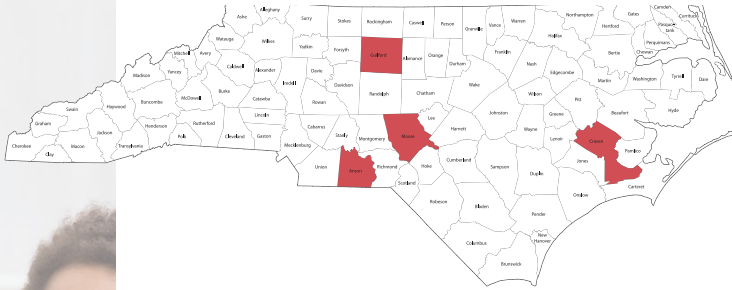


# Promoting and Strengthening Early Literacy

A majority of language development occurs in the first few years of life and Smart Start supports this development by providing programs needed for success in school, work, and life. In FY 22-23, programs with wide reach across the state include Reach Out and Read (ROR), Raising a Reader (RAR), and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL). These programs promote positive language-rich interactions—by not only providing books, but by increasing reading frequency and skills, fostering language skills, and nurturing relationships.

## Spotlight on:

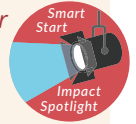


**In fact, over 300,000 children participated in DPIL, Motherread/Fatheread, Raising a Reader (RAR), Reach Out and Read (ROR), and other programs!**

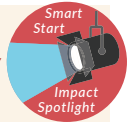
In 2017, the General Assembly allocated funding to NCPC to increase access to DPIL, an early literacy program that mails age-appropriate books monthly to registered children. The General Assembly's investment leveraged Smart Start's community roots and resulted in rapid expansion of the program. In less than two years, every child under the age of 5 in North Carolina had access to DPIL, and by June 30, 2023, the Smart Start Network distributed more than 15 million books to North Carolina children. **The percentage of eligible children enrolled has grown from 8% in 2017 to 50% in 2023!**

Smart Start ensures children across the state receive literacy skills enhancement through a variety of literacy programs and will continue to promote a love of reading in children and enhance their literacy skills.

**Craven Smart Start's Raising a Reader (RAR) activity received a \$12,500 grant from the Bosch Community Fund to supplement the program with STEAM activities. RAR served 184 children and families in 11 classrooms in six sites in Craven County. Raising a Reader's end of year surveys showed a significant increase in the frequency that parents and children read together!**



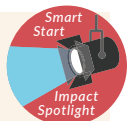
**Anson County Partnership for Children collaborates with community partners to provide Raising a Reader, Reach Out & Read, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Motherread, Little Free Libraries, book distributions, and Bright by Text for an integrative approach to building literacy skills in young children and families. These efforts resulted in more than 15,000 books distributed to increase access, and 63% of participating families reported an increase in family-shared reading in the home.**



**Partners for Children & Families of Moore County embedded a Raising a Reader Blue Bag celebration into seven preschool graduation ceremonies this year. The elevation to kindergarten and the commitment of the family support to their child's early education was acknowledged. As many as 80 books rotated through each home during the implementation of the program!**



**Guilford County Partnership for Children's Motherread program highlighted the transformative journey of a mother and son from another country. In less than six months, the mother made significant strides in her English proficiency, advancing multiple grade levels in both reading and listening. Her son, who initially struggled with separation anxiety, blossomed into a confident young learner, engaging actively with peers and teachers.**



See Data and Tables on page 35

# Promoting and Strengthening Early Literacy

## Access to Books and Literacy Education

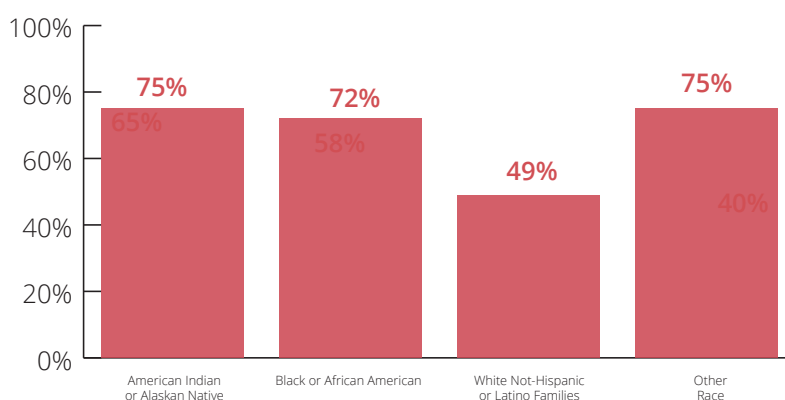
Over 300,000 children participated in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL), Reach Out and Read (ROR), Raising a Reader (RAR), and Motherread/Fatheread.

| Literacy Programs Implemented by Smart Start Local Partnerships | Number of parents and guardians participating |
|---|---|
| Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library                              | 301,856                                       |
| Reach Out and Read (ROR)  | 83,051  |
| Raising a Reader (RAR)  | 5,071   |
| Motherread/Fatheread  | 417   |

50% of North Carolina’s children aged 0-4 receive a free book each month through DPIL. Parents with children participating in DPIL, reported the following:

47% of families indicated they wouldn’t be able to purchase the same number of books as provided by DPIL.

Percent of participants who wouldn’t be able to purchase books without DPIL identified by race:



Out of these families, some would not have been able to purchase books at all.

- Other Race - 14% of parents
- American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, and Asian Families - 10% of families
- White Not-Hispanic or Latino Families - 4% of parents

## Reading Frequency

Smart Start offers a wide range of early literacy initiatives that promote parent and child shared reading time.

### Raising a Reader (RAR)

Participating RAR parents reported an increase in reading to their children weekly.

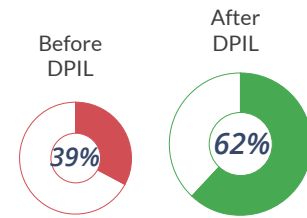
When asked how often their child looks at books, parents reported an average increase in reading weekly:

Before Enrolling in RAR: 4.4

After Enrolling in RAR: 5.8

### Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)

Parents who participated in DPIL for any length of time reported an increase in reading to their children daily from **39%** before they began receiving books to nearly **62%** after participating in DPIL.



### There is a racial gap in the opportunity to read daily.

- The percent of parents/guardians who identify as White (Not Hispanic or Latino) and have an opportunity to read with their children daily **increased from 45% to 68%**.
- The percent of Black/African American families who have an opportunity to read with their children daily **increased from 23% to 45%**.
- While the percentage of families reading daily **increased by ≈20%** in both groups, a racial gap exists in terms of opportunity to read.

### There is an ethnic gap in the opportunity children have to read daily.

- The percent of Not Hispanic or Latino families who have an opportunity to read with their children daily **increased from 41% to 64%**.
- The percent of Hispanic or Latino families who have an opportunity to read with their children daily **increased from 22% to 49%**.

## Reading Quality

Participation in literacy programs increases the reading strategies used by children and their parents.

*How Parental Reading Strategies Improved Before and After DPIL:*

|  | Before DPIL | Now |
|--|-------------|-----|
| I change my voice to sound like animals or people to animate the story.                  | 72%         | 87% |
| I ask my children questions about the story.   | 55%         | 80% |
| I point to pictures or other clues to help my children understand new words in the book. | 78%         | 92% |
| I point out or point to the text or letters as I am reading a book with my children.     | 65%         | 82% |
| My children look at the book when I am reading to them.                                  | 89%         | 95% |

After participating in Raising a Reader (RAR), families enhanced their literacy skills.

*The number of families who used at least 4 dialogic behaviors most or all of the time increased before and after Raising a Reader implementation.*

