

# Beyond Medicine: Reach Out and Read + Workforce Readiness



## ECONOMICS AND WORKFORCE READINESS

The skills that workers need to compete for employment has shifted towards higher-skilled work, changing job requirements. Companies are experiencing a significant “skills gap” which results in positions going unfilled. The mismatch between available talent and employer needs is a threat to growth for businesses and to communities, and to opportunity for individuals.

Sixty-five percent of all US jobs will require postsecondary training and education beyond high school by 2020. In 2015, 50% of all US millennials failed to demonstrate proficient literacy skills. Although dollars are invested in remedial reading programs, children who enter school unprepared are highly likely to never catch up. Reading difficulty increases several risk factors that can perpetuate the cycles of poverty and dependency. A focus on improving third grade reading proficiency offers a uniquely powerful lever to address many aspects of the skills gap over the long term.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PROVIDER?

Third-grade literacy is pivotal in reversing the “skills gap” and developing a workforce geared for a growing economy. Primary care providers promote literacy in the critical years before children enter school, when interventions can have the most dramatic impact. Early literacy intervention designed for the medical home is an opportunity for low-cost, population-based prevention that support family relationships and social development of children.

Primary care providers have a key role in preparing children to achieve their potential, therefore, helping our nation achieve it’s potential.

Primary care providers incorporate Reach Out and Read in well-child visits, encourage parents to have many conversations with their children and read to them every day, and discuss language and reading readiness milestones and risk factors for reading failure. Providers equip parents with the tools and techniques to help their children succeed by prescribing books, advise about the importance of reading aloud, and empower parents as their child’s first teacher.

## HOW REACH OUT AND READ CAN HELP PROVIDERS?

Reach Out and Read promotes early literacy and school readiness with a research-tested, evidence-based model that’s proven to help children develop the language skills they will need to learn to read and succeed in school. We partner with community efforts across the Carolinas, expanding awareness of the economic and social benefits of the Reach Out and Read model. Although the problem is big, we believe that the solution begins with something small – reading. And it all starts with the turn of a page.

There are five key skills needed to develop reading proficiency: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. For all children, the foundation for these essential skills is developed starting at birth, when a young child’s brain is highly responsive, malleable, and attuned to learning language, through frequent, high-quality language interactions, and frequent exposure to books, in the context of warm, loving, and secure adult-child relationships. Reach Out and Read is a foundational component that builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to address literacy and build skills early to stop deficits from occurring.

Reach Out and Read clinics create a literacy-rich environment in the medical home by decorating bulletin boards with literacy-rich material, including a list of literacy and educational resources for interested parents. Clinics also create a children’s area in the waiting room or lobby with a bookshelf filled with gently used books, a colorful child-friendly rug, or child-sized table and chairs. A literacy-rich environment embeds literacy in the clinic culture, exposes children to additional print, encourages interaction, and offers authentic opportunities to become engaged with a book to practice literacy behaviors and language.

**RESOURCE:** [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Economic\\_Neurobiological\\_Behavioral\\_Perspectives.pdf](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Economic_Neurobiological_Behavioral_Perspectives.pdf)

To learn more about the value of Reach Out and Read in Pediatric Primary Care, please visit [www.rorcarolinas.org](http://www.rorcarolinas.org).

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