Nearly one third of Florida’s third-graders attending public school cannot read at grade level. And, sadly, those children are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

Right here in Broward County, many elementary school children struggle daily with reading. At home many children have parents who work, some multiple jobs, so there is very little time for reading. In addition, there might be language barriers, no access to books in the home and the parents might have their own reading challenges. In an effort to provide additional support to the schools, parents and children, United Way of Broward County implemented ReadingPals.

Why ReadingPals?

In an effort to ensure more children are reading at grade level by the end of third-grade, United Way of Broward County introduced an early learning initiative. ReadingPals is a statewide program managed by The Children’s Movement of Florida. ReadingPals are screened, trained and deployed into the schools for one hour a week for 25 weeks to read to a child. In addition, each student receives 17 books to take home.

During each visit with a student, the ReadingPal mentor practices oral reading, meaningful book content discussion, simple reading instruction, social emotional learning and confidence-building motivation. To help support the volunteer and the student, materials are provided to guide them through each book. Students also take materials home to use with their families to reinforce these new concepts.

Currently, the ReadingPals program is in 20 schools and serves 408 students. Last year, volunteers donated more than 7,311 hours of instruction and children received 11,400 books to take home.

“I have a first-grade ‘ReadingPal’ and each week I am amazed at her excitement and perseverance. Her reading and confidence have considerably improved since the beginning of the school year.

When I signed up to volunteer, I was determined, but not convinced I could make the time commitment. I quickly realized how grateful I was to have this meaningful experience each week.

The time I spend with her reminds me how special it is to help others – and how we both benefit from our time together. The ReadingPals program has helped me personally remember what is important in life.”

— JENNIFER, “READINGPAL"
READINGPALS
Opening children’s minds to the wonders of reading, which fosters lifelong learning

How We Are Changing Lives
The success of the ReadingPals program has been demonstrated in the significant gains the students obtained.

• Children with a ReadingPal increased their scores significantly in print knowledge, phonological awareness, math and oral language.
• In a family survey, 92% of parents reported reading to their child at least twice a week or more by the end of the program.
• In a sample of 225 children, reading proficiency was increased by 116%. Median scores also increased five levels.

How You Can Help
United Way of Broward County’s ReadingPals program is currently offered in only 20 schools. The need is great since the Broward County Schools system has 138 elementary schools in the district. More dollars are needed to expand the program throughout Broward County and to ensure every child has a chance.

You can help expand the ReadingPals program across Broward County. Your contribution will help United Way of Broward County reach its goal of ensuring every child is reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

$1,000  Provides materials and supplies for five volunteers
$750   Provides free books for an entire first grade class
$600   Sponsors two family literacy events
$365   Provides a year curriculum for three students plus three summer reading kits
$100   Supplies a year curriculum for one student
$75    Provides three summer reading kits

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES
United Way of Broward County fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our community.

Health: Ensuring people have the opportunity to achieve optimal health
Education: Helping people achieve their greatest potential through learning and leadership programs
Financial Stability: Empowering people to earn, keep and grow assets

Join others in supporting ReadingPals:
Carol and Barney Barnett
The A.D. Henderson Foundation
The Children's Movement of Florida
Broward County Public Schools
Children’s Services Council
Scholastic