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## **Legislators and community leaders read to young children in early learning programs across the state to promote high quality early childhood education and early literacy**

**Providence, RI (May 11, 2017): *Rhode Island Reads : the Campaign for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading*** —led by United Way of Rhode Island and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT — teamed up with Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children to arrange for community leaders to read at early learning programs across the state.

Guest readers organized over three days in April and May 2017 included 19 state legislators, including Senate President Dominick Ruggiero and Representative Grace Diaz (Chairwoman of the Legislative Commission on Child Care). There were also 15 community leaders who read to young children, including RI Department of Education Commissioner Ken Wagner; Rhode Island Department of Human Services Administrator for Family and Children's Services, Karen Beese; members of the United Way of Rhode Island's Women's Leadership Council; and employees from Hasbro, Inc.

*Please see page 3 for a full list of guest readers and early learning program locations. [Please click here](#) to see photos from guest readers.*

The event was held during The Week of the Young Child, which is an annual celebration hosted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers and families. The Week of the Young Child helps to focus a spotlight on the importance of high quality early learning programs for school readiness, and that investments in high-quality early learning programs yield high returns for student success.

"What better way to hit home the importance of early learning opportunities for Rhode Island's young children than to have legislators and other community leaders visit early childhood classrooms and see children fully engaged and thriving. We were excited to promote the importance of early literacy through this special reading opportunity that connected legislators and other community leaders with some of our state's youngest students," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

"All young children need and deserve high-quality early learning experiences that will prepare them for life," said Lisa Hildebrand, Executive Director of Rhode Island AEYC. "Week of the Young Child is a time for Rhode Island to celebrate our youngest learners and we are excited to be a part of that!"

### ***Rhode Island Reads: The Campaign for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading***

United Way of Rhode Island and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT lead *Rhode Island Reads: The Campaign for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading*. Rhode Island Reads connects people, organizations, businesses, and communities around the shared goal of doubling the number of third graders reading on grade-level by 2025.

*Rhode Island Reads* is made up of many organizations and partners who are dedicated to reaching our goal of 75% of Rhode Island third graders reading at grade-level by 2025. Partners include:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics, RI Chapter
- Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce
- Hasbro, Inc.
- Integra Community Care Network
- Providence Talks
- Reach Out and Read RI
- Rhode Island College
- Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
- The Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children
- The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services
- United Way of Rhode Island

To learn more about the Campaign, and to become involved, please visit [www.rireads.org](http://www.rireads.org)

### **Why Does Third-Grade Reading Matter?**

Educators and researchers have long recognized the importance of achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade, when children begin to shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Students who do not read proficiently by then struggle in the later grades and are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their proficient peers.

### **How Are Rhode Island Children Doing?**

- In 2016, 40% of Rhode Island third graders met expectations on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) English language arts assessment, compared with 37% of students in 2015.
- In Rhode Island in 2016, 13% of third-grade English Language Learners met proficiency, compared with 8% in 2015.
- In Rhode Island in 2016, 25% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared with 56% of higher-income third graders.
- In Rhode Island in 2016, 49% of Asian and White third graders met expectations, compared with 26% of Black, 24% of Hispanic, and 15% of Native American third graders. All information is from the *2017 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*. For more data and information, please visit [www.rikidscount.org](http://www.rikidscount.org).

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United Way of Rhode Island and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT lead  
*Rhode Island Reads: The Campaign for 3rd-Grade Reading.*



**Table 1: Elected Officials Reading in Early Learning Programs**

<b>Elected official</b>	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>City</b>
Sen. Joshua Miller	Comprehensive Community Action Program Child Development Center-Gansett Avenue	155 Gansett Avenue	Cranston
Rep. Robert Jacquard	The Children's Workshop	546 Budlong Road	Cranston
Rep. Alex Marazalkowski	Four Corners Early Learning Center YMCA	160 Bear Hill Road	Cumberland
Rep. Gregg Amore	East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) Head Start-East Providence	386 Willett Avenue	East Providence
Sen. William Conley	East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) Head Start-East Providence	386 Willett Avenue	East Providence
Rep. Julie Casimiro	Hidden Hills Early Learning Center	190 Yawgoo Valley Road	Exeter
Sen. Louis DiPalma	KinderArt	146 Aquidneck Avenue	Middletown
Rep. Deb Ruggiero	Sandpipers Early Learning Center (Child & Family Services)	31 John Clarke Road	Middletown
Senate President Dominick Ruggerio	TriCounty Head Start – Waterman Ave.	79 Waterman Avenue	North Providence
Rep. Carlos Tobon	Children's Friend and Service - Dean Center	13 Legion Drive	Pawtucket
Sen. Elizabeth Crowley	Heritage Park Early Learning Center/Pawtucket YMCA	333 Roosevelt Avenue	Pawtucket
Rep. Aaron Regunberg	David C. Isenberg Family Early Childhood Center (Jewish Community Center)	401 Elmgrove Avenue	Providence
Sen. Gayle Goldin	Brown Fox Point Early Childhood Education Center	150 Hope Street	Providence
Rep. Grace Diaz	Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center	700 Elmwood Avenue	Providence
Sen. Maryellen Goodwin	Smith Hill Early Childhood Learning Center	25 Danforth Street	Providence
Rep. Scott Slater	Over the Rainbow	50 Niantic Avenue	Providence
Rep. Teresa Tanzi	Joyful Learning Child Academy – TriCounty Community Action	1935 Kingstown Road	South Kingstown
Rep. Evan Shanley	CHILD, Inc. - Centerville Road	849 Centerville Road	Warwick
Rep. Michael Morin	Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association - Highland Park	2390 Mendon Road	Woonsocket

**Table 2: Community Leaders Reading in Early Learning Programs**

<b>Community Leader</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Program Name</b>	<b>City</b>
Lisa Hildebrand	Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children	Saint Elizabeth Manor, East Bay	Bristol
Erin Flores	Hasbro Toys	The Children's Workshop - Central Falls	Central Falls
Petra Jenkins	Women's Leadership Council at UWRI	The Children's Workshop-Cranston	Cranston
Lynn Corwin	United Way of Rhode Island	Four Corners Early Learning Center YMCA	Cumberland
Adam Greenman	United Way of Rhode Island	The Children's Workshop-Rumford	East Providence
Mary Ann Shallcross Smith	Women's Leadership Council at UWRI	Tri-Town Community Action Agency- Head Start	Johnston
Tejal Tarro	Women's Leadership Council at UWRI	Over the Rainbow Learning Center	Johnston
Art Nevins	Rhode Island Governor's Office	The Children's Workshop-Lincoln	Lincoln
Lisa Nugent	Rhode Island Department of Education	Sandpipers Early Learning Center	Middletown
Marinel Russo	Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children	Dr. Pat Feinstein Child Development Center	Providence
Ken Wagner	Rhode Island Department of Education	Imagine Preschool	Providence
Charles Wood	Hasbro Toys	Children's Friend-Hartford	Providence
Laren Lamoi	Women's Leadership Council at UWRI	Westbay Children's Center	Warwick
Karen Beese	RI Department of Human Services	CHILD-Inc Payan	West Warwick
Shannon Jutras	Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children	The Children's Workshop - Westerly	Westerly