DATE

SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

Dear Superintendent NAME,

As a local affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), the AFFILIATE NAME’s mission is to increase literacy by ensuring all young children in NAME OR AREA County may participate in the Imagination Library program. AFFILITAE believes literacy begins at birth, the benefits of a home library go far beyond the books, and parents/guardians are a child’s first and best teacher.

In 1995, Dolly Parton launched her Imagination Library to benefit the children of her home county in East Tennessee. Dolly’s vision was to foster a love of reading among her county’s preschool children by providing them with the gift of a specially selected book each month. To date, DPIL mails free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to over 2 million children each month directly to their home from birth to age five in participating communities within the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the Republic of Ireland. Dolly's homegrown effort is now a part of thousands of communities' early childhood strategies and is increasingly a vital part of educational policy for states, provinces, and territories.

Since 2004, AFFILITAE has worked with local community organizations to increase the number of children receiving books, and has mailed NUMBER books to NUMBER children in NAME/AREA County, of which NUMBER have graduated out of the program. Currently, NAME/AREA County has NUMBER children enrolled in the Imagination Library program, or ##% of the total 0 to 5 population (NUMBER). Of those enrolled, ### children live in the NAME School District. However, approximately ### eligible children live within the NAME School District’s boundaries.

According to the Arkansas Community Foundation’s Aspire Arkansas Report (2019), only 38% of Arkansas third graders are proficient in reading – specifically ##% in NAME/AREA County and ##% in NAME School District. Third grade reading proficiency is considered an important indicator of whether a student will graduate from high school. Research shows that 85% of a child's core brain development occurs before the age of 3. This “wiring” shapes a toddler's ability to learn to read and think critically. Because of that fact, as early as age three, a child's vocabulary can predict third-grade reading achievement. Recent studies have shown the connection between increased reading in the home during the pre-k period with later development of brain areas supporting literacy skills (J.S. Hutton, 2015). Early learning experiences also influence health, social, and economic outcomes.

Poverty diminishes brain growth in these earliest years. For example, 61% of children from lower-income families have no children’s books in their homes. In lower income neighborhoods, the ratio of books to children is one book for every 300 children, far below the ratio of 13 books per child in more affluent neighborhoods (Neuman, S.B., 2006).

Additional research indicates the dramatic correlation between the number of books in the home and future academic achievement. A multi-year study concluded that children growing up with a home library, even as small as 25 books, got 2.4 more years of education than children from bookless homes, independent of their parents’ education, occupation, and class (Evans, M.D., 2014, 2017). In many cases where books are rare in the home, the Imagination Library is the primary source of books.

DPIL is an evidenced-based, best practice program (Library of Congress, 2021 & 2014) that helps to prepare children for kindergarten and later academic success. Impressive program results report that children enrolled in the program score significantly higher in reading comprehension and vocabulary measures than their peers - not only in kindergarten, but also in second and third grades (Samiei, S., 2015). The DPIL program fosters a love of reading and encourages parents to read aloud to their children daily. As a result, the program helps to promote pre-literacy skills and create a culture of reading at home.

Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) was able to complete their first impact study in 2021. ARIL partnered with the Arkansas Department of Education, the Dollywood Foundation, the Arkansas Research Center, and the University of Central Arkansas to analyze student achievement among children that participated in the Imagination Library - going back to 2010 - and those students that did not participate in the program. This initial comparative research and data analysis demonstrates that enrollment in the Imagination Library decreases retention, and increases kindergarten readiness and third grade literacy test scores.

Preliminary Findings Show:

A. DPIL students on average score higher on all sections of standardized tests (ACT Aspire,

QUALLS) than non-DPIL students.

B. DPIL students are 24% less likely to be required to repeat kindergarten than non-DPIL students.

C. DPIL students are 28% less likely to be held back in third grade than non-DPIL students.

D. DPIL students have a 18.26% higher rate of proficiency on ACT Aspire than non-DPIL students.

These findings are consistent with other studies on the impact of the Imagination Library conducted around the nation over the past 25 years.

AFFILIATE respectfully requests $AMOUNT to promote parental involvement, literacy, and education to children, ages 0 to 5, in who live in the NAME School District in NAME/AREA County. We will utilize requested funds, along with the 50% cost-matching grant from ARIL, to sustain and grow enrollment numbers, and provide NUMBER books to at least NUMBER children in NAME/AREA County.

AFFILITAE would like to partner with the NAME School District to increase enrollment and raise awareness of the program and the importance of reading to children from birth. 100% of the requested grant will be used to purchase and mail books. Enrolled children will receive one new, high-quality, age appropriate book per month until their fifth birthday, at no cost to families. Books are mailed directly to each child, with their name on the label, which makes the book gifting experience special.

By providing books at no cost to families, AFFILITAE increases childhood literacy rates, fosters a love of books, and promotes a culture of reading among underserved families in high-risk communities of NAME/AREA County.

I look forward to your consideration of our request. I will be pleased to submit additional information or answer any questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact me at NUMBER or EMAIL.

Sincerely,

NAME

TITLE

AFFILIATE