



BEST BEGINNINGS
Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

BEST BEGINNINGS

OUR MISSION

**Best Beginnings is a public-private partnership that
mobilizes people and resources to ensure all
Alaska children begin school ready to succeed.**

OUR WORK



GROWING READERS

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
- Weekly parent e-newsletters
- Kindergarten readiness camps

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

- Educational series on early learning/kindergarten readiness
- Family engagement events
- Early learning activity guides

ENGAGING COMMUNITY

- Advocacy on behalf of early childhood in Alaska
- Multimedia publisher
- Research & resource database

WHERE WE WORK

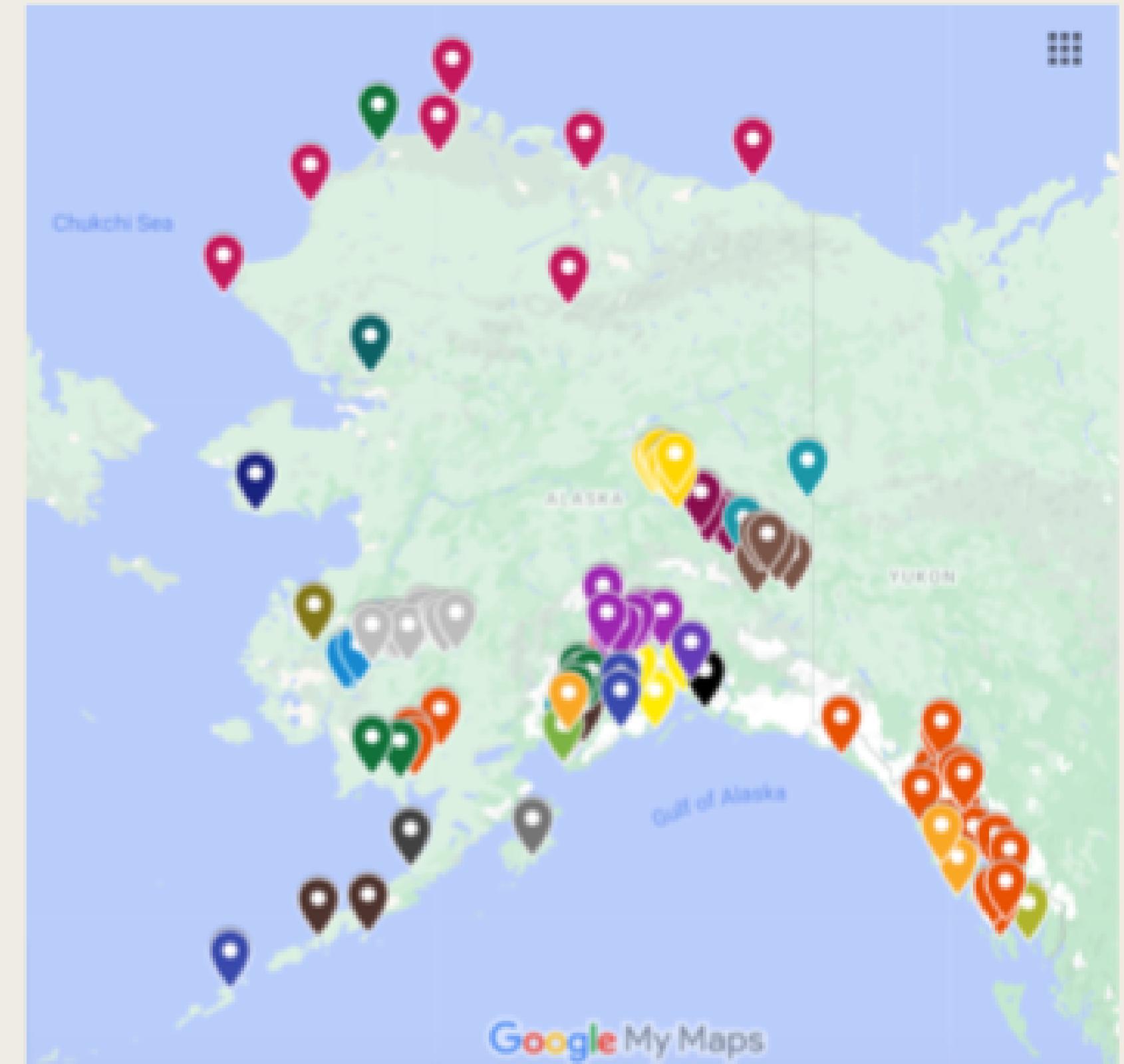
DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

- Operated in 138 Alaska Communities by 29 affiliate partners
- Serving 14,207 children
- Delivers monthly books in the mail from birth to age 5 at NO COST to the family
- Affiliates pay roughly \$30 per enrolled child per year to operate the program

Statewide enrollment trends:

*Peak in August 2015 = 23,230

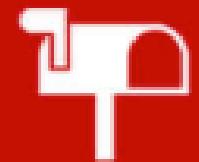
Full community list: BestBeginningsAlaska.org/Imagination-Library



INPUTS**STRATEGIES****SHORT-TERM****INTERMEDIATE****LONG-TERM**

Books mailed to home in child's name

Book sharing guides included with books



Target families with children ages birth to five

Caregivers read daily with children

Caregivers read books multiple times

**Enhanced home literacy environment**

- Earlier onset of caregiver/child book reading
- Increased frequency of caregiver/child book reading
- Increased duration of caregiver/child book reading sessions
- Increased number of picture books in the home

Positive attitudes about reading and motivation to read among caregivers and children

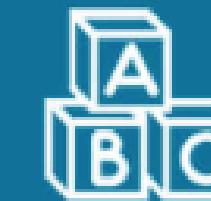
- Increased frequency of child requests for reading
- Increased frequency of child book play

Increased interactions between caregivers and children during book reading

- Increased child responses/contributions during book reading
- Increased reading skill practice

Increased emerging literacy skills

- Concepts about print
- Alphabet knowledge
- Receptive and expressive vocabulary
- Phonological awareness
- Phonological memory



Kindergarten literacy readiness



**Based on Imagination Library Research Findings and Literature Review



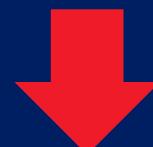
WHY IT MATTERS

In 2023-24, less than 20% of kindergarteners in Alaska entered school with all the skills experts say they need to succeed.

Alaska Developmental Profile Results show a decreasing trend that started pre-pandemic in most goal areas:



Domain 1: Physical Health, Well-being



Domain 2: Social and Emotional Development



Domain 3: Approaches to Learning

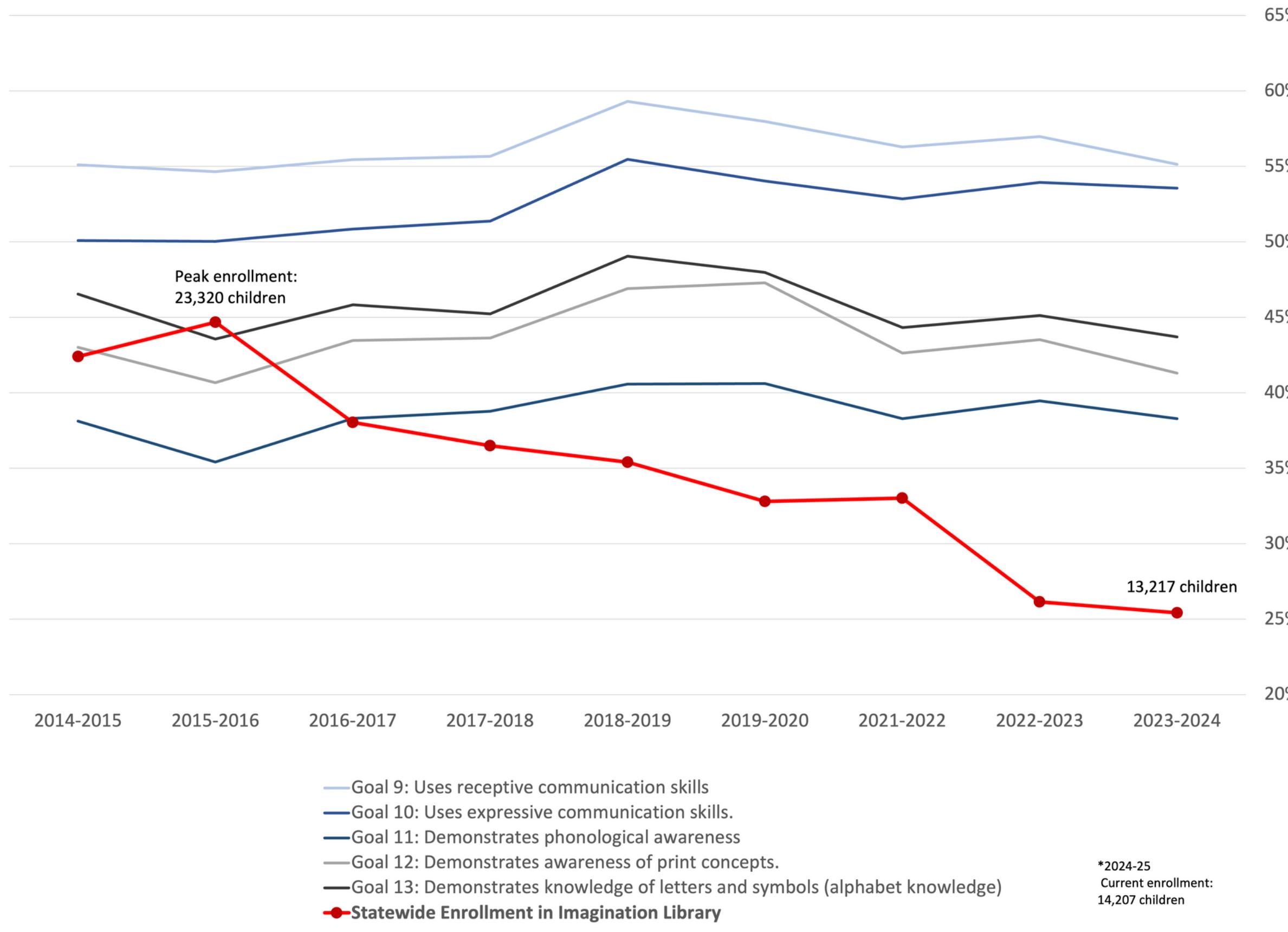


Domain 4: Cognition & General Knowledge



Domain 5: Communication, Language, and Literacy

Alaska Developmental Profile Results: Domain 5: Communication, Language, and Literacy Goals



Participation in Imagination Library is associated with:

- Increased kindergarten readiness
- Higher rates of demonstrating literacy skills on the Alaska Developmental Profile, particularly in awareness of print concepts and knowledge of letters
- Higher levels of grade 3 reading achievement and higher levels of grade 3 math achievement

Local Research:
Encouraging Early Literacy in Alaska: An Evaluation of the Imagination Library Program (2021)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Home Supports & Parent Education

- Increased investment in Parents as Teachers
- Expanded eligibility for Early Intervention Services
- Invest \$1.2 million in a statewide Imagination Library system

Access to High Quality Early Education Programs

- Additional \$30.5M investment in Child Care Benefits; HB 89
- \$12 million in state funds for federal Head Start match
- Universal Pre-K expansion & Alaska Reads Act implementation

Strengthening the System

- Adoption of Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction 2020-2025
- Streamlined and universal application system to reduce administrative burden on families qualifying for child care assistance, WIC/SNAP, Denali KidCare, and Head Start services.