

Institute of Museum and Library Services

Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Proposal (2018 *pending*)

Wordless Conversations: Training librarians on an asset-based approach to family literacy using wordless picture books.

Washington State has the fourth highest percentage of second language speakers in rural areas in the U.S. The high migrant population that works in agricultural areas often has lower levels of educational attainment and less experience with libraries making family literacy a priority to organizations that serve these rural communities.

While some families might not “fit” into traditional literacy roles of book reading, they can be involved in literacy activities if they are given open opportunities to participate. The use of wordless picture books gives all families, including those with parents of low educational attainment or limited English language skills, the opportunity to interact with their children while “reading” books. Vocabulary development has been shown to result from the conversations surrounding book reading, not only from reading books. Research shows that mothers who engage with their young children around wordless books tend to use more rich vocabulary than those who read from a book. Language enrichment in a child’s heritage language has positive effects on second language acquisition.

Conducting workshops for families using wordless picture books: 1) Builds the capacity of organizations to answer the needs of communities and strengthen strategic relationships between libraries, schools and migrant offices. 2) Encourages cultural engagement in communities and increases equity and access by removing the stigma of reading ability from family literacy activities 3) Exemplifies library principals set forth in the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) Multicultural Library Manifesto affirming the importance of infusing world cultures and heritage languages into library programming