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Shared Book Reading Programs: Evidence Review Snapshot

SUMMARY OF THE RIGOROUS RESEARCH ON SHARED BOOK READING PROGRAMS

Shared book reading programs provide free, age-appropriate children's books to families with training and guidance on how to read together. These programs deliver books in a variety of ways—directly to families' homes, in health care clinics, and through local community partnerships. Research shows shared book reading programs can promote nurturing family relationships and healthy child development.



EMERGING EVIDENCE FOR IMPACTS ON CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is the most prominent and widely studied shared book reading program. ROR gives every child a new, age-appropriate book at each well-child visit from birth through age 5; on average, a cumulative 10 books throughout the program. In addition to distributing books, during each well-child visit, the clinician provides families with guidance on how to read together effectively. Often, ROR also has volunteers in clinic waiting areas modeling how to read aloud and distributing handouts on reading strategies to families.

Shared book reading programs like ROR have the potential to reduce emergent literacy disparities across socioeconomic groups during the prenatal-to-3 period. Although more evidence is needed, shared book reading may be particularly beneficial for children of parents with less education. Children of parents without a high school degree, on average, are exposed to approximately 3,000 fewer words per day compared to children of parents with a college degree.

States can use both federal and state funding to support shared book reading programs. States can leverage federal funding mechanisms such as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the Maternal and Child Health (Title V) Block Grant to expand and sustain the programs. States can also make direct investments, or they can include eligible shared book reading programs, such as ROR, in early literacy grants.

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

The Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center at Vanderbilt University analyzes rigorous evidence to determine which policies are proven to produce positive outcomes for young children, their families, and society. Our comprehensive review of evidence demonstrates that shared book reading programs can build nurturing and responsive child-parent relationships and promote optimal child health and developmental outcomes.

RIGOROUS STUDIES FIND THE FOLLOWING IMPACTS

Shared book reading programs help families build more nurturing and responsive child-parent relationships.

- Parents were 10 times more likely to engage in shared reading with their child at least 3 times per week.
- Parents were more likely to include shared reading as part of children's bedtime ritual.
- Parents and children both reported greater levels of shared reading enjoyment.
- Families were more likely to have at least 10 children's books at home by age 2.

Shared book reading programs promote optimal child health and developmental outcomes.

- Children participating in the program demonstrated greater vocabulary skills at 18 months.

For more information on Shared Book Reading Programs:

- For more information and citations for the above-referenced studies, please refer to our comprehensive Evidence Review on Shared Book Reading Programs: <https://pn3policy.org/policyclearinghouse/shared-book-reading-programs/>.