The 3Rs: Reading, Racial Equity, and Relationships
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Who We Are
The Pittsburgh Study is a community-partnered, longitudinal study consisting of six age-specific cohorts following children thrive from prenatal through adolescence to understand what helps them thrive. We are the Early School Age Cohort of the Pittsburgh Study and we are focused on improving pre-K through 3rd grade reading experiences across the region. To accomplish this, we are split into four strands each addressing a specific aspect of the literacy ecosystem: classroom, school leadership, family, and community.

Why We Need All 3Rs
Research indicates that children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade struggle with later social and academic outcomes, yet for decades there have been persistent gaps in reading scores between Black and White students locally and across the country (Annie Casey Foundation, 2010; Gottfredson, 1992; NAEP, n.d.). Taken together, our team’s areas of expertise, the research literature, our understanding of social and academic outcomes, yet for decades there

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What We Are Committed to: Community Centered Research & Change
University & Community Members Working Together to Envision & Enact Change

What It Means to Be “3Rs” According to Community Voices & Research

Embracing Literacy
Adults Are Always Engaging Children in Literacy Experiences
- Literacy includes conversations, writing, print, books, storytelling.
- We feel joy in reading together often.
- Children see adults loving literacy.
- Teachers know & intentionally teach to child’s reading level.
- Literacy is our goal, not only higher standardized test scores.
- Teachers have sustained professional development opportunities and sufficient planning time for literacy.

Working Together
Adults & Organizations Work Together so Everyone Has the Support & Resources They Need & Can Align Their Efforts
- Teachers & families have strong relationships and view each other as trusted partners.
- And schools, libraries, & organizations need to align efforts.
- Shared decision-making for creating projects, spaces, materials to reflect the community and with everyone’s voice welcome at the table.

Loving Black Children
Adults See Strengths in Black Children & Families and Love Them Like Their Own
- Celebrate Black children’s autonomy rather than compliance. (Stop policing Black children’s behavior)
- Advocate for Black children and against all racial injustice.
- Know that every family is literate in their own way.
- Honor Black culture & communities.
- Teachers act on the knowledge that Black families are assets to children’s development.
- Maintain high expectations.

Prioritizing High Quality, Racially Affirming Books
Our Community is Full of Adults Who Are Effectively Using Books and Materials that Affirm Black Culture
These books are:
- Mirrors & Windows.
- Show Black characters with agency.
- Show Black children that books can help them reach their dreams.

What We Are Doing

Classroom Strand
- Working with 8 schools
- Providing 10 hours of Professional Development for 152 K-3rd grade teachers & Bi-Weekly 45-minute Professional Learning Community Sessions for 20 teachers.
- Giving over 424 high quality, racially affirming picture books to teachers.

Community Strand
- Built a network of 18 community literacy organizations to envision a County-wide literacy paradigm and work toward it.
- Developed a community network map.
- Provided 18 hours of Racial Equity training via external grant.
- Distributed 340 high quality, racially affirming books

Leadership Strand
- Awarded an external grant to create “PELA” the Pittsburgh Education Leaders Academy.
- PELA meets monthly, has guest speakers, and aims to building a community of leaders in Allegheny.
- PELA believes strong leadership is grounded in justice, mindfulness, & social emotional learning.

Home Strand
- Developed video with tips for shared reading at home.
- Created list of racially affirming picture books by child.
- Conceptualizing ways to work with families to support their literacy goals and honor their family’s racial heritage.

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How To Find Out More
September 2020 – June 2021: The Classroom Strand offers a six-session racial equity training to literacy agencies and conducts interviews to create literacy ecosystem maps.
September 2020 – September 2021: The Leadership Strand offers monthly PELA sessions to local leaders.

How We Have Developed
Spring 2019: The Early School-Age Cohort (ESAC) of The Pittsburgh Study forms and is tasked with improving third grade reading scores across the county.
Summer – Fall 2019: Ethnographic interviews are conducted with county stakeholders, community members, and literacy experts. Key literacy and literacy-supporting organizations are identified.
October 2019: The 3Rs Scientific Committee meets for the first time at the Office of Child Development.
February 2020: The 3Rs team holds its first roundtable with community organizations to discuss the current state of literacy in Allegheny County, what it would look like for literacy to thrive in the county, and what it would take to move our community in that direction.
March 2020: Three parent focus groups are held to learn family perspectives on helping children learn to read.
April 2020: Advancing the idea of “it takes a village” the 3Rs team restructuring into four strands to address the entire literacy ecosystem: home, community, classroom, & school leadership.

We Are Grateful To Our Funders

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