

KEY MESSAGES & TALKING POINTS

Making the case to individuals in your community? Calling for more investment in early learning? Here are some helpful messages and talking points for you to use!

Children Need to Be Ready to Learn in Kindergarten To Succeed

- Far too many children arrive at kindergarten unprepared to learn.
- In order to be ready for Kindergarten, children need to have high-quality learning opportunities, beginning at birth. Half of children who grow up in poverty aren't ready for school, academically or socially, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Parents are their child's first and most important teacher! Parents are encouraged to read and converse with their very young children every day to instill the language and vocabulary skills that lead to proficient reading later on.
- Too many children from low-income families lack early interactions that foster linguistic development, including verbal interactions with their parents, being read to, and access to books in their home, compared with children from middle-income families.



Third Grade is a Critical Year in Learning

- Reading ability by third grade tells us a lot—often, whether children will succeed in school and life. It's critical that we help children become good readers by this age.
- Third grade is the pivotal year when children transition from learning to read to **reading to learn**.
- **Together, We Read** is bringing people and resources from across the community together to provide a better start for our children, through reading and early literacy. Your club can provide books, activities and tools that families, schools, and the community can use to help our children succeed in school and help them have a brighter future.

Children Are Our Future

- Our children's future matters. Literacy is the foundation for school success, and we need to make literacy for young children a greater priority in our community and families. We know from research that if a child isn't reading at grade level by third grade, he or she is already at serious risk of becoming a high school dropout. This is a challenge for schools, families AND communities, so we all should be part of the solution.
- It's never too early to invest in our children's future.
- The first five years of a child's life are a critical period of rapid brain development, when we can make a big difference in a child's life and their readiness to start school.
- The first few years of school are a critical period for children to develop the reading skills and confidence that create a foundation for all future success.

Together, We Read Makes An Impact

- We're working to make reading and literacy a central focus in our community. If our babies and toddlers can develop stronger early language and pre-literacy skills, they will have a much better chance to succeed once they start school.

- We care about our children's future. We want to read and engage more with our youngest kids and encourage others to do so—it's important to talk, sing, play and enjoy activities together such as discussing the stories in books and what we learn from them.
- We know that early literacy is critical. Sharing books and reading aloud from infancy gives children language skills and a love of books and reading that will help to prepare them for success in school and life.
- Helping children in the early years at home, at school, and throughout the community gives them a foundation for success at school and in life and can help break the cycle of poverty.
- We need to start teaching children early. More access to books, more activities with parents and their children, and better early childhood education can help more of our children have a good start.

Supporting Facts (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

- 90% of a child's brain is developed by age 5.
- 60% of low-income families have no books in the home.
- Vocabulary development by age 3 has been found to predict reading achievement by third grade.
- By age 3, children living in poverty hear 30 million fewer words than more affluent classmates.
- In many low-income and rural communities, a majority of children do not have access to high-quality childcare or preschool.
- Children that live in low-income communities often lose two to three months of reading growth each summer.
- Children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are much more likely to drop out of high school.
- The ability to read by third grade is critical to a child's success in school, life-long earning potential and their ability to contribute to the nation's economy and security.
- Every student who does not complete high school costs our society an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes and productivity.