**Why *Every Baby! Every Day!* Message is Important**

Learning to read is critical to a child’s success – both in school and in life. Literacy is one of the best predictors of a child’s future success. (*First Book*, 2013.)

Fewer than half (48 percent) of young children in the United States are read to daily. (Russ S, Perez V, Garro N, Klass P, Kuo AA, Gershun M, Halfon N, Zuckerman, B. *Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook*. Boston, MA: Reach Out and Read National Center: 2007.)

In virtually every state, minority and low-income children are less likely to be read to every day than their non-minority and higher income peers. (Russ S, Perez V, Garro N, Klass P, Kuo AA, Gershun M, Halfon N, Zuckerman, B. *Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook*. Boston, MA: Reach Out and Read National Center, 2007.)

Parents who may not have been read to as children themselves may not realize the value of reading to their own children. Additionally, many parents do not have the skills to read to their children. (*Reach Out and Read*, 2012.)

**Starting Early**

Research shows that the more words parents use when speaking to an 8-month-old infant, the greater the size of their child's vocabulary at age 3. (*Reach Out and Read*, 2012.)

What happens during the first months and years of life matters, a lot, not because this period of development provides an indelible blueprint for adult well-being, but because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows. (J.S. Shonkoff, J.S. & Phillips, D., eds. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.* Washington D.C.: National Research Council & The Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press, 2000.)

Reading aloud is widely recognized as the single most important activity leading to literacy acquisition.  Among other things, reading aloud builds word-sound awareness in children, a potent predictor of reading success. (*Reach Out and Read*, 2012.)

Reading aloud stimulates language development even before a child can talk. (Bardige, B. *Talk to Me, Baby!* Baltimore, MD:Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2009.)

The nurturing and one-on-one attention from parents during reading aloud encourages children to form a positive association with books and reading later in life. (*Reach Out and Read*, 2012.)

Reading aloud to young children is not only one of the best activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills; it also builds motivation, curiosity, and memory. (Bardige, B. *Talk to Me, Baby!* Baltimore, MD:Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2009.)

Reading aloud in the early years exposes children to story and print knowledge as well as rare words and ideas not often found in day-to-day conversations or screen time. (*Reach Out and Read*, 2012.)

Reading aloud gives children the opportunity to practice listening - a crucial skill for kindergarten and beyond. (*Reach Out and Read*, 2012.)

**Challenges for Low-Income Families**

42% of American families cannot afford basic necessities, let alone books. (*First Book*, 2013.)

Children from low-income families lack early interactions that lead to language development including being read to and access to books in the home. New data show that children from low-income families have one-fourth the vocabulary of children from wealthier homes. (*NPR*, 2011.)

By age 4, children from professional families have heard, on average, 45 million spoken words, while children from welfare families have heard, on average, 13 million, a difference of 30 million words. (Hart, B. & Risley, T. *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1995.)

By the time children from low-income families enter kindergarten, they are 12-14 months below national norms in language & pre-reading skills. (*Annie E. Casey Foundation*, 2010.)