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The number of children's books in the home directly relates to a **child's reading proficiency**.

## Raising Readers: Parent Book Club

### EARLY LEARNING SUPPORT, DESIGNED FOR PARENTS

Raising Readers is a parent book club with a focus on early learning: Clubs are designed to encourage parents and caregivers to read to their child daily, while providing them with the guidance, resources and tools needed to build their skills.

#### CLUB STRUCTURE

Clubs meet for six sessions and typically have 10 - 15 participants. Each session lasts one hour.

During each session:

- Club facilitators model proper reading techniques and share ideas with parents and caregivers
- Parents and caregivers discuss the triumphs and difficulties of reading to their children
- Participants share new ideas they've formed since joining the club
- Each participant is given a quality children's book to keep, so they can use and practice the tools they just learned with their child at home

#### OUTCOMES & TAKEAWAYS

At the end of the six sessions, each participant has accumulated six quality books to add to their child's home library. Plus, they receive a bonus book for perfect attendance!

**Most importantly, parents and caregivers have honed the skills necessary to engage in quality reading with their child on a daily basis.**



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serving Allegheny, Westmoreland,  
Fayette and Southern Armstrong Counties



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**75% of all learning disabilities** stem from some type of vision problem.

**1 in 20 preschoolers** has a vision problem that could lead to permanent vision impairment, if left untreated.

## Pre-Kindergarten Vision Screenings

### TACKLING A ROOT CAUSE OF EARLY LEARNING ISSUES

Vision issues in young children often pose a significant - but unrealized - barrier to early learning: Approximately 85% of what a child learns is learned visually, but nearly one out of every four children has a learning-related vision problem.

Because children don't know how they should see and most vision issues don't hurt, parents often don't know when a problem exists. In the long run, unaddressed vision issues can lead to learning disabilities or even permanent vision loss.

### CHALLENGING STANDARDS & FINDING SOLUTIONS

Traditionally, students don't receive their first vision screening until they are enrolled in kindergarten. But by that time, vision issues may have already impaired crucial early learning.

Today, United Way trains and organizes volunteers, who go into schools and early childhood education facilities and conduct vision screenings with pre-k students. Through this process, volunteers, educators and parents can detect vision problems - and their related learning issues - *before* a child starts kindergarten.

### OUTCOMES & TAKEAWAYS

When the results of a vision screening indicate a possible issue, parents are referred to see their preferred healthcare professional - helping to prevent vision-related learning disabilities before they start and ensure their child has a strong start in school.

Every year, nearly 3,000 screenings are conducted with help from United Way.



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**Hearing parents read**  
encourages babies to use  
their voice and helps them  
build confidence in their  
communication abilities.

Stories stimulate babies'  
**imagination and creativity**,  
helping them develop better  
problem-solving skills.



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## Books For Babies

### SUPPORTING OUR YOUNGEST READERS

Books for Babies educates parents on how reading to their newborn benefits their child's cognitive, social and emotional development. Reading to newborns has been shown to help babies develop key skills, including:

- Language skills, such as rhythm, pace and boundaries between words
- Use of their own voice and confidence in their ability to communicate
- Recognition of familiar shapes and objects
- Early reading skills
- Problem-solving skills

Thanks to partnerships with Excela Health - Westmoreland Hospital and Uniontown Hospital, parents of every baby born in each hospital receive a care package filled with early learning, development and literacy materials, including:

- "Building Blocks for Babies" flipchart
- "Every Day I Learn Through Play" child development activity book
- A high-quality infant board book

### ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS IN EARLY LITERACY

Books for Babies would not be possible without volunteers from Caritas Christi and the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Volunteers pack and label all care package materials.

### OUTCOMES & TAKEAWAYS

In 2014, nearly 1,700 families received Books for Babies care packages at Westmoreland Hospital and nearly 1,000 families received care packages at Uniontown Hospital.



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United Way facilitates  
Transition Teams in **all**  
**23 school districts in**  
**Westmoreland and Fayette**  
**Counties**, plus one district  
in Greene County.

As part of our transition  
work, United Way supports  
over **100 early childhood**  
**education providers**.



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## Pre-K Transition Teams

### NAVIGATING ONE OF CHILDHOOD'S BIGGEST TRANSITIONS

Transition Teams are collaborative groups of early childhood education providers, school district personnel, parents and community members. They work together to ensure our pre-k students experience a smooth transition from pre-k to kindergarten and get a strong start to school.

Transition Teams plan and coordinate high-quality activities and experiences that help pre-k students successfully navigate their start in kindergarten. Transition activities include parent orientation nights, student summer camps, classroom visits and more.

Transition Teams are also leaders in:

- Promoting the importance of quality early childhood education
- Promoting literacy development between birth and third grade
- Facilitating communication between early childhood education providers and school districts
- Enhancing home and school libraries
- Increasing engagement between communities, families and schools
- Promoting on-time kindergarten registration

### OUTCOMES & TAKEAWAYS

Our transition work culminates in annual conferences held in Fayette and Westmoreland Counties each spring. Conferences bring together every transition team for a day of professional development and planning.

**During the 2014-15 school year, over 23,000 students were impacted by transition activities, including 17,000 students in Westmoreland County, 6,000 students in Fayette County and 275 students in Greene County.**