

UNITED WAY OF YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

REACH OUT AND READ



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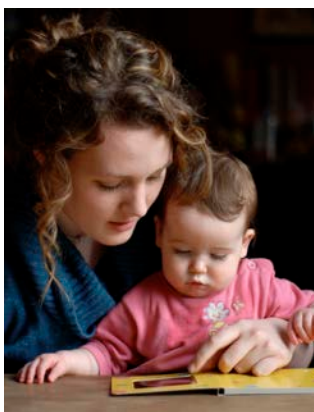
ISSUE BACKGROUND

Studies show that kids who can read well by third grade are four times more likely to graduate high school, have continued success in their future employment, and life. The percentage of third graders not reading at grade level is dramatically higher among the schools with the highest rates of children at the poverty level, where there is only one grade level book at home for every 300 kids.

According to the Grade Level Reading Campaign: (<http://gradelevelreading.net/>)

- By age 2 low income children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy.
- By age 3 low income children have heard as many as 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.
- As early as age 3 a child's vocabulary can predict third grade reading achievement.
- By age 5 a typical middle-class child recognizes 22 letters of the alphabet, compared to 9 for a child from a low-income family. :

Ensuring that the reading tools and resource are available to kids is one of the key strategies to improving third grade reading levels. Focusing on the link between pediatricians, supportive parental involvement and children's early literacy, the Reach Out and Read program ensures children will have access to quality reading materials regardless of their income levels.



WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM DO?

Reach Out and Read is a nonprofit organization that gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together.

The Reach Out and Read evidence-based program builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to develop critical early reading skills in children, beginning in infancy. As recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read incorporates early literacy into pediatric practice, equipping parents with tools and knowledge to ensure that their children are prepared to learn when they start school. (<http://www.reachoutandread.org/about-us/>)

Reach Out and Read distributes an estimated 18,000 books to children and their families in Yellowstone County annually and this number is growing as the program expands. Reach Out and Read families read together more often and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills. 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.



HOW DOES REACH OUT AND READ CONNECT WITH UNITED WAY OF YELLOWSTONE COUNTY'S IMPACT STRATEGIES?

*Connecting the dots for community wide impact and success, our Impact Goal is to make sure “All children in Yellowstone County graduate from high school and are ready to enter the workforce or transition to college or advance training.” Our strategy to make this goal a reality is to improve graduation rates by focusing on three strategies: **School Readiness, School Success and Crisis Stabilization.***

Reach Out and Read directly influences the first phase of dropout prevention by focusing on children being ready to enter Kindergarten and develop cognitive, physical and social-emotional skills. This program is a valuable piece to ensuring children are ready to face academic challenges, which lead to school success.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR UNITED WAY TO SUSTAIN THIS PROGRAM?

- *Identify and establish relationships with children's clinics and pediatricians working with families.*
- *Communicate products to the community and its impact.*
- *Solicit and secure donor commitment for families who will benefit from the program.*
- *Engage businesses, physicians and families for community collaboration to improve literacy skills of the children of Yellowstone County.*



CURRENT PARTNERS WITH REACH OUT AND READ IN YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

Partners working together to continue to secure long-term funding to sustain this program include: United Way of Yellowstone County, The Children's Clinic and Employee Benefit Management Services, Inc.

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