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Organización
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Regional Conference "*Literacy challenges in the Arab Region:*"
Building partnerships and promoting innovative approaches,
Doha, Qatar, 12-14 March 2007

"Reach Out and Read"

Programme name: Reach Out and Read
Implemented by: Reach Out and Read National Centre, USA

Basic Facts

Country: USA

Starting year: 1989

Outreach: approximately 2.6 million children and their families per year

Target Population: Low-income children from 6 months to 5 years old, and their families

Language of instruction: predominantly English and Spanish, but books are translated into 13 languages

Operating in: 3,100 locations

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Brief Description

Reach Out and Read trains health care providers to advise mothers about the importance of reading aloud, and to give books to children at health care check-ups from six months to five years of age. A special focus is placed on children growing up in poverty, who are at high risk for reading problems and school failure. By building on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers, Reach Out and Read helps families and communities cultivate early literacy skills so that children enter school prepared to succeed at reading.

In the United States, the programme has been replicated successfully. It has grown from a single programme in a single clinic to 3,105 sites and now serves 2.6 million children every year.

Rationale

Children in poverty are at high risk of school failure and reading failure, in part because they have not grown up with books or basic literacy exposure. By the time children arrive at school entry, marked discrepancies already exist, since the early years of life are critical in terms of brain development, stimulation, language, and literacy. Yet, many of the children most at risk are not enrolled in literacy programmes during those crucial early years.

Studies show that with ROR, parents read to their children more frequently, that both parents and young children have more positive attitudes toward books and reading, and most importantly, starting at the age of 18 months, children participating in ROR have significantly improved expressive and receptive language skills.

Objectives

ROR aims at giving mothers of infants and young children practical age-appropriate strategies for enjoying books with their children, and for making looking at books and reading aloud part of their daily routines. The programme also strives at making literacy promotion a standard part of children's primary health care so that children grow up with books and a love of reading.

Moreover, ROR provides training for health workers, so that they can, in turn, provide guidance to mothers, as well as books given to the children at their checkups.

Conceptual Model and Methodology

Health care providers are trained by other health-care providers, who are experienced in delivering ROR as part of taking care of children. There is an established training curriculum which includes literacy development in young children, the importance of the first years of life in school readiness, age-specific developmental milestones of literacy, strategies for integrating literacy promotion into primary care, and giving guidance and modelling to mothers. This curriculum is usually taught in workshops, but it is also available on-line, in print, and by video or DVD. Many workshops have been successfully offered at medical conferences or in other settings where health care workers receive other training as well.

The Reach Out and Read Programme (ROR) is a successful and evidence-based model for promoting early literacy in the setting in which primary health care is delivered to infants and young children, especially children in poverty. ROR works through clinics, hospitals, medical practices-any setting that provides basic health care, immunizations, and guidance to young children and their mothers by training paediatricians, nurses, and other health care workers. By this method, ROR offers literacy guidance to mothers of young children, and provides children's books so that the mothers can follow the guidance. As children are brought to health care visits many times during the first years of life, this allows ROR to reach almost all young children at risk and their mothers, well before schools or even most early childhood programmes can reach this population.

The child is given a developmentally appropriate book at every check-up from 6 months through 5 years of age, thus integrating literacy promotion and books into the visits when most immunizations are given.

Innovative features

The guidance offered to parents is kept specific and age-appropriate. Mothers are given simple and successful strategies for enjoying books with their children, and advised around appropriate expectations-that a 2-year-old may not sit still for long, for example, or that young babies like to look at pictures of faces. Health care workers often model these strategies as part of giving the books, so that a mother can see her baby respond.