



## SPREAD THE WORD!

### A CHILD'S EXPERIENCES IN THE FIRST 3 YEARS LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR READING SUCCESS

#### **BASIC LITERACY SKILLS DEVELOP EARLY IN LIFE**

"The key to school readiness is language development, fostered in caring relationships through frequent, vocabulary-stretching conversations that stimulate and build upon children's natural curiosity. Whether we are concerned about social-emotional competence, literacy, problem-solving, or scientific thinking, children's early experiences with language provide the foundation."  
*Dr. Betty Bardige, At a Loss for Words, 2005.*

#### **THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: A "VOCABULARY GAP"**

The number of words a young child understands is a predictor of later reading ability. 1st graders with fewer than 6,000 words are likely to have reading difficulties.

*Dr. Catherine Snow, National Academy of Sciences*

Preventable reading difficulties occur in all families, but children from low income backgrounds are most at risk. They enter kindergarten with a listening vocabulary of 3,000 words while a middle income child enters with 20,000.

*Hart & Risley, 1995*

Children from low-income families typically enter school a full year and a half behind their middle-class peers in language ability. The average middle-class first grader has been read to more than 1,250 hours. For some children in low-income families, the comparable figure is 25 hours.

*University of Chicago/Get Ready to Read.org*

22% of Itasca County students are not reading to grade level standards in 3rd grade, a critical year in which "learning to read" gives way to "reading to learn" in all other subject areas. Local 8th grade testing is consistent with national research that predicts these reading and learning gaps will only widen over time, despite intense intervention.

*MN Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) Reading Test*

#### **PROJECT READ: A COMMUNITY APPROACH**

We *all* can help young children develop language skills and attitudes that will help them learn to read when they get older. Spread the news about early brain development to people with young children...and act on what you know! Talk and read to babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Speak clearly, use interesting words, encourage them to use *their* words, and share your love of reading.

#### **WE KNOW WHAT WORKS!**

Children develop strong vocabularies and other language skills when they we talk, read, sing and rhyme with them—frequently— from the first days of life. ***These activities don't just feel good—they actually do good by creating critical connections in the child's still-developing brain.***

#### **NURTURING CARE IS ESSENTIAL**

"Daily interactions must be stimulating and nurturing. Without this, not only can brain development be compromised, but the child's ability to develop emotional skills can be impaired. Children who struggle to manage their emotions in stressful situations have a difficult time attending to learning activities... (and) school success becomes elusive. Responsive, warm, consistent care results in a more resilient child."

*J. Gramman, "Windows of Opportunity in Early Learning," 2004.*



Positive caregiving is estimated to be somewhat or very characteristic for fewer than 40% of American children between one and three years old. During their prime time for language learning, most American children are receiving care that is not good enough to support robust language learning.

*National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*