



PBS KIDS Raising Readers Fact Sheet

What is PBS KIDS Raising Readers?

PBS KIDS Raising Readers is a five-year reading initiative focused on using media to help children ages two-to-eight, especially those from low-income families, build their reading skills. The project is funded by a Ready To Learn grant from the U.S Department of Education and is a cooperative agreement with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), PBS and The Ready To Learn Partnership.

Background

For over 40 years, PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting have been dedicated to producing unique educational programming for children – resources that have been built solidly upon a foundation of research. Throughout this time, PBS continued to learn more about the ways in which children learn from various types of programming and resources, *and* the ways in which the content and resources are delivered. All of this important research has fueled the development of a powerful and comprehensive multiplatform package of new tools, including video, web, professional development and training resources for parents, caregivers and teachers in their efforts to help preschool-aged children build the skills they need to learn to read.

These new resources are part of PBS KIDS Raising Readers, a literacy initiative that is developing PBS KIDS programs, related multimedia content and community engagement activities. PBS KIDS Raising Readers uses scientifically-based reading research to support the development of all content - on-air, online and in formal and informal educational settings. The long-term goals are to achieve measurable results in improving literacy skills of children in low-income families in 20 target markets, and to build successful models that can be replicated across the country.

PBS KIDS Series and/or Related Multimedia Content

Producers of some of the most imaginative educational programming are working together in conjunction with literacy experts and researchers to develop content and tools that will engage kids and help them learn to read. All of this content is being developed using proven, scientifically-based reading research concepts, including phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Other media projects in development by the Ready To Learn Partnership include “RU There?” and “Everyday Alphabet,” both working titles, along with an untitled literacy property for kids ages six-to-eight.

- **SUPER WHY!** -- This animated preschool series offers interactive storybook adventures, featuring a team of superhero characters with literacy-based powers, who jump into books to look for answers to everyday problems. The program is built on the literacy building blocks recommended by the National Reading Panel of 2000. Each episode and/or script also has been researched and tested, in total at 43 schools with more than 1,000 children participating. Testing is based on appeal, ability to hold attention, comprehension, literary elements, story highlights, and game play. (Launched September 2007; produced by Out of the Blue Enterprises.)
- **WORDWORLD** -- A computer-animated preschool series that brings words to life. The series focuses on a place where characters and objects, called “Wordfriends,TM” spring to life from the letters that spell their names. (Launched September 2007; produced by WTTW/The Ready To Learn Partnership.)

- **MARTHA SPEAKS** – Based on the popular children’s book series, this animated show follows the humorous adventures of Martha, a loveable dog who learns to speak after eating a bowl of alphabet soup. (2008; produced by WGBH Boston.)
- In addition to **SUPER WHY**, **WORDWORLD** and new content from **SESAME STREET** and **BETWEEN THE LIONS**, PBS KIDS Raising Readers is launching PBS KIDS Island, a reading website with rich content for parents, caregivers, teachers and kids, as well as a 32-week multi-media pre-school, research-based curriculum, and online professional development courses for formal and informal childcare providers. The initiative is also exploring ways to use new technology to deliver research-based literacy content to families of young children wherever they are, via cell phones and other mobile devices.

Partners

PBS KIDS Raising Readers is funded as part of the U.S. Department of Education’s Ready To Learn grant and is managed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), PBS and The Ready to Learn Partnership through a cooperative agreement. This innovative five-year project consists of two programming awards (CPB/PBS and WTTW/The Ready to Learn Partnership) and one outreach award (CPB/PBS) designed to locate and connect with kids from low-income families in 20 target markets. Local public television stations in these markets are important partners in the community engagement and partnership building efforts.

Target Markets

Selected after careful review of factors including children’s reading scores, ethnic and geographic diversity and concentration of children from low-income families, the 20 markets are: **Birmingham, AL/APT**; **Des Moines, IA/IPTV**; **Phoenix, AZ/KAET**; **San Antonio, TX/KLRN**; **San Diego, CA/KPBS**; **Oakland and San Francisco, CA/KQED**; **Baton Rouge, LA/LPB**; **Jackson, MS/MPB**; **Baltimore, MD/MPT**; **Tallahassee, FL/WFSU**; **Toledo, OH/WGTE**; **Norfolk, VA/WHRO**; **Washington, DC/WHUT**; **Martin, TN/WLJT**; **Buffalo, NY/WNED**; **Nashville, TN/WNPT**; **State College, PA/WPSU**; **Carbondale, IL/WSIU**; **Pensacola, FL/WSRE**; and **Charleston, WV/WVPB**.

Targeting the Audience

Assisted by targeted social marketing research, PBS KIDS Raising Readers partners are reaching out to low-income families at the neighborhood level. CPB and PBS are working with public television stations to help identify and forge strategic partnerships with local community organizations to achieve the broadest-based results. This targeted community engagement effort is powered by a Literacy 360° approach, designed to surround children and families where they live and are most likely to learn.

Research

The best scientifically-based reading research available -- both existing and specially commissioned -- is being used to design, test and revise all of the major elements of the literacy initiative’s content and outreach efforts. Among the many applications for the project, research is being used to:

- develop program content and community engagement strategies;
- develop student curriculum materials;
- test an online professional development course designed to help child care providers learn important early literacy practices;
- test use of new technologies to deliver content; and,
- evaluate the effectiveness of the content or the concept of media synergy.



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