

The BookStart Fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne.

Could at-risk infants and toddlers in your community benefit from their parents having books to read to them and knowing why and how to do so? If so, you may be interested in learning how to create a local initiative like The BookStart Fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne.

Every dollar contributed to the BookStart Fund purchases durable board books for parents to read with babies and toddlers with the goal of closing the “30-million-word gap” for children in Allen County.

The Fund distributes the books local agencies to be given as gifts to the families in their parent education, abuse prevention, and in-home mentoring programs, such as Healthy Families Indiana and Parents As Teachers. Parents learn to use inflection, questions, prediction, and other strategies to enhance their child’s brain development.

Through repeated home visits and modeling of book sharing by trained staff, parents and other caregivers make reading books with their children a regular, nurturing family routine.

Research shows that by age 3, children from welfare homes typically have heard 30 million fewer words spoken to them than children from affluent homes (Hart& Risley). The achievement gaps between children from language-rich and language-poor homes tend only to widen from there. Parents and care givers can close that gap by reading and talking with their children daily. The BookStart Fund also addresses the fact that families in poverty typically have zero children’s books in the home.

By buying in bulk, the BookStart Fund buys books with text and pictures that interest children and parents alike at a 50%-or-greater discount. Family-serving agencies appreciate the generous flow of books that strengthen their programs and families.

Founder Ginny Clark will have materials at the resource table at the Indiana Summit for Economic Development via Early Learning Coalitions June 5 in Bloomington. More at <http://bookstartfund.org>.

John Peirce, May24, 2017