

Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read (ROR) was developed by pediatricians and early childhood educators to promote school success by supporting reading aloud as part of routine pediatric care. Exposure to books and reading in the first years of life increases the probability of healthy child development and decreases the chance of school failure.

Reach Out and Read is the success story of a public-private partnership which has helped primary care physicians practice medicine in a new way. By promoting literacy, doctors and nurses expand their traditional practice to make a positive difference in children's developmental skills and, consequently, in the nation's economic health.

Reach Out and Read is cost effective. The primary cost of ROR is that of the children's books. At deep discounts, these books average \$2.75. Since children average two visits to their doctor per year, the program costs \$5.50 per child per year, or \$27.50 over five years for a lifetime of learning. ROR is effective because it includes these vital elements: parent involvement; a trusted physician messenger; broad scope and reach; guidance parents are able to follow; hope for educational success; and positive reinforcement.

Increasing and consistent evidence showing the effectiveness of the Reach Out and Read model, together with mounting awareness of the need, have led the policy and business communities and public sector to offer financial support to purchase books for ROR. As a result, ROR has expanded from its original site in Boston to over 2,700 sites nationally and distributes over 3.8 million books to over 2.3 million children per year.

Current public-private partnerships supporting evidence-based strategies such as Reach Out and Read are expanding so that children from low-income families will grow up with books and experience regular reading aloud and richer language exposure during the first five years of life. As a result, these children will develop the vocabularies and book-related skills necessary to read, complete school, and succeed in life.