





“I think Raising A Reader is a wonderful and very useful program. My daughter was always very excited to come home with a bag every week. We learned a whole lot together, and she felt very important to have something to share with her big sister!”

– Angelina, Parent

Raising A Reader MA is an independent affiliate of a national organization that was brought to Massachusetts in Spring 2006 by the GreenLight Fund, an organization that identifies high-performing, innovative nonprofits in cities around the country and then supports expansion of those programs where they meet a local need. The GreenLight Fund chose Raising A Reader for its demonstrated success and efficacy in dealing with a central issue in American education today – the academic readiness gap between low income and middle/upper income children. In 2009, Raising A Reader MA became an independent 501(c)(3).

Since our founding, Raising A Reader MA has circulated over 45,000 books to more than 38,000 children and families in Massachusetts. In the 2012-2013 program year alone, Raising A Reader MA served 11,500 children and families in over 700 implementing sites across the state, teaching high impact and easily accessible Dialogic Reading strategies to thousands of parents, many of whom have never had a practice of reading in their homes.

RAISING A READER MA'S CORE COMMUNITY MODEL

Raising A Reader MA partners with centers of early education and other community-based organizations to offer three key services that allow us to deliver vital tools and knowledge:

- 1 | Our signature red bag rotation program allows each child to bring home a different bag of books each week, exposing him or her to dozens of classic and new titles throughout the year.
- 2 | Our staff offers a series of individually tailored, evidence-based parent educational workshops that focus on discrete interactive reading strategies to strengthen the culture of reading at home.
- 3 | Our program partners receive coaching and support throughout the course of the program to build their capacity to work with families and young children, as well as to recognize the benefits of early literacy.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

Timing is everything, and as I reflect on our accomplishments over this past year I am encouraged to see that our goal – preventing the achievement gap between low-income children and their more advantaged peers – has been generating a lot of good press. Hillary Clinton has blogged about the ‘Word Gap’; the NY Times and the Boston Globe have written about the ‘Language Gap’; and, perhaps with the most striking title of all, Nick Kristoff asks, “Do We Invest in Preschools or Prisons?” What’s different about these articles is that in each piece, the author specifically calls out the critical role of parents in reversing this trend and makes the case for enhanced support and educational op-

portunities so they can do so. I agree! All parents have dreams for their children, and all parents have the capacity to support their children’s learning.

Raising A Reader is a family engagement program that has been on the front line of these efforts for 15 years.

In addition to rotating our signature red book bags, we provide easily accessible, multilingual parent education that raises awareness of the crucial role parents play in supporting their children’s future academic success, starting from birth. This is significant, as a major new study from Stanford University has noted that the achievement gap is first evident at 18 months! And once these children enter school, the gap continues to widen, making it extremely difficult to undo. Raising A Reader partners with local agencies that are already serving children and families in their community and with their support, we teach simple strategies that help parents develop, practice, and maintain the habit of sharing books with their young children.

Over this past year we reached more than 11,000 children between our two delivery models, which translates into 44,000 high-quality children’s books in the hands of academically at-risk children and their families across the Commonwealth. Our five-part, evidence-based parent education workshops were implemented statewide reaching more than 3,000 parents, many of whom were raised in low literacy households themselves. For the first time, each of our nine core communities have an experienced cohort of Raising A Reader Parent Ambassadors serving as community advocates and literacy coaches. In addition to our partnerships with centers of early education, public schools, and home visiting programs, we have reached children and families in new and innovative settings – adult education programs, ESL classes, and places of worship.

Of course, none of this work is done in isolation – Raising A Reader MA is by nature a collaborative organization. All successes are equally shared among our program partners in the community, our deeply committed Board of Directors, and many of you who have supported us along the way. With your help, we will continue our work until every child has an equal opportunity for achievement and every parent has the opportunity to excel in what may be their most important role – their child’s first teacher.

I look forward to staying in touch with you about our progress. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna".

Donna DiFillippo, Executive Director

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FROM THE BOARD



The recent emphasis throughout the country on early childhood literacy and the specific focus on children from birth through age five highlights an important time for Raising A Reader MA. It has become evident that the most crucial time in a child's development takes place before they even enter school. Raising A Reader MA's distinctive program model focuses on this period in a child's development by both increasing the availability of high quality children's books AND helping families cultivate regular home reading routines. The result is an environment filled with richness of language, learning, and human interaction, which allows each child to expand their pre-literacy skills and be well prepared to learn when they enter school.

Raising A Reader MA focuses its attention on our most underserved communities in Massachusetts, where basic needs are a daily challenge and other social and economic conditions impede the path for these families to develop, practice, and maintain habits of reading together at home. Literacy is an essential skill for a child to succeed, but how can a family give their children the building blocks to develop this skill when facing so many other daily obstacles? It is because of these added pressures that Raising A Reader MA is making a priority of using donor funds – your generous gifts – to expand and improve the services available to children and families living in the most vulnerable communities in the Commonwealth.

Because we believe so passionately that early childhood literacy and education are critical to the development and success of every child, Raising A Reader MA continues to expand its reach and advance its programs to ensure that these children have the best opportunity for academic success. Our new Parent Ambassador program, which developed organically in Chelsea, is a perfect example of how we are adapting to address our constituents' needs. Believing that parents can serve as the best role models for their peers, we are creating opportunities for parents who have already experienced Raising A Reader MA (our Parent Ambassadors) to become leaders in their communities and help increase the awareness and effectiveness of our program.

Our past successes and future opportunities in addressing these critical issues would not be possible without the passion and efforts from Raising A Reader MA staff, volunteers, donors and institutional funders. On behalf of the entire Board, I want to thank and acknowledge all of you for your contributions in advancing the Raising A Reader MA mission.

I am proud to be both a major donor and Chair of the Board of Raising A Reader MA at this crucial time when many of our Massachusetts communities are increasingly prioritizing early literacy and lifelong achievement. I look forward to sharing our progress over the next year!

Sincerely,

Steve DiPietro, Chair of the Board, Raising A Reader MA



“Raising A Reader has helped my daughter learn how to be responsible. She knows that when she has the red bags, it is time to read. The program teaches her at an early age to read and to participate with others.”

– Lina, Parent



THE NEED

The academic achievement gap between low-income children and their middle/upper income classmates is a major concern in American education today. This gap is first evident at 18 months and without intervention, can widen until it becomes nearly impossible to overcome. Evidence has shown that 88% of children who struggle with literacy skills in kindergarten continue to struggle throughout their elementary and high school education.

Nearly 30 years of research show that the most significant factor impacting a child's academic success is being regularly read to by a parent or other primary caregiver before starting kindergarten. In fact, the first five years of a child's life are crucial to building critical thinking skills, learning new vocabulary, and enhancing creativity.

OUR ROLE

Raising A Reader MA realizes that addressing this problem early is vital to contributing to the long-term success of every young child. We work directly with communities in need to help families incorporate reading into their daily routines. Our dual intervention focuses on providing families with access to high quality children's books and parent education. Access to books is one of the most common obstacles for the families we serve, with startlingly few books in the hands of low-income children and families compared to middle-income children and families.

Ratio of Age-Appropriate Books Per Child in Middle and Low-Income Neighborhoods

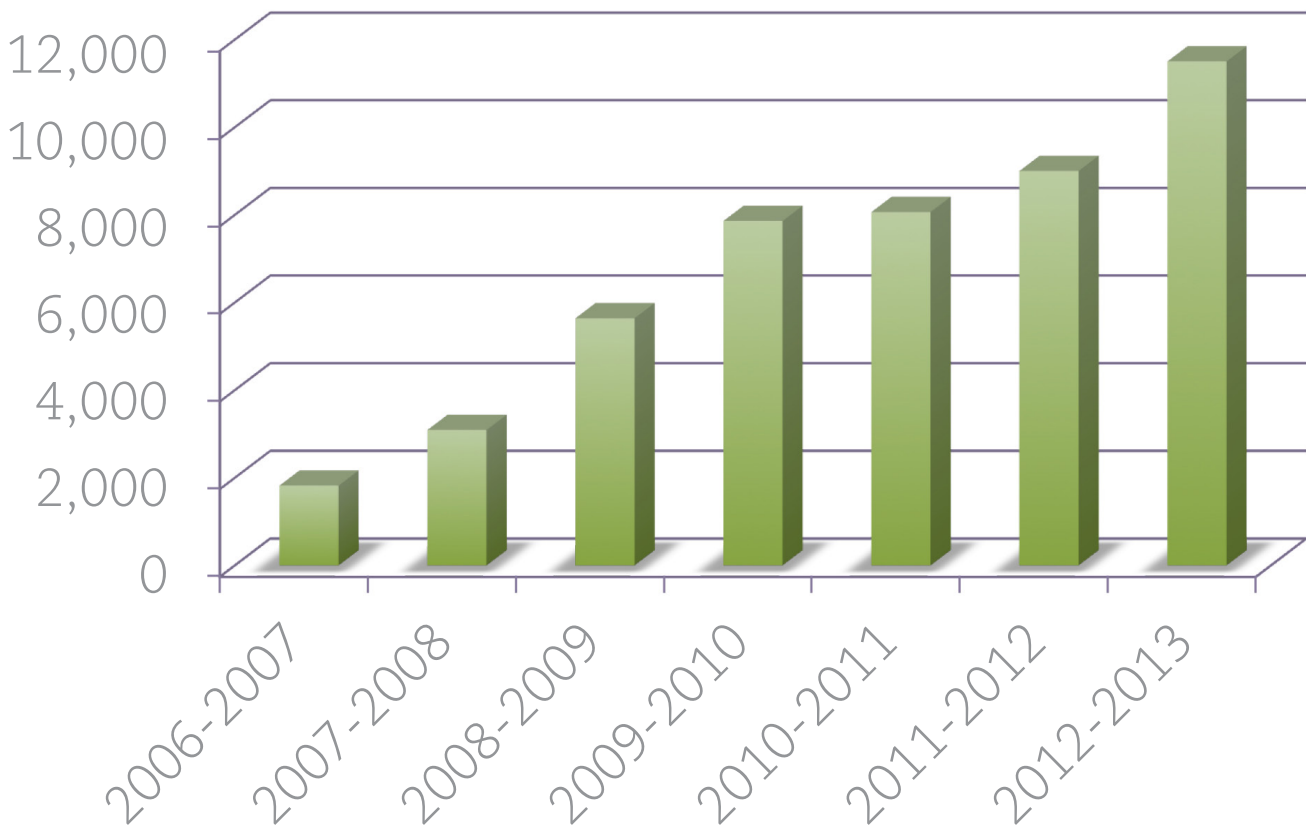


Getting books into the hands of young children and families, however, is not enough to make a lasting difference. What sets Raising A Reader MA apart from other programs is our focus on parent engagement and education. We give parents the strategies they need to share books effectively with their young children. Our multi-session training series teaches the key techniques of Dialogic (Interactive) Reading, which has been proven to improve children's vocabulary and other skills essential for their later school success. Our multilingual DVD, *Storytime: How to Share Books With Your Child*, complements these trainings by offering more tips to integrate reading into a daily routine.

OUR IMPACT

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

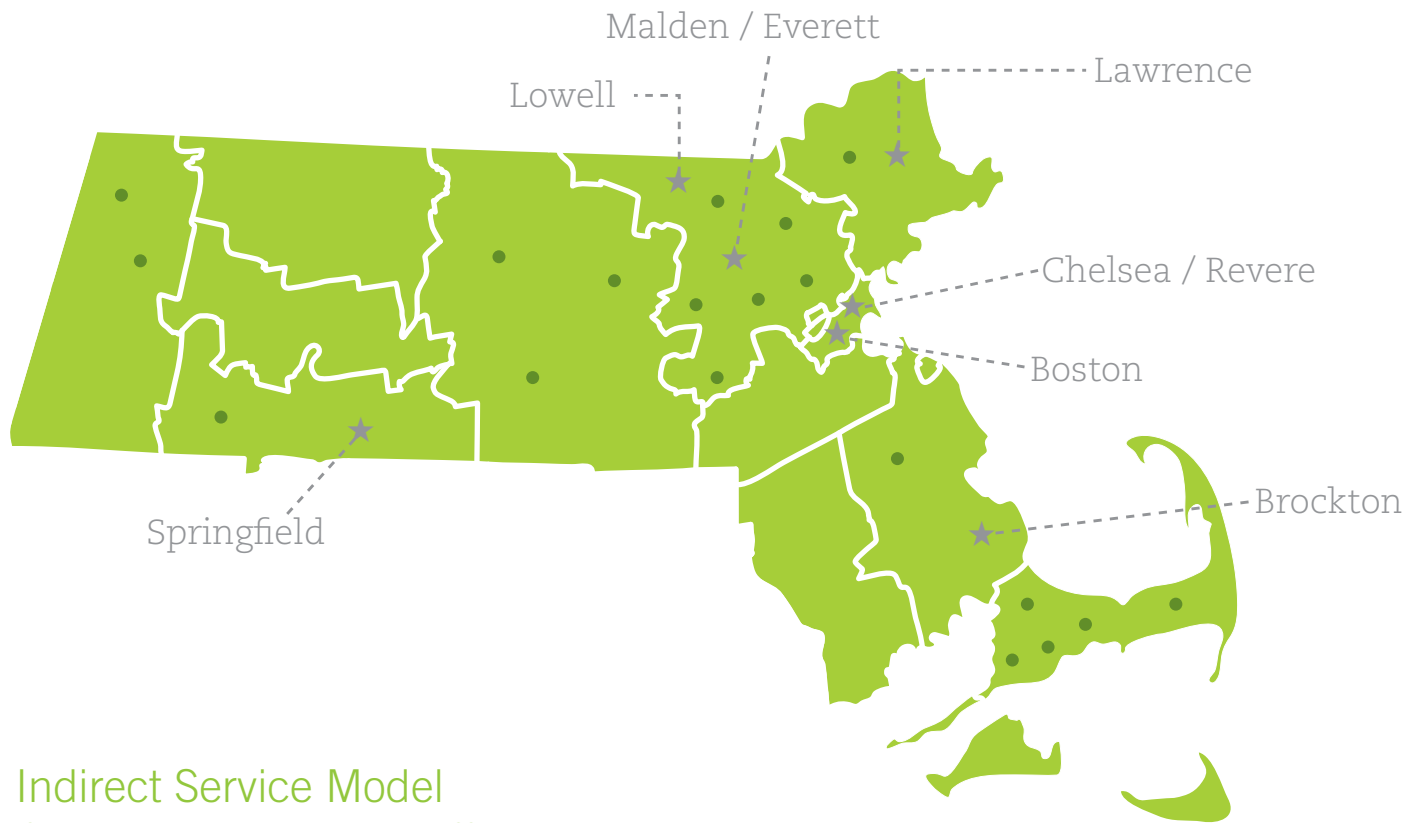
Families Served



SIX YEARS OF LOCAL DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS SHOWS OUR INTERVENTION IS WORKING:

1. Overall, families showed a **54%** increase in their shared reading routines.
2. Non-English speaking families showed a **117%** increase in their shared reading routines.
3. Workshop participants were nearly **4 times** more likely to ask questions while reading to their children, a key influencer on vocabulary development.

Communities We Serve



Indirect Service Model Communities - Local Affiliates

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| Adams | Newton | Truro |
| Arlington | North Adams | Waltham |
| Brewster | Oxford | Wellfleet |
| Cambridge | Plymouth | West Springfield |
| Eastham | Somerville | Woburn |
| Lynn | Southbridge | Worcester |

- ★ Core Communities
- Local Affiliates

Since beginning our work in Massachusetts in 2006, Raising A Reader MA has helped close the achievement gap for over 38,000 children and their families with 45,000 books in circulation. We have maintained steady growth since our founding.





“I like sharing new stories with my daughter. She asks me every week to have a new book. Although she doesn’t know how to read, she looks at the drawings in the book, makes up her own story, or tries to remember a story. RAR is an excellent program.” – Maria, Parent

NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK

We are very excited to announce our new Raising A Reader MA logo, reflecting our dual focus of reading to our youngest learners at home and focusing on how to prepare each child to be ready to learn as they enter school!



Please note that we expect our old and new logos to coexist for an extended period. There will be NO recall of book bags or other materials with the existing logo, no required timeline for partners to transition logos, and plenty of support from our office to help in the transition.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: MALDEN

Samira Sekhri and Najat Tarik, two Arabic mothers of Raising A Reader MA children, joined the Tri-City parent volunteer team, and together, helped plan and facilitate RAR MA's first-ever Arabic workshop at the Malden YMCA. The workshop, tailored specifically to the Arabic community, included targeted phone and mail outreach to RAR MA and Arabic school families, and succeeded in encouraging 14 Arabic parents from Malden and Everett to brave the cold in order to attend. Families explored brain development through sensory stimulation, such as identifying henna through smell alone, and participated in Dialogic Reading training through interactive modeling of the book, "Pancakes for Breakfast." Due to the resounding success of the workshop, a second Arabic workshop has been scheduled to take place at Parent University in Everett.

"I want to say thank you or 'shokran' for the lecture tonight that was given in Arabic. It feels so good to relate to others with the same background as you. The workshop was a real eye-opener, and we simply do not realize how much our children can gain at this age. We must take every opportunity to get their minds working, and we have to use our time wisely and keep encouraging them -- take all the time they need, get involved, and as we learned tonight, the best way is through interactive reading!! It was a ton of fun just interacting with the other parents to read 'Pancakes for Breakfast.' Imagine how fun it will be to do this style of reading with our kids! This program is truly an amazing thing you are all doing for this community! Children are our future!" – Dina, Parent



NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR KINDERGARTEN EXPANSION

In September 2012, Raising A Reader National was awarded the federal “Innovative Approaches to Literacy” grant, funding intended to develop programs that help students cultivate skills that will boost achievement and carry them through adulthood to prepare them for lifelong success. As a leading affiliate, Raising A Reader MA has received a portion of these funds to expand to kindergarten classrooms for the first time. In Chelsea and Revere, all 1,400 kindergarteners in the public schools now have access to the red book bags and parent educational workshops- a new meaning to saturating the community with the program! As part of the federal grant, Raising A Reader National has contracted with Child Trends to evaluate the program; a report is expected in Summer 2014. We look forward to the findings and anticipate that it will drive decisions about further kindergarten expansion.

GROWTH THROUGH INDIRECT SERVICE MODEL

In 2012, Raising A Reader MA set its growth strategy with a focus on expansion to all of Massachusetts’ Gateway Cities, which are those identified as having education and income levels lower than the state average, as well as a large number of under-performing schools. Yet in other communities across the Commonwealth, educators are searching for evidence-based early literacy programs that can help prepare their youngest children to succeed once they arrive in kindergarten. In order to reach these communities, known as our Local Affiliates, Raising A Reader MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer experience:

1. Community-based programs secure funding to support the implementation of Raising A Reader.
2. Programs designate staff to attend an intensive two-day session covering the ins- and-outs of the Raising A Reader program, including trainings on brain development, Dialogic Reading, program logistics, and online resources.
3. Partner programs launch the red bag rotation for their children and families and implement the Raising A Reader MA parent training curriculum.



APPROVED EVIDENCE-BASED PROVIDER OF EARLY LITERACY AND FAMILY WORK

In 2012, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care approved Raising A Reader MA as one of five evidence-based providers of early literacy and family engagement work. This recognition has allowed CFCE Councils to provide community-based financial support for Raising A Reader programming, thereby enabling our expansion to six new Local Affiliates. As a result, we are now reaching over 1,500 additional children in 14 towns all the way from the Northern Berkshires to Outer Cape Cod.

PARENT LEADERSHIP

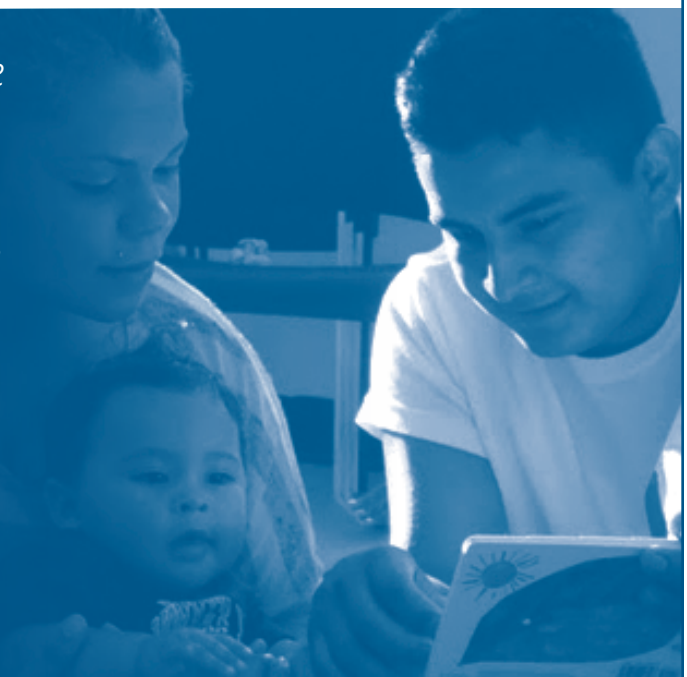
We believe that parents can serve as the best models for their peers. With this in mind, we have created multiple opportunities for parents who have already experienced Raising A Reader MA to become leaders in their communities. Responsibilities range from making phone calls about upcoming events to facilitating workshops on their own. We expect that parents will be more likely to attend workshops when they hear from their peers that the information is relevant and useful and continue to systematize what began organically in one of the communities we serve.

METRICS AND EVALUATION

Since our inception in 2006, we have employed parent behavioral surveys to assess the impact of our programming. Research shows that when parents share books dialogically with their children, children's own literacy outcomes improve. A new approach will allow us to strengthen this link. We have worked with Dr. Nonie Lesaux from the Harvard Graduate School of Education to identify a child outcome measure, and this year, we are using the PALS (Phological Awareness Literacy Screening) subtest on Print and Word Awareness as one indicator of children's pre-literacy skills. Our goal is to incorporate this tool into our yearly evaluation portfolio, adding a new dimension to the way we measure our program's success.

“After having done this program for more than three years with three of my teens (who had their babies when they were in ninth or tenth grade), I can absolutely see that they have learned the importance of reading to their young children, [who] have developed a LOVE of books, which is so nice to see!! This would not have happened without this program.”

– Mary, Site Director



FINANCIAL REPORT

FYE13 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

This summary represents our FYE13 Operational Financial Statements for Raising A Reader MA, including our nine communities and Local Affiliates throughout Massachusetts.

CONTINUED FEE FOR SERVICE GROWTH

Fee for Service revenue represented 26% of our overall revenue - double our budgeted expectations. This is a testament to our strong demand as new partners recognize the efficacy of our program and are willing to pay for it. Partners within our core communities continue to contribute to the cost of replacing lost or damaged materials as they are able.

IMPROVED OPERATING EFFICIENCIES

71% of every dollar spent went toward Program Services.

MORE CHILDREN SERVED

Springfield was a large part of our 40% growth in children served in FYE13, with only a 26.5% increase in overall expenses.

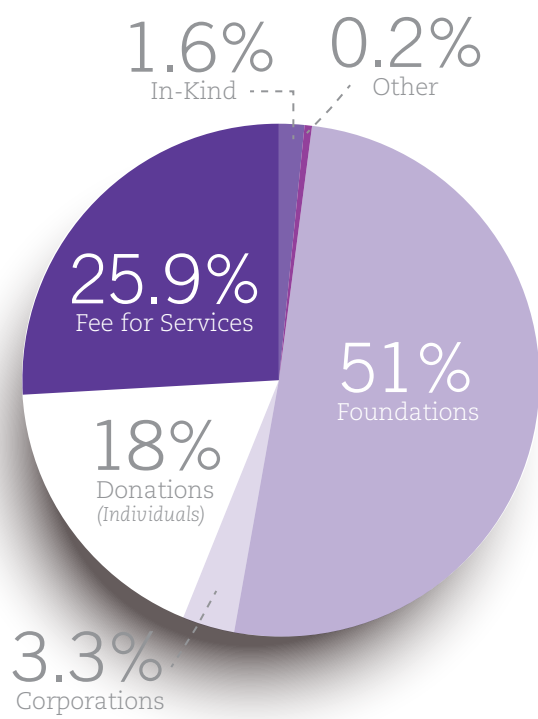
For more information on Raising A Reader MA's finances, browse our profile on Giving Common: <http://www.givingcommon.org>

OPERATIONAL FINANCIALS* FYE 2013

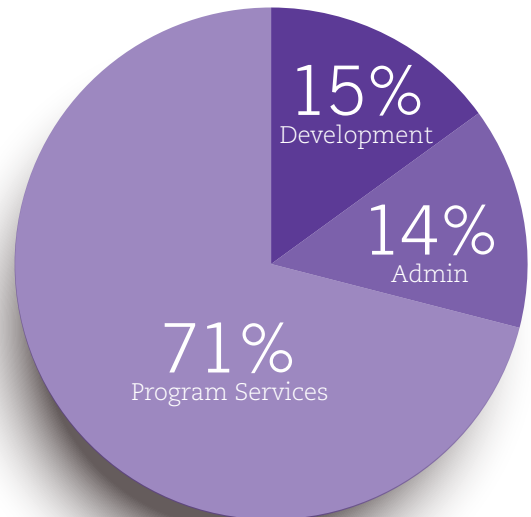
| REVENUE | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Foundations | \$578,600 |
| Corporations | \$37,642 |
| Donations | \$204,022 |
| Fee for Service | \$293,989 |
| In-kind | \$18,185 |
| Other | \$2,113 |
| TOTAL | \$1,134,551 |
| EXPENSES | |
| Program Services | \$824,325 |
| Administration | \$156,724 |
| Development | \$172,751 |
| TOTAL | \$1,153,800 |

*Audited financials available upon request

REVENUE FYE13



EXPENSES FYE13



OUR SUPPORTERS

Many thanks to the individuals, corporations, and organizations that are supporting investing in early literacy for lifelong achievement in FYE 13!

\$50,000 AND ABOVE

Amelia Peabody Foundation
Edith Glick Shoolman Children's Foundation
Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation
Jessie B. Cox Charitable Lead Trust
at the Boston Foundation
Sheehan Family Foundation
Social Venture Partners
Strategic Grant Partners

\$20,000 – \$49,999

Anonymous
Beveridge Family Foundation
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Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Jared Coffin House
Laurie Mattaliano
MS Walker
New England Patriot's Charitable Foundation
Space Gifts



**Raising
A Reader**
Massachusetts

Raising A Reader MA is an evidence-based early literacy program that is closing the academic achievement gap by helping families of young children develop, practice and maintain habits of reading together at home. Our work, which both increases access to books and offers families resources and support for strengthening the culture of reading at home, is driven by 25 years of research that shows a significant factor affecting a child's academic success is being regularly read to by a parent or other adult caregiver before starting kindergarten.

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

Raising A Reader MA
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Raising A Reader MA is an independent affiliate of the California-based Raising A Reader.

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All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed under the law.