



Raising A Reader Massachusetts

2016
ANNUAL REPORT



CHILDREN SERVED

Over the course of the program year 2015-16, we served a cumulative total of **13,813** children in both our core and Local Affiliate models. As of the end of FYE16, the following children and partner programs were participating:

Community	End of Year FYE 2016 Children	End of Year FYE 2016 Programs
Boston	443	10
Brockton	1,087	10
Chelsea/Revere	2,589	19
Holyoke	141	3
Lawrence	1,065	16
Lowell	449	7
Lynn	615	4
Springfield	1,566	20
Tri-city	1,634	10
Local Affiliates*	2,000	15
Grand Total	11,589	114

**Local Affiliates served children in Somerville, Cambridge, Newton, Waltham, Arlington, Burlington, Wellesley, Needham, Bedford, Woburn, West Springfield, Plymouth, Oxford, Southbridge, Acton, Bedford, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Harvard, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, Westford, and Worcester.*

“RAR IS AN AMAZING PROGRAM. It’s helping me and my child to interact [with] the world of words. I believe that this program has a power to encourage us.” – **RAR-MA PARENT**



MISSION & GOAL

Raising A Reader MA is an evidence based early literacy organization that helps families of young children (birth through age 6) develop, practice, and maintain habits of reading together at home. Our core program model, which both increases access to books and offers support for strengthening the culture of reading at home, is driven by more than 25 years of research that shows the most significant factor impacting a child's academic success is being regularly read to by a parent or other primary adult caregiver before starting kindergarten.

Our Goal is to end the cycle of low literacy by helping families across Massachusetts develop high impact reading routines that lay the groundwork for a lifetime of learning, success, and productive, responsible citizenship.

HISTORY

Raising A Reader MA was founded by the GreenLight Fund, an initiative that identifies groundbreaking, innovative, and results-oriented non-profits in cities around the country and replicates those programs in Massachusetts and other states to meet local needs. In 2006, the GreenLight Fund focused its efforts on identifying an intervention that could make significant impact on closing the achievement gap. After performing their due diligence and researching organizations nationwide, the GreenLight Fund established Raising A Reader MA in Chelsea, serving as a testament to the power of the early childhood years and the impact of our program. RAR-MA became an independent organization in 2009 and has circulated 48,000 books to 71,000 children across the Commonwealth.

RATIONALE

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS IS IN A STATE OF QUIET CRISIS. CHILDREN – ESPECIALLY POOR CHILDREN – CANNOT READ.

Statewide, **43%** of third grade students did not score proficient in reading.



Among children from low-income families, a startling **65%** lag in reading.



RAR-MA HARNESSSES THE POTENTIAL OF THE EARLY YEARS WHEN **2 KEY FACTORS** ARE IN PLAY:

1 children's brain development is at its peak

The rate of change in the brain of a three-year old is **10,000** TIMES FASTER THAN AN ADULT.



90% OF A CHILD'S BRAIN HAS DEVELOPED BY AGE 5, while critical windows for learning are in place during the earliest years. Brain connections are fostered through interactions between adult and child, and shared reading is one of the best ways to nurture these back-and-forth interactions. ¹

2 parents have the power to create a strong foundation for their children's lifelong learning.



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LITERACY PRACTICES is a more powerful force than other background variables, such as income, family size, and level of parental education. ²

¹ *Strategies for Children MCAS scores "Eye on Education" 2013*

² *Flouri and Buchanan, 2004*



A LOOK AHEAD

As an entrepreneurial non-profit, we continue to find ways to increase our impact, measure our efficacy, identify new revenue opportunities, and plan for sustainable growth. As we celebrate our tenth year serving families in Massachusetts, transitioning from a start-up to a growth non-profit, we are excited to see the results of some of these investments and new partnerships in the near future. This year was a time of transition as the organization has moved over time from a founding Executive Director to new entrepreneurial leadership. In this next phase of maturity we look forward to the results that new initiatives and opportunities bring, especially as related to corporate and individual support. We remain strong in our Foundation and Fee for Service support and are finding new revenue opportunities in the changing non-profit landscape. Between a strong support base of people and organizations, staff with deep industry and institutional knowledge, and board reserves, we have solid cornerstones as we transition into FYE17 and anticipate the fruition of some of these initiatives. At Raising A Reader MA we seek to eliminate the opportunity gap that impacts success in school and beyond and with your help, we can.

A NOTE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

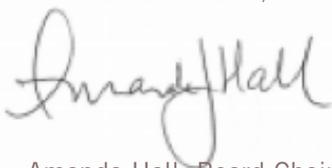
Developing early literacy skills is critical to preparing a child for school as these abilities are the foundation for learning in all subjects. As Board Chair and a working mother of two, I have been fortunate to experience Raising A Reader MA from many perspectives, which has made me appreciate even more what we do every day for parents and families across Massachusetts. I have seen firsthand the benefits of reading with my children every night and the impact of the Raising A Reader program. I want to enable other parents to have this rewarding experience and to help develop their children's foundational skills, which are so critical for their future.

We continue to find new ways to improve our model and expand our reach, and we are pleased to report we added texting this year to complement our program model by sending tips and facts directly to our participants' fingertips - literally! We continue to focus on serving gateway cities, where the population is most in need with below average income and education levels. We were thrilled to add Holyoke as our 10th gateway city this year, while also expanding our presence in Boston.

By bringing the Raising A Reader evidence-based model to families of children age 0-6 across the Commonwealth, we are having a profound impact on those we serve while spreading the message about the importance of both the way we read to children and what we read to children matters. This early literacy exposure is critical to forming the base for a lifetime of learning and opportunity.

We are so grateful to our supporters, parent ambassadors, and program partners who understand the importance of our work to end the cycle of low literacy.

With sincere thanks,



Amanda Hall, Board Chair (effective July 2016)

IMPACT

FYE 2016 PARENT BEHAVIORAL SURVEY ANALYSIS AND FOCUS GROUPS INDICATE POSITIVE TRENDS:

81% of families are reading together at least three times per week after one year with RAR-MA.

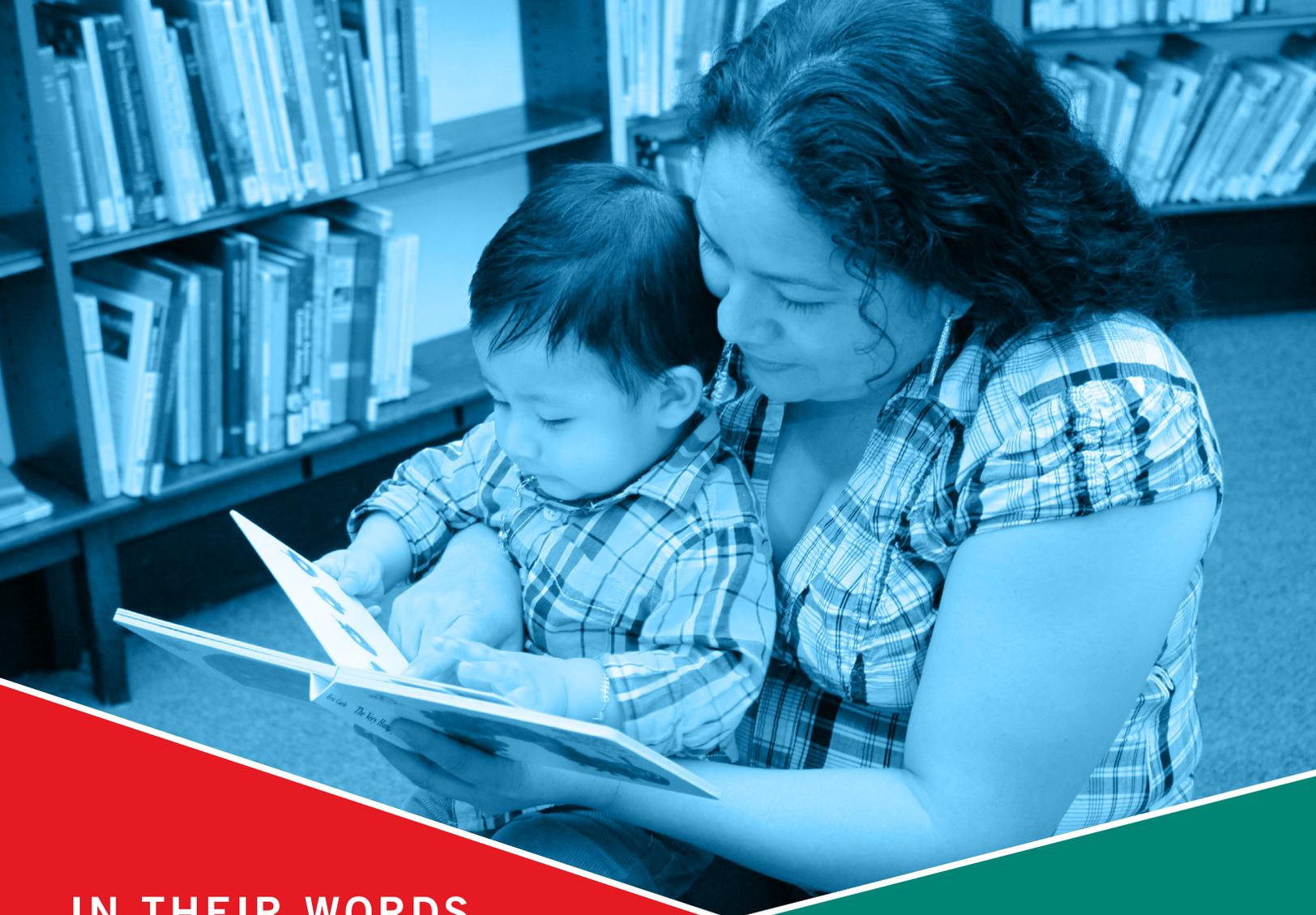
Of those who did not read together at least three times per week before starting RAR-MA, **80%** had increased their reading frequency after participation.

77% of families increased use of dialogic reading strategies (such as asking questions and talking about new words) by at least one new behavior.

Over **one third** of respondents reported at least one of these changed behaviors: they read more, talk more when they read, and/or their child is more involved in storytime.

90% of parents who attended workshops increased their regular use of dialogic reading strategies.

Parents who had attended at least one workshop consistently reported having stable **reading routines**, usually part of bedtime.



IN THEIR WORDS

“I LEARNED A LOT FROM RAISING A READER. Reading to me, I thought was just reading the sentences from the book. I don’t remember my mother reading to me a lot when I was a child. So I thought holding a book, looking at the pictures was something nice... I didn’t know that you could look at the pictures and ask questions. I didn’t think about it that way. I think I learned a lot from Raising A Reader about reading with my child in this interacting way. [Before] it was boring for my younger son to read sometimes. He didn’t want to stay still, but now he’s much better because maybe I changed the way I do it.” – **RAR-MA PARENT**

BREAKFAST AND GALA

RAR-MA HOSTED TWO SIGNATURE EVENTS TO SUPPORT STATEWIDE EFFORTS.

LEADERSHIP IN LITERACY BREAKFAST

On November 4, 2015 at the Westin Copley Place, Raising A Reader MA honored Jeff Bellows, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Public Affairs at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The Leadership in Literacy Award was created to honor and highlight inspiring business leaders who utilize their influence to change lives through literacy and learning. Mr. Bellows, his team, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts have been instrumental in helping fund Raising A Reader MA programs such as 'Storytimes in the Park' in Boston and the launch of partnerships in Springfield. Breakfast sponsors included Arbella, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, BNY Mellon, Citizen's Bank, the Connors Family Office, Deloitte, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare, John Hancock, the Kelly Family Foundation, Partners Healthcare, Pioneer Investments, Don Rodman, the Sheehan Family Foundation, State Street Corporation, Suffolk Construction, and Tufts Healthcare. We were honored to be joined by Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, who spoke of his own passion for early education and importance of having Raising A Reader MA as a partner in the city's efforts to close the opportunity gap.



DINNER WITH AN AUTHOR

On June 1, 2016, nearly 200 guests gathered at the Fairmont Copley Plaza to mingle and dine with 21 of the area's most celebrated authors. Hank Phillippi Ryan served as emcee as we celebrated 10 years of serving children and families across the Commonwealth.

“EVERY PROGRAM WOULD GAIN ADDITIONAL VALUE WITH RAISING A READER. Providing children a wide variety of literature and supporting parents to bond and read with their children is priceless!” – **LAWRENCE TEACHER**

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The best champions of Raising A Reader are the parents who have participated in the program. Last year, RAR-MA created a new staff role specifically to grow our Parent Ambassador program in Greater Boston, and this year, under the leadership of our Parent Liaison, herself a former parent participant, the cohort played a vital role in our programming. Parent Ambassadors received in depth training on recruitment techniques, workshop facilitation, and general administrative and communications skills. They went on to lead workshops across Greater Boston, enabling us to reach more families and offer services in community languages such as Portuguese, Arabic and Chinese. We have had overwhelming success from this initiative and plan to increase our program ambassador model to our other communities so they can continue to serve as exemplary leaders of our program model and community outreach.

NEW PROGRAMMING IN BOSTON AND HOLYOKE

Raising A Reader MA prioritizes program growth in Massachusetts' "Gateway cities," communities recognized as crucial hubs for the state's economy, which face both unique challenges and promising potential. Since our beginnings in Chelsea in 2006, RAR-MA has established a presence in nine of the 26 "gateway cities," and this year we were able to add Holyoke as our 10th. We served over 400 new families in Holyoke by the end of 2016. Thanks to generous funding from the Barr Foundation, RAR-MA also grew significantly in the city of Boston this year. Nearly 1,000 families in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and East Boston, where conditions and demographics closely mirror those of "gateway cities," are now participating in RAR-MA.

"We talk about book sharing being an important aspect of language development and RAR makes access to materials not a barrier. I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR THIS PROGRAM AND PROUD TO OFFER IT AND PARTNER WITH RAR."
–SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST, CHELSEA/REVERE

DONORS

OUR SUPPORTERS

\$50,000+

- Amelia Peabody Foundation
- Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation
- The Philanthropic Initiative
- Sue and John Simon
- MassMutual Financial Group
- Barr Foundation

\$30,000-\$49,999

- Rodman Ride for Kids
- Raising A Reader National Cummings Foundation
- Funder Collaborative for Reading Success

\$20,000-\$29,999

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
- The Hestia Fund
- Gisela B. Hogan Charitable Foundation
- Ludcke Foundation
- The Nordblom Family Foundation
- Highland Street Foundation

\$10,000-\$19,999

- A.C. Ratshesky Foundation
- Clipper Ship Foundation
- Horne Family Foundation
- Liberty Mutual Foundation
- Ted and Erica Pappendick
- Tom Werner
- Jessica and Josh Lutzker
- Connors Family Office
- Pioneer Investments
- Lawrence J. and Anne Rubenstein Charitable Foundation
- Nathaniel and Elizabeth Stevens Foundation
- Adelaide Breed Bayrd Foundation
- Beveridge Family Foundation
- Community Foundation of Western Mass

FINANCIALS

FYE 2016 OPERATIONAL FINANCIALS

REVENUE

TOTAL: \$1,141,795



Restricted and Unrestricted Gifts, Grants and Contributions	\$770,118
Special Fund Raising Event net Direct Cost	\$188,936
Program Revenue	\$102,894
In Kind	\$78,654
Other	\$1,193

EXPENSES

TOTAL: \$1,382,643



Program Services	\$1,004,519
Administrative	\$169,971
Development	\$208,153

“I DEFINITELY SEE A DIFFERENCE IN CHILDREN WHO HAD RAISING A READER in preschool and those who came to kindergarten without. They know how books work, how illustration and text go together.” **–TEACHER**



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