



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE RAISING A READER BOOK BAG PROGRAM

UNITED WAY OF SOUTH HAMPTON ROADS



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Raising A Reader Program Overview

Background of Raising A Reader Program

- Research has found that academic success is influenced by early childhood experiences.
“Whether or not children succeed in school is in part related to events and experiences that occur prior to their entering kindergarten for the first time.” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Fall 1998)
“Although many experiences are said to contribute to early literacy, not other single activity is regarded as important as the shared book experience between caregivers and children.” (Dr. Susan Neuman, Asst. U.S. Secretary of Education, Spring 2001)
- Children with more risk factors for poor school success (poverty, low income, single parents, parent with lower levels of education) are less likely to pass various reading proficiencies than those with fewer risk factors.
- Raising A Reader is a take-home book bag program that promotes daily book sharing between parents and their children from birth to age 5. It is based on a theory of change with parents and childcare providers who receive education about infant and child brain development, training about the importance of daily book sharing and “read aloud” techniques, and literary-acclaimed multi-cultural books that are brought into the home on a weekly basis, by and for their child.
- Raising A Reader aims to encourage families, in an engaging, non-intimidating manner, to establish a regular reading routine at home in a manner that excites both parents and their pre-school aged children. It especially focuses on busy parents, as well as those with limited or poor reading skills.

Community Data

- 22% of Hampton Roads children enter kindergarten lacking basic pre-reading skills and at risk of never developing strong academic skills.
- 32% of our regions four-year old children are considered “at-risk” and needing preschool enrichment, compared to the state average of 24%.

- 7% of our regions kindergarteners are retained compared to the Commonwealth's average of 4%.
- 60% of the kindergartners in the neighborhood where children did poorly in school did not own a single book.
- 25% of the adults in Hampton Roads are functionally illiterate, compared to 19% for Virginia.
- 18% of our region's children live in poverty, compared o the average in Virginia of 13%.
- 25% of South Hampton Road's children live in single mother families, compared to 19% for Virginia.

Goals of the Raising A Reader Evaluation

- To uncover the lap-reading behaviors of parents in Head Start programs before and after the introduction of Raising A Reader for the purposes of assessing changes in reading behavior.
- To evaluate the impact of Raising A Reader on Head Start children's kindergarten readiness relative to their scores on the following domains: Literacy, Phonological Awareness, Print Awareness and Concepts, Recognizing Words as a Unit of Print, Recognizing 10 Letters and Letters in Name, and Naming the Alphabet as Units of Sound. A Raising A Reader treatment group of 521 Head Start children was compared to a Head Start control group of 980 children.

Findings

- There was a 42% increase in the number of parents who shared books with their children at least 3 times a week and a 75% increase in the number of parents who shared books with children 5 or more times a week.
- There was a 33% increase in the number of the children achieving literacy scores at the highest level in the Raising A Reader group compared to 24% for Head Start Children in the control group who had interventions other than Raising A Reader.
- Head Start children participating in Raising A Reader had a 37.5% greater likelihood of achieving literacy at the highest level than the Head Start children who did not participate in Raising A Reader.
- There was a 33% increase in the number of Head Start children functioning at the highest Phonological Awareness level in the Raising A Reader group, compared to 27% for the Head Start children who did not participate in Raising A Reader.
- "The probability that the differences in rates of growth in proportions occurred by chance is less than 1% and thus you can conclude that the Raising A Reader program resulted in a higher growth rate of children attaining the highest literacy level than the control group." Dr. John Massey, TCC