

## First Book Statistics: Literacy in America



*“Access to books and educational material is the single biggest barrier to literacy development in the United States and beyond. If we can solve the problem of access, we will be well on the road to realizing educational parity – a goal which has eluded this country for generations.”*

-- Susan B. Neuman, Ph.D. University of Michigan, Ctr. for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement

### The Importance of Access to Books

- Access to books is key to reading skills. Studies confirm that the number of books in the home directly predicts reading achievement. Children who grew up with books in their homes reached a higher level of education than those who did not. (*Family Scholarly Culture and Educational Success*)
- One study found that in middle income neighborhoods the ratio is 13 books per child; in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is one book for every 300 children. (Neuman, Susan B. and David K. Dickinson, ed. *Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2*. New York, NY: 2006).
- Price is the #1 barrier to book ownership. Programs have limited funds and 94% of teachers use their own money to provide books & resources for their students.

### The Educational Challenges Faced by Children in Need

- Vocabulary development by age 3 has been found to predict reading achievement... By age 3, children from wealthier families have typically heard 30 million more words than children from low-income families. (*AEC, 2010*)
- Children from low-income families lack early interactions that lead to language development including being read to and access to books in the home. New data show that children from low-income families have one-fourth the vocabulary of children from wealthier homes. (*NPR, 2011*).
- By the time children from low-income families enter kindergarten, they are 12-14 months below national norms in language & pre-reading skills. (*AEC, 2010*)
- Reading scores have not improved in decades. 83% of low-income 4th graders score at “Below Proficient” levels vs. 55% of middle-income student cohorts. (*Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count 2010*)

### High School Students and the Drop-out Rate

- Every school day, seven thousand students become dropouts. Annually, that adds up to 1.2 million students who will not graduate high school with their peers as scheduled. (*Alliance for Excellent Education*)
- The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2004 was \$16,485, compared to \$26,156 for a high school graduate, a difference of \$9,671 (*U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005*).
- “Every student who doesn’t complete high school costs our society \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, productivity.” (*Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count 2010*)
- 78% of juvenile crime is committed by high school dropouts. (*National Children's Reading Foundation*)