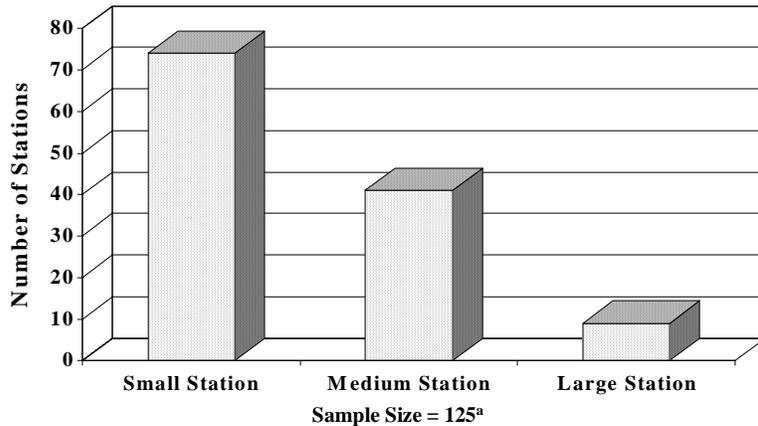
Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

We classified stations into small, medium and large based on their PBS Program Pricing Factor (PPF). PPFs are used to determine the annual programming and membership assessments for each station. These factors take into account stations' annual budgets (adjusted for funding received for national production), federal monies received, and the population they serve. The objective of this approach is to consider both the financial resources of the station and the potential size of its membership and viewing base.

Because individual station's PPFs sum to 1.0, we broke stations into quartiles by arranging PPFs into ascending order and then computing a cumulative sum. We created a variable of station "size" based on stations that were at or below .25 (small), between .26 and .75 (medium), and above .75 (large). These roughly resemble percentile ranks but took into account the skew of the distribution, with most stations falling into the small and medium categories and only a few into the large category (see Figure I.3).²

²We used PPFs from all PBS stations (including non-Ready To Learn stations) to create our small, medium, and large categories.

FIGURE I.3
STATION SIZE USING PROGRAM PRICING
FACTOR (PPF) GROUPINGS



Source: PBS Program Pricing Factor data for fiscal year 2002.

^aThe sample size differs because PBS did not have PPF data for one station. In addition, data for one station was dropped because PPF considered revenues aggregated across other stations in the state and a third was missing because that coordinator did not complete the survey.

“If there could be some way to share budgets from other stations to show my station how to disperse funds, that would be a HUGE help.”

—Coordinator

We examined whether the responses to questions of coordinators from large stations were systematically different from those of coordinators from small- or medium-sized stations (PPF). In general, we found that this measure of station size was useful to compare and contrast stations on a few dimensions, as described later.

We found that the size of the Ready To Learn budget was positively associated with the total station size (PPF). This could mean that stations with more funding contribute their own resources to the program more often or at a greater level than stations with less overall funding or, that they have a stronger infrastructure and are able to raise more funds. We are unable to determine what factors are driving this association.

COORDINATOR EXPERIENCE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH READY TO LEARN BUDGET

Size of the Ready To Learn budget was positively associated with experience as a Ready To Learn coordinator. Among coordinators, we found that most had been in their current Ready To Learn position for an average of 2 years, 10 months, ranging from 4 months to 6 years, 4 months. For comparison purposes, we divided coordinators into two groups according to their relative experience with Ready To Learn. Where relevant, we compared those who began in their positions after January 1, 2000, and those who started before then. We considered coordinators who started before January 1, 2000, to be somewhat more

experienced, and those who started after that time to be less so.³ Using this definition, 71 percent (87 people) were experienced Ready To Learn coordinators and 29 percent (36 people) were less experienced.

**READY TO LEARN
STATIONS SERVED
VARIED MARKETS**

We found substantial differences in the total Ready To Learn budgets by tenure as coordinators. Less-experienced coordinators on average had Ready To Learn budgets of nearly \$58,000, compared to experienced coordinators, who on average had Ready To Learn budgets of nearly \$85,000. We do not know the source of the funds, so we cannot tell whether experience makes it easier for coordinators to get additional funds from the station, from outside sources, or from both. There was no relationship between coordinator experience and stations' relative wealth.

Most coordinators reported that their stations' broadcast areas covered several different types of markets (therefore, values did not add to 100 percent):

- Urban (63 percent)
- Rural (78 percent)
- Suburban (57 percent)
- State networks (23 percent)

Of the 29 statewide stations, 24 coordinators indicated their outreach encompassed the entire state; the rest conducted outreach in smaller areas. Six stations from non-statewide networks also indicated that their outreach was statewide.

**COORDINATORS OFTEN
TRAVELED GREAT
DISTANCES TO DELIVER
WORKSHOPS**

On average, the farthest distance coordinators traveled to complete a workshop was 145 miles (ranging from 15 to 800 miles). Fifty percent of coordinators traveled a maximum of 95 miles or less on average, while the rest traveled greater distances to deliver workshops. The farthest distance that coordinators from stations serving rural markets traveled was on average 138 miles to conduct a workshop, whereas those that did not include rural markets traveled 170 miles. Coordinators from state networks reported traveling an average maximum distance of 268 miles for a workshop, compared to 110 miles for those that do not cover an entire state.

³Starting before January 1, 2000, means coordinators had 15 or more months of experience at the time of the survey.

SUMMARY

In summary, stations' Ready To Learn and overall budgets varied greatly, stations served very different geographic regions and markets, and coordinators, particularly those from statewide networks, traveled long distances to conduct outreach.

II

Local Ready To Learn Program Activities

MOST COORDINATORS EXCEEDED THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS

Outreach is a key component of Ready To Learn. It takes several forms, including organizing community events, distributing children’s books, distributing the *PBS Families* and *PBS para la Familia* magazines, and, perhaps most important, conducting workshops. This chapter describes the Ready To Learn outreach conducted by coordinators.

Participants at station workshops may include parents (and other family members), teachers, caregivers, and children. In their subcontracts, PBS stipulated that stations should target four groups in special need: (1) people with low literacy, (2) people with limited English speaking and reading skills, (3) people living in rural areas, and (4) children with disabilities. Each coordinator is free to develop workshops to best serve his or her community, so we can identify only basic types of workshops: thematic (those that discuss particular subject matter—such as media literacy), programmatic (those that describe and discuss a particular PBS children’s television program), and “Train-the-Trainer” (those that aim to teach others to deliver workshops). Considering all reported workshops (that is, those conducted by the coordinator and those conducted by facilitators), 55 percent of coordinators either met or exceeded the required 20 workshops (per year) at the time of the survey (approximately seven months into the first year of the new cooperative agreement and just a few months into the new station subcontracts). On average, coordinators reported that they or other workshop facilitators delivered 36 workshops since September 2000. Coordinators themselves completed an average of almost 18 workshops since the beginning of the cooperative agreement, ranging from 0 to 83.

Coordinators from medium stations delivered a higher total number of workshops than did coordinators from small or large stations. On average, coordinators from medium stations reported a total of 55 workshops since September 2000, compared to 29 and 26 at small and large stations, respectively.

MOST COORDINATORS RELIED ON FACILITATORS TO DELIVER WORKSHOPS

About two-thirds of coordinators (80 coordinators) reported that they used workshop facilitators to deliver workshops. Of those who used workshop facilitators, the number ranged from 1 to 43, with an average of 3 facilitators. Across stations, facilitators completed an average of just

over 19 workshops, ranging from 1 to 428. Half of coordinators with facilitators reported that facilitators completed 12 or fewer workshops, and half reported more than 12.

More than half (57 percent) of coordinators reported that they conducted Train-the-Trainer workshops for their workshop facilitators. The number of Train-the-Trainer workshops since September 2000 ranged from 0 to 36, although on average coordinators conducted fewer than 2 of these workshops. Seventy-five percent of the coordinators who held these workshops conducted three or fewer.

THE MAJORITY OF WORKSHOPS WERE DELIVERED IN A SINGLE SESSION

Most coordinators reported that the workshops were single sessions (80 percent) rather than multiple sessions (20 percent). However, about two-thirds of coordinators reported that participants tended to come to more than one workshop. Reportedly, workshops lasted on average 1 hour and 45 minutes, although the range was 50 minutes to 4 hours.

COORDINATORS COVERED LITERACY MOST OFTEN, FEW COVERED SPECIAL NEEDS/INCLUSION

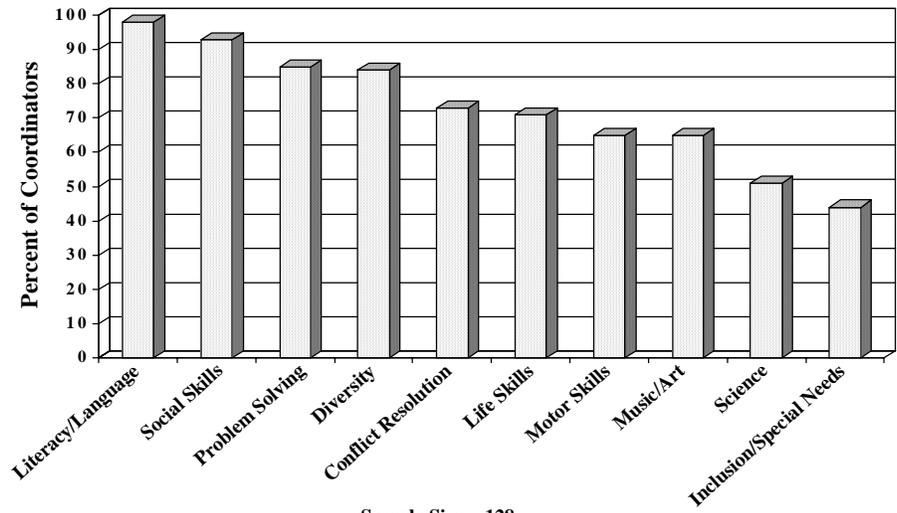
Coordinators specified topic areas they covered in their workshops (see Figure II.1). Almost all coordinators covered language and literacy topics (98 percent); the fewest covered issues of inclusion and special needs (44 percent). It is difficult to know how many topic areas are covered in a typical workshop, because the survey asked only whether the coordinator covered the area in workshops rather than specifically in a single workshop.

Coordinators did not vary in their coverage of broad topics during workshops. All coordinators indicated that they discussed watching television with children, monitoring the amount and type of television children watch, and reading with children. Nearly all coordinators (96 percent) indicated that they covered the idea of using topics on television to initiate conversations with children.

We asked coordinators which PBS children's television programs they used in workshops to cover content. All of the PBS children's television programs were selected by at least some coordinators. *Between the Lions*, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and *Sesame Street* were the most popular for use in a workshop; *Adventures from the Book of Virtues*, *Tots TV*, and *Charlie Horse Music Pizza* were least popular (Figure II.2).

FIGURE II.1

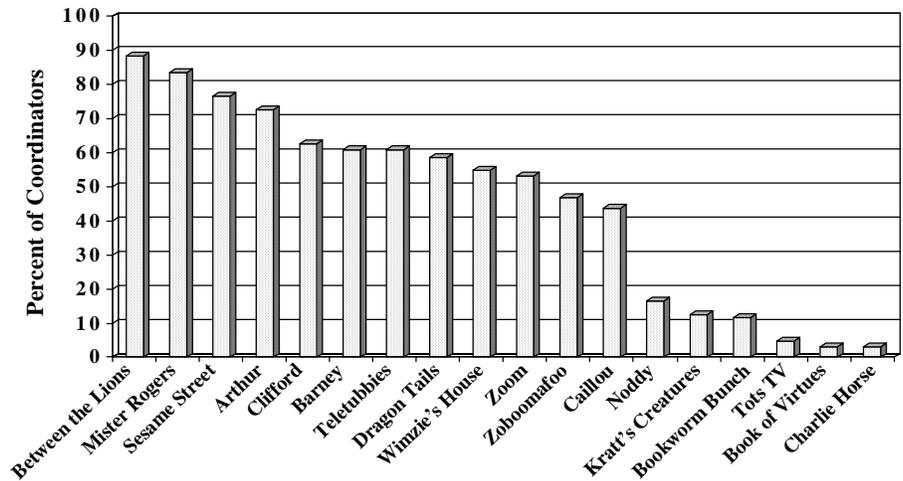
PERCENTAGE COVERING EACH CONTENT AREA IN WORKSHOPS



Sample Size = 128
Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

FIGURE II.2

PERCENTAGE USING EACH PROGRAM IN WORKSHOPS



Sample Size = 128
Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

PARENTS WERE THE MOST COMMON WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Coordinators reported that the following participants attended their workshops:

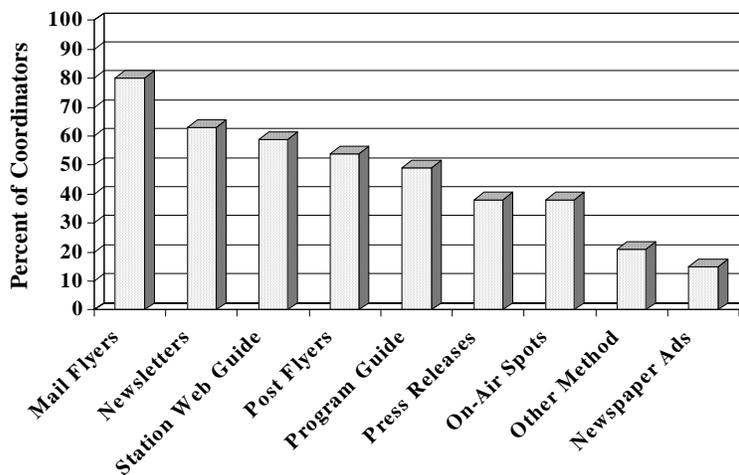
- Parents (average of 39 percent)
- Center-based child care providers/teachers (average of 23 percent)
- Family child care providers/teachers (average of 16 percent)
- Public school teachers (average of 11 percent)
- Others (includes children and combinations of the above; average of 10 percent)

A number of coordinators indicated that they did workshops directly with children, an option that was not a choice listed in the survey. Sometimes, when children were present at a workshop, they were attending with their parents or their teachers—another variation not specifically mentioned in the survey.

Coordinators used a variety of strategies to recruit workshop participants. Most coordinators reported they mailed flyers or announced workshops in newsletters and only a few reported they placed advertisements in newspapers (see Figure II.3)

FIGURE II.3

METHODS USED TO RECRUIT WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



Sample Size = 128

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

**LOW-LITERACY
POPULATIONS WERE
MOST OFTEN TARGETED
FOR OUTREACH**

Under the cooperative agreement, coordinators must focus their outreach on four newly identified target populations: (1) people with low literacy, (2) people with limited English speaking and reading skills, (3) families in rural areas, and (4) children with disabilities. However, it is unclear how coordinators will count the number of people that they reach in these populations. Often, one cannot know for certain into which group (or groups) a given participant falls. We asked coordinators if they had ever targeted the four populations when recruiting for workshops. All coordinators indicated that they had targeted low-literacy populations; fewer had ever targeted the other three:

- 100 percent targeted low-literacy populations
- 82 percent targeted families in rural areas
- 63 percent targeted those with limited English
- 52 percent targeted children with disabilities

If a coordinator reported never targeting or including a particular population in outreach, we asked why, but many coordinators did not provide reasons. The figures that follow are proportions of those who did. The reason most commonly given by the 29 coordinators who did not target limited-English populations was that they were not well represented in the station's market (18, or 62 percent), followed by lack of translators (9, or 31 percent). Of the 41 coordinators who did not target children with disabilities, 20, or 49 percent, indicated that they did not know enough about that population. Only 15 coordinators did not target families in rural areas, mostly because they were not well represented in the market area (8, or 53 percent).

Coordinators were ambitious in extending Ready To Learn to populations that they did not serve at the time of the survey. Seventy-three percent were involved in extending Ready To Learn to other groups. Of the 34 coordinators who reported they had not extended the program to other populations they did not serve, 21, or 62 percent, described plans to do so in the future. The groups that coordinators mentioned as new populations for their outreach were often those that are now target populations (such as children with disabilities; non-English-speaking groups, particularly Spanish-speaking; and rural populations).

Other groups that were mentioned often were pregnant and parenting teens, homeless and migrant populations, American Indian/Native Americans, and Head Start and Even Start populations. Coordinators who had not yet extended their programs mentioned plans to target home schoolers, non-English-speaking populations, and children with disabilities.

ALMOST HALF PROVIDED WORKSHOPS AND MATERIALS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Most coordinators provided for non-English-speaking populations either through distributing materials in other languages in the workshops (36 percent), providing workshops but not materials in another language (2 percent), or providing both workshops and materials in another language (47 percent). Sixteen percent of coordinators provided neither workshops nor materials in languages other than English.

The proportions of non-English workshops offered (as a proportion of all workshops offered) ranged between 0 and 50 percent. The average proportion of workshops offered in other languages was 10 percent. (Excluding the 45 percent of coordinators who delivered no workshops in other languages, the average proportion of workshops offered in languages other than English was 19 percent.)

The non-English language most commonly used in workshops and/or materials was Spanish (97 percent). Infrequently, coordinators reported providing workshops or materials in Korean (three percent), Chinese (two percent), or another language (six percent).

COORDINATORS DISTRIBUTED MORE CHILDREN'S BOOKS THAN REQUIRED

Coordinators reported distributing an average of almost 5,900 children's books annually, ranging from 200 to 41,000. Coordinators currently are required to distribute 300 books per month paid for directly by PBS (under the previous Ready To Learn grant, they were required to distribute 200 per month). They may purchase additional books at the same cost per book using their Ready To Learn funding or any additional funds they obtain. Thirty-eight coordinators distributed fewer than 3,600 children's books per year (equivalent to 300 books per month), and of those, 11 distributed fewer than 2,400 (equivalent to 200 books per month).

Medium and large stations distributed more children's books, on average, than small ones. Coordinators from small stations on average distributed approximately 5,400 children's books annually, compared to those from medium and large stations, who distributed an annual average of 6,850 and 6,700 children's books, respectively.

MOST COORDINATORS DID NOT PROVIDE MONTHLY SCHEDULES WITH EPISODE NUMBERS

Producers of many PBS children's programs make available guides and other materials that include episode numbers and summaries of each episode. To facilitate use of these materials, a station may provide up-to-date information about episodes and summaries of those that will air, so that parents or caregivers/teachers can consult the guides and tape or arrange to view episodes of interest, and have the opportunity to gather related books and plan related activities (that is, to use the View-Read-Do model).

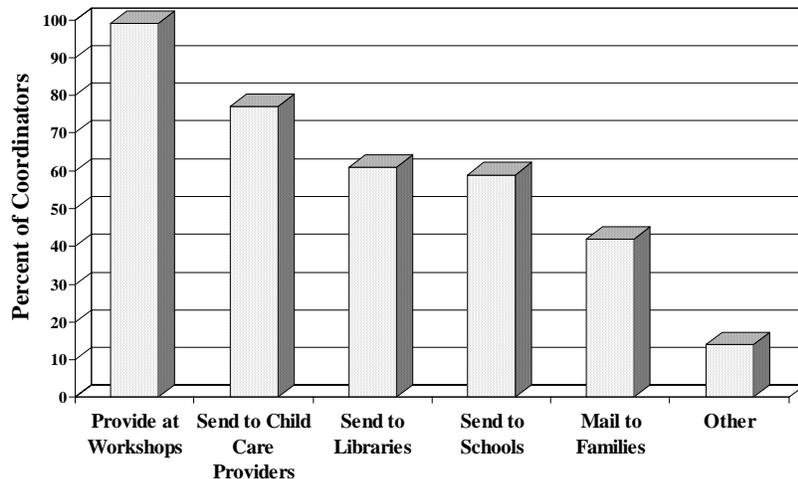
Although all coordinators reported that they distributed program-specific materials in their workshops, fewer reported that they created monthly schedules of Ready To Learn programs with episode numbers (49 percent). Availability of program guides may facilitate practicing the View-Read-Do model, particularly in classroom settings, because these allow participants to tape episodes, plan related activities, and read related children’s books with the children in their care. Coordinators from medium and large stations were more likely to prepare monthly program schedules (54 and 56 percent, respectively) compared to coordinators from small stations (45 percent).

**COORDINATORS
DISTRIBUTED *PBS
FAMILIES* IN WORKSHOPS
AND BY OTHER MEANS**

WGBH, a PBS member station in Boston, produces the magazines *PBS Families* (in English) and *PBS para la Familia* (in Spanish). The magazine was designed for low-literacy readers and it provides easy-to-do family activities related to PBS children’s programs. The activities are designed to support cognitive and social skill development. Coordinators reported distributing *PBS Families* at workshops as their most regular form of distribution.¹ Figure II.4 illustrates the other methods coordinators used to distribute it. The “other” category includes distribution at community events and community locations such as health clinics, churches, and Head Start centers.

FIGURE II.4

METHODS USED TO DISTRIBUTE *PBS FAMILIES*



Sample Size = 128

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

¹The survey only asked about distributing *PBS Families* and did not mention *PBS para la Familia*.

**READY TO LEARN
OUTREACH TOOK MANY
FORMS**

In addition to workshops, coordinators reported that they also conducted other types of outreach in the community:

- Set up tables/booths at community fairs/events (91 percent)
- Participated in events sponsored by schools (83 percent)
- Set up tables or booths at malls/shopping centers (48 percent)

**MOST COORDINATORS
HAD SUPPORT STAFF**

“I only wish I could do all there could be done. I am a one-person department and I do get frustrated with the large number of things I could do for my community, but I am but one person.”

—Coordinator

Sixty-one percent of coordinators had support staff who help them with Ready To Learn tasks. However, of those who had access to support staff, less than half (43 percent) reported that these staff were adequate to meet their needs.

Although many coordinators have paid support staff, substantial numbers also depend on unpaid staff, who may be more temporary. Of the coordinators who indicated they have support staff, 85 percent used paid employees, 62 percent indicated they used nonpaid volunteers, and 33 percent used interns or university students. Nearly equivalent proportions of support staff held Ready To Learn positions (32 percent), other positions at their PBS station (36 percent), or both (33 percent). Coordinators who had support staff reported anywhere from 1 to 13 regular helpers (average was 3) and 1 to 24 people helping on an “as-needed” basis (average was 5).

Coordinators from medium stations were the most likely to report having support staff (73 percent), with small and large stations nearly identical (57 and 56 percent, respectively). Coordinators from all stations reported having paid and volunteer staff in similar proportions. Coordinators from large stations were approximately twice as likely to have interns than those from small and medium stations (60 percent compared to 33 and 30 percent, respectively).

**COORDINATORS
WORKED WITH MANY
DIFFERENT COMMUNITY
PARTNERS**

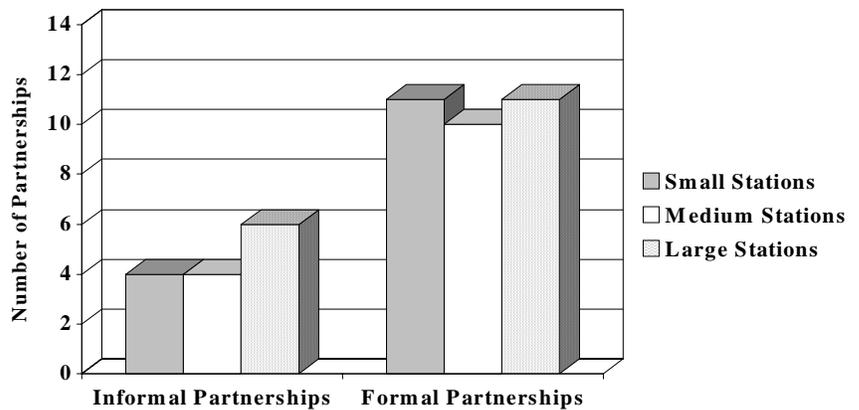
One critical facet of Ready To Learn is partnering with community organizations and agencies to recruit workshop participants, reach target populations, and distribute children’s books and other materials. On average, coordinators reported that they had informal agreements with 4 community partners (ranging from 0 to 62), and formal agreements with 10 partners (ranging from 0 to 175).²

²We defined a formal agreement to mean a partnership in which there was a written agreement or memorandum of understanding describing the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Coordinators from medium stations were more likely to report having formal partnerships than coordinators from small and large stations (94 percent compared to 90 and 89 percent). Coordinators from large stations were the least likely to report having informal partnerships compared to small and medium stations (44 percent compared to 52 and 58 percent, respectively). When considering the number of partnerships, coordinators across all station sizes reported similar numbers (both informal and formal—see Figure II.5).

FIGURE II.5

NUMBER OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS, BY STATION SIZE (MEAN)



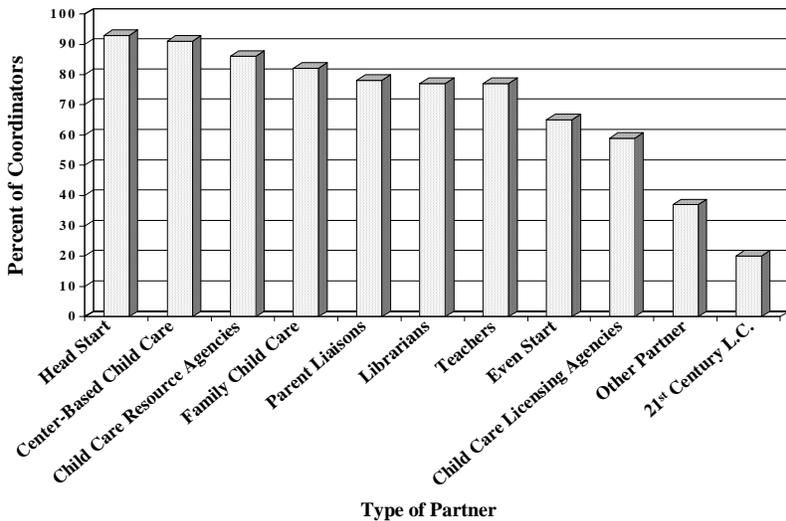
Sample Size = 117 - 118

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

Coordinators frequently relied on their community partners to help recruit workshop participants. Coordinators reported working with many different types of community partners—usually Head Start and child care organizations or providers. Some were used less often, although percentages were still high. These partners may serve other purposes, such as distributing children’s books, rather than recruiting workshop participants (see Figure II.6).

FIGURE II.6

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PARTNERS TO RECRUIT WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



Type of Partner

Sample Size = 128

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

COORDINATORS MONITORED WORKSHOP QUALITY BUT NEED MORE INFORMATION TO EVALUATE THEIR READY TO LEARN EFFORTS

This section describes the steps that coordinators took to ensure the quality of the workshops that they deliver and those delivered on behalf of the station by facilitators. It also describes information the coordinators gathered on the effectiveness of their workshops in terms of whether participants practiced the skills taught.

Written evaluations by participants are one commonly used way to assess participants' perceptions of the value and usefulness of the presentation. Sixty-one percent of coordinators always used written evaluations in workshops that they conducted, 29 percent did so sometimes, and 10 percent used them seldom or never.

Those who used facilitators to deliver workshops engaged in many different activities to ensure the quality of the workshops the facilitators delivered (sample size ranged from 79 to 82):

- Written evaluations by participants (94 percent)
- In-person observations of workshops (89 percent)
- Outside evaluators (14 percent)
- Another strategy (18 percent)

Of those who reported using written evaluations by participants, on average they reported doing so for 83 percent of the workshops delivered by facilitators. Similarly, coordinators who used in-person observations did so for an average of 40 percent of workshops. Coordinators who hired outside evaluators did so for an average of 30 percent of workshops delivered by others.

“[We need] clearer outcome measures (and ideas for how to gather them).”

—Coordinator

Addressing the issue of effectiveness, we also asked coordinators how often they received feedback on the frequency with which workshop participants engaged in the View-Read-Do model after the workshop. Overall, coordinators did not receive this information frequently. Just over 9 percent always did, 65 percent sometimes did, and 26 percent rarely did. Generally, this feedback on the frequency of using the View-Read-Do model was provided through informal means. Ninety-one percent of coordinators received informal comments from parents, 94 percent from teachers or caregivers, 38 percent from formal surveys, and 12 percent in another way (most often through letters or e-mails).

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we reported about the workshops and other outreach that coordinators conducted, the content of and participants attending workshops, the staffing of Ready To Learn programs, the types of partners and their roles, and the ways that coordinators monitored the quality of workshops.

Coordinators used their workshops as forums to emphasize the importance of literacy and primarily used three PBS television programs to illustrate the point (*Between the Lions*, *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, and *Sesame Street*). In keeping with their emphasis on literacy, coordinators targeted mostly low-literacy groups to include in their workshops and outreach efforts. Many coordinators were able to obtain only informal, anecdotal information about the frequency with which workshop participants actually practiced afterwards what was taught in the workshops.

Workshop participants were most often parents. Since all stations targeted people with low literacy skills, many participants were presumably in that category. Coordinators were successful at cultivating partners to assist in their workshop recruiting efforts.

Most coordinators reported that they would meet or exceed the 20 workshops required under the cooperative agreement.

Coordinators had a number of different community partners to recruit workshop participants, and coordinators used a variety of methods to monitor the quality of the workshops that they and their facilitators conducted.

Most coordinators engaged in numerous types of outreach in addition to their workshops, and most distributed more than the required number of children's books each month. Coordinators from medium and large stations distributed more than those from small ones.

III

Ready To Learn Coordinators

This chapter describes Ready To Learn coordinators—their job, education, training, and professional development needs.

MANY COORDINATORS DID NOT WORK FULL- TIME ON READY TO LEARN

Coordinators reported that they worked an average of 28 hours per week on Ready To Learn activities. Thirty-four percent reported working on Ready To Learn the equivalent of full-time (35 to 40 hours per week) or more (greater than 40 hours per week). Sixty-five percent worked less than 35 hours per week on Ready To Learn activities. However, although many coordinators worked part-time on Ready To Learn, a substantial number worked additional hours for their PBS stations—often more than 40 hours per week in total.

About half (53 percent) of the coordinators held another position at their PBS station within 12 months of completing the survey. Of those, nearly all still held that position while they performed their Ready To Learn duties (90 percent). Those who left their prior position most often did so because either the Ready To Learn position better matched their skills, Ready To Learn was reorganized, or they received a promotion.

Overall, coordinators worked for their PBS stations (including time spent on Ready To Learn) an average of 39 hours per week. One-quarter worked less than 35 hours per week; the rest worked the equivalent of full-time jobs (41 percent worked 35 to 40 hours per week, and 35 percent worked more than 40 hours per week). When we examined total average hours worked by whether the coordinator held another position at the station in the year prior to completing the survey, coordinators without another position worked an average of 34 hours per week, compared to 44 for those who held another position. The fact that the averages are higher than those that consider Ready To Learn hours alone, even among those who do not hold another position, suggests that coordinators spend the additional hours performing non-Ready To Learn duties at their stations.

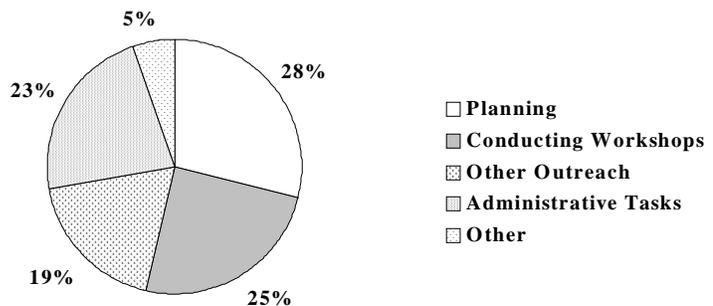
Coordinators indicated that they had many job duties, although there were many commonalities among their descriptions. Most indicated that they were responsible for the following activities:

- Administration (hiring and supervising staff, scheduling workshops, managing budget, and distributing *PBS Families* and *PBS para la Familia* and children’s books)
- Fundraising/grant writing
- Developing and maintaining partnerships
- Conducting workshops
- Reporting (to PBS, the station, and funders)
- Creating/ordering/distributing materials
- Maintaining or contributing to the station’s Web page
- Organizing special events
- Writing newsletters

Coordinators reported that, on average, they spent roughly equivalent amounts of time on planning, conducting workshops, doing other outreach, and administrative tasks, with less time spent on other activities (see Figure III.1).

FIGURE III.1

COORDINATOR TIME ALLOCATION



Sample Size = 128

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

**COORDINATORS WERE
MAINLY WOMEN**

At the time of the survey, Ready To Learn coordinators were a fairly homogeneous group, although they did represent a range of backgrounds (see Table III.1). Coordinators were an average age of 43 years, and were predominantly female and white. The next largest racial/ethnic group was African American, at eight percent. Those from Hispanic and Asian backgrounds made up another combined eight percent. Nearly one-quarter of coordinators spoke a language besides English, and of those, 9 spoke Spanish and 10 spoke a European language other than Spanish.

Table III.1: A Look at Ready To Learn Coordinators' Backgrounds

Average Age/Range	43 years/19 to 65 years
Gender (Percent Female)	98
Racial/Ethnic Background (Percent)	White (84) African American (8) Hispanic (4) Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native (4)
Bilingual (Percent)	23
Other Languages Spoken (Percent of Those Who Are Bilingual)	Spanish (35) Other European language (39) Other (23)
Sample Size	118-125

SOURCE: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

**READY TO LEARN
COORDINATORS WERE
HIGHLY EDUCATED**

Coordinators' experience and training were more varied, although the vast majority held a four-year college degree and most had attended or completed graduate school. Less than one percent had a high school diploma only. Coordinators reported the following educational attainment:

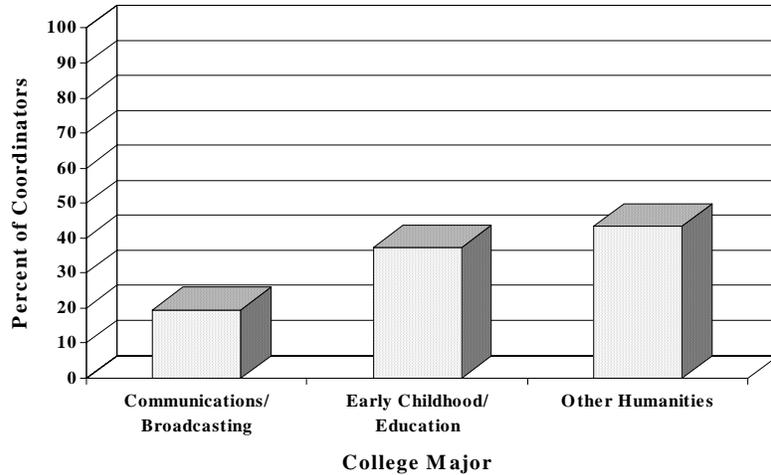
- Some college or a two-year degree (12 percent)
- Four-year degree (26 percent)
- Some graduate schooling (23 percent)
- Graduate degree (39 percent)

Coordinators with less experience were somewhat more likely to have as their highest credential four-year college degrees than coordinators with more Ready To Learn experience (37 percent versus 23 percent). Less-experienced coordinators were less likely to hold graduate degrees (31 percent versus 41 percent).

Of those with college degrees, many different majors were reported. However, in general, the areas of specialization could be characterized as early childhood/education, communications/broadcasting, or other humanities disciplines, such as English or psychology (Figure III.2).

FIGURE III.2

COORDINATOR COLLEGE MAJOR/DISCIPLINE



Sample Size = 113

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

We examined whether new coordinators have come to the position through pathways different from those of coordinators who were hired earlier. Apart from differences in degree attainment, the only difference we found in major field of study by experience was that experienced coordinators were more likely to have a humanities degree than were less-experienced ones. Otherwise, roughly equivalent proportions of each had early childhood/education and communications/broadcasting degrees.

COORDINATORS HAD EXPERIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CHILDREN’S TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

Considering overall time spent in the fields of early childhood development and children’s television programming, coordinators reported an average of slightly more than 9 years’ experience working in early childhood (ranging from 0 to 35 years). They reported an average of 4 years, 8 months’ experience in children’s television programming (ranging from 0 to 32 years).

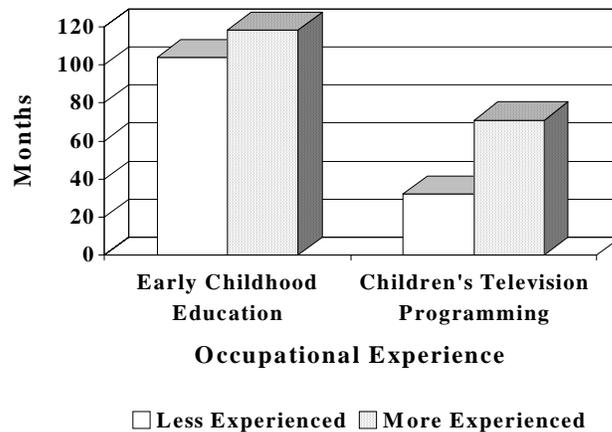
Coordinators reported that their primary occupational backgrounds were:

- Child development (39 percent)
- Television programming (17 percent)
- Education (ranging from elementary to adult, 13 percent)
- Another field (31 percent)

As expected, less-experienced coordinators reported less total time spent in either early childhood or children’s television programming than experienced coordinators (Figure III.3).

FIGURE III.3

MONTHS COORDINATORS WORKED IN EACH FIELD (MEAN)



Sample Size = 123

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

COORDINATORS WERE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Almost all coordinators reported having engaged in professional development activities since September 2000 (94 percent or 119 of 126). For almost all, this included attendance at the 2001 PBS Professional Development Seminar (see Table III.2). Three-quarters of coordinators indicated that they found the seminar to be “very effective,” the rest rated it “somewhat effective,” and none rated it as “ineffective.” There were no differences in ratings of effectiveness between experienced and less-experienced coordinators. Of those who reported having attended the seminar, 62 percent attended at least one other professional development activity.

Table III.2: Coordinator Professional Development Activities

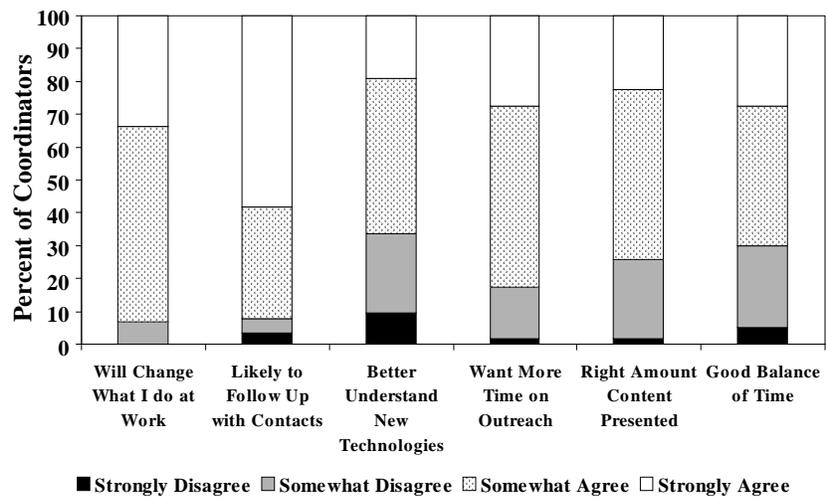
Attended Professional Development Activity Since September 2000 (Percent)	94
Attended 2001 Professional Development Seminar (Percent)	99
Rated the Seminar Very Effective (Percent)	75
Rated the Seminar Somewhat Effective (Percent)	25
Average Number of Professional Development Activities since September 2000	2.1
Average Number of Professional Development Hours (40 Hours Required Annually)	26.2
Sample Size	118-126

SOURCE: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

Coordinators who attended the 2001 Professional Development Seminar rated the extent to which attendance had affected aspects of their professional lives (approximately two months after the seminar). Figure III.4 summarizes coordinator ratings of the seminar. Overall, coordinators reported positive reactions to it. Most indicated that they would change what they did at work as a result of attending and would follow up with contacts made at the seminar. Coordinators were less certain that they left the meeting with a better understanding of new technologies. Chapter IV discusses the seminar in more detail.

FIGURE III.4

COORDINATORS' RATINGS OF PBS 2001 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR



Sample Size = 116 - 117

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

There were few differences in the number of professional development activities attended by coordinators from stations of different sizes, although coordinators from the large stations logged an average of at least five additional hours of training than coordinators from the small and medium stations.

PBS provides memberships in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for all Ready To Learn Coordinators. Membership in professional organizations provides networking opportunities and is a good way to learn about current research and promising practices. Two-thirds of coordinators indicated that they had such professional affiliations.¹ When we explored the specific affiliations, we found that coordinators were most often affiliated with either national or local Associations for the Education of Young Children, literacy organizations, and education organizations. Several also reported community affiliations in addition to their professional ones in answer to this question.

Community affiliations might not provide the same professional development benefits as professional memberships, but they may have other advantages, such as providing better ties to the community, aiding in establishing partnerships, gaining the trust of target populations, and boosting workshop participation. We found that 15 percent of coordinators reported they had community, charitable, or political affiliations, such as religious organizations, the Girl Scouts, Kiwanis, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and the United Way.

**COORDINATORS HAD
VARIED PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

“We need a clearinghouse for workshop outlines, materials, etc.”

— Coordinator

Coordinators indicated what they would like the new Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center, currently under development by PBS, to provide them. In general, most coordinators wanted assistance with all the informational areas suggested (Table III.3). The table below depicts the proportions of coordinators who wanted different types of assistance from PBS, by their level of experience. The types of assistance requested were information on (1) Ready To Learn program implementation and improvement, (2) child development and education, and (3) technology.

¹These responses were surprising, since all coordinators should have reported NAEYC membership.

Table III.3: Professional Development and Technical Assistance Information Coordinators Requested, by Experience Level

Information Requested	Less Experienced	More Experienced
Ready To Learn Program Implementation and Improvement Topics		
Ideas for Workshops	89	78
Increasing Target Population Participation	89	87
Getting Funding	89	87
Establishing Partnerships	86	67
Working with Center-Based Providers	78	67
Working with Parents	75	64
Communication with Other Coordinators	75	67
Working with Teachers	74	56
Local Evaluation	72	84
Developing Workshop Evaluation Forms	67	75
Working with Schools	69	55
Working with Family Providers	67	67
Child Development and Education-Related Topics		
Media Literacy	81	92
Child Development	61	84
Adult Learning	61	78
Early Childhood	60	84
Technology-Related Topics		
Web Page Design	67	69
Using PBS Express	42	22
Using RTL+	39	22
Using the Internet	36	31
Sample Size	35-36	87

SOURCE: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

Technical assistance needs seemed to vary by experience, which is something that PBS can consider as it develops the Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center. Less-experienced coordinators seemed most interested in information that will help them to establish their Ready To Learn programs and run them effectively, whereas more-experienced coordinators wanted information on child development and education. Less-experienced coordinators were more likely to request information on working with schools, teachers, parents, and center-based child care programs, as well as on cultivating partnerships, than were experienced coordinators. Experienced coordinators were more likely to request information on local evaluation than were less-experienced ones.

Experienced coordinators were also more likely to request information on child development, early childhood education, media literacy, and adult learning. Less-experienced coordinators reported more need for information about using PBS Express (PBS's intranet) and RTL+ (an electronic bulletin board within PBS Express) than did experienced coordinators. The Technical Assistance Center may be able to help new coordinators by creating additional orientation about the identified topics.

Coordinators indicated their preferences for how to receive information from the new Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center. The most popular ways were regional workshops (94 percent), newsletters (72 percent), on-line classes (65 percent), teleconferences (58 percent), and on-line chats (52 percent).

Since December 2000, the PBS Ready To Learn Department has provided on-line resources for coordinators to communicate with one another. RTL+ is an electronic bulletin board that coordinators can use to ask questions, chat, or post messages that they think will be of interest to the group. Many Ready To Learn coordinators indicated that they used RTL+ frequently to find or communicate information; some indicated less-frequent use. Ninety percent of coordinators used RTL+ a few times per week or more. Fifty-nine percent of coordinators had posted questions on RTL+, and of those, 82 percent said they had received useful feedback. Those who never posted questions on RTL+ indicated their reasons, which included:

- Too busy to post questions and wait for responses (usually just contact people directly)
- Have not had a need to post
- Others have already asked the questions
- Technical problems prevented posting

Coordinators provided feedback about ways that RTL+ could be improved, including:

- Reducing chat²
- Adding more electronic bulletin boards on specific topics (such as children's books or workshops) for ease of finding answers to questions

²Since the survey was conducted, RTL+ has been restructured with RTL+ serving as the place for official PBS Ready To Learn Department postings and a new bulletin board, RTL Chat+, serving as the place for other communications.

- Including more ideas from coordinators
- Posting answers to questions more quickly

Another professional development resource provided by the PBS Ready To Learn Department is the opportunity to work with mentors. Nearly one-third of coordinators (32 percent) indicated that they had worked with a mentor, and of that group, 90 percent found the mentor to be helpful.

COORDINATORS OFFERED SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“I kept expecting a sort of welcome package that never came . . . specific guidelines for new Ready To Learn coordinators would be helpful.”

—Coordinator

In general, coordinators thought that professional development opportunities within Ready To Learn could be enhanced if PBS made the following improvements:

- ***Provide examples of evaluation tools that coordinators can use.*** Many coordinators were very aware of evaluation and the need to show results of their interventions, and would like more guidance on ways to evaluate their own efforts effectively.
- ***Increase assistance for new coordinators.*** Coordinators wanted a “101 course” with instructions about how to do workshops, form partnerships, and keep records. Some mentioned that examples of databases and memos of understanding for formalizing partnerships would be useful. Others noted that a national job description and list of qualifications would assist stations in hiring. Also, they suggested an actual workshop be given at the national conference, rather than just describing how to do one.
- ***Offer kits of workshops centered on themes.*** Many coordinators noted the need for workshop kits that could be picked up and used, out of the box, for a given topical or thematic area.

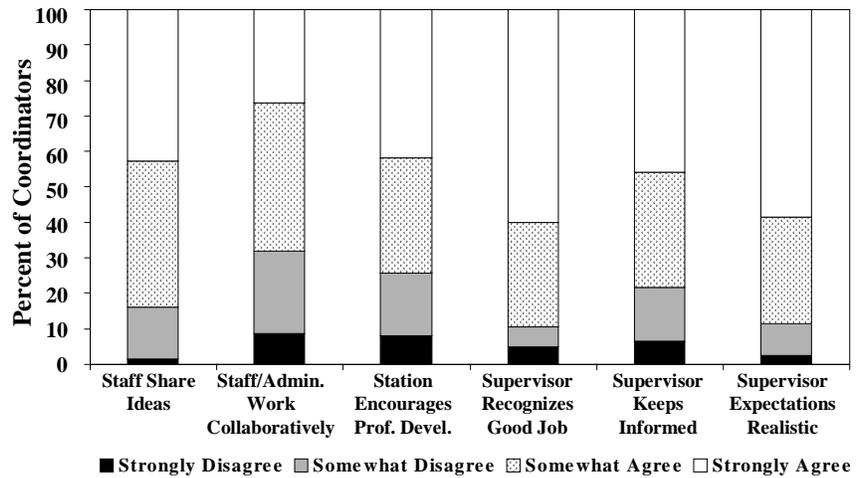
COORDINATORS WERE SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOBS, BUT THERE WERE AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Coordinators reported very high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of their jobs and with Ready To Learn in particular. However, an appreciable proportion of coordinators reported lower satisfaction with the amount of within-station collaboration with station administrators and staff, their station’s encouragement to engage in professional development, and the degree to which their supervisors kept them adequately informed.³ Figures III.5 and III.6 illustrate how the coordinators answered individual job satisfaction questions.

³The actual survey items were (1) staff and station administrators work collaboratively to identify needs for improvement to the program, (2) station administrators encourage staff to become involved in professional development activities, and (3) my supervisor keeps me informed of the things I need to know to do my job well.

FIGURE III.5

**COORDINATORS' RATINGS OF JOB SATISFACTION
(STATION-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS)**

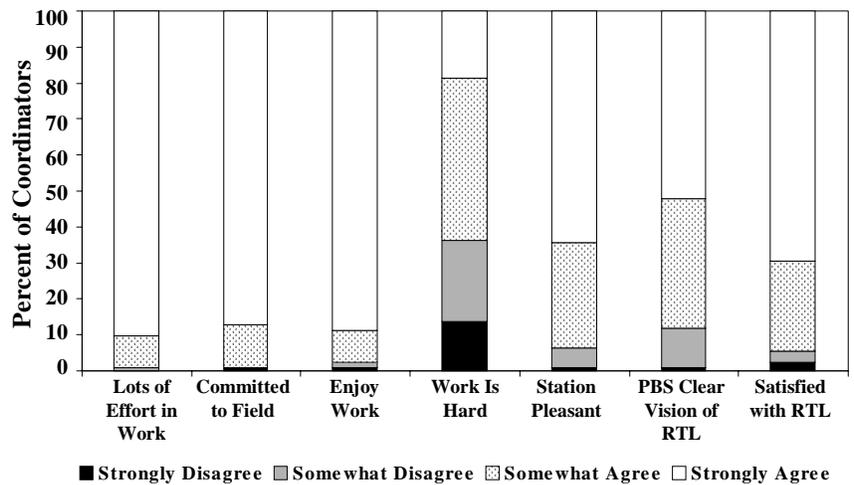


Sample Size = 123 - 125

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

FIGURE III.6

**COORDINATORS' RATINGS OF JOB SATISFACTION
(GENERAL AND READY TO LEARN QUESTIONS)**



Sample Size = 123 - 125

Source: Baseline Coordinator Survey.

“Push the professional development, require it, insist on it.”

—Coordinator

We also collapsed the job satisfaction questions into a single value for ease of comparison between groups of more- and less-experienced coordinators.⁴ Less-experienced and experienced coordinators were nearly identical in overall job satisfaction. On average, coordinators had job satisfaction scores of 41.5—equivalent to answering each item between “somewhat agree” and “strongly agree.”

Coordinators are dedicated professionals who viewed their jobs as careers. Coordinators reported they were motivated by a desire to (1) affect children’s lives (97 percent), (2) help parents (95 percent), (3) benefit families through media and early childhood education (92 percent), and (4) make a difference (91 percent). Most coordinators saw their jobs as their chosen occupation (66 percent) or as a first step in the field (17 percent). Relatively few reported that the job was a stepping stone to a different field or was temporary until they found something else (15 percent).

Most coordinators reported that they sometimes or usually had job stress (26 and 61 percent, respectively)—the average was 2.7 (equivalent to a rating between “sometimes” and “usually” stressful). The difference between less-experienced and experienced coordinators was negligible. Few coordinators, regardless of their tenure, reported the extremes of job stress (always stressful: six percent; rarely or never stressful: eight percent).⁵

**COORDINATORS CITED
MANY POSITIVE
ASPECTS OF READY TO
LEARN**

To further illustrate the positive light in which coordinators viewed Ready To Learn, we included a few of the examples they gave of the positive aspects of the program. Although there was variation, most seemed to target a few key areas:

⁴Creating a summed job satisfaction “score” can be justified by the high degree of average correlation among the 12 job satisfaction items (alpha = .86; Dawis 1987). We did not include the item “I find the work that I do is hard” in the summed score, because it was uncorrelated with the other items. Each of the other items was positively worded, so “agree” responses indicate satisfaction. Therefore, scores could range between 12 (lowest possible job satisfaction—equivalent to responding “strongly disagree” to each item) to 48 (highest possible job satisfaction—equivalent to responding “strongly agree” to each item).

⁵These levels of job stress are higher than those we found in a sample of Early Head Start staff members where 25 percent reported they usually or always had job stress (Kisker et al. 1999).

“I feel like this is a great group of people to work with, and I love what I do.”

—Coordinator

“This is more than a job; it’s a calling.”

—Coordinator

- Making a difference to families and children
- Offering quality children’s programming
- Community involvement
- Helping child care providers provide enriching experiences for children
- Professional development seminar
- Ability to localize/customize content for each community

COORDINATORS OFFERED SUGGESTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING READY TO LEARN

“First and foremost, [we should improve] communication between national and affiliate stations. We are all reinventing the wheel every single day, spending money over and over again to develop workshop content, translate materials, etc.”

—Coordinator

Coordinators’ suggestions for strengthening and improving Ready To Learn were concentrated in several key areas:

- ***Increase/improve communication and timeliness of communication between the PBS Ready To Learn Department and local stations.*** Coordinators often reported that information was not disseminated promptly, and that there were generally slow responses to queries.
- ***Provide more funding.***
- ***Require less paperwork and reporting.*** Coordinators complained of paperwork requirements, but also of the timing. Several noted that notices of when reports were due came only a few days before the due date.
- ***Create national agreements with partners.*** Some coordinators noted that stations are required to work with certain partners, but that the partners are not required to work with them, and that national-level agreements between PBS and targeted partners would help local efforts.
- ***Include fewer animated programs.*** Some coordinators felt that the distinctions between PBS and commercial children’s television were becoming blurred as a result of the number of new animated series in the PBS lineup.
- ***Improve “branding” of Ready To Learn and PBS Kids so that stations can brand locally.*** Some coordinators reported that it was difficult to brand PBS Kids and Ready To Learn on-air materials with local station logos because of the way they had already been branded nationally.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we learned about coordinators' jobs, background, education, training, job satisfaction, and professional development needs.

As a group, coordinators were highly educated, mostly white women. They were active participants in professional development and often attended at least one other professional development activity in addition to the Professional Development Seminar. As a group, most had made substantial strides to completing the requirements of the cooperative agreement.

Coordinators were dedicated professionals who had high regard for their work. Areas for improvement within their stations included more collaboration with station administrators, more encouragement and support of professional development activities, and more communication with their supervisors.

They suggested numerous improvements to professional development that may be activities that the Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center can undertake. These suggestions included consolidating workshop materials and ideas, assisting with local evaluation, and providing additional orientation for new coordinators.

Coordinators also suggested ways that Ready To Learn could be strengthened, including increased communication between the PBS Ready To Learn Department and local member stations, increased funding, decreased paperwork requirements, establishment of national-level agreements with partner organizations, less or better branding of Ready To Learn materials, and less animation in the program schedule.

IV

Meeting Ready To Learn Coordinators' Professional Needs: The February 2001 Professional Development Seminar

SEMINAR GOALS WERE BROAD

“[I want to gain] understanding of [the] new direction of Ready To Learn and how to best accomplish these goals at my station.”

—Coordinator

One important goal of Ready To Learn under the new cooperative agreement is to develop a group of professionally trained Ready To Learn station coordinators who can lead community-based efforts to promote school readiness and disseminate Ready To Learn's resources. To meet this goal, PBS requires that coordinators receive 40 hours of training per year, and provides 20 hours by hosting the annual Ready To Learn Professional Development Seminar for coordinators. This seminar serves as a focal point for the year's professional development and training activities, a springboard for launching new outreach initiatives, a showcase for new PBS children's television programs and other media advances, and an opportunity for the PBS Ready To Learn Department staff members to get feedback from the stations. The seminar also offers coordinators a chance to receive face-to-face training and mentoring, as well as an opportunity to network with other coordinators. Sessions at the seminar are conducted by collaboration partners, experts in various fields, the developers of new outreach materials, and the producers of children's programs. There are also small concurrent group sessions with specific learning objectives and goals. The 2001 seminar was the eighth that PBS conducted and the first under the new cooperative agreement.

The purpose of the 2001 Professional Development Seminar was to bring coordinators and others involved with Ready To Learn together to share new information and provide opportunities for expanding coordinators' knowledge and skills. The seminar planners—PBS, the Department of Education, and members of the Station Advisory Council (a 12-member group of coordinators, although currently there are only 9 members, who represent the coordinators in monthly discussions with PBS)—were guided by five goals for the seminar: (1) rebuilding the team after a six-month interruption in Ready To Learn funding; (2) introducing the new responsibilities and requirements of the cooperative agreement; (3) providing training to help coordinators meet the new requirements; (4) getting feedback from coordinators about their needs; and (5) providing opportunities for coordinators, PBS children's television program producers, PBS Ready To Learn Department staff members, and other partners to communicate informally. The seminar focused on a variety of topics, including designing workshops, planning outreach strategies,

reaching target populations, establishing and maintaining community partnerships, working with Head Start and Even Start, raising additional funds, recruiting and training professionals, and examining the latest in children's outreach conducted in conjunction with PBS children's television programming. The seminar began with a half-day newcomer's orientation session attended by 24 coordinators who were new to their positions and had never before been to a Ready To Learn seminar. The full seminar, which ran for three and a half days (in February), was held in Washington, DC. PBS broke up the more than 30 educational sessions with a variety of light-hearted, entertaining events and activities, including a gala awards dinner with Fred Rogers; producer-sponsored snack breaks; and the "Walk About," an opportunity for coordinators to meet producers and receive materials to support their outreach efforts. PBS invited the Ready To Learn coordinators from all 133 Ready To Learn member stations to attend the seminar and paid for their travel and accommodations. Some stations elected to bring additional staff members and to use station funds for this purpose. PBS also invited Ready To Learn National Advisory Board members to attend the seminar, and a few did.

This is the first time PBS contracted with MPR to study and report on the seminar. In this chapter, we review the methods used to study the seminar, summarize overall and session-level data, and identify strengths and areas for improvement. As we designed the study, our goal was to provide PBS with as much information as possible about how attendees viewed the seminar sessions and the overall structure of the seminar without creating a large reporting burden for the attendees.

**METHODS USED TO
STUDY THE SEMINAR
WERE COMPREHENSIVE
AND INNOVATIVE**

We created three different survey instruments to evaluate the Ready To Learn professional development seminar:¹

- ***Preseminar Evaluation Form.*** Coordinators completed this 23-item form during the first session of the seminar. It included questions about the attendees' involvement with Ready To Learn, the size and reach of their PBS station, the total number of professional development seminars attended, which topics would best address their professional needs, and what they were hoping to learn more about.
- ***Individual Session Evaluation Form.*** Coordinators used this 10-item form to rate various aspects of each session and indicate whether they would like more training or additional information on the topic.
- ***Postseminar Evaluation Form.*** Coordinators completed this 43-

¹Copies of the seminar agenda and the evaluation forms are available upon request.

item form at the end of the last session. It asked them to rate the seminar on a variety of levels, answer questions about whether the topics presented addressed their professional needs, identify any unmet needs, and provide suggestions for future seminars.

At the seminar, each attendee received a binder that included a packet of 30 sequentially numbered evaluation forms. Since a number of sessions ran concurrently, participants did not complete every evaluation form in the packet. To ensure that participants completed the correct evaluation form, we asked session facilitators to call attention to the appropriate form number at the beginning and end of each session. All forms in an individual's packet were labeled with one unique identification number. This allowed us to link the background and evaluative information provided by each participant in our analyses, and reduced the burden on the participants because they had to describe themselves only once—on the preseminar evaluation form.

At the end of each session, participants dropped completed evaluation forms into specially labeled bags placed next to each exit, and MPR staff collected all the forms. We also set up drop boxes in central areas to accommodate participants who opted to fill out an evaluation form after leaving a particular session. At the end of the seminar, completed evaluation forms were brought back to MPR for data processing.

Since attendance was not taken during the individual seminar sessions, we cannot compute response rates for our analysis. Instead, as our sample size, we report the number of evaluation forms completed and returned for each session, including the pre- and postseminar evaluation forms. From PBS seminar registration records, we know that 177 coordinators and station staff members from all of the 133 Ready To Learn stations attended the seminar.

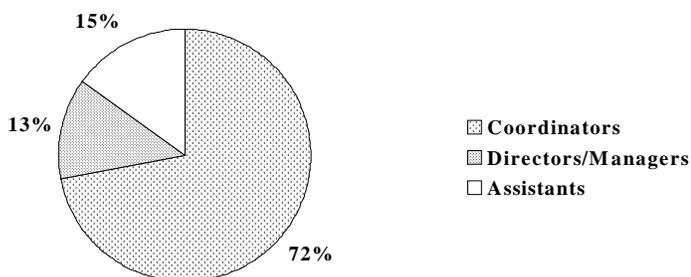
**COORDINATOR
CHARACTERISTICS WERE
REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE FULL GROUP OF
COORDINATORS**

From the preseminar evaluation form, we learned who attended the seminar, how long seminar attendees have worked with Ready To Learn, and the broadcast market type and size of their stations. Coordinators also identified the topics they hoped to learn more about during the seminar.

Of the 145 participants who completed and returned a preseminar evaluation form (84 percent of registered station attendees), the majority, 72 percent, identified themselves as Ready To Learn coordinators. Figure IV.1 summarizes the main job titles of seminar participants: coordinators, directors/managers, and assistants. Fifteen seminar attendees who completed the preseminar evaluation form reported that their positions were not specifically related to conducting or supervising the Ready To Learn program. We excluded them from our analysis of the seminar data (the titles they listed included producer, seminar

FIGURE IV.1

TITLES OF READY TO LEARN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS



Sample Size = 145

Source: 2001 Preseminar Evaluation Forms.

presenter, and National Advisory Board member). Since most seminar attendees identified themselves as Ready To Learn coordinators and represent the full group of station coordinators, we refer to them in this report as coordinators.

Coordinators responding to the preseminar evaluation form reported that, on average, they had been working for Ready To Learn for about three years (ranging from 0 to 84 months). Seventy-five percent of the coordinators reported having worked for Ready To Learn for more than one year. Throughout this chapter, we present key results separately for the experienced group (more than one year with Ready To Learn) and the less-experienced group (one year or less with Ready To Learn). Coordinators reported that, on average, 93 employees (ranging from 2 to more than 500) worked at the PBS member stations where they were employed. Coordinators responding to the preseminar survey described the market types of their stations as (coordinators could choose multiple categories to describe their market type):

- Urban (58 percent)
- Rural (63 percent)
- Suburban (40 percent)
- Statewide (30 percent)

The coordinator experience and station market type information from the preseminar forms are almost identical to the data from the coordinator survey described in Chapters I through III, which confirms that the two data sources are consistent and representative.

**COORDINATORS
WANTED TO LEARN
ABOUT THE
COOPERATIVE
AGREEMENT AND
WORKSHOP IDEAS**

Coordinators identified the most important topic they were hoping to learn more about and the topics that would best address their professional development needs. Among these topics were:

- The cooperative agreement (30 percent)
- Ideas for workshops (17 percent)

When taking into account the number of months coordinators had worked for Ready To Learn, the less-experienced coordinators reported ideas for workshops as the most important topic (23 percent), whereas the experienced coordinators identified information about the new cooperative agreement as most important (35 percent).

Coordinators identified workshop models and ideas, partnerships, and target populations as the topics that would best address their professional development needs (Table IV.1).

Table IV.1: Seminar Topics That Would Best Address Coordinators’ Professional Development Needs

Topics	Percent
Workshop Models and Ideas	21
Partnerships	17
Target Populations	14
Fundraising/Program Development	8
Research and Evaluation	8
Literacy	8
New Cooperative Agreement/Ready To Learn	7
Outreach: Programs, Materials, and Techniques	5
Introduction to Children’s Television Programs	2
Networking	2
Other	3
All Topics	5
Sample Size	130

Source: 2001 Preseminar Evaluation Forms.

**PRESEMINAR
KNOWLEDGE AND
SKILLS WERE
STRONGEST IN READY
TO LEARN GOALS,
WEAKEST IN
FUNDRAISING**

On both the pre- and postevaluation forms, coordinators rated their knowledge and skills in areas important to their role as Ready To Learn coordinators (using a five-point scale where 1 equals “poor” and 5 equals “excellent”). Before the seminar began, coordinators rated their knowledge of the Ready To Learn program goals as their highest area of knowledge and skills (average rating of 4.2, or very good; ranging from 2 to 5, or fair to excellent). Coordinators rated fundraising as their lowest

area (average rating of 2.8, or fair/good; ranging from 1 to 5, poor to excellent). The results of the average ratings for the preseminar evaluation are presented along with the postseminar results later in this chapter (Figures IV.2 and IV.3).

RATINGS OF SESSION QUALITY WERE HIGH

To simplify our analysis and discussion of results, we assigned the 28 individual seminar sessions to one of four categories, each representing an overall theme highlighted at the 2001 seminar and generally sharing common structure and goals. The categories and the sessions included in each are listed in Appendix A.

The sessions in the implementation and evaluation category provided information about the expectations for Ready To Learn as a result of the new cooperative agreement, reading and literacy development, program management, and the national evaluation plans. Most of these were plenary sessions with very good attendance. Sessions in the community category focused on creating and maintaining partnerships and developing effective methods of reaching and working with the four target populations. Some of these sessions were offered as plenaries, and some were concurrent. Producers of children's programs conducted sessions in the PBS Kids programs and outreach category. For these concurrent sessions, producers often partnered with a Ready To Learn coordinator to present new ways of working with new and current children's programs. Often, producers supplied new workshop ideas and materials for coordinators to use. Sessions in the outreach strategies category provided information about fund-raising, outreach approaches, and new technology and programming to support Ready To Learn outreach. They were a mixture of plenary and concurrent sessions.

In general, coordinators rated the overall quality and usefulness of the sessions in each category as very good. The average rating for each category did not vary by the number of months coordinators worked for Ready To Learn.

Most coordinators indicated that they would like more training on the topics covered in the individual sessions. On average, 70 percent of the coordinators would like more training about the topics presented in the Ready To Learn implementation and evaluation sessions. Seventy-five percent would like more training on the topics presented in the partnership sessions; 80 percent on the topics in the PBS Kids programs and outreach sessions; and 79 percent on the topics in the outreach strategies sessions. These needs are similar to the professional development needs coordinators identified in the baseline survey.

**THE SEMINAR MET
COORDINATORS’
EXPECTATIONS AND
NEEDS**

“[The most useful aspect was] sharing ideas with others and getting the whole picture.”

—Coordinator

At the end of the seminar, coordinators filled out a postseminar evaluation form. Coordinators reported whether the topics at the seminar met their professional and educational needs. They also identified areas of unmet need and ideas for future sessions. Of the 125 coordinators who completed and returned a postseminar evaluation form, 77 percent reported working for Ready To Learn for more than one year. This is similar to the proportion who completed a preseminar form.

Most coordinators rated the seminar as very good in meeting their expectations (mean of 4.3, range from 2 to 5). They also rated the overall quality of the information presented at the seminar as very good (mean of 4.3, range from 1 to 5). In addition, 87 percent indicated that the seminar provided information about the topic that was of greatest interest to them.

Ninety-eight percent of the coordinators indicated that the topics presented at the seminar addressed their professional development needs. Coordinators found networking, information about outreach, and the overall structure of the seminar to be most useful (see Table IV.2). Coordinators with a year or less of Ready To Learn experience and those with more than a year of experience reported networking as the most useful aspect of the seminar. In the baseline survey, nearly all coordinators reported that they planned to follow up on contacts made at the seminar.

Table IV.2: Aspects of Seminar Coordinators Found Most Useful

Category	Percent
Networking	23
Outreach	15
Seminar Structure	10
Partnerships	9
Priority Audience	9
Newcomer Debriefings	8
Introduction to New Television Programs	6
Fund-Raising	5
New Cooperative Agreement	3
Research and Evaluation	3
Special Events	2
All Aspects	9
Sample Size	118

Source: 2001 Postseminar Evaluation Forms.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100, as a result of rounding.

**CONCURRENT
SESSIONS POSED A
CHALLENGE**

In addition to providing feedback about the useful aspects of the seminar, coordinators provided feedback about the topics that were not as useful to them. Only 60 of the 125 coordinators who completed a postseminar evaluation provided a response to this question. Of those 60, almost 40

“I missed sessions I wanted to attend. [I] had to make choices.”

—Coordinator

“Many people, including new coordinators, need a model workshop.”

—Coordinator

percent indicated that the structure of the seminar was problematic—most were referring to the concurrent sessions. Coordinators were concerned that they were unable to attend all the sessions they were interested in, because sometimes the concurrent sessions were not repeated often enough.

Coordinators also provided feedback about topics that were important to their work but were not covered adequately at the seminar. Of the 86 coordinators who responded to this question, 10 indicated that all topics were covered adequately. The top four suggestions to help cover important topics adequately were:

1. Spending more time on how to conduct workshops (12 percent)
2. Spending more time on issues involving effective outreach (12 percent)
3. Providing more information about how to raise funds locally for Ready To Learn activities (11 percent)
4. Providing more information about the new cooperative agreement (9 percent)

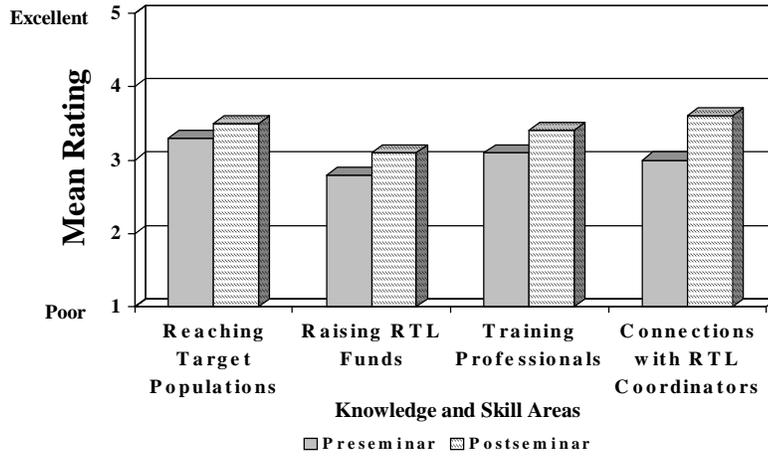
COORDINATORS ADDED TO THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Self-ratings of knowledge and skills can be problematic (there is no “objective” measure), and pre-post designs are not the most rigorous. Nevertheless, to provide descriptive information, we asked coordinators to rate their knowledge and skills in several areas important to their work on both the pre- and postseminar evaluation forms (using a 5-point scale where 1 is “poor” and 5 is “excellent”). Both before and after the seminar, coordinators gave the highest rating to their knowledge of Ready To Learn program goals (see Figures IV.2 and IV.3; preseminar mean of 4.2—“very good,” ranging from 1 to 5; postseminar mean of 4.3—“very good,” ranging from 2 to 5). They gave the lowest rating to how to raise additional Ready To Learn funds (preseminar mean of 2.8—“fair/good,” ranging from 1 to 5; postseminar mean of 3.1—“good,” ranging from 1 to 5).

We compared the pre- and postseminar responses and found that coordinators’ postseminar ratings of their knowledge and skills were at least two-tenths of a point higher than their preseminar ratings in 4 of the 14 areas (a statistically significant difference), including reaching the 4 target populations, raising funds for Ready To Learn activities, training and recruiting professionals, and making connections with other coordinators. Coordinators’ ratings of their connection with other Ready To Learn coordinators increased from a mean of 2.9 (ranging from 1 to 5) before the seminar to 3.6 afterward.

FIGURE IV.2

SELF-RATING OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FROM PRE- TO POSTSEMINAR (AREAS THAT CHANGED)

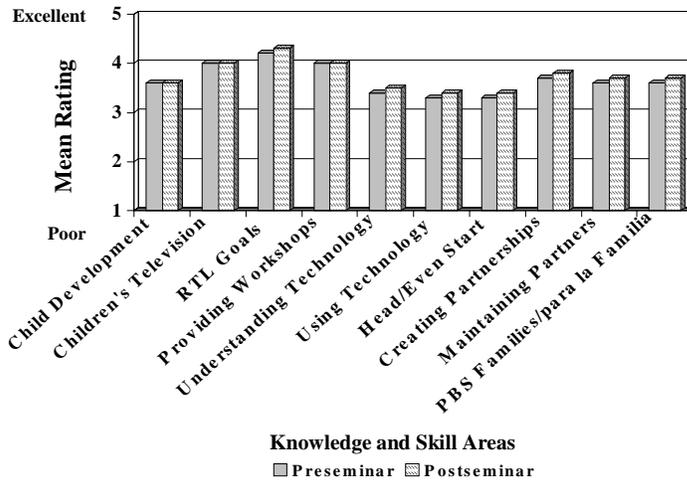


Sample Size = 111 - 113

Source: 2001 Pre- and Postseminar Evaluation Forms.

FIGURE IV.3

SELF-RATING OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FROM PRE- TO POSTSEMINAR (AREAS THAT DID NOT CHANGE)



Knowledge and Skill Areas

Preseminar Postseminar

Sample Size = 111 - 113

Source: 2001 Pre- and Postseminar Evaluation Forms.

The theme of learning from other coordinators, strengthening relationships, and building new ones emerged clearly from the comments coordinators made on their postseminar evaluation forms. They did not expect to rate this aspect of the experience as most important to them, but for many of the coordinators, this was clearly the most beneficial aspect of the meeting.

THE SEMINAR WAS RATED AS SUCCESSFUL

“Thank you for the privilege of dinner with Mister Rogers, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

—Coordinator

Overall, most coordinators rated the 2001 seminar a success. The seminar met their professional development needs, provided information on the topic they most wanted to learn more about, and allowed them the opportunity to interact with and learn from the other coordinators. From reviewing the quantitative data, reading through the many responses coordinators gave to the open-ended questions, and attending the seminar, we identified five key strengths for PBS to build on as they plan the next seminar:

1. ***Face-to-face sharing makes a difference.*** Coordinators are excited about their work and very interested in sharing with and learning from their counterparts at other stations. The seminar provided many formal and informal opportunities for this sharing, perhaps in a way that no other professional development format could.
2. ***Professional development needs were met.*** The seminar content met the professional development needs of both experienced and less-experienced coordinators. Less-experienced coordinators appreciated the newcomer orientation and debriefing sessions.
3. ***Session topics were relevant.*** Coordinators found the topics covered during the seminar to be useful to their work.
4. ***Session quality was very good.*** Overall session quality, including the skill of presenters, handouts, and audiovisuals, was high.
5. ***The mix of session formats facilitated learning.*** The variety of session formats provided opportunities for all types of learners to get the most from the seminar. Some of the plenary sessions and many of the concurrent sessions provided hands-on opportunities to work in small groups or individually and practice what was being shared.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDED SEMINAR STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

Coordinators shared many ideas about ways to improve the next seminar, from providing balanced meals and warmer meeting rooms to recommendations for bringing back favorite sessions from previous seminars and particular presenters. We identified five key areas for improvement and training needs for the next seminar.

1. ***Limit the number of concurrent sessions.*** Coordinators, especially those who were the only representative from their station, want to be able to attend all the sessions. Concurrent sessions were not repeated often enough to allow coordinators to attend them all.
2. ***Include more unstructured time.*** The schedule was very full, and coordinators reported that it did not offer enough time for reflection and processing the information. Coordinators would appreciate more opportunities to interact informally with each other. They found it difficult to stay engaged during sessions scheduled over meals.
3. ***Offer model workshops.*** Coordinators would like to attend model workshops and use these workshops to add to and improve their own.
4. ***Provide workshop evaluation strategies.*** Coordinators want more than model evaluation forms; they want training about how to develop forms tailored to their needs and how to collect, analyze, and interpret the data. Stations want to demonstrate that the Ready To Learn outreach is effective, and coordinators are looking to local and national research to meet this need.
5. ***Group coordinators by station size and outreach approach.*** Coordinators from small stations found it difficult to gain much from sessions that highlighted the outreach conducted by coordinators from large stations that had many Ready To Learn staff members and additional funding. Coordinators would benefit from meeting with coordinators from other stations who share similar station and outreach characteristics.

SUMMARY

Our study of the 2001 Professional Development Seminar was rigorous and representative and provides important information that PBS and the Department of Education may use as they plan the next seminar. The main lesson from the perspective of the coordinators is that the seminar is a good way to provide professional development activities for them. Coordinators found the topics useful and the presentation quality high. This information provides a solid base for moving forward and addressing two other lessons that emerged from this study. First, coordinators would benefit from some changes to the seminar structure, including reducing the number of concurrent sessions (this is especially important when only one person from a station is attending). The second lesson also relates to seminar structure and has the potential to extend the value of the seminar throughout the year. Coordinators would benefit from more networking time during the seminar. Offering time during the seminar for coordinators who share key characteristics (for example, size of station, primary workshop audience, main approach to conducting

workshops) to meet would help coordinators identify others from whom they might learn in a more focused way. These relationships might extend beyond the seminar and serve as a network of support and sharing.

V

Synthesis of Coordinator Strengths and Professional Development Needs

In this chapter, we bring together the data from the baseline coordinator survey and the 2001 seminar evaluation to identify cross-cutting themes related to coordinator strengths and needs for additional training and support. We recognize that PBS does not play a role in hiring the coordinators, and that the day-to-day oversight of the program is a station-level responsibility. To address this, we conclude with three sets of recommendations for (1) what PBS can do to meet the needs of coordinators, (2) what Ready To Learn station management can do, and (3) what coordinators can do. In addition, because the data reported here were collected so early in the cooperative agreement, coordinators may have answered based on their experiences related to the previous grant rather than the new cooperative agreement. As such, this survey serves as a baseline for this transition period.

COORDINATOR STRENGTHS PROVIDE A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR READY TO LEARN

Overall, Ready To Learn coordinators bring many strengths to their positions, including education in a variety of fields, a history of experience with the program, and a strong commitment to their work. It is clear from the baseline survey that coordinators came to their positions from many different routes—we probably could not find one coordinator who set out in college to prepare for a position that brought children’s television programming, early childhood education, and community outreach together. Some stations hired from within for this position, some expressly sought an early childhood education expert, and others wanted a person with strong ties to community. As the study continues, we hope to learn more about station criteria for selecting coordinators and how coordinators’ educational backgrounds may be related to the frequency and intensity of the outreach they conduct. From a national perspective, we view the diversity of coordinator training as a strength, because it allows coordinators to use each other as a resource and to share their different approaches to the position.

Coordinators’ tenure with Ready To Learn provides a strong base for the program at many stations. It takes time and effort to cultivate and develop the community partnerships that are at the heart of Ready To Learn. On average, coordinators had been in their position for about three years, and 71 percent had been in their positions for more than 15 months (Ready To Learn began in 1995 with only 47 stations and grew

to more than 100 by the third program year). The implementation lessons the experienced coordinators have learned are important to gather and share with less-experienced coordinators.

Coordinators are committed to their work and to helping children and families in their communities. They enjoy their work and see their position as their chosen profession and not as a stepping stone to something else they would prefer to be doing. Coordinators are enthusiastic about their work and want to make a difference in the lives of young children by using their skills to teach media literacy and family literacy to parents and other family members, teachers, and child care providers.

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND
PROGRAM NEEDS
CLUSTER IN SPECIFIC
KNOWLEDGE, SKILL,
AND RESOURCE AREAS**

Coordinators' professional development needs include building their knowledge and skills in working with the four target populations and the new partners, as well as conducting local evaluations of their outreach efforts. Coordinators need support in developing strategies for meeting the audience and partnership goals of the new cooperative agreement. They also need help identifying and working with the target populations in their communities (families with limited literacy, children with disabilities, families with limited English proficiency, and rural residents) and the newly identified partners (Head Start, Even Start, 21st Century Learning Centers, child care providers, and libraries). Training in how to work with children with disabilities might be helpful, since only half the coordinators targeted children with disabilities, and many who did not reported that they did not know enough about working with this group. Coordinators are not sure how to measure participation of target population members in outreach activities for their quarterly reports to PBS. Coordinators also want to build their evaluation skills, and they require training and assistance in developing and using the appropriate tools to evaluate their outreach efforts.

Coordinators do not want to duplicate efforts and would like to share more of what they have done and benefit from the work of others. Facilitating the sharing of outreach materials, including translations of the materials, would be one way to reduce such duplication. Although the coordinators are connected through RTL+, some feel isolated from other stations that are likely to be duplicating efforts. For example, when new materials come from a producer and they are not available in other languages, a number of stations might pay for translations independently. Better planning and coordination would reduce the duplication of station efforts. Also, coordinators would appreciate sharing of ready-made workshops that they could adapt for their communities.

Coordinators may benefit from learning from other coordinators about how Ready To Learn “fits” into their broader station mission and organization. Some coordinators have very close partnerships with their outreach, production, and development departments and benefit greatly from those relationships. In smaller stations, the person responsible for Ready To Learn may also be the director of the education department. Facilitation of sharing station-level partnerships and experiences is one way to help coordinators see what is possible as far as integrating Ready To Learn into the member stations.

New coordinators have special needs that were partly addressed by the newcomers’ session at the professional development seminar. New coordinators may benefit from a better system of orientation to Ready To Learn and a collection of readings and resources to get them going. The welcome package could include a manual that explains what a workshop is, what partnerships are for, and what types of information to collect. A new coordinator who takes the position may not receive all of the original Ready To Learn materials from his or her predecessor.

WHAT CAN PBS DO?
—LEAD KEY
COORDINATION
EFFORTS

In its role as the national leader of Ready To Learn, PBS will be able to address many of the coordinators’ professional development and outreach management needs. We have identified five strategies that would meet both short- and long-term needs:

1. ***Strengthen national-level partnerships with key partners to facilitate local partnerships.*** Federal Head Start and Even Start staff members attended the 2001 professional development seminar. Wider sharing of information about Ready To Learn on the national level may facilitate local partnerships. PBS can lead the way in this area, helping coordinators develop and strengthen their local partnerships and meet the goals of the cooperative agreement.
2. ***Collect, disseminate, and facilitate sharing of resources that coordinators need.*** For example, model Ready To Learn workshops, materials, and local evaluation tools may be very helpful. Producers of the PBS children’s television programs have put together a wealth of information that coordinators use as part of their outreach efforts. However, there is no centralized list of these resources (and the languages in which they are available) for coordinators to access. PBS could work with the children’s television program producers to create a clearinghouse of information and resources. For this clearinghouse, PBS and the children’s television program producers could use the coordinator survey findings to develop more and better materials related to the programs coordinators frequently use in workshops. Producers of television programs that are used less frequently by the coordinators

may revisit their materials and strengthen them. It is possible that coordinators use certain programs because there are more or higher-quality materials available or because the program is new or very popular.

3. ***Recognize that coordinators have different professional development needs.*** Needs differ based on station size, Ready To Learn budget, community, type of outreach, and experience. PBS could support the identification of smaller groups based on station and coordinator characteristics, facilitate communication among those groups, and provide sessions or networking opportunities at the professional development seminar for them.
4. ***Strengthen communication with the coordinators.*** Communication may be improved by providing timely responses to questions posted on RTL+, sharing reporting requirements early, and providing other information as quickly as possible.
5. ***Acknowledge that coordinators' Ready To Learn experience is valuable by tracking coordinator turnover and facilitating transitions for new coordinators.*** New coordinators may not have at their disposal all the resources that PBS might expect, and PBS could play an important role in smoothing coordinator transitions by working with them and the station management staff to identify resource and professional development needs.

**WHAT CAN READY TO
LEARN STATIONS DO?
—ENCOURAGE
COMMUNICATION AND
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Station managers who supervise Ready To Learn coordinators could further support coordinators in meeting their professional development needs by:

- ***Facilitating in-house communication and collaboration.*** A large proportion of coordinators reported that the staff members at their stations do not work collaboratively. Ready To Learn is a cross-cutting effort that seems to benefit from bringing together station expertise in education, outreach, production, member services, and development. Stations seem to vary greatly in the level of integration of Ready To Learn into the main activities of the station and the relative status the program has within the station.
- ***Supporting and encouraging professional development.*** A large proportion of coordinators reported that their stations do not encourage professional development.
- ***Informing PBS immediately when the Ready To Learn coordinator leaves the position or goes on extended leave.*** PBS often learns indirectly or after a long period of time that a

coordinator has left the position and a new or temporary coordinator is in place. PBS cannot facilitate the transition unless it knows there has been one.

WHAT CAN READY TO LEARN COORDINATORS DO?

—COMMUNICATE AND SHARE WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOES NOT

Coordinators could ensure that their professional development needs are met by:

- ***Communicating with each other, PBS, and their station colleagues.*** Important coordinator communication activities include providing constructive feedback to PBS about their needs, using the established Station Advisory Council (a group of coordinators that meets regularly to share coordinator concerns and advise PBS on all aspect of Ready To Learn, including the professional development seminar), working with their station supervisor to develop a professional development plan, and participating in the Ready To Learn evaluation activities.
- ***Sharing strategies that work, as well as those that clearly do not.*** Often there is pressure to put efforts in the best light, but coordinators may also benefit from learning from others about strategies they may not want to pursue.

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND LOOKING AHEAD

In the past seven months, two main events brought PBS and coordinators closer to meeting the coordinators' professional development goals and needs. First, in April, PBS hired the director of the Ready To Learn Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center and initiated plans for establishing the center. The director brings an extensive background in training and development to her new position. Second, PBS sponsored two one-and-a-half-day summer training meetings for coordinators in July and August, entitled "Ready To Learn: Ensuring a Comprehensive Approach to Literacy." Eighty-six coordinators and 21 other Ready To Learn staff members from 83 stations attended, and each coordinator received credit for 10 professional development hours. The main topics included family literacy, reaching adult learners, and building community partnerships to support Ready To Learn. Improvements on the 2001 seminar included a mixture of plenary and concurrent sessions, with all concurrent sessions repeated often enough for one person to attend them all, and time for informal interactions among coordinators and PBS staff members.

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APPENDIX A

CATEGORY ASSIGNMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL SEMINAR SESSIONS

CATEGORY ASSIGNMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL SEMINAR SESSIONS

Category	Individual Session Title
Ready To Learn Implementation and Evaluation	Ready To Learn About Reading: Research, Methods and Models Ready To Learn About Reading: Getting Started ^a Ready To Learn About Reading: Getting Stronger ^a Growing Ready To Learn Building a Stronger Ready To Learn Station Team ^a Evaluation Plan
Community: Partnerships, Target Populations	Priority Audiences and Partners Powerful Partnerships: How to Make Them, How to Keep Them: Part I Head Start and Ready To Learn ^a Even Start and Ready To Learn ^a Child Care and Ready To Learn ^a Powerful Partnerships: How to Make Them, How to Keep Them: Part II Extending Your Reach to Rural Families ^a Working with Spanish-Speaking Kids ^a
PBS Kids Programs and Outreach	Between the Lions ^a Clifford ^a Jay Jay the Jet Plane ^a Reading Rainbow ^a Teletubbies ^a Zoom into Action with Local/National Zoom ^a Sesame Workshop—New Outreach Initiatives ^a
Outreach Strategies	Working Lunch: Designated Reader Campaign Digging for Dollars ^a Recruiting and Training Professionals ^a Making the Most of <i>PBS Families</i> and <i>PBS para la Familia</i> ^a Working from Home ^a Children’s Programming and Outreach Pipeline Ready To Learn Online Pipeline
Total Sessions	28

^aOffered as a concurrent session; all others were plenary sessions.