

Raising a Reader targets the whole family

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The Monterey County Office of Education's Head Start and Early Head Start introduced the national Raising a Reader program in 2011 to ignite a love of books among the county's youngest students ages birth to 5 so they enter kindergarten ready to learn to read. Each week, the popular "red bag" of books rotates for students to read at home.

The award-winning program begins with the child getting excited about books and engaging their families in a routine of daily "book cuddling" to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding and early literacy skills critical for school success.

Raising a Reader helps families understand why it is important to share books regularly, and supports the family in building a book-sharing routine that increases growth in their child's language and literacy skills. Parents are trained during two sessions on "read-aloud" strategies so they can engage one-to-one with their children at home. The program also establishes a meaningful connection to libraries to maintain literacy habits at home.

Since 2011, 1,100 students have participated in Monterey County's Raising a Reader program.