

HOW You Read to a Child Makes a Difference

OUR MISSION AND HISTORY

You TELL Me Stories Inc. (YTMS) is a 501(c)(3) with the mission of ensuring that every parent and caregiver, regardless of literacy skills or English proficiency, has the tools to effectively read to his or her child in the child's first five years of life. We achieve this mission by developing multi-lingual interactive digital picture books and print books that model dialogic reading. Research has shown that dialogic reading is the most effective read aloud technique, and is critical to the development of pre-literacy skills and oral language – the foundation for literacy.

Founded in 2013 and established as a non-profit in 2015, YTMS has already developed an extensive library of free digital and low-cost print books. To begin to get these books into the hands of parents and caregivers who need them most, we have partnered with the outpatient pediatric clinics at NY Cornell and Columbia Presbyterian Hospitals through Reach Out and Read, and our content has been used at the New York City Ronald McDonald House as well. Over 700,000 free apps have been downloaded to date.



Red WordWinks® in our print and digital text model dialogic techniques for readers, making any caregiver a literacy expert

HOW IT WORKS

Our books have three unique features that enhance thinking skills, develop vocabulary, and foster a child-reader connection, including:

- **Listen with WordWinks®** reads the book aloud, utilizing different voices for different characters and providing thought provoking open-ended questions and comments to stimulate engagement. It's a simple way for any adult to create a read-aloud experience—You Provide the Lap, We Provide the App!
- **Read with WordWinks®** provides cues throughout the book text, modeling dialogic reading and teaching readers how to use the technique with any book. **WordWinks®** help make meaning along the way and are designed by language and literacy experts—it's like having a master teacher right in your pocket!
- **Retell, Record & Share** supports story mapping and sequencing skills, developing the types of thinking that lead to broader comprehension. Children can immediately use the new vocabulary introduced in the story, identify important details, build memory and develop strong oral language skills. In addition, retelling gives the reader a measure of the child's listening comprehension, and encourages family engagement, even with adults who may be traveling, deployed, or otherwise unable to read in-person.



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WHY IT MATTERS

YTMS was founded on the following principles:

- Oral language development is the foundation for the reading, writing, speaking, and analysis skills that will guide an individual through school and a career. Learning to read begins here!
- Human brains are hard wired for speech and language, but brain pathways not frequently activated in the early years of life are “pruned out,” never to regrow. Where brain development for oral language is concerned, it’s use it or lose it!
- If a child enters school with low oral language skills, he or she may never catch up.

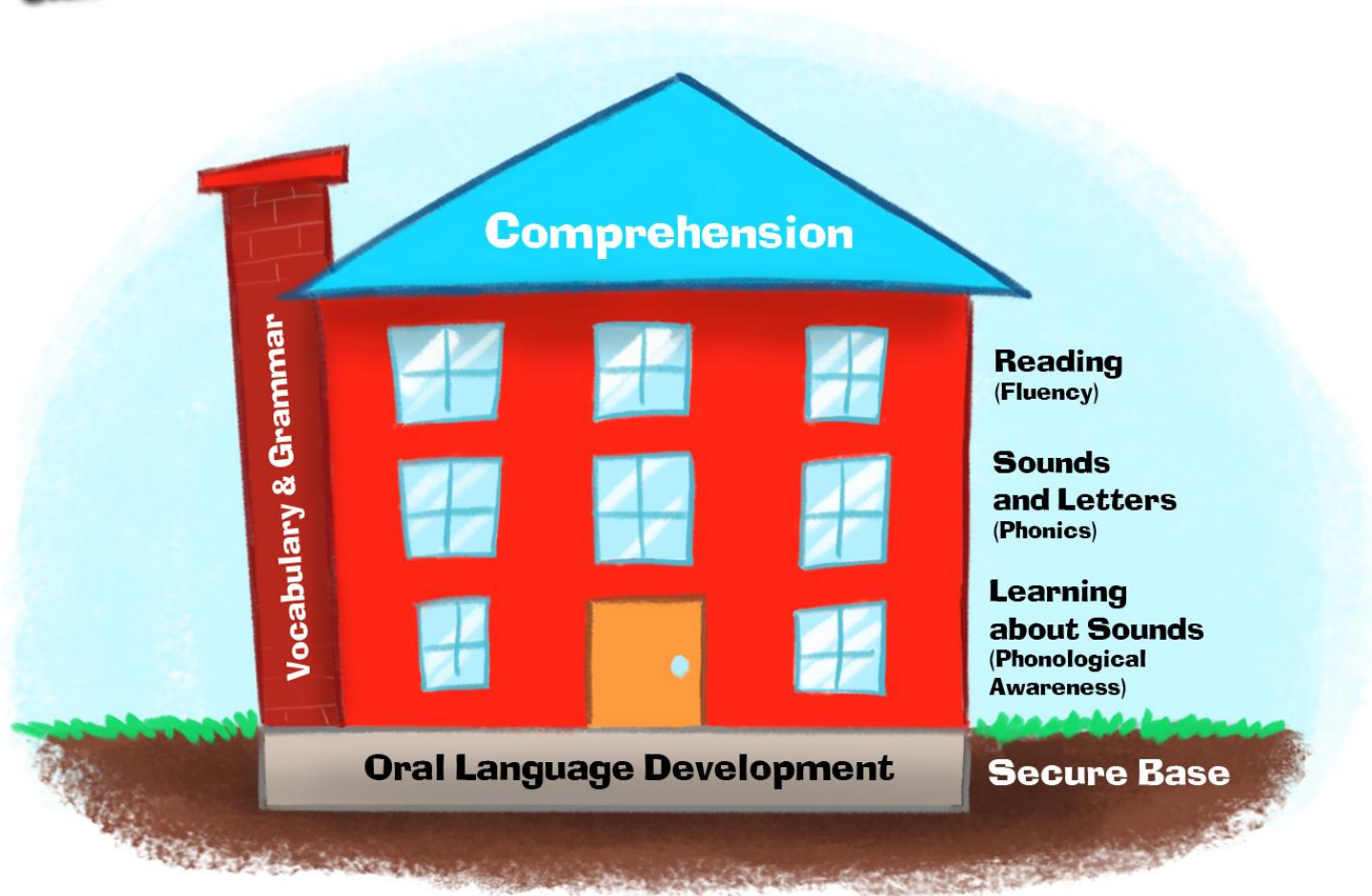
These principles have led to YTMS’ strategy of developing content that provides parents and caregivers with the tools to grow a smarter child. Specifically, these principles mean that:

- **Developing pre-literacy skills in school is too late.** The policy conversation around early education focuses on programs that begin at age 3 to 4, by which point the oral language window has largely closed, rather than on empowering parents and caregivers as a child’s first teachers.
- **The educational achievement gap begins as a word gap.** [Landmark research](#) by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley shows that children from low-income families have heard 30 million fewer words by age three than their higher-income peers. And, the real difference is even bigger than 30 million words, because [it is quality of words, not simply quantity, that matters](#), and quality verbal interactions are most effectively [developed by reading aloud](#) to a child.
- **Even parents with low-literacy skill can effectively prepare a child for school.** Parental involvement matters tremendously in early education, both because it creates a parent-child bond, and because [any parent](#) can learn how to effectively develop pre-literacy skills.
- **How you read to a child matters, and dialogic techniques work.** Not all read aloud techniques are equally effective. The Department of Education’s [What Works Clearinghouse](#) shows that dialogic techniques, like those modeled through YTMS content, correlate with an average of 17% increase in oral language skills for preschool children from low-income backgrounds, making them among the most effective techniques.
- **Reading to a child is the first, but not the last, step.** Encouraging a child to retell the story that has just been read can be a [critical tool for developing comprehension and vocabulary](#), two of the primary purposes of read-aloud.
- **Technology, when used correctly, is a powerful early education tool.** The American Academy of Pediatrics has changed its guidance on early screen time, now saying, “[The quality of content is more important than the platform or time spent with media.](#)” This change is the result of an increasing understanding that screen time is only dangerous when it supplants adult interaction, and can actually be beneficial if it brings research-informed educational techniques into every home.



Learning to Read Begins Here

Oral language is the foundation for all learning.



Comprehension

Vocabulary & Grammar

**Reading
(Fluency)**

**Sounds
and Letters
(Phonics)**

**Learning
about Sounds
(Phonological
Awareness)**

Oral Language Development

Secure Base



Research - Brain Development and Oral Language

The human brain grows more rapidly between birth and five than during any other time.

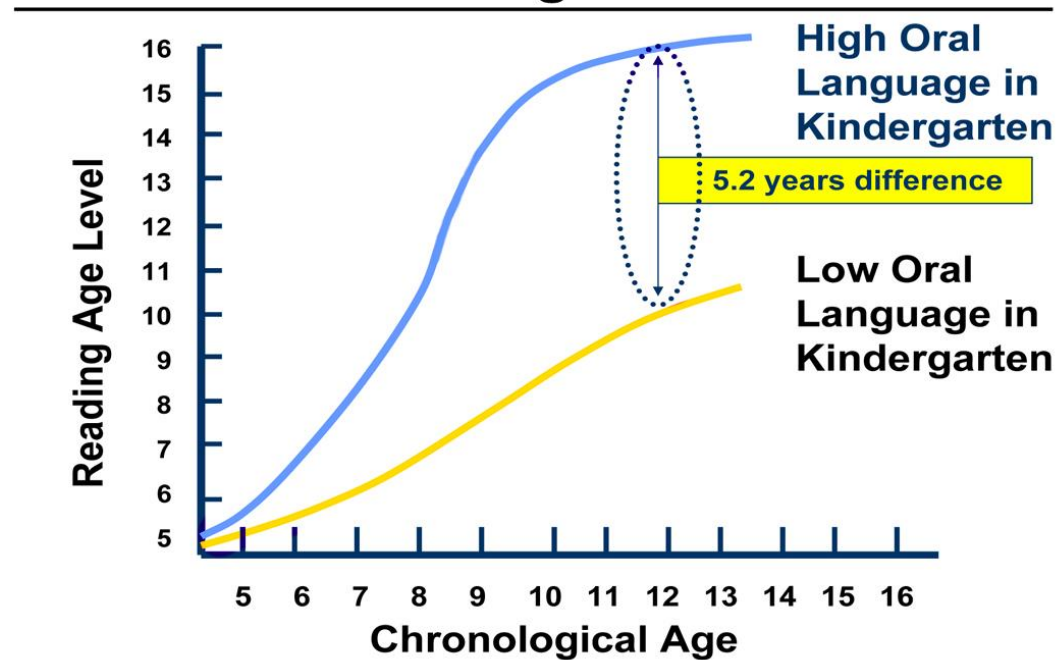
- **The window for oral language development is short:**
Every skill set has a "critical period," during which the brain can most easily develop.
The critical period for language acquisition is birth to age 3.
- **The involvement of parents and family members during this window is essential:**
"The quality of an infant's relationship with his or her primary caregivers...affect(s) the nature and extent of adult capabilities."
- **Repetitive positive experiences, like reading to a child, maximize this window.**
"Connections become stronger and more efficient through repeated use. Reading to children every day, for example, helps strengthen essential connections....Exposure to rich language... increases the likelihood of reading success at a later age."
- **Once closed, this window cannot be reopened.** "The brain operates on a 'use it or lose it' principle. Only those connections and pathways that are activated frequently are retained."



Effects of Low Language

Children entering kindergarten with low oral language skills struggle to read at age level and may never catch up to their higher language peers.

The Effects of Weaknesses in Oral Language on Reading Growth



Source: Biemiller, A. (2001).
Teaching Vocabulary: Early, Direct, and Sequential.
American Educator, 25, 24-28.



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WHAT WE'RE HEARING

Early education providers across the city are already using our digital books in their work, and parents are embracing YTMS content as well. The results are remarkable.

"I had the opportunity to observe four children at the Broadway Practice (using YTMS books). It was amazing to see how they were making predictions on their own and offered their opinion. One little girl was excited to learn the meaning of the word 'delirious.' Many of the parents were amazed as to how their kids would join the reading group without prompting them to do so. I cannot thank you enough for giving us such a tool that not only engages the children in such a way, but promotes the importance of dialogical reading to parents who are sitting nearby!"

Emelin Martinez, Program Manager, Reach Out & Read and HEAL (Health Education Adult Literacy)
New York- Presbyterian Hospital

"I loved listening to your stories with my son. Now when I read, I make up my own questions to ask! Thanks for showing me such a great way to read!"

Elena B., Parent

"The stories are engaging and appealing ... expert guidance and interactive choices enhance language skills at all levels. Every home, classroom and library serving preschool and primary grade children should have access to You TELL Me Stories."

Judith C. Hochman, Ed.D. Author of *Teaching Basic Writing Skills*, and Founder & Senior Faculty
Windward Teacher Training Institute

"All the You TELL Me Stories are educational and engaging. My young students love them and want to listen over and over again. I love them because they get my students enthusiastically listening and speaking!"

Lauren Turk, MS, CCC-SLP Speech Language Pathologist Founder TherapyfindR

"I am a parent of a 3 year old, and a five year old who has been diagnosed on the autism spectrum. I recently discovered your apps and I wanted to reach out to tell you how wonderful your books are for both my children. I have downloaded many picture book apps and find my children merely swipe the pages and tap the tap zones even when I am reading with them. Your books intrigued me and fascinated the kids. My kids loved the character voices and eagerly answered the wordwink questions. After reading many of your books with my kids, I now try to ask them questions even when I read regular books. Thank you, You Tell Me Stories!"

Chris D., Parent

"I had to write to you to tell you how much YTMS means to my students! As an educational therapist, I use many apps, but yours has been the favorite of all of my younger clients! I have a number of students on the autism spectrum and they all want to start with one of your stories. In fact, they listen to the stories over and over, even though all of the families have the app as well."

Mishelle Ross, EdD, BCET President/CEO AHEAD



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CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT LYNN RUBIN

With a Master's Degree in Special Education, Learning Disabilities from Teacher's College, Columbia University, Lynn is certified in elementary education (K-6) and special education (N-12). For more than 30 years, Lynn has served as an educational consultant and therapist in New York for students in kindergarten through tenth grade, teaching remedial reading, writing and math.

She also worked as a consultant for the educational publisher *New Dimensions in Education*, developing the scope and sequence of a video home reading program.

Lynn is the author of the children's digital picture book *Oscar Goes to the Zoo*.

Prior to founding YTMS and serving as an educational consultant and academic tutor, Lynn was the co-director of the Learning Center at the Spence School in New York. Additionally, she was a teacher at the Windward School in White Plains, New York, an independent, co-ed day school for children with language-based learning disabilities.