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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Selected News Releases

Little Books Get Big Boost in Marketing and Distribution

ORONO, Maine -- A series of Little Books from Maine didn't generate much talk in literacy circles, but publishers took notice that the simple texts were a hit among beginning readers and their teachers. Five years after the first series was created and produced by the Center for Early Literacy at the University of Maine, the small texts are heading for an international market.

Little Books for Early Readers, written by Maine educators and featuring Maine children doing Maine things from playing in the snow to harvesting potatoes, are now being distributed by Educators Publishing Service, Inc. Based in Cambridge, Mass., the

50-year-old, family-owned business specializes in instructional materials and publishes nearly 2,000 books and workbooks to help beginning through adult learners develop basic and critical thinking skills.

The new agreement gives EPS worldwide marketing and distribution rights to the four series for two years, including promotion through its catalogs, website, direct mail programs, independent representative network and its extensive exhibit schedule. The Center for Early Literacy, a unit of the UMaine College of Education and Human Development, remains the owner, copyright holder and manufacturer and will continue to use revenue above expenses to initiate and support early literacy efforts in Maine.

UMaine Literacy Professor Rosemary Bamford and EPS Publisher John Hall announced the agreement at the University during an Aug. 7 literacy conference attended by nearly 400 Maine K-5 educators, including some authors of the *Little Books*.

“Our problem has been trying to keep up with the demand, and we know we should be exhibiting at national conferences,” said Bamford. “With the targeted marketing expertise and distribution resources of EPS, the *Little Books* will get the

exposure they need, and they will get into the hands of many more teachers and children.”

EPS is promoting the Maine series through mailings to just about every school in the United States and throughout Canada, as well as to other countries over its website (www.epsbooks.com). “This is the kick-off year for marketing the *Little Books*, and we're doing it in a big way,” said Hall.

The series is a good fit with the EPS philosophy and family of materials, according to Hall. “The best materials are developed and field-tested by teachers in the classroom, so we know that they are effective and will be helpful to other educators,” he said.

Bamford credited the foresight and work of Center for Early Literacy Director and Assistant Professor Paula Moore in recognizing the need for engaging, low-cost books for beginning readers and spearheading the effort that since 1995 has produced four series of *Little Books*. Nearly 9,000 sets of *Little Books* have been sold throughout Maine and around the country since the series was created.

Just the right size for small hands, the *Little Books* provide adequate meaning and structure, such as heavy picture clues, repetitive use of key words and complete, meaningful stories to give young children a strong, eager start in the complex task of learning to read.

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