Language development is the foundation for children’s social, emotional, and mental health development—and academic ability.

Early language exposure is among the strongest predictors of third-grade reading proficiency.

**Language Nutrition**

- Children who are read to frequently during infancy and preschool years have **larger vocabularies** and more advanced language comprehension skills when they enter elementary school, and better cognitive outcomes than children who aren’t read to or are read to infrequently.

- Children’s vocabulary development depends on the **quality and quantity of authentic language** their caregivers use to engage them beginning in infancy.
  - *Child Development* (2012)

- Language Nutrition feeds children neurologically, socially, and linguistically by using language that’s rich in engagement, quality, quantity, and context.

- Children with well-developed oral vocabularies at age 2 are **prepared academically and behaviorally to enter kindergarten**. This leads to higher achievement in reading and math, and the ability to control their own behavior.

- Children with underdeveloped expressive language development at age 2 are up to 5X more likely to have language impairment in elementary school.

- Children in **foster care** are 2X as likely to suffer from language impairment than their counterparts.
  - *Pediatrics* (2016)

- Youth involved with **juvenile justice** are up to 5X more likely than their non-offending peers to have language difficulties, hindering their ability to benefit from behavior therapies and restorative justice conversations aimed at reducing recidivism.

- 8 - 12% of preschool children and 12% of children entering school have some form of language impairment, putting them at a significantly high risk of reading deficiencies and behavior disorders.

- Language deficits **impede children’s ability** to benefit from instruction, talk-based therapies, and comprehensive behavior management plans.
  - *Journal for the Council of Exceptional Children* (2014)

- Although language deficits occur in **4 out of 5** children with emotional and behavioral disorders, they are often overlooked.

**WHAT WE KNOW**
When we uncover underlying factors that affect a child’s ability to read, we increase our opportunities to improve outcomes. Here are just some of the ways that we can all address those factors.

**Provide Language Nutrition coaching training** for workforces and groups already working with parents and young children, such as nurses, physicians, mental health providers, WIC nutritionists, medical assistants, infant and toddler teachers, and foster parents.

**Support institutions of higher education** in integrating the concept of Language Nutrition coaching in preparation programs for all professionals who work with children and families, such as nurses, physicians, medical assistants, WIC nutritionists, early childhood educators, K-12 teachers, social workers, and speech-language pathologists.

**Encourage parent participation in Ready4KGA**, a free text-messaging program designed to boost engagement in home literacy activities with children. Research shows that involvement in Ready4KGA results in measurable progress by children whose parents were enrolled.

**Support programs that promote reading with children birth to 5** and provide increased access to books, such as Reach Out and Read, Ferst Books, and 1,000 Books B4 Kindergarten.

**Provide immediate referral to a speech-language pathologist** for children with expressive language issues.

**Strengthen efforts to identify and provide language services** to children with language impairments before they start kindergarten and during the first few years of elementary school—and carefully monitor and support the reading progress of children with language impairment.

**Leverage the recent addition of Speech-Language Pathologists** to the list of Medicaid provider types who may provide services via telemedicine in schools and other settings to identify and treat children with language impairment.

**Identify speech and language issues and provide appropriate interventions** for language impairment for all children in foster care and those involved with juvenile justice.