

Book Chapter Co-authored by Tiffany Coulson and Barbara Peterson in  
Libraries and Non-profits Collaboration for the Common Good

“Growing access to books: Supplementing library services to rural students.”

<http://libraryjuicepress.com/nonprofits.php>

Abstract

As of March 2013, the U.S. Department of Education reported that one quarter of all public school students attended rural schools.<sup>1</sup> Not only do these students face limited access to library materials within their schools, but often rural public libraries are also challenged in providing access to books due to decreased budgets, reduced hours and staffing shortages.<sup>2</sup> With one of the fastest growing poverty rates in the nation, an average of one in four rural children lives in poverty.<sup>3</sup> In Warden, Washington, located in a county with high childhood poverty rates, and a high percentage of English Language Learners, access to books is crucial to the development of reading skills.<sup>4</sup> An area non-profit organization, Northwest Learning and Achievement (NLA) Group, provides after school programming to Warden School District. As part of their out of school time literacy curriculum, NLA Group uses resources purchased through FirstBook.org by means of a federal grant establishing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center at the school district. First Book is a non-profit organization that leverages their contact with publishers to provide low cost books to children in need. This case study of K-5 students, parents and staff in Warden School District will evaluate how an informal partnership between the non-profits of NLA Group and First Book is able to supplement local library services by providing access to books for students and their families. The ability of NLA Group to purchase multiple copies of literacy materials allows children access to high quality new books in classes, during free reading, in after school book clubs and to check out and take home. The focus of First Book in stocking the latest award-winning books, and a large variety of less available authentic multi-cultural selections means that supplemental programming designed by NLA Group is progressive and meets the needs of Warden’s culturally diverse population. Data collection examining the way books are used and their perceived value to participants was carried out using a mixed methods approach with observations, quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews and focus groups with students, school staff and parents at Warden School District over the course of a year.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. “The Status of Rural Education.” Last modified March, 2013. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_tla.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_tla.asp).

<sup>2</sup> Swan, Deanne W., Justin Grimes, and Timothy Owen. The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States. Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. “Child Poverty.” Last modified September, 2016. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/child-poverty/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.