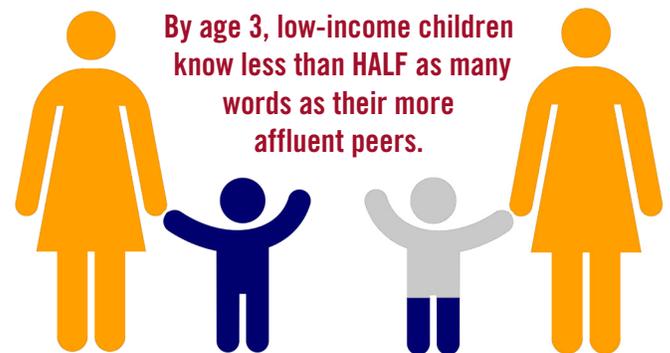


READING MATTERS: UWYC'S Early Literacy Efforts

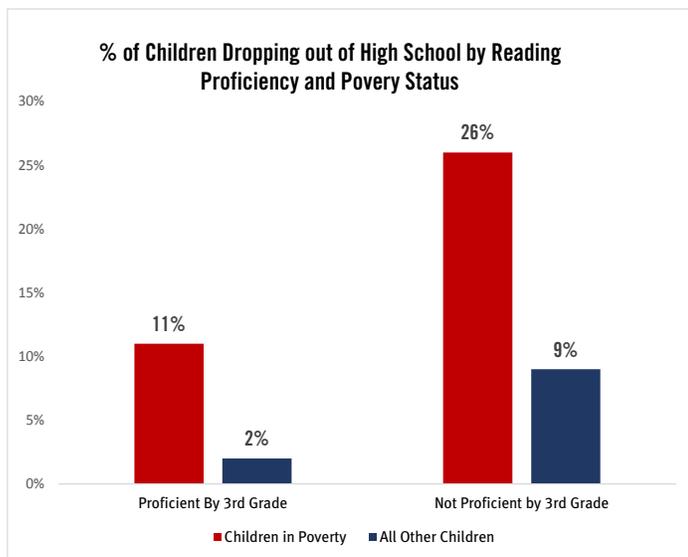
United Way of Yellowstone County's goal is to increase graduation rates in Yellowstone County to 95% by 2025 by investing in strategies that ensure children start school prepared to learn and have supports to help them succeed in school, and that families have what they need to support their children's education. We know the importance of early literacy and that parents and families play a significant role in reaching literacy goals for our community's children.

Early Literacy and Language Development

Early literacy and early language development are crucial to the success of children in school and beyond. Unfortunately, not all children enter school with these important early skills. Fewer than half of children from low income families are ready for school at age 5 and when they enter school they do so at a big disadvantage. By age 2, children from low-income families are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy. These children hear as many as 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.



Source: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families. 2015



Source: "Double Jeopardy" Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2010

3rd Grade Reading

A child's vocabulary as early as age 3 can predict third grade reading achievement. Up until 3rd grade, kids are learning to read. After 3rd grade, kids are reading to learn about and understand other subjects. Students who aren't reading at grade level in 3rd grade are likely to fall behind in other subjects and ultimately are four times more likely to drop out of high school than students who do read at grade level. Children in poverty who don't read on grade level by 3rd grade are 13 times more likely to drop out of high school than their middle-high income peers who do read on grade level.

Parent Engagement

Research has consistently demonstrated the significant influence of positive parent-child interactions on early childhood learning, reading in particular. In most cases, parent involvement in their children's language and literacy development outweighs the influence of the family's income and demographics. Parental involvement in early literacy has also been linked to positive social-emotional and behavior outcomes for children.

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Reach Out and Read

United Way of Yellowstone County is committed to support Reach Out and Read, an evidence based early literacy program that incorporates early literacy into pediatric practice, equipping parents with tools and knowledge to ensure that their children are prepared to learn when they start school. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Reach Out and Read serves nearly 4.5 million children and their families annually. Reach Out and Read families read together more often and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills. During the preschool years, children served by Reach Out and Read score three to six months ahead of their non-Reach Out and Read peers on vocabulary tests. These early foundational language skills help start children on a path of success when they enter school." UWYC has successfully implemented Reach out and Read with the Children's Clinic in Billings and is working to expand the program to other community health care providers.

Click here to learn more about literacy efforts in our community

<http://tiny.cc/hjeaay>

Sources:

Annie E Casey Foundation, "Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters" 2010

Clark, Christina. "Why It is Important to Involve Parents in Their Children's Literacy Development" National Literacy Trust. 2007

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Hernandez, Donald J. "Double Jeopardy" Annie E Casey Foundation, 2010

Peckel, Kent et al. "Don't Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America's Effort to Help All Children Succeed." The Search Insitutute. 2015

Sheridan, Susan et al, "A Randomized Trial Examining the Effects of Parent Engagement on Early Language and Literacy: The Getting Ready Intervention." Nasional Institutes of Health. 2011

www.reachoutandread.org

REadCYCLE

REadCYCLE is a project of the Youth Volunteer Corps along with United Way of Yellowstone County. It seeks to address "summer slide," the learning loss that can occur for kids when they are out of school and not engaged in learning activities. Youth Volunteer Corp members collect gently used donated books and work to repair, sort and distribute books to children during the summer months.

Book Distributions

United Way of Yellowstone County will focus on creating literacy rich environments for low-income children in particular by conducting two large book distributions each year. We will partner with non-profit organizations in our community to distribute books to the children they serve.

Best Beginnings

United Way of Yellowstone county convenes the Best Beginnings Council, a group of stakeholders that work to ensure that all children age 0-8 in Yellowstone County come to school ready to learn and they succeed in school. Because children start falling behind with regard to literacy as early as age one and two, the Council focuses on conditions necessary for early learning. These include family stability starting prenatally; support for parents; education on pre-literacy, and what school readiness is; mental health and basic needs supports; quality childcare and preschool; and positive transitions to Kindergarten



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