

Every day. In times of crisis. **For our future.**



Your support ensures that children in Kentucky enter school ready to learn, and grow to reach their full potential.

Photo: Save the Children/Elissa Miolene

Helping Kentucky's Children Succeed **Annual Report** **October 22, 2021**

Submitted by:
Save the Children Federation, Inc.

Executive Summary

Children living in rural areas face many barriers, including poverty, geographic isolation, and limited access to services, that deter academic achievement.¹ Since 2004, Save the Children has partnered with Kentucky schools and communities to overcome these barriers. Our core programs focus on prenatal through third grade early childhood development, literacy, and healthy choices, closing the achievement gap before it starts through home visiting, in-school, and after-school programs. With a data-proven track record, and measurable outcomes, Save the Children has and will continue to work to improve education outcomes for Kentucky children living in rural poverty.

With Kentucky's \$1,846,490 investment in FY21 (includes budget allocation, CARES Act, and 21st Century Community Learning Center grant), Save the Children continued to operate our proven programs serving 31,500 children in Bell, Clay, Floyd, Harlan, Jackson, Knott, Knox, Leslie, Madison, McCreary, Menifee, Owsley, Perry, and Whitley counties with early childhood, literacy and math programming.

Save the Children believes in public-private partnerships and significantly leverages public dollars. **Last year, to match the state's \$1,846,490 investment, Save the Children brought an additional \$26.7 million to these high need communities in rural Kentucky** (\$13.1M in Private, \$4.9M in Gifts-In-Kind, \$3.2M in federal and \$5.5M in commodities). In addition, our programs employ 450 Kentuckians, in rural communities where jobs are often hard to come by.

A 2021 report from Stanford University estimated that pandemic-related learning loss in reading in Kentucky would equate to 121 lost days of learning; the projected lost days of learning in math was even higher at 172 (nearly an entire school year). However, in **Save the Children's literacy program, students in Kentucky gained close 1.7 months of school; math growth for children in our math program is equivalent to 2 additional months of school per year per child. Children in underserved rural communities in Save the Children programs achieved greater literacy gains than their national peers during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Children in our literacy program read an average of 38 additional books per child during the school year and 60% of our target population showed significant reading improvement. In addition, **94% of 5 year old children in our early childhood program scored at or above the normal range for vocabulary acquisition, a key indicator for school readiness, despite having multiple risk factors.**

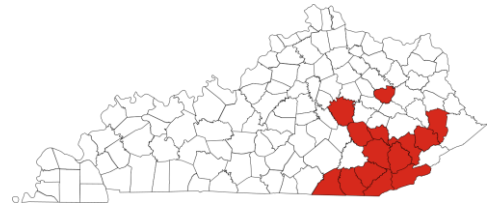
Proven Track Record: Creating Lasting Impact in Kentucky

In Kentucky, where Save the Children has been working since 2004, 25 percent of children live in poverty. Child poverty rates in rural counties where we work are significantly higher: the percent of children living in poverty is nearly double the state rate in Bell, Clay, Harlan, Knott, Knox, and McCreary counties. The lack of resources in rural areas exacerbates the challenges

¹ The Rural School and Community Trust (2005). Why Rural Matters 2005.

these children face at home and in school. Children in these communities also face many other challenges that their peers in more populated areas do not.

The children we serve in some of the most underserved communities are frequently from families dealing with poverty, unemployment, single or teen parenting, low education, inadequate transportation, smoking, depression, home language other than English, and crisis-driven lifestyle.



Without positive intervention, these challenges can create long-lasting negative consequences for children's health, education, and development, which makes the cycle of poverty almost impossible to break.

But our programs have made a difference.

Last year in Kentucky, children in our literacy program read an average of 38 books during the school year and 60% of regularly participating children showed significant reading improvement. ***On average, literacy improvement among program participants was equivalent to an additional 1.7 months of schooling.*** In addition, ***94% of 5 year old children in our early childhood program scored at or above the normal range for vocabulary acquisition, a key indicator for Kindergarten readiness, despite having multiple risk factors.***

Where We Work: 2020-21 School Year

Sites	Early Steps	School-Age	Summer Learning
BELL COUNTY			
Bell Central School Center		√	√
Frakes School Center		√	√
Lone Jack School Center		√	√
Page School Center		√	√
Pineville Elementary		√	√
Right Fork School Center		√	√
Yellow Creek School Center		√	√
CLAY COUNTY			
Big Creek Elementary	√	√	√
Burning Springs	√	√	√
Goose Rock Elementary	√	√	√
Hacker Elementary	√	√	√
Manchester Elementary	√	√	√
Oneida Elementary			√
Paces Creek Elementary		√	√
FLOYD COUNTY			
Allen Elementary		√	√
Betsy Lane Elementary		√	√

Duff-Allen Central Elementary		√	√
John M. Stumbo Elementary		√	√
South Floyd Elementary		√	√
HARLAN COUNTY			
Black Mountain Elementary		√	√
Cawood Elementary		√	√
Cumberland Elementary		√	√
Evarts Elementary		√	√
Green Hills Elementary			√
Harlan Elementary		√	√
James A. Cawood Elementary		√	√
Ross Point Elementary			√
Wallins Elementary		√	√
JACKSON COUNTY			
McKee Elementary	√	√	√
Sand Gap Elementary	√	√	√
Tyner Elementary	√	√	√
KNOTT COUNTY			
Beaver Creek Elementary		√	√
Carr Creek Elementary	√	√	√
Emmalena Elementary		√	√
Hindman Elementary		√	√
Jones Fork Elementary		√	√
KNOX COUNTY			
Central Elementary	√	√	√
Corbin Elementary		√	√
Corbin Primary	√	√	√
DeWitt Elementary		√	√
Flat Lick Elementary	√	√	√
Girdler Elementary	√	√	√
GR Hampton Elementary	√	√	√
Jesse D. Lay Elementary		√	√
Lynn Camp Schools	√	√	√
LESLIE COUNTY			
Hayes Lewis Elementary		√	√
Mountain View Elementary		√	√
Stinnett Elementary		√	√
W.B. Muncy Elementary		√	√
MADISON COUNTY			
Daniel Boone Elementary		√	√
Kingston Elementary		√	√
MCCREARY COUNTY			
Pine Knott Elementary	√	√	√
Whitley City Elementary		√	√
MENIFEE COUNTY			

Menifee Elementary		√	√
OWSLEY COUNTY			
Owsley County Elementary	√	√	√
PERRY COUNTY			
Buckhorn Elementary	√	√	√
East Perry Elementary	√	√	√
Leatherwood Elementary		√	√
R.W. Combs Elementary	√	√	√
Robinson Elementary	√	√	√
Roy G. Eversole Elementary	√	√	√
Viper Elementary		√	√
West Perry Elementary	√	√	√
WHITLEY COUNTY			
Boston Elementary		√	√
Oak Grove Elementary	√	√	√
Pleasant View Elementary	√	√	√
Whitley Central Intermediate		√	√
Whitley Central Primary	√	√	√
Whitley County East Elementary	√	√	√
Whitley County North Elementary	√	√	√
Williamsburg Independent	√	√	√

Program Design, Evaluation, and Results

With decades of experience working in poor, rural communities, Save the Children has both a clear understanding of the challenges facing children and families living in rural poverty, as well as unique insight into solutions to those challenges. Our domestic early childhood and literacy programs give children ages prenatal-Grade 3 the skills and support they need to succeed in school and in life. Most importantly, our data-driven programs deliver measurable outcomes, ensuring results for our investment.

Early Childhood Development: Early Steps to School Success

Attaining school readiness by age 5 is a proven indicator of a child's future academic and overall success; through our Early Steps to School Success (Early Steps) program, we support children in rural communities achieve school readiness. Through home visits, we help parents guide their infants and toddlers to books, language and learning opportunities. From age 3, we help families transition their children to preschool or find the best possible alternatives in their community. Throughout the program we make age-appropriate books available and help connect families to their local school.

Early Steps has the following four program goals:

1. Children will enter school with the skills necessary for school success;
2. Home/school connections will be strong;
3. Early childhood knowledge and skills in communities will be significantly increased; and
4. Parents will have the knowledge and skills to support their child's development.



On average, the children we serve face a shockingly high average of risk factors. The program is deemed a success when these high-risk, low-income children enter kindergarten with the same skills and knowledge as their middle-income peers and are ready to succeed. In order to measure success against that goal, we track all results through a rigorous web-based Monitoring and Evaluation system, which allows us to track enrollment, participation, individual screenings and assessments, community contacts, staff development, and success in achieving program goals over time.

Additionally, each year participating 3 and 5 year-olds who were in the home-visiting component for 12 months or more are given the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). The PPVT is a widely used, standardized tool to measure receptive language, a strong predictor of future school success. Typically, low-income children and children whose families have multiple risk factors (such as poverty, teen-age or single parents, unemployment, low education, inadequate transportation, smoking, depression, home language other than English, a crisis-driven lifestyle or frequent moves) score well below the national mean (100) on the PPVT.

Last year in Kentucky, 98 percent of 3-year-olds and 94 percent of 5-year-olds in Early Steps had vocabulary development scores at or above normal—demonstrating that our program is achieving a significant improvement over conventional expectations of early childhood interventions provided to children facing such barriers to success.

Early Steps is implemented in direct partnership with local school districts, with whom we provide implementation support, oversight, coaching and mentoring, training and technical assistance and all curriculum materials. We also have a national, web-based data collection system that supports continuous program improvement.

The Early Steps program hires coordinators locally by each district to help them implement the program. The coordinators are members of the community who have shown an aptitude for working with children and families. Hiring locally sustains the local economy, enhances program

sustainability, helps build local buy-in for the program and ensures that coordinators are intimately familiar with the culture as well as challenges families in their community face, which helps facilitate enrollment and build trust. We then provide extensive training and technical assistance to the coordinators. For example, in 2020-2021, each coordinator received an average of 69 hours of professional development, which helped increase program quality and broaden early childhood knowledge within these rural communities.

During a typical visit, the coordinator brings age- and culturally-appropriate books to the child and family. Activities are tailored to the particular developmental stage and identified needs of each child, and focus on teaching and empowering parents to work with their children on a daily basis.

Coordinators may work with parents on issues such as nutrition, establishing healthy sleep routines, interpreting and responding to babies' efforts to communicate, helping toddlers develop self-control and problem-solving skills, and how to read interactively with the child. Early Steps empowers parents to be their child's first teacher and to support their healthy growth and development every day. Additionally, coordinators use home visits and their community partnerships to strengthen and maintain a referral network for families, including visiting nurses, information on safe and stable housing, medical care and child care referrals, mental health services and school-based assistance.

Literacy and Math: School Age Programming

Education is one of the most direct and viable pathways out of poverty; however, many of Kentucky's poor school age children lack the literacy skills they need to be successful in life. Working in partnership with local schools in 14 counties across the state, Save the Children's Literacy program is providing children in kindergarten through sixth grade with opportunities to improve their reading by supplying the tools they need to develop reading skills and the guidance and support they need to grow as readers.



To put our results in context, research conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) from 1992 to 2011 found that fourth-grade reading scores have remained fairly stable, despite national and local efforts to improve reading instruction. Additionally, most evaluations of out-of-school time programs show no significant gains in participants' reading proficiency. Save the Children's program continuum results represent potential significant improvement to school, state and national literacy outcomes.

Developing Reader Literacy Block (60 minutes each day): The developing reader literacy block consists of three activities that were specifically selected to accelerate

achievement for struggling readers in grades two through six.² These activities are read-aloud, fluency and guided independent reading practice. Each day, children listen to a 10-minute read-aloud, engage in fluency building activities for 20 minutes and read independently for 30 minutes. In addition, since vocabulary development is such a strong predictor of success in school and life, vocabulary instruction and support are incorporated throughout the hour.³ The following is a brief rationale for each component:

- *Read-aloud*: Reading aloud to young children is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading.⁴ Reading aloud builds background knowledge and vocabulary, exposes children to new ideas and concepts, and builds a love of reading. Each day, literacy tutors read a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts, introduce useful new vocabulary and engage children with higher-order thinking questions about the texts being read.
- *Fluency Building*: Repeated readings with short texts improve pronunciation, intonation and phrasing.⁵ Fluency-building games and activities like “Reader’s Theatre” give children the opportunity to practice reading in a fun and authentic way.
- *Guided Independent Reading Practice (GIRP)*: Giving children opportunities to practice reading through self-selected, developmentally appropriate books increases motivation and achievement.⁶ Children participate in a guided independent reading practice each day for 30 minutes of uninterrupted time. During this time, children select developmentally appropriate books, read these books independently – while receiving appropriate support from program staff – and then take a short comprehension quiz using AR software. AR software provides diagnostic reports on each child’s reading achievement and enables close monitoring of overall program progress.

Emergent Reader Literacy Block (60 minutes each day): For children in kindergarten and first grade who are having difficulty learning how to read, beginning reading skills are practiced during our Emergent Reader Literacy Block. As with the Developing Reader Literacy Block, three activities – an extended read-aloud, reading together activities and emergent reader modules – were specifically chosen to help young children develop the building blocks for independent reading.⁷ The following is a brief description of each component:

- *Extended Read-aloud*: Reading aloud to young children enhances their understanding of emergent reading skills (such as rhyming, letter recognition, sound-symbol correspondence and beginning word recognition), increases background knowledge about important concepts, builds vocabulary and serves as a model for fluent reading behavior. After the

² Richard C. Anderson, Elfrieda H. Hiebert, Judith A. Scott, & Ian A. G. Wilkinson, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. National Academy of Education (1985); see also Yi-Chen Wu & Jay Samuels, *How the Amount of Time Spent on Independent Reading Affects Reading Achievement*. Department of Education Psychology, University of Minnesota (2004); see also Timothy V. Rasinski & Nancy D. Padak, *Effective Reading Strategies: Teaching Children Who Find Reading Difficult, 2nd Ed.* Prentice Hall (2000).

³ James F. Baumann & Edward J. Kameenui, eds., *Vocabulary Instruction: Research to Practice*. The Guilford Press (2004).

⁴ Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson.

⁵ Timothy Rasinski, Camille Blachowicz, & Kristin Lems, *Fluency Instruction: Research-Based Best Practices*. Guilford (2006).

⁶ Wu & Samuels.

⁷ M. R. Kuhn & S. A. Stahl, *Fluency: A Review of Developmental and Remedial Practices*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. **95**, 3-21 (2003); National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000).

instructor reads the book read aloud, the children extend their knowledge by participating in hands-on activities related to the skills and concepts in the book.

- *Reading Together Activities:* This component uses Scholastic's *Fast Start for Early Readers* curriculum.⁸ Over the course of several days, children practice reading a poem or nursery rhyme chorally. Each day, after repeated choral readings, the tutor uses the text to help the children learn emergent reading skills and enhance vocabulary development by playing fun games with letters, sounds and words.
- *Emergent Reader Modules:* Activities in the emergent reader modules provide active learning opportunities for mastering the basic skills that serve as a foundation for beginning reading success. Activities address the following skills: phonemic awareness, letter recognition, sound-symbol correspondence and beginning sight words.

Mathematics Block (30 minutes each day): The core of the mathematics programs includes hands-on activities, activities using manipulatives such as counters on a number line or base-10 blocks, to support children's understanding of mathematics with visuals. These visuals enhance learning and have a significant role in memory retention.⁹ **Last year, 55% of targeted school aged children in our math program showed significant progress in mathematics achievement.**

Core math activities are as follows:

- *Hands-on Learning Activities:* These engaging, interactive activities develop and reinforce children's mathematical understanding by providing concrete experiences to support their understanding of abstract mathematics concepts.
- *Mathematics Games:* These games provide opportunities for children to develop fluency with mathematics computation and apply mathematics skills.
- *Mathematics Routines:* These structured activities focus on developing and supporting number sense to help children become proficient with a range of mathematical concepts and practices. These routines are used regularly, but modified to address a variety of concepts and ability levels.
- *Fact Fluency Activities:* Youth are engaged in activities to foster their fluency with basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts. The fact fluency component includes engaging activities and games, with an emphasis on effective strategies that will promote quick recall of basic facts. In grades K-2, the focus is on addition and subtraction and in grades 3-6, the focus is on multiplication and division.



⁸ Timothy Rasinski & Nancy Padak, *Fast Start for Early Readers*. Scholastic (2005).

⁹ Jensen, 2008

Match: Bringing Additional Funding to Kentucky

Save the Children believes in public/private partnerships. Save the Children **matches the Commonwealth's investment** at a rate of 14:1, bringing \$26.7 million in additional funding annually to Kentucky.

Conclusion: A Lasting Impact

Where rural poverty presents barriers to educational achievement, Save the Children builds strong partnerships with local schools to implement programs which reduce these barriers and give every child a chance to achieve a future outside of poverty. Grounded in empirical data and measurable outcomes, Save the Children's continuum of programs will improve the opportunities for rural children in Kentucky.

In addition, we were able to add local jobs to each of the communities where we work. Each continuum site adds two full time jobs and multiple part time positions. In Kentucky, Save the Children programs employ 450 people, in rural communities where good jobs are often hard to find.

This investment not only continued the proven programs across Kentucky but extended the services to additional communities, directly benefitting nearly 8,834 Kentucky children currently living in poverty.