

### On the power of words

Words and language are critical shapers of a child's future. Dana Suskind, a surgeon who does cochlear implants, has found that, among her patients, "The kids who . . . struggled to develop language often did so because their parents didn't talk to them as much as their growing brains required." She references a study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley "of children between 0 and 3 years old from all socioeconomic backgrounds. . . . [T]hey found, [that] by the end of age 3, children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds will have heard 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers. . . . The most stark findings of Hart and Risley were really the differences in affirmations versus prohibitions. . . . Not only does that impact children's language development, but it can often be related to toxic stress, which impacts children's ability to learn, as well as their own view of themselves. . . ."2

### Empowering God's children

Your church or PWP can help children develop healthy minds and spirits (and equal footing) through words, books and reading. Plan one activity or a week of activities! Focusing on children's literacy is one way we can fulfill our call to serve "the least of these" and witness to God's love. Here are a few ideas.

- Start an after-school program that helps children with homework or improves their reading skills.
- Partner with another church to make a community impact for kids.
- Hold a book drive and set up a "lending" library.
- Donate books to children who don't have books at home.
- Talk to children and listen, *really* listen, to them.
- Share your stories of successful outreach in the area of children's literacy/education. Email PW staff at [yvonne.hileman@pcusa.org](mailto:yvonne.hileman@pcusa.org).

### Resources

- Visit [www.presbyterianwomen.org](http://www.presbyterianwomen.org) for additional suggestions, a reading list and a copy of this bulletin insert. Email [yvonne.hileman@pcusa.org](mailto:yvonne.hileman@pcusa.org) with questions/suggestions.
- Download the free Educate a Child toolkit from [www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/child/toolkit](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/child/toolkit). Email [ginna.bairby@pcusa.org](mailto:ginna.bairby@pcusa.org) with questions/suggestions.
- See the July/August 2015 (page 47) issue of *Horizons* magazine and visit [www.pcusa.org/globalpoverty](http://www.pcusa.org/globalpoverty) for more information on the Educate a Child initiative.
- Learn about Children's Book Week at [www.bookweekonline.com](http://www.bookweekonline.com).
- See Teaching for Change ([www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org)) and We Need Diverse Books (<http://weneeddiversebooks.org>).

### Notes

1. Also see "Working to Alleviate Poverty Through Education in Democratic Republic of Congo" at [www.pcusa.org/blogs/global-poverty/2015/10/30/democratic-republic-of-congo/](http://www.pcusa.org/blogs/global-poverty/2015/10/30/democratic-republic-of-congo/)
2. Cory Turner, National Public Radio report, September 14, 2015.

*Gracious and loving God, may our words  
to your children further your kingdom on earth.*



Presbyterian Women in the PC(USA)

# Together in Action

## for children's literacy



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The development of adequate language is critical in allowing every child to reach his or her potential.

*"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'"*

*—Matthew 19:4*

### Literacy as a justice issue

Last fall, Presbyterian Women's Churchwide Coordinating Team pledged to make children's education a focus of PW's work during the 2015–2018 triennium. Children's nurture and well-being have always been concerns of Presbyterian Women, but they are more so now, since the PC(USA) launched its global campaign in 2015 to strengthen quality education for a million children by 2020. (Learn more about the Educate a Child initiative in the July/August 2015 issue of *Horizons* magazine or at [www.pcusa.org/globalpoverty](http://www.pcusa.org/globalpoverty).)<sup>1</sup>

What began as a PC(USA) program aimed at eliminating poverty through educating children is, for PW, becoming even more. PW is taking the challenge of children's education a step further by addressing children's literacy as a justice issue. Because many peace and justice issues—poverty, discrimination, abuse, violence, exploitation, marginalization, imprisonment, unequal access to opportunity—are related to lack of education, PW urges each congregation to seek to empower children through literacy.

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