

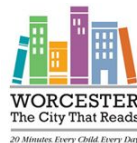
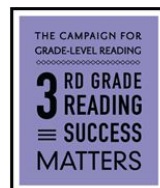


LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH GROUP  
increasing opportunities-to-learn for all // dedicated to the science of learning // informing research, practice, and policy

# THE ROAD TO IMPACT: OVERCOMING COMMON PITFALLS AND IDENTIFYING HIGH-STAKES DECISIONS FOR LITERACY SUCCESS

Nonie K. Lesaux, PhD  
First Things First Early Childhood Summit  
August 24-25, 2015  
Phoenix, AZ

Reading proficiency by third grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success. Yet every year, 67% of children nationwide miss this crucial milestone.



# AGENDA

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- Today's Context of Early Literacy
- Recent Research on Early Literacy Development
  - 3 Key Findings
- Today's Literacy Efforts
- Capitalizing on the Momentum: Leading the Next Generation of Improvement Initiatives

# **TODAY'S CONTEXT OF EARLY LITERACY**

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The science of early learning, the demographic context, policies & initiatives

# THE SCIENCE OF EARLY LEARNING

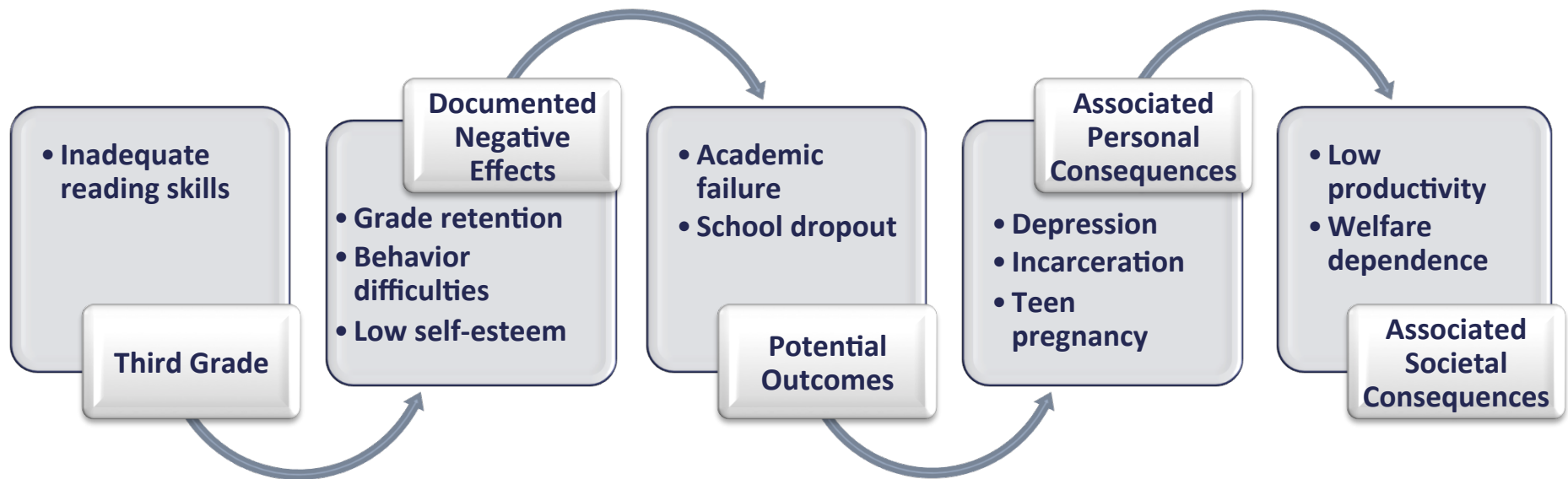
The foundations of lifelong learning are established in the earliest years of children's lives

Optimizing children's development requires strong and supportive interactions across contexts

Child development exists along a continuum

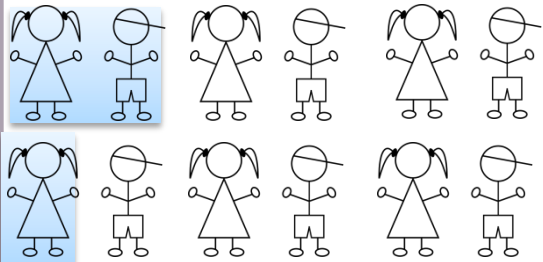
Early learning practices and policies can buffer the impacts of adverse childhood experiences

# Why Literacy in the Early Years?

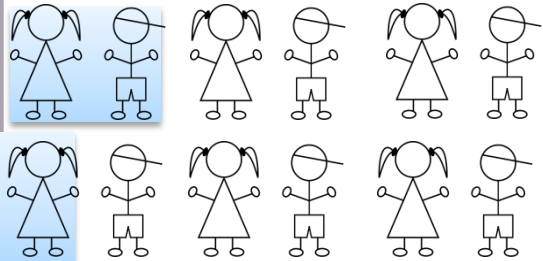


# Today's Population

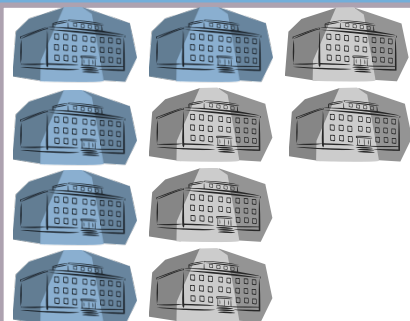
## U.S. Children...



25% of children, ages 0-5, live in poverty

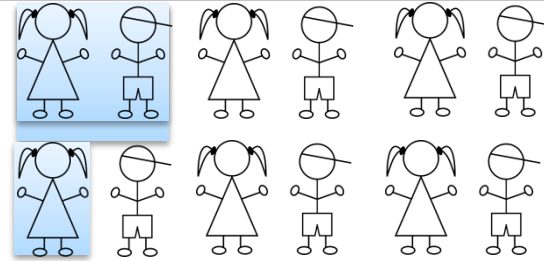
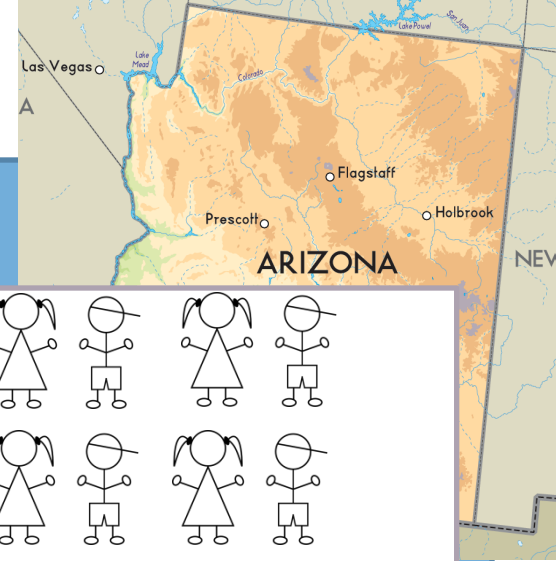


24% are children of immigrants

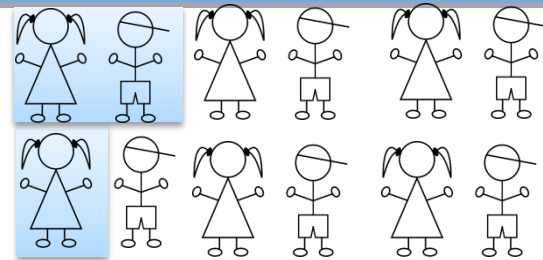


46% of children age 3 to 4 enrolled in early education and care

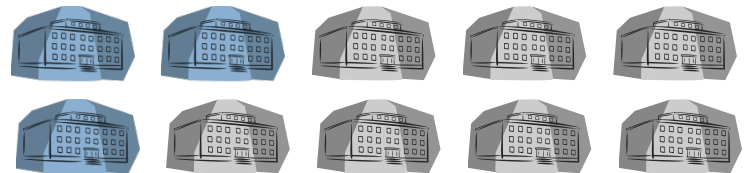
## AZ Children...



29% of children, ages 0-5, live in poverty



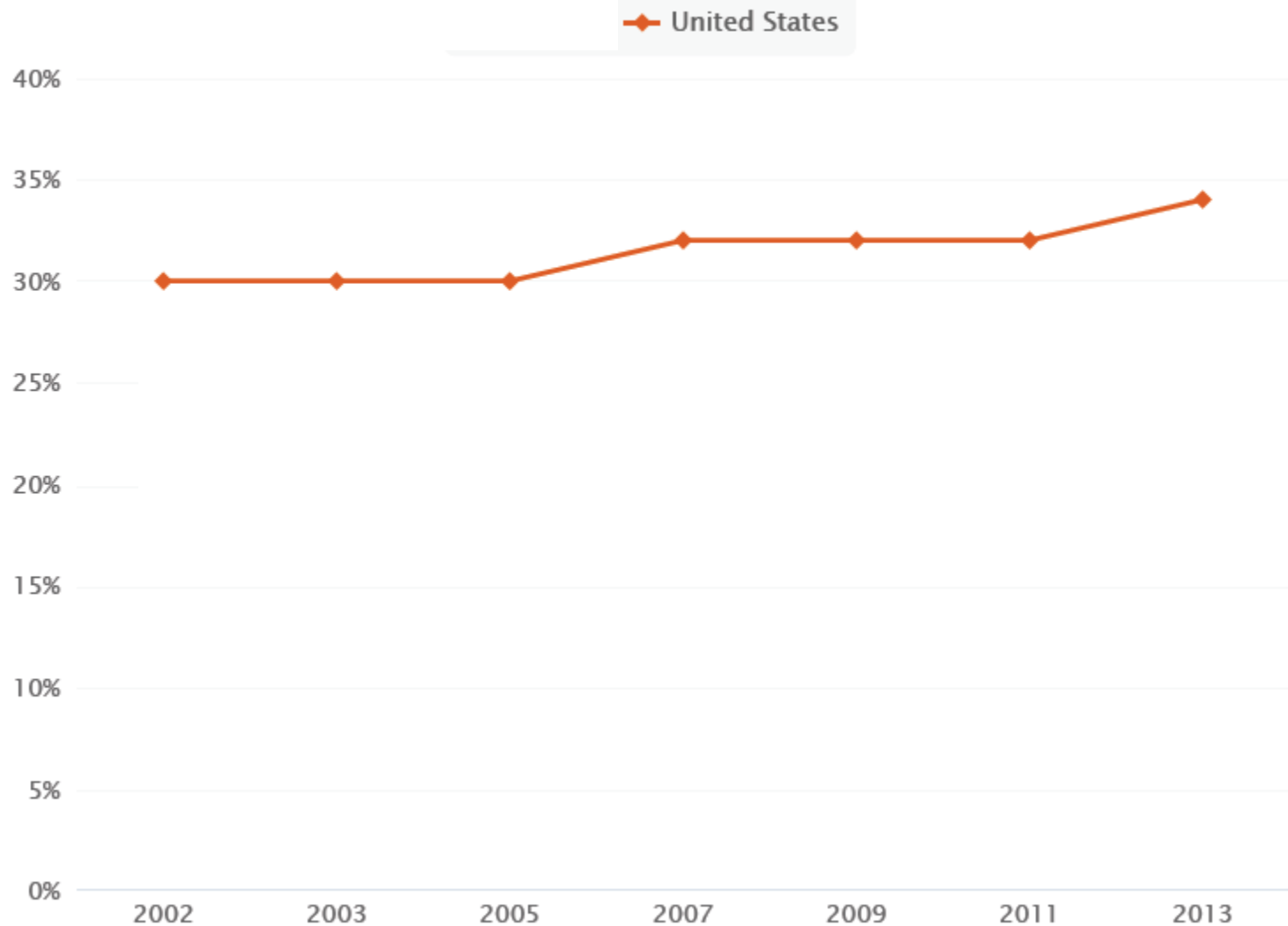
28% of children and youth are children of immigrants



33% of children age 3 to 4 enrolled in early education and care

# Literacy Data: National NAEP Trends

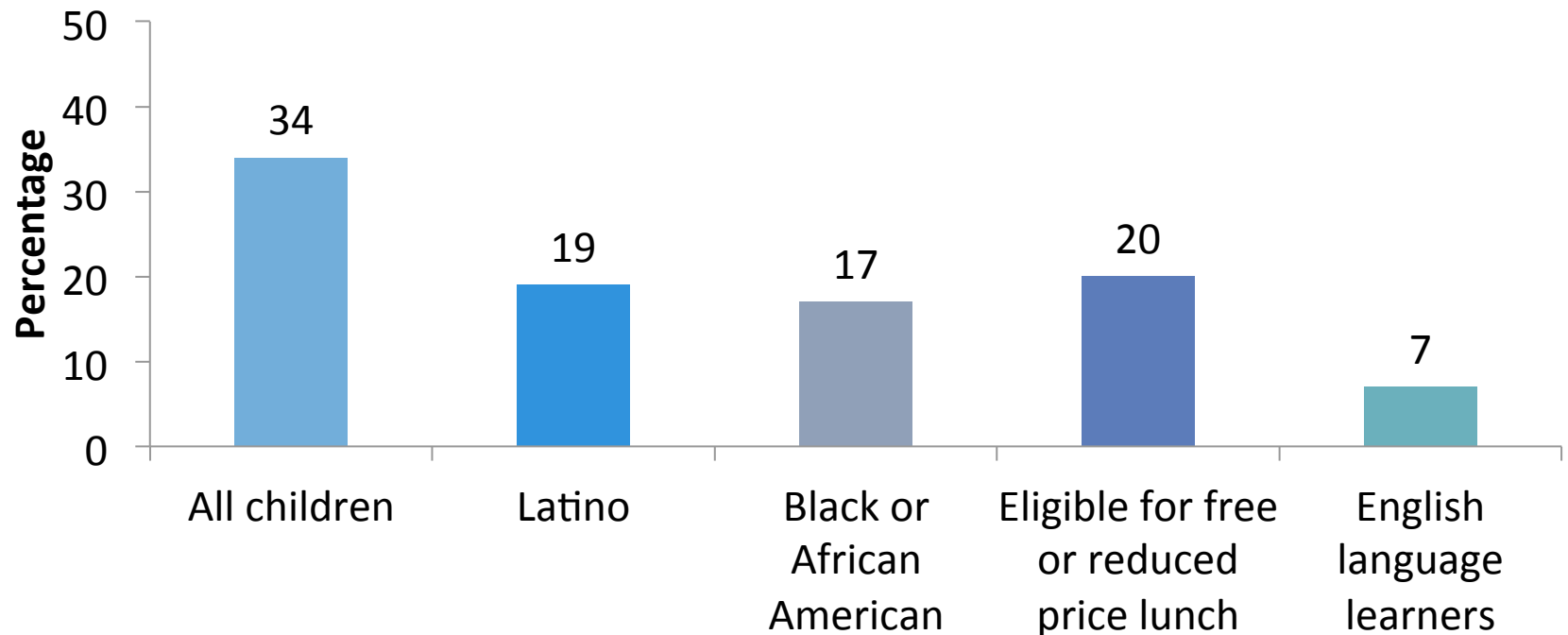
## 4<sup>th</sup> Graders Who Scored At or Above Proficient



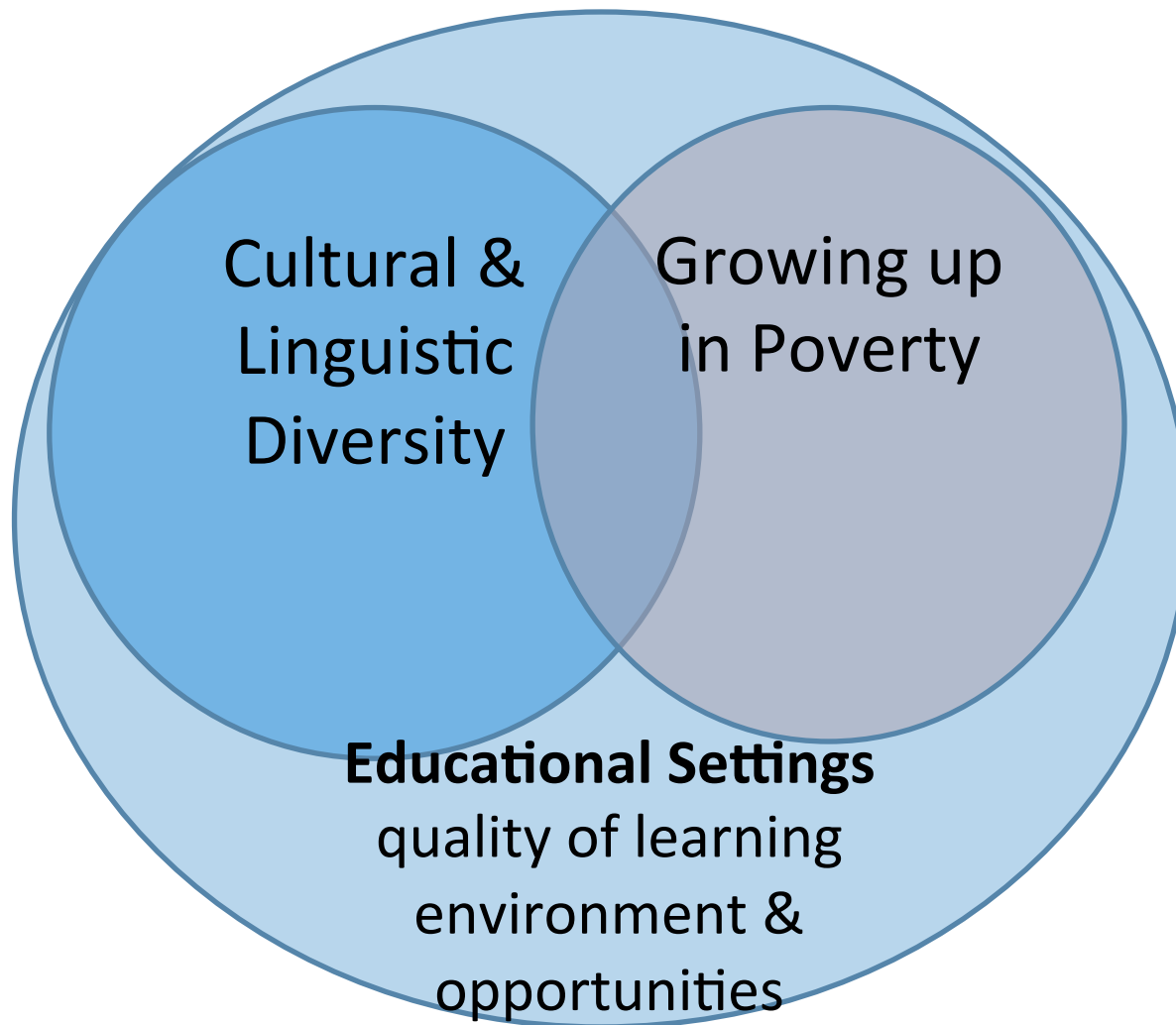


# Literacy Data (con't): Clear Disparities

## US 4<sup>th</sup> Graders Who Scored At or Above Proficient 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress



# INCREASING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY & INCREASING VULNERABILITY



**Compromised  
opportunities to  
develop language and  
reading skills**

**Compromised  
opportunities to  
develop strong  
emotional, social,  
and cognitive skills**

# Matching the Science and the Context with Policies and Initiatives



**Policies & Large-Scale Initiatives**

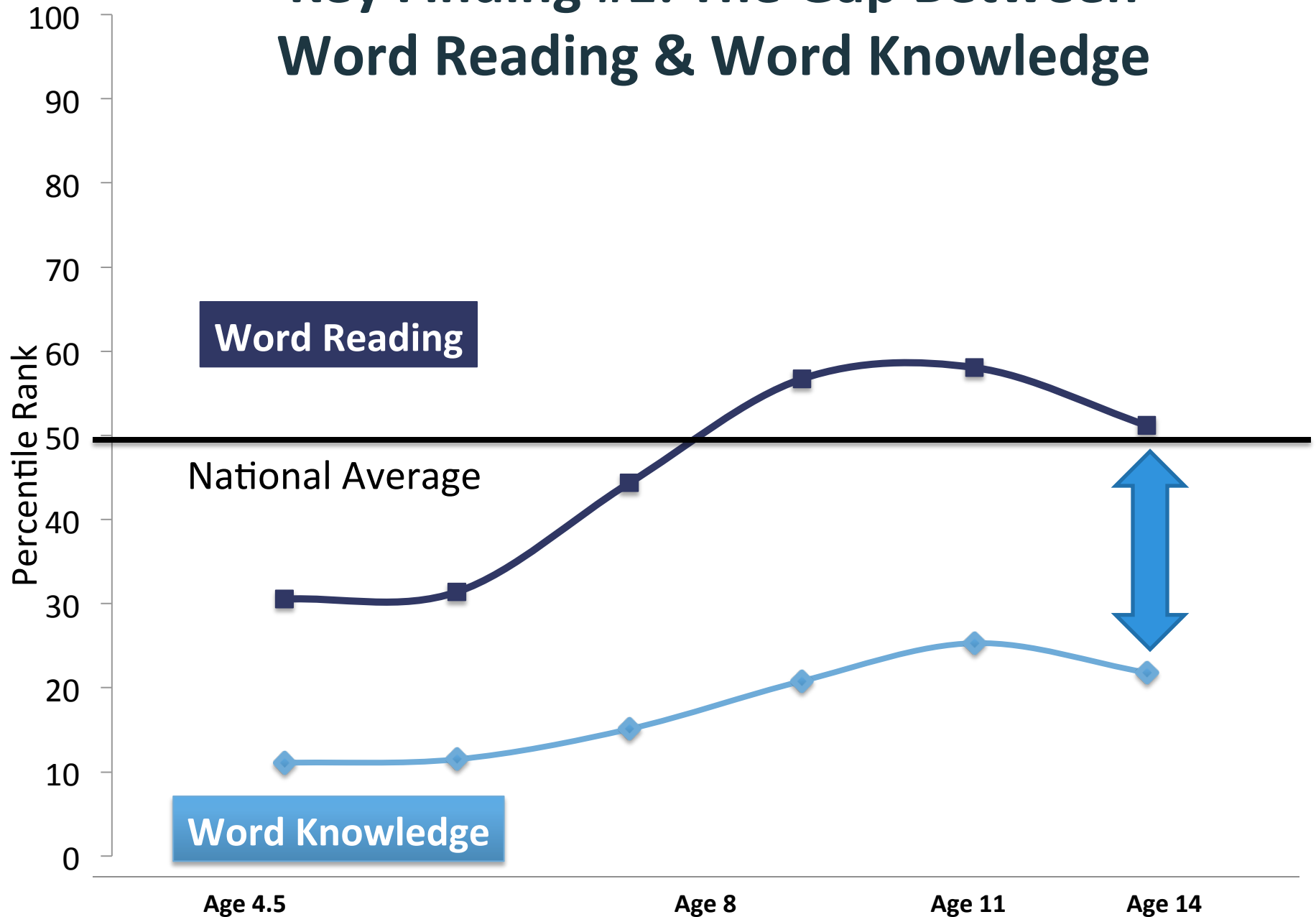
**Improved  
3<sup>rd</sup> Grade  
Outcomes**

PreK expansion  
Preschool for All initiative  
Campaign for Grade Level  
Reading  
Word-gap initiatives  
(e.g., *Too Small to Fail*)  
My Brother's Keeper  
AAP Policy Statement  
(*Pediatric Care & Literacy Promotion*)

# **TODAY'S RESEARCH ON EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: 3 KEY FINDINGS**

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# Key Finding #1: The Gap Between Word Reading & Word Knowledge



# Why This Gap?

## Two Different Problem Spaces

### Code-based skills

/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.

### Meaning-based Skills

Cognitive  
strategies

Vocabulary

Relevant background  
knowledge

Understanding of  
language

Interest and  
motivation

# CHANGING TEXT DEMANDS

## The Train Trip

I like to ride the train.  
I can walk all around the train car whenever I want.

Grade 1

## 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.

Grade 5

## Economic and Governmental Forces: Their Impact on American Railroads in the Twentieth Century

And so began one of the biggest populist campaigns ever seen in America – the crusade to harness the railroad robber barons. Before long, that drive had spread to Washington where in 1887, Congress legislated not out of reason but out of fear to create the Interstate Commerce Commission. Remember that in the days of a relatively powerless federal government, the railroad industry budget was many times the size of the federal budget.

High School

# Implications & Next Steps

## Common Pitfall

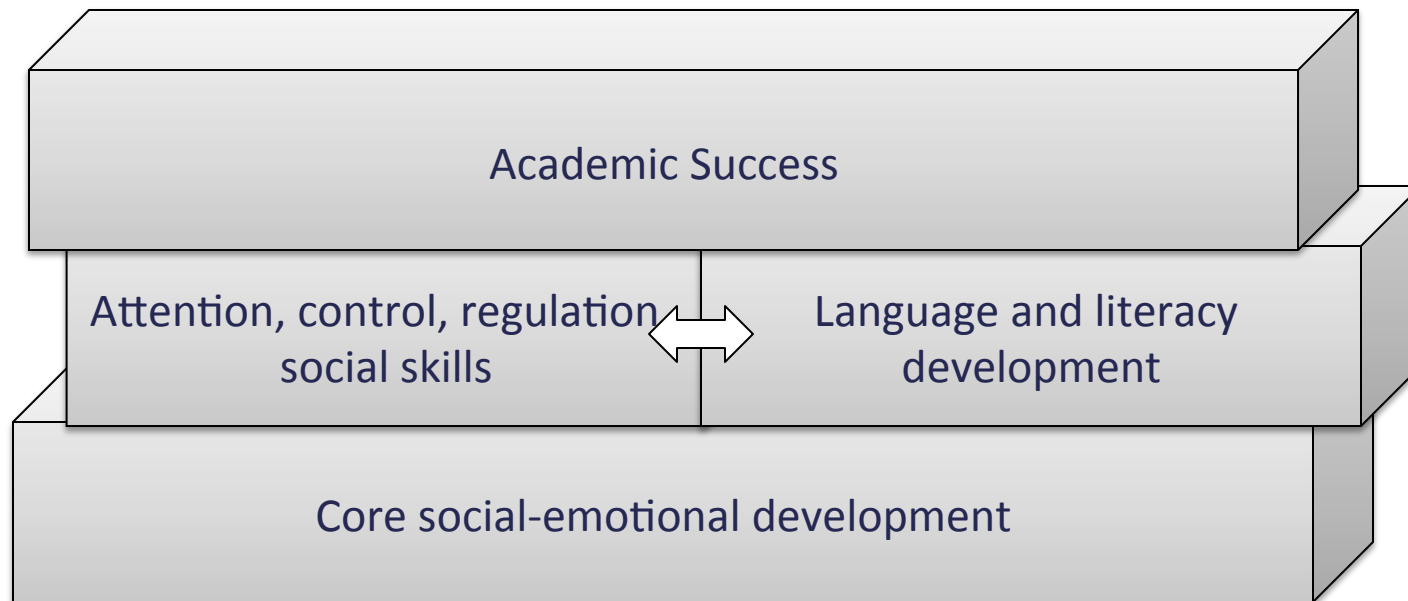
- Onset of remediation of language-based literacy difficulties at grades 2, 3, and beyond

## What We're Learning

- Create a prevention model, beginning in the earliest years, designed around the crucial link between early language development and later reading outcomes



# KEY FINDING #2: ACADEMIC, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL CAPABILITIES ARE INEXTRICABLY INTERTWINED



# UNPACKING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

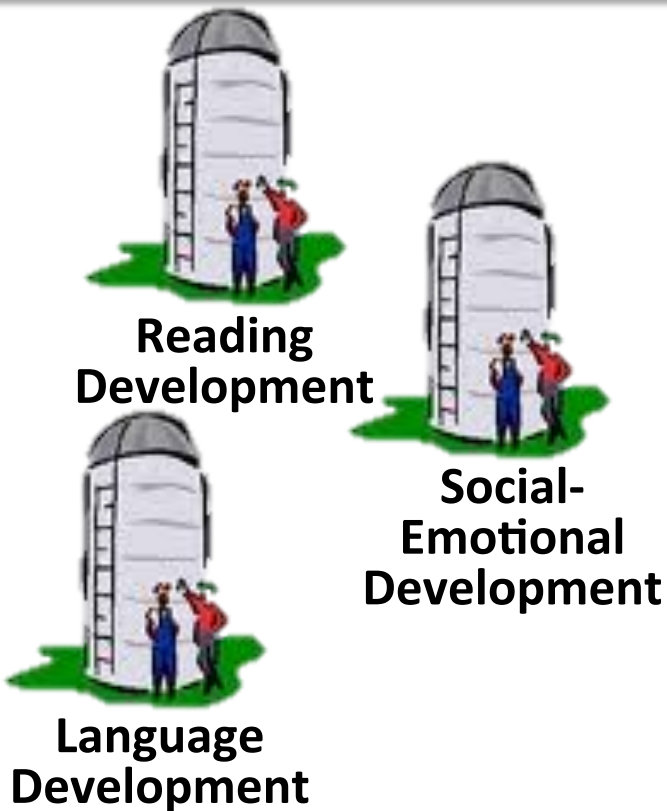


# A WINDOW INTO THE INTEGRATED NATURE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

	Alphabet Knowledge & Early Word Reading	Vocabulary Knowledge
Impulse Control	.18**	.23**
Attention Skills	.09	.19**
Positivity and Confidence	.21**	.26**

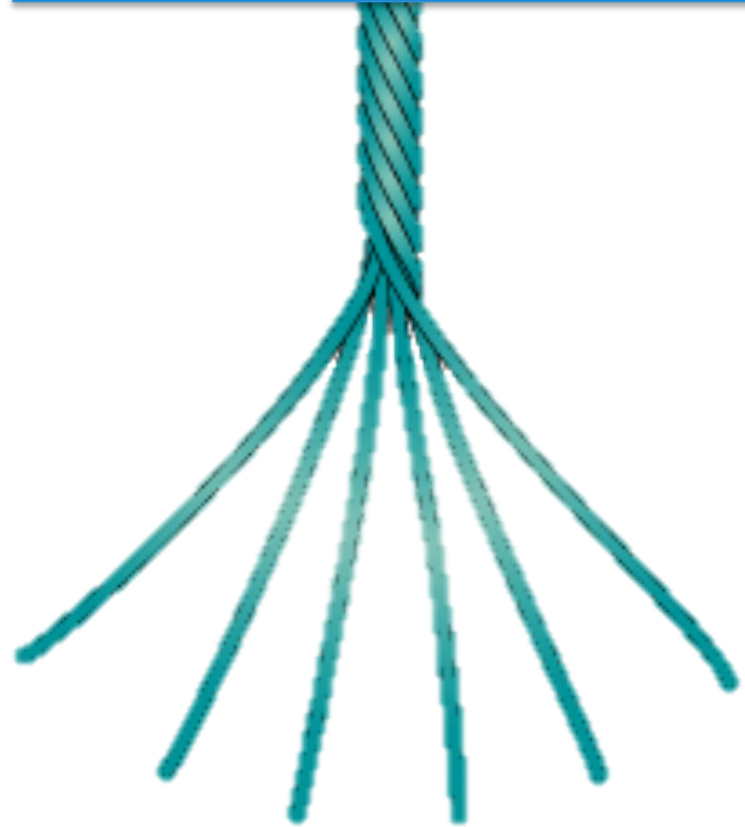
# IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK

## Common Pitfall



**Approaching development as the composite of isolated domains**

## What We're Learning



**Design settings and programs that focus on multiple domains of development**

# KEY FINDING #3: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IS THE RESULT OF ONGOING ACCUMULATION OF EXPERIENCES

Has  
250-350  
words

Has 3000-5000  
words

Now learning 3,000  
words/year

**Infant**

**Toddler**

**Preschooler**

**Early Elementary**

**3<sup>rd</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



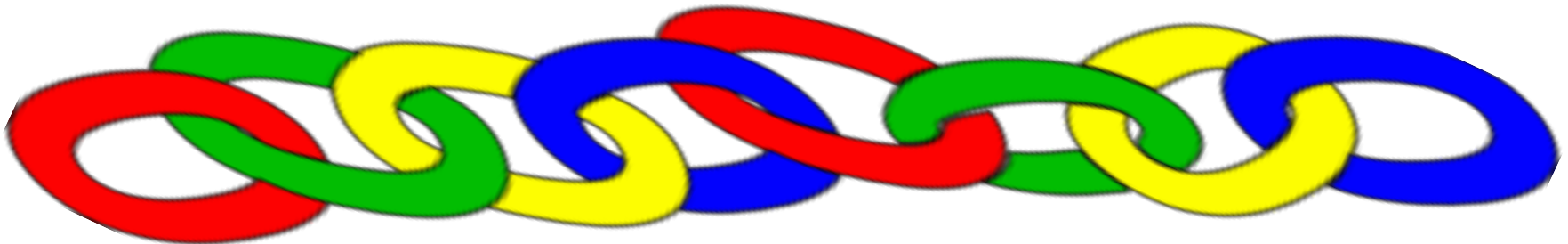
# IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

## Common Pitfall

- Investing in a particular time period at the expense of others
  - Kinks/breaks/disconnects in the pathway

## What We're Learning

- Provide learning experiences and opportunities across the early childhood continuum



# **TODAY'S LITERACY EFFORTS**

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Toward a comprehensive approach to early literacy reform

# COMPREHENSIVE EARLY LITERACY REFORM

**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**

Ongoing  
Assessment of  
Children &  
Settings

Re-Defined Adult  
Capacity-Building  
Models

Curricula  
Supporting  
Language-Rich,  
Rigorous, &  
Regulated  
Learning  
Environments

Partnerships with  
families focused  
on language &  
learning



# CONDUCT EARLY, ONGOING ASSESSMENTS OF CHILDREN'S SKILLS *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			
Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Curricula Supporting Language-Rich, Rigorous, & Regulated Learning Environments	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning



Child-Level:  
Comprehensive  
measurement  
across domains

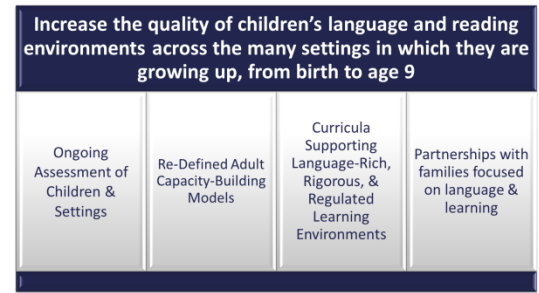
Setting-level:  
Measure quality  
and impact

# 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			
Ongoing Assessment of Children & Settings	Re-Defined Adult Capacity-Building Models	Curricula Supporting Language-Rich, Rigorous, & Regulated Learning Environments	Partnerships with families focused on language & learning



# Use Curricula to Support Language-Rich, Rigorous, & Regulated Learning Environments

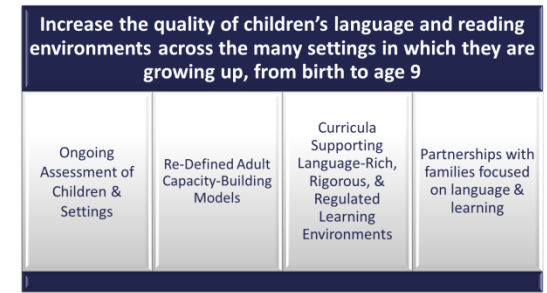


We can't  
confuse curricula  
with good  
teaching



**But we can  
support good teaching  
with high-quality,  
comprehensive curricula**

# PRINCIPLES OF AN INTEGRATED INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH



Organizes learning around content-rich themes and texts

Promotes culturally responsive classrooms

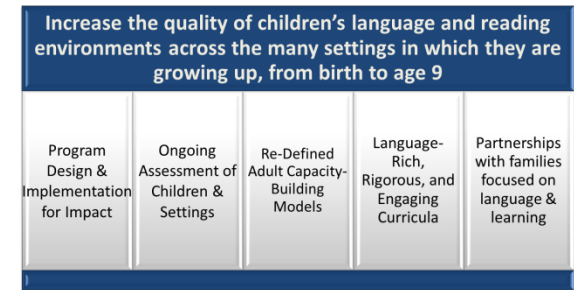
Uses consistent routines and language

Provides rigor and challenge in a supportive context

Combines explicit instruction with inquiry-based learning

Supports peer-to-peer interaction

# EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN WORK WITH FAMILIES ACROSS LEARNING SETTINGS AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES



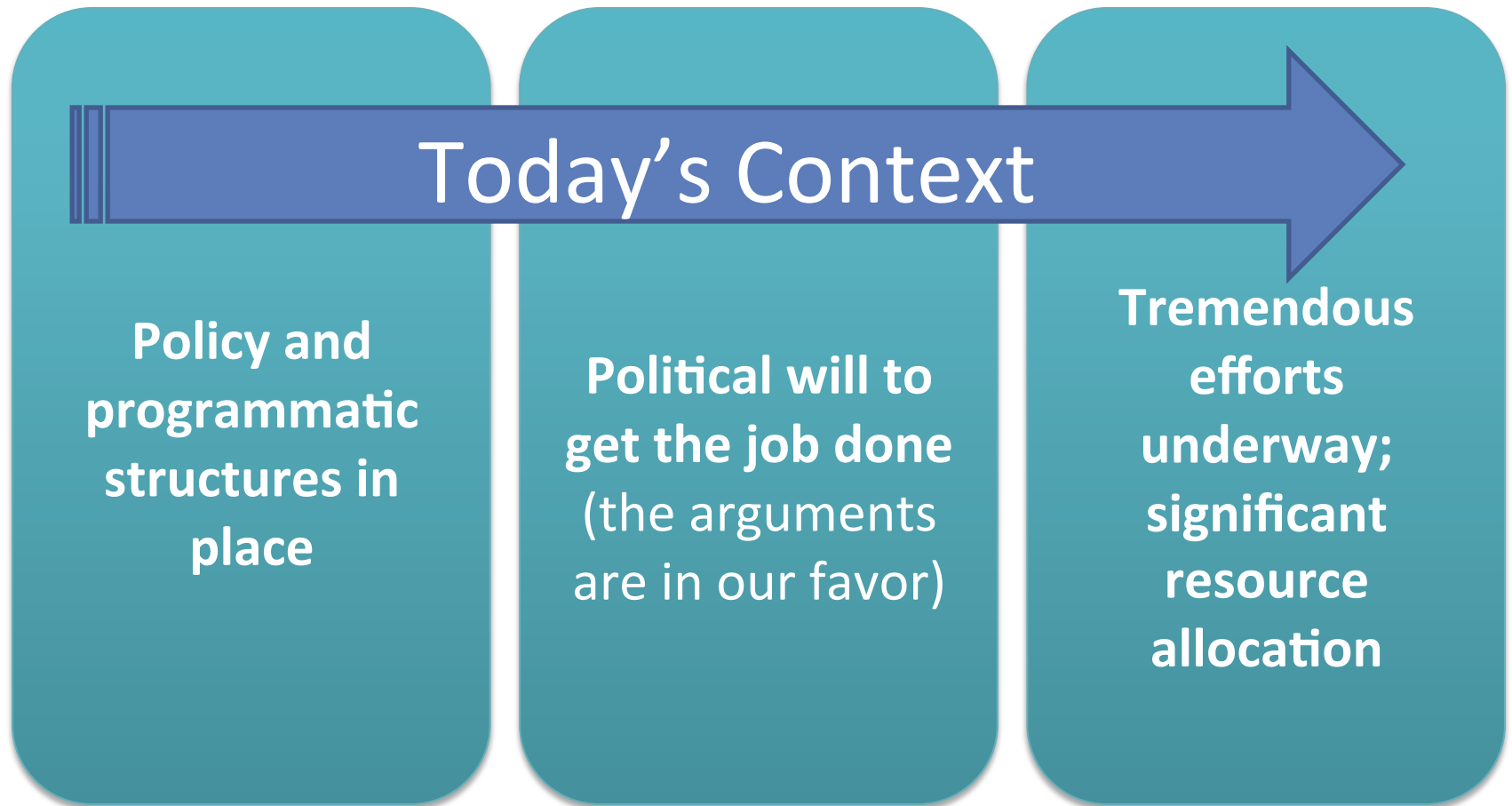
- Link family engagement to children's language and reading
- Strengthen family literacy ↔ community library connection
- Tap community leaders

# **CAPITALIZING ON THE MOMENTUM: LEADING THE NEXT GENERATION OF IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES**

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Implications for the collective effort

# CAPITALIZING ON THE MOMENTUM...



**Key Issue:** Ensuring sustained, intensive, and strategic efforts that result in measurable impact across settings, stakeholders, and developmental stages

**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**

Ongoing  
Assessment of  
Children &  
Settings

Re-Defined Adult  
Capacity-Building  
Models

Curricula  
Supporting  
Language-Rich,  
Rigorous, &  
Regulated  
Learning  
Environments

Partnerships with  
families focused  
on language &  
learning



**...WHILE ADDRESSING COMMON PITFALLS  
THAT FUNCTION AS BARRIERS TO DESIRED  
OUTCOMES**

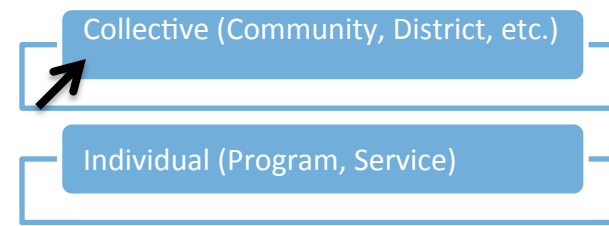
# COMMON PITFALLS AT TWO LEVELS

Collective (Community, District, etc.)

The diagram consists of two horizontal rows. Each row has a blue rounded rectangle on the left containing text, and a white rectangle on the right. A thin blue line connects the right side of the blue rectangle to the left side of the white rectangle. The top row is for 'Collective' and the bottom row is for 'Individual'.

Individual (Program, Service)

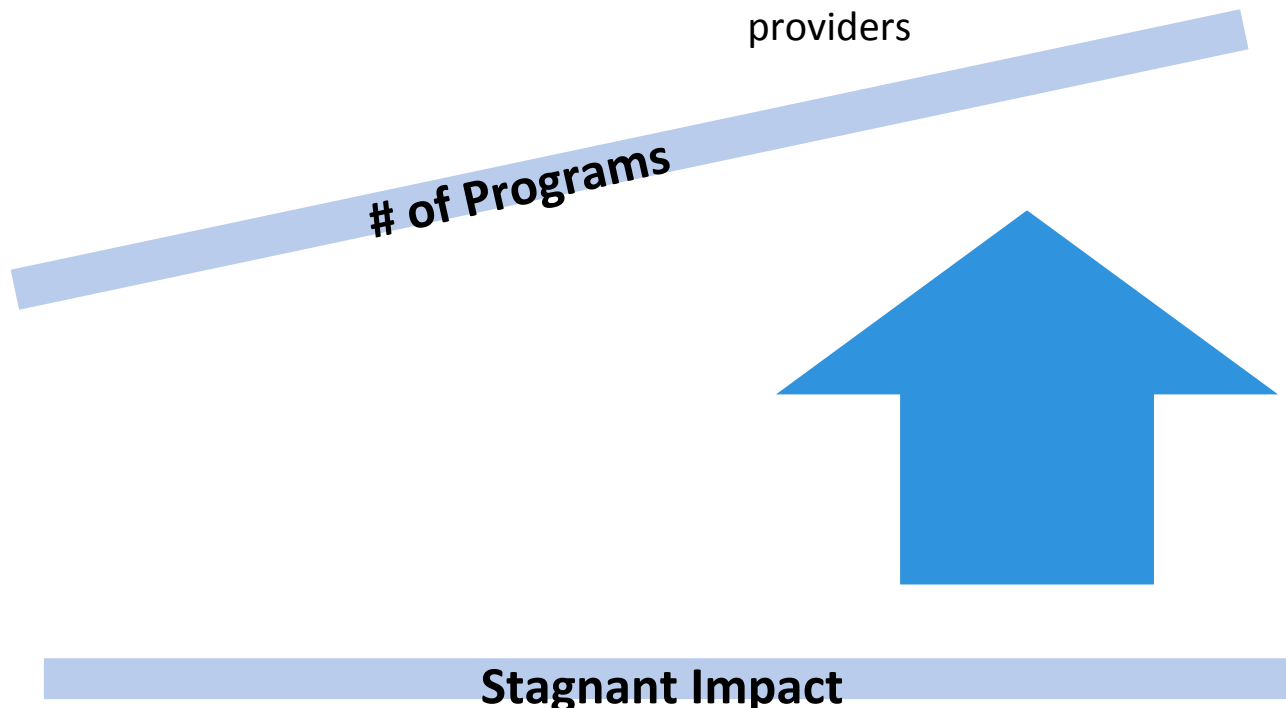
# COLLECTIVE LEVEL: TWO (RELATED) KEY PITFALLS



1. Not having a Strategic “Map” of the Landscape
2. Responding to Limited Success By Adding New (and More) Programs

# PITFALL #2: REACTING TO LIMITED SUCCESS BY ADDING NEW (AND MORE) PROGRAMS

- Administrative costs
- Redundancies
- Confusion among stakeholders and providers



# INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM LEVEL: TWO (RELATED) KEY PITFALLS

Collective (Community, District, etc.)

Individual (Program, Service)

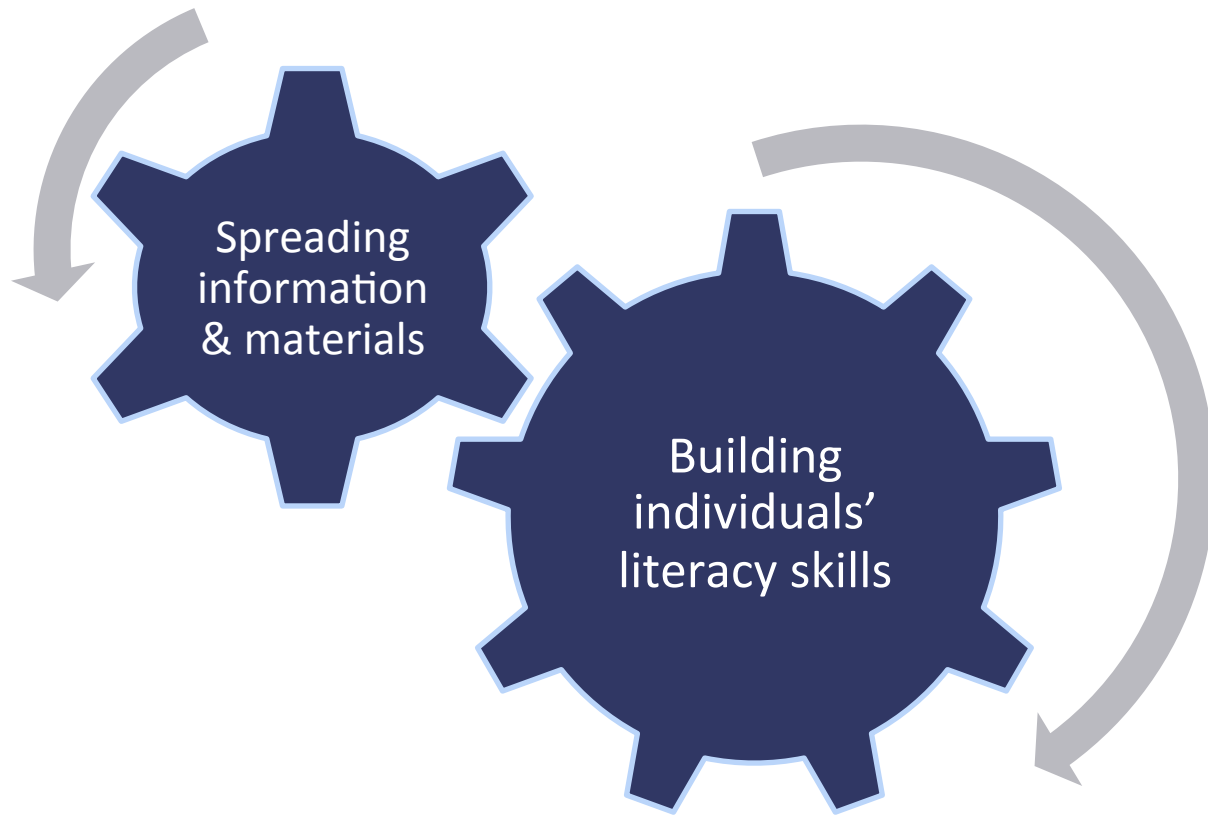


1. Disconnect between the program's design and the guiding goal/desired outcome(s)
2. Not making a distinction between outputs and outcomes

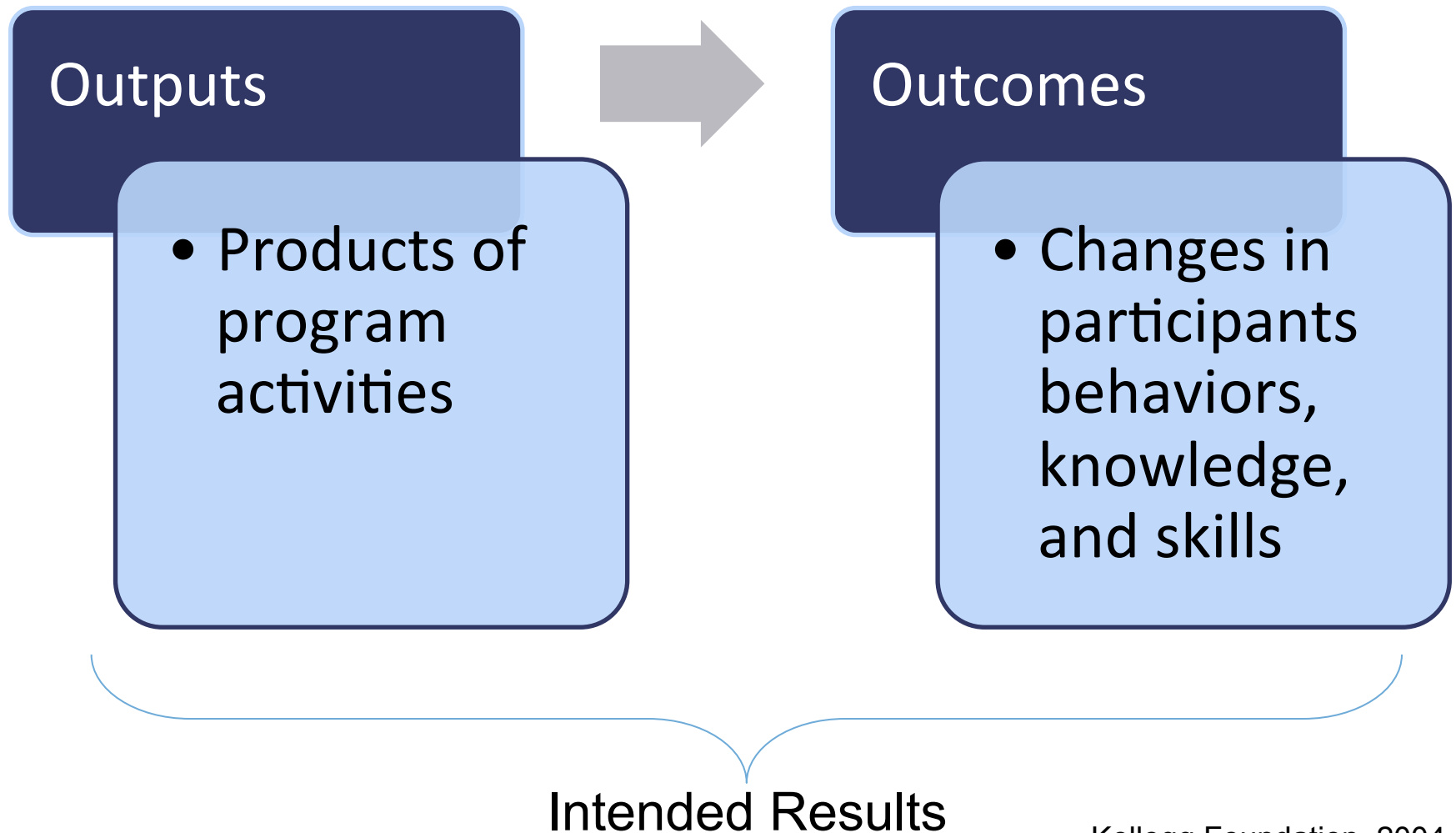
## **Case One: “Talk, Read, Play, Sing!”**

On the last Thursday of each month, the early ed center and local library hold a parent education night focused on literacy called, “Talk, Read, Play, Sing!” Understanding that listening, speaking, and interactive language-building opportunities support literacy development for all children, especially the at-risk population, these 30-minute workshops were launched. They aim to influence both parents’ knowledge of early literacy development and children’s literacy skills. At each session, educators provide resources and tips for how best to support these opportunities. Sometimes the leader models shared reading practices and language-building opportunities. The center’s teachers, librarians, and volunteers alternate in leading the individual sessions.

# Where do we sit on the continuum? How does this map onto our goals?



# KEY PITFALL #2. NO CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES





# KEY PITFALL #2: IMPLICATIONS

Collective (Community, District, etc.)

Individual (Program, Service)

- Using *outputs* as indicators of effectiveness
  - Rather than *outcomes*
- No clear information about whether the program or support is having the intended effect
  - Missed opportunities: no data to drive mid-course corrections, ensure there is a clear match between participants' needs and program, etc.

## **Case One: “Talk, Read, Play, Sing!”**

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## CASE ONE REVISED

A few key considerations to ensure the stated outcomes, increasing parents' knowledge regarding early literacy development *and* improving children's literacy skills:

### Core Mechanism

- Making it both a **parent and child attended** workshop
- Ensures parents practice the shared reading techniques *with* their children during the workshop, using books from the library.

### Dosage

- Shifting to **weekly** workshops that instruct families on ways to interact and engage with their children to build their child's literacy skills.

### Evaluation

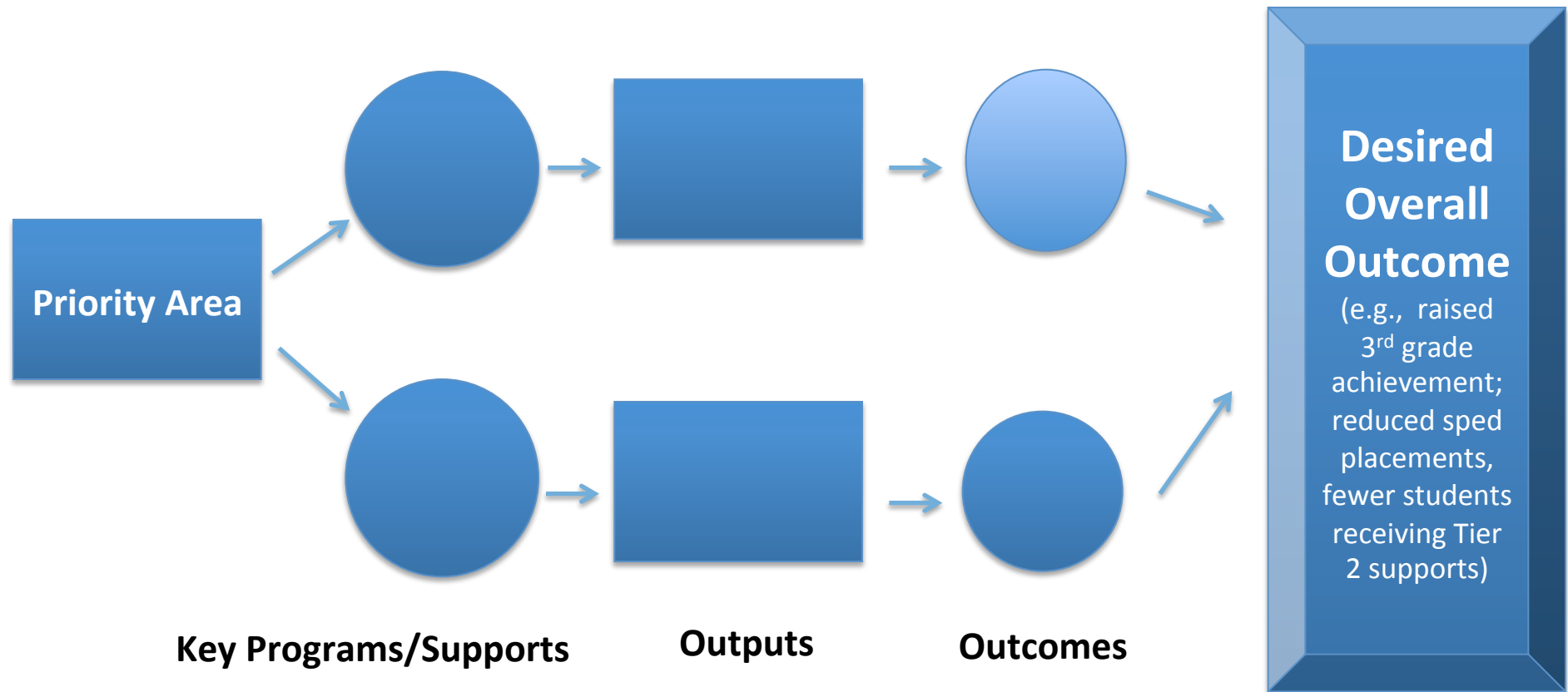
- Including **program success indicators** that reflect both a program and child-level indicator that isn't so broad as "literacy gains".

# **BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORK FOR IMPACT**

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What do we offer? What is our theory of change?

# MOVING TOWARDS IMPACT



## IN SUMMARY...

- We need to focus on:
  - the language-building, knowledge-building gaps
  - the interrelatedness of language, literacy, and social-emotional development and their dependence upon strong interactions
  - a pathway of learning and development
  - sustained, intensive, and strategic efforts (collective, individual) that are clearly defined and measurable

# Acknowledgements

## Collaborators and Research Team

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Overcoming common pitfalls and identifying high-stakes decisions for literacy success