



BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

House Finance Subcommittee on
Education & Early Development
March 15, 2019

Our Mission



- To mobilize people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed
- How do we do it?
 - Family engagement & parent education
 - Community-based
 - Research
 - Collaboration
 - Innovation



Resources & Outreach

- BestBeginningsAlaska.org, Facebook, YouTube, e-news
- Convening large and small groups
- Advocacy support
- Training and technical assistance to partners
- Activity guides and cards
- Innovative projects
 - *Babies on Track*
 - StoryTRACKS
 - Parent Newsletter via email
 - Alaska's Imagination Library



Books in the Home

- Just the mere presence of books profoundly impacts a child's academic achievement.
- Each additional book yields more “bang for your book” among the book-poor than among the book-rich.
- The greatest impact of book access occurs among the least educated and poorest families.

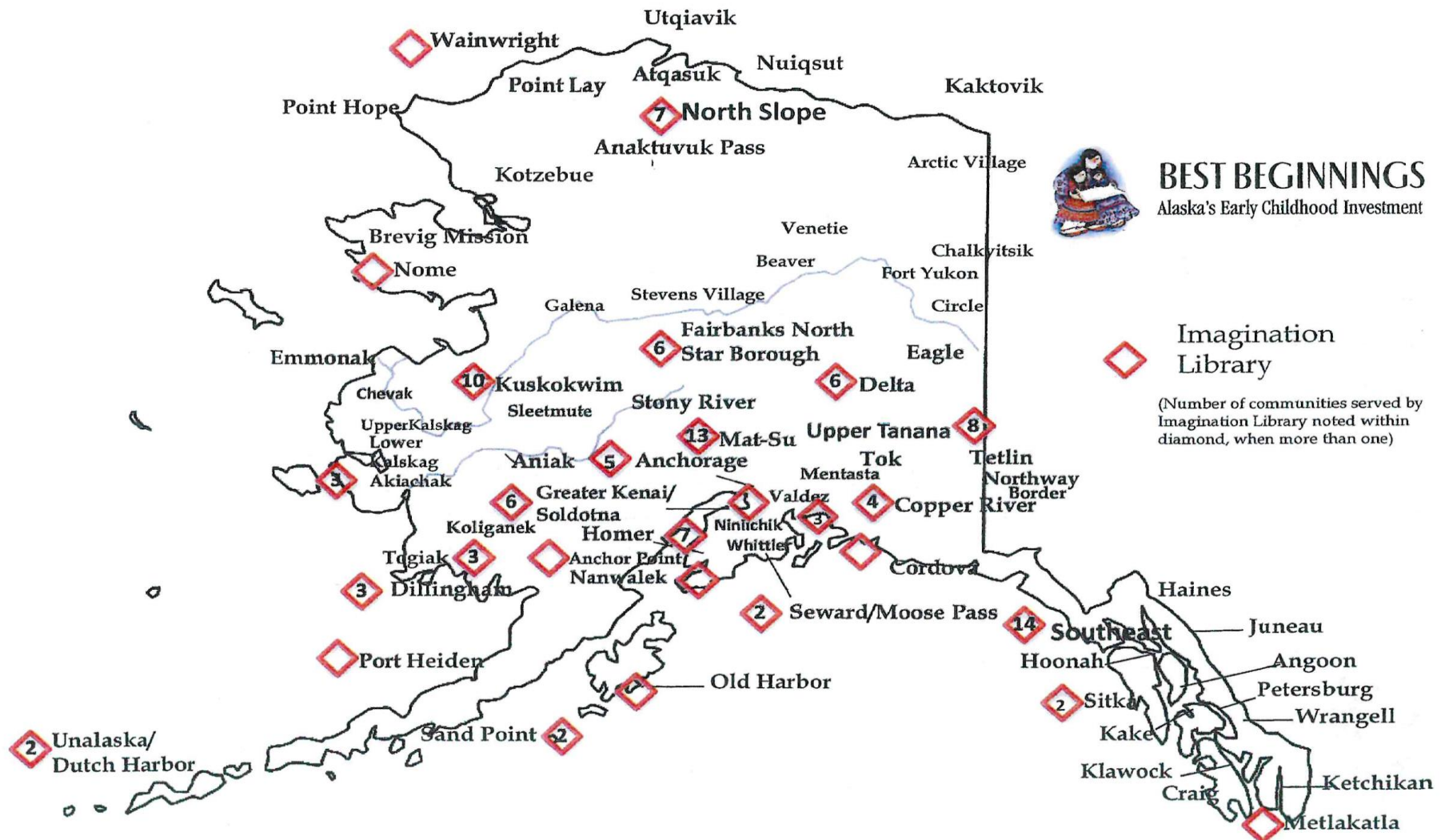
Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 2010



Imagination Library

- Age-appropriate, quality children's books
- Free to families
- “Get the whole community involved in reading with children!”
- Family engagement
- Research results
- Numbers

Imagination Libraries in Alaska



Imagination Libraries in Alaska





Why does it matter?

- Reading regularly with young children stimulates optimal patterns of brain development and strengthens parent-child relationships at a critical time in child development, which, in turn, builds language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that last a lifetime. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014)

State of Babies Yearbook 2019



- **Alaska's high ranking** in the Positive Early Learning Experiences domain primarily reflects that Alaska is in the Working Effectively tier for the **percentages of parents who report reading or singing songs to their babies every day.**



Book Redistribution

- Undeliverable books returned – address changed if possible
- “Book Bundles” to children without direct access to Imagination Library
 - More books to more children
 - More Imagination Libraries



On Behalf of the State...

A.S. 14.03.072 Early Literacy Information

- (b) ...educate parents and guardians about the importance of early literacy...[through] a website that provides access to current research on early literacy, book recommendations, and vocabulary-building exercises.



BEST BEGINNINGS
Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

HOME

WHAT WE DO

RESOURCES

HOW TO GIVE

NEWS

ABOUT

GROWING

readers for success in school and
in life.

WHAT WE DO

WHAT YOU DO



GROWING READERS



BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES



ENGAGING COMMUNITY





- Parent e-Newsletter
- 5,500 subscribers
- Statewide rollout to Imagination Library families
- Open to all families with young children

Daily Literacy

Ways You Can Help Your Child...

Get Daily Doses of Literacy

- Talk about [anything and everything!](#)
 - *Playtime*
 - Talk about the colors, shape, and feel of the toys being used.
 - Be descriptive when making requests such as "Can you pass me the round toy with the blue stripes?"
 - *Cooking & Eating*
 - Name the foods you can see and taste in each dish.
 - Narrate the steps and name the utensils as you work through a recipe.
 - *Shopping*
 - Share with your daughter a few grocery items on your list, and ask her to repeat it back to you. As you find an item ask her to recall what else you still need to find.
 - Describe two pieces of produce and ask your child which one you should pick.
- **Narrate what you do** as you go through your daily routines. Soon your son will start to connect the words you say with the actions and objects around him.
- Point out the words you see in your environment. Look for [words in your home](#) on food labels, packages, newspapers, magazines, mail, street signs, and buildings.
- Celebrate when your daughter starts recognizing symbols around her. "Look, mom! A STOP sign!" The more she realizes the **meaning** of what she's learning, the more excited and motivated she'll be.
- Give your son his full attention when he tries to talk to you. You're showing him that **his words are important** to you, which motivates him to talk and communicate even more.
- Pair a favorite book up with a favorite activity for a special story time. Take a book to read about colors with you to the museum, or a book about fall to your favorite park.
- As your child gets older **ask questions that keep the conversation going**. "What do you think of this rainy weather today?" "Where do you think all the rain goes?"
- Remember that literacy is much more than reading skills alone. Talking with and listening to your child are all important ways you [support the development of your child's communication and literacy skills](#).





“In an era of tight government budgets...the real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: invest in the very young.”

James J. Heckman, PhD
Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences



BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Abbe Hensley, Executive Director
ahensley@BestBeginningsAlaska.org

BestBeginningsAlaska.org
Best Beginnings on Facebook