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KATE MALONEY | USAID/RWANDA MUREKE DUSOME PROJECT

# BEYOND SUPPLY: STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE BOOK USE IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

DATA AND EVIDENCE FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	II
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	III
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	IV
INTRODUCTION .....	I
BENEFITS OF BOOK READING .....	I
CHALLENGES TO BOOK USE.....	2
FINDINGS.....	2
Developing a book-friendly environment .....	2
Mechanics of displaying and storing books .....	3
Supplying the right mix of books.....	6
Developing love of reading through reading practices .....	9
Implementing dialogic reading.....	10
Performing read-alouds .....	12
Additional promising classroom strategies .....	12
Engaging caregivers and community members.....	14
Strategies for supporting low-literate caregivers .....	14
Harnessing the potential of other family and community members.....	15
Training to support book use .....	16
Educator training.....	16
Caregiver training .....	17
CONCLUSIONS .....	20
AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	21
REFERENCES.....	22
ENDNOTES.....	27

# LIST OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1. Promising classroom library management strategies.....	5
Exhibit 2. Innovative strategy: co-creation of books.....	7
Exhibit 3. Considerations for use of e-resources .....	9
Exhibit 4. Simple example of dialogic reading .....	11
Exhibit 5. Steps to ensure strong read-aloud practice.....	12
Exhibit 6. Overview of classroom reading strategies.....	13
Exhibit 7. Innovative strategy: game and movement.....	14
Exhibit 8. Strategies for working with low literate caregivers.....	15
Exhibit 9. Caregiver training interventions: comparison of project elements .....	19

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACR GCD	All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development
DEEP	Data and Evidence for Education
ELLCO	Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool
HIC	Higher-income country
LIC	Lower-income country
LMIC	Lower- and middle-income countries
MIC	Middle-income country
RAR	Raising a Reader
RCT	Randomized control trial
READ CO	Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Community Outreach
ROR	Reach Out and Read
SHELLS	Storytelling for the Home Enrichment of Language and Literacy Skills
TEEM	Texas Early Education Model
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VVOB	Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exposure to reading has many benefits including supporting the development of young children’s vocabulary and literacy abilities<sup>1</sup> as well as building important connections between children and adults. Evidence also indicates that book sharing can lead to a decrease in caregiver stress and levels of depression.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Reading books may be particularly promising in families with lower socioeconomic status.<sup>5</sup> However, many barriers to effective book use in both the classroom and the home exist, including a lack of access to books,<sup>6,7</sup> unclear book replacement policies,<sup>8</sup> and suboptimal classroom conditions.<sup>9,10</sup> Low-literacy levels among some caregivers, time constraints, and a weak or non-existent culture of reading are persistent challenges within the home.<sup>11</sup>

This research brief presents promising practices and considerations for promoting book use at school and at home, focusing on the development of a book-friendly environment and strategies that foster a love of learning. A review of relevant research and project documents in lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and higher-income countries (HICs) and expert consultations inform the findings.

Several strategies stand out as particularly effective for promoting book use. Implementers should consider the following actions to support the **development of a book-friendly environment**:

- Ensure **careful and attentive design of classroom environment** so that it is print-rich with the creation of a specific, child-friendly book area and dedicated reading spaces.
- Provide teachers with **training in increasing book utilization, including creating and managing a book-friendly environment**.
- Supply a **wide variety** of age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction books that are culturally, contextually, and linguistically relevant and accessible to students.
- Consider **electronic resource strategies** with deliberate planning if context-appropriate.
- Ensure **proper care and management of reading spaces** including properly keeping and displaying books, rotating books, caring for books, and checking out books.

Implementers should also consider using the following **strategies to foster book use and develop a love of learning in the classroom and home**:

- Implement **dialogic reading strategies** to extend reading beyond the text at school and home.
- Adapt **read-alouds** techniques to guide students’ attention and inquiries.
- Adopt **gamified and movement-based instruction** to activate different learning styles.
- **Train educators in practices** that strengthen reading skills and develop a love for books.
- **Use a variety of training and coaching modalities** to support teachers’ book use practices.
- Develop **workshops for caregivers in shared reading strategies** that address perceived challenges and identify practical solutions, including techniques for lower-literate individuals.

Beyond these findings, the brief also suggests areas for further research. Studies on the type and quality of books used, and the effects of shared reading interventions on different age groups and genders would further enrich the knowledge base.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, investigations of culturally relevant and local practices as well as interventions that scale-up support for lower-literate caregivers and classroom libraries may also improve awareness of promising book use strategies and benefit young readers and their communities.

# INTRODUCTION

While much justified effort and investigation has focused on the publication of books and on the supply chain to get books into classrooms and the hands of children, there has been much less focus on the actual usage of books themselves. This research brief addresses that gap by presenting promising practices and considerations for promoting book use within schools and the home. Findings are drawn from a review of relevant research and project documents from both lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and higher-income countries (HICs). The findings also offer important food for thought about how to bridge those two spaces. A rigorous review of over 80 documents and 17 consultations<sup>13</sup> with international experts from prominent organizations and institutions inform findings.

## BENEFITS OF BOOK READING

Exposure to books has been demonstrated to contribute to the development of young children's emergent literacy abilities, including letter recognition and the more general concept of print.<sup>14</sup> Reading with an adult generates more language input than toy play and other adult-child activities.<sup>15</sup> At home, when reading with children, caregivers use more sophisticated language models than during other times in the day. Reading books may be particularly promising in families with lower socioeconomic status, as these families tend to provide less linguistic interaction during caretaking than wealthier families.<sup>16</sup> The potential for improvement is greater.

At school, books in the hands of students allow children to practice critical decoding and fluency skills, build vocabulary, foster reading comprehension, and develop a love and habit of reading. USAID recognizes the provision of high-quality reading materials, teachers being able to effectively use books to provide effective instruction, and students being able to engage in extra practice and support for reading in and outside of school as critical.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond the clear connection between reading and literacy, language acquisition, and cognitive development, ample evidence indicates that book reading supports many additional benefits. Children and adults reading together (i.e., book sharing) promotes shared experience because it involves important adults in the child's life (teachers, caretakers, etc.) in joint attention and focused interaction. Through exploring stories, children build self-esteem and empathy as they learn more about their own narratives. They also increase their awareness of peer relationships and coping strategies alongside general world knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Caregivers often also experience a decrease in caregiver stress and an improved caregiver-child relationship through regular book-sharing interactions. This effect is consistent regardless of race or socioeconomic status.<sup>19</sup> Book sharing is also linked to decreased levels of depression for adolescent mothers.<sup>20</sup>

The evidence focusing specifically on *how* books are used in these spaces and the effectiveness of these strategies to promote and increase book use, however, is relatively thin, particularly for LMICs and low-literacy caregivers.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, obstacles that limit book use in both the classroom and at home abound, necessitating targeted and informed strategies.

# CHALLENGES TO BOOK USE

Within the home, a lack of books and low caregiver literacy levels are common obstacles that prevent book use for many caregivers in LMICs.<sup>22</sup> In addition, many caregivers struggle to make time for book reading because of other duties, worries, or stress.<sup>23</sup> Cultural traditions may also be at play: oral traditions may be more commonplace for some families, while others simply may not have developed a tradition of reading at home. Caregivers may speak and/or read a language that is different from the school language, making it challenging to access their children's materials. If the family is displaced or from a language group that differs from the dominant language group, it may also be challenging to find materials in a language the caregiver understands.

An absence of books is also a common barrier in classrooms. When there is a shortage of books or a perception of a book shortage, teachers tend to put any books that are available aside to save them for future use.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, there may be a misunderstanding about book replacement policies. Reported and anecdotal evidence suggests that books are often kept out of children's hands or not allowed to be taken home because teachers believed that they would be charged for any lost or damaged books or that the books would not be replaced.<sup>25</sup>

When books are made available, other challenges may arise. Teachers may have difficulty changing their mindset and practices after developing teaching strategies that do not rely on books in the classroom. Another common concern is book content and relevance. Teachers may be hesitant to use books in class if the difficulty level is too high, if the content is outdated, or if the content does not reflect the interest or experiences of their students.<sup>26</sup> Suboptimal classroom conditions may also be a barrier to book use. In one example reflective of many classrooms in LICs, a classroom in Ghana had a shortage of desks, requiring students to sit three to a desk. Without enough room for each child to hold their own book, children had to share, which led to some students being able to see and use the book better than others.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, classrooms with over 45 students in South Africa hindered the implementation of a Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB)-funded classroom library project because there was insufficient space to install the cardboard box that served as the library and make it accessible.<sup>28</sup>

## FINDINGS

Findings from a review of the literature and from expert consultations point to several areas for consideration that may promote book use within the classroom and/or at home. The first section presents supply-related strategies in creating a book-friendly environment; specifically, how to effectively display and store books and considerations for the use of e-resources. The second section goes beyond supply to identify strategies to effectively promote the use of books in the classroom and at home to help unlock the potential of reading for children, teachers, and families, and instill a love for reading.

## DEVELOPING A BOOK-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Purposeful and thoughtful attention to structuring a book-friendly environment and developing a culture to support it is an important component of fostering book use within the classroom and the home. Though still thin, the literature supporting creation of a book-friendly environment within the classroom is more substantial and nuanced than for doing so at home, for which the focus is largely on book

provision. The Global Family Research Project identifies the creation of a literacy-friendly home environment as one of seven research-based strategies to promote early literacy. In such an environment, caregivers support children’s learning and engage in healthy literacy habits. The project, based in the United States, suggests that caregivers should consider obtaining books through libraries or book rotation or lending programs as an alternative to buying new books.<sup>29</sup>

**Careful and attentive design of the classroom environment** is necessary to support book use. Effective literacy programs provide insights into how the **development of a print-rich environment** can help increase book use. For example, Save the Children’s Rwandan Children’s Book Initiative developed a teacher’s guide that instructs teachers to ensure students have exposure to written and printed texts within the classroom.<sup>30</sup> This requires decorating and designing the classroom so that many printed words are on display. Examples of this practice include:<sup>31</sup>

- Creating word cards to label items in the classroom, such as chairs and desks
- Creating posters and charts to put on the classroom wall
- Displaying student work on classroom walls
- Providing other non-book reading materials, such as reading cards, letters, or local news articles

As the Rwandan Children’s Book Initiative demonstrated, a print-rich environment can increase book use because it provides students with more opportunities to see and recognize words and understand that words convey meaning. When children understand that reading can be useful to them by supporting their learning and enjoyment, they are more motivated to develop their reading skills.<sup>32</sup>

Another key element of the classroom environment is the **creation of a specific, child-friendly book area**. Scales that are used or have been proposed to measure book use in the classroom include the existence of a dedicated book area as a key metric. These scales indicate that the best book areas have books on display, properly oriented for children to see, and easy for children to reach, are neatly organized, have soft materials such as pillows or cushions for children to use, can accommodate at least 4–6 children at one time, and include a wide variety of books.<sup>33</sup> Research in preschool and kindergarten classrooms and daycare centers in the United States indicates that classroom book areas with favorable physical conditions (e.g., pillows, easy chairs, carpet, books within children’s reach, attractive displays, sufficient size) are positively correlated with increased children’s book use.<sup>34</sup>

Save the Children’s Ethiopia READ Community Outreach activity found that **creating dedicated reading spaces** gave children more opportunities to practice reading and increased the borrowing of supplemental reading materials.<sup>35</sup> Reading spaces in schools were particularly effective when there was a dedicated time (for example, 8–9:30 a.m. every Tuesday and Thursday morning) for students to use the reading spaces. Often, time in the reading spaces was structured by teachers and included reading activities and competitions that encouraged children to engage in reading practice.

## MECHANICS OF DISPLAYING AND STORING BOOKS

How books are displayed and stored in the classroom is of particular importance. The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development found that a lack of knowledge about how to store and display books is a common issue, especially in rural primary schools in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>36</sup> The Rwandan Children’s Book Initiative instructed teachers to store books in the classroom whenever possible. The teacher’s guide emphasized the importance of **keeping books on display**,



**preferably on a bookshelf, with covers facing out toward the students.**<sup>37</sup> A study of preschool classrooms in the United States found that books are more frequently used when there are many **books on display or books are regularly rotated.**<sup>38</sup>

To ensure the longevity of the books, **shelves should be dusted and book covers wiped down regularly.** Books should be **stored in a dry area away from food and drink, handled only with clean and dry hands,** and any **damaged books should be immediately repaired.**<sup>39</sup> Another best practice is to **clearly label books and their storage location with matching words and pictures** so that students can place them back where they belong after use.<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, even the best classroom environment may not increase book use without additional support. Findings indicate that while thoughtful classroom design is important, teachers who know how to create an appropriate physical classroom environment may still lack the knowledge and skill to effectively utilize the materials within their lessons.<sup>41</sup> As discussed below, **specific teacher training about book utilization, including setting aside dedicated time for book reading,** may help to further increase book use.<sup>42</sup>

Classrooms may incorporate libraries where students can check out books to take home. To ensure books are used and returned, strategies for managing the library must be in place, such as:

**Develop simple book checkout and return systems.** Depending on the student age or teacher's workload, this process may be managed entirely by the teacher, or by students with the teacher's oversight. Student involvement may be particularly effective when classrooms are crowded and teachers are reluctant to take on an additional task. Examples of useful practices include:

- Laminated posters with stickers to indicate which child has which book checked out
- Checkout cards where students write the book title and checkout date, and the teacher records the due date and signs the card when the book is returned
- Notebook log that records the student's name, checkout date, book title and return date
- Book register detailing the date registered, title, number of copies, and remarks

**Raise awareness about the book checkout system and library rules.** For example, teachers may spend the first few library sessions teaching children about the library rules. Children should not be punished if books are lost nor families required to pay for lost books. Instead, library systems should focus on raising awareness on the importance of caring for and returning borrowed books.

**Dedicate time for library use.** Checkout and return systems are easier to maintain when students have a regularly specified time for library use (e.g., during literacy instruction, after school, during class breaks).

**Involve principals.** Engaging school leadership helps to promote functioning libraries. Encourage principals to take a lead in, e.g., working with teachers to design a classroom library schedule.

**Involve caregivers in the process.** It's important for caregivers to be aware of the library process. Caregiver engagement may take several forms and should be adapted to caregiver literacy profiles. Options may include informational meetings, sending letters home, requiring caregiver signature confirming books have arrived home, or providing guidance on how to use books at home.

**Stock multiples copies of each book.** When books will be taken home, it is helpful to have multiple copies of books to ensure students can access the book they want to read.

**Monitor book levels.** It's important that students are taking home books at the appropriate reading level. Teachers should organize books in the library by level and monitor student book use either in the classroom or via the checkout log. If students are consistently selecting books above or below their reading level, teacher support in book selection may be needed. Teachers may consider using the five-finger rule\* to assess fit for book.

**Provide teacher training.** Classroom libraries can fail when teachers do not know how to manage them or incorporate them into their classroom. Therefore, training teachers on the management system, book organization, and the value of classroom libraries is crucial.

*\*The five-finger rule is a strategy educators and parents can use to assess if a book is a good fit for a child. A child should open the book up to the first page that has text. The child reads the page and holds up one finger for each word they don't know or can't pronounce. If it's 0-1 fingers, the book is too easy. If it's 2-3 fingers, the book is just right. The book is too hard or should be read aloud or with a buddy if a child holds up 4-5 fingers.<sup>44</sup>*

## SUPPLYING THE RIGHT MIX OF BOOKS

Providing access to a greater variety of books increases the likelihood of children reading on their own and of engagement from caregivers.<sup>45</sup> Save the Children's Rwandan Children's Book Initiative and Ethiopia Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Community Outreach (READ CO) activity, along with the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO) tool, emphasize the importance of the **presence of a wide variety of books accessible to students** in the classroom.<sup>46</sup> Classrooms score high in the ELLCO's book selection category if they contain a certain number of books that range in difficulty level (e.g., words per page, language complexity) and genre (e.g., fiction vs. nonfiction).<sup>47</sup> Attention to the number of books available per reader is also very important. Room to Read recommends that classrooms contain, at minimum, 10 book per child.<sup>48</sup> Building a diverse book collection that celebrates diversity and inclusion and is transformative is also important.<sup>49</sup> Experience from the early education Head Start program in the United States also indicates that classrooms need to possess **books in different formats** (big hardcover board books, smaller thin paper pages, books with a lot of words, books with fewer words, etc.) and in **different languages**. These books may appeal to different readers.<sup>50</sup>

There are also data to support that supplying **nonfiction books** is particularly relevant to increasing student engagement with books. Research shows that young children show a strong interest for real stories and may select informational, or nonfiction, books if they are made available.<sup>51</sup> As an illustration, the Classroom Libraries project in South Africa experienced teachers requesting that non-fiction books be added to their storybook libraries.<sup>52</sup> In addition to engaging students, nonfiction books can help children learn new vocabulary, develop critical thinking skills, explore new topics, and inspire a love of learning.<sup>53</sup> For the inclusion of nonfiction books to be most effective, there needs to be a **variety of age-appropriate books covering different relevant topics**. It may also be beneficial to **provide training to teachers about selecting and using informational texts, like nonfiction books**, in their instruction. Without training, researchers have observed teachers selecting informational texts with concept loads or reading levels appropriate for much older children than they have in their classrooms.<sup>54</sup>

The Storytelling for the Home Enrichment of Language and Literacy Skills (SHELLS) intervention was a Head Start program in the United States working with two to five-year-old children from migrant farm workers and their families. The project represents an innovative strategy making connections to families' cultural assets by working with them to co-create narrative about everyday events in the form of books. Both children and caregivers were storytellers. Caregivers made gains against the counterfactual in their use of language elicitation strategies and the quality of their home language and literacy environment. At the same time, children demonstrated an increased number of total words and different words from the pre-test. Many of the families were Spanish speaking.

The project had three key components:

- Elicit caregiver-child conversations and storytelling
- Use simple technology to help participants develop home-made books
- Guide caregivers to use evidence-based dialogic reading strategies for supporting children's language development.

The bookmaking process involved seven steps developed through a series of home visits:

1. Plan ahead with the family so they can start to generate ideas about book topics, involving child participation
2. Encourage conversations between caregivers and children on the book topic
3. Illustrate the story through pictures or drawings
4. Developing written captions from words or sentences in the caregiver-child narrative
5. Assist with organizing and making the book
6. Observe caregivers and children using the book
7. Leave them with the finished book

Examples of book topics included: My Animals, Counting to 10, Cooking My Favorite Family Recipe, Our Day at the Park, Visiting the Zoo With My Family, and Our Trip to the Store.

**Culturally, contextually, and linguistically relevant books** are more likely to engage students and caregivers. Room to Read suggests that providing books in local languages and in the school language may help inspire a habit of reading. Room to Read also recommends that children have access to **books that reflect their experience through the illustrations, characters, setting, or events**. A Room to Read program in India **provides training to teachers on how to use local language books** as a bridge to helping children learn and read in the school language.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, a former administrator of the Boston Reads program in the United States underlined that careful selection of books was critical so that caregivers also felt energized and interested to read with their children.<sup>57</sup> The Storytelling for the Home Enrichment of Language and Literacy Skills (SHELLS) intervention demonstrated an innovative approach, working with families to **co-create books** from their own family histories (see Exhibit 2). Book Dash, an NGO in South Africa that implements engaging and fast-paced book production workshops for professional volunteer writers, illustrators, and book designers, presents an innovative approach for developing culturally-relevant books, though more research is needed to assess effectiveness.<sup>58</sup>

Although opinions differ on the appropriateness of e-resources,<sup>59</sup> if the technology is available, the use of electronic books (e-books) or other technology-based materials can support book use in several

ways. Digital technology can allow access to a greater variety of books, including content in national languages, to students who have little access to these materials otherwise. Electronic versions of books also promote inclusion for children and adults with disabilities. They may also be printed, allowing for multiple means of interacting with content.<sup>60</sup>

The All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development (ACR GCD) partnership has seen book use increase as the result of technology-based materials in a number of projects. For example, the Oyas project in Jordan found that students read an average of 105 e-books during the school year. Prior to the introduction of e-books, students had reported little access to engaging reading materials.<sup>61</sup> The Makhalidwe Athu project in Zambia sent 41 stories in the local language via text message to caregivers to read with their children. While few caregivers read with their children at home before this intervention, **providing stories via text message** reduced barriers to caregivers reading with their children.<sup>62</sup>

Some evidence suggests that the **use of e-books in the classroom** leads to increased engagement in reading, especially for children who don't have electronic media at home.<sup>63</sup> In some cases, the novelty of electronic resources inspires children's engagement and use. E-books may also increase accessibility for some students. The Ethiopia READ CO activity prioritized book accessibility by providing electronic versions of titles and adapting materials for learners with visual difficulties.<sup>64</sup> The ACR GCD Bookshare India project provided students who are blind or have low vision with 50 stories accessible in audio formats. Students receiving these materials showed an increased motivation to read.<sup>65</sup> **Technology-based books may also be an important resource for communities with reliable access to smart devices and the Internet dealing with school closures.** During COVID-19 school closures in Indonesia, teachers were able to use Literacy Cloud, Room to Read's online platform, to do **read-alouds with students over Zoom video calls.**<sup>66</sup> Increased accessibility to e-books and related technology increases the possibility of use.

Once a variety of books are available to students in classrooms, **targeted training on building teacher knowledge on specific types of books** can help ensure that they present their students with the right mix of books. For example, a small study in the United States found that educating teachers on the properties and purpose of picture books made teachers more intentional in their use of picture books in classroom instruction. This led to students themselves engaging more in read-alouds and their independent reading of picture books.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, a teacher training program in England, Literature Matters, aimed to increase teacher knowledge of children's literature and school library services. While the program was not sustained long-term due to low funding and poor initial rollout, the program did increase teachers' knowledge and confidence in using children's literature in their instruction. It was also effective in increasing teachers' comfort in working with school library services, which provides students more opportunities to access books.<sup>68</sup> Other research has proposed that **specific teacher training about selecting and using nonfiction books and e-books** will help increase the use of these texts if they are to be provided in the classroom.<sup>69</sup>

While the literature comparing the benefits of digital and print resources is still evolving, several considerations emerge for practitioners:

*Interactive elements:* The effectiveness of moving animation or hot spots (interactive touch-screen locations) depends on the distance between the element and the resource content. For example, **interactive elements that support the storyline** are likely more effective than those that may be tangential or distracting. **App developers should work closely with literacy educators and digital learning specialists to harness the full potential of interactive elements.**

*Adult support:* **How adults work with children when reading e-books may be different than** when reading printed books. Caregivers ask fewer evaluative questions and are more likely to talk about book format and the environment with e-books than with printed books where the focus is more on the story content. The role of adults when children engage in e-materials may change from providing direct support to a more distant role of selecting materials and providing encouragement while children interact independently with resources. Caregivers may provide positive support to a child engaging with an e-book or other electronic resource by **drawing a child's attention to the place on the screen where there are word labels or naming picture examples.**

*Deliberate planning required:* Decisions implementers must address include **whether to use hardware (smartphones, tablets, computers) that learners, caregivers, and educators already have access to or to deliver new hardware** and **whether to use existing software or to invest resources** in new software. Local context technology options and digital literacy are factors to take into account.

*Attention to digital literacy:* Many ACR GCD projects experienced issues with implementation because of low digital literacy among caregivers, teachers, and librarians. At the same time, other studies point to how children who are familiar with technology may receive less benefit from digital resources than those who are less comfortable with e-resources. Children more comfortable with digital media may view the interaction as a game and be less apt to engage with content. Adults can mediate this dilemma by **reminding children to focus on content rather than technology.**

*Training on e-resources essential:* Training for teachers and caregivers should present the **benefits and challenges of both mediums** and **underline the continued effectiveness of reading print books.** Training may also include **how to use technology, how to select appropriate e-books, or how to conduct read-aloud or other reading activities with technology-based reading materials.** Emphasis on **continued discussions between adults and children on content and vocabulary**, rather than book format, is important to ensure the benefits of e-resources.

## DEVELOPING LOVE OF READING THROUGH READING PRACTICES

Several types of strategies stand out as critical to fostering book use within the classroom and home to harness the potential of reading and instill a love of reading in children. Caregivers may similarly find themselves inspired to increase their use of books. This section begins by reviewing dialogic reading, an

overarching approach to reading that applies to both classroom and home, including how best to help caregivers and other community members engage in book-reading habits. Next, attention turns to strategies specific to the classroom and the home environment. A final section presents promising practices for training educators and caregivers to support book use.

## IMPLEMENTING DIALOGIC READING

“Dialogic reading” is a specific strategy for adult-child interaction when reading and refers to asking questions, providing feedback, and letting children take the lead in conversations. Specifically, in dialogic reading, adults **engage children in discussions that go beyond simply describing the narrative or pictures on the page**. During dialogic reading, adults may **provide explanations of the meaning of words and of what is happening in the story and may help a child make connections** to previous experiences or real-world examples. For older children, adults may try to elicit explanations from children regarding illustrations or the story.<sup>71</sup> Dialogic reading can take place in classrooms and at home (the next section provides steps for implementing dialogic reading in the classroom.) Within the literature, “interactive reading” also often indirectly refers to this strategy. Multiple studies have found that training in dialogic reading amplifies the effects of book distribution activities, leading to better effects for children and caregivers than the provision of books alone.<sup>72</sup>

Exhibit 4. Simple example of dialogic reading

### Offering explanations:

- “Do you see this picture?” [Caregiver points to an image in book.] “This is a *hammer*. We use it to nail down things.”
- “A *lamb* is a baby sheep.”
- “William is sad. He is sad because he fell and hurt his knee.”
- “Khady is tired. She has been swimming!”

### Eliciting explanations from children:

- “How does William look?” [sad]
- “Why do you think William is sad?” [because he fell and hurt his knee.]
- [Caregiver points to an image] “What’s this?” “What’s that?”
- “What do you see?” “What’s happening?” [More advanced questioning as children progress]

### Making connections to the child’s past experiences or the real world:

- In a book where a child is going to the market: “We went to the market together this morning!” OR “Ah, they are going to the market! Do you go to the market? Who do you go with?”
- In a story where a child plays with friends: “Look at [character name]. She is playing with her friends, just like you play with [name of child’s friend].” OR “I see [character name] playing with a friend. Who do you like to play with?”

Like many teachers, most caregivers do not engage in interactive reading naturally with their children. Research shows that caregivers with less education, in particular, are more likely to simply read words and point to pictures rather than provide an explanation.<sup>73</sup> Distinctions may also reflect cultural preferences. In the United States, for example, among low-income families, African-American and Latino mothers were found more likely to use directive one-way reading strategies than European-American mothers who invited co-construction of stories.<sup>74</sup>

Interventions training caregivers in dialogic reading strategies have often been successful. Children's outcomes from these interventions have demonstrated improved print awareness and other early literacy skills, including significantly better expressive language skills, longer utterances, and lower frequency of single-word responses.<sup>75</sup> Such an interactive approach establishes reciprocal communication between adult and child and can be highly enjoyable and support socio-emotional well-being and resilience. Both older and younger siblings may also benefit when caregivers develop dialogic reading practices from the habit of reading at home.<sup>76</sup>

The benefits of dialogic reading may be greater for younger children than for older children. Despite general support for dialogic reading as a promising practice, a meta-analysis found that the effect size of dialogic reading training on vocabulary outcomes was not as great for 4 to 5-year-old children compared with effects for 2 to 3-year-olds and that results of dialogic reading interventions were negative in some cases. While uncertain, scholars hypothesize that older children may see interruptions as annoying and interfering rather than stimulating. They may be more interested in the narrative and already have sufficient linguistic skills and prior knowledge to understand the story without an adult's directive efforts.<sup>77</sup>

## PERFORMING READ-ALOUDS

Current evidence on the frequency of book use during reading instruction is sparse though some strategies emerge as effective, including read-alouds.<sup>78</sup> Within the classroom, teacher read-alouds show promise in improving student reading comprehension and inspiring a habit of reading. Multiple early grade reading projects include **read-alouds as foundational strategies**, such as the Rwanda Children's Book Initiative<sup>79</sup> and Room to Read.<sup>80</sup> Exhibit 5 provides an overview of key steps involved in read-alouds.<sup>81</sup> Read-alouds also exhibit the characteristics of dialogic reading.








#### Exhibit 5. Steps to ensure strong read-aloud practice

- Before the read-aloud begins, select a book and practice reading it once or twice, identifying areas to ask prediction questions or highlight vocabulary words.
- Introduce the book, including the book cover, title, author, and illustrator.
- Ensure that all students are able to see the book and its writing.
- Before beginning to read, ask students to predict what they think the book might be about based on the title and cover. Introduce students to any new vocabulary words students may not know that will help them understand the story.
- Read the book slowly and clearly, using facial expressions and body gestures that correspond to the words or story.
- Show students all pages of the book. Draw students' attention to words, information, or pictures of significance.
- Pause occasionally while reading to discuss the story. Ask students questions about the characters' actions, predictions of what's to come next, or how the book relates to their own experience. Pause to review the vocabulary words as they appear in the story. Make sure pauses are strategic and occasional as to not disrupt the flow of the story.
- Finish reading the book and reflect on the story with the students. Ask students reflection questions, such as what they thought of the book, who their favorite character was, what their favorite part of the story was, and if their predictions came true. Ask students to retell the story, as this shows their reading comprehension.

## ADDITIONAL PROMISING CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

In addition to read-alouds, some programs reviewed also trained teachers on **shared and guided reading**,<sup>82</sup> while others highly encouraged **teachers to set time aside for independent reading**.<sup>83</sup> Exhibit 6 summarizes the essential reading practices that teachers may utilize within the classroom. These strategies help children develop a habit of reading through improving children's reading and confidence in their own abilities.

Exhibit 6. Overview of classroom reading strategies<sup>84</sup>

ICON	BOOK PRACTICE	FORMAT	BOOK LEVEL*	DETAILS
	Teacher Read Aloud	Teacher reads to multiple children	Above students' reading level	The teacher reads a book aloud to the entire class, ensuring all students can see the book. The teacher engages students by introducing the book and asking questions that require students to predict or reflect on the story.
	Shared Reading	Teacher reads with multiple children	1–2 levels above the average students' reading level	The teacher reads a Big Book aloud to the entire class, ensuring all students can see the book. The teacher later reads the same book to the students again, and this time asks students to read along and participate in the reading if they would like. The teacher introduces the book, asks comprehension questions, and demonstrates decoding strategies.
	Guided Reading	Teacher reads with a small group of children	Slightly above the students' reading level	The teacher works with a small group of children who share a similar reading level. The teacher introduces the book, then the children read independently (silently or at a whisper volume), with support from the teacher as needed. Afterward, the teacher guides them on reflecting on the words and story.
	Paired Reading	Child reads with another child	At or just above the younger/less fluent readers' reading level	Two students read aloud to each other. Older or more fluent readers may be paired with younger or less fluent readers. In other cases, children at the same reading level may be paired to reread a story they have already read. In some cases, students will then provide feedback or reflection on their partner's reading.
	Independent Reading	Child reads to self	At the students' reading level	The teacher sets aside time for students to read on their own. Students choose a book to read from a selection in the classroom or library.

\*A specific book level is not required for successful reading activities. A skilled teacher can often conduct useful reading activities regardless of book level.

**Gamified and movement-based reading instruction** offer innovative methods to engage children and offer teachers variety of instruction. Both examples derive from USA-based pilot projects.

In one pilot, children were asked to participate in **directed movement that correlated to what was being read during a teacher read aloud**, such as jumping whenever the book says the word jump, or doing 10 jumping jacks while counting by 10s when the book says the number 100. This pilot program led to increased engagement and focus, retention of knowledge, and interest in reading among students.<sup>1</sup> This strategy may also be applicable to classrooms with large numbers of students and also potentially serve as a rapid formative assessment technique for listening comprehension.

Secondly, in a USA middle school, teachers led a **reader response game** with their students. It was an open-ended matching game where students were given a prompt, and had to respond to it using a passage in the book they were currently reading. For example, the teacher may turn over a card with a prompt reading “find a line from the first chapter that reminds you of positive experiences from your childhood.” Each child would find a corresponding line from their book and share it with the class. Then, the teacher would lead a group discussion on prompt and responses that concludes with the group voting on which student response is most deserving of winning the round and receiving a point. Then the teacher reveals the next prompt, “find a line that an older sibling would say to an annoying younger sibling,” and the game continues.

The students in this middle school also **had a goal of how many books they wanted to read by the end of the school year, as a class**. The game and the goal led to an increase in the number of books read by students, and an increase in the variety of books students engaged with, as the game made them more aware of the books their classmates were reading. This strategy may be adaptable to different reading levels but may be most applicable to students with more advanced reading skills.

Though these are small pilot studies, they do suggest that game- or play-based reading may be a method to explore to increase child interest in book use.

## ENGAGING CAREGIVERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Caregivers can be supported to help their children develop a strong habit for reading and to establish a book-friendly environment. In many LMICs, children benefit from the contributions of many members of their family and community, expanding the role of caregiver beyond mother and father. The first section below indicates strategies that can be used to support caregivers who have low literacy levels. These strategies address a major impediment for many adults who feel uncomfortable reading with their children. The subsequent sub-section presents examples of projects and practices of how extended family and community may also contribute to supporting children’s use of books.

### STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING LOW-LITERATE CAREGIVERS

Evidence from programs in multiple contexts demonstrates strategies that can be used to help caregivers with lower levels of literacy engage in book-sharing activities. Findings also show that a caregiver’s literacy level is not a determinant factor for positive outcomes of those who participate in programs promoting shared reading.<sup>86</sup> In Kenya, for example, a randomized control trial (RCT) of an

intervention for caregivers to foster dialogic reading demonstrated stronger gains for households of caregivers with low literacy. Caregivers with lower literacy were more likely to engage in shared reading and children’s expressive vocabulary improved more than for families where caregivers were more literate.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, another RCT of an early childhood development program in childcare centers in Brazil found comparable benefits of the intervention regardless of caregiver literacy level. Caregivers in this program **participated in a series of workshops** and **spent time discussing perceived barriers and solutions** to reading aloud with one another. They **received feedback** about their book reading. Such exercises may have helped caregivers increase their self-efficacy and motivation for book sharing with their children.<sup>88</sup> A study in Ethiopia found that a caregiver education program for children without access to pre-primary learning produced similar outcomes to children in a government standard pre-primary class. Children with caregivers who were illiterate benefited just as much as children with literate caregivers. The project concluded that “such interventions in Ethiopia can be a powerful equalizer for children from poorer and disadvantaged households.”<sup>89</sup>

Exhibit 8. Strategies for working with low literate caregivers<sup>90</sup>

Successful strategies for working with caregivers of low literacy levels de-emphasize actual reading of the text and instead focus on:

- **Using pictures** to engage verbally with children.
- **Labeling and describing pictures.**
- **Telling stories** prompted by pictures.
- Engaging children in **discussion** relevant to what is seen on the pages.
- Enlisting the **assistance of more literate family members** during reading sessions.
- **Co-creating books** with families during sessions based on family stories. Low-literate caregivers will have already mastered the content and be able to fully engage with their children.

Electronic books also have the potential to provide support to caregivers through audio tracks that may accompany the books.

## HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF OTHER FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Real-world experience shows the importance of implementers **creatively recruiting other community members to support children’s reading**, extending support of book use beyond educators and direct caregivers. Book use boosters may include **older students, unemployed youth, and older siblings**. These strategies may improve outcomes and demonstrate cost-effectiveness. Community members’ involvement may also extend awareness of the importance of reading to a larger audience.

Save the Children’s Literacy Boost program in Rwanda implemented a paired reading program called Reading Buddies. In this program, **competent readers in upper primary levels were paired with buddies in lower primary levels**. The pair could borrow books to read together. The program was more successful when children were **paired intentionally with a buddy that lived close by to them**, to enable them to read together outside of school. The Reading Buddies activity allowed children to have regular exposure to books and practice reading with a more skilled reader.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, a **cross-age literacy mentoring program** in Florida paired first through third-grade students who were reading below grade level with middle and high school students mentors. The mentors provided weekly

mentoring sessions. Younger students also received free books to bring home, which encouraged reading between caregivers and children and enhanced the book-friendly environment at home. An external evaluation of the program indicates that children's reading skills increased by more than a grade level. This rapid growth indicated that students in the program were making strides in catching up to their peers.<sup>92</sup>

In South Africa, Room to Read implemented a Reading Champions program. This program **trained unemployed youth between ages 18 and 24 to promote a reading culture in schools and communities** by engaging learners with books, supporting teachers with reading activities, starting reading clubs, supporting community reading events, and celebrating literacy in schools and communities. This program, which used a cascade model of training, led to an increase in the amount of time students spent reading and increased library visits and book checkout.<sup>93</sup>

Siblings also have a role to play in helping their younger brothers and sisters develop reading skills and habits. When surveyed about study habits at home, children in LICs frequently noted that their older brothers and sisters provided them support with homework, sometimes more so than fathers or mothers. The reasons for this arrangement may vary but likely involve cultural expectations of siblings helping one another, caregivers having limited time because of their focus on daily provisions, and caregivers' low literacy levels. Birth order may also affect the literate environment at home as older siblings pass along books to younger brothers and sisters. Similarly, caregiver awareness of the importance of books and reading may increase as their children move up in school grades, allowing younger children to benefit from a more heightened understanding than older children.<sup>94</sup> These conditions all point to **older siblings as potentially powerful allies in promoting book use at home.**

## TRAINING TO SUPPORT BOOK USE

How educators and caregivers learn the effective strategies above to promote book use deserves careful consideration. Fortunately, evidence from classroom-based and home-based programs offers insights into training and coaching methods. The evidence base on classroom practices within LMICs is stronger than for home-based practices.

### EDUCATOR TRAINING

Teacher training to support classroom book use can take many forms, both in the modality of delivery and the contents of the training. **Coaching** is a key component of many effective activities influencing book use. In the Read Malawi project, a directive model of coaching is used.<sup>95</sup> Under this model, expert coaches (Ministry of Education staff, headteachers, etc.) **visit teachers in the classroom, model effective reading practices, and indicates what instructional practices the teachers must implement.** The coaching model is associated with changes in teacher beliefs and perceptions, and the researchers suggested that more success (i.e., change in action) might have occurred had teachers had more opportunities to interact with their coaches.<sup>96</sup> Coaches were also able to ensure that the reading materials provided to the classrooms were being used. Room to Read's Indonesia program used coaches for both in-person and online modalities (during school closures) to help teachers improve their reading instruction skills. **Group coaching** was used to help teachers address common issues, and individual coaching allowed teachers to get support before and after their reading time with children.<sup>97</sup>

To be most effective, **teacher training should cover not only reading instruction and activities, but book selection, care, storage, and display.** Further research should be done into the

effectiveness of training on teacher knowledge of types of books (e.g., picture books, informational texts, e-books). Additionally, the use of coaches and volunteer reading champions may help support teachers in increasing classroom book use.

One element of coaching and training that implementers have found to be especially useful in improving teacher skills around book use is modeling. In the Read Malawi project, coaches were able to model practices that teachers and students were not familiar with and support the successful introduction of the practice.<sup>98</sup> Room to Read Indonesia produced videos that showed individuals modeling effective practices such as teacher classroom read-aloud. **Videos allowed teachers to observe how to appropriately use expressions and gestures to enhance the experience of read-alouds.** After watching these videos, teachers reported an increased frequency and effectiveness of their reading activities.<sup>99</sup> In the Literature Matters program in England, the most effective training style was **interactive workshops**, in which student teachers watched librarians model skills such as book selection and development of book displays, and then were able to practice the skills themselves.<sup>100</sup>

During COVID-19-induced school closures, Room to Read moved some of their teacher training around book use online. While online platforms may allow training to reach people in a greater geographical range, it does face issues with internet connectivity, teachers' software literacy, and participant focus.<sup>101</sup> Lessons learned from Room to Read's Indonesia program indicate that **online coaching and training programs should send participants instructions for software use, use multiple hosts with different Internet providers during video calls, and engage participants through interactive tools** (polls, breakout rooms, etc.).

Regardless of the training modality, **hard copy teacher's guides** have been important in numerous activities. Room to Read's Reading Champions program,<sup>102</sup> Save the Children's Rwandan Children's Book Initiative,<sup>103</sup> and the University of Texas at San Antonio's Read Malawi project<sup>104</sup> all note that hard copy training or teacher guides were important to the success of their training. In Rwanda and Malawi in particular, these guides offer pedagogical suggestions and recommended activities that teachers can refer to inform their instruction and use of reading materials.

There is also initial evidence to suggest that teacher training around book use can be enhanced if developed with local expertise. The READ Malawi activity led to changes in teacher beliefs and perceptions but not practices, which is suspected to be the result of issues with fidelity of implementation. The successes that were seen (e.g., increases in teacher self-efficacy, increases in teacher confidence in their ability to teach in English) were associated with teacher training and coaching practices that borrowed from local training practices. For example, **teacher training workshops used local practices** (storytelling, dancing, etc.) to introduce teachers to more westernized book practices that teachers may not recognize (read-alouds, guided reading). Additionally, the training encouraged teachers to lesson plan together at their school, a practice with which they were already familiar.<sup>105</sup>

To promote the sustainability necessary for consistent reinforcement of book use, **ministries of education may wish to consider reviewing pre-service and in-service teacher training materials to ensure the inclusion of promising strategies within training modules.**

## CAREGIVER TRAINING

Evidence demonstrates that **training with caregivers that provides guidance for reading** can lead to better outcomes than book provision alone. Such training is more intensive than general book-

reading stimulation activities like read-a-thons, literacy fairs, and reading festivals and allows for more effective measurement of results. The structure of caregiver training interventions varies substantially, with some interventions providing more direct support than others. The Reach Out and Read (ROR) project is a unique example because it is situated within the health sector and follows a relatively light intervention model. The project targets children from six months to five years of age and relies on the **influence of medical providers and their access to caregivers of young children**. In most cases, the model consists of a medical provider giving a developmentally and culturally appropriate book to a caregiver during well-child visits and speaking about the importance of reading to a child's development.<sup>106</sup> It may also include a third component of volunteers demonstrating read-aloud with children in waiting rooms, thereby providing demonstrations for parents. During the early months of a child's life, these visits take place monthly. Providers may also demonstrate helpful book reading strategies. On a more limited scale, ROR may involve scheduled workshops with caregivers.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the health care context of ROR's intervention may offer substantially more weight to recommendations for caregivers to read with their children than other caregiver training or guidance models.<sup>108</sup> ROR has demonstrated positive results in the United States among low-income families, ethnic minorities, and parents with less education. Results are also apparent in rural India, Taiwan, the Philippines, and South Africa.<sup>109</sup> Evidence from the United States points to caregivers doubling their rate of frequent book sharing, increased caregiver support for reading with children, and children's improved language development.<sup>110</sup> Project effectiveness has been demonstrated regardless of the child's age, sex, region, and home language.<sup>111</sup>

While ROR offers a unique individual-based model, many other programs supporting reading practice are group-oriented. A meta-analysis including 19 RCTs of book-sharing promotion interventions concluded **that group-based interventions were more effective because they offer social support to caregivers and allow opportunities to exchange experiences**. In addition, longer intervention sessions may be better. The study also found that **caregiver guidance sessions of over 90 minutes** were more effective than sessions that lasted less than one hour.<sup>112</sup>

Exhibit 9 provides an overview of three caregiver education interventions aimed at increasing book use. The projects took place in very different contexts: low-income settings in the United States, a rural area in Kenya, and an urban center in Brazil. All demonstrated positive outcomes when compared to control groups that did not benefit from caregiver training. The number of interventions ranged from one **single session paired with two follow-up SMS messages** to eight monthly sessions. Discussions of challenges and identification of solutions featured prominently within session agendas along with presentations of interactive reading strategies and opportunities for practice. In two of the three projects, **caregivers practiced reading with their children during the session** while the third project **practiced using simulations with partners**.

The Kenya intervention by Innovations for Poverty Action merits particular attention. Results showed that even with just one session, caregivers of children between two and six years of age increased the quality of their reading interactions and children's knowledge of vocabulary words associated with the storybooks when compared to the control group. Caregivers received two text messages, two and three weeks after the initial training. The first asked about the main character in a storybook. The second asked when caregivers were reading to the children. When caregivers responded, they received a small amount of mobile airtime. Outcomes were not any better for groups receiving a second booster training or a complementary home visit. These findings are particularly notable because a one-session approach is more cost-effective than more complex interventions.<sup>113</sup> Such a model may be an attractive low-cost addition to early grade reading programming provided that it accompanies book provision.

Exhibit 9. Caregiver training interventions: comparison of project elements

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	<b>UNIVERSIDADE DO BEBÊ/FAMILIA QUE ACOLHE/INSTITUO ALFA E BETO<sup>114</sup></b>	<b>TEXAS EARLY EDUCATION MODEL (TEEM) + RAR + FAMILY NIGHTS<sup>115</sup></b>	<b>INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION<sup>116</sup></b>
Country	Brazil	USA	Kenya
Age of children	2–4 years	3–5 years	2–6 years
Book distribution	Weekly borrowing from early education child center	4 books weekly	6 books (4 in local languages); emphasis on culturally and developmentally appropriate books
Number of caregiver education sessions	8	2	1
Number of participants per session	Up to 30	Up to 25	Not indicated
Session duration	60 minutes	60 minutes	180 minutes
Additional support		Meal following session (breakfast or dinner; lasting 30 minutes)	2 SMS messages (2 weeks, 3 weeks after training)
Session content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of challenges and perceived barriers to book use and solutions</li> <li>• Effective strategies for reading aloud<sup>117</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of book to read to child</li> <li>• Preparation of prompts; use of Post-It notes to fix prompt to the page</li> <li>• Demonstration of picture walkthrough wordless book</li> <li>• Recall questioning</li> <li>• Open-ended questioning</li> <li>• Making personal connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of challenges and perceived barriers to book use and solutions</li> <li>• Selecting storybooks for children</li> <li>• Identifying objects in illustrations</li> <li>• Read words they could/seek out assistance</li> <li>• Active listening to child</li> <li>• Recall questioning</li> <li>• Open-ended questioning</li> <li>• Repeating what child has said</li> <li>• Making personal connections</li> <li>• Praise and encouragement for child</li> </ul>
Practical exercise during sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured book reading with their children</li> <li>• Reflection on what worked</li> <li>• Feedback from trainers</li> </ul>	Structured book reading with their children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role play with partners</li> <li>• Feedback from trainers</li> </ul>



# CONCLUSIONS

To foster book use and reading, implementers should take into account the following promising practices related to the **development of a book-friendly environment**:

- Ensure careful and attentive design of the classroom environment so that it is print-rich with the creation of a specific, child-friendly book area and dedicated reading spaces.
- Provide teachers with training in increasing book utilization. Training should include creating and managing a book-friendly environment, setting aside dedicated time for book reading, a review of book types and their benefits, and how to select and use informational/nonfiction texts, books, and e-resources.
- Supply a wide variety of age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction books that are culturally, contextually, and linguistically relevant and accessible to students. Print books should include a variety of formats (big books, soft books, and where feasible, board books), and represent different levels of reading difficulty.
- If context-appropriate and after deliberate planning, consider electronic resource strategies such as:
  - Providing stories via text message
  - Using e-books in the classroom
  - Using digital conference platforms for read-alouds with students during school closures
  - Choosing resources with interactive elements that support the storyline
  - Advocating for app developers to work closely with literacy educators and digital learning specialists in e-resource creation
- Ensure proper care and management of reading spaces to foster book use by:
  - Keeping books on display, preferably on a bookshelf, with covers facing out toward the students
  - Regularly rotating books on display
  - Caring for books by dusting shelves, wiping book covers down regularly, and immediately repairing damaged books
  - Clearly labeling books and their storage location with matching words and pictures
  - Developing specific and well-organized strategies for checking out books and tracking their return
  - Developing strategies to involve students with library management to promote ownership and lighten teachers' burdens

Implementers should also consider using the following **strategies to foster book use and develop a love of learning in the classroom and home**:

- Educators and caregivers should implement dialogic reading strategies that extend reading beyond the text at school and home.
- Educators should adapt read-alouds as a foundational strategy that follows a series of steps that guide students' attention and inquiries.
- Adopt gamified and movement-based instruction as ways to amplify read-aloud content and help students with different learning styles access content.
- Provide training to educators in reading practices that strengthen reading skills and foster a love of reading such as dialogic reading (with print and e-books), shared and guided reading, read-alouds, setting aside specific time for independent learner reading, and incorporating local

practices into instructional practices to create a bridge to more Western approaches to literacy instruction.

- Provide training to educators in reading strategies via:
  - Pre- and in-service teacher training modules
  - Both individual and group educator coaching support
  - Hardcopy educator guides
  - Video and online coaching to extend training, particularly in times of lockdowns
- Specific to interventions to support caregivers and community members in shared reading:
  - Develop workshops for caregivers on reading with children that provide an opportunity for caregivers to discuss perceived barriers and solutions to reading aloud with one another, practice their technique, and receive feedback from trainers. Workshops should introduce caregivers to strategies, including for caregivers with low literacy levels. Examples include using pictures, telling stories, engaging children in discussion, enlisting the assistance of more literate family members, and co-creating books.
  - Recruit other community members to support children's reading, including older students, unemployed youth, and older siblings.

## AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several areas stand out from a review of available resources and discussions with experts as being particularly beneficial areas for future research. Such efforts will help provide greater precision to the recommended strategies above and deepen the evidence base. Topics for further exploration include:

- The impact of the type and quality of books provided to families and classrooms.
- The sorts of books, topics, and characters most popular and engaging with children in a given context, including books that children and families create.
- Best practices for integrating culturally relevant and local practices into teacher and caregiver training around book use and reading practices.<sup>118</sup>
- Effects of shared reading interventions at home with different age groups and genders, especially outside of the United States.<sup>119</sup> More studies are needed on strategies to promote effective book use with older children in LMICs who may have little prior experience with books.
- How caregivers and children learn to establish good practices for handling and storing books within the home.
- Promising strategies for dialogic reading training with caregivers (as contrasted to classroom).<sup>120</sup>
- Nature of shared-reading interactions between caregivers and children using e-resources in LMICs.
- Effective interventions with lower-literate caregivers with attention to cost effectiveness and scalability and the burden on caregivers' time.
- Effectiveness of scalable classroom library initiatives with a focus on strategies to support book use.
- Effectiveness of game- or play-based reading activities in primary-level classrooms.

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# ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Duursma et al., “Reading Aloud to Children: The Evidence,” 554–557; Zuckerman et al., “Book Sharing: In Home Strategy to Advance Early Child Development Globally,” 1–3; Dowdall et al., “Shared Picture Book Reading Interventions for Child Language Development: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” e383–e399.

<sup>2</sup> Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman, 554–557

<sup>3</sup> Xie, Chan, Ji, and Chan, “Psychosocial effects of parent-child book reading interventions: A meta-analysis,” referenced in Third Sector of New England, Inc., “The SCIENCE behind The Basics PRINCIPLES.”

<sup>4</sup> Kumar, Cowan, Erdman, Kaufman, and Hick, “Reach Out and Read is Feasible and Effective for Adolescent Mothers: a Pilot Study.” 638.

<sup>5</sup> de Bondt, Willenberg, and Bus, 349–375.

<sup>6</sup> Dowdall. et al., e383-e399.

<sup>7</sup> Lee and Zuilkowski, “Making do’: Teachers’ coping strategies for dealing with textbook shortages in urban Zambia,” 117–128.

<sup>8</sup> Opoku-Amankwa, “What happens to textbooks in the classroom?” 159–172.

<sup>9</sup> Opoku-Amankwa, 159–172.

<sup>10</sup> A short course in usage techniques, or at least a simple guide book for teachers, could have significant benefits,” (p.17), Tony Read, “Learning and teaching materials: policy and practice for provision,” *DFID, 2011*.

<sup>11</sup> Weissenbourd, in discussion with author, November 12, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Dowdall et al., e383–e399.

<sup>13</sup> Eleven of the 17 experts met with the team for an interview, while the remaining 6 corresponded with the team via email.

<sup>14</sup> Duursma et al., “Reading Aloud to Children: The Evidence,” 554–557; Zuckerman et al., “Book Sharing: In Home Strategy to Advance Early Child Development Globally,” 1–3; Dowdall et al., “Shared Picture Book Reading Interventions for Child Language Development: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” e383–e399.

<sup>15</sup> Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman, 554–557; de Bondt, Willenberg, and Bus, “Do Book Giveaway Programs Promote the Home Literacy Environment and Children’s Literacy-Related Behavior and Skills?” 349–375; Bus, Neuman, and Roskos, “Screens, Apps, and Digital Books for Young Children: The Promise of Multimedia,” 1–6.

<sup>16</sup> de Bondt, Willenberg, and Bus, 349–375.

<sup>17</sup> USAID, “USAID Reading MATTERS conceptual framework.”

<sup>18</sup> Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman, 554–557

<sup>19</sup> Xie, Chan, Ji, and Chan, “Psychosocial effects of parent-child book reading interventions: A meta-analysis,” referenced in Third Sector of New England, Inc., “The SCIENCE behind The Basics PRINCIPLES.”

<sup>20</sup> Kumar, Cowan, Erdman, Kaufman, and Hick, “Reach Out and Read is Feasible and Effective for Adolescent Mothers: a Pilot Study.” 638.

<sup>21</sup> Knauer, et al., “Enhancing young children’s language acquisition through parent-child book-sharing: A randomized trial in rural Kenya,” 179–190.

<sup>22</sup> Dowdall. et al., e383-e399.

<sup>23</sup> Weissenbourd, in discussion with author, November 12, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Lee and Zuilkowski, “Making do’: Teachers’ coping strategies for dealing with textbook shortages in urban Zambia,” 117–128.

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<sup>26</sup> Opoku-Amankwa, 159–172; Milligan, et al., “Textbook availability and use in Rwandan basic education: A mixed-methods study,” 1–7; Reichenberg, “Explaining Teachers’ Use of Textbooks,” 145–159.

<sup>27</sup> Opoku-Amankwa, 159–172.

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<sup>29</sup> Caspe and Lopez, “Seven research-based ways that families promote early literacy.”



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- <sup>30</sup> Cozzolino, Germond, and Nhan-O'Reilly, *Enjoying books together: A guide for teachers on the use of books in the classroom*.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Parsons and Irish, "Print- and Text-Rich Classroom Environments," 3–14.
- <sup>33</sup> "Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation ELLCO"; Dickinson, McCabe, and Anastasopoulos, *A framework for examining book reading in early childhood classrooms*.
- <sup>34</sup> Morrow, "Relationships between Literature Programs, Library Corners Designs, and Children's Use of Literature," 339–344; Morrow, "Promoting Innerscity Children's Recreational Reading," 266–274.
- <sup>35</sup> American Institutes for Research, *An Evaluation of Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Community Outreach (READ CO) Project*
- <sup>36</sup> Read, *Learning and teaching materials: policy and practice for provision*.
- <sup>37</sup> Cozzolino and Nhan-O'Reilly.
- <sup>38</sup> Gillespie and Twardosz, "An ecological perspective on the voluntary book use of 2- and 3-year-olds in day care," 283–306.
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- <sup>40</sup> Reutzell and Jones, "Assessing and Creating Effective Preschool Literacy Classroom Environments," 175–198.
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- <sup>42</sup> Read.
- <sup>43</sup> Fleisch, Schöer, and Sapire, "VVOB Classroom Library Project Final Report," 1–47; Anthony, et al., "Experimental Evaluation of the Value Added by Raising a Reader and Supplemental Parent Training in Shared Reading," 493–514; Read; Basic Education Department: Republic of South Africa and National Education Collaboration Trust, "Reading Champions Manual," 1–62; Morrow, "Preparing Centers and a Literacy-Rich Environment for Small-Group Instruction in Early Reading First Preschools," 124–41; Brahm Fleisch, in discussion with author, January 10, 2022.
- <sup>44</sup> Prentice. The five-finger rule. Colorin Colorado: a bilingual site for educators and families of English language learners. (2019). <https://www.colorincolorado.org/classroom-video/five-finger-rule>; Migala. The Five Finger Rule for Reading Will Help Your Child Find a "Just Right" Book. *Parents*. <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/five-finger-rule.html> Scholastic.
- <sup>45</sup> Moody and Swafford, "Practical strategies for e-book use in early childhood classroom (K-5)," 217–233.
- <sup>46</sup> Cozzolino and Nhan-O'Reilly; LoRusso; Dickinson, McCabe, and Anastasopoulos.
- <sup>47</sup> "Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation ELLCO."
- <sup>48</sup> Patrick Curry, in discussion with author, March 18, 2022.
- <sup>49</sup> Experts also point to books serving as mirrors (reflecting our experience), windows (offering views of different real and imagined worlds created by the author), and sliding glass doors (permitting readers to walk through and become part of the world created by the author. Pinto, Christabel. *Diverse Books are Bridges to Embracing our Differences*. (2018). GPE & Room to Read. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/diverse-books-are-bridges-embracing-our-differences>
- <sup>50</sup> Kristen Bub, in discussion with author, November 8, 2021.
- <sup>51</sup> Palmer and Stewart, "Nonfiction trade book use in primary grades," 38–48; Barnes, Bernstein, and Bloom. "Fact or Fiction? Children's Preferences for Real Versus Make-Believe Stories," 243–258; Simpson, "Fact or Fiction? Children Want Their Non-Fiction Books, Adults May Be Their Barriers."
- <sup>52</sup> Brahm Fleisch, in discussion with author, January 10, 2022.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid; Palmer and Stewart, 38–48.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup> Boyce et al., 343–371.
- <sup>56</sup> Room to Read, "Room to Read's Minority Language Book Publishing."
- <sup>57</sup> Rick Weissenbourd, in discussion with author, November 12, 2021.
- <sup>58</sup> Penelope Bender, in discussion with the author, April 7, 2022. See <https://bookdash.org/> for information on the Book Dash book creation workshops.

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<sup>59</sup> Consultations with experts revealed varied opinions on the effectiveness and appropriateness of electronic resources (e-resources) within education interventions in LMICs. Some experts indicated that e-resources offer advantages in terms of access as their ease of distribution can bypass concerns of initially limited demand for local language resources and printer bottlenecks. Those more skeptical noted persistent challenges to accessing technology and the equity of that access, unreliable or non-existent Internet networks, and lack of sustainability for electronic devices.

<sup>60</sup> Miller and Malecki, in discussion with the author, November 12, 2021.

<sup>61</sup> School to School International, "Technology-Based Innovations to Improve Early Grade Reading Outcomes in Developing Countries."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Moody and Swafford, 217–233.

<sup>64</sup> Save the Children, "Ethiopia READ Community Outreach Internal Performance Assessment."

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<sup>66</sup> Thomsen, "Developing a Love of Reading through Technology in Indonesia."

<sup>67</sup> Martinez and Harmon, "An investigation of teachers' growing understandings of the picture book format," 299–314.

<sup>68</sup> Bailey, Hall, and Gamble, "Promoting school libraries and school library services: problems and partnerships," 71–85.

<sup>69</sup> Palmer and Stewart, 38–48.

<sup>70</sup> Bus, Neuman, and Roskos, 1–6; Krcmar and Cingel, "Parent–child joint reading in traditional and electronic formats," 262–281; School to School International; Krcmar and Cingel, 262–281; Moody and Swafford, 217–233.

<sup>71</sup> Patrick Curry, in discussion with author, March 18, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Anthony et al., 493–514. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.812484>; Knauer, et al., 179–190; Dowdall et al., e383–e399.

<sup>73</sup> Mol, Bus, de Jong, and Smeets, "Added Value of Dialogic Parent–Child Book Readings: A Meta-Analysis," 7–26.

<sup>74</sup> Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, and Mendelsohn, "Children's Literacy Experiences in Low-Income Families: The Content of Books Matters," 213–233.

<sup>75</sup> Caspe and Lopez; Evans, Kelley, Sikora, and Treiman, "Family scholarly culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations."; Whitehurst et al., "A picture-book reading intervention in day care and home for children from low-income families," 679–689; Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman, 554–557; Dowdall, et al., e383–e399; Mol, Bus, de Jong, and Smeets, 7–26.

<sup>76</sup> Zuckerman, Elsansary, and Needlman, 1–3.

<sup>77</sup> Mol, Bus, de Jong and Smeets, 7–26.

<sup>78</sup> Some evidence suggests that in U.S. classrooms, primary grade teachers utilize book reading more than intermediate grade teachers. Meanwhile, studies in Malawi and Ghana have found that reading instructions focuses more on lecture, spelling drills, and class reading of stories in textbooks. Use of storybooks by teachers or students in these contexts seems to be rare. Given this, training of teachers on book reading practices is particularly important. (For relevant sources see: Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard, "Reading aloud to students: A national probability study of classroom reading practices of elementary school teachers," 171–193; Sailors et al., 209–231; and Opoku-Amankwa, "Textbooks, Classroom Communication and Literacy Development in a Multilingual School in Ghana.")

<sup>79</sup> Cozzolino, Garmond, and Nhan-O'Reilly.

<sup>80</sup> Room to Read, "Membaca Nyaring 'Bubu Si Ambulan'"; Room to Read, "Membaca Dengan Ekspresi dan Gerakan."

<sup>81</sup> Room to Read. Session 9: Reading Aloud. 2016; Cozzolino, Garmond, and Nhan-O'Reilly.

<sup>82</sup> Room to Read, "Membaca Nyaring - 'Bubu Si Ambulan'"; Misty Sailors et al., "Supporting change in literacy instruction in Malawi," 209–231.

<sup>83</sup> Cozzolino, Garmond, and Nhan-O'Reilly.

<sup>84</sup> Allison, "Read-Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading: What's the Difference?"; Burkins and Yaris, *Who's Doing the Work?: How To Say Less So Readers Can Do More*; Scholastic, "What is guided reading?"; World Vision, "Reading Buddies help children learn to read through friendship."

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- <sup>85</sup> Kreider, “Read and Move: A new approach to read-aloud time in primary grades,” 64–71; Smutny and Saal, “A ‘Good Game’ of Readers Responding,” 517–525.
- <sup>86</sup> Dowdall et al., e383–e399; Knauer et al., 179–190.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>89</sup> Borisova, Pisani, Dowd, and Lin, “Effective interventions to strengthen early language and literacy skills in low-income countries: Comparison of a family-focused approach and a pre-primary programme in Ethiopia,” 667.
- <sup>90</sup> Knauer et al., 179–190; Boyce et al., “Telling Stories and Making Books: Evidence for an Intervention to Help Parents in Migrant Head Start Families Support their Children’s Language and Literacy,” 343–371; Miller and Malecki, in discussion with the author, November 12, 2021.
- <sup>91</sup> Friedlander and Goldenberg, *Literacy Boost in Rwanda: Impact Evaluation of a Two-Year Randomized Control Trial*.
- <sup>92</sup> Mason, “Evaluation of the Florida Teen Trendsetters Program: 2019-2020 Summative Report.”
- <sup>93</sup> Dornbrack et al., “The Reading Champions: An innovative partnership between the DBE, NGOS, schools and youth organizations.”
- <sup>94</sup> Tamis-LeMonda and Mendelsohn, 213–233.
- <sup>95</sup> Sailors et al., 209–231.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup> Thomsen.
- <sup>98</sup> Sailors et al., 209–231.
- <sup>99</sup> Thomsen.
- <sup>100</sup> Bailey, Hall, and Gamble, 71–85.
- <sup>101</sup> Thomsen; Dornbrack et al.
- <sup>102</sup> Dornbrack et al.
- <sup>103</sup> Cozzolino, Garmond, and Nhan-O’Reilly.
- <sup>104</sup> Sailors et al., 209–231.
- <sup>105</sup> Sailors et al., 209–231.
- <sup>106</sup> Weitzman, Roy, Walls, and Tomlin, “More evidence for Reach Out and Read: A home-based study,” 1248–1253.
- <sup>107</sup> Zuckerman, Elsansary, and Needlman, 1–3.
- <sup>108</sup> Bondt, Willenberg, and Bus, 349–375.
- <sup>109</sup> Zuckerman, Elsansary, and Needlman, 1–3.
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- <sup>114</sup> Weisleder et al., “Reading aloud and child development: A cluster-randomized trial in Brazil,” 1–12.
- <sup>115</sup> Anthony et al., 493–514. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.812484>.
- <sup>116</sup> Knauer et al., 179–190.
- <sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, no additional details were available in the article. It is likely they are similar to the strategies within the other two interventions identified within Table 2.
- <sup>118</sup> Bondt, Willenberg, and Bus, 349–375.
- <sup>119</sup> Dowdall et al., e383–e399.
- <sup>120</sup> Knauer et al., 179–190.



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