

# Arkansas Imagination Library Case for Support





In 1995, Dolly Parton launched Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) 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 3.5 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.

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In 2002, local communities throughout Arkansas started county affiliates to deliver books. In July 2017, Governor Asa Hutchinson provided a one-time gift to create the Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL), a statewide 501c3 nonprofit organization that works with local affiliates to expand the program. As a licensed partner of DPIL, our mission is to increase school readiness and early literacy in Arkansas by ensuring all young children across the state can enroll in the Imagination Library. ARIL believes reading 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. Since 2017, ARIL has worked with local communities to grow the program from 54 to all 75 counties; increasing the number of children receiving books each month from 16,700 to over 83,000 today (or 46% of the total 0 to 5 population).

We are a partner that supports the health and wellbeing of young children. By providing books at no cost to families, the Imagination Library increases school readiness, childhood literacy rates, and promotes a culture of reading among underserved families in high-risk communities of Arkansas.

Here is the ARIL case for support and proposal. We hope you find the data compelling and agree that a partnership is an excellent strategy to establish the importance of reading in homes, schools, and communities in Arkansas.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Charlotte Parham*

Dr. Charlotte Green Parham  
Executive Director  
charlotte@arimaginationlibrary.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Manning Drew".

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## HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

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In 1995, Dolly Parton launched Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (an initiative of the Dollywood Foundation) 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, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) mails free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to over 3.2 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.

In the United States, the Imagination Library has grown to reach children in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. State-wide coverage was established in Arkansas in 2020, and 20 other states since then. In all other states, the program is available in communities where a local partner has teamed up with the Imagination Library. Those partners can be nonprofits, state agencies, school districts, or a public library system. Any child from 0 to 5 is eligible to enroll. Local partners are responsible for promoting their program, enrolling children who live in their geographical area, and securing funds to cover the cost of the books and shipping (\$31.20 per child per year).

In return, DPIL chooses, sources, and ships the books to all registered children; addressed to them, at no cost to the child’s family. A panel of early childhood literacy experts, nicknamed Dolly’s Blue Ribbon Panel, selects the age-appropriate books, which are organized around themes and concepts, and include two bilingual Spanish-English books per year. Audio and braille versions of the books are also available through a partnership with the American Printing House for the Blind. The choices range from time-tested titles like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter to contemporary classics such as Newbery Medal winner *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Pena.

In 2002, local communities throughout Arkansas started county affiliates to deliver books in the natural state. In July 2017, Governor Asa Hutchinson provided a one-time gift to create the Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL), a statewide 501c3 nonprofit organization that works with local affiliates to expand the program. As a licensed partner of DPIL, our mission is to increase literacy in Arkansas by ensuring all young children across the state may participate in the Imagination Library. ARIL believes reading 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. Since 2017, ARIL has worked with local communities to grow the program from 54 to all 75 counties; increasing the number of children receiving books each month from 16,700 to over 83,000 today.

By providing books at no cost to families, the Imagination Library increases childhood literacy rates and school readiness, fosters a love of books, and promotes a culture of reading among underserved families in high-risk communities of Arkansas.

# DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY – OVERVIEW: HOW THE IMAGINATION LIBRARY WORKS IN ARKANSAS

Each month, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) mails a high-quality, age-appropriate book to all registered children, addressed to them, at no cost to the child’s family. Countless parents have shared how excited their child is when a new book arrives each month. Many groups and individuals work hard behind the scenes to make that special moment possible for each child.

DPIL chooses, sources, and negotiates wholesale pricing for the books and shipping. DPIL also provides and manages a custom book order system for all affiliate data entry. This process makes the Imagination Library affordable and easy for communities to implement. The partnership with DPIL encourages community buy-in because local donations go directly to book purchases rather than administrative overhead.

Local affiliates are responsible for promoting the program, enrolling local children, and raising funds to cover the cost of books and shipping (\$31.20 per child per year). Imagination Library affiliates in Arkansas save approximately 90% in costs by running this direct mail book-gifting program with DPIL. Affiliates are successful mainly through grassroots efforts by highly devoted volunteers who have seen the success of the Imagination Library over and over again.

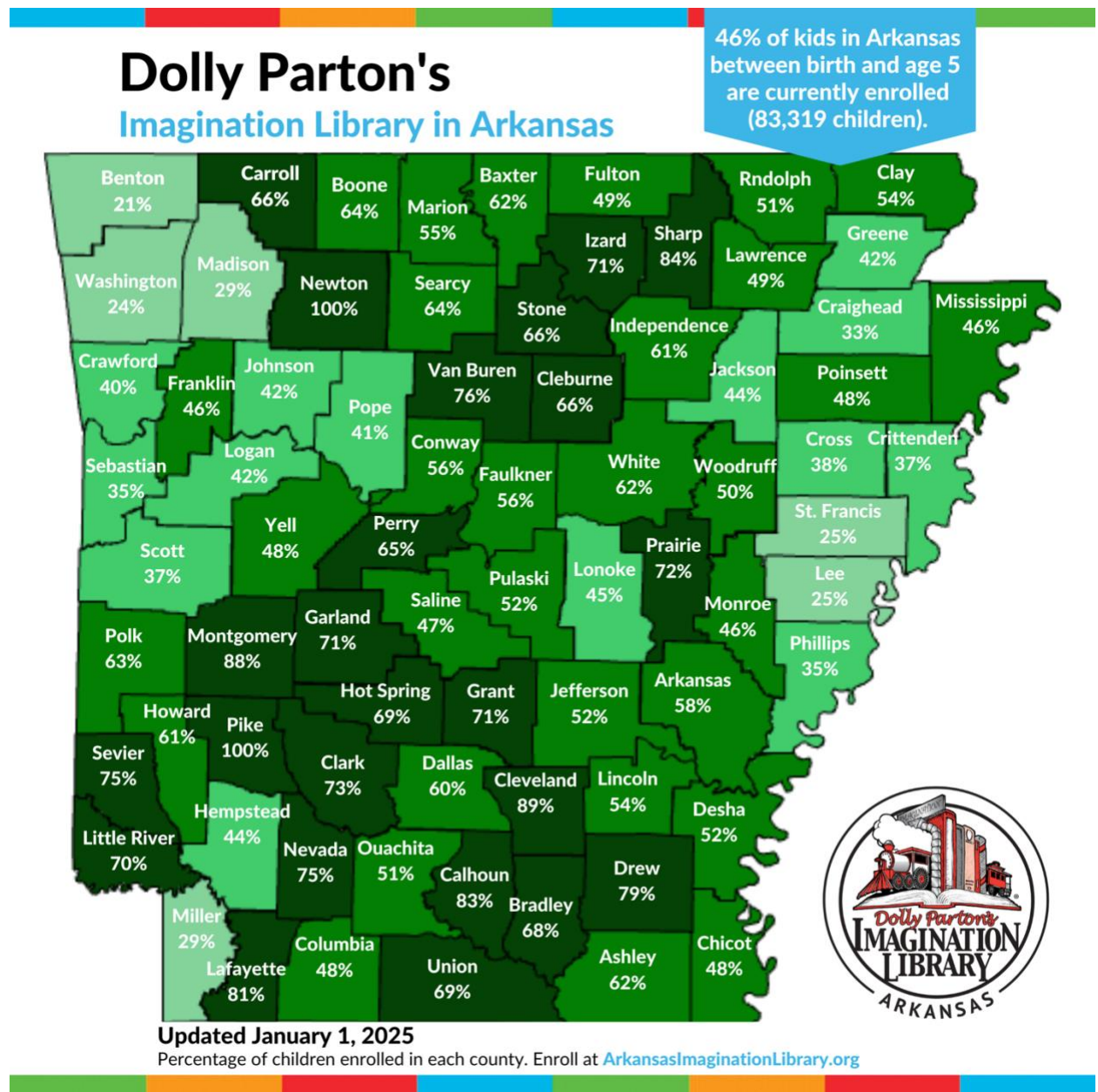
Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) works with DPIL and the local county affiliates to provide support for the success of the programs in Arkansas. ARIL supports county affiliates through fundraising, marketing, matching dollar programs, relationship building, logistical support, community engagement, program promotion, communication of best practices, capacity building by providing trainings and managing resources. ARIL does not directly enroll children into the program. However, as a statewide organization, ARIL can access greater resources and apply for larger amounts of funding than local affiliates. In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, ARIL has funding from a federal grant that covers 50% of the cost of books for every affiliate, leaving local affiliates to fund the remaining 50% of expenses. Grant



funds ensure that ARIL can help Arkansas affiliates continue intentional enrollment growth by reducing the financial burden at the local level.

Our program's strength lies in the efficiency of this three-organization partnership. The program's simplicity makes it unique among other reading programs. Community leaders can easily partner with the program because of the structure and support that minimizes implementation cost. Parents and communities can understand the program, and become excited about bringing it to their communities. Its affordability, scalability, and demonstrated impact on student achievement makes the Imagination Library a sustainable program for communities to implement.

Today all 75 counties in Arkansas have local Imagination Library affiliates that champion their communities. Based on national research, a healthy program will serve approximately 65% of its 0-5 population. For Arkansas, that number is approximately 117,860 children under the age of five. Currently, Imagination Library is serving over 83,000 children in Arkansas. This is a county coverage area map showing the percent of children enrolled in Imagination Library across the state. Shades reflect the percent of coverage within the county.



Local Arkansas affiliates are separate, individual 501c3 organizations or school districts in a community that desire to champion early childhood literacy through this program. These organizations are not limited to, but include, preschools, school districts, community foundations, chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, libraries, childcare facilities, literacy councils, junior leagues, foundations, United Way chapters, and other non-profit organizations.

ARIL continues to work with local affiliates to ensure all children in the state of Arkansas receive books by promoting literacy through various strategies. With three employees dedicated to working with all Arkansas county programs, ARIL provides fundraising and human resource support to local affiliates to help implement and manage the Imagination Library program in their area. Below is the detailed list of affiliates throughout the state of Arkansas that currently serve as the local affiliate champion in all 75 counties.

<b>County</b>	<b>Local Champion/Organization Name</b>
Arkansas	Imagination Library of Arkansas County
Ashley	Friends of the Crossett Public Library
Baxter	Imagination Library of Baxter County
Benton	United Way of Northwest Arkansas
Boone	Boone County Imagination Library
Bradley	Bradley County Friends of the Library / Warren Rotary
Calhoun	Hampton School District / Hampton Library
Carroll	Carroll County Rotary Youth Literacy Foundation
Chicot	Arkansas Rural Community Alliance
Clark	Rotary Club of Arkadelphia-Sunrise
Clay	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Cleburne	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Cleveland	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Columbia	Magnolia Junior Charity League
Conway	Arkansas Rural Community Alliance
Craighead	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Crawford	United Way of Fort Smith Area
Crittenden	Achievers Learning Academy
Cross	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Dallas	Rotary Club of Fordyce / Dallas County Library
Desha	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Drew	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Faulkner	University of Central Arkansas Foundation
Franklin	United Way of Fort Smith Area
Fulton	Thayer Development & Improvement Organization
Garland	Imagination Library of the Ouachitas
Grant	Grant County Imagination Library
Greene	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Hempstead	Hope School District
Hot Spring	Hot Spring County Imagination Library

Howard	Nashville School District
Independence	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Izard	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Jackson	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Jefferson	Youth Partners of Pine Bluff - Jefferson County
Johnson	River Valley United Way
Lafayette	Independent Economic Development Council / Rotary Club of Stamps
Lawrence	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Lee	Lee County School District
Lincoln	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Little River	Ashdown Community Foundation
Logan	United Way of Fort Smith Area
Lonoke	Building Bridges Development & Community Services
Madison	United Way of Northwest Arkansas
Marion	Arkansas Preschool Plus/Bull Shoals Lakeview Rotary
Miller	United Way of Greater Texarkana
Mississippi	Mississippi County Regional Chamber of Commerce
Monroe	Brinkley Public Schools
Montgomery	Imagination Library of the Ouachitas
Nevada	Prescott Alliance for Community Development Assoc.
Newton	Newton County Friends of the Library
Ouachita	Camden Fairview School District
Perry	Arkansas Rural Community Alliance
Phillips	Elaine Community Opportunity Seekers
Pike	Imagination Library of the Ouachitas
Poinsett	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Polk	Quality of Life Outreach
Pope	River Valley United Way
Prairie	Margaret Fisher Literacy Challenge
Pulaski	Pulaski County Imagination Library
Randolph	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Saline	Imagination Library of Saline County
Scott	United Way of Fort Smith Area
Searcy	Searcy County School District
Sebastian	United Way of Fort Smith Area
Sevier	Southwest Arkansas Imagination Library
Sharp	United Way of North Central Arkansas
St. Francis	Achievers Learning Academy
Stone	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Union	United Way of Union County
Van Buren	Van Buren County Reads
Washington	United Way of Northwest Arkansas



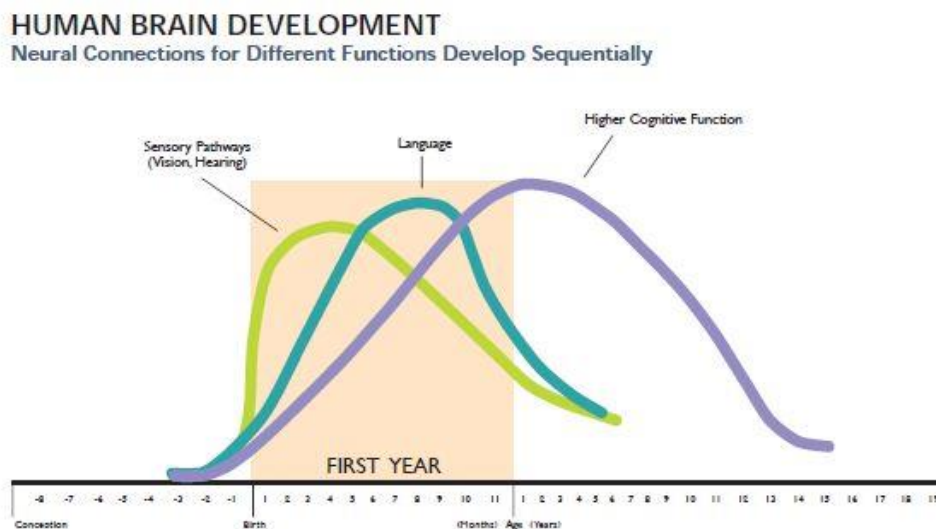
White	Searcy Public School District
Woodruff	Margaret Fisher Literacy Challenge
Yell	River Valley United Way
Statewide Partner	Children in Foster Care - Arkansas Department of Human Service
Statewide Partner	Newborn Initiative - Baptist Health Foundation
Statewide Partner	Newborn Initiative - CHI St. Vincent Hospital

# RESEARCH

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## Early Learning Research

Several decades of research demonstrate that positive early learning experiences help prepare children for kindergarten and later academic success. The human brain develops rapidly during the first few years of life. Research shows that 85% of a child's core brain development occurs before the age of three. This “wiring” shapes infants and toddlers’ 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 importance of early reading, by connecting greater home reading during the prekindergarten period with later development of brain areas supporting mental imagery, narrative comprehension, and oral language skills (Hutton, J.S., 2015). Parents who read 1 picture book with their children every day provide their children with exposure to an estimated 78,000 words each a year. Cumulatively, over the 5 years before kindergarten, children from literacy-rich homes hear 1.4 million more words during storybook reading than children who are never read to (Logan, J., 2019). Early learning experiences also influence health, social, and economic outcomes. Below is a graph displaying the rapid growth of human brain development during the early stages of life.



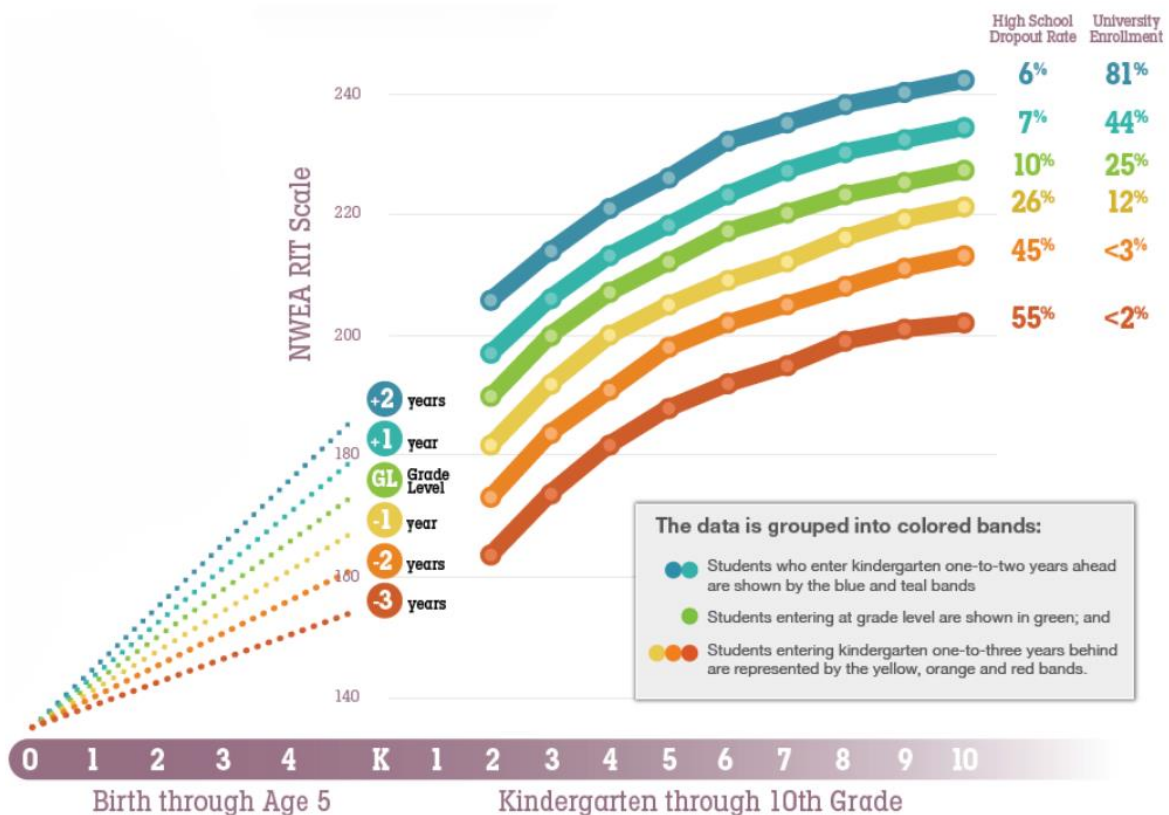
### The First Five Years Impact Success in School and Life

A child’s learning from birth to age 5 is critical; it determines their kindergarten starting point. Students who enter kindergarten behind have a monumental undertaking to catch up with their classmates.

The chart below represents the reading scores of 2.3 million students nationwide, based on real data from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). As students progress through school, they typically only make one year of academic growth for each year in school. For those behind, it’s extremely hard to catch up because they need to achieve their normal year of growth plus another year of growth or more.

So for students who enter kindergarten one-to-three years behind (*the yellow, orange and red bands*) it is very difficult to make sufficient progress to move up even one level without a massive amount of intervention.

All children can and will improve, but for those who enter kindergarten behind, around 75% will never catch up to their classmates. **This means each child's kindergarten starting point matters.**



ARIL anticipates significant long-term outcomes from its early literacy initiatives which aim to enhance educational readiness and lifelong learning for children in Arkansas. The Imagination Library program is designed to ensure that by the time children start kindergarten, they are well-prepared, fostering a trajectory of academic success and broader life opportunities. New research indicates that children who were well- prepared for kindergarten showed consistently better performance in later academic achievements like standardized tests in third grade, middle school GPAs, and high school graduation rates. Those less prepared faced ongoing challenges, maintaining lower performance levels and higher drop-out rates. In fact, those children never caught up to their peers who were fully ready. **This is why kindergarten readiness matters.** Because it is exceedingly unlikely for a student who is only partially ready or not ready for kindergarten to ever catch up to K-ready peers (Clarity Social Research Group, 2023).

Cognitive processes develop rapidly in the first few years of life when a child's brain builds one million connections per second! Poverty diminishes brain growth in these earliest years. For example, many low- income infants and toddlers have limited exposure to early literacy and social-emotional skill development resources. By age two, lower-income children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy. By age 5, a typical lower-class child recognizes nine letters of the alphabet, compared to 22 for a child from a middle-class family. 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 communities (Neuman, S.B., 2006).

### **Having books in the home prepares infants and toddlers to become lifelong readers.**

Exposure to books at an early age leads to improved literacy throughout life. In fact, research indicates that having books in the home is twice as important as the father's education level for developing reading skills. However, 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). In 2022, 22% of Arkansas children were living below the federal poverty level (national rate is 17%), making Arkansas 47th in the nations for this indicator. ARIL minimizes the impact poverty has on children's access to books.

Research indicates the dramatic correlation between the number of books in the home and future academic achievement. In a multiyear study, researchers 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. Building up a child's home library boosts their academic performance, leading to improved test scores, and makes them 19% more likely to complete college. This same study found that regardless of how many books the family already has, each addition to a home library helps the children get a little farther in school. However, having books in the home has a greater impact on children who come from homes where books are rare (Evans, M.D., 2014, 2017). In many cases where books are rare in the home, the Imagination Library is the primary source of books in a home.

### **U.S Studies of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

After launching in 1995, DPIL quickly became popular in many communities, thereby birthing a love of reading in preschool children across America. As communities signed up to collaborate with the program, more and more families engaged in reading with their children at home. As the children of these families entered kindergarten, schools began noticing the positive impact on kindergarten readiness and grade level reading.

In 2015, a research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) Program provided 35,000 free books to high-needs families with children ages birth to 4. The project was conducted by Parents as Teachers, one of the nation's most respected family support organizations, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Results indicated that combining literacy-enriched parents with the Imagination Library program improved the overall literacy environment in homes, including more families reading books together one or more times every day and more children pretending to read books on their own.

The project revealed two major results: 1) Increased parent-child literacy activities among parents with children birth through age four, and 2) Improved oral language skills of children at 4 years of age. These charts show the percentage growth in targeted areas based on implementation of the Imagination Library. There was a 29% increase in children pretending to read books; 22% increase with families reading books together at least once a week; 35% increase with families having more than 26 books in the home; and 19% increase with families owning a library card.

Results also revealed an improvement in oral language skills in children scoring below normal range at pretest. **Children scored at normal range at posttest. There was a 54% increase in story recall, 65% increase in understanding directions, 52% increase in picture vocabulary, and 76% increase in oral comprehension.**

An additional study conducted by LeMoynes College confirmed the Imagination Library has benefits that support school readiness. Their 2015 study, supported by the Center for Urban and Applied Research, revealed that parents were more likely to read frequently to their children the longer they stayed enrolled in the Imagination Library program. When comparing those families enrolled for 4 months or less versus more than 4 months, they found that reading 3 times a week or more jumped from 59.7% to 85.2%. The percent that read to their child daily doubled from 29% to 59.3%. With more advanced statistics, they found that each month a child is enrolled increases the likelihood that they will be read to daily.

Another fascinating dimension to this study was the examination of children not born in the United States. These children are less likely to be read to on a daily basis. **However, this research revealed that after a few months the native and non-native experiences were nearly identical – in other words the non-native children were being read to as often as those children born in the United States.**

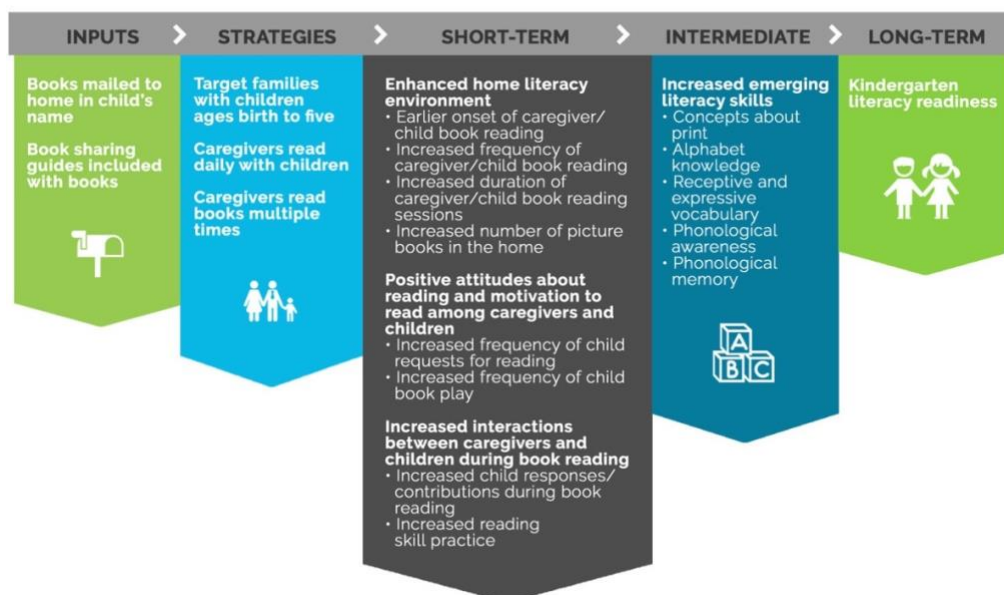
In addition to improving literacy scores and kindergarten readiness, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library also received the coveted 2021 David M. Rubenstein Award and the 2014 Best Practice Award from the U.S. Library of Congress for addressing social barriers to literacy. Not requiring any proof of income maximizes the access of children of low-income families, since having to provide documents and paperwork can discourage even qualifying families from participating.

In March 2022, The Board of Directors for the Council of Chief State School Officers awarded Dolly Parton with The Distinguished Service Award which is the Council's highest honor. This premier award recognizes individuals whose contributions have given strength to pre-K - 12 public education in the United States, and has been presented for more than 60 years. This shows the impact of the Imagination Library reaches far past the early years of childhood and into the elementary and high school period.

The studies referenced above are just a fraction of many research projects conducted at the local level. All of them point to the same general conclusions: more families read more often to their children and, in turn, this leads to children who are better prepared to learn in school.

### Logic Model

*Based on Imagination Library Research Findings and Literature Review.*



## Arkansas Studies

Young children whose parents read to them, tell stories, and sing songs become better readers and perform better in school. But almost 2/3rds of Arkansas children start kindergarten unprepared, lagging their peers in critical language, math, and social-emotional skills.

**According to the Arkansas Community Foundation's Aspire Arkansas Report, only 32% of Arkansas third graders are proficient in reading.** Third grade is considered an important milestone in a student's career in terms of reading proficiency and is correlated to whether a student will graduate from high school. The Aspire Arkansas report indicates that, in school districts in distress, third grade reading proficiency levels are below the state average.

**ARIL completed the 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 students that participated in the Imagination Library - going back to 2010 - and those students that did not participate in the program. This research demonstrated that enrollment in DPIL decreases retention, and increases kindergarten readiness and third grade literacy test scores by 18.26%. These findings are consistent with other studies on the impact of the Imagination Library conducted around the nation over the past 25 years.

### Kindergarten Readiness

In 2023, ARIL continued to analyze the data, diving deeper into the school readiness component. This is where the most impact was seen in children who received Imagination Library books. ARIL worked with the Arkansas Research Center to analyze scores on the Qualls Kindergarten Readiness Assessment that all preschool children took from 2013-2017. This analysis showed that not only were Imagination Library children more likely to be school ready, but that the program is closing the achievement gap for low socioeconomic children by a significant amount. Low socioeconomic children that were enrolled in DPIL scored 5-10% higher in every section, compared to low socioeconomic children not enrolled in the program. We found that opportunity gaps often create achievement gaps. Closing opportunity gaps help close achievement gaps.

### Serving Those In Need

In 2017 and 2019, ARIL conducted an early study with the University of Central Arkansas to provide research on the program's impact to guide literacy decisions in Arkansas. First year findings showed that although the Imagination Library is a program free to all demographics and does not have any income requirements, low-income families were less likely to enroll in the program. In response to the research data, ARIL was intentional in seeking collaborative partnerships to ensure *all* children in the state received books. ARIL worked to minimize the impact poverty had on Arkansas children's reading, and was able to change data positively in less than two years. Below is the result of the study that compares strategic growth from October 2017 to March 2019.

### Original October 2017 Study:

- Represented 56 counties in Arkansas
- Approximately 16,700 children across the state of Arkansas

As the poverty level of the county increased, the number of students in the county enrolled in the Imagination Library decreased. The data revealed as the poverty level increased one percent the number of students enrolled decreased by .40. Implications from that statistic is; if there were 10 students enrolled in the lowest poverty county there would be zero students enrolled in one of the highest poverty counties.

### **March 2019 Study:**

- Represented 71 counties in Arkansas
- Approximately 29,443 children across the state of Arkansas

The new study reveals that, as poverty levels increased by one percent, the number of students enrolled decreased by .27. Implications from the current statistical data is that if there are 10 students enrolled in one of the lowest poverty counties there will be 3.3 students enrolled in one of the highest poverty counties. **This represents a 33% increase in enrollment of families living in poverty in less than two years.** Investment in high-quality early childhood programs for at-risk children from birth to age 5 delivers a 7-10% annual return on investment through improved education, health, social and economic outcomes, increased productivity, and the reduced need for social spending. **ARIL will not only create a culture of reading for all children, it will work to minimize the impact poverty has on children's reading success.**

### **Partnerships**

ARIL is committed to addressing book access disparities and closing the poverty gap through strategic partnerships. While our local affiliates excel in community collaborations, ARIL aims to enhance their impact by fostering statewide alliances. National and statewide partnerships include Little Free Library, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Human Resources, Baptist Health Foundation, CHI St. Vincents, Blue & You Foundation, Arkansas Community Foundation, Arkansas Humanities Council, Excel Before Eight, University of Central Arkansas, Arkansas Head Start, Bank OZK, First Security Bank, and other local birthing hospitals, among others.

For instance, our collaboration with Baptist Health Medical System and the Baptist Health Foundation led to the "Books from Birth" program. This statewide initiative allows birthing hospitals to enroll newborns, educate parents, and gift them their first Imagination Library book before leaving the hospital. Several of our birthing hospital partners commit to funding 1-3 years of books for every baby born in their facility.

These statewide strategic partnerships, combined with local affiliates' efforts to promote parental involvement, play a crucial role in cultivating a reading culture in Arkansas. ARIL achieves this by delivering age-appropriate books directly to families' mailboxes each month, creating a culture of reading at home. Moreover, ARIL actively collaborates with both state and local partners in every Arkansas community, connecting local affiliates with potential partner organizations, community leaders, educators, policymakers, funders, parents, and caregivers.

Our mission extends to disseminating Dolly Parton's Imagination Library's best practices throughout every county in the state, recognizing that early learning experiences profoundly impact health, social well-being, and economic outcomes. DPIL's book-gifting program contributes to elevating the overall quality of early childhood development in Arkansas.

## Two Generation Approach

The Imagination Library program's unique approach provides a two-generation impact, inspiring both parents and children to embrace education and literacy. By delivering free, high-quality, age-appropriate books directly to families' homes, the program nurtures a shared enthusiasm for reading. These monthly book deliveries not only spark joy in children as they receive mail but also motivate parents to engage in reading with their excited youngsters.

Starting at birth, the Imagination Library promotes early parent-child book reading, establishing a vital routine. This regular interaction encourages increased reading frequency, creating more opportunities for parent-child bonding and play. Spending quality time together enhances parents' awareness of their children's reading skills and interests, fostering emotional stability and a harmonious family atmosphere, especially for families facing challenges.

Additionally, each Imagination Library book includes a family literacy component, offering parents valuable suggestions for extending the reading experience beyond the pages. These book-specific reading tips, prompts, and activities promote active engagement, even for parents with limited literacy skills. Many parents have reported reading more frequently to their children and gaining confidence in their reading abilities thanks to the program.

Furthermore, the Imagination Library has contributed to increased enrollment in adult literacy programs in some communities, creating a ripple effect in building adult literacy and vocabulary awareness. Recognizing adult literacy as the foundation of workforce development, this initiative strengthens the community's overall literacy fabric.

The Imagination Library's partnerships with community organizations, churches, schools, and preschool centers play a pivotal role in fostering this two-generation approach. These collaborations facilitate access to parents, offering vital information to raise literacy awareness and promote the parent as a child's first teacher. Ultimately, the program cultivates a culture of family literacy, positively impacting workforce development and education for both parents and children. This holistic approach ensures that both generations are reached and motivated to embrace education and literacy, creating a thriving learning environment.

### THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

based on the classic fairy tale • illustrations by Caroly Gleedbill

THIS CLASSIC TALE FEATURES THREE PIGS, using different materials to build their houses and a wolf who tries to blow their houses down.

For the first reading, curl up with your child and read the book together. Enjoy. For the next readings, here are some ideas for activities to do with your child. Don't try to do everything each time you read it. And most of all, have fun and enjoy sharing the story with your child.

#### STARTING UP

- After reading the title, count the pigs on the cover: "I see one, two, three pigs!"
- Point to the materials in their hands and wonder aloud what they will do with the straw, bricks, and sticks in the story.

#### READING THE STORY

- Talk about the work the pigs are doing as they build their houses and ask if your child likes to build things.
- When the wolf blows the houses down, ask your child to blow at the book.
- At the end, point out that all of the pigs' houses are now brick. Talk about how they are all safe and how keeping your family safe is a way of showing love.

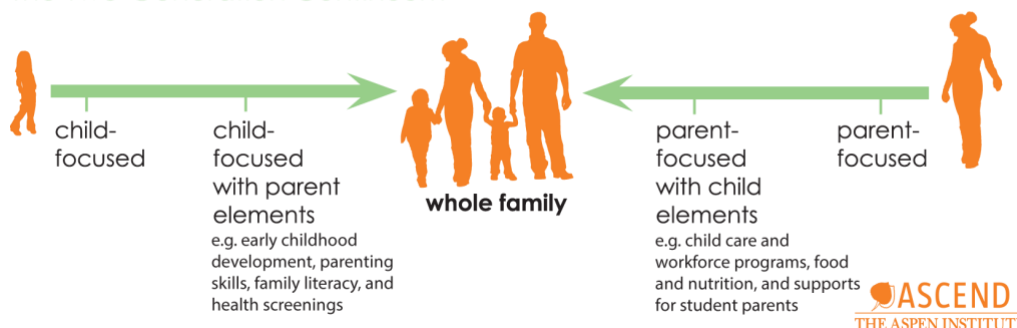
#### AFTER THE STORY

- Ask your child questions about the story.
  - Which material was the strongest: straw, sticks, or bricks?
  - The last pig helps keep her sisters safe. How did she do that?
- Learning on the Go:
  - Build some structures at home using different types of materials, such as paper, cardboard, cans, or blocks. See which structures topple most easily and which are the strongest.
  - Take turns pretending to be a pig or a wolf and chase each other with the wolf blowing and the pig running.

These Reading Activities are Presented in Collaboration with the Library of Congress, loc.gov



### The Two-Generation Continuum





# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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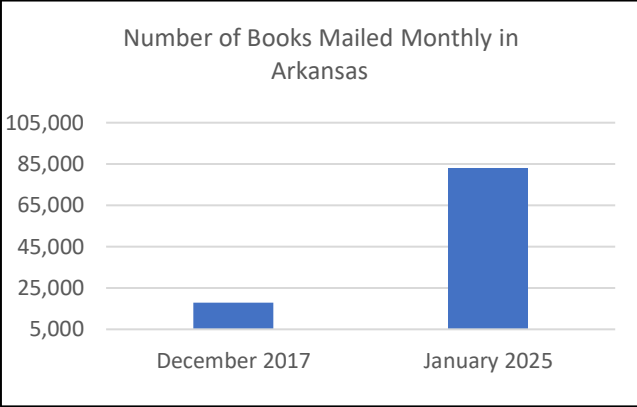
**ARIL has four goals to ensure an effective implementation plan for delivery:**

**Goal 1: Provide support to ensure healthy affiliates in all 75 counties.**

Since the establishment of the state office in August 2017, ARIL has worked with local affiliates and Arkansas communities to grow the number of counties served. ARIL met our goal of coverage in all 75 counties in 2020. Now ARIL is focusing on strengthening affiliate infrastructure, growing enrollment and fundraising capacity, and engaging communities through current partners and potential new partnerships.

**Goal 2: Serve 65% or more of the total 0 - 5 population in Arkansas.**

Since 2017, the number of children receiving books has increased from 16,700 to over 83,000. ARIL continues to work with all Arkansas counties to grow enrollment to 117,860 - 65% of the children age 0 to 5 in the state of Arkansas (181,324). After reaching the 65% goal, ARIL will continue to grow the number of children receiving books in the state. ARIL desires for ALL children ages 0-5 to receive books.



**Goal 3: Provide 50% matching dollars to support affiliates.**

ARIL works with DPIL and the local county affiliates to provide support for the success of the programs in Arkansas. In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, ARIL has funding from a federal grant that covers 50% of the cost of books for every affiliate, leaving local affiliates to fund the remaining 50% of expenses. Grant funds ensure that ARIL can help Arkansas affiliates continue intentional enrollment growth by reducing the financial burden at the local level.

**Goal 4: Provide research to show the Imagination Library’s impact on the culture of reading and grade-level reading to gain sustainable funding.**

As of 2023, ARIL has provided research showing the impact of the Imagination Library on the culture of reading and grade-level reading. As stated above, the initial 2021 study demonstrated that enrollment in the Imagination Library increases retention, kindergarten readiness, and third grade literacy test scores. Further research in 2023, showed that the Imagination Library improved children's school readiness.

# SUSTAINABILITY

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The Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) has been successful in growing a strong base of county programs. By creating partnerships with statewide and national entities as well, the program model is successfully sustained using financial plans and national best practices.

ARIL understands the importance of building both public and private funding for the sustainability of this program. In partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education and the University of Central Arkansas, ARIL has a federal grant that covers 50% of the cost of books for every child enrolled in the state, leaving local affiliates to fund the remaining amount. These funds ensure that ARIL can help affiliates continue to grow enrollment by reducing the financial burden at the local level. In addition, ARIL is pursuing a stronger position within the state legislature. During the 2023 Arkansas General Assembly, [Senate Bill 416 was passed, becoming Act 640](#), to support Imagination Library in Arkansas. However, this is not a funding bill.

Concurrently, ARIL is building an endowment to ensure sustainability. ARIL has \$2.5 million in the endowment fund, with a 30 year goal of raising \$30 million. At \$30 million, an endowment will produce \$1.5 million in interest, enabling ARIL to sustain operations and the 50% match for all local affiliates to reduce the cost of books.

According to the most current U.S. Census, there are 181,324 children under the age of five in Arkansas. Research by DPIL reveals that 65% of the population will enroll in the program. 65% of 181,324 is 117, 860 children, which gives us Arkansas’ target population. It costs \$31.20 each year to enroll a child in the Imagination Library program. To strengthen the impact and sustainability of local Arkansas affiliates, the state office has reduced the local costs by 50%. To scale the delivery system of books to reach a minimum of 65% of the 0-5 population, approximately \$3.5 million is needed to pay for the total cost of books and mailing.

The table below is the 9-year budget progression to scale the program to deliver books to a minimum of 65% of children in Arkansas.

<b>Years 1 - 5: 2020 - 2024</b> (Growth 20-46%)	<b>Year 6: 2025</b> (Growth 46-50%)	<b>Year 7: 2026</b> (Growth 50-55%)	<b>Year 8: 2027</b> (Growth 55-60%)	<b>Year 9: 2028</b> (Growth 60-65%)
Enrollment growth was 39,875 (21%) to 83,400 (46%).	Projected year enrollment growth from 83,400 to 90,600.	Projected year enrollment growth from 90,600 to 99,700.	Projected year enrollment growth from 99,700 to 108,800.	Projected year enrollment growth from 108,800 to 117,860.
Years 1-5: Total Book Cost <b>\$8,319,665</b>	Year 6: Total Book Cost <b>\$2,714,595</b>	Year 7: Total Book Cost <b>\$2,968,951</b>	Year 8: Total Book Cost <b>\$3,251,392</b>	Year 9: Total Book Cost <b>\$3,534,632</b>
Affiliate 50% Book Cost Match: <b>\$4,159,832</b>	Affiliate 50% Book Cost Match: <b>\$1,357,297</b>	Affiliate 50% Book Cost Match: <b>\$1,484,475</b>	Affiliate 50% Book Cost Match: <b>\$1,625,696</b>	Affiliate 50% Book Cost Match: <b>\$1,767,316</b>



**Budget Description**

The budget above shows a comparison of what it would cost to run a direct mail book gifting program with the matching support of DPIL and without the matching support from DPIL. This includes only the expenses associated with books, postage, database, book selection, and operations. It does not include expenses for staff, facilities, utilities, equipment, office supplies, advertising, or travel. Imagination Library affiliates in Arkansas save approximately 90% in costs by running this program in partnership with DPIL.

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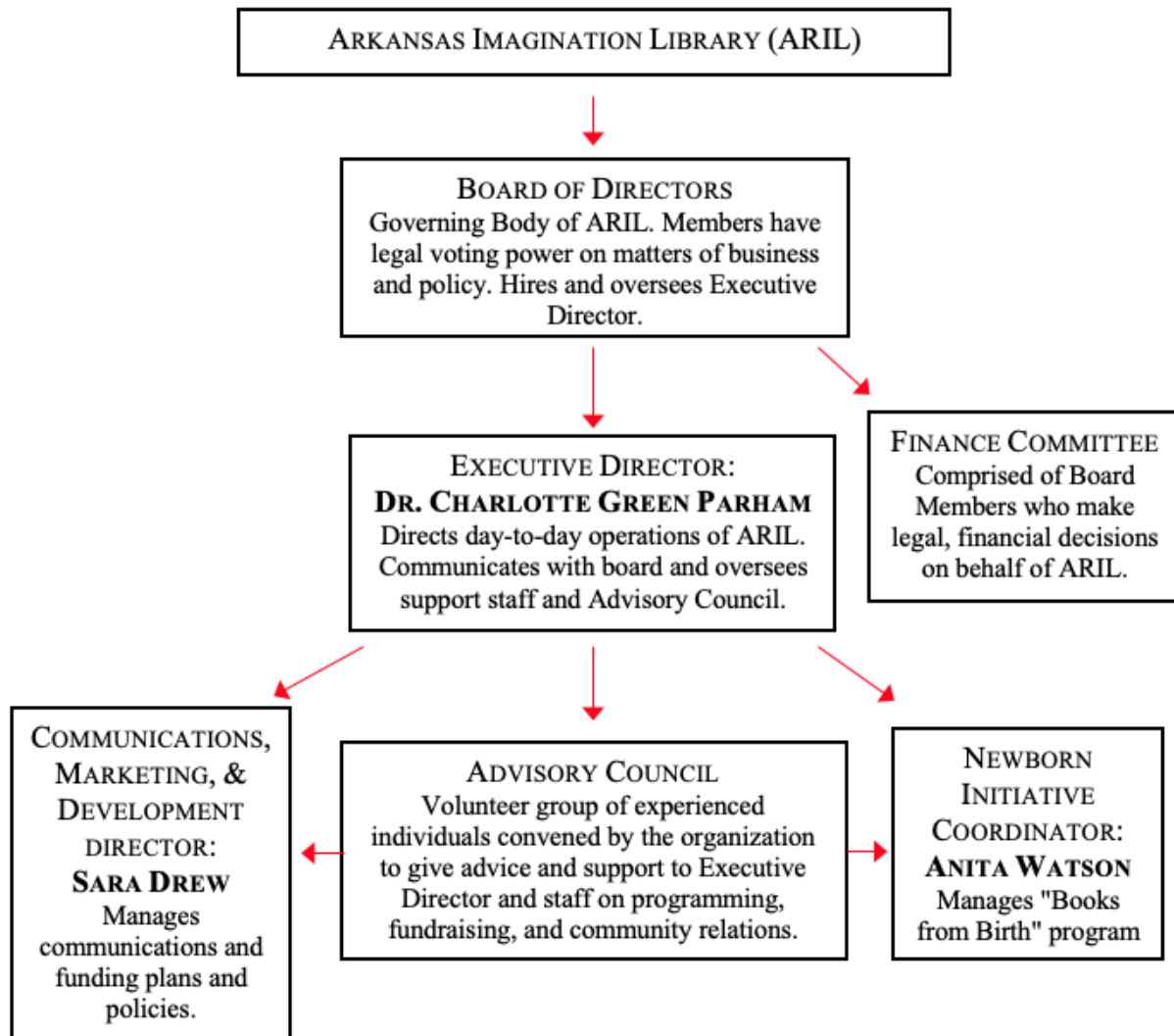
# APPENDIX

## Arkansas Imagination Library: Board of Directors for 2025

	Title	First Name	Last Name	Board Title	Place of Employment
1	Mr.	Fred	Leonard	Chair	State Farm Leonard Agency, Owner
2	Dr.	Linda	Eilers	Vice Chair	University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Clinical Associate Professor of Childhood Education
3	Mr.	Lavon	Morton	Treasurer/ Secretary	ArcBest Corporation Senior VP, Accountant, current Ft. Smith City Director Ward 3
4	Dr.	Houston	Davis	Member	University of Central Arkansas, President
5	Ms.	Jackie	Govan	Member	Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office, Collaboration Director
6	Ms.	Lisenne	Rockefeller	Member	President and chair of the Winrock Group Inc. and Winrock Farms Inc., Philanthropist
7	Ms.	Mireya	Reith	Member	Founding Executive Director of Arkansas United
8	Dr.	Bobby	Hart	Member	Searcy School District, Superintendent of Schools
9	Sen.	Clarke	Tucker	Member	Poynter Tucker Law Firm, Lawyer, current AR State Representative
10	Mrs.	Courtney	Pledger	Member	Executive Director and CEO of Arkansas PBS/AETN
11	Mrs.	Leigh Scanlon	Keener	Member	Joyfully Engaged Learning Arkansas, Founder and Executive Director

12	Dr.	Sylvia	Simon	Member	Physician at Jefferson Regional Medical, Family Medicine; Chairman of the Arkansas Medical Board, Medical Director of Lincoln County Health Department and Hospice Home Care
13	Dr.	Richard	Valentine	Board Emeritus Member	Valentine Consulting, LLC, President, former College President
14	Mr.	Jerry	Adams	Board Emeritus Member	Arkansas Research Alliance, Retired President/CEO
15	Mr.	Eddie	Herndon	Board Emeritus Member	OGE Energy Corp., Community Affairs Manager

# Organizational Chart







# 2025 BLUE RIBBON SELECTIONS

Titles on this list are subject to change.

**UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA**  
Core Program

The first book a child receives is  
**The Little Engine That Could™**  
(customized version)

The month a child turns 5 they will receive  
**Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!**  
(customized version)

## GROUP 6 Children born in 2020

- Cinderella -- with Dogs!
- Rabbit's Snow Dance
- + The Tree in Me
- Joy Takes Root
- + First Day Critter Jitters
- You Are a Honey Bee!
- Help Wanted: One Rooster
- + Wild Horses
- Exactly as Planned
- Steppin' Out
- Grilled Cheese? Yes, Please!
- Something Wild
- The Power of Yeti



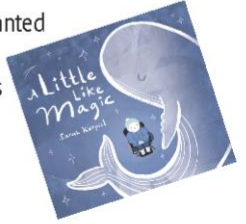
## GROUP 5 Children born in 2021

- How to Get Your Octopus to School
- Full Moon Pups
- How to Say Hello to a Worm
- A Book for Bear
- Danbi's Favorite Day
- The Rabbit Listened
- When You Love a Book
- The Outside
- Being Home
- Enola's Best Friend
- There's a Monster in Your Book
- A Unicorn, a Dinosaur, and a - Shark Were Riding a Bicycle
- + Coat of Many Colors



## GROUP 4 Children born in 2022

- + Corduroy
- How We Say I Love You
- A Little Emotional
- This is the Tree We Planted
- Nubby
- Raindrops to Rainbows
- Gift & Box
- Roar-Choo!
- Little Owl's Love
- Jonny Lambert's Bear - and Bird Explore the Seashore
- Gaga Mistake Day
- A Little Like Magic
- What's New, Daniel? Somewhere Right Now
- Rocket Ship, Solo Trip



## GROUP 3 Children born in 2023

- The Animal Song
- Where Do Diggers Sleep at Night? Squeak!
- + Green Tractor
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar's Nature Walk
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar Eats Breakfast
- Birding for Babies: Backyard Birds
- Dandelion Magic
- Ice Cream Face
- K is for Kindness
- + Solitary Animals
- The Big Slide
- Llama Llama Meets - the Babysitter
- Buffalo Fluffalo



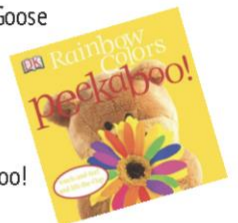
## GROUP 2 Children born in 2024

- Where is Your Nose?
- Eric Carle's Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star - and Other Nursery Rhymes
- Home Builders
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar's First Summer
- + My First Bilingual Farm
- + Richard Scarry's 100 First Words
- Tad and Dad
- Llama Llama Feelings
- "Slowly, Slowly, Slowly," Said the Sloth
- My Feet Go
- Bedtime, Here I Come!
- Little Poems for Tiny Ears
- Play with Me
- Llama Llama Red Pajama
- Good Night Gorilla



## GROUP 1 Children born in 2025

- Llama Llama Hide & Seek
- Look at the Animals
- Can You Guess? Animal Sounds - with The Very Hungry Caterpillar
- Pudgy Pat A Cake
- Pudgy Book of Mother Goose
- + Baby Sounds
- Baby! Talk!
- + Sleep Tight, Polar Bear
- + Who Says Quack?
- Rainbow Colors Peekaboo!
- Roald Dahl Colors



• Signifies a new book to the program + Signifies a bilingual English / Spanish title or Hispanic Content

