Save the Children.

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

HELPING CHILDREN SUCCEED IN SCHOOL & LIFE

THE NEED

Education is a ladder out of poverty, but that ladder is often out of reach for the more than 12 million children living in poverty in America. These children struggle in school in large part because they don't have the familiarity with books and language that are the building blocks for literacy. The disparity gap widens even more when economic barriers are intensified by the lack of community resources and geographic isolation.

Consider the following:

- Low-income children begin school as many as 18 months developmentally behind their peers.[1]
- More than 60 percent of low-income families have no children's books in their homes.[2]
- 4 in 5 low-income fourth graders are not reading proficiently compared to 3 in 5 of all fourth graders.[3]
- Children living in poverty who can't read at grade level by the end of third grade are 13 times less likely to graduate from high school on time.[4]
- Children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds often do not perform as well in mathematics as their peers, and early mathematics performance is linked to future success in mathematics.[5]
- Less than 1 in 4 children take part in 60 minutes of daily physical activity.[6] Children now spend an

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[1] PSRP Reporter. "When Poverty Comes to School," *American Federation of Teachers*. 2014.
[2] Marilyn Binkley, et al. "Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study," *National Center for Education Statistics*. June 17, 1996.
[3] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Low Reading Scores Show Majority of U.S. Children Not Prepared for Future Success," *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*. January 29, 2014.
[4] Donald J. Hernandez. "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation," *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*. April, 2011.
[5] Kimberly P. Raghubar and Marcia A. Barnes. "Early numeracy skills in preschool-aged children: A review of neurocognitive findings and implications for assessment and intervention" *The Clinical neuropsychologist* vol. 31, 2 (2017): 329-351. Doi:10.1080/13854046.2016.1259387
[6] The Child & Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI). 2016 National Survey of Children's Health. *Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health*. 2016.

average of 7.5 hours a day in front of a screen.[7]

- In 2020, more than 38 million people lived in food-insecure households, including 6.1 million children. A food-insecure household is one with uncertainty of having, or unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of the household members due to insufficient money or other resources.[8]

As these children progress through school, they fall further and further behind, until they run out of time to catch up. In many cases, without interventions, their futures are determined before they leave elementary school. In order to give children in America living in poverty a chance to succeed, we have to give them a fair chance to learn.

AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

Save the Children's school-age programs focus on measurable outcomes for children and are designed to reduce the achievement gap between students most impacted by inequality and their more affluent peers. Our literacy, math, and Healthy Choices components provide the training, tools and support schools need to accelerate growth for struggling students, kindergarten through sixth grade.

In our afterschool and summer programs, the centerpiece of our curriculum is the **Literacy Block** - an hour of activities supporting increased reading achievement, including guided independent reading practice, fluency-building support and listening to books read aloud. We also know reading support is critical during the school day. We work with children in the course of their academic day to provide tutorials in phonics, sight word growth, comprehension and vocabulary enhancement. Additionally, we conduct emergent reader activities for children in kindergarten and first grade to provide an extra boost to their literacy growth.

Our in-school and afterschool **Mathematics Programs** are structured into two key components: Math Talks and Hands-On Activities. During our summer program, we expand the math block to one hour, allowing us time to add another key component: basic fact fluency. Mathematical Discussions are critical for creating a safe space for children to explore, learn, struggle, make mistakes, ask questions, and share their own thinking. Hands-on activities and games are included to learn concepts and practice skills in a fun and meaningful way. Basic Fact Fluency provides a foundation for future success in the math field. We train our staff members to implement this structure with fidelity. Through our program, we are able to increase children's mathematics efficiency by strengthening confidence, conceptual understanding, fluency, reasoning, and problem solving.

Healthy Choices operates during afterschool and summer programs using the research-based CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) curricula, developed by researchers at the University of Texas School of Public Health. It provides children with 30 minutes or more of daily, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity that teaches lifelong movement skills and combines fun and fitness. Children also receive a daily, healthy snack, in alignment with Save the Children's Healthy Snack Standards, and participate in weekly nutrition education.

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[7] The Kaiser Family Foundation. "Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8 to 18 – Year –Olds," *The Kaiser Family Foundation.* January 1, 2010.
[8] U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. "Key Statistics and Graphics: Food Security," *USDA Economic Research Service.* April 22, 2022

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

When COVID-19 shuttered schools in the spring of 2020, Save the Children worked with rural school districts and families to keep rural children from falling behind their peers during the pandemic. Policy Studies Associates (PSA), an independent education evaluation consultancy, analyzed literacy scores made available by Renaissance Learning®, to compare 5,101 children in Save the Children's in-school and afterschool literacy programs[9] with the one-year change among over 5 million other children nationwide who completed Renaissance Learning literacy tests.[10] PSA found that between the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2020, Save the Children elementary school participants in kindergarten through fourth grade:

- Made greater gains in their literacy scores than their grade-level peers nationally, even though Save the Children's programs are located in high poverty and/or rural communities.
- Made greater gains in their literacy scores than is typical or expected even during a normal, non-pandemic year, equivalent to between 1 and 2 months of additional literacy instruction;
- African-American students in Save the Children programs achieved greater gains than did African-American students nationwide.

OUR RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Save the Children's school-age programs have achieved significant increases in reading and math proficiency. In the 2022-2023 school year our student evaluations showed:

- Literacy results have rebounded post-pandemic for participating students in grades 1-6.
- Save the Children's school-based literacy programs reached 14,994 children across 194 sites in eight states.
- We supported 5,221 children across 93 sites in seven states through our math programming.
- 73% of students showed typical or high growth after participating in our literacy program and 70% of students showed typical or high growth after participating in our math program. *This typical or high growth is meaningful because Save the Children specifically targets students who are most vulnerable o falling behind their peers.*
- 41% of students who started the year below proficiency in literacy were proficient by the end of the school year. The same proportion of 41% students who started the year below proficiency in math were proficient by the end of the school year.

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[9] Policy Studies Associates included in their analysis of Save the Children program participants students who attended 30 or more days of in-school or after-school programming during the 2019-2020 school years and controlled for student and community characteristics such as race and ethnicity, poverty, and internet access.

[10] Renaissance Learning (2020). *How Kids Are Performing: Tracking the Impact of COVID-19 on Reading and Mathematics Achievement.* Retrieved November 2020 from https://www.renaissance.com/how-kids-are-performing/