

Background

Education is one of the main social determinants of health. Literacy is an important driver of future academic success as well as attainment of higher education and income potential. Lack of literacy and education are linked with higher levels of poverty, higher-risk sexual behavior, smoking, and lower life expectancy.

In 2017, Rochester's childhood poverty rate was 51.9%, representing an increase over the previous 5 years, making it the city with the 3rd highest rate in the United States. That same year 57% of children in the Rochester City School District were assessed as ready for kindergarten and 10% of third graders were able to pass the NY state reading test, below the state average of 43%.

Pivotal current research in literacy indicates that critical skills attained during the first three years of life determine subsequent academic achievement. Parents can have a tremendous impact on these emergent literacy skills by interactively reading books to their children, even from infancy. Early literacy is also promoted through play with alphabet-based toys like ABC blocks. Allowing children to choose their own books has also been shown to improve academic outcomes. An interventional study in Florida showed that children who were allowed to choose books to read over summer vacation showed improved reading skills when they returned from summer break compared with children who were given books they didn't choose. There are currently many programs which offer free books to families of young children to promote literacy, but these efforts could be enhanced when coupled with book choice and toys which will promote early literacy. Well child pediatric visits are an ideal setting to reinforce parents' efforts and promotion of early literacy.

Objectives

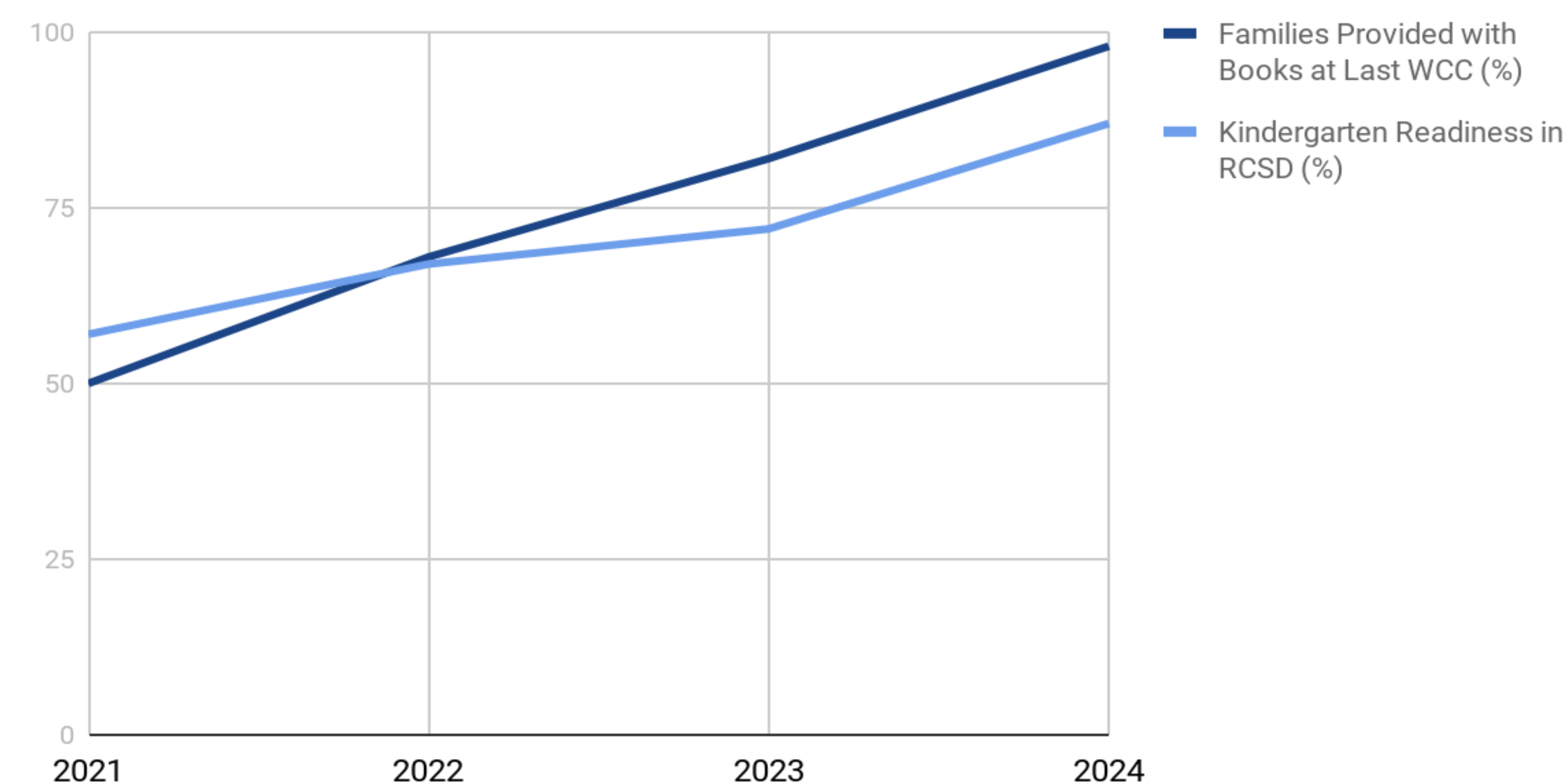
- ★ The overall objective of this project is to improve kindergarten readiness rates in Rochester City School by promoting literacy at pediatric visits.
- ★ Partner with community organizations and literacy experts to optimize our approach in reinforcing and promoting literacy behaviors at home during pediatric visits.
- ★ Standardize the implementation of the Reach Out and Read program among providers at URM pediatric practice.
- ★ Reinforce families' current practices that promote early literacy and provide supportive materials and information that will enhance these habits.

Methods/Intended Next Steps

- ★ Partnered with Rochester Public Library and Warner School of Education to identify a list of culturally responsive children's books that also promote early literacy. This list of books will be shared with our Reach Out and Read coordinator in the hope that these books can be provided to the URM pediatric practice.
- ★ Standardized approach to implementing Reach Out and Read by training pediatric residents and other providers:
 - Free books will be offered at each well-child visit from the newborn to the 5 year well-child visit.
 - Providers will be trained to ask about and positively reinforce parent-child interactions at home.
 - Providers will offer several options of books for children (or parents, depending on stage of development) to choose from.
 - Providers will also provide a set of toy ABC blocks at each 12-month visit in addition to literature that provides resources and ideas on how to promote early literacy at home.
 - Ask and record whether a book was provided at the last well child visit.
- ★ Utilize the hashtag #read4luv with pictures of parents reading to their children on social media to promote awareness that childhood literacy begins at birth.
- ★ Providers will give information about resources available at no charge through the Rochester Public Library.

Hypothesized Impact

Key Indicators of Early Literacy



Significance

The purpose of this project is to improve education in Rochester by promoting early literacy through home-centered, evidence-based interventions. The pediatric well-child visit is an opportunity for frequent contact with children in the community in the early childhood stage of development, and is thus an ideal setting to reinforce and promote home practices that engender early literacy.

Improving average early literacy can improve childhood health by improving markers of childhood development and by decreasing the prevalence of developmental/behavioral diagnoses like learning disabilities and ADHD. Preventing school failure prevents myriad health problems throughout the life course and into the next generation.

Future Sustainability

Sustainability of this project can be achieved through ongoing training of providers at URM pediatric, but also by building questions about home-literacy practices into the well-child visit templates for providers. Ideally, these questions would be woven into the template's existing social/developmental section of the patient/family interview. Rather than adding extra time to an already time-limited visit, this training and template change would bring focus to an important aspect of development in early childhood.

References

Hanline, M. F., Milton, S., & Phelps, P. C. (2010). The relationship between preschool block play and reading and maths abilities in early elementary school: a longitudinal study of children with and without disabilities. *Early Child Development and Care*, 180(8), 1005-1017. doi: 10.1080/03004430802671171

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