

# **The More Books the Better? Expanding Access to Early Childhood Literacy Resources**

Final Report

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## Act No. 139

**An act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction.**

### **Sec. 12. EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY RESOURCES; REPORT**

On or before January 15, 2025, the Department of Libraries shall submit a written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education with recommendations for expanding access to early childhood literacy resources with a focus on options that target low-income or underserved areas of the State. Options considered shall include State or local partnership with or financial support for book gifting programs, book distribution programs, and any other compelling avenue for supporting early childhood literacy in Vermont.

**Source:**

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/ACTS/ACT139/ACT139%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

## Executive Summary

Reading scores of Vermont fourth graders have declined precipitously over the past two decades. In 2022, school readiness data showed that 15% of incoming kindergarteners in 2022 were not yet ready to succeed in school. Both State and national data suggest that intervention is necessary to better support Vermont's children ages birth to three in becoming ready to succeed in elementary school.

While implementing a gift book program can promote increased shared reading, the research shows that programs that focus primarily on the distribution of books often lack the key component of educating parents about early childhood literacy. This is an important element that contributes positivity to a child's reading readiness by strengthening family relationships and increasing direct informal reading supports for children in the home.

Research shows that the most effective gift book program isn't necessarily the one that gives a child the most books, but rather is the one that encourages parents and caregivers to read to their children every day and provides adults with instruction on how to read to best support their child's learning.

Because research shows that multi-pronged approaches are most effective in positively impacting early childhood literacy, the Department recommends the State consider investment in both a gift book program and a parent-education program to increase support for early childhood literacy for children birth through three years of age in the State. The Department recommends that these supports include the *Reach Out and Read* book gifting program and an early childhood literacy education program for parents, caregivers, and public library staff.

## Methodology

Based on the charge set forth by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont through Act 139—an act relating to supporting Vermont’s young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction—this report by the Vermont Department of Libraries (the Department) provides the Senate and House Committees on Education with recommendations for expanding access to early childhood literacy resources in Vermont with a focus on options targeting low-income or underserved areas of the State.

To inform its report to the Legislature, the Department:

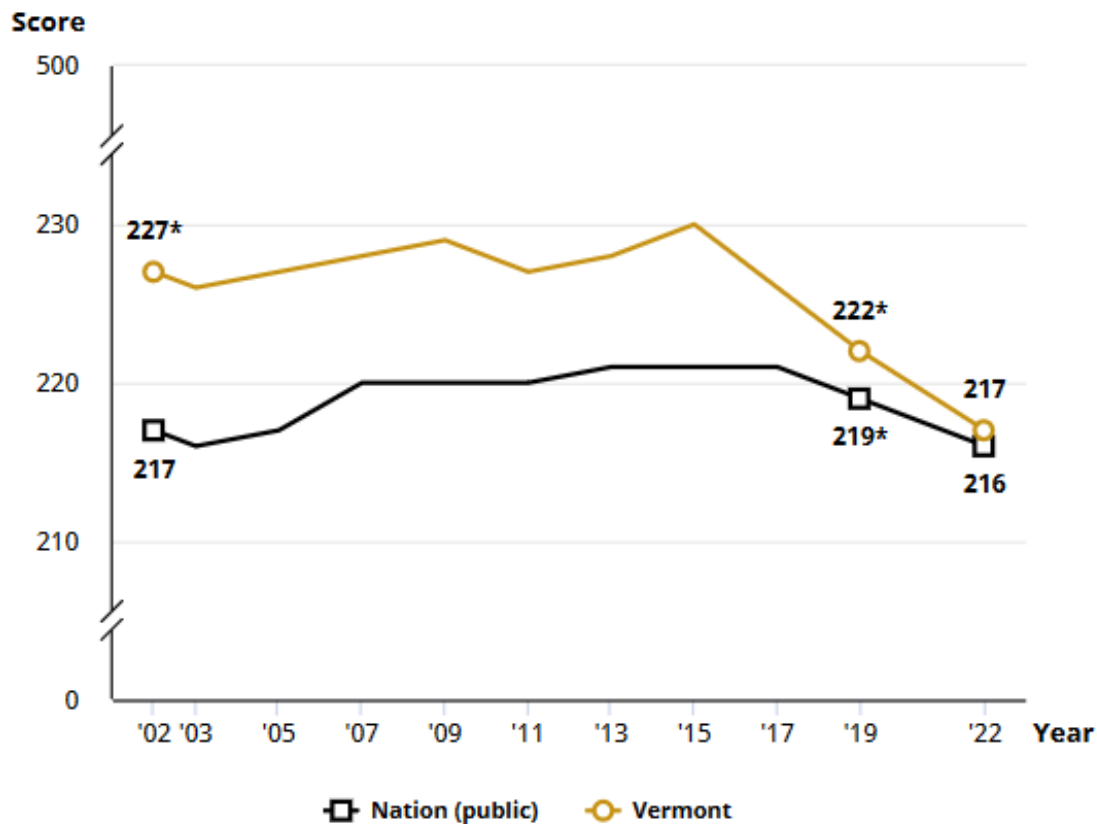
1. Reviewed literature on avenues to support positive early childhood literacy outcomes in Vermont, including book gifting programs, book distribution programs, and other programs that support early childhood literacy, with a focus on options targeting low-income or underserved communities in the State;
2. Reviewed State and federal data on the literacy and school readiness needs of children in Vermont;
3. Conducted a survey of peer State Library Administrative Agencies (State Libraries) to assess which statewide and national early literacy programs are working well and to what extent other state libraries support or administer gift book, book donation, or other early literacy programs, either directly or through partnerships with local or national organizations;
4. Researched existing national and regional book gifting programs and evaluated their alignment with the State’s goals and available financial resources; and
5. Evaluated research to determine which literacy programs are likely to provide the best early literacy outcomes for the youngest Vermonters, and where a new literacy program would best fit within our State’s existing framework (within the Agency of Education, the Department of Libraries, and/or Human Service Agency).

## Section 1: The Need to Support Emerging Literacy in Vermont

Vermont's fourth grade Reading Achievement scores reflect a troubling trend: over the past twenty years, a smaller percentage of Vermont's school children are attaining scores of "Proficient" and "Advanced" on the National Assessment of Education Progress test.

Vermont's decreased scores are not isolated, fourth grade reading assessment scores across nation have dipped during and following the pandemic years. That said, the decline in Vermont's scores is significant as Vermont far outpaced many states as recently as 2015, but its scores have now precipitously dropped to the national average.<sup>i</sup>

### AVERAGE SCORES FOR STATE/JURISDICTION AND THE NATION (PUBLIC)



\* Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from 2022. Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.

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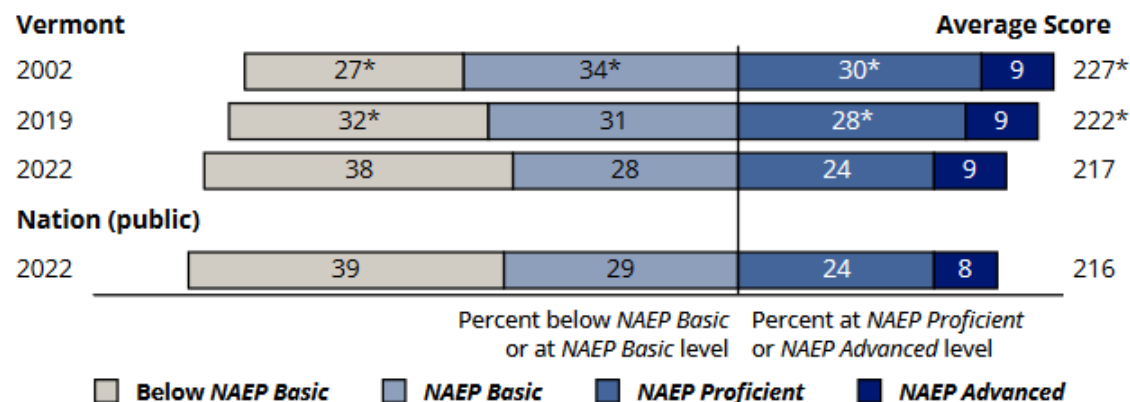
**Source:**

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023010VT4.pdf>

Fourth grade reading scores are particularly significant as a child’s academic achievement by this age is strongly linked with their overall academic outcomes. As the Annie E. Casey Foundation observes, “Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child’s educational development. Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school dropout, which suppresses individual earning potential as well as the nation’s competitiveness and general productivity.”<sup>ii</sup> This underscores the importance of early interventions.

In 2002, 39% of Vermont’s fourth graders scored “Proficient” or “Advanced,” with 61% scoring “Basic” and “Below basic.” Two decades later, Vermont’s scores declined significantly. In 2022, just 33% of Vermont’s fourth graders scored “Proficient” or “Advanced” and the percentage of fourth graders scoring “Basic” and “Below basic” rose to 66%.

**NAEP ACHIEVEMENT-LEVEL PERCENTAGES AND AVERAGE SCORE RESULTS**



\* Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from the state’s results in 2022. Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.

NOTE: NAEP achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted and used with caution. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

**Source:**

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023010VT4.pdf>

Educators in Vermont have observed and reported a similar trend among younger-aged children in Vermont. Significant gaps in reading readiness among children entering elementary school is evident in the Vermont Agency of Education’s report on the **2023-2024 Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S)**, which presents data gathered by kindergarten teachers for each of their students in the first weeks of elementary school. According to the report, “In SY2024, 85.37% of all students statewide identified as ready

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for kindergarten, with 62.0% being within category “4-Ready and performing independently,” and 22.0% being within category “3-Ready and practicing.”<sup>iii</sup>

**Table 1. Statewide Kindergarten Readiness Level**

<b>Readiness Level</b>	<b>SY2022 Statewide Percentage</b>	<b>SY2023 Statewide Percentage</b>	<b>SY2024 Statewide Percentage</b>
1-Not yet ready	5.0%	6.0%	6.0%
2-Approaching ready	9.0%	9.0%	10.0%
3-Ready and practicing	21.0%	22.0%	22.0%
4-Ready and performing independently	64.0%	63.0%	62.0%
Total of all students statewide identified as ready	86.0%	86.0%	85.0%

**Source:**

<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-ready-for-kindergarten-2023-2024-survey-report.pdf>

Kindergarten teachers rated each of their student’s skills as “beginning,” “practicing,” or “performing independently” on 28 items in the domains of Physical Development and Health, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Communication, and Cognitive Development.

The table below, collated for this report by the Department, presents selected metrics from Tables 54-56 of the 2023-2024 R4K!S report that are closely linked with reading, and reveals differences between different supervisory unions or supervisory districts in Vermont.

The 2023-2024 R4K!S report data show that 15% of Vermont’s children are not yet prepared to succeed in school by their first week of kindergarten. The data also reflects uneven readiness across school districts/supervisory unions, which points to needs for different levels of intervention in different communities. Further, the data shows that in many areas of the State there is a need for increased resources to promote social emotional development, approaches to learning, communication, and cognitive development – areas that research shows are positively impacted by increased parent-child reading and access to reading materials.<sup>iv v</sup>

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**Table 2. Vermont School Readiness**

Supervisory Union (SD) / Supervisory District (SD)	Percent of all Students Ready	Social Emotional Development (range 7-21)	Approaches to Learning (range 7-21)	Communication (range 3-9)	Cognitive Development (range 11-33)
<b>STATE Average</b>	<b>85.00%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27</b>
Addison Central SD	86.00%	17	17	8	28
Addison Northwest SD	88.00%	17	17	8	27
Barre SD	76.00%	17	15	8	24
Bennington Rutland SD	74.00%	15	15	7	26
Burlington SD	82.00%	18	18	8	28
Caledonia Central SD	86.00%	17	17	8	26
Central Vermont SD	75.00%	16	15	7	24
Champlain Valley SD	94.00%	18	18	8	29
Colchester SD	86.00%	17	17	8	29
Essex North SD	***	***	***	***	***
Essex-Westford SD	95.00%	18	18	8	29
Franklin Northeast SD	87.00%	17	16	8	27
Franklin West SD	85.00%	17	17	8	28
Grand Isle SU	86.00%	17	16	8	26
Greater Rutland County SU	80.00%	17	16	7	27
Hartford SD	80.00%	16	16	8	25
Harwood Unified Union SD	94.00%	18	18	8	30
Kingdom East SD	88.00%	17	17	8	28
Lamoille North SU	85.00%	16	17	7	28



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Lamoille South SU	87.00%	17	17	8	27
Lincoln SD	90.00%	***	***	***	***
Maple Run SD	85.00%	17	17	8	27
Mill River Unified Union SD	82.00%	16	16	8	25
Milton SD	85.00%	17	16	8	28
Missisquoi Valley SD	85.00%	17	16	8	26
Montpelier Roxbury SD	90.00%	18	18	8	28
Mouth Mansfield Unified Union SD	96.00%	18	18	8	30
Mountain Views SU	94.00%	19	18	8	30
Mt. Abraham Unified SD	78.00%	17	16	8	25
North Country SU	82.00%	17	17	8	26
Orange East SU	87.00%	18	17	8	27
Orange Southwest SU	90.00%	17	17	8	30
Orleans Central SU	80.00%	17	17	8	26
Orleans Southwest SU	100.00%	18	18	8	29
Rivendell Interstate SD	100.00%	19	19	9	30
Rutland City SD	75.00%	16	16	8	25
Rutland Northeast SU	81.00%	17	16	8	26
Saint Johnsbury SD	85.00%	18	16	8	26
School Administrative Unit #70	98.00%	20	20	9	31
Slate Valley Unified Union SD	88.00%	18	17	8	26

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South Burlington SU	86.00%	17	17	8	28
Southwest Vermont SU	82.00%	17	17	8	26
Springfield SD	71.00%	16	16	7	24
Two Rivers SU	88.00%	17	17	8	28
Washington Central SD	86.00%	17	17	8	27
White River Valley SU	91.00%	18	18	8	29
Windham Central SU	87.00%	17	18	8	29
Windham Northeast SU	79.00%	16	17	8	26
Windham Southeast SU	79.00%	16	16	7	24
Windham Southwest SU	83.00%	16	16	8	26
Windsor Southeast SU	90.00%	17	17	8	27
Winooski SD	78.00%	17	16	7	26

National and State data reflect that many children in Vermont would benefit from additional resources to support literacy *before* they enter kindergarten. Providing additional resources to promote literacy and school readiness would better prepare children to read and succeed in elementary school, which would likely improve their school success as measured in fourth grade. The question remains, however, which approaches would be best to accomplish this goal. There is a common assumption that simply increasing access to books will improve childhood literacy. This report will show that it is the practice of daily reading to a child by parents or caregivers that is most impactful. Access to books is a necessary condition for improving childhood literacy, but on its own, access to books alone is *not* sufficient to impact a child’s school readiness.

## Section 2: Supports for Emergent Literacy for Children Birth-PreK

Reading aloud to children has long been accepted as having a positive impact on their development of literacy skills and their readiness to succeed in school, and many studies support that assumption.

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A popular understanding is that if a family owns many children's books, then the children in that family will be read to, and because they have been read to, they will develop strong early childhood literacy skills and will be successful in school. This understanding, however, is not necessarily true. Simply having access to a collection of books at home does not mean that a child has access to developmentally appropriate books. Additionally, having a home library does not necessarily mean that parents will engage in daily reading with their child, or that parents have the skills and knowledge needed to effectively support their child as an emergent reader. This report will demonstrate that *how* a book is read to a child matters as much as *what* is read to them.

This is not to say that having access to books is not important for children. Toward that end, many parents strive to collect in-home libraries of engaging, high-interest books for their children. Children from wealthier families tend to own more books and have access to more books than their peers from less affluent families. Children in lower income families, then, are likely to be negatively impacted by their families' lack of access to enriching resources, including books.

In 2001, Susan B. Neuman and Donna Celano published research that highlighted the disparities in access to books between children of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Their study showed that children of middle-income families had an average of 13 books in their homes but that there was only 1 book for every 300 children from low-income homes.<sup>vi</sup> This statistic from 2001 is still frequently cited today, more than 20 years later.

While the data is older, it is likely still the case today that there is a significant equity gap in access to books based on a family's economic status. In the United States, many book distribution programs have emerged in this context with varying levels of success at addressing the equity gap and its negative impacts upon childhood literacy.

The many gift book programs that provide kids with free books would seem like a perfect solution to address the achievement gap that has been observed between children from affluent families and children whose families live in poverty. But are book gifting programs really the panacea that will fix school readiness gaps between children of diverse economic backgrounds? Or do social dynamics contribute to reading readiness?

Book gifting programs that reach low-income families can help to bridge a key equity gap by providing low-income children with access to print materials. Children enrolled in book gifting programs receive free books and can build their home libraries regardless of their parents' financial resources.

While increasing access to books clearly has a positive impact on the emergence of reading and school readiness, the research suggests that it isn't the books themselves, but the daily practice of being read to by a parent or caregiver that makes a positive

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difference for a child. A policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics published in December 2024 highlights the importance of shared parent/child reading, starting at birth. Reading together every day promotes both *more* verbal communication and *richer* verbal communication than children would experience otherwise, and reading together also promotes greater resiliency for the child and for the family.<sup>vii</sup> So, reading together from infancy has positive impacts, not just on emergent communication and literacy skills, but also on a child's formation of a strong relationship with their parents, which is key to their readiness for school. According to the policy statement,

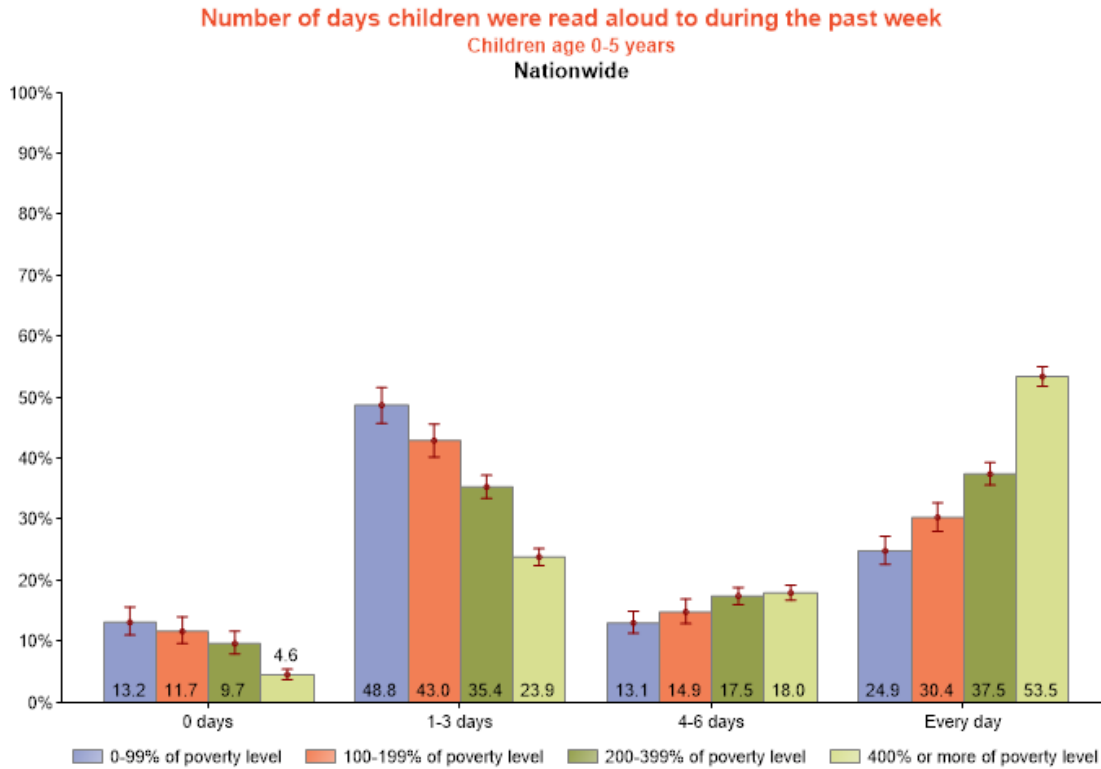
“Reading together often with infants and young children strengthens their relationships with parents and caregivers at a critical time in child development, stimulating brain circuitry and early attachment. A positive parenting practice, shared reading helps build the foundation for healthy social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy development, setting the stage for school readiness and providing enduring benefits across the life course...Reading aloud with young children, starting at birth, offers parents and caregivers strength based strategies that promote positive, intimate, and language-rich interactions. The foundational relationships with parents and caregivers formed in infancy and early childhood, early relational health, are crucial in shaping children's trajectories, including their cognitive, language, and social-emotional development. Early experiences, exposures, and above all, activities that foster early relationships affect a young child's capacities for sustained attention, executive function, self-esteem, and social behavior, which profoundly shape school readiness and success.”<sup>viii</sup>

Book gifting programs for children birth through age three can be helpful because they can spur adults, who might not otherwise read with their children, to read with them more regularly. However, gift book programs that focus primarily on the *distribution* of books often neglect other key components that contribute positively to early literacy development and school readiness: family relationships and reading support.

For these reasons, it is important to shift the conversation away from the number of books a family owns and toward increasing the frequency of shared reading and improving the quality of shared reading.

Importantly, the findings of the 2020–2021 National Survey of Children's Health<sup>ix</sup> highlight that children living in poverty are not the only children in the United States who need to be read to more frequently by their parents and caregivers. Here, too, socioeconomic conditions matter. The study “found that 54% of American children birth to 5 years of age with family incomes 400% of the federal poverty threshold or greater were read to daily, compared with only 24% of children in families living below the poverty threshold.”<sup>x</sup>

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**Data Source:** National Survey of Children's Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/data/national-surveys>

**Citation:** Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2021-2022 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved [mm/dd/yy] from [www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org).

In Vermont, the data reflects an even larger gap: 70.3% of Vermont children, birth to five years of age, with family incomes 400% of the federal poverty threshold or greater, were read to daily, compared with only 26.7% of children living below the poverty threshold in Vermont.

**Table 3. Daily Reading and % of Poverty Level**

**2021-2022 National Survey of Children’s Health Indicator 6.7: During the past week, how many days did you or other family members read to this child, age 0-5 years?**

Percentage of poverty level	0 days	1-3 days	4-6 days	Every day
Nationwide 0-99% of poverty level	13.20%	48.80%	13.10%	24.90%
Vermont 0-99% of poverty level	7.70%	44.80%	20.80%	26.70%
Nationwide 100-199% of poverty level	11.70%	43%	14.90%	30.40%
Vermont 100-199% of poverty level	1.60%	27%	9.00%	62.30%
Nationwide 200-399% of poverty level	9.70%	35.40%	17.50%	37.50%
Vermont 200-399% of poverty level	5.10%	18.60%	20.20%	56.10%
Nationwide 400% or more of poverty level	4.60%	23.90%	18.00%	53.50%
Vermont 400% or more of poverty level	1.80%	14.70%	13.20%	70.30%

**Data Compiled by the Department from:** <https://www.childhealthdata.org/>

The data shows that a significant number of Vermont children from middle- and high-income families are also not being read to daily by their parents or caregivers. This data implies that many children in Vermont would benefit from being read to more regularly by their parents and caregivers.

State and federal data highlights the need to: ensure parents of all socioeconomic backgrounds understand the importance of reading to their children ages birth through five years of age daily; encourage parents to make time every day to read with their children; and provide families with access to children’s books suited to specific stages of childhood development.

The importance of increasing the frequency of shared reading is clear. The question that remains is how Vermont can promote this important activity.

While many parents know they *should* read to their children, they could benefit from a deeper understanding of how reading together contributes to their children's long-term academic success. Furthermore, the way children are read to matters. Though many parents and caregivers lack the skills and confidence to read books in a way that fosters their children’s learning, this is something that they can easily learn if provided with the right support. Literacy programs that focus on daily reading and that model proven techniques for adults when reading with children both promote the development of reading skills and promote children’s social relationships with parents, which is a support children need to thrive.

When delivered by librarians trained in techniques proven to support early childhood literacy, public library storytime programs can be an excellent source of instruction for parents and caregivers, many of whom have no formal or information training on reading and lack familiarity with developmentally appropriate children’s literature or the pedagogy of reading. At library storytimes, librarians model how to read children’s books in a way that engages children and supports them as emergent readers. Rather than simply reading the words on the page, engaged reading that promotes early childhood literacy encourages children to interact with the text and images of a book. Techniques parents learn through observation and instruction at storytime include asking questions about the words on the page and the images on the page. Questions can be as simple as “What do you think will happen next?” or more complex, such as asking a child to relate their own experiences to the words of the story or the images in the pictures. In addition to modeling engaged reading, librarians incorporate songs, rhymes, and movement that encourage learning about the natural cadence of language in effective storytimes.

Importantly, while children are the primary audience of traditional storytimes, modern storytime programs presented by librarians trained in early literacy concepts have shifted their focus toward the *education of parents*, who are the primary literacy teachers in the earliest years of a child’s life. By modeling engaged reading and providing plain language instruction to parents and caregivers about the behaviors that support literacy, librarians are stepping into a role as teachers of literacy for their communities.

Storytime can also provide social benefits for adults and families. Parents who attend storytime regularly develop an informal network of peers all focused on supporting their children’s development and growth. Parents who attend storytime together have regular opportunities to share techniques and strategies, and to offer one another support in responding to the challenges of parenting. Public libraries are thus crucial to efforts to promote early childhood literacy.

## Section 3: Literature Review: Early Literacy Programs

Only in recent years have researchers begun to evaluate the efficacy of programs that promote literacy, including book gifting and storytimes programs. In 2023, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) commissioned a review aimed at answering two key questions: “What are the best practices that promote children’s motivation and positive attitudes toward reading? To what extent and in what ways are these practices also related to improving reading competence?”<sup>xi</sup>

One critical finding from this metaanalysis is that “Evidence from both library and non-library programs showed that only exposing children to books, even those of high



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interest, appears to be ineffective unless supplemented with reading strategies and adult reading support.”<sup>xii</sup>

Exposure to books is a *necessary* element in promoting children’s print motivation, or a child’s interest in and eagerness to read, and the development of positive attitudes toward reading, and improved reading competence. Simply providing books is not *sufficient* to attain those goals, however.<sup>xiii</sup> To develop print motivation, positive attitudes toward reading, and improved reading competence a child must both have access to books *and also* have reading support from an adult.<sup>xiv</sup>

While all book gifting programs give kids free books, many book gifting programs focus solely on the *distribution* of books and provide little or no guidance to parents about *how* to read to their child. In addition to providing families with free books, the most successful book gifting programs provide support and education to parents about the importance of reading to their child daily, taking their child to the library, and directly supporting their child as they learn to read.

The IMLS study found that literacy programs that included read-aloud elements were effective in meeting the goals of promoting literacy. The theme of adult support for children’s emergent reading is repeated throughout the IMLS metaanalysis, which found that “Programs incorporating family support or scaffolding generally reported positive effects on reading performance and motivation due to parent and caregiver engagement.”<sup>xv</sup>

Significantly, the IMLS metaanalysis of three book gifting programs found the American Academy of Pediatrics’ *Reach Out and Read* program (ROR) was substantially more effective than two other prominent book gifting programs, *Bookstart*, and the *Dolly Parton Imagination Library*, because of its parent education model. According to the IMLS study,

“The study also found that the Reach Out and Read program had a substantially higher effect on literacy-related behavior and skills compared with the two other programs. The difference was explained by the information and guidance provided to parents by the Reach Out and Read program (de Bondt et al., 2020).”<sup>xvi</sup>

The study found that the relative success of the *Reach Out and Read* program as compared with the two other gift book programs was not due to children receiving more books from *Reach Out and Read*. Through *Reach Out and Read*, the child does *not* receive a book every month in the mail. Instead, children receive just 10 or 14 books through the ROR program at their wellness visits, depending on whether they enter the program at 6 months or at birth.

“Since two of the three programs only provide a few books and yet are still effective, these findings do not support the hypothesis identifying number



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of books as a predictor of children’s language and literacy development. Thus, in this instance, the drive to build children’s libraries does not appear to be the mechanism explaining the success of book giveaway programs. Instead, the current findings align with the theory that the presence of an age-appropriate book may serve as a “nudge” for developing book reading routines (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Book gifts constitute environmental cues that by themselves may direct the caregiver’s choices unconsciously. The book gift may entice caregivers to try shared book reading, which may then lead to the development of a regular book reading routine, especially when these incidental attempts are positive experiences for both the caregiver and the child.”<sup>xvii</sup>

One significant difference between ROR and other programs is that ROR leverages the role the pediatrician plays as a respected and trusted source for information about supporting childhood development. The ROR program is successful in large part because parents are receptive to suggestions from their pediatrician and take the advice and instruction of their pediatrician seriously. The “prescription” the pediatrician gives parents is to dedicate time every day to reading with their child. This daily practice has positive effects on the child’s exposure to books and language, contributes toward a love of reading, and has positive impacts on the child’s school readiness.

The program’s success also stems from the fact that the pediatrician models reading to the child and parent during the appointment. The gentle instruction about reading isn’t directed toward the child but rather is directed at the parent and tailored to them by the health care provider.

The program also leverages the book as a diagnostic tool. When the pediatrician gives the book directly to the child, they observe the child’s reaction to the book. Are they familiar with books? Are they demonstrating appropriate stages of print readiness such as flipping pages or engaging with it directly? Do they turn to their parent and pass the book over to be read? Or is the child confused by the book or unfamiliar with books? Does the parent engage with the child around the book? The child’s and parent’s behavior informs the pediatrician about their level of reading readiness and what suggestions they should provide to the parent to encourage them.

Another key component of ROR is that the pediatrician doesn’t imply that the books they distribute are sufficient fodder for a child’s growing mind. Instead, the pediatricians who participate in ROR encourage parents to bring their children to their local library regularly to select more books to read together. The pediatrician also encourages participation in library programs that support literacy, including storytime.

In short, the most effective gift book program isn’t necessarily the one that gives a child the most books, but rather is the one that encourages parents and caregivers to read to their children every day and provides those adults with instruction on how to read to best support their child’s learning.

## Section 4: Gift Book Programs

The country has many national and regional book gifting organizations, including *Reading is Fundamental* (RIF), which began in 1966. A number of book gifting organizations including *Reach Out and Read*, *FirstBook*, *Dolly Parton Imagination Library*, *Everyone Wins DC*, *My First Books*, *Raising a Reader*, and *Read to Grow*, then formed between 1989 and 2005 at a time when research was emerging about the learning gap between kids of economically disparate backgrounds and the potential positive impact books in the home have on reading and academic achievement.

The Department contacted book gifting organizations to request information including data about program outcomes, relationship of the program to public libraries in which states a program operates, administration of the program in each state, funding sources (including federal and state), and financial reporting. The Department received responses from *First Book*, *Raising a Reader*, *Reach Out and Read*, and *Reading is Fundamental*. The Department did not receive responses from the other organizations in **Table 1. Gift Book National Landscape** and so relies on information those organizations have made public online for this report.

### [Table 4. Gift Book National Landscape]

Refer to Appendix A

## Section 5: The Local and National Landscape Early Childhood Literacy Training

As we have seen, parent education is key to providing children with a supportive framework as they develop pre-literacy and literacy skills. As highlighted earlier in this report, however, many parents are unfamiliar with early literacy concepts and so need training in how to assist their children. Public librarians can train parents in simple strategies they can use at home to support their children's growth. Storytime providers must have the skills and the confidence to train parents in the principles of early literacy though. <sup>xviii</sup>

Across Vermont, public library staff offer engaging storytime programs for their communities. Because many of the children's librarians in Vermont lack formal education in childhood literacy, some may not feel confident or qualified to teach parents these skills. Since 2023, the Department has supported children's librarians by providing increased professional development training and resource-sharing opportunities within the context of its continuing education curriculum and consulting services. These trainings provide children's librarians in Vermont with a handful of free opportunities to learn about the science of early childhood literacy from experts in the field. However, the Department has not had the capacity or the financial resources to

implement a statewide literacy initiative focused on parent education to support early childhood literacy.

Nationally, a number of training initiatives to support the dissemination of early childhood literacy principals to parents have emerged.

**[Table 5. Early Literacy Training Landscape]**

Refer to Appendix B

## Section 6: State Library Administrative Agencies Experience

The Department surveyed other State Library Administrative Agencies (State Libraries) to learn about the role they play, if any, in administering book gifting programs and other early childhood literacy initiatives in book gifting programs. The input from other State Libraries provided insight into staffing associated with the administration of these programs and recommendations for implementation.

The Department received written responses to its survey from colleagues in nine states: Kentucky, Iowa, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Four of the responding State Library Administrative Agencies (Iowa, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Oregon) do not administer a book gifting or book distribution program.

Idaho, Pennsylvania, and North Dakota manage homegrown book gifting programs that have been in place for decades. The Idaho Commission for Libraries administers *My First Books* (MFB), a book gifting program designed to encourage early literacy. The program, in place for over 25 years, fosters direct interaction between library staff, children, and parents, by pairing book distributions with literacy education. By the end of the program, children build their home libraries and are encouraged to obtain library cards to promote continued reading.

According to a study of the program by Stephanie Bailey-White, Rober Stewart, and Staci Shaw, MFB “is unique among book distribution programs because it relies on local librarians to deliver and showcase the books each month during the academic year in a variety of public and private early childhood care and education settings.”<sup>xix</sup> Staff of the Idaho Commission for Libraries administer the program, which serves roughly 5,000 children annually and has a budget of \$140,000 for this program, excluding costs associated with the two staff members at the Idaho Commission for Libraries who support the program.

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In addition to supporting the needs of young readers, “Ongoing MFB program evaluation research shows that libraries benefit in a multitude of ways including closer ties with existing community partners, establishing new community partners, more visibility in the community, increased circulation, increased attendance at library events, new patrons, and increased awareness of and contact with underserved families.”<sup>xx</sup>

The Pennsylvania State Library oversees the *PA One Book* program, which began in 2006. The program distributes books to public libraries and early learning centers, creating online activity guides aligned with *Pennsylvania’s Early Learning Standards* and hosting statewide programs. While both Idaho’s and Pennsylvania’s programs have evolved over time, their focus on active engagement with books through educational initiatives has remained constant.

The North Dakota State Library operates a *Book Lottery for Libraries* program, designed to distribute materials deaccessioned from the State Library collection to libraries across the state through a lottery system.

Curiously, none of the aforementioned programs specifically target children aged zero to five. Funding for these programs has shifted over their decades-long existence, but includes state, federal and private funding streams. Staffing levels vary from having dedicated program staff (Idaho) to having program responsibilities distributed across existing staff (North Dakota).

Both the Kentucky State Library Agency and the Maine State Library currently serve as state affiliates of the *Dolly Parton Imagination Library* (DPIL) book gifting program. Kentucky has been running its DPIL program for 1-2 years, while Maine’s program has only been active for less than 12 months. Both states receive 50% of funding for the state affiliate program through direct appropriation from the state legislature and rely on fundraising at the county affiliate level to match the state contributions. Kentucky employs two full-time staff members to administer its DPIL program, while Maine dedicates one-third of an FTE along with one full-time AmeriCorps Vista volunteer to administer its DPIL program. State Library staff in both Maine and Kentucky who administer the DPIL program describe it as highly dependent on volunteers to sustain its operations.

Importantly, Maine learned only *after* the legislature had earmarked funding that becoming a state affiliate and ensuring a one-time appropriation of \$200,000 from the Maine Legislature would not enable children all across the state to participate in the DPIL program. Instead, the national DPIL program requires that a local affiliate non-profit take responsibility for raising matching in funds in each of their state’s 16 counties – and that a \$200,000 annual appropriation would not suffice as more counties come online in their state. The investment of general funds needed to increase each year as more counties came on board and as those local affiliates registered more children.

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Additionally, the Maine State Library was unable to find a non-profit willing to take on the role of statewide fiscal agent for the program. For that reason, the Maine State Library pays DPIL a fee of \$12,000 annually to serve as the fiscal agent for the county affiliates to the statewide program. The fiscal agent costs are not always disclosed to State Libraries and Legislatures by DPIL when the program is proposed.

Staff of the Maine State Library shared that the biggest implementation hurdle they encountered in implementing DPIL in their state is that the program model is county-based. Like Vermont, Maine does not have strong county government. Maine State Library staff shared that, “Without strong county government, there is a lack of county-wide non-profits. This has severely hampered our efforts to sign up non-profit affiliates for this program, as required.”

The sustainability of the DPIL program was identified as a concern due to its reliance on fundraising and volunteer support, particularly as the program grows to include more counties and more children are registered for the program in each county. Some counties struggle to form non-profits and raise the required funds annually to support their half of the funding commitment. It seems possible that some counties that have raised sufficient funds to participate in one year may not be able to continue raising those funds in subsequent years, so could lose access to the program. Less affluent, often rural communities seem more challenged to fundraise, and in some cases county affiliates are competing against one another for limited local grant funds.

Importantly, market factors can also negatively impact the overall cost of any book gifting program. For example, last year the cost per book per child in the DPIL program was \$2.20, with half being paid with state funds and half being paid by county affiliates with funds raised to support the program. In the coming year, the cost per book will rise 18% to \$2.60, which will require both the state and the county affiliate to pay an additional \$0.20 per book per child. As one publisher, Penguin Random House, produces all books distributed through the DPIL program in China, there is also a concern that global economics, including tariffs on imports from China, could significantly increase the cost to administer the DPIL program.

In addition to the local challenges of fundraising, the DPIL model leverages unpaid volunteers heavily in other roles. According to information shared with SLAA affiliates, DPIL ships out 3,000,000 books each month and relies on 3,000 volunteers to ship those books. While the program relies on local community members to sort and pack books for distribution it does not compensate them for their efforts.

Before adopting DPIL, Maine ran its own *Raising Readers* early literacy program for 23 years. Based on the American Academy of Pediatrics' *Reach Out and Read* program, Maine's *Raising Readers* gift book program was funded entirely by a single donor. The donor ceased to support *Raising Readers* after the Maine legislature decided to implement DPIL in 2022. Recently, Maine has begun partnering with the *Reach Out and Read* program to promote the growth of that program at pediatric clinics in their state.

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The staff member who administers DPIL in Maine formerly worked in the Colorado State Library and had experience administering the American Academy of Pediatrics' book gifting program, *Reach Out and Read* (ROR), in that state. The ROR program, through which pediatricians distribute books at wellness visits, encourages parents to develop the daily practice of reading with their children, providing guidance on how to read, and encouraging parents to bring their children to the library regularly. In addition to providing books at children's wellness visits, ROR also worked with the Colorado State Library to present clinics and webinars for librarians, deposit collections of children's books in health clinics, and other joint projects with libraries including pop-up storytimes at clinics. Importantly, ROR focuses on the highest need communities, particularly rural clinics that receive federal support and have a high number of community members on Medicaid. ROR matches state appropriations dollar-for-dollar and does *not* require state or local affiliate non-profit organizations to fundraise, pack, or distribute books.

The State Libraries of other states, including Michigan, Ohio (<https://www.ohreadytoread.org>), New Hampshire, and Utah (<https://kidsreadytoread.utah.gov>), have adapted materials from the nationally recognized professional development program *Every Child Ready to Read* (ECRR) for public librarians in its state. The Library of Michigan (Michigan's state library administrative agency) has branded their program *Ready to Read Michigan* (RTRM). Their program leverages Grants to States IMLS funds for all RTRM materials and training. According to staff of the Library of Michigan, the Public Library Association and Association for Library Service for Children do not charge them for the use of ECRR practices but do appreciate being credited for developing the program. The program is popular, "(t)his year we trained 100 library staff at 2 in-person trainings, plus I held a webinar that trained 77. I don't keep track of "views" once the recordings are released."

Importantly, a colleague from the Maine State Library recommended that when selecting and administering any book gifting or literacy program, the State should

"Be sure the focus is on and stays on early literacy, with clear goals and evaluation measures in place (rather than the program focusing on celebrity or its popularity). Consider the efficacy of what comes with the books—are they given by trusted individuals with early literacy messaging? Sent to the home with early literacy guidance? Coupled with programming, and/or training for parents? Also, consider programs other than book gifting programs which may be more effective at promoting early literacy and kindergarten literacy skills."



## Section 7: Evaluation of Programs to Meet State Needs

The goals of the Department of Libraries include:

- Supporting early childhood literacy among Vermont’s children;
- Encouraging pre-literacy activities demonstrated to promote reading readiness: talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing;
- Increasing access to books for children in Vermont, particularly those in low-income or underserved areas of the State;
- Increasing early literacy training for parents and caregivers of young children, particularly those in low-income or underserved areas of the State;
- Encouraging kids and families to develop a habit of visiting the public library; and
- Developing and implementing programs in all communities (either simultaneously or with a rotating cohort with size and duration such that communities have equitable access to the program).

Of the many gift book programs, the two that align most closely with the goals of the Department are *My First Books* and *Reach Out and Read*. While MFB is an excellent program, the cost and complexity of administering it likely exceeds the State’s and the Department’s resources. For this reason, the Department recommends that the Legislature consider support for expanding the American Academy of Pediatrics’ *Reach Out and Read* program in Vermont.

The aforementioned, professional development program, *Every Child Ready to Read* (ECRR), aligns closely with the goals of Department. ECRR was developed by the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). The ECRR website describes the organization as a “parent education initiative” that incorporates simple practices, based on research, to help parents and other caregivers develop early literacy skills in children from birth to age five.”<sup>xxi</sup>

Professional development for public library storytime presenters is a key element in the success of the ECRR model as it provides training that supports librarians as they step into the role of basic literacy instructor for parents and families. ECRR training provides library staff with the framework they need to feel confident teaching the basic science of reading, improve their storytime practice and support the parents and kids they serve. ECRR has brought about a sea change in the field of public children’s librarianship since 2004 when it was first introduced.

“Although seemingly simple, the initiative represents a sharp turn in the way many libraries approach children’s services. Previously, librarians focused their attention primarily on children, not on parent education. Today, librarians see that they can have a greater impact on early literacy by focusing on the primary adults in a child’s life—parents and caregivers.

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By teaching adults, the importance of early literacy and how to nurture pre-reading skills at home, libraries can multiply the effects of their efforts many times over.”<sup>xxii</sup>

In its first iteration ECRR instructed children’s librarians to incorporate brief 30-90 second “asides” to parents on the topics of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Adults attending storytime were not familiar with these literacy terms, and the community members and librarians both noticed the asides sometimes felt disconnected from the everyday language of the books, songs, and rhymes shared at storytime.

In 2011, ECRR presented an updated second edition, which trains librarians to talk with parents in plain language about five “key practices” to incorporate into their children’s daily lives: Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing, and Playing. The ECRR manual is geared toward public librarians and provides them with tools and techniques to instruct parents and early childhood educators in early childhood literacy. ECRR defines early literacy as “what children learn and know about reading and writing before they can read or write” and stresses that “Early literacy begins with the primary adults in a child’s life.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

“ECRR is based on a key assumption that “incorporating skills into early childhood literacy programming produces two important benefits: children will be helped in early literacy development and parents and caregivers will be educated about it.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

This suggests it would be valuable to direct resources toward professional development for Vermont’s public librarians.

The multi-pronged approach recommended by the Department includes training public library staff to implement literacy education program for adults locally at libraries statewide and the Department of Libraries is best positioned to work with this group of stakeholders.

The Department recommends that it administer a potential *Reach Out and Read* program, as ROR already works with a variety of state and municipal entities, including the Connecticut State Library.

Administering both programs within one Department would provide a stronger framework for collaboration and synergy between the two programs, both focused on parent education and increasing access to books for children birth to three years of age. Administering both programs would also enable simpler collection of metrics and reporting on the impacts of these interrelated programs with a common goal.



## Section 8: Recommendations to the Legislature

Based on its research on the topic of early literacy resources, including gift book programs and other programs, the Department recommends that the Legislature consider a multi-pronged approach to support the needs of emergent readers in Vermont, as that approach is likely to yield a better outcome than simply implementing a book gifting program alone. As the IMLS metanalysis concluded, “Arguably, the most important findings that emerged from our review is the importance of combining various strategies to increase program effectiveness.”<sup>xxv</sup>

A successful multi-pronged approach to supporting early childhood literacy could include annual financial support to the Department of Libraries for:

1. The implementation of *Reach Out and Read*, the book gifting program of the American Academy of Pediatrics, at clinics throughout the State with a focus on communities with the lowest fourth grade literacy scores.
2. Increased professional development and resources for public library staff on principles of early childhood literacy, to support direct public programming for parents and childcare providers on principles of early childhood literacy, and to support promotion of this program throughout the State.
3. A new Early Literacy Consultant to the Department of Libraries to direct the book gifting program, coordinate trainings for library professionals and the public, oversee grant programs that support early literacy in public libraries, and manage data collection and reporting on these programs.

These recommendations are based on:

1. the success of the American Academy of Pediatrics *Reach Out and Read* program, as demonstrated through evidence-based studies and upon its alignment with the literacy goals of the State;
2. the demonstrated importance of early literacy training for parents, caregivers, and librarians in promoting positive literacy outcomes for children;
3. the Department’s statutory role supporting professional development of public library staff; and
4. the need for ongoing attention and coordination at the State level of this key multi-pronged effort to support the State’s youngest emergent readers.

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002–2022 Reading Assessments. <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023010VT4.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> *EARLY WARNING! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. A KIDS COUNT Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Summary)*. Baltimore, January 1, 2010. Accessed January 3, 2025. [https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early\\_Warning\\_Full\\_Report-2010.pdf](https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> *Vermont Agency of Education Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S)*. Montpelier, VT, May 24, 2024. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-ready-for-kindergarten-2023-2024-survey-report.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Perri Klass, Anne Miller-Fitzwater, and Pamela C. High, “Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice: Policy Statement.” *Pediatrics* 154, 6 (December 2024). Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/154/6/e2024069090/199467/>

<sup>v</sup> Jim Lindsay, “Children’s Access to Print Materials and Education-Related Outcomes: Findings of a Meta-Analytic Review.” *Reading is Fundamental Literature Review* (August 2010). <https://www.rif.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019/09/16/RIFandLearningPointMeta-FullReport.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Susan B. Neuman and Donna Celano, “Access to print in middle- and low -income communities: An eco-logical study of four neighborhoods.” *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36, 8-26 (January/February/March 2001).

<sup>vii</sup> Perri Klass, Anne Miller-Fitzwater, and Pamela C. High, “Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice: Policy Statement.” *Pediatrics* 154, 6 (December 2024). Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/154/6/e2024069090/199467/>

<sup>viii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>ix</sup> *2021-2022 National Survey of Children's Health*. Data Resource Center for Child and adolescent Health. Baltimore, 2022. Accessed January 6, 2025. <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=10675&r=1&q=1122>

<sup>x</sup> Perri Klass, Anne Miller-Fitzwater, and Pamela C. High, “Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice: Policy Statement.” *Pediatrics* 154, 6 (December 2024). Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/154/6/e2024069090/199467/>

<sup>xi</sup> Ozen Guven and Yasmina Haddad. *Research on Motivation, Literacy, and Reading Development: A Review of Best Practices Final Report for the Institute of Museum and Library Services* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Museum and Library Services, September 2023), iii. <https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/research-motivation-literacy-reading-development-report.pdf>

<sup>xii</sup> *Ibid*, iv.

<sup>Xiii</sup> *ibid*, ix.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

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<sup>xv</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>xvii</sup> Merel de Bondt, Ingrid A. Willenberg, and Adriana G. Bus. "Do Book Giveaway Programs Promote the Home Literacy Environment and Children's Literacy-Related Behavior and Skills?" *Review of Educational Research* 90, No. 3 (June 2020) 349–375.

<sup>xviii</sup> Roseanne M. Perkins and Brook E. Sawyer. "Context Matters: Factors that Influence Storytime Providers' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Self-Efficacy." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 52, no. 2 (February 2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-024-01639-3>

<sup>xix</sup> Stephanie Bailey-White, Rober Stewart, and Staci Shaw. "Librarians: Key Partners in a State-Wide Book Distribution Outreach Program." *PNLA Quarterly* 81 No. 2 (2017).

<https://arc.lib.montana.edu/ojs/index.php/pnla/article/view/1087>

<sup>xx</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>xxi</sup> *Every Child Ready to Read*. American Library Association. Accessed January 6, 2025.

<https://everychildreadytoread.org/>

<sup>xxii</sup> Susan B. Neuman, Naomi Moland, and Donna Celano. *Bringing Literacy Home: An Evaluation of the Every Child Ready to Read Program* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2017), 5.

<https://everychildreadytoread.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017-ECRR-Report-Final.pdf>

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Ohio Ready to Read*. Ohio Library Council. Accessed January 6, 2025.

<https://www.ohreadytoread.org/every-child-ready-read-overview>

<sup>xxiv</sup> Roger A. Stewart, Stephanie Bailey-White, Staci Shaw, Erica Compton, and Ghoting, Saroj. "Enhanced Storytimes: Effects on Parent/Caregiver Knowledge, Motivation, and Behaviors". *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, 12 no. 2 (2014), 9-14.

[https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/literacy\\_facpubs/86/](https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/literacy_facpubs/86/)

<sup>xxv</sup> Ozen Guven and Yasmina Haddad. *Research on Motivation, Literacy, and Reading Development: A Review of Best Practices Final Report for the Institute of Museum and Library Services* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Museum and Library Services, September 2023), 30.

<https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/research-motivation-literacy-reading-development-report.pdf>

Appendix A  
Table 4. Gift Book National Landscape

Organization	Based Where?	Year Program Began	Mission	Type	Service Model	Program Description	Service Area	Impact Study	URL
Reading is Fundamental	Washington, D.C.	1966	Reading is Fundamental (RIF) connects children with the joy of reading to spark imaginations and possibilities, putting kids on a path of reading proficiency. Because every child deserves the chance to succeed.	Free Book Program, Literacy Resources	Books for Ownership programs are made possible by dedicated volunteers. Typically, the coordinator handles the administrative side of things including the book order, event planning, and volunteer recruitment.	RIF brings books and reading content to children and families in person and online, through community activation programs and resources such as Literacy Central, our free book resource website.	National	<a href="https://www.rif.org/solutions/rif-model/supporting-research">https://www.rif.org/solutions/rif-model/supporting-research</a>	<a href="https://www.rif.org/">https://www.rif.org/</a>
Reach Out And Read	Boston	1989	In deep partnership with a network of clinicians, Reach Out and Read leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit, using children's books and shared reading to support parents and caregivers in fostering early literacy and healthy relationships with their infants and young children. The only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read annually serves 4.4 million children and families across every state in the country.	Book Giving, Parent Education	At the beginning of the (pediatric well-child) visit, we give each child a new, developmentally-appropriate book to take home with them. We offer books in 28 different languages. Books can even be useful for families who don't read—we encourage them to talk about the story that the pictures tell.	At Reach Out and Read, we believe all families should have the tools and information they need to make shared reading a daily routine. We help integrate guidance about reading into pediatric practices, advise families about the importance of building healthy relationships, and share books that serve as a catalyst for healthy childhood development and family bonds.	National	<a href="https://reachoutandread.org/research/">https://reachoutandread.org/research/</a>	<a href="https://reachoutandread.org/2023/04/26/reach-out-and-read-providing-free-books-at-doctors-offices-clinics/">https://reachoutandread.org/2023/04/26/reach-out-and-read-providing-free-books-at-doctors-offices-clinics/</a>
First Book	Washington, D.C.	1982	First Book is dedicated to ensuring that all children, regardless of their background or zip code, can succeed, by removing barriers to equitable education. We reach 6.5 million kids each year in low-income communities across North America, providing books and resources through a powerful network of more than 600,000 individual educators, professionals and volunteers specifically serving children in need. This is the largest online community of its kind.	Discounted Book Marketplace	First Book Marketplace provides the First Book Network with 24-hour, year-round access to an award-winning repository of affordable and new books, educational resources, and basic necessities curated for kids in need, ages 0-18.	All those who work with children where at least 70 percent of kids served come from low-income families are eligible to become a First Book member for free. Members have access to an incredible selection of relevant, brand-new books and educational resources available at deeply discounted prices (and sometimes for free) through our award-winning eCommerce site thanks to our generous publishing partners.	National	<a href="https://firstbook.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/First-Book-Impact-Report-2022-2023.pdf">https://firstbook.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/First-Book-Impact-Report-2022-2023.pdf</a>	<a href="https://firstbook.org/">https://firstbook.org/</a>

Dolly Parton Imagination Library	Tennessee	1995	Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books free of charge to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and Republic of Ireland.	Book Gifting	The Imagination Library partners with Local Affiliates and Partners who help bring the program to cities, towns and communities around the world. Local Affiliates are responsible for enrolling children who live within the geographical area they offered the program in. While the Imagination Library negotiates wholesale pricing for the books, the Local Affiliates and Partners are responsible for securing funds to cover that cost. Books are 100% free to enrolled children because their Local Affiliate has secured funds to cover the cost of the books and the shipping fees.	Each month, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails a book to all registered children, addressed to them, at no cost to the child's family.	International	<a href="https://imaginationlibrary.com/news-resources/research/">https://imaginationlibrary.com/news-resources/research/</a>	<a href="https://imaginationlibrary.com/">https://imaginationlibrary.com/</a>
Everyone Wins DC	Washington, D.C.	1995	EWDC uses books and reading to help children develop the foundational skills needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond. We build social-emotional skills, support literacy fluency, and foster a love of reading and learning. We change children's lives for the better. But it isn't just the children who benefit from reading. By creating connections through reading, we help whole communities thrive.	Free Books, Mentoring, Storytime Modeling	Give a child the gift of reading! Donate new and engaging books for children to enjoy through Power Readers, StoryTime, and The Book Project. Select items from one of EWDC's Wish Lists on Bookshop.org to be shipped directly to EWDC or host a book drive with friends, family, and colleagues.	Everybody Wins DC helps children thrive through the power of reading. Our three programs offer children exciting opportunities to learn and grow through books. See below for more information about our programs, our impact, and how you can support our work. The Book Project, EWDC's free distribution program, increases access to books that engage, empower, and inspire young readers and helps build diverse and representative home libraries.	Washington, D.C.	<a href="https://everybodywinsdc.org/reports/">https://everybodywinsdc.org/reports/</a>	<a href="https://everybodywinsdc.org/">https://everybodywinsdc.org/</a>
My first books - Idaho Commission for Libraries	Idaho	1997	My First Books supports children from birth to kindergarten who are unlikely to have many books in their homes or have a library card. In addition to providing children with books, a goal of all Read to Me programs is to encourage contact between participating families and librarians to promote local library services.	Book Gifting Parent Training		The program provides a book a month for nine months for each participating child, and My First Books families can participate in a free early literacy workshop. The program ties in with local libraries.	Idaho	<a href="https://libraries.idaho.gov/vtm/mv-first-books/">https://libraries.idaho.gov/vtm/mv-first-books/</a>	
Raising a Reader	California	1999	Raising a Reader supports families to build, practice and grow reading routines at home. Family engagement is at the core of what we do.	Book Giving	Raising a Reader builds equity-focused shared reading programs and curated book collections that are customizable based on local need. Local community partners utilize Raising a Reader to support a child's social emotional learning through promoting healthy relationships and learning in the home with a caring adult.	Raising a Reader's evidence-based Classic Red Book Bag Program fosters family bonding moments and develops critical literacy and social emotional skills through shared reading. Every week, children bring home a Red Book Bag filled with award-winning, multicultural books.	National	<a href="https://raisingareader.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/rar_153_ImpactReport_2023_FINAL.pdf">https://raisingareader.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/rar_153_ImpactReport_2023_FINAL.pdf</a>	<a href="https://raisingareader.org/">https://raisingareader.org/</a>
Read to Grow	Connecticut	2000	Our mission is to promote language skills and literacy for children, beginning at birth, and to support parents as their babies' first teachers.	Free Book Program	Across Connecticut, our 31 Book Places/Rimcones del Libros are sites at agencies and community nonprofits where families have access to a Read to Grow-stocked book shelf with free children's books that families can select and take home to keep.	We give free books, literacy resources and workshops to families, child-care providers, teachers, doctors, health-care groups, library programs, and many nonprofits.	Connecticut	<a href="https://readtogrow.org/about-us/annual-reports/">https://readtogrow.org/about-us/annual-reports/</a>	<a href="https://readtogrow.org/how-we-help/books-for-kids/">https://readtogrow.org/how-we-help/books-for-kids/</a>

Every Child Ready to Read	Chicago	2004	<p>Every Child Ready to Read® is a parent education initiative. The Public Library Association (PLA) and Service to Children (ALSC) concluded that public libraries could have an even greater impact on early literacy through an approach that focused on educating parents and caregivers.</p>	<p>Parent Education Training and Resources</p>	<p>The updated and expanded second edition of Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® provides a new curriculum and materials to continue the effort, supporting parents and caregivers with the early literacy development of their children birth to age five.</p>	National	<a href="https://everychildreadytoread.org/full-evaluation-report-2010/">https://everychildreadytoread.org/full-evaluation-report-2010/</a>	<a href="http://everychildreadytoread.org/">http://everychildreadytoread.org/</a>
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**Appendix B**  
**Table 5. Early Literacy Training Landscape**

Organization	Base	Year Program Began	Mission	Type	Service Model	Program Description	Service Area	Impact Study	URL
Building Bright Futures	Vermont	2023	BBF's mission is to improve the well-being of children and families in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and by bringing voices together across sectors and within regions to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve.		Through Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP), BBF maintains the vision for Vermont's early childhood system, which is to be an integrated continuum of comprehensive, high-quality services that are equitable, accessible, and improve outcomes for each and every Vermont child in the prenatal period through age 8 and their families. BBF supports accountability through Vermont's Early Childhood Data & Policy Center, a nonpartisan, independent source of data, research, and publications for policymakers, researchers, and the public.	Building Bright Futures (BBF) is Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership, charged under Title 33 § Chapter 46 and the Federal Head Start Act (Public Law 110-134) as Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council (SAC). The SAC advises the Governor and Legislature on the well-being of children in the prenatal period through age 8 and their families. BBF supports accountability through Vermont's Early Childhood Data & Policy Center, a nonpartisan, independent source of data, research, and publications for policymakers, researchers, and the public.	Vermont & New Hampshire	<a href="https://buildingbrightfutures.org/vecap/impact-hr-122/">https://buildingbrightfutures.org/vecap/impact-hr-122/</a>	<a href="https://buildinbrightfutures.org/vecap/">https://buildinbrightfutures.org/vecap/</a>
CLIF	Vermont	1998	Our free literacy programs and book giveaways inspire under-resourced children throughout New Hampshire and Vermont to fall in love with books.	Free books, author programs, and professional development for recipients of annual grants	CLIF arranges for more than 65 professional authors, illustrators, poets, graphic novelists, and storytellers to give inspiring presentations for children. These memorable events help kids get excited about books, stories, reading, and writing. CLIF holds nearly 1,000 events each year. At almost every CLIF event children can select new, high-quality books of their choice from hundreds of titles. In some CLIF programs, children can pick at least ten new books of their choice over one year. CLIF also donates significant collections of new, high-quality children's books to school libraries, public libraries, classrooms, shelters, affordable housing developments, and other locations where children and families may be found.	Our programs include an application process for organizations that serve children who are at risk of growing up with low literacy skills. This helps us make sure that we support the children who need us most.	Vermont & New Hampshire	<a href="https://clifonline.org/about/impact/">https://clifonline.org/about/impact/</a>	<a href="https://clifonline.org/">https://clifonline.org/</a>
Every Child Ready to Read	Chicago, Illinois	2000	The goals of ECRR are to change practice in our field around parent early literacy education, resulting in improved early literacy skills in very young children, and to educate parents on how to nurture early literacy skills in their children and successfully become their child's first teacher.	Public library parent education initiative	Train the Trainer	Teaching parents and other caregivers how to support the early literacy development of their children is the basis of Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library®. When the first edition of ECRR was introduced in 2004, the focus on educating parents and caregivers was a significantly different approach for many libraries; one that certainly has proven its value. This updated and expanded second edition of Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® provides a new curriculum and materials to continue the effort, supporting parents and caregivers with the early literacy development of their children birth to age five.	National	<a href="https://www.ala.org/alsc/every-child-ready-read-evaluation-report">https://www.ala.org/alsc/every-child-ready-read-evaluation-report</a>	<a href="https://everychildreadytoread.org/">https://everychildreadytoread.org/</a>



Northern Lights at Community College of Vermont	Vermont		Our goals are to: Provide clear information and resources about professional development and career pathways; Enhance and align the components of a user-friendly professional development system; Increase opportunities for professional development and career advancement; Make Vermont's professional development system as effective as possible.	Educator Training and Certification	Our Registry Team assists you with certificates, credentials, professional development document processing, the Northern Lights Instructor Registry, and the Northern Lights MATCH Registry. Our Resource Team offers high quality, affordable trainings, career advising, and support navigating the professional development system.	Northern Lights at CCV is the hub of the professional development system for the early childhood and afterschool workforce in Vermont. We offer trainings, career advising, technical assistance, and friendly support to assist with your professional development goals.	Vermont	n/a	<a href="https://northernlightsccv.org/">https://northernlightsccv.org/</a>
Raising a Reader	California	1999	Raising a Reader supports families to build, practice and grow reading routines at home. Family engagement is at the core of what we do.	Book Giving	Raising a Reader builds equity-focused shared reading programs and curated book collections that are customizable based on local need. Local community partners utilize Raising a Reader to support a child's social emotional learning through promoting healthy relationships and learning in the home with a caring adult.	Raising a Reader's evidence-based Classic Red Book Bag Program fosters family bonding moments and develops critical literacy and social emotional skills through shared reading. Every week, children bring home a Red Book Bag filled with award-winning, multicultural books from their classroom's Raising a Reader collection.	National	<a href="https://raisingareader.org/wb-content/uploads/2024/03/rar_153_ImpactReport_2023_FINAL.pdf">https://raisingareader.org/wb-content/uploads/2024/03/rar_153_ImpactReport_2023_FINAL.pdf</a>	<a href="https://raisingareader.org/">https://raisingareader.org/</a>
Ready to Read Michigan	Michigan	2019	Ready to Read Michigan Goals: Equip public library staff with information, skills, and tools needed for them to promote early literacy in their community. Engage parents and caregivers of children, ages 0-5, in Michigan with the 5 Practices of ECRR.	Public Library Parent Education Initiative	This webinar series is designed to support public library staff as they model early literacy skill development directly to families and caregivers with young children (ages birth to 5). Webinars are typically scheduled during the winter/spring months of the year and are available as archived recordings.	The Library of Michigan offers public library staff a variety of educational webinars based on the 5 Practices of Every Child Ready to Read™. Participants watch librarians, early literacy specialists, and storytellers as they share tips, ideas, and background information on how to best Read, Talk, Play, Sing, Write with young children.	Michigan	n/a	<a href="https://readytoreadmi.org/home">https://readytoreadmi.org/home</a>
Start with the Arts	Vermont	1986	A program of inclusive Arts Vermont Start With The Arts (SWTA) focuses on instilling a lifelong love of reading and strengthening the quality of early childhood education across Vermont.	Art-based literacy instruction	Our teaching artists model and present quality children's books and engage children in exciting performing and visual arts activities. Next, the teaching artists support the providers in delivering their own arts-based literacy lessons.	It is an award-winning arts-based literacy program for early childhood educators and the children in their care. SWTA couples direct service to children with professional development for early childhood educators in both home-based and small center childcare sites.	Vermont	n/a	<a href="https://www.inclusiveteamvermont.org/education/start-with-the-arts/">https://www.inclusiveteamvermont.org/education/start-with-the-arts/</a>
Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI)	Vermont	2010	A program of Vermont Humanities, the Vermont Early Literacy Initiative (VELI) provides a cohort of 21 Vermont public libraries with literacy training and supports for their collections.	Training, peer network, mentorship, grants to public libraries	A continuous cohort of 21 public libraries.	Each library receives a grant for the development of community programs that they feel will best meet the needs of their local area, specifically with an eye toward populations that do not typically use the library. They also have opportunities to co-develop booklists on topics important to them, such as everyday diversity, climate change, own voices, difficult topics, or whatever else they feel is most relevant and pressing to them, and we provide books from those lists to add to their collections.	Vermont	n/a	<a href="https://www.vermonthumanities.org/for-educators/early-educators/vel/">https://www.vermonthumanities.org/for-educators/early-educators/vel/</a>