

Fact Sheets for Kids – Literacy

Fact Sheets for Kids help children understand related community issues. For more fact sheets, go to www.HandsOnNetwork.org/FamilyVolunteering/ServiceLearning.



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Meet Carlos

Carlos is in the 3rd grade and cannot read well. His parents are migrant workers and must travel to many areas of the country to work the farms. Because Carlos has been to several different schools, he has fallen behind his classmates. He doesn't own any books of his own and his parents cannot read to him in English. Most of the schools that Carlos has attended do not have an abundance of books in their classrooms or libraries. Carlos dreams about being able to read like the other kids in his class.

How can you help?

- Make Good-Eat BookBags
- Read to Children
- Hold a Read-a-thon — Raise funds for new books for children in need

Did you know... that a great number of children and adults struggle with reading?

- 37% of American fourth graders read below the "Basic" level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test (NCES, 2003).
- A child from a low-income family enters kindergarten with a listening vocabulary of 3,000 words, while a child of a middle-income family enters with a listening vocabulary of 20,000 words (Hart & Risley, 1995).
- Forty million adults in the U.S. can't read well enough to read a simple story to a child (NCES, 1992).

Research demonstrates that having access to a wide variety of reading materials is essential if a child is to grow and develop into a strong reader. The majority of children from low-income families have no books at all in their homes or classrooms, and as a result, direct access to books is extremely limited for these children.¹

¹ First Book

Children need access to books

- In two-thirds of American classrooms, there are fewer than 50 children's books, and almost 60 percent of childcare centers buy fewer than one book per child a year (Neuman et. al, 2001).
- The National Center for Education Statistics found that nearly two-thirds of the low-income families they studied owned no books for children.
- Communities that rank high in achievement tests have these factors in common:
 - an abundance of books in public libraries
 - easy access to books in the community at large
 - a large number of text books per pupil.
- A recent study (included in the Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Vol. 2 edited by Susan Neuman and David Dickinson) shows that while in middle income neighborhoods the ratio of books per child is 13 to 1, in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 age-appropriate book for every 300 children. (Source: First Book)