



CREATE YOUNG READERS AND LIFELONG LEARNERS

Nearly half of low-income fourth graders cannot read at a basic level. Children who do not reach reading proficiency by the end of third grade risk never catching up and are in danger of dropping out later. Until third grade, students are mastering reading and writing; after third grade, they depend on those skills to master everything else.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Support programs that **strengthen early literacy**, at the pre-school and/or early elementary stage. Some programs focus on providing extra support directly to at-risk students, while others concentrate on curriculum and on improving teachers' skill and knowledge.

HIGH IMPACT OPPORTUNITY: [Children's Literacy Initiative \(CLI\)](#) is an example of an early literacy program focused on professional development of teachers. It trains pre-K through third grade teachers in literacy techniques and provides books and coaching to help teachers implement strategies in their classrooms. Several randomized control studies have verified the effectiveness of CLI training in increasing the number of children achieving literacy benchmarks on time. In New York, an internal evaluation estimated that for every 100 students in participating classrooms, an additional 32 made benchmarks. We estimated that for less than \$600 per student, CLI enables an additional student to hit literacy benchmarks. Other benefits include improved teacher satisfaction and retention.



Photo provided by Children's Literacy Initiative

TAKE ACTION: CLI currently operates in nine states, plus the District of Columbia, and has recently received a federal grant to expand the program. Other models that have succeeded in improving early literacy include the [Success for All](#) whole school reform model and the [Reading Recovery](#) program, a school-based tutoring program focused on at-risk first graders.

TIPS: Look for teacher training programs in which mentors, coaches, and instructors are seasoned and successful classroom teachers themselves; where coaching is sustained over time; and where teacher preparation is supported by active strategies such as modeling and group assessment of student work rather than lecturing.

For more discussion of effective teacher development, see pages 26-28 of [High Impact Philanthropy to Improve Teaching Quality](#). For more on CLI and other programs to support preschool and early elementary school children, see pages 18-25 of [Pathways to Student Success](#).