

***THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST
AND SAVE THE CHILDREN:
Investing in Progress for South Carolina's Youth***

*Annual Report
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Submitted to:
Page McCullough
The Rural School and Community Trust



A young girl at Monarch Elementary School in Union, South Carolina, selects a book to read during Save the Children's afterschool literacy program.

Contacts:

John Farden
National Director, Programs and Partnerships
202-640-6614 * jfarden@savechildren.org

Amy Rogers
Director, Resource Development
202-640-6624 * arogers@savechildren.org



54 Wilton Road Westport, CT 06880
1.800.SAVETHECHILDREN www.savethechildren.org

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Executive Summary

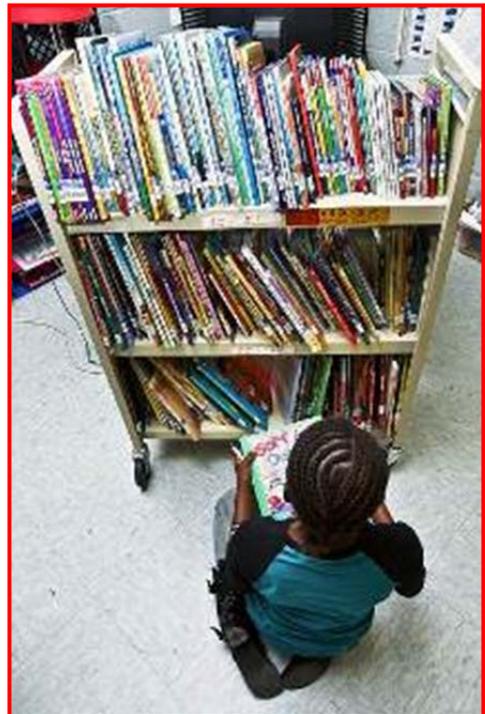
Save the Children is very grateful to The Rural School and Community Trust for its \$500,000 investment in our innovative literacy program serving high-need elementary schools in rural America. Over three years, your investment will help us reach more than 1,000 children in underserved areas of rural South Carolina with our supplemental literacy services that have proven effective in improving the reading scores of low-performing children. Over the first year of this grant, Save the Children has served more than 600 children at Andrews, D.P. Cooper, Monarch, St. Paul, and West Lee Elementary Schools. We are pleased to share this report with you, detailing the programmatic accomplishments to-date at these schools. Because the current school year is still in session, summative results from the 2011-2012 school year are not available; however, formative metrics and key programmatic highlights are detailed below, all which were made possible through the generous support of The Rural School and Community Trust.

Investing in Progress for South Carolina's Children

In the most depressed and isolated areas of the United States, children often go to school woefully underprepared: reading well below grade level, under the supervision of overworked teachers in underfunded schools, and with little parental support. In rural South Carolina, more than one in four children live in poverty,¹ and 52 percent of fourth graders statewide who are eligible for the free and reduced price meal program – a proxy indicator of poverty – score below even “basic” literacy levels on standardized testing.² This is staggering in comparison to just 21 percent of fourth graders not eligible for the program who score below basic on the same evaluation. In addition, more than one-third of children in rural South Carolina are overweight or obese and fail to meet recommended levels for physical activity.³

Thanks to the support of The Rural School and Community Trust, from April 1, 2011 through March 30, 2012, Save the Children provided over 600 South Carolinian children at five elementary schools with programs designed to help them overcome these barriers. In Year One of this grant, your support enabled us to build the capacity of these five schools to:

- Sustain in-school and afterschool literacy programs aimed at increasing reading achievement of elementary school students.
- Sustain physical activity and nutrition programs for children in elementary school in order to combat the growing levels of childhood obesity as well as improve academic performance.
- Support these activities with our expert staff and the provision of technical assistance, training, and other essential program services.



A second grader at St. Paul Elementary School selects from a cart of books during the in-school literacy program.

¹ National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, New York, NY.

² U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2011 Reading Assessment.

³ Overweight and Physical Inactivity among Rural Children Aged 10-17: A National and State Portrait. South Carolina Rural Health Research Center, Columbia, SC

Programmatic Reach

During the 2010-2011 school year, concluding June 2011, Save the Children reached a combined total of 594 children at these five schools through our in-school and afterschool supplemental services. As of March 30, 2012, we have already reached more than 630 children this school year, surpassing last year's reach with nearly two months of programming remaining. The following table details the children served and days of programming provided to-date this program year.

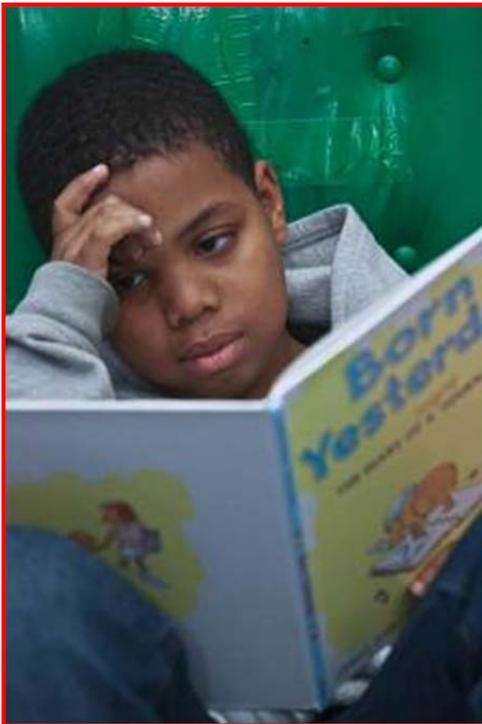
2011-2012 Program Year Beneficiaries, to-date*

	Number of Children Served	Days of Programming
Andrews Elementary	130	95
D.P. Cooper Elementary	135	107
Monarch Elementary	131	104
St. Paul Elementary	145	109
West Lee Elementary	89	101
TOTAL, to-date:	630	516

*August 1, 2011 through March 30, 2012

The Program Results

Working in partnership with Andrews, D.P. Cooper, Monarch, St. Paul, and West Lee Elementary Schools, Save the Children's literacy program is providing children in kindergarten through sixth grade with the opportunity to increase their reading achievement by supplying the tools they need to develop reading skills and the guidance and support they need to grow as readers. Our programs are implemented in partnership with these local schools, for which we act as a grantor, content provider, and ongoing source of technical support.



Rabteek, 11, a 6th grader at St. Paul Elementary reads a book during Guided Independent Reading Practice.

Our afterschool programming is providing children a safe place with structure for the time following the school day, while our in-school program is closely coordinated with classroom teachers and state curricula standards to ensure maximum effectiveness and program cohesion. The hallmark of the program is the Literacy Block, which is provided to children in grades 2-6 in the afterschool program. Activities include 30 minutes of guided independent reading practice, 20 minutes of fluency-building support, and a 10-minute read-aloud. Emergent Reader Literacy Block activities specifically geared toward new readers are provided to children in grades K-1. Small-group tutoring sessions – targeting phonics, sight words, vocabulary, and comprehension – are incorporated during the school day to support reading skill development.

Additionally, afterschool program participants also take part in our physical activity and nutrition program, Healthy Choices. Healthy Choices provides 30 minutes of vigorous noncompetitive physical activity and a healthy snack to children each day. This is proven to not only increase

children’s health, helping to combat rising rates of childhood obesity in rural America, but also to improve academic performance and concentration, enhancing the results of our literacy program.

During the 2010-2011 school year, 594 children at these five schools participated in programs and together they achieved remarkable results. In total, **75% of participants made significant growth in their reading skills from the beginning to the end of the school year**, as measured by a gain of two or more Normal Curve Equivalencies on the STAR Reading Assessment. Furthermore, **children read an average of 82 books each** while enrolled in the program.

We are unable to share our summative evaluation results for the 2011-2012 school year at this time, as end-of-year testing is ongoing. However, the table below outlines some of the many impressive results already achieved so far this year. With nearly two months of programming remaining at the time this data was collected, it is remarkable to note that every site is on par to meet, and in most cases dramatically *exceed*, our programs’ goals. We are confident that children at Andrews, D.P. Cooper, Monarch, St. Paul, and West Lee are on course to have one of the best programmatic years yet, and look forward to sharing the year-end results when they become available.

2011-2012 Results, Year-To-Date*

	ANNUAL GOAL, per site	Andrews	D.P. Cooper	Monarch	St. Paul	West Lee
Children Served	100	130.00	135.00	131	145.00	89
Days of Afterschool Programming	110.00	95.00	107.00	103	109.00	94.00
Days In-School Programming	n/a	95.00	121.00	104	120.00	101
Afterschool Avg. Daily Attendance	30.00	38.41	41.85	36.32	42.61	38.34
In-School Avg. Daily Attendance	n/a	76.22	54.30	87.72	81.34	48.89
Avg. # of Books Read, per child	25	56.19	24.25	114.49	63.65	70.89
Avg. % of Quizzes Passed	80.00%	87.00%	97.83%	89.29%	96.68%	90.02%
Avg. Mins Daily Physical Activity	30.00	30.00	30.06	30	30.00	30
% Children Receiving Healthy Snack	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

* August 1, 2011 through March 30, 2012

Outstanding results like this are common in Save the Children’s programs across the country. Last year more than 16,000 children at over 150 rural communities participated in Save the Children’s literacy program. Among them, 68 percent made significantly greater gains in reading than would be expected if they were only receiving classroom instruction, according to the results of our independent evaluation. This kind of growth equates to an extra five months of school, all accomplished in less than nine months of supplemental instruction. Additionally, the percent of children reading at or above grade level more than doubled from the beginning to the end of the school year – from 12 to 29 percent. Moreover, what matters most is that the program is not only improving those children’s literacy scores, but also fostering a life-long love of reading in the next generation. Such a love is exemplified by James’, below.

James' Success Inspires All Those Around Him

James is an adorable six year old boy who has made great gains in literacy at Monarch Elementary School thanks to Save the Children's in-school and afterschool program. At the beginning of the school year, James was far behind in phonemic awareness. Save the Children's literacy coordinator decided to partner with his teacher and create a custom plan for James – establishing several activities that were designed to help him succeed.

Since September 2011, James has successfully learned each individual letter sound! This is quite an achievement, since at the beginning of the year he only knew 5 of the 26 letters. The progress that James has made in these few months is extremely encouraging for his literacy coach, Katie Kingsmore. His teacher has also expressed excitement, as he is improving rapidly in class – not only in reading, but in all of his subjects!

Mrs. Kingsmore states, "I feel so rewarded to work with students such as James. He has a desire to learn, and when he learns something new, his face lights up almost as much as mine!"



Conclusion

Thanks to the support of The Rural School and Community Trust, Save the Children is helping more than 600 children improve their academic achievement through literacy, building a pathway out of poverty for the more than 1 in 4 children in rural America growing up in low-income homes. Your three-year commitment of \$500,000 will ultimately help us reach South Carolina's most vulnerable and underserved children, creating real and lasting change in communities where poverty is deeply rooted and the educational gap between low-income children and their middle-and upper-income peers is clear. Save the Children remains incredibly grateful to your ongoing support and the impact it has had for children throughout the nation.