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Half a Million New Children’s Books Will Be Distributed through Pediatric Clinics to Help Close the Word Gap

Book donations from Scholastic begin arriving at Reach Out and Read sites as part of a collaborative effort with the American Academy of Pediatrics and Too Small to Fail to promote early language development

Boston, MA (March 17, 2015) – The first shipment of new children’s books donated by Scholastic, through the Scholastic Possible Fund, is on its way to thousands of pediatric clinics across the nation. In total, 500,000 books will be given to young children at wellness checkups through Reach Out and Read, a program that educates parents and caregivers about the importance of reading aloud starting from an infant’s first days.

The book donation and distribution are part of a national partnership announced by former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the fourth annual Clinton Global Initiative America Meeting (CGI America) in June, 2014. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Reach Out and Read, Scholastic and Too Small to Fail are using a multi-pronged approach to ensure that medical caregivers have the information, tools and books they need to help families make reading aloud with their infants a daily practice.

Research shows that a child’s first three years offer a critically important window for brain development. Reading aloud, talking, singing and rhyming every day during these early years helps young children reach their full potential.

However, the [*Kids & Family Reading Report™: Fifth Edition*](#), conducted by Scholastic and YouGov, shows that 50% more parents from highest-income households versus lowest-income households have received advice that children should be read aloud to from birth - a recent recommendation from AAP. Further, additional research has found that by age four, children in poverty hear 30 million fewer words than their higher-income peers.

Pediatricians have a unique opportunity to help close this word gap. Through the trusting relationship that doctors have with their patients, they are able to influence

parents from all income levels and provide them with information on how reading aloud from birth will benefit their children.

Reach Out and Read healthcare providers have been offering advice to families about reading aloud daily for over 25 years. The collaborative approach of the AAP, Scholastic and Too Small to Fail, together with Reach Out and Read will help raise awareness and reach more families across the nation.

“We are very grateful for this donation of books from Scholastic,” said Brian Gallagher, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read. “It means that our Reach Out and Read doctors will be able to reach 500,000 families with a “prescription” to read aloud with their infants, toddlers and preschoolers every day. In many cases, this will be the first book the family has ever owned. It will be a much-treasured story, as well as a means of developing early literacy skills, and fostering healthy brain and social/emotional development.”

“The arrival of Scholastic books for the Reach Out and Read sites in Southeastern Pennsylvania was an exciting event,” said Trude Haecker, M.D, medical director of Reach Out and Read Greater Philadelphia. “I wish you could see the faces of the children light up when their doctor gives them a book to take home with them. Whether it’s *“Joshua by the Sea”*, or *“Knees and Toes”*, each of these books will be read over and over any time of day, and is the first step in building a love of reading and learning. Thank you so much, Scholastic!”

“Pediatricians play an invaluable role in ensuring that parents are aware of the developmental benefits of talking, reading and singing with their newborn children,” said Patti Miller, co-director of Too Small to Fail. “We’re thrilled that this collaboration will help pediatricians provide parents with the resources they need to boost their child’s early brain and language development.”

“Reading with young children is a joyful way to meet children’s basic needs by building strong and healthy parent-child relationships, fostering early language skills and promoting children’s development,” said AAP President Sandra G. Hassink, MD, FAAP. “Yet, fewer than half of children younger than five years old have the opportunity to be read to daily in our country. Pediatricians are speaking up to spread the news more widely -- that early shared reading is both fun and rewarding. The benefits are so compelling, that encouraging reading at young children’s check-ups has become an essential component of our care. We are thrilled to partner with the Clinton Foundation, Too Small to Fail, Reach Out and Read and Scholastic, Inc. to encourage shared reading, and get more books into the hands of children and families.”

“The *Kids & Family Reading Report* shows us that alongside the word gap, there is an income gap among parents who receive the important advice to read aloud early and often to their child,” said Greg Worrell, President, Scholastic Classroom and Community

Group. “Through the Scholastic Family and Community Engagement program, we’ve seen firsthand that when parents are provided the tools and information they need to create literacy-rich environments at home, their children thrive. We are proud to partner with organizations that share our dedication to support literacy for all children.”

About Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based nonprofit organization of doctors and nurses who promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud. Reach Out and Read builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to develop critical early reading skills in children from birth. As a result of this literacy intervention, Reach Out and Read families read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten better prepared to succeed, with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills. Nationwide, Reach Out and Read’s 20,000 medical providers serve 4 million children and their families annually at 5,000 pediatric practices, health centers, and hospitals with a focus on those that serve low-income communities. For more information, please visit www.reachoutandread.org.

About Scholastic Inc.

Scholastic Corporation (NASDAQ: SCHL) is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books and a leader in educational technology and related services and children's media. Scholastic creates quality books and ebooks, print and technology-based learning materials and programs, magazines, multi-media and other products that help children learn both at school and at home. The Company distributes its products and services worldwide through a variety of channels, including school-based book clubs and book fairs, retail stores, schools, libraries, on-air, and online at www.scholastic.com.

About American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 62,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org and follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds.

About Too Small to Fail

Too Small to Fail, a joint initiative of the Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation and Next Generation, aims to help parents, communities and businesses take meaningful actions to improve the health and well-being of children ages zero to five, so that more of America’s children are prepared to succeed in the 21st century.

Too Small to Fail is focusing its work on closing the “word gap.” Studies have found that by age four, children in middle and upper income families hear 30 million more words than their lower-income peers. This disparity in hearing words from parents and caregivers translates directly into a disparity in learning words. And that puts our children born with the fewest advantages even further behind. Among those born in 2001, only 48 percent of poor children started school ready to learn, compared to 75

percent of children from middle-income families.

The “word gap” is a significant but solvable challenge. *Too Small to Fail* is about parents, caregivers, other concerned individuals, and the private sector coming together to take small, research-based actions with big impacts. Learn more at www.toosmall.org and on Twitter @2SmalltoFail.

The distribution of the first shipment (258,950 books), listed by state, can be seen on:

http://www.reachoutandread.org/media/43645/scholasticdelivery_1.pdf

The second shipment is scheduled for early summer.