



where great stories begin™

THE **POWER OF PARENTS +**  
THE **INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S DOCTORS**

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**REACH OUT AND READ**  
**IN A CHILD'S FIRST FIVE YEARS**

## THE PROGRAM

**Reach Out and Read prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together.** Our program builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to develop early reading skills in children. Doctors, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals incorporate Reach Out and Read's evidence-based model into regular well-child checkups by advising parents about the importance of reading aloud and giving developmentally-appropriate books to children to take home and keep. The program begins at the 6-month checkup and continues through age 5, with a special emphasis on children growing up in low-income families, where children are most at risk for reading failure. Every child in the program enters kindergarten with a home library of at least 10 books and parents who understand the importance of reading aloud.

Reach Out and Read was founded in 1989 by a group of pediatricians and educators who recognized that what happens in infancy and toddlerhood truly sets the stage for achievement later in life.



**66%** OF CHILDREN IN AMERICA ARE NOT PROFICIENT IN READING BY THE END OF 3RD GRADE.<sup>1</sup>

**83%** of children living in low-income families are not proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade.<sup>2</sup>

**IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY**

## THE ANNUAL IMPACT:

**4 MILLION** CHILDREN SERVED. **6.5 MILLION** BOOKS DISTRIBUTED. **20 THOUSAND** MEDICAL PROVIDERS. **5 THOUSAND** PROGRAM SITES. **50** STATES AND D.C.

## THE PROBLEM

### MANY CHILDREN ENTER SCHOOL UNPREPARED TO LEARN

Many children, especially those from low-income communities, are not read to from birth. **90% of brain development occurs between birth and age 5.**<sup>3</sup> The first five years of life offer a critical window for learning, with rapid brain development that does not occur at any other time. If children miss the opportunity to acquire foundational language skills, they are set up for immediate struggles with literacy as soon as they arrive at school.

Books at home, parents reading aloud, and early language skills have long demonstrated to be vital precursors to later success in learning to read. Children living in low-income families are exposed to a much less language-rich environment than their more affluent peers. By the time children from low-income families enter kindergarten, they are typically 12-14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills.<sup>4</sup> Children who start kindergarten behind rarely catch up, and disparities in early childhood tend to persist throughout school and life.

Reading difficulty can contribute to school failure and prevent a child from reaching his or her full education, social, and economic potential. This problem is not only a crisis for individuals and families; it also has a significant effect on the ability of the United States to compete in the global economy.

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION

“INVESTMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 5 HELPS REDUCE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP, REDUCE THE NEED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION, INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES, LOWER THE CRIME RATE, AND REDUCE OVERALL SOCIAL COSTS. IN FACT, EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PRODUCES A 7 TO 10 PERCENT PER ANNUM RETURN ON INVESTMENT.”

Heckman, James J., “The Economics of Inequality: The Value of Early Childhood Education,” *American Educator*, Spring 2011; pp 31-35, 47.

# 15 INDEPENDENT PEER-REVIEWED STUDIES SHOW THAT REACH OUT AND READ IS EFFECTIVE IN CHANGING CHILD OUTCOMES.

## KEY FINDINGS

1) High-risk urban families participating in Reach Out and Read had higher receptive language scores and expressive language scores.

Mendelsohn A.L., Mogiler L.N., Dreyer B.P., Forman J.A., Weinstein S.C., Broderick M., Cheng K.J., Magloire T., Moore T., Napier C., "The impact of a clinic-based literacy intervention on language development in inner-city preschool children," *Pediatrics*, 2001; 107(1), p. 130-134.

2) Families participating in the Reach Out and Read model read to their children more often (4.3 vs. 3.8 days/week).

High P.C., LaGasse L., Becker S., Ahlgren I., Gardner A., "Literacy promotion in primary care pediatrics: can we make a difference?" *Pediatrics*, 2000; 104, p. 927-934.

3) Among children ages 33 months to 39 months attending a well-child clinic in Louisville, KY, expressive and receptive language scores were significantly and positively associated with both the number of Reach Out and Read-enhanced well-child visits they had attended, and with the number of books purchased for them by their parents.

Theriot J.A., Franco S.M., Sisson B.A., Metcalf S.C., Kennedy M.A., Bada H.S., "The impact of early literacy guidance on language skills of 3-year-olds," *Clinical Pediatrics*, 2003; 42, p. 165-172.

4) Hispanic parents whose children had received bilingual books, educational materials, and anticipatory guidance about literacy were more likely to report reading books with their child at least 3 days/week (66% vs.24%) and report that reading books was one of their three favorite things to do with their child (43% vs. 13%) than parents in a control group.

Golova N., Alario A.J., Vivier P.M., Rodriguez M., High P.C. "Literacy promotion for Hispanic families in a primary care setting: A randomized controlled trial," *Pediatrics*, 1998; 103, p. 993-997.

"The Reach Out and Read model has proven successful in helping parents read to their kids and increasing the probability of healthy child development. Reach Out and Read works with doctors to encourage parents to read to their children and gives them the tools to get started. By building on the special relationship between parents and medical providers, Reach Out and Read helps children enter school prepared to learn and succeed."

- United States Senator Jack Reed (D-Rhode Island)



## WHY WE WORK

**REACH OUT AND READ LEVERAGES TWO EXTRAORDINARY FORCES TO IMPROVE EARLY LITERACY AND EDUCATION OUTCOMES: THE POWER OF PARENTS AND THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S DOCTORS.**

Reach Out and Read is uniquely positioned to help our youngest children arrive at school ready to read, learn, and succeed. As the only early literacy nonprofit that works through pediatricians, we have unparalleled access to young children—and their parents. Nearly 90 percent of all young children see a child health provider at least annually for a checkup, while less than one-third are in any childcare setting, the next most common contact with a formal service system.<sup>5</sup>

Since all Reach Out and Read doctors and nurses volunteer the time they spend promoting early literacy, children's books are the primary cost for the Reach Out and Read program. Publisher discounts and an innovative bulk-purchasing system enable Reach Out and Read to buy more than twice as many books as it could at standard retail pricing. The result is a low cost program that makes a profound impact on the lives of children.

Fifteen independent peer-reviewed studies, published in medical journals, show that Reach Out and Read is effective in changing both child outcomes, and parental attitudes and practices. During the preschool years, children served by Reach Out and Read score three to six months ahead of their non-Reach Out and Read peers on vocabulary tests. These early foundational language skills help start children on a path of success when they enter school.

1. The Nation's Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011).

2. Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters* (2009 data).

3. *Zero to Three*

4. *A Quiet Crisis: The Urgent Need to Build Early Childhood Systems and Quality Programs for Children Birth to Age Five*, Policy Statement, (2009); (Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers).

5. The Colorado Trust Issue Brief: *Connecting Child Health and School Readiness* (2009).

## THE POLICY RESPONSE

### STRONG PUBLIC-PRIVATE SUPPORT FOR REACH OUT AND READ

Reach Out and Read's annual budget is supported by the public sector, corporations, foundations, and individual donors. This public-private partnership has allowed Reach Out and Read to expand from its first location in Boston to nearly 5,000 hospitals, pediatric clinics, and health centers nationwide.

Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, Reach Out and Read has changed the way pediatrics is practiced in the United States by giving medical providers an evidence-based strategy to promote child development and school readiness.

"Research shows that reading aloud to children from an early age is vitally important to their development. We've seen the tremendous impact that Reach Out and Read has on kids in Iowa and across the country, who are in danger of falling behind even before they reach school age. Reach Out and Read is an investment in the future and helps ensure that more children have a greater chance at success."

- United States Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa)

### OUR SPECIAL INITIATIVES

#### Military

Reach Out and Read doctors help parents build routines to reassure children, and support families dealing with deployments, separation, and reintegration. We show parents how reading aloud helps families cope with stress and anxiety, while helping children prepare for kindergarten.

#### Legendo Juntos (Reading Together)

Legendo Juntos helps primary care providers to effectively encourage Latino parents and extended family members to read with their children. We emphasize respect for patients' cultures and primary language, and build upon the best practices for supporting early literacy in Spanish-speaking families.

#### American Indian/Alaska Native

Reach Out and Read partners with the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Indian Health Service to support tribal clinics.

## THE NEXT STEP...

### GIVING BOOKS SHOULD BE AS ROUTINE AS GIVING IMMUNIZATIONS

With your help, we can support all children across America at risk for poor educational outcomes by engaging parents as their child's first and most important teachers.

## AWARDS AND ENDORSEMENTS



"And so the question is whether all of us—as citizens, and as parents—are willing to do what's necessary to give every child a chance to succeed. That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities. It's family that first instills the love of learning in a child."

— President Barack Obama,  
State of the Union Address, January 25, 2011

[www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)

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