

**“Dream More, Learn More, Care More, and Be More”:
Erie County’s Imagination Library Project and the Influence of Storybook Reading**

The Imagination Library in Erie County

- Started in May 2013 under the leadership of the United Way of Erie County (in collaboration with the Erie Community Foundation and other generous donors).
- **Free books available to all children in our community from birth to age five.**
- Each registered child receives one free, high quality book in the mail each month.
- Now in it's eighth year, United Way of Erie County's Imagination Library has reached more than 24,000 children in the Erie area, distributing more than 800,000 books.



IMAGINATION LIBRARY

The Research Study

- Purpose: To understand the impact of storybook reading on the children and parents receiving Imagination Library books using Clay's (2013) *Concepts about Print* and *Letter Identification* tasks with a parent/caregiver survey about home literacy practices.
- Focused on examining the early literacy skills and strategies of young children entering kindergarten across Erie County elementary schools.
- Diverse sampling of urban, suburban, and rural school sites (six Erie County elementary schools). Surveyed 394 young children.

Findings of the Research Study

- **Young children who received the Imagination Library books performed significantly better on early literacy tasks (letter identification; word and letter concepts within text) than their peers who did not receive the books.**
- **Young children who received the Imagination Library books have stronger beginning reading skills**—both in the assessments and as reported by their parents. (This improves their success in *reading on grade level* by third grade.)