

# Building Early Literacy: The Opportunity and the Challenge



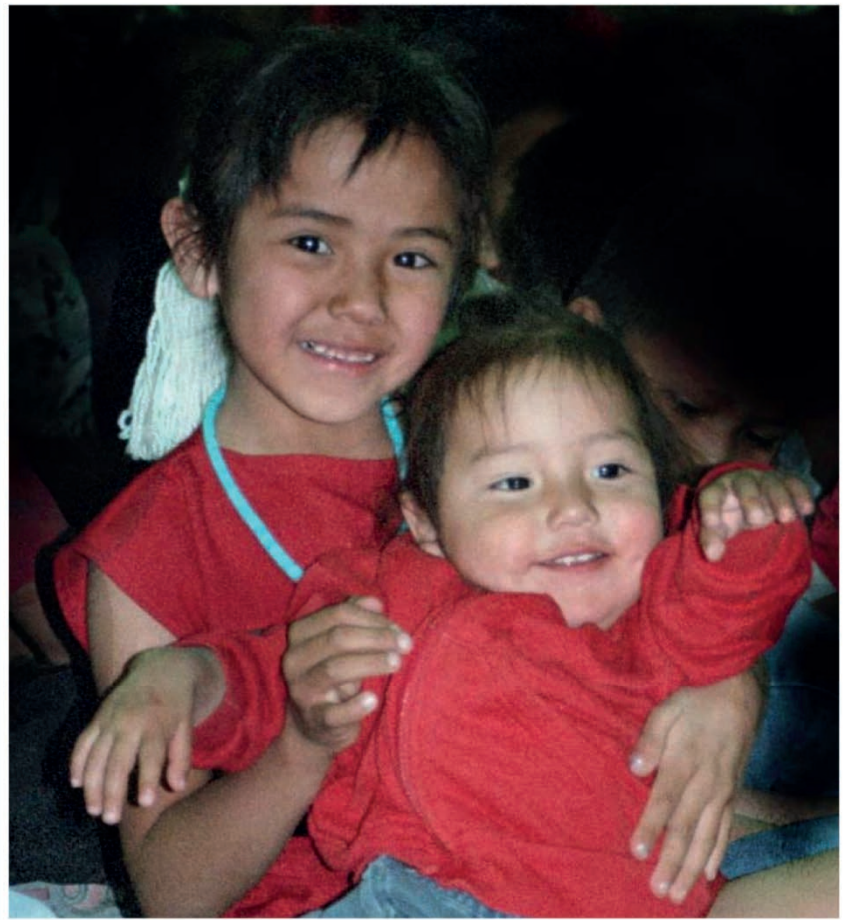
Nonie Lesaux, PhD


*Early Literacy Summit*

Phoenix, AZ

November 8, 2013

# Meet Nathan & Shelby





# Today's Agenda: Three Guiding Questions

1. How did we come to a comprehensive plan for improving children's learning outcomes?
2. What do we know about language and literacy development among diverse populations?
3. What are the key strategies for increasing the quality of children's language and learning environments?

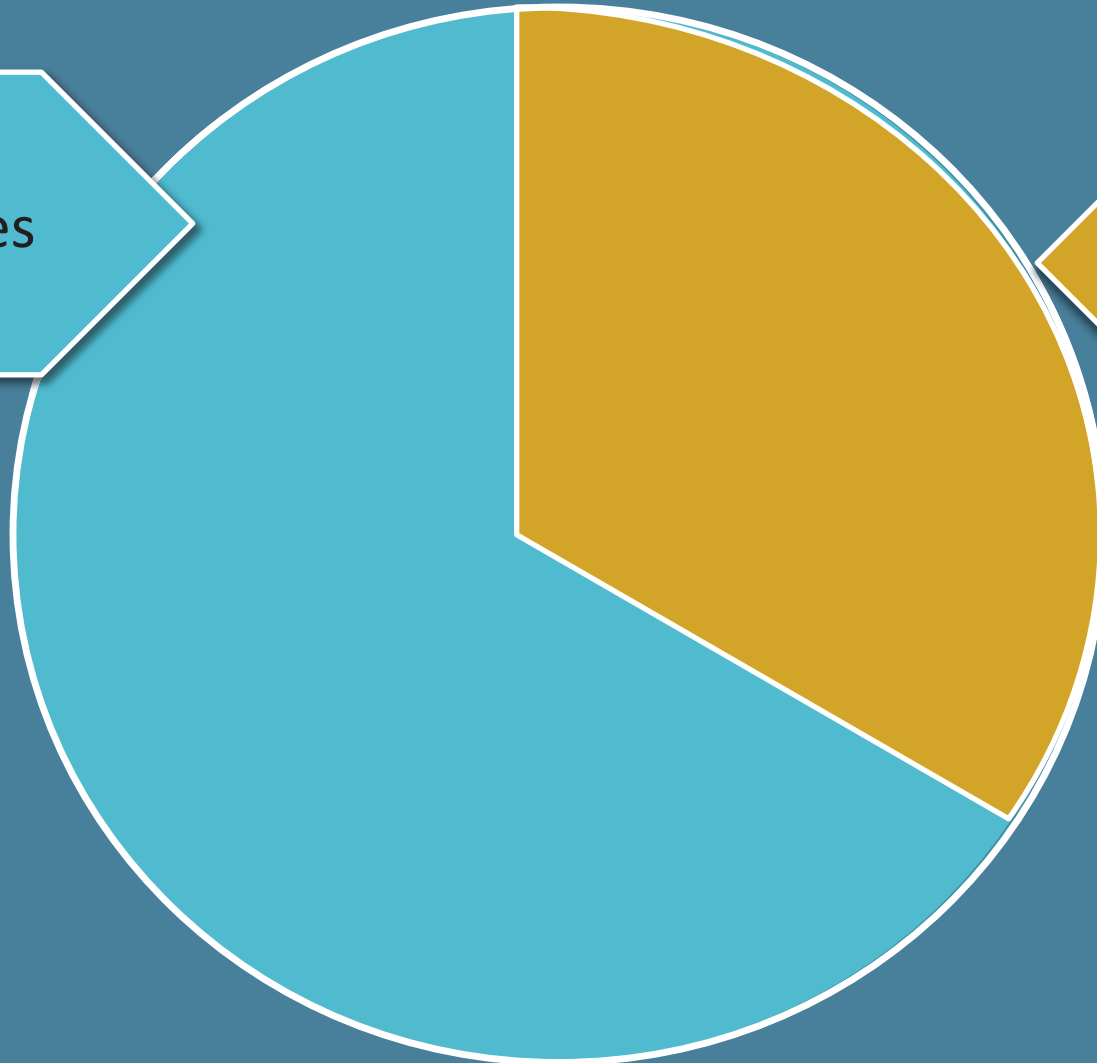


# ARIZONA LANDSCAPE



# AZ's Children, 0–5

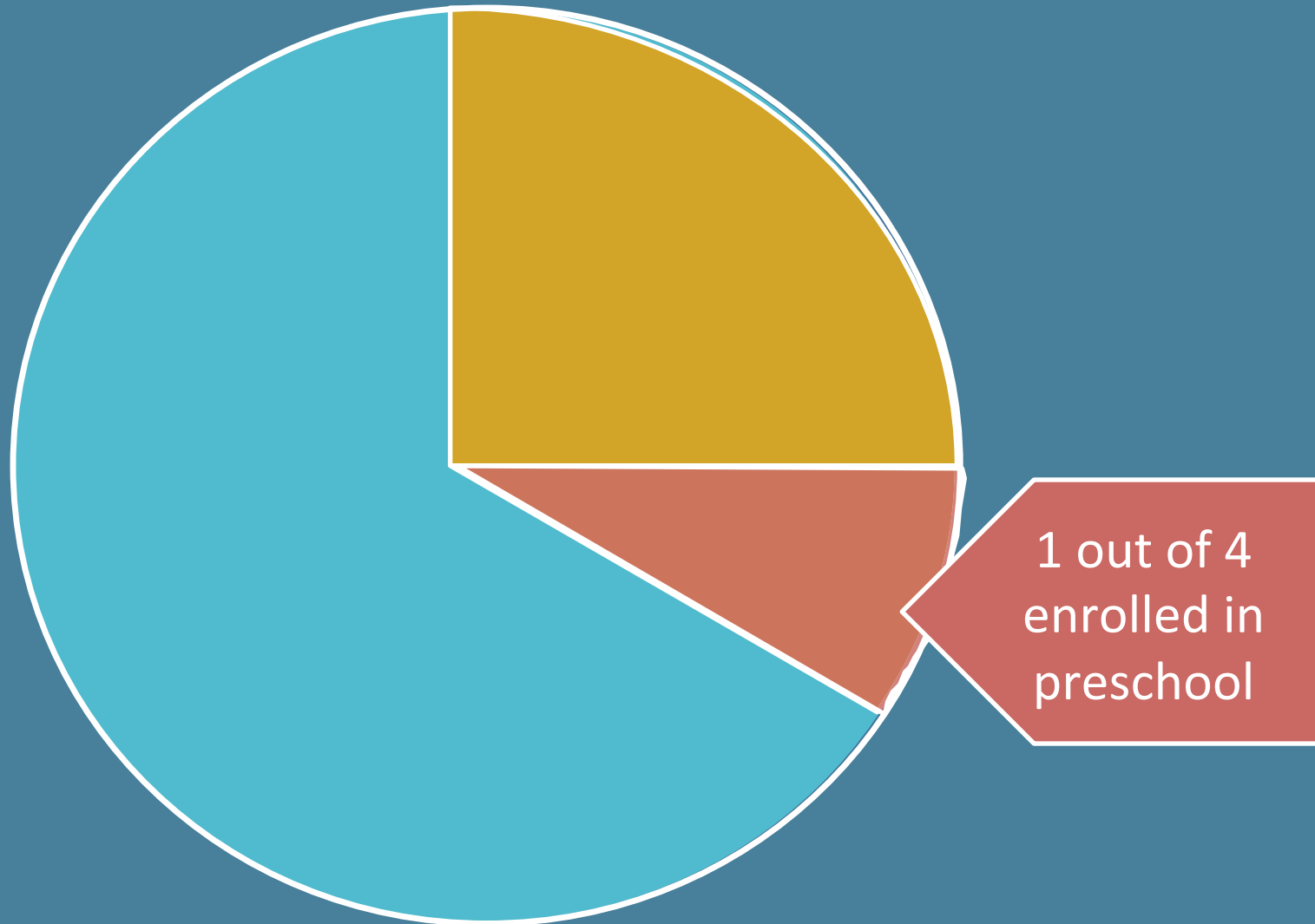
533,333  
children ages  
0-5

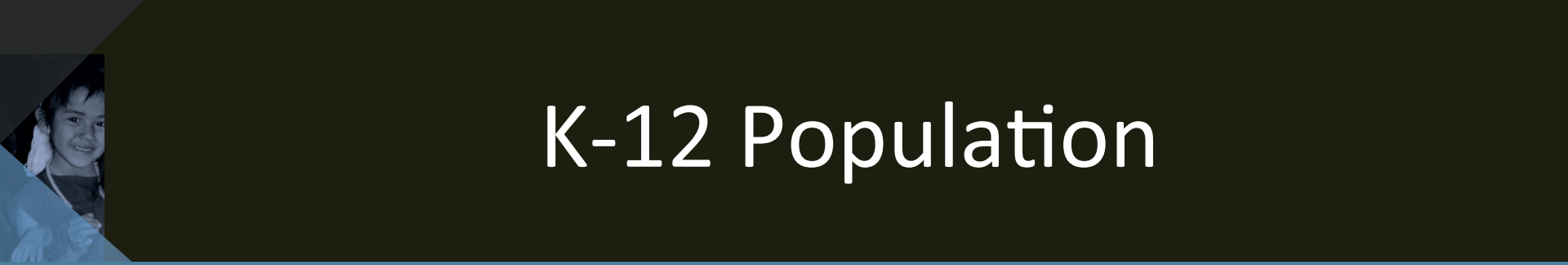


1 of 3 grow  
up in poverty



# Preschool Enrollment

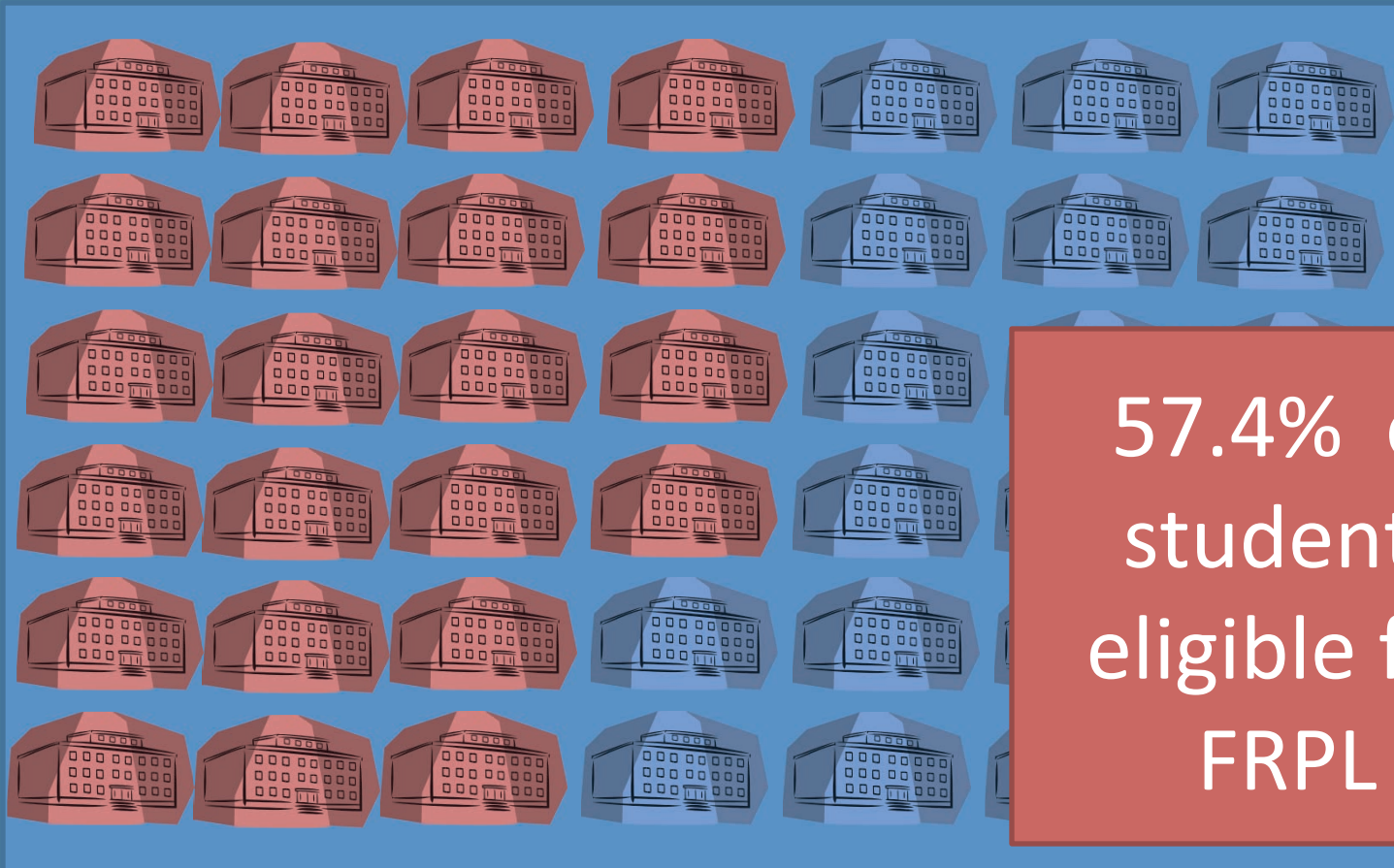




# K-12 Population



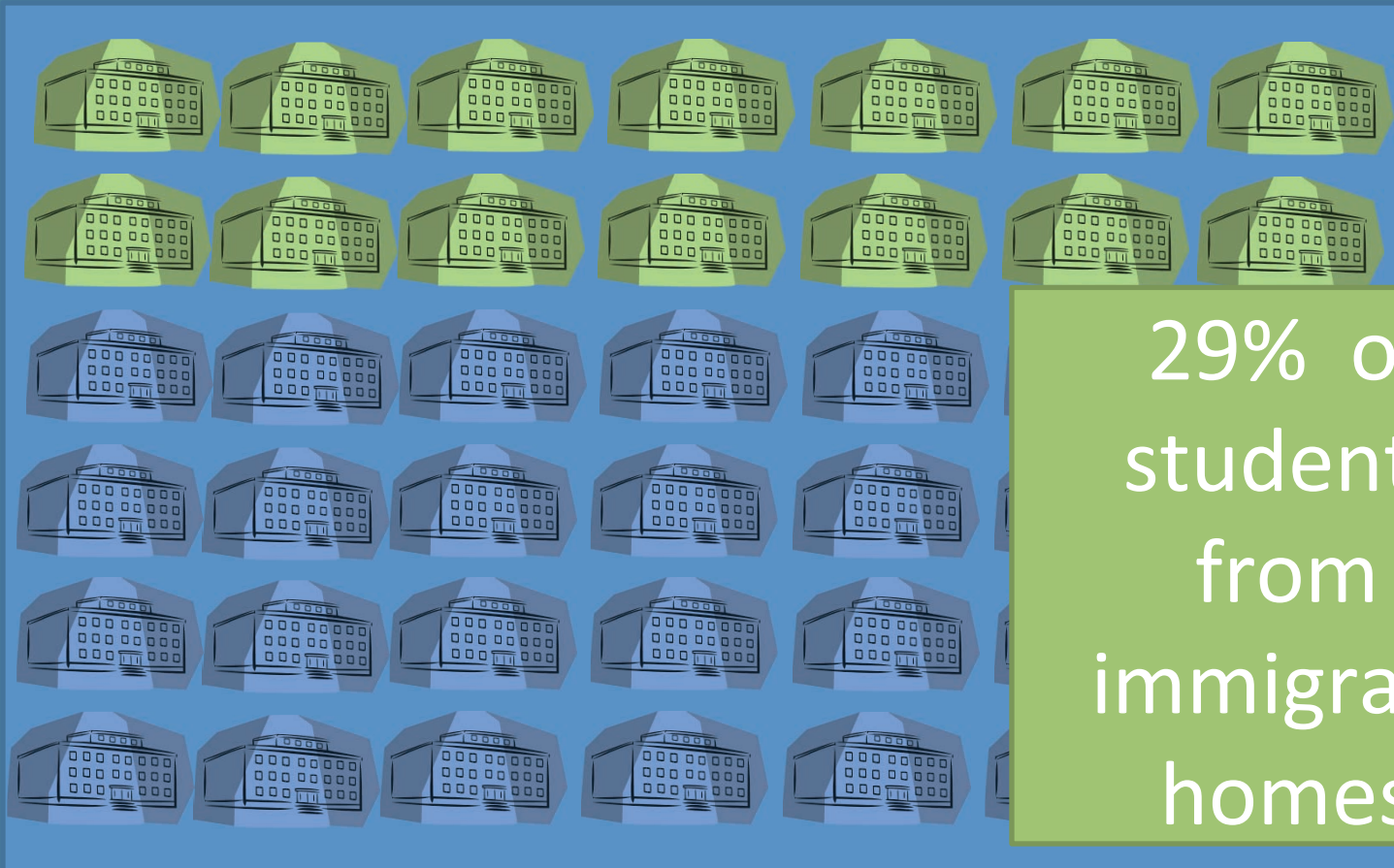
# K-12 Population: Free or Reduced Price Lunch



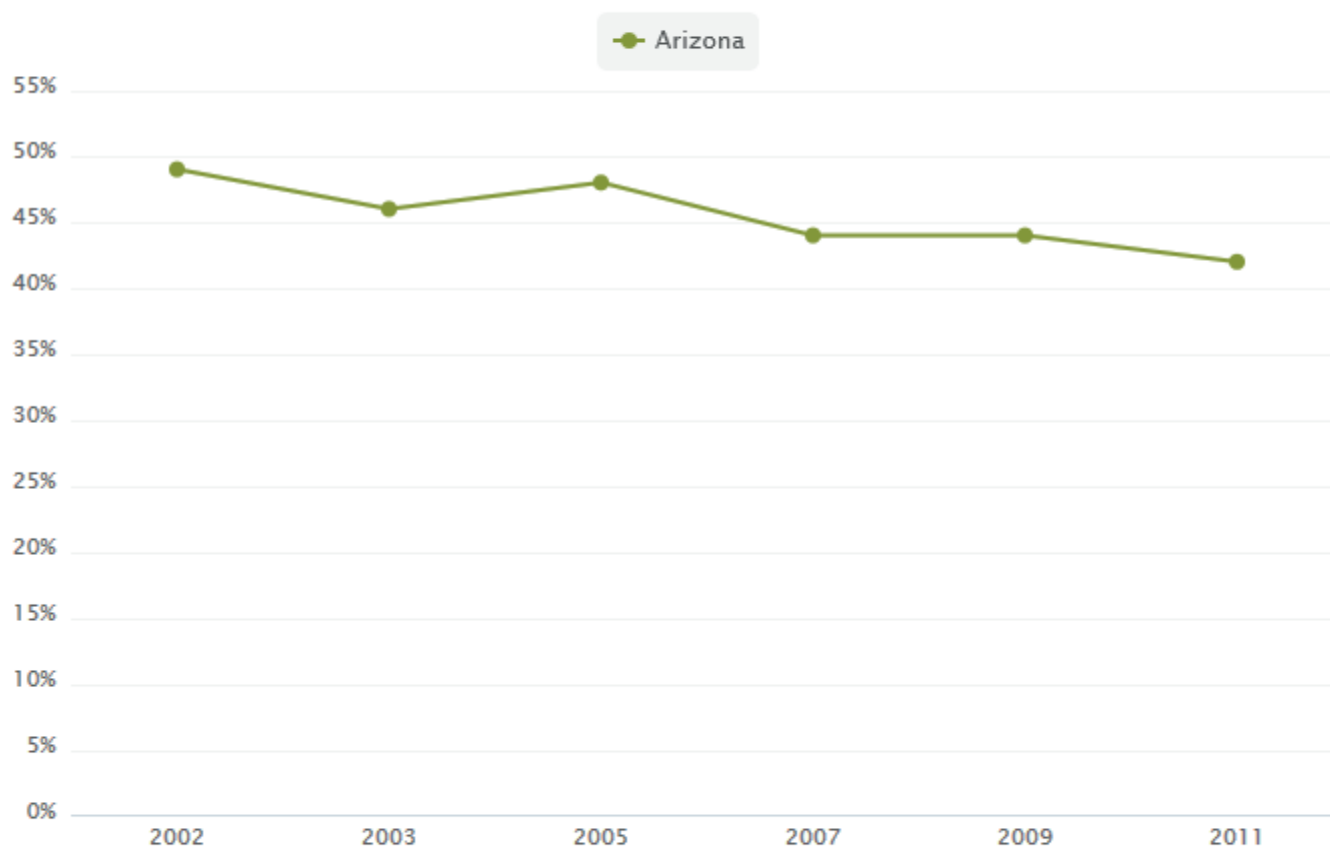
57.4% of  
students  
eligible for  
FRPL



# K-12 Population: Immigrant Status



29% of  
students  
from  
immigrant  
homes

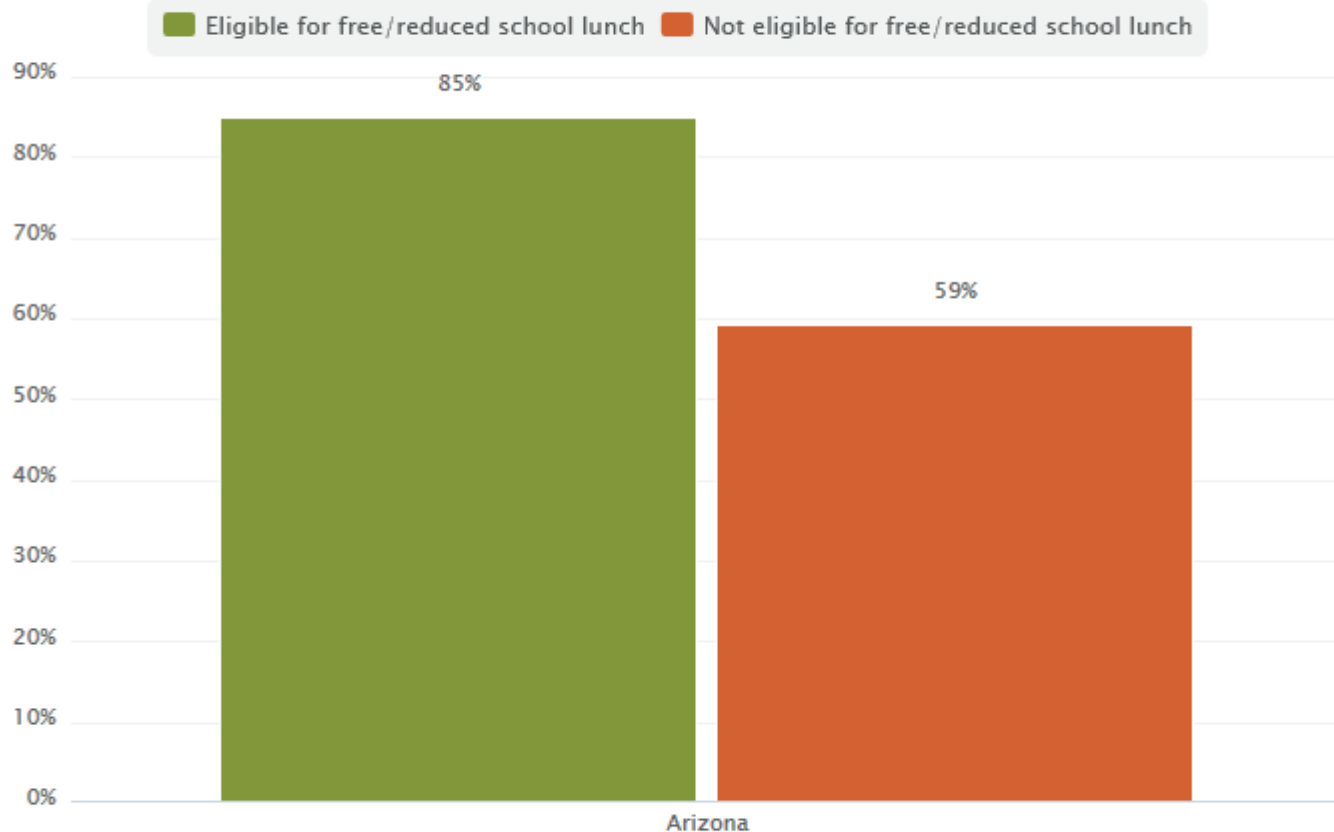


## 4TH GRADE READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS: BELOW BASIC (PERCENT)

**National KIDS COUNT**

KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)

A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

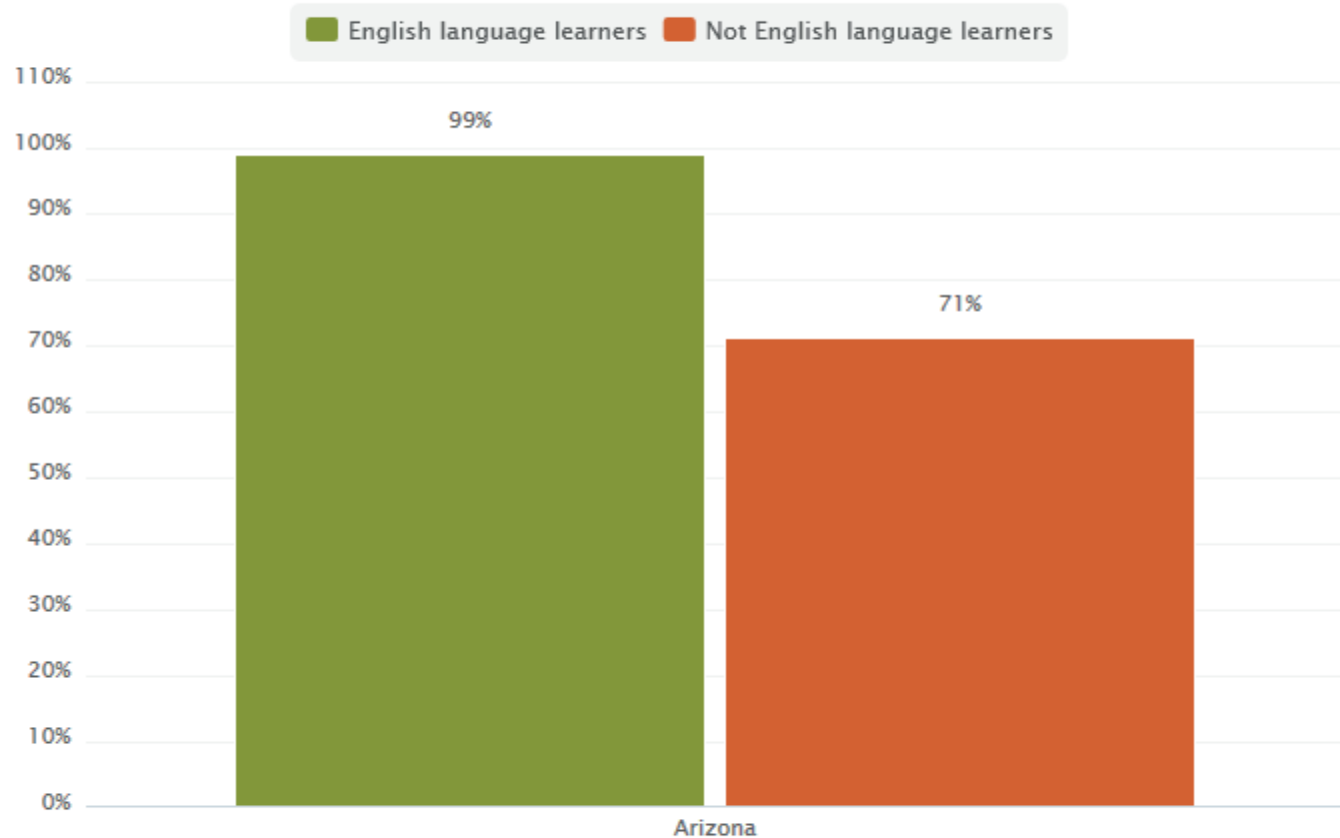


## 4TH GRADERS WHO SCORED BELOW PROFICIENT READING LEVEL BY FAMILY INCOME: ALL (PERCENT) - 2011

**National KIDS COUNT**

KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)

A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation



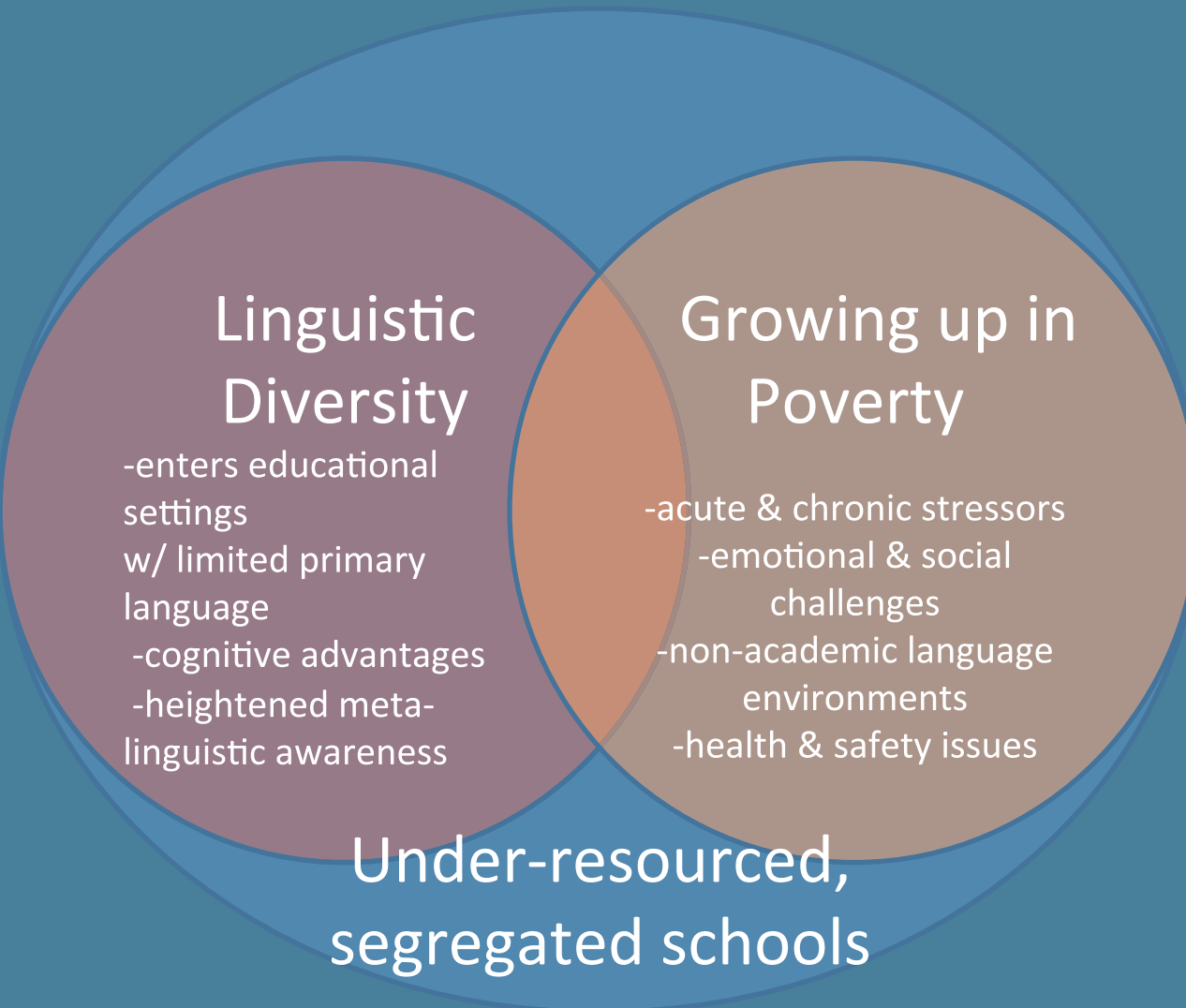
## 4TH GRADERS WHO SCORED BELOW PROFICIENT READING BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STATUS: ALL (PERCENT) - 2011

**National KIDS COUNT**

KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)

A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

# The Demographics of Reading Difficulties



**Limited opportunities to develop advanced literacy skills**

Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2009;  
Murnane & Levy, 1996, 2004; Symonds,  
Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011

**High rates of special education placement**

Hehir, 2002; National Research Council, 2002;  
Samson & Lesaux, 2009

**High dropout rates**

Fry, 2010; Bloom & Haskins,  
2010; Symonds, Schwartz, &  
Ferguson, 2011



# Guiding Goals



## Improving Reading in AZ

**Capitalize on  
our attributes  
& resources**

**Elevate the bar  
for children at  
every reading  
level**

**Increase  
individual &  
societal  
prosperity**



# EARLY LITERACY

# What is Reading?

4 sounds, 1 word:

/s/ /p/ /ee/ /d/

“-igh family”

high

sigh

thigh

/H/

Cognitive  
strategies

Interest and  
motivation

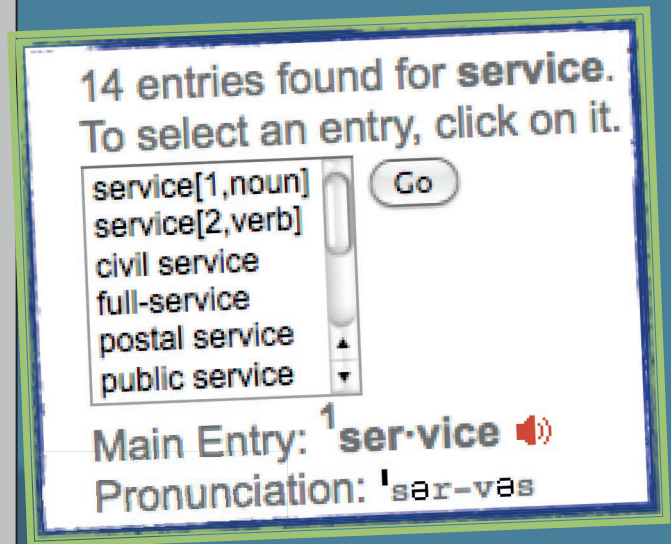
Understanding of  
language

Relevant  
background  
knowledge

## High-Speed Trains

A type of high-speed train was first introduced in Japan about forty years ago. The train is low to the ground, and its nose looks somewhat like the nose of a jet. These trains provided the first passenger service that moved at a speed of one hundred miles per hour. Today, they are even faster, traveling at speeds of almost two hundred miles per hour. There are many reasons that high-speed trains are popular.

115+ words correct  
per minute (grade  
5)



Vocabulary

# Two Different Problem Spaces

## Skills-Based Competencies

/H/

“-igh family”

high

sigh

thigh

4 sounds, 1 word:

/s/ /p/ /ee/ /d/

115+ words correct  
per minute (grade  
5)

## High-Speed Trains

A type of high-speed train was first introduced in Japan about forty years ago. The train is low to the ground, and its nose looks somewhat like the nose of a jet. These trains provided the first passenger service that moved at a speed of one hundred miles per hour. Today, they are even faster, traveling at speeds of almost two hundred miles per hour. There are many reasons that high-speed trains are popular.

## Knowledge-based Competencies

**Cognitive strategies**

**Relevant background knowledge**

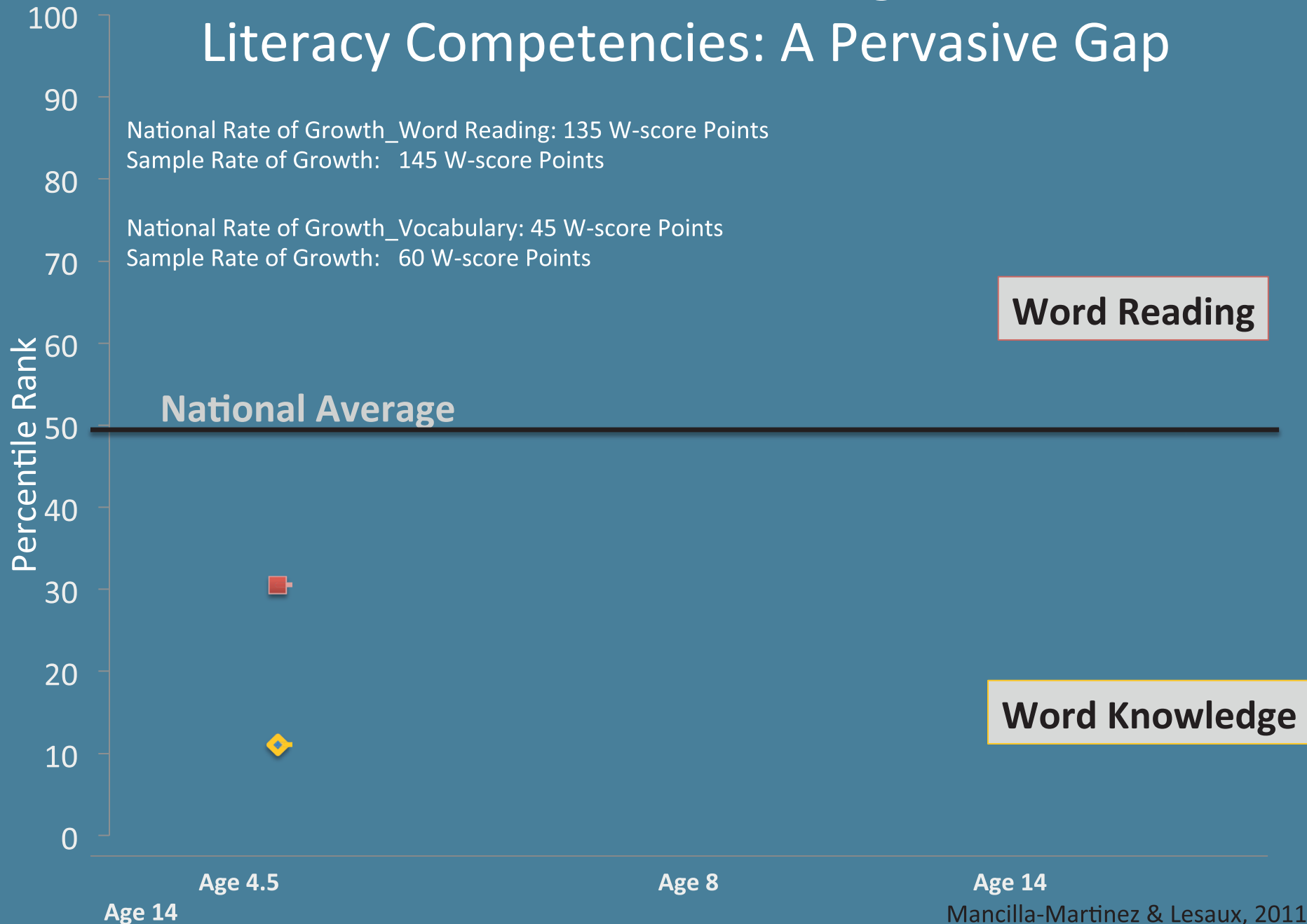
**Understanding of language**

**Interest and motivation**

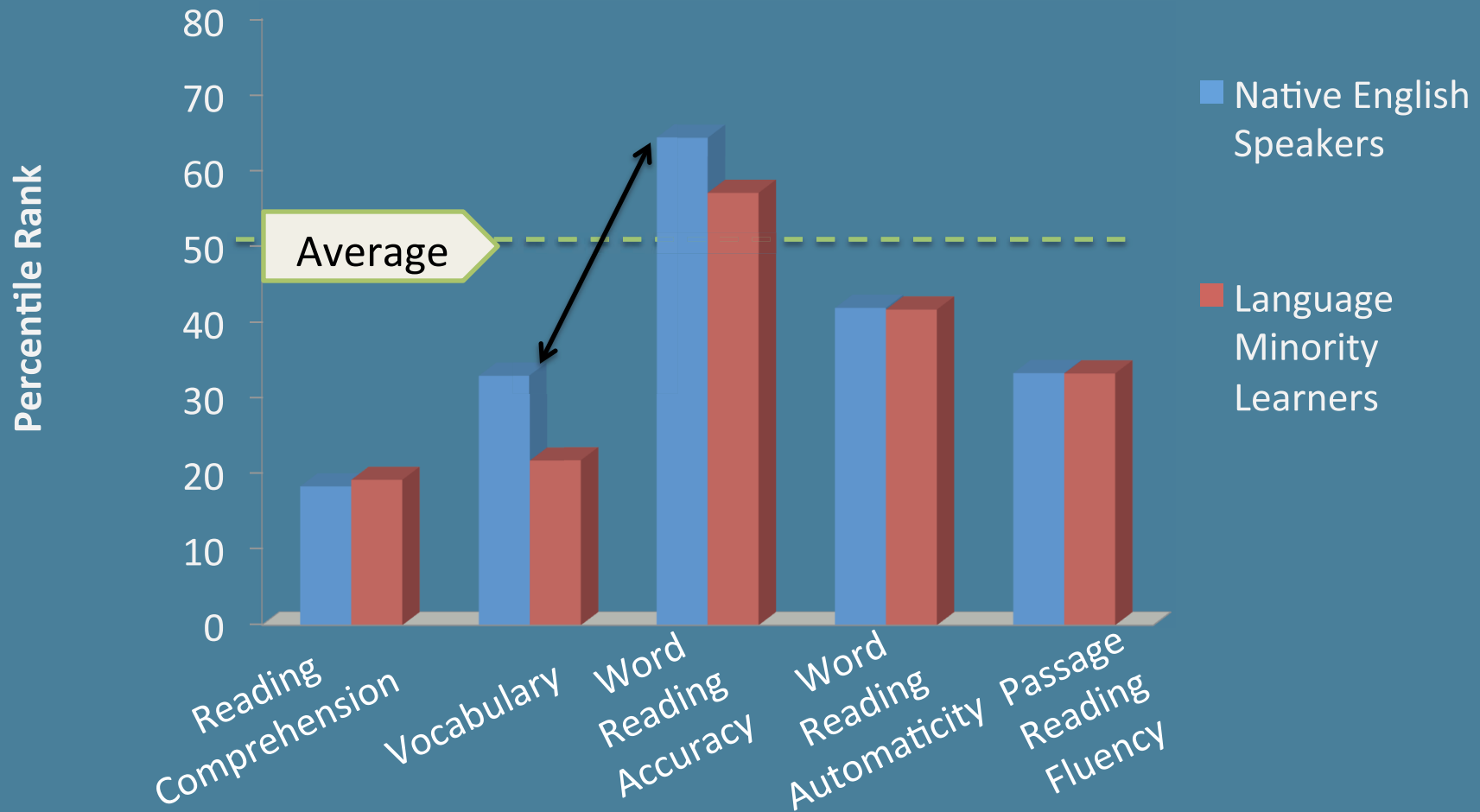
# Skills-Based vs. Knowledge-Based Literacy Competencies: A Pervasive Gap

National Rate of Growth\_Word Reading: 135 W-score Points  
Sample Rate of Growth: 145 W-score Points

National Rate of Growth\_Vocabulary: 45 W-score Points  
Sample Rate of Growth: 60 W-score Points



# Skills-Based vs. Knowledge-Based Literacy Competencies: A Pervasive Gap



(Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010)



# Two Different Problem Spaces

## SKILLS

- Concepts about print
- The ability to hear & work with spoken sounds
  - Alphabet knowledge
- Word reading & spelling
  - Fluency

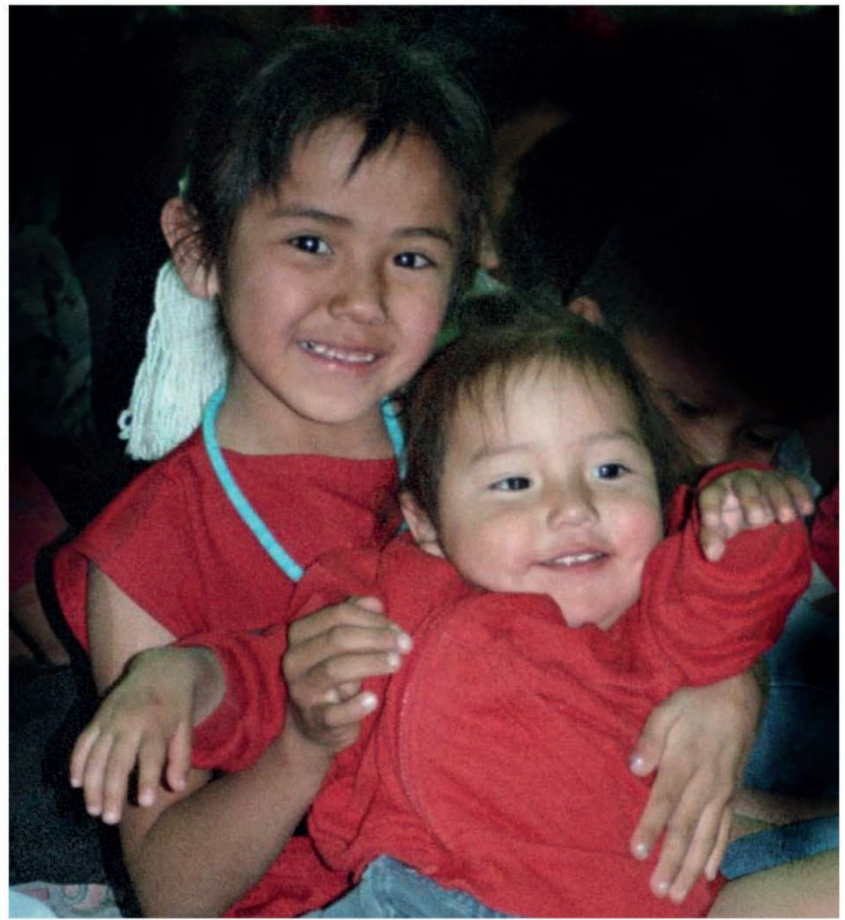
## KNOWLEDGE

- Concepts about the world
- The ability to understand & express complex ideas
  - Vocabulary
- Oral language skills



**Literacy:**  
Reading Writing,  
Listening &  
Speaking

# What does this mean for our learners?





# Lesson #1: The Key Link Between Reading & Language Development

Has  
250-350  
words

Has 3000-5000  
words

Now learning 3,000  
words/year

**Infant   Toddler   Preschooler   Early Elementary   2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**

Imitates  
Speech

Vocalize  
feelings  
(cry, giggle)

Looks  
through a  
book and  
retells the  
story

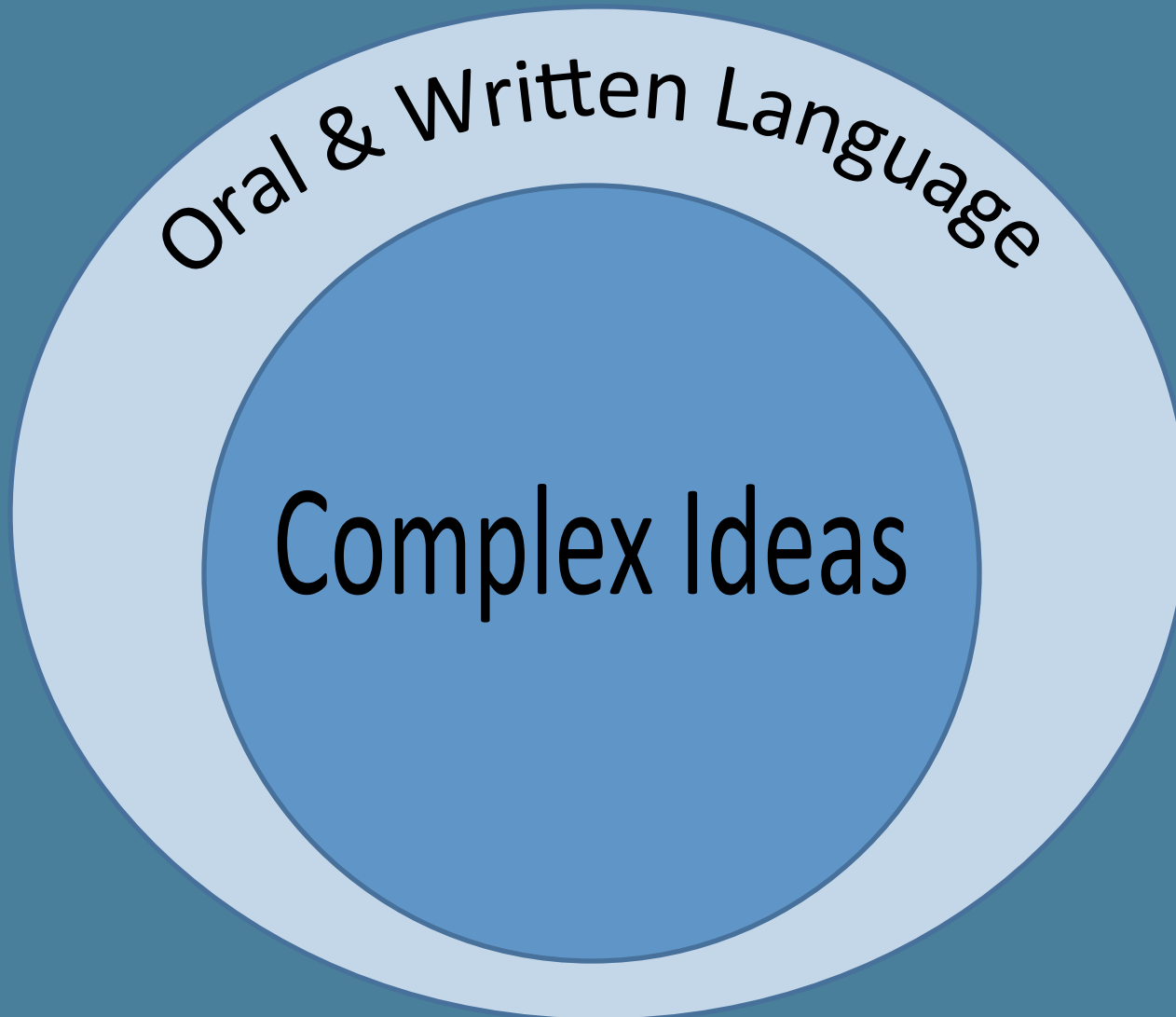
Reads simple  
books

Asks questions  
when listening  
to stories

Reads  
independently  
and talks about  
what he reads



## Lesson #2: Thinking Past “Proficiency”



# Lesson #3: It Takes Strong, Supportive Interactions Across Contexts





# KEY STRATEGIES



# A Framework for Comprehensive Reform

## Promoting young children's language and reading

Program  
Design &  
Implementation  
for Impact

Ongoing  
Assessment of  
Children &  
Settings

Re-Defined  
Adult Capacity-  
Building  
Models

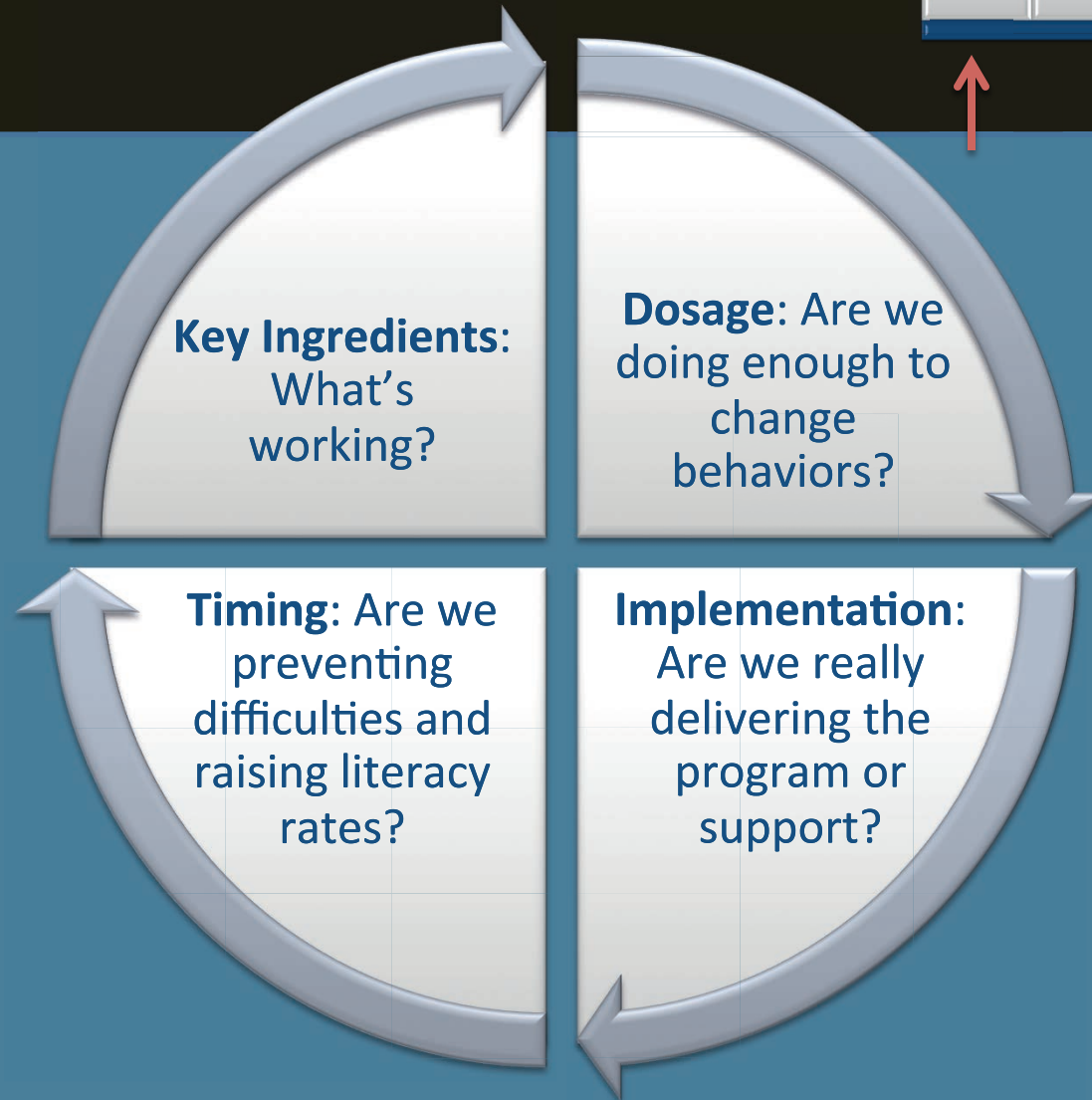
Language-  
Rich,  
Rigorous, and  
Engaging  
Curricula

Partnerships  
with families  
focused on  
language &  
learning

# Ensure programs are delivered with sufficient intensity, duration, and scope (before scaling up)

Increase the quality of children's language and reading environments across the many settings in which they are growing up, from birth to age 9

Program Design & Implementation for Impact	Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Language-Rich, Rigorous, and Engaging Curricula	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning
--	---	---	---	---



Conduct early, ongoing assessments of children's language and reading, *and* the quality of settings and services

Increase the quality of children's language and reading environments across the many settings in which they are growing up, from birth to age 9

Program Design & Implementation for Impact	Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Language-Rich, Rigorous, and Engaging Curricula	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning
--	---	---	---	---



Comprehensive:  
Measurement across  
literacy domains

Setting-level:  
Measure quality and  
impact

# Increase adults' capacity to assess and support children's language and literacy development

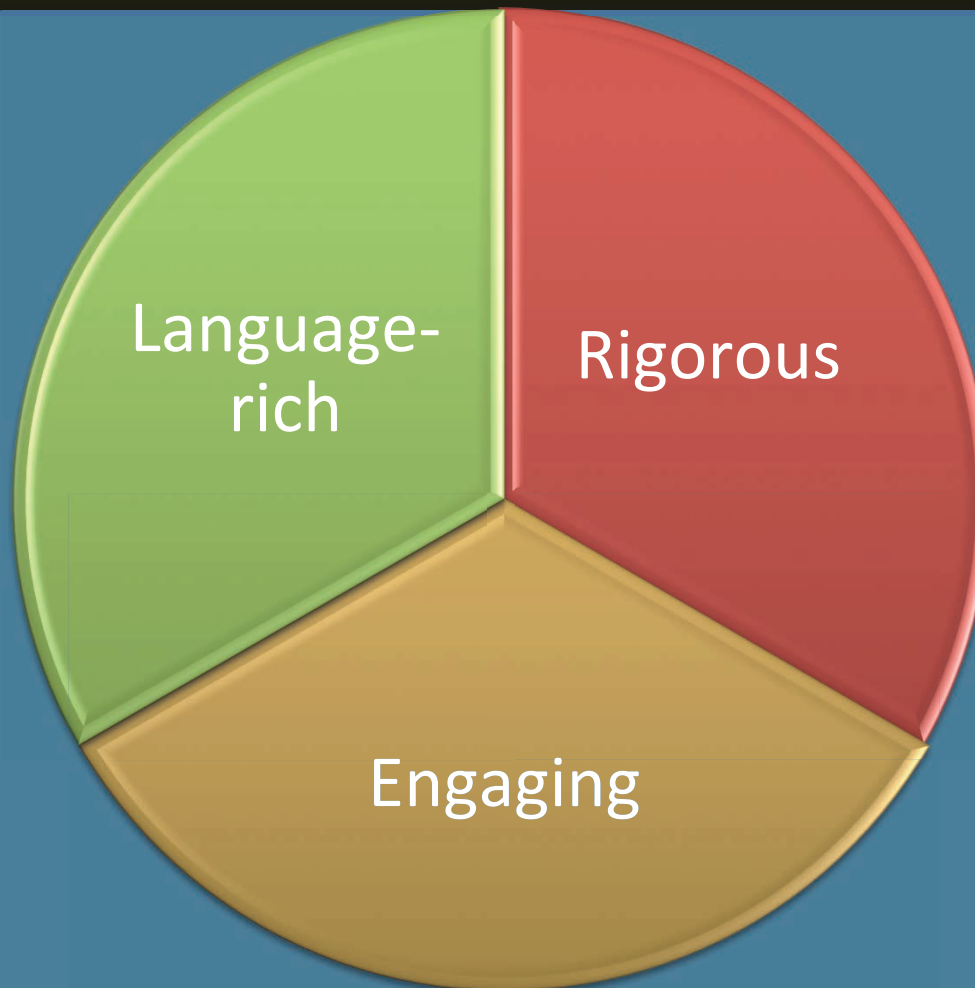
Increase the quality of children's language and reading environments across the many settings in which they are growing up, from birth to age 9

Program Design & Implementation for Impact	Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Language-Rich, Rigorous, and Engaging Curricula	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning
--	---	---	---	---



# A Comprehensive Curriculum Supports Quality Instruction

Increase the quality of children's language and reading environments across the many settings in which they are growing up, from birth to age 9				
Program Design & Implementation for Impact	Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Language-Rich, Rigorous, and Engaging Curricula	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning



# Principles of An Integrated Instructional Approach

Increase the quality of children's language and reading environments across the many settings in which they are growing up, from birth to age 9

Program Design & Implementation for Impact	Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Language-Rich, Rigorous, and Engaging Curricula	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning
--	---	---	---	---

Provides direct instruction

Uses rich texts as a platform

Instruction to Support Language, Literacy, and Social-Emotional Development

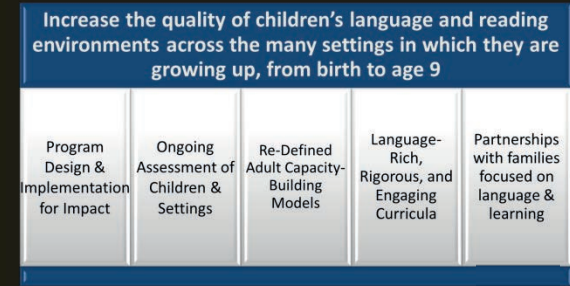
Makes Learning Social

Cultivates Consciousness

Uses consistent routines and language



# Expand and strengthen work with families across learning settings and within communities



- Link family engagement to children's language and reading
- Strengthen family literacy ↔ community library connection
- Tap community leaders

# Partnerships with Families

Increase the quality of children's language and reading environments across the many settings in which they are growing up, from birth to age 9

Program Design & Implementation for Impact	Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Language-Rich, Rigorous, and Engaging Curricula	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning
--	---	---	---	---





**MAKING IT  
HAPPEN**



# Focusing on the Architecture of the System

## Promoting young children's language and reading

Program  
Design &  
Implementation  
for Impact

Ongoing  
Assessment of  
Children &  
Settings

Re-Defined  
Adult Capacity-  
Building  
Models

Language-  
Rich,  
Rigorous, and  
Engaging  
Curricula

Partnerships  
with families  
focused on  
language &  
learning



# Making It Happen

Raising Awareness

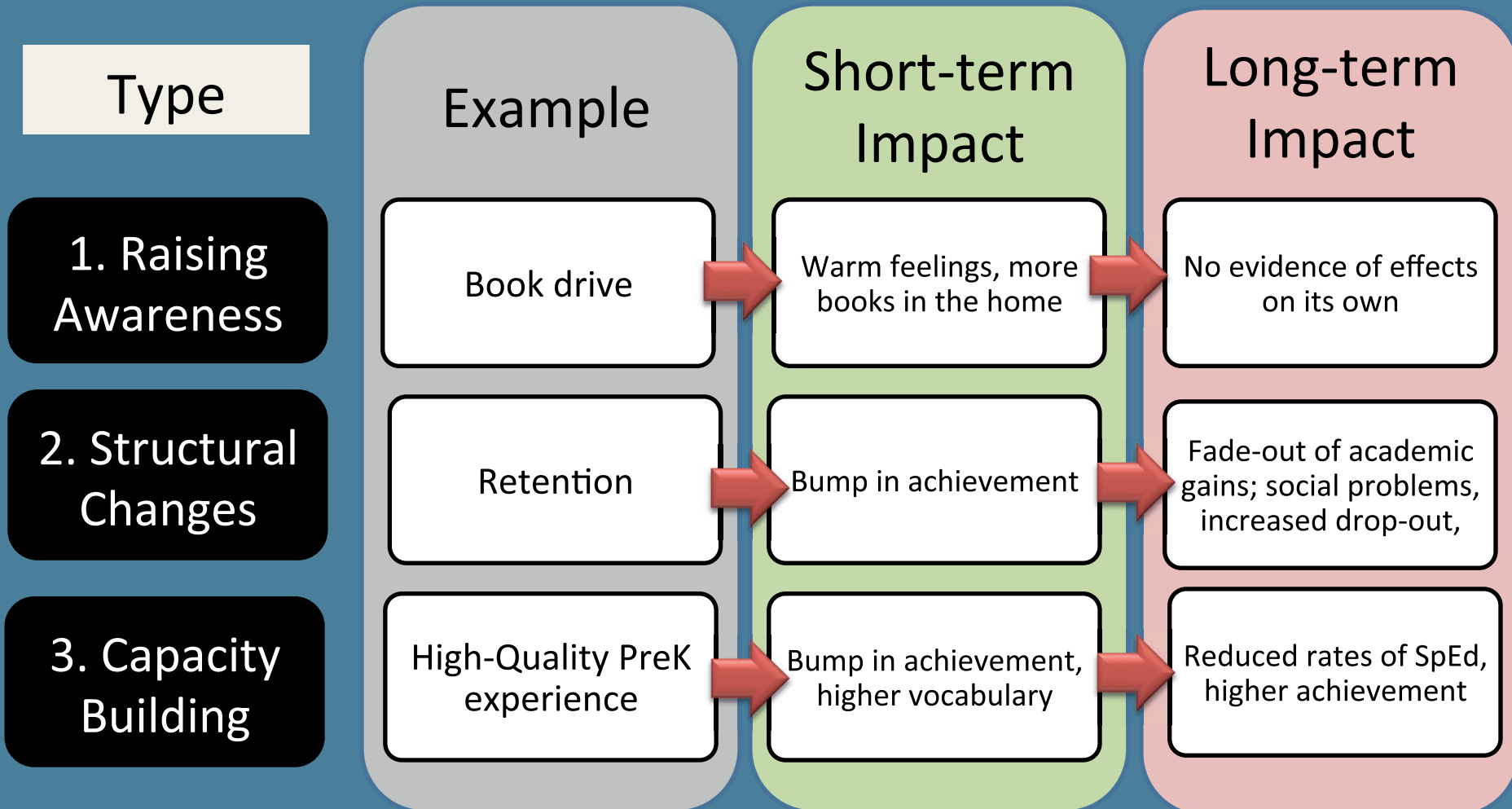
Changing Behaviors


Intensity

- Time
- Money
- Human Capital

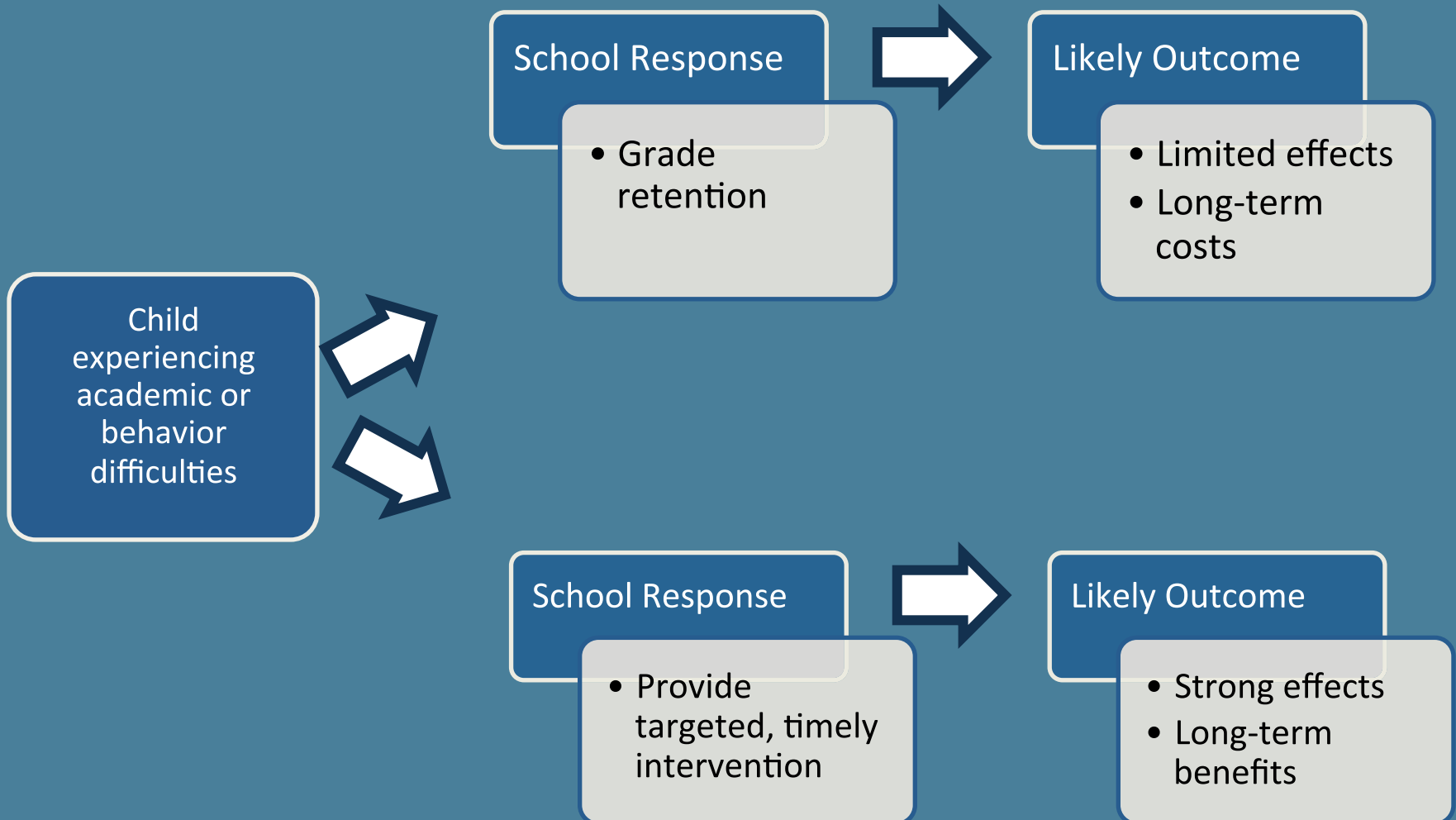


# Focusing Efforts: 3 Broad Types of Initiatives





# Structural v. Capacity-Building Levers: A Cautionary Tale





# Summing Up: A Complex Enterprise Demands a Comprehensive Process

## Promoting young children's language and reading

Program  
Design &  
Implementation  
for Impact

Ongoing  
Assessment of  
Children &  
Settings

Re-Defined  
Adult Capacity-  
Building  
Models

Language-  
Rich,  
Rigorous, and  
Engaging  
Curricula

Partnerships  
with families  
focused on  
language &  
learning

# Acknowledgements

## Collaborators and Research Team

**Stephanie Jones**, Kargman Associate Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education

**Jeannette Mancilla-Martinez**, University of California, Irvine

**Michael Kieffer**, New York University

### Research Team

Rebecca Bailey

Julie Russ Harris

Robin Kane

Joan Kelley

Sky Marietta

Rebecca Givens Rolland

## Funders and Partners



Early Childhood Centers of Greater Springfield, Inc.



[rdgstudy@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:rdgstudy@gse.harvard.edu)  
<http://isites.harvard.edu/lesaux>

# Thank you!

