Let me share a story.

The story of an organization that is all about stories, stories of children and families reading together, and the greater story of how this organization, Read to Them, is cultivating a culture of literacy across our home state of Virginia and in homes and schools across the United States.

As President and Chairman of Read to Them's Board, I am honored to be part of this vibrant and vital organization and happy to report on Read to Them's success and sustained growth. To achieve its mission, Read to Them's programs and resources kindle the imagination and foster community-wide engagement. Their success is our shared story.

In 2020, Read to Them and its community partners gained an even deeper appreciation for the value of timeless stories to encourage, illuminate and provide hope in the midst of challenging times. During this unprecedented pandemic, with schools seeking new, creative ways to further their educational mission, Read to Them launched a novel program, #OneBookConnects, in response to school closings resulting from Covid-19. The #OneBookConnects program is Read to Them's first nationwide reading program, and represents a digital, interactive platform designed to connect networks of families and communities across the country through the shared experience of reading a book together.

Featuring a new title each month, Read to Them facilitated this community reading event online through daily trivia questions, author interactions, live chapter readings and activities related to the book.

“*The single most important activity to building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud*”
Read to Them is also utilizing its platform as a leader in literacy and community development to provide resources that help bind historic wounds and nurture racial reconciliation. By heightening awareness of both racial injustice and our common bond as members of the same American family, sharing heroic stories of African-American citizens through our nation’s history, and introducing children to myriad cultures and perspectives, Read to Them is working to further dialogue, build empathy and forge unity through the shared experience of reading. In so doing, Read to Them aims to enrich the tapestry and beauty of the American story in all its varied voices and colors.

Read to Them is also developing relationships with regional banks, state economic educational organizations and other civic-minded benefactors to support Read to Them’s well-established reading programs, sponsor reading events, and promote family financial literacy through carefully selected stories designed to provide invaluable tools to help families steward their family finances.

By investing deeply in its home base of Richmond, working with community partners across the country, and creating a digital platform to connect schools and families nationwide, Read to Them has shown its commitment both to our local neighborhood families and schools as well as the broader American family. Read to Them has a proven track record of success in changing lives and improving the culture of literacy in thousands of homes. Moreover, through its sustained growth in a diverse array of communities and schools and abundant literary resources showing both the tragedy, triumph and redemptive greatness of the American story, Read to Them is creating a more perfect union through the power of common values, shared stories and community engagement.

Thanks for being a part of our story.

Sincerely,
Ward Marstiller

to children.” - Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson
Meet our committed Board.

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"Anything worth learning is worth celebrating" - Cynthia P. (Read to Them participant), San Antonio, Texas
When life gives you lemons...

No one expected what March 2020 would bring. It seemed like everyone was just hearing about Covid-19 on the news when businesses started to close, quarantines were put in place, travel became restricted, and virtual schooling became commonplace. Everyone looked inward to focus on their families’ safety. And we all hoped it would all be behind us in a matter of weeks.

#OneBookConnects

When that didn’t happen, the staff at Read to Them jumped into action. We knew what everyone needed, especially our students, was to feel a sense of connection to each other and to our communities. From this understanding, our #OneBookConnects program was developed.

#OneBookConnects is a new way of presenting a nationwide reading program. It’s a new, completely digital way of reading together.

100 schools shared the joy of a good book

Through a carefully curated inventory of books, Read to Them suggests one book a month that the entire school community can read at the same time, bringing everyone together in a shared literary experience. By working through schools, children and families receive books and reading resources that are fun and engaging. Through virtual classrooms, students and families have the same experience our other more traditional programs deliver.

30,547 students and families read together

90% of educators surveyed claimed #OneBookConnects promoted family engagement with student learning.

“#OBC has been a great addition to our curriculum. Our students are really engaging with the story” - Educator
We understand the importance of reading aloud to children. We believe that early childhood literacy has more of a significant impact on a child’s future success than many people realize. One in four children in America grow up without learning to read.¹ Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare.² Those who don’t read proficiently by the 3rd grade are four times likelier to drop out of school.³

These are the reasons we do what we do. Our programs have been designed to encourage reading and engage a community to help children succeed. Studies have shown that reading aloud to children helps them listen better and longer, to build bigger vocabularies, to understand concepts better, and to feel positive about both books and learning.

In addition, reading to children strengthens the emotional bonds between adult reader and the child, providing those positive parent-child connections essential to a child’s psychological health and academic growth.

When an entire school reads the same book, the buzz and excitement around the book augments these benefits. Reading a book together brings the added joy of building and expanding a sense of community among students, parents, teachers, and staff – and beyond. In some schools, bus drivers and custodial and cafeteria staff clamor to be included. And when a library, church, community group or commercial donor becomes involved, that sense of fostered community is exponential. All Read to Them family literacy programs are extensions of our flagship program, One School, One Book, including our States Read One Book program. We coordinate the delivery of books from publishers along with resource materials like family engagement activities, tips for reading aloud, classroom resources, trivia and games, and much more. Because all of our program staff are previous educators themselves, the materials we provide are invaluable to teachers, schools and families. So much so, that 97% of One School, One Book surveyed educators would participate in a Read to Them program again.

We understand the importance of reading aloud to children. 

Our One School, One Book program supports one school in choosing the one book that’s a perfect match for their reading goals. Schools choose not only their book but the timing of their reading event and how they want to tailor our program to meet their needs.

One School One Book

One District, One Book is a program designed to create a shared reading experience across an entire school community. When you read a children’s novel – or more than one novel – across an entire district, you spark a community-wide conversation. That conversation takes place on playgrounds and parking lots, in grocery stores and churches, across your district. A conversation that rich, involving hundreds and thousands of families, inspires a rich appreciation of literature and lays the groundwork for children to become lifelong readers.

One of our largest programs, States Read One Book, engages and unites students, schools, and families across an entire state. These programs include our Family Financial Literacy project where students and families can learn the basic practices of financial literacy via an engaging children’s novel.

Read Aloud to a Child Week

Read Aloud to a Child Week is a national, annual event organized by Read to Them during the last week of October that is meant to emphasize the importance of reading to children and to encourage families to participate. There is a large body of research that documents and confirms the benefits of reading aloud to children. It may in fact be the most important activity that parents share with children to help them become strong readers.

84% of surveyed educators believe that the state reading programs assisted with their educational goals for their students.

“One District, One Book is a key component in supporting those relationships.” - Dan B., Sauk Rapids-Rice, MN
When we saw how engaged the parents were, we knew we had found the program worth supporting. - Dr. M., Manassas, VA

1,227 schools shared the joy of a good book
436,952 students and families read together
47 states & 4 Canadian Provinces participated
1,227 schools shared the joy of a good book
“When we saw how engaged the parents were, we knew we had found the program worth supporting.” - Dr. M., Manassas, VA
We couldn’t have done it without the help of our generous supporters.

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“This is not just a school program...It has helped promote a culture of reading in our community. We can..."
We couldn’t have done it without the help of our generous supporters.

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Sarah Weeks
Paul Zelinsky

encourage our kids and community to read together. It’s a wise investment of our funds” - Steve A., Arkansas
Read to Them is a 501c(3) non-profit organization promoting family literacy. We educate families and schools on the benefits and importance of reading aloud at home.