

# PBS KIDS and Ready To Learn Media

## Support Early Literacy



RESEARCH  
BRIEF



Ready to Learn Hartford/Burt Granofsky

Every child needs opportunities to develop early literacy skills by hearing and using language, and by observing how reading and writing are used and valued. The Ready To Learn Initiative, led by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and PBS, uses research to inform the creation of high-quality educational media and invests in studying how the media and related resources can support learning. This brief summarizes the research evidence that Ready To Learn resources support early literacy.

Children need strong reading skills to thrive in school and in life. But only 43% of all U.S. children, and 19% of children who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program, read at grade level by fourth grade.<sup>1</sup>

Independent studies of PBS KIDS resources have found they boost literacy learning for children, including those in low-income households.

### **PBS Kids Media Helps Parents Support Children's Language Development**

Speaking and listening are vital to children's early language and literacy growth. In a 2023 study, use of PBS KIDS media and resources supported consistent conversations and interactions between parents and children. Parents also gained new ideas to support their children's learning.<sup>2</sup>

### **Research Shows *Molly of Denali* Increases Informational Text Learning**

Children need skills to read maps, follow instructions, and navigate the world around them. Two studies found that first graders' ability to use informational text to solve real-world problems improved after using *Molly of Denali* resources at home for only one hour per week for 9 weeks.<sup>3</sup> Children in the studies gained an average of 1.5 months of classroom learning.

### **PBS KIDS resources:**





- include videos, digital games, activities, and guidance for adults;
- are free, fast to access, and easy to use anywhere;
- help adults spark and support their children's learning.





## Explore the Research-Backed Classics + New and Coming Soon

### RESOURCES

	Research-Backed Classics	Grades	PBS KIDS	+	New and Coming Soon	Grades	PBS KIDS
	<b>Molly of Denali</b>	K–2	<a href="https://pbskids.org/molly/">pbskids.org/molly/</a>		<b>Tiny Time Travel</b>	K–3	<a href="https://pbskids.org/videos/tiny-time-travel/">pbskids.org/videos/tiny-time-travel/</a>
	<b>Martha Speaks</b>	PreK–2	<a href="https://pbskids.org/martha/">pbskids.org/martha/</a>				
	<b>Super Why</b>	PreK–2	<a href="https://pbskids.org/superwhy/">pbskids.org/superwhy/</a>		<b>New PreK Literacy Series</b> (Coming Fall 2025)	PreK	
	<b>Sesame Street</b>	PreK	<a href="https://pbskids.org/sesame/">pbskids.org/sesame/</a>				



### Literacy Gains from Ready To Learn-Supported Resources Demonstrated in 45 Studies

Children PBS KIDS media and other literacy resources had positive effects on literacy development, a review of 45 studies of children's media found. The studies included nearly 25,000 children between 2 and 8 years old, many of whom were from low-income households and were multilingual learners.

Vocabulary and phonological awareness showed the strongest positive outcomes for all demographic groups, with strongest effects for preschool children and Native American children.<sup>4</sup>

### In-Class PBS KIDS Media Use Can Improve Preschool Learning

The early literacy skills of 436 children from low-income households improved significantly compared to their peers when their teachers used a high-quality, media-rich curriculum.<sup>5</sup> Children's ability to name letters, identify sounds, and understand stories and printed words all improved.

Find more resources at [pbs.org/parents](https://pbs.org/parents) and [pbslearningmedia.org](https://pbslearningmedia.org).

SUPERWHY © Out of the Blue Enterprises, LLC. d/b/a 9 Story USA. All rights reserved.

SESAME STREET © 2024 Sesame Workshop

MOLLY OF DENALI,® / © 2024 WGBH Educational Foundation. All rights reserved.

MARTHA SPEAKS is a trademark and copyright of Susan Meddaugh and used under license. All rights reserved.

PBS KIDS and the PBS KIDS Logo are trademarks owned by Public Broadcasting Service. Used with permission.

### Sources

1. NAEP National Achievement Level Results: U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), [2022 Grade 4 Reading Assessment](#).
2. The Intergenerational Learning Study sought to understand how media design and distribution can support engagement in high-quality IGL experiences, focusing on families in low-income households. Over the 5 weeks of the study, researchers asked participating families to play a set of digital games, view a set of videos, and listen to podcasts together. The selected resources aimed to foster parent-child conversations, including media that modeled discussions and activities relevant to adults and children, such as those about shared culture or family history, social issues, and socio-emotional skills. See Hoisington, C., Bueno, M., Anderson, K. (2023, October 23–25). *Leveraging media to support parent priorities* [Poster presentation]. 2023 Families Learning Conference, Omaha, NE, United States.
3. 263 first-grade children from low-income households in 17 states participated in either the randomized controlled trial or the replication study. See Kennedy, J. L., Christensen, C. G., Maxon, T. S., Gerard, S. N., Garcia, E. B., Kook, J. F., Hupert, N., Vahey, P., & Pasnik, S. (2022). *The efficacy of digital media resources in improving children's ability to use informational text: An evaluation of Molly of Denali from PBS KIDS*. *American Educational Research Journal*, 59(6), 1194–1228. See also a quick summary of the research: Education Development Center. (2021, April 6). *Learning with Media, One Adventure at a Time*.
4. This 2018 peer-reviewed article provides analysis of 45 evaluations of Ready To Learn: Hurwitz, L. B. (2019). *Getting a read on Ready To Learn media: A meta-analytic review of effects on literacy*. *Child Development*, 90(5), 1754–1771.
5. The curriculum included resources from *Super Why*, *Sesame Street*, *Between the Lions*, and *Martha Speaks*. See Penuel, W. R., Bates, L., Gallagher, L. P., Pasnik, S., Llorente, C., Townsend, E., Hupert, N., Domínguez, X., & VanderBorgh, M. (2012). *Supplementing literacy instruction with a media-rich intervention: Results of a randomized controlled trial*. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 27(1), 115–127.