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Children listen to a story read out loud at their preschool in San Francisco.

Parent program helps kids' reading, study says

December 5, 2014 | By [Erin Brownfield](#) | [1 Comment](#)

124

The adage that “parents are a child’s first teachers” applies to learning to tie shoes and ride a trike. But parents also can be crucial when it comes to learning to read and write – especially if

they get some guidance along the way, according to recent research.

The nonprofit research organization Child Trends looked at nearly two dozen evaluations of [Raising A Reader](#), a California-based program that teaches parents how to be reading mentors to their kids. [The Child Trends report](#) found that parents who received training in the most effective ways to encourage kids' reading were more likely to report positive changes in their children, such as improvement in spoken language skills, ability to ask questions and turning pages in a book.

With help from workshops that Raising a Reader offers, parents can learn how to deeply engage with their kids around books, by asking questions and helping kids make connections between the stories they read and their own lives.

Parents who completed the training showed a stronger connection to their kids' literacy development, the Child Trends study found. They were more likely to read together, more likely to have an established routine for reading and to recognize the importance of reading to children at an early age.

Family involvement in kids' education has been shown to have an important positive effect on young children as they develop literacy skills. [A 2013 report](#) from the nonprofit policy group MDRC summarizes what is known about the importance of parents. One of the key findings is that parents from diverse backgrounds can be taught how to engage more effectively with their kids to support early learning.

The findings point to the importance of parental involvement, a stated priority of California's Local Control and Accountability Plans, districts' three-year plans, updated annually, that describe how they will meet their goals for school improvement and student success. School districts are trying new ways to engage parents in reading, including [a text messaging initiative](#) in the San Francisco Unified School District.

The Raising A Reader program is offered in a variety of settings, from libraries to schools to after-school programs. In California, it is offered in 1,400 sites reaching an estimated 57,000 children. Its national offices are in Redwood City. The program targets low-income families who may not have the tools or knowledge to encourage reading at home with their youngsters.

Raising A Reader will participate next in a large-scale formal evaluation of its programs.



Erin Brownfield is editor of EdSource's **Leading Change** newsletter. [Email her](#) or [Follow her on Twitter](#). [Sign up here](#) for a no-cost online subscription to EdSource Today for reports from the largest education reporting team in California.

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April Inniss, MD [↗](#)

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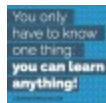
This is wonderful. As a pediatrician, I’m especially happy to hear about this initiative, as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Clinton Global Initiative have renewed a push for cultivating literacy skills beginning as early as infancy.

I think too often we assume that aspects of parenting just come naturally. In a culture that’s quickly becoming more digital, imparting to parents (esp younger parents) these foundational skills becomes incredibly important. Would love to see this initiative connected to child literacy outcomes later in life. I’m looking forward to hearing more; kudos to Raising a Reader!

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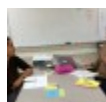
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Sounds great (to the extent parents and teachers are not already doing it). However

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I'm glad you mentioned cost. Any discussion of these techniques must include a clear...

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I do tech support for local one-room school in Landaff NH. The teacher is

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The Morrigan, you raise an interesting point. Everyone now wants to spend on technology...

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You never answered my question. Do you have an alternative, or is your goal

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