



Raising Readers in Story County

Annual Report 2018

Reaching new levels in the first 1,000 days

The Paull Family Story

In 2016 Emily and Jason Paull attended Small Talk classes with their baby Eleanor. Now Eleanor is a thriving three-year-old. She loves to make up songs, has many favorite books, and attends preschool. Her parents credit Small Talk with getting them all off to a good start.

Emily: I learned that even though Eleanor was so little, she was still “saying” things to us and it was important to talk with her. The LENA data was a good reminder to talk more and showed us when we were getting better. The community aspect of the class - being around other parents of small children who are also exhausted but wanting to do the right thing by their kid - was essential. It’s hard to talk to your kid all the time, but we supported each other. We still see some of the families around town and it’s really fun.

Jason: The classes taught me to think about reading and talking in a way I didn’t understand before. I was a little intimidated to be a parent. I didn’t have a lot of experience with little children. Learning about conversational turns and seeing the data to support what we were learning in class was helpful. Comparing where Eleanor was in physical age and intellectual age was interesting. It’s important for dads to be as involved as moms, and the Small Talk materials and videos show both moms and dads



interacting with their children. My advice for other families is If you have a baby, do Small Talk! Even if it’s your third child, you will learn something new and improve the way you communicate with your child.

Today the Paull family continues to read together. And now that Eleanor is three, she gets three books before naps and bedtime instead of two.

Reaching New Levels with Small Talk

For the third year, RRSC partnered with Iowa State University and Ames Public Library to provide this community-based program that helps parents of babies and toddlers increase their child-directed talk, their back-and-forth interactions with their child, and their knowledge of child development. Children’s brains are wired in the first years of life by these relationships with adults. By age three a child’s brain has

grown to 80% of its adult size and the foundation is laid for his or her lifelong emotional, social, and intellectual make-up.

Small Talk classes met at Ames Public Library. Our Iowa State University partners contributed valuable expertise and research capacity. LENA digital language processors allowed families to make weekly recordings of their talk at home and track their progress. As one parent said, “We found that we did not talk to



our children as much as we thought we did, but we improved as the weeks went on. It was an eye opener for sure!” At each class, a healthy snack or meal, childcare, and a new book were provided.

In 2017-18, 145 families received their M.B.A. (My Baby’s Awesome) degree. As to parent feedback, 98% said it was easy to understand the weekly lessons and 100% said the digital language recorders were useful. ISU Extension has begun expanding Small Talk in Story County and Iowa.

Letter from Shellie Orngard

President of the Raising Readers in Story County Board of Directors

Hello. As President of the Raising Readers in Story County (RRSC) Board of Directors, I am pleased to present to you our 2018 Annual Report. Here you will find an overview of our work over the 2017-18 year, highlights from some of our groundbreaking programs, and thank you's to the community partners, donors, and volunteers who make this work successful.

This past year, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading recognized our work with a Pacesetter Award given to the State of Iowa. In January, Story County Reads, a collaboration of which RRSC is a founding member, was among those honored with a ceremony in the office of Gov. Kim Reynolds.

We look ahead to the coming year of Reaching for New Levels with excited expectation. Our objective is to keep growing our programming throughout Story County. This includes programs for children in Kindergarten through Third Grade; at the same time, we will emphasize programs for children from birth to age five, critical years for brain development. This is important because research shows that a child's vocabulary as early as age three is a predictor of

later reading achievement.

RRSC is undergoing a personnel change this fall. After three years as RRSC Executive Director, Kim Hanna has taken a position with University of Northern Iowa and has moved to Cedar Falls. Kim left us with a well-managed organization, and we are grateful for her substantial contribution to that.

We are fortunate that staff member Lisa Reeves agreed to step in as Interim Executive Director until a permanent director is named. With a Masters in Education and experience as RRSC Family Literacy Coordinator/Educator, Lisa is well-qualified for the task.

This work is personal for me. Having grown up in a reading-rich home, I wish the same for others. As a Story Pal and summer Reading Buddy, I have thrilled to see the progress my little friends have made in establishing the building blocks of literacy and experiencing the joy of a good story.

The need for literacy education remains great. For children, there is no better predictor of success in school and later in work than the ability to read. Yet nationally, two-thirds of fourth-graders are not able to read at their grade level, as evidenced by national assessments. We want better for the children of Story County. That is why RRSC is so committed to finding ways to improve the reading success rates here where we live.

Thank you for joining us in this endeavor.

Letter from Lisa Reeves

Interim Executive Director of Raising Readers in Story County

I have had the pleasure of working with so many outstanding children and volunteers as the Family Literacy Coordinator/Educator for the StoryPals and the Harrison Barnes Reading Academy programs the past few years. The StoryPals program is part of the focus age group of 0-5 for the coming year, so I will share some information about the program.

I have seen many preschool students in Story County benefit from this wonderful literacy enrichment StoryPals program. StoryPals utilizes the research proven technique of Dialogic Reading to help preschool children increase their language and literacy skills. RRSC has StoryPals programs in three locations in Story County. In 2017 we had 70 energetic, eager to learn preschoolers that read with 18 fabulous volunteers. There are two programs at Northwood Preschool, one for the three-year-olds and one for the four-year-olds. At Central Elementary in Nevada we have a large four-year-old program with an average of thirty children each year. This year is our third year for the Story Pals program at Zearing Elementary.

The preschool teachers identify students who have deficiencies in their language and literacy skills. The students are matched with volunteers who are trained in the Dialogic Reading Technique which is basically having a conversation with the students while reading

the books together. The volunteers are scheduled to read with two or three students at a time once per week. The volunteers and the students have a great deal of fun reading richly illustrated children's books such as "Click, Clack, Moo" and the "Flower Garden". They utilize manipulatives that mimic pictures in the books to retell and act out the stories. The students' language and literacy skills improve through focused letter and word identification.

Following is a quote shared by one of the preschool teachers: "I have enjoyed this program for my students over the years! It gives my really quiet/shy kids an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas in a smaller setting while gaining literacy skills and confidence. It also gives my more active/outgoing kids the opportunity to work on sitting and listening to a story and answering questions. I have noticed when I do large group story time those kids who attend StoryPals will apply the skills they learned from their Story Pal person!"

One of my favorite memories of StoryPals was when I was reading "Whistle for Willie" with two four-year-old boys in Zearing. One of the boys seemed to be preoccupied with something outside so I mistakenly thought he might not have been following the story. Much to my surprise I quickly found out he had been listening very closely after all. When I asked him what was going on in the picture on the page he quickly answered, "He's in a disguise!" I was delighted by his use of such a descriptive word for a four-year-old. I told him that was an outstanding new word to describe what was happening in the picture!

I'm looking forward to Reaching for New Levels in the coming year!

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Reno Berg, Paula Cady, Randie Camp, Diana Claus, Jennifer Dieter, Lynn Engen, Dan Franklin, Jane Halliburton, Jerri Heid, Kim Herzberg, Carolyn Jons, Margie Oldehoeft, Shellie Orngard, Sue Seaton, Melissa Skinner *We offer special thanks to these board members who retired:* Dallas Rust, Brandon Schrauth, and Natalie Welter

Reaching New Levels

Reaching New Levels birth to age 5

REACH OUT AND READ

Last year Workiva joined these community sponsors who provide funding for the books: United Way of Story County, Ames Morning Rotary, US Bank Foundation, Brian and Jennifer Dieter, Rotary Club of Ames, Julie and Harold Pike, Workiva, McFarland Clinic, and Kiwanis Club of Ames Noon.

With this funding, RRSC provided 10,000 books that were given to babies, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers at well-child check-ups at McFarland Clinics, Story County Medical Clinics, Primary Health Care, and the MICA Women Infants and Children (WIC) Clinic. Healthcare providers use the books to build positive relationships, to assess children's development, and to prescribe reading at home.

Reaching New Levels with Preschoolers (3 - 5 years)

STORYPALS



Lisa Reeves, in her Interim Director letter, personally describes the StoryPals program and its impact.

PRESCHOOL READING BUDDIES

RRSC provided small group reading and literacy fun twice a week during the school year at Ames Community Preschool Center. RRSC's amazing volunteers led 20 four-year-olds in reading, singing, counting, dancing, and STEM activities. ACPC Executive Director Elizabeth Miner applauds the program. "ACPC is proud to partner with Raising Readers in our Pre-K program. We are thankful for the opportunity to provide additional literacy



support and a chance for children to build new relationships with community members. Our children are always excited to attend, and our teachers see the added bonus academically."

SUPER K

This two-week half-day transition program helped 43 five-year-olds become Super Ready for Kindergarten. Children from Ames and Nevada gained confidence and reduced their anxiety by experiencing typical kindergarten activities in a school classroom and learning lunch procedures and etiquette in a school cafeteria. The program also prepared parents through daily emails and frequent personal conversations. RRSC teachers told parents what their children did in class, why, and how to follow up at home. They also shared daily tips, such as the importance of sleep schedules and how to help their child develop self-help skills. Parents confirmed this small group experience made a significant positive difference in their child's transition to kindergarten.

STEP INTO STORYBOOKS IN AMES AND EASTERN STORY COUNTY

Each spring, RRSC partners with the Ames Public Library, Ames Morning Rotary, Nevada Kiwanis, Nevada Community School District, and many

volunteers to provide a fun-filled morning with literacy-rich experiences to inspire families to use reading and related activities at home with their young children.

Over 2,000 attended the 2018 events at the Ames Public Library and the Eastern Story County event at Central Elementary School in Nevada. Books were given out at both events and 148 volunteers donated over 611 hours. The Ames event was sponsored by Ames Morning Rotary and the Ames Public Library. In Nevada books were sponsored by Burke Corporation and United Way of Story County.



Reaching New Levels with Elementary Students (K - 3)

Harrison and Brittany Barnes committed as sponsors of the weekly afterschool tutoring and the six-week summer Reading Buddies programs. We deeply appreciate both their funding and their personal support and role modeling for the students involved. We also appreciate Up and Running Software for funding book bags for the students.

HARRISON BARNES READING ACADEMY - SUMMER READING BUDDIES

In 2017, RRSC's free summer tutoring program helped avoid the 2-month reading loss that is too common for students in families with low incomes.

A total of 116 children met 45 minutes twice a week for six weeks with 94 volunteers at ten sites in Ames and Nevada. School districts partnered with RRSC by comparing participating students' spring and fall FAST (literacy proficiency) scores. In fall 2017 all students had maintained their reading levels and 72% actually increased. In Ames, 79% of students improved or maintained their reading levels over the summer. In Nevada, 75% improved or maintained. Altogether, families reported reading 40,379 minutes at home.



BREAKING NEWS

The 2018 summer program achieved new levels. RRSC served 136 students, 80% increased their reading levels, and families reported reading a total of 87,338 minutes!

HARRISON BARNES READING ACADEMY - AFTER SCHOOL TUTORING

RRSC continued tutoring at Ames Public Library and added Nevada Central Elementary as a new site. A total of 36

K-3 students met once a week with their volunteer tutors to work on reading and literacy skills. This year the students received Valentine's Day books from the Harrison and Brittany Barnes Foundation. Assessments showed 92% of the students increased their reading levels and 8% maintained.



READ TO SUCCEED

Last year, 290 elementary school students from six Story County school districts received a total of 870 new books from RRSC through our partnership with United Way of Story County's Backpack Program™ of the Food Bank of Iowa. Disadvantaged elementary school students take home backpacks of food over the weekends and during school breaks. RRSC contributes by giving personally selected gift books to tuck in the backpacks three times a year, typically before winter holidays and spring break.

STORYTIME AT EASTWOOD

Last school year, children who live at Eastwood Apts., a low-income housing complex in Ames, gathered twice a month after school to enjoy stories, poems, songs, and movement activities. Between 8 and 12 children attended each StoryTime and many of the children also participate in other RRSC programs.

Thank you, Volunteers

The work of RRSC is made possible by the generous contributions of time by many volunteers, led by Sue Seaton, our Volunteer Coordinator.

In 2017-18, 406 volunteers gave 5,338 hours of their time.

Special thank you's go to Dallas Rust, Brandon Schrauth and Natalie

Books R Us



RRSC put over 18,000 good books in the hands of children last year.

Our Gift Books program provides children's books to partner agencies and organizations that serve vulnerable children and families. Last year a total of 3,672 books were given to these eleven

partners: Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance, Salvation Army, Northminster Presbyterian Shared Blessings, WIC, Story County Dental Clinic, Calvary United Methodist Church, Northwood Preschool Center, Habitat for Humanity, and food pantries in Slater, Sheldahl, Huxley, and Bethesda Lutheran Church in Ames.



In addition to Gift Books, RRSC programs also gave out over 14,000 more books: Reach Out and Read, Reading Corners, Nurses' Discretion Books, Small Talk, Reading Buddies Preschool, Reading Buddies Summer, Reading Buddies K-3, Read to Succeed Backpacks, Little Free Libraries, Eastwood StoryTime and Tot Time.

Welter, who served on the RRSC Board of Directors and who continue on as volunteers. There are many opportunities to volunteer with RRSC in one-time, short-term, and longer-term positions.

To see which volunteer opportunity might be right for you, contact Sue Seaton at volunteer@raising-readers.org or call the RRSC office at 515-520-8686.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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in Story County

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