

# Making Books Part of a Healthy Childhood

A Community Service Project of the  
Southern Early Childhood Association



*The Southern Early Childhood Association and Reach Out and Read have teamed up to sponsor a project to promote early literacy and ensure that children grow up with books and a love of reading.*

## SECA believes that to promote early literacy we need to:

- Recognize and support what children already know about language before school
- Permit and encourage children to build on their existing knowledge of language
- Ensure that young children have access to quality and age-appropriate books
- Design classrooms and other settings for young children that are rich with literacy materials for reading and writing
- Provide a supportive instructional environment where children can build a positive attitude toward themselves and literacy development
- Prepare ourselves as teachers of young children to deal with and respect differences in language and cultural backgrounds

*Excerpted from Early Literacy and Beginning to Read, a Position Statement of the Southern Early Childhood Association*

## The Challenge

Children who live in print-rich environments and who are read to during the first years of life are much more likely to learn and read on schedule.

Parents of children living in poverty may lack the money to buy books, may not have easy access to good children's books, and may not themselves have been read to as children, with the result that millions of children are growing up without books. Reading difficulty contributes to school failure, which increases the risk of absenteeism, school dropout, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy, perpetuating the cycles of poverty and dependency.

Reach Out and Read currently serves over 900,000 at-risk children in the SECA network, but this number represents less than 30% of the children living at or near poverty in the SECA States.

## What is Reach Out and Read?

Reach Out and Read encourages early literacy skills by making literacy promotion a standard part of a child's regular visits to the pediatrician.



- In the exam room, doctors and nurses trained in the developmental strategies of early literacy encourage parents to read aloud to their young children and offer age-appropriate tips.

- The pediatric caregiver gives every child a new, developmentally appropriate book to take home and keep at each well child visit from six months to five years—a total of ten books.

- In the waiting room, displays, information, and gently used books create a literacy rich environment. Where possible, volunteer readers entertain the children, modeling for the parents the pleasures—and techniques—of reading aloud.

- Reach Out and Read has trained over 50,000 physicians and nurses, who have given more than 5.4 million books to more than 3.3 million children each year. Reach Out and Read programs are located in 3,797 hospitals and health centers in the US, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands.

## What are we asking you to do?

SECA and Reach Out and Read have come up with a number of different ways for you and your students to participate:

- Raise money to help pay for new, developmentally appropriate books to be given to children during their pediatric check-ups. The cost of putting one child through the Reach Out and Read program for 5 years is only \$40, so a little goes a long way!

- Incorporate information and materials from Reach Out and Read into your curriculum to educate your children and encourage them to read, read, READ!

- Educate parents on the importance of early literacy and encourage them to read aloud to their children. Give parents and caregivers a Reach Out and Read doctor-recommended reading list.

By integrating all three into your program, you'll be helping the children in your own program, as well as others all over the country!

## What types of projects could you do?

- **Read and Romp**, an event that celebrates children's literature through an event where books "come alive."

- A **"Read-a-Thon"** in which children seek pledges for reading books.

- **"Celebrations"** encouraging children to seek donations to Reach Out and Read in celebration of birthdays or other happy events.

- Conduct a gently used book drive and deliver to a local Reach Out and Read site.

## Including Reach Out and Read in your curriculum:

- Collect spare change and report back the number of children this would serve monthly. Sort, count change, and determine how many children these funds will support. Chart your results.

- Make book marks to distribute to parents and other adults.

- Combine a Reach Out and Read activity with special celebration (e.g., pajama day) incorporating reading as an activity.

- Think of your own project or ask your class what they'd like to do!

## What free materials are available from Reach Out and Read?

- Program announcement for parents and program summary

- Reach Out and Read DVD to show to teachers and parents

- Classroom flyers describing the specific project the class will undertake

- List of suggested math activities designed to help children sort, compare, and count the change they collect in a spare change drive

- Sample certificates recognizing participation by class

- Template for bookmarks for children to create as gifts for parents, and other adults

- Reach Out and Read website section featuring reading suggestions for children from Reach Out and Read

- List of local Reach Out and Read sites and contact names that would receive gently used books if a class decides to organize a book drive. Reach Out and Read could assist in organizing a presentation with the local program and feature it in the Reach Out and Read newsletter.

### Contacting Reach Out and Read:

**Website:** [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)

**Telephone:** 1-617-455-0600

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Southern Early Childhood Association



This information is provided to you by The Southern Early Childhood Association as a service to our members and to communities across the South.