



MASSACHUSETTS

Opening Doors by Opening Books



ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2024

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Dear Supporters,

Children are not born with a predetermined path for their lives. Factors within and beyond their control shape their journeys, influencing the successes and challenges they encounter. Early literacy, including having access to books and other educational materials, plays a major role in setting the foundation for positive outcomes.



Massachusetts continues to be a state of contrasts in terms of early education success.

On the one hand, the Commonwealth was recently ranked by The Annie E. Casey Foundation as second in the United States for overall child well-being. The supports in place offer an environment where children should have every opportunity to thrive.

On the other hand, we continue to see troubling literacy results from MCAS assessments. According to The Boston Globe's "Lost in a World of Words" series: "Fewer than half of public school third-graders in Massachusetts can read proficiently, and the most vulnerable kids are in serious trouble. The vast majority of Black and Latino children and kids with disabilities are being sent off to the fourth grade without adequate reading skills" (The Boston Globe - January 17, 2024). This literacy crisis compounds over time with far-reaching consequences for communities, including lost tax revenue, poorer health outcomes, and additional costs for retraining and support. These disparities underscore the inequities in access to early literacy resources, particularly in under-resourced communities.

Our Mission: Closing the Literacy Opportunity Gap

We are resolute in our mission: to ensure that all children, regardless of background, are equipped with the early literacy foundation they need for success. Children who have access to high-quality early education programs are more likely to achieve long-term educational, economic, and health success. Education begins at birth, and every child has the right to early literacy resources.

By partnering with trusted organizations that are anchored within communities, we continue to effectively reach parents and caregivers with our evidence-based model that is based on over 35 years of research and 41 independent evaluations. Our program continues to be recognized as one of the most effective ways to prepare children for kindergarten and a lifetime of opportunity by building a critical early literacy foundation (American Association of Pediatrics/Early Literacy).

FY 2024: A Year of Growth and Impact

Your support in FY24 played a major role in advancing our mission. Together, we:

- Expanded our program implementer network,
- Enhanced our model to better address community needs,
- Expanded our team to increase impact, and
- Built new connections within Massachusetts and beyond.

Thank You

We are excited to share the highlights of this transformative year in this report, showcasing the life-changing impact of our work. It is all made possible by the generosity of our donors, collaboration with our partners, and the dedication of our staff.

Thank you for your partnership and support as we continue to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

With gratitude,

Christine Ward, Executive Director

Mercedes Dahar, Board of Directors Chair

According to the 2024 MCAS assessment, 58% of Massachusetts third graders are not reading proficiently. In the communities Raising a Reader MA supports, those numbers range from 70-86%.

OUR MISSION



Our mission is to close the literacy opportunity gap among children birth to age six in under-resourced communities by helping families develop and practice shared home reading habits.

We work to give families the knowledge and resources to feel empowered as active participants in their child's education, having already succeeded as their child's first teacher.

Our goal is to create a love of reading, change family/caregiver behavior, and strengthen family reading culture to impact kindergarten readiness.

Diverse by nature, inclusive by choice.

Diversity is at the heart of our Mission, Vision, and Values. We are an inclusive organization at every level, committed to fostering a workplace that embraces and reflects the diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives of our team and the communities we serve. Through our cross-cultural efforts to expand access to equity-driven literacy interventions, we recognize that our diversity and inclusion are not just strengths—they are essential to our impact.

WE SERVE:

Boston - Brockton - Chicopee - Chelsea - Everett

Holyoke - Lawrence - Lowell - Lynn - Malden

Middleboro - West Newton - Norton - Norwood

Plymouth - Revere - Saugus - Springfield - Wakefield

Whitman - Winthrop - Worcester

OUR COMMUNITIES



We work with partners located in Boston, 11 Gateway Cities*, seven communities with parent organizations in those Gateway Cities (Middleboro, Norton, Norwood, Saugus, Wakefield, Whitman, and Winthrop), and three satellite communities (West Newton, Plymouth, Worcester).

Through our satellite model, RAR-MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer approach for organizations located outside of our core communities.

*Gateway Cities are midsize urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state. - MassINC

SPOTLIGHT ON BOSTON

Every year we survey a specific area we serve, and our FY 2024 Family Survey focused on the Boston Area. This geographic cohort approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the local impact and benefits to families.

WHO DID THIS SURVEY COVER?

20% response rate in Boston Community with over 1,000 children served

PRIMARY LANGUAGE AT HOME



English



Spanish



Other

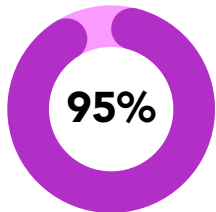
Gender Make Up of Participants:

50% Boys 50% Girls

Average Age: 3 Years Old



Families reading three or more times per week at the end of the program year



Families using four Dialogic Reading strategies* some, most, or all of the time at the end of the program year

Previous Participation with Raising a Reader Massachusetts:

62% Yes 38% No

* What are Dialogic Reading strategies?

- Parent/Caregiver asks child questions about story
- Parent/Caregiver lets child choose what to read
- Parent/Caregiver uses different voices for different characters in the story
- Parent/Caregiver talks with child about new words and what they mean

"While we feel privileged to have the time and resources to devote to reading in our household, we have loved having new books to explore each week. Each Monday, bringing home the books is like opening a present - my kids get so excited to see which books they received that week, and we sit down and read them instantly. This is an incredible program and I wish this were in all schools!"

- RAR-MA Caregiver

SPOTLIGHT ON STEM

Following our Social, Emotional Learning overlay curriculum, in FY24 we featured a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) overlay curriculum to introduce STEM concepts in a developmentally appropriate manner to address learning loss and inspire potential career paths for children.



OUR IMPACT

The impact of our work can be seen in each child, caregiver, and partner who takes part in the RAR-MA program in communities throughout Massachusetts. Each year, we reach over 6,500 children and families, helping to eliminate the cycle of low literacy as we work to build a lifelong love of literacy through family engagement.



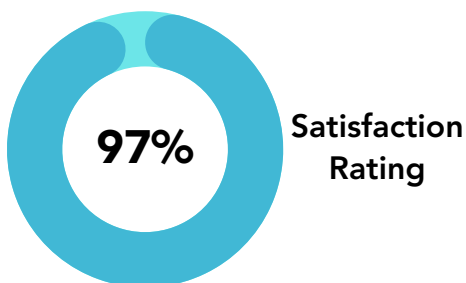
PARTNERSHIPS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Our Program Team members work in under-resourced communities across Massachusetts, each bringing a deep understanding of their local neighborhoods. They collaborate closely with trusted partner organizations to design effective book rotation systems and offer parent/caregiver education sessions.

Each year, our team works hand-in-hand with partner staff to assess program success, measuring key indicators such as partnership commitment, the effectiveness of the red bag rotation system, family engagement, and the support and coaching provided to partner staff. This collaborative approach ensures that our model is implemented with fidelity, maximizing its impact on families and young learners.

**"I enjoyed all aspects surrounding RAR-MA; working with our Program Manager through book selections that best made sense for our families that we serve, organizing the red bags and planning disbursement with the home visiting team. Knowing that our families and children receive a "mini library" weekly to reinforce the importance of and love of literacy."
- RAR-MA Program Partner**

We surveyed our program implementers and received ratings of:

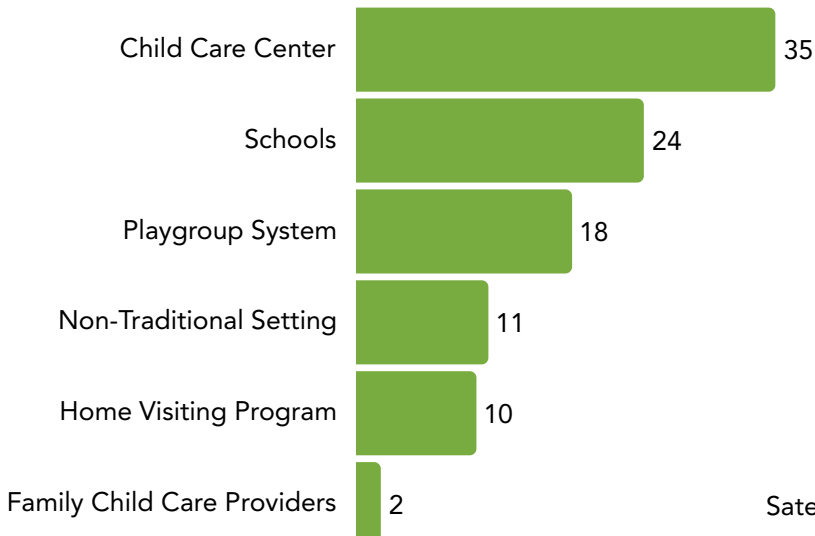


PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

We reach families including parents, caregivers, and their children through trusted community partners. In total, we work with 100 partners in under-resourced communities across Massachusetts.

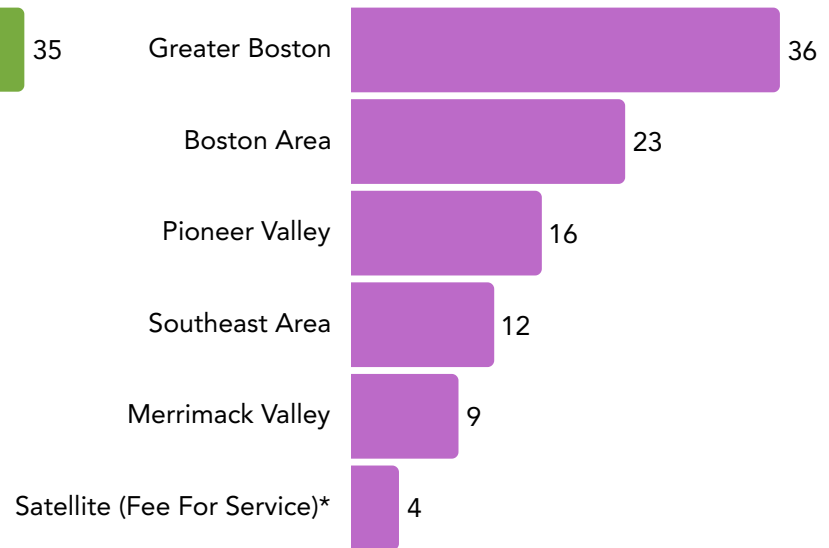
Number of Partners by Type

FY 2024



Number of Partners by Region

FY 2024



**Through our satellite model, RAR-MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer approach for organizations located outside of our core communities.*

DUAL INTERVENTION MODEL

With our program implementers, we teach families **dialogic reading strategies** to effectively engage children in interactive reading that supports healthy brain development. We also provide **age-appropriate and culturally relevant books** through our rotating library.



“Parent participation was really strong this year, especially in groups with the youngest children. They displayed joy and curiosity and a willingness to have fun with their children as we shared stories and practiced dialogue reading strategies!” - RAR-MA Caregiver

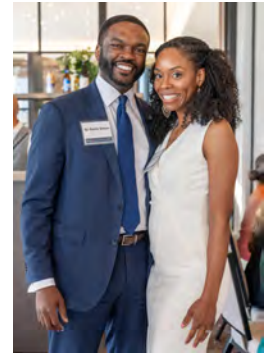
LOOKING BACK

2024 DINNER WITH AN AUTHOR

Our signature fundraiser, *Dinner with an Author Gala*, was held on May 16, 2024, at Raffles. The event provided attendees with a unique opportunity to engage with over 20 esteemed and best-selling authors while gaining valuable insights into the importance of Social and Emotional Learning from **Dr. Kevin Simon, Chief Behavioral Health Officer for the City of Boston**. We also highlighted the impact of our work through a meaningful conversation with our community partner, **Huong Vu of the Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester**.

The evening concluded with a lively auction, raising unrestricted funds to support our programs where they are needed most. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we raised over **\$380,000** in unrestricted funds.

We are deeply grateful to the **200+ guests, 20+ authors, 30 sponsors, 44 in-kind donors, 16 hosts, countless volunteers**, and the entire **Raising a Reader MA** team who came together to celebrate a shared love of books and made this incredible event possible.



Dinner with an Author Featured Authors & Guest Speakers

Steve Almond
Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg
Adrienne Brodeur
Christy Cashman
Tina Cassidy
Sara DiVello
Crystal Cobb Collier
Paul Grogan

Emily Habeck
Caroline Kepnes
Jessica Lander
Kaija Langley
Kathryn Merchant
Ben Mezrich
Tonya Mezrich
Virginia Pye

Andrew Ridker
Edward Lee Rocha
Dan Shaughnessy
Dr. Kevin Simon
Michelle Min Sterling
Garrick Thames
Jonathan Todd
Huong Vu

Ilyon Woo
Laura Zigman

THANK YOU!

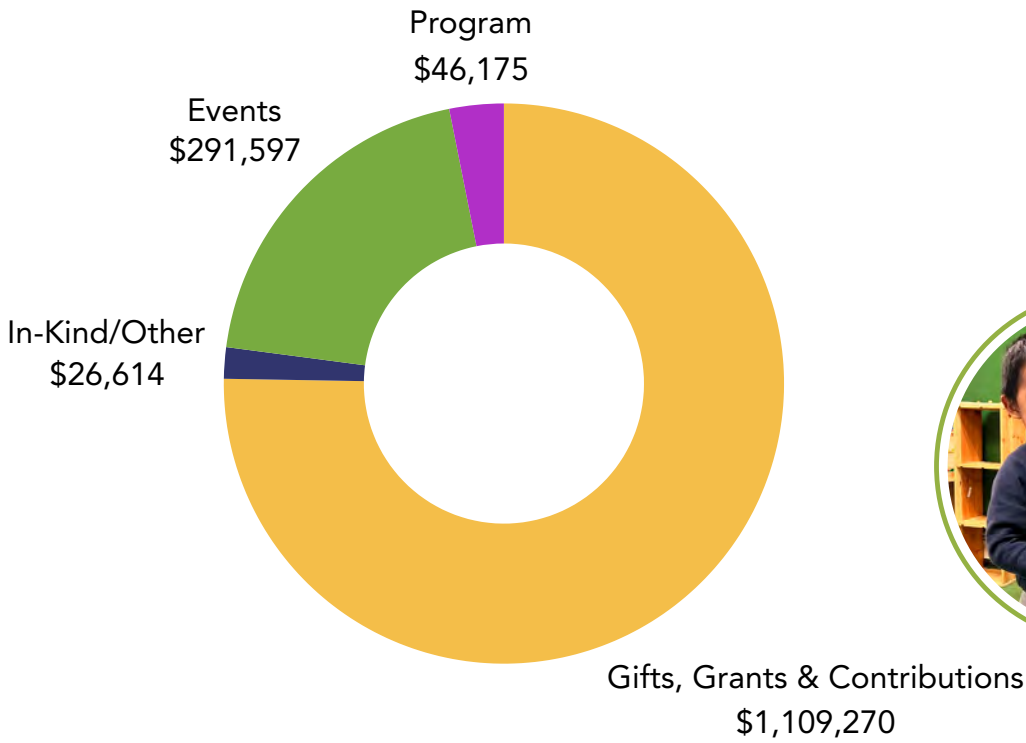
KISS 108'S LISA'S BOOK CLUB

In early 2023, Lisa Donovan, from Kiss 108, reached out to partner with Raising a Reader Massachusetts for Lisa's Book Club, and her steadfast enthusiasm has been instrumental in amplifying our mission and raising awareness about the critical importance of early literacy. Through this collaboration, we were able to raise over \$9,000 in FY 2024, host more than 8 book clubs, and connect thousands of readers with incredible authors. Additionally, our partnership led to the generous donation of over 1,500 new books from Book Ends in Winchester, which we distributed as "forever books" to our constituents. This contribution directly reinforces our mission to ensure all families have access to books in the home.

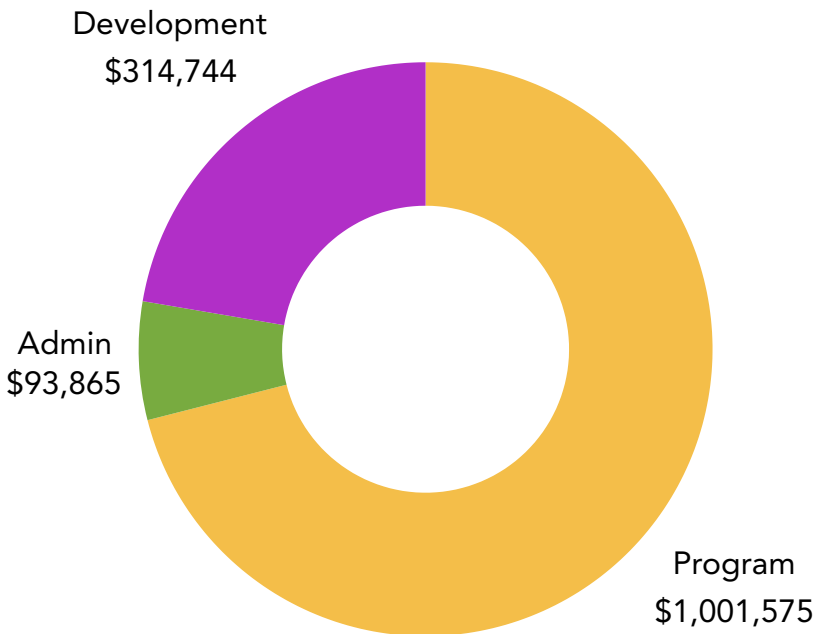


FY 2024 FINANCIALS

Revenue \$1,473,656



Expenses \$1,410,184



OUR LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Partner, AON/Radford Advisory

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Myra Majewski

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Isis Ortiz-Belton (added April 2024)

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Vice President of Grantmaking and Portfolio Management, CJP

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Executive Director, Inspiring Educators

Patricia Schiapelli

Vice President of Sales, Northern Bank

Joseph Theis, Jr. (added January 2024)

Partner, Goodwin Procter LLP

Michelle Tutunjian

Associate Director, Public Safety Systems, Harvard University

Community Advisors to the Board

Jeanette Velez - Community Engagement Manager, Everett Public Schools

Lilliana Tirado Arteaga - Boston Community Hub School Coordinator, Umana Academy

**"It is nice to have new books to read every week."
- RAR-MA Caregiver**

EMERGING LEADERS BOARD

The Emerging Leaders associate board is a mixture of young and mid-level career professionals who regularly take action to raise awareness and funds for our core mission and develop into future leaders.

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Communications Director, MassEcon

Mikaela Alioto

Content Marketing Manager, Valora

Weston Cohen

Advisory Analyst, Deloitte

Amanda DiMatteo

Of Counsel, Peabody & Arnold LLP

Maeve Foley

Vice President, Raines International

Emily Leinbach

Senior Manager, Global Capability Marketing (Sustainability Practice), Bain & Company

Joshua Zeff

Principal Accountant, CarGurus

OUR DONORS

\$50,000 and More

Bancel Philanthropies
Boston Children's Hospital
Essex County Community Foundation and the Nisource
Charitable Foundation Fund for the Merrimack Valley
GreenLight Fund
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Reeder Foundation
The Cigna Group Foundation
The Philanthropic Initiative

\$20,000 - \$49,999

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Lawrence J. and Anne Rubenstein Charitable Foundation
Lovett-Woodsum Foundation
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The TJX Companies, Inc.

\$10,000 - \$19,999

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DCU for Kids
Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Fund
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Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation
Harbus Foundation
Harold Brooks Foundation
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Yellow Wood Partners

\$5,000 - \$9,999

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Judith and Eric Lubershane
Myra Majewski
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Menemsha Family Fund
Kerry Nelson and Alan Milinazzo
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Karen Osborn
Paul and Edith Babson Foundation
PNC Foundation
Praxis Precision Medicines, Inc.
Progress Partners
Rockland Trust Charitable Foundation
Rodman for Kids
Social Finance - Impact First Fund
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Melissa Steffy
TD Charitable Foundation
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Lisa Thompson
United Way of Greater Plymouth County
Winning Home Inc.

\$2,500 - \$4,999

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Nadine Bonda and Thomas Shapiro
Jennifer Bowers
Cambridge Savings Bank
Mark and Marybeth Dooling
Dale Dowdie
Kimberly Duong
HarborOne Foundation
Don and Pam Hawley
Justin and Lydia Hayward
Joshua and Giana Hebert

OUR DONORS

Hologic Fund at San Diego Foundation
Lisa and Jeff Kerrigan
Moses Kimball Fund
Heather Murray and Rob Pawliuk
Richard K. and Nancy L. Donahue Charitable Foundation
Stephanie and Brian Spector
The Boston Foundation
The Charlotte Home
Town Fair Tire Foundation

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Adams Keegan
Caroline Balz
Bluestone Bank Charitable Foundation
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Big Night Entertainment Group
Bostonian Hotel
Bravo TV
Bruins Foundation
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Chelsea Public Library
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Columbus Hospitality Group - Sorellina & Moo...Seaport
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Five Iron Golf
Framebridge
Greg Demers
Greg Valentini
Harvard Museums of Science & Culture
ICA Boston
Ilyon Woo
Intercontinental Boston
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Jeannette Hsu
jm Curley
Kelly Clarkson Show
Kiss 108
La Padrona
Laurel Greenfield Art
Lenox Hotel
Lo Hennessy
Long's Fine Jeweler's
Martignetti Companies
Mercedes Dahar & Philip Dennehey
Michael Corrado
Pati Fernández
PGA Travelers Championship
Prima Steakhouse
Raffles Boston
Sara DiVello
Scholastic
Tresca
Winston Flowers

Includes funding pledged in FY 2024 and received in FY 2025.



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Christine Ward
Executive Director

Katee Duffy
Director of Programs

Angela Haynes
Director of Development

Maria Mombeleur
Associate Program Director

Isaí Jiménez
Associate Program Director

Guadalupe Panameño
Senior Program Manager

Nina Norfleet
*Development and Communications
Manager*

Tara Ruby
Grants Manager

Lindsay Woods
*Executive Administrator and Data Analytics
Manager*

Claudia Chavarria
Program Manager

Amy Dolan
Program Manager

Tatiana Keane Forero
Program Manager

“Education is the cornerstone of the state’s economy.”

- Patrick Tutweiler, Massachusetts Secretary of Education



MASSACHUSETTS

Raising a Reader Massachusetts

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Visit our website to learn more!



www.raisingareaderma.org

Raising a Reader Massachusetts is a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN #80-0297898.



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