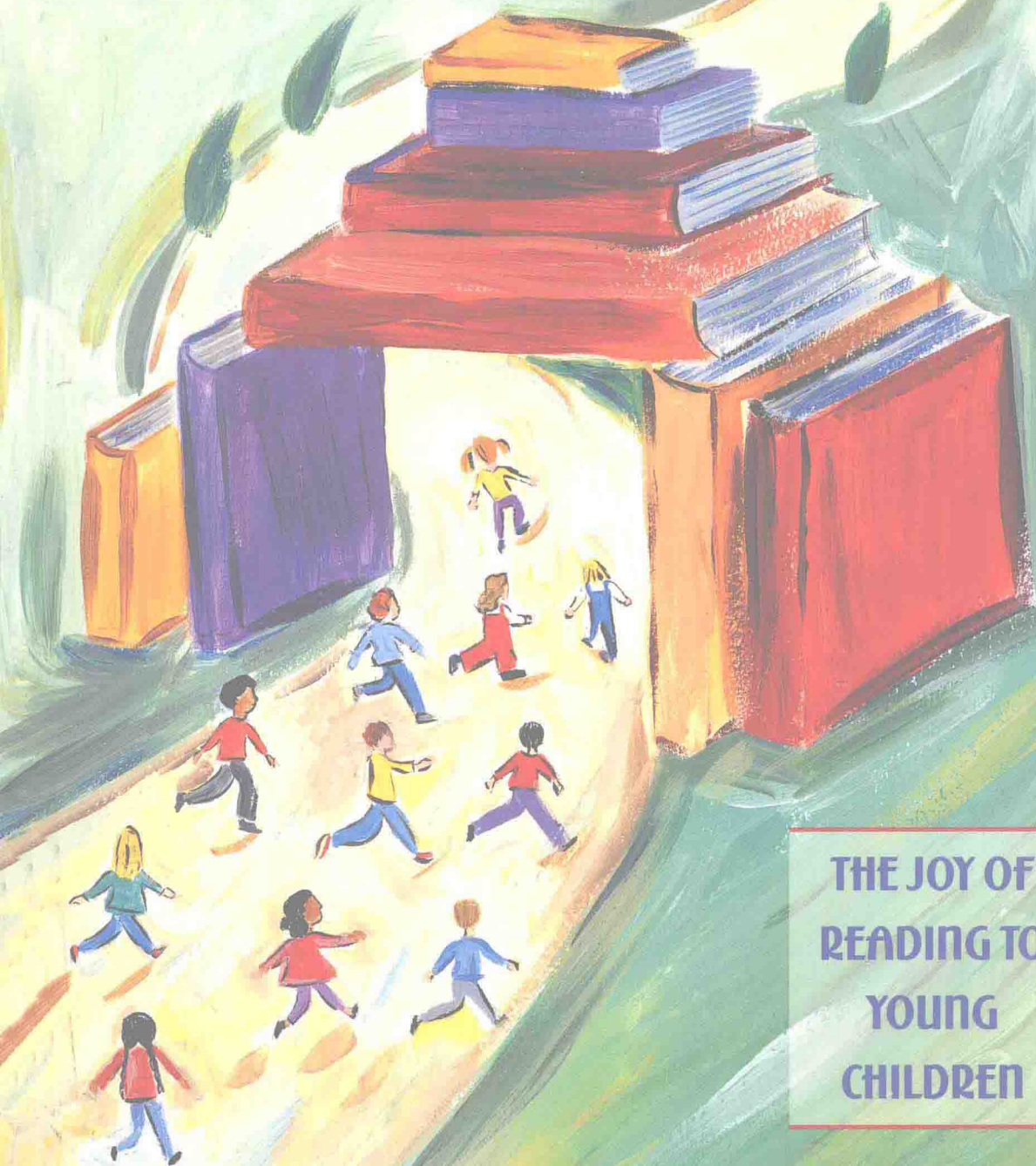


# INTERVENING FOR LITERACY



THE JOY OF  
READING TO  
YOUNG  
CHILDREN

Charles Temple

James MaKinster



# **Intervening for Literacy**

## **The Joy of Reading to Young Children**

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# **Intervening for Literacy**



# Foreword

 One of the many lessons I took from my tenure as Director of the Peace Corps was that the agency created in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy and brilliantly led by its first Director, Sargent Shriver, showed the power of an idea. At the end of the day, the concept of the Peace Corps was quite simple: send Americans to countries that need and want our help, they will share their skills, each culture will learn about the other and Americans will gain when the Volunteer “brings the world home” to share with them.

The power of an idea is also evident with Jumpstart and other efforts nationally to encourage volunteer service during college years. Many important service initiatives are happening each and every day on college campuses across the United States. From volunteer efforts in local elementary schools and food programs to important service learning courses integrated into the curriculum that allow for students’ reflection of their volunteer experience—America’s college students are making a difference.


Colleges and universities have an enormous opportunity to capture this volunteer spirit, and promote and enhance it in important curricular and co-curricular ways. Most students will only spend four Falls and four Springs as an undergraduate—a remarkably short period of time. As educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that students graduating into the twenty-first century have a full understanding of what citizenship must mean in this exciting time, and volunteer service must be part of that understanding.

As President of an institution that has a rich history of civic engagement and community service, I am proud of our students’ initiative and faculty support for these priorities. It is no surprise, therefore, that two faculty colleagues have taken on this important research in this book with typical enthusiasm and dedication to service. Their work will be an important contribution as we advance our understanding of student engagement.

Mark D. Gearan  
President  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges



# Preface

 This book is written for you, the tens of thousands of good people who will be giving of your time to tutor young children. We admire you and we salute you, because helping a young person develop language and literacy is one of the most generous acts of service you can perform. Here's why.

If preschool children can get the kinds of playful and enjoyable experiences with books and print that an engaged parent—or an engaged tutor—can give them, those children will have an easier time of it when they learn to read later on. Knowing how to read will be a huge advantage to them, not only in school, where they must be able to read in order to learn their subjects, but later in adult life, when literacy will help them get and keep a fulfilling job, enable them to participate in civic life, and make them more alert to the world and to their own experiences. Just imagine making so much difference in a person's life. No wonder we say that tutoring a child in language and literacy is a generous thing for you to do.

Like a book we already read, a movie we already saw, we know in advance the stories of the children who probably won't learn to read and write adequately. A decade ago, we could tell by the time they reached the age of six which children were likely to fail, and why. Now research has pushed that age back to four, even three. We may be speaking here of the child you are about to tutor, a child you may not have met yet.

But if we know who is likely to fail, we know what kind of help that child will need. And that's where you come in. We can now say in fair detail what you can do in order to turn a child's trajectory toward success. But it will take hard work, patience, a generous heart, and informed judgment for you to make the difference you *can* make. This book is about the last of those. We assume you are bringing the rest.

The first three chapters of the book will tell you first who will have trouble in learning to read, and why that matters. Those chapters will also help you develop your own working theory of how children learn language and literacy (think of that as part of gaining “informed judgment”). The fourth chapter, a long and full one, will equip you with a “tool box” for helping grow children’s language and literacy. And the fifth and final chapter will tell you what to do in case you decide you’re pretty good at working with young people, and that you want to do more of this work.

Our institution, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, has long had an emphasis on service learning, and over the past twenty years, we have mounted programs through which college students volunteer to tutor children in reading. These are mostly not teacher education candidates—they are majors in psychology, public policy, sociology, pre-med, and even art or Greek. But after working with children for even a few sessions, they become fascinated and want to know more about how language and literacy development work. And each year more than a few of those students find a call to teach, and wonder what steps to take to move from volunteer to paid teacher. We have written this book for students like them: We’re assuming you are a curious non-specialist, and that you might just decide to continue helping children learn.

In our experience, the most successful volunteer tutors don’t try to go it alone: They work through well-organized programs. Hobart & William Smith Colleges started one of the first Student Literacy Corps projects in the late 1980s, which eventually morphed into America Reads when that program started in the early 1990s. America Reads is still going strong on our campus, and it features a fairly structured approach to teaching that we adopted from our good friend, Darrell Morris’ Howard Street tutoring model (Morris, 1999).

A few years ago on our campus, we began a chapter of Jumpstart, a nationally organized tutoring project [<http://www.jstart.org>]. Jumpstart trains students on many college campuses throughout the United States to serve as tutors in language and literacy for children in Head Start and other early childhood education centers. On our campus, students rate Jumpstart highly for the training it gives them, plus the support when they are tutoring, and the esprit de corps with fellow Jumpstart volunteers both here and on other campuses. Jumpstart also provides guidance and opportunities to compete for scholarships for students who want to pursue their interest in teaching young children.





Most of the interviews with tutors and teachers that appear throughout this book were collected through our partners in the Jumpstart program. Jenna Logue, our Jumpstart project director, and Lauren Buchmann, a Jumpstart site leader at the time of this writing, both conducted interviews with people locally and nationally, and also took pictures for the project.

Jumpstart enjoys corporate sponsorship from American Eagle Outfitters, Starbucks, and Pearson. Jumpstart demonstrates a powerful model of support for community service, in which the service project becomes a vehicle of community outreach for sponsors from the business community, and engages not only their treasure, but their time and talents. This sort of relationship is a model worthy of attention from anyone interested in sustainable community development. As we will argue in this book, the challenge of helping all of our children become literate is so huge that it will require hefty investments of time, talent, and treasure from many quarters. In this effort, educators are finding valuable partners in the local and national business community.

The relationship between Jumpstart and the Pearson businesses (*The Financial Times*, Pearson Education, and The Penguin Group) is an enviable example of a productive, multi-faceted partnership between a non-profit organization and a corporation. With a multi-year \$2.5 million commitment, Pearson teamed up with Jumpstart to create the Pearson Teacher Fellowship, a program designed to inspire talented university graduates to become preschool teachers in low-income communities. To date, Pearson has sponsored over 70 Pearson Teacher Fellows (see Chapter Five). In addition to the Fellowship Program, Pearson contributes in many other ways toward helping Jumpstart achieve its mission. They publish books for and inspired by Jumpstart, and send Jumpstart-affiliated schools learning materials for children. These include Pearson Early Learning's *Read Together Talk Together*, Penguin's *Only You* by award-winning author Rosemary Wells, and the *Jumpstart Training Manual* from Pearson Custom Publishing. Pearson sponsors fundraisers, provides advertising in *The Financial Times*, and helps Jumpstart expand through outreach to potential university partners. Additionally, over one thousand Pearson employees are supporting Jumpstart and the Pearson Teacher Fellowship by volunteering in the preschools, collecting much needed resources and supplies for these communities, and mentoring Pearson Teacher Fellows. "Through these initiatives," says Kathleen Morgan, Manager of the Pearson-Jumpstart Partnership, "Pearson is encouraging college students to choose a career in teaching and helping



Jumpstart achieve its mission—to work toward the day every child in America enters school prepared to succeed” (Morgan, personal communication, June, 2004). Pearson/Allyn and Bacon Publishers will donate the profits from this book to Jumpstart.

On that note, we would like to celebrate all of the great people who work with young people. We thank Ed Greene, Montclair State University; Kathleen Morgan, Manager, Pearson–Jumpstart Partnership, and Kim Davenport, Jumpstart Vice President of Education and Training for their reviews of the manuscript. We thank the enthusiastic people involved in the Jumpstart program who offered their insights to us. We thank our friends, Darrell Morris, Linda Kucan, Dick Allington, and Alan Crawford for sharing their thoughts in these pages. We thank Mark Gearan for writing the foreword, and Aurora Martinez, our good friend and editor at Allyn and Bacon, who not only honchos good books to fruition, but obligingly keeps having children so we teachers can have kids to educate.



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## chapter one

# Why Do We Need to Intervene?

★★★ **W**hen William Wordsworth wrote, “The child is father of the man,” he meant that this early childhood classroom in front of us is the cradle of the future. Any one of these children will one day rock the world with an awesome song, choreograph a breathtaking ballet, negotiate peace in a troubled corner of the world, invent a treatment for leukemia, design an automobile everyone will love—be a caring teacher, an inspiring professor, a neighbor who helps kids with their homework.

But to move on from this classroom toward any of those happy futures, each child must develop a rich and supple grasp of the language we speak and hear and read and write. She must grow confident and clear in her thinking about the things that go on inside her and around her and beyond her. In order to think clearly about these things, she must know their names. And be able to read and write their names. And be able to take from and contribute to the flow of ideas that come to us through the spoken word and in written texts. In order to reach such a future, she will need language and literacy.



## What Is the Problem?

American schools are some of the best in the world. Children in the primary grades in the United States rate among the world's very best readers, scoring second (only behind Finland) on one recent international comparison. Adult workers in the United States are the most productive anywhere, and the amount of earnings per capita in the United States is 25% above the world average. Workers in the United States are among the world's most creative and innovative. In an important measure of creative output, the United States leads every European country in the number of patents per capita (although we lag far behind Japan and Korea). Clearly our country and its educational system are doing many things right. But as we shall see, although the United States prides itself on being a land of opportunity for all, the chances for success in school—and for the successes in life that directly follow school—are not shared equally. If there is one key to success in school, it is literacy.



### To the Reader

We're about to tell you why we're worried about some young children who might not get off to a good start in their education, particularly as readers. Before you read our ideas, please pause for a minute and think ahead. What children are you worried about? That is, what factors do you think might make it harder for some children to learn to be readers?

This book has been written out of a concern that *although our average achievements remain high, far too many children in the United States are not*