

Success in life.



It starts here.



BEST BEGINNINGS
Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Best Beginnings mobilizes people and resources to ensure all Alaska children start school ready and prepared to succeed. Children who start school with the skills they need to succeed are more likely to graduate from high school, become contributing members of our society, and have healthy families of their own.

Recipe for a ready child

- **Healthy interactions**
with parents and other adults
- **Early literacy**
reading, singing, talking
- **Community support**
for early childhood
- **Mobilization, collaboration,
and advocacy**



“Being ready for kindergarten affects everything that follows. The connections from preschool to third grade reading proficiency to high school completion – a bare minimum requirement in today’s economy – could not be clearer.”

John Pepper, former CEO, Procter & Gamble

What a ready child looks like:

(kindergarten teachers agree)



Best Beginnings in Alaska

★ Early childhood partnerships identify local needs and support programs in these and surrounding communities.

● Imagination Libraries 33 Imagination Libraries serve children in 113 Alaska communities and have distributed more than 1 million books.

Number of communities served noted within the circle



Why it matters

Children who start kindergarten well prepared are much more likely to succeed in school and in life. But children who start school lacking the skills they need have a hard time catching up. Many never do. They are more likely to struggle in school and drop out, and less likely to lead healthy, productive lives. Investing in early childhood sets children on the path to success and prevents future problems from arising. Investments in the earliest years are more effective and cheaper than treating problems later in life.

In the first few years of life, about 700 new neural connections are formed every second. These connections are the foundation for all subsequent learning. Interactions such as playing, talking, singing, and reading encourage the formation of these vital connections.





Healthy interactions

Children develop in an environment of relationships. Through initiatives such as *Babies on Track* and *Words Count*, Best Beginnings shows parents the importance of frequent healthy interactions and how those interactions help children develop.



Early literacy

Early literacy means children are exposed to many words in many ways right from birth. That's why Best Beginnings spearheaded an explosion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Alaska. As of June 2015, nearly 24,000 children were enrolled in their local Imagination Libraries. Plus, Best Beginnings has made Imagination Library more meaningful through parent engagement activities and empowering local volunteers to build the programs. Best Beginnings also promotes early literacy through website resources and programs such as *Words Count*, *Babies on Track*, and StoryTRACKS.



Community support

Communities first began building early childhood partnerships with the support of Best Beginnings in 2009. Partnerships, now in six communities, identify specific local needs and how to achieve them, promote parent engagement and education, and support early literacy.

With support from Best Beginnings, the early childhood partnership in Juneau did a community survey that revealed a glaring lack of information and support about perinatal mood disorders (postpartum depression). The partnership organized funding for a support group and created educational packets and training for health care providers.



Pulling it all together

This important work doesn't just happen spontaneously. It takes leadership, grassroots support, and commitment.

Best Beginnings plays a leadership role to mobilize, collaborate, and advocate for investments in early childhood development.

“My son is now one of the best readers in his kindergarten class. He’s reading at a 1st grade level and excelling in all areas. I attribute much of his success to these programs!”

Kallyn Hanson Lang

“I couldn’t have done it without the support of Best Beginnings. They gave me the tools to help my son get a quality start in life that I couldn’t afford on my own, but it was up to me to put those tools to use. It was a true team effort to give a little boy a good start in life.”

Lynelle Davis

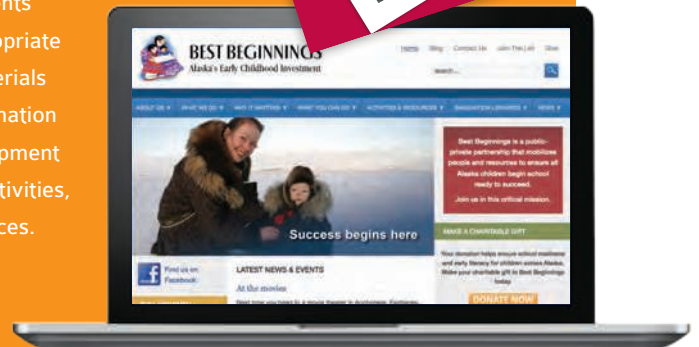


Words Count



Helpful resources

Best Beginnings maintains a wealth of wide-ranging information and tools available on its website and on Facebook. Parents can find age-appropriate activities and materials for children, information about child development and community activities, and helpful resources.



By the numbers:

1.25 million

Books distributed to Alaska children through Imagination Library

57,000

Unique visitors to Best Beginnings' website in 2014 (double the previous year)

9

Legislative sessions in which Best Beginnings and its partners have collectively advocated statewide for early childhood

23,687

Alaska children receiving a book every month through Imagination Library as of June 2015

15,500

Alaskans who participated in community partnership family events from July 2013 through December 2014

6,497

Best Beginnings TV PSAs typically broadcast every month on GCI channels

113

Alaska communities – from Unalaska to Upper Tanana, Hoonah to Wainwright – participating in Imagination Library

89% vs. 56%

Parents in Juneau who read to their children every day: 89% of those whose children are in Imagination Library, just 56% of those whose children are not.

44%

Percentage of all Alaska children under 5 participating in Imagination Library

8,555

Babies on Track video/book sets distributed since 2012

4,800

Alaskans had fun following StoryTRACKS at 22 different events in one year

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