



Dallas County Family Empowerment Pilot

How Dallas is Building Brains and the Future



The Bright Spot Series

Why This Matters:

An estimated 90% of brain development happens during the first five years of a child's life.

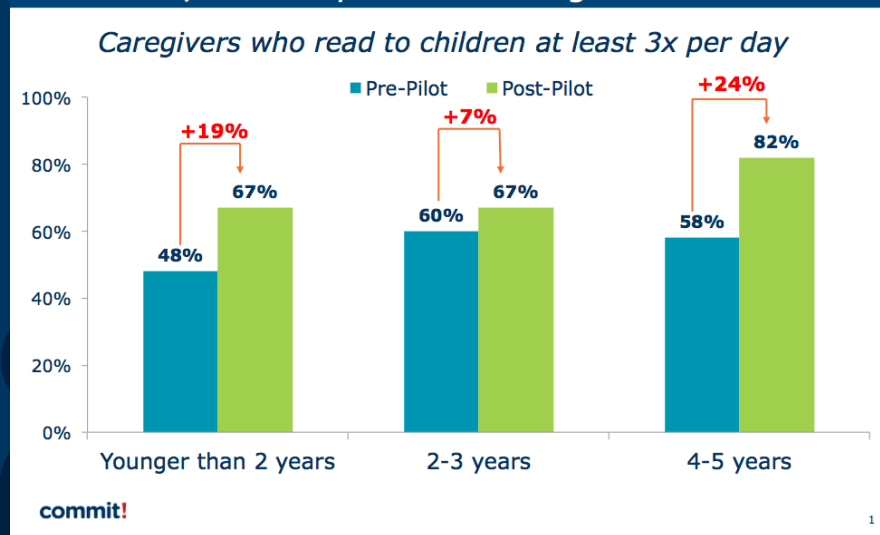
Executive Summary:

Nearly 18,000 kindergarteners in Dallas County entered school unprepared in 2014. During summer 2015, members of the Early Childhood Family Empowerment Action Network (ECFEAN) joined together to launch a local pilot of Vroom, an app that empowers parents to be their child's 'brain-builder,' so that students will be more likely to enter kindergarten ready for school. Nearly 40 non-profit organizations and sites included Vroom as an extension of existing programming for parents of young children across the county. These 40 partners were incredibly successful in using the app: the pilot measured an average 17 percentage point increase among parents who reported reading to children more than three times a day.

Partners that Participated:

Avance, Bachman Lake Together (4 agencies), Catholic Charities, ChildCareGroup, Children's Health, DAEYC, Dallas ISD, DAPE, EFS, Garland ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Grand Prairie Library, Head Start, HIPPIY, Juega Conmigo, Leadership ISD, Mi Escuelita, Parkland, Readers 2 Leaders, United Way, Vickery Meadow Youth Development Foundation (3 orgs), VMLC, Vogel Alcove, WINS.

The pilot led to significant increases in brain building activities, such as parents reading to their children



Results:

- 19% more parents reported reading to children younger than two years old three or more times a day after the pilot program of Vroom
- 7% more parents reported reading to two- to-three-year-olds three or more times a day after the pilot program of Vroom
- 24% more parents reported reading to four- to-five-year-olds three or more times a day after the pilot program of Vroom

Vroom takes the limited time busy parents have and makes engaging their young children in brain-developing activities both easy and fun. To do this, Vroom leverages mobile and digital technology to give parents tips on how to make small modifications to activities in their daily routine to create more connections for their children's brain development.

In order to spread the word about this highly effective tool, organizations that worked with local parents of young children were encouraged to apply to become part of a pilot program to promote Vroom. The organizations' pooled efforts in promoting the app created a "surround sound approach" so that parents likely learned about the importance of early childhood brain development and tools like Vroom from multiple sources. The pilot geographies were identified based on demonstrated need, willingness of partners to promote, and the number of partner organizations in the area.

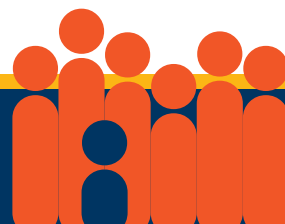
During the pilot, partners met monthly to share updates, identify concerns, and learn from each other. Partners also documented details such as frequency of and approach to Vroom promotion regularly during the pilot. This information was used to problem solve, optimize efforts, and identify effective practices.

Partners promoted Vroom in a variety of ways:

- **Libraries** incorporated Vroom into weekly “story time” programs with community parents, highlighting a relevant tip of the week.
- One **parenting group** shared a weekly tip and challenged attendees to try the activity with their children. The following week, parents would share their child’s reactions to the activities.
- One **childcare** provider included Vroom reflection response activities when completing monthly parent check-ins.
- A local **cultural institution** shared specific Vroom tips their staff could highlight with families. These tips typically aligned with specific units, events, or information being shared with families at that time.
- Area **health clinics** developed “Vroom corners” in patient rooms and waiting areas to engage families with Vroom resources.

Partners noted the following practices were effective for implementation:


- Communicating the science behind Vroom when describing why the app should be used
- Consistently mentioning the importance of early childhood brain development and tools like Vroom
- Incorporating Vroom tips and resources into the organization’s existing activities and framework (e.g., newsletters, tip of the week)
- Sharing uplifting parent experiences and utilizing parent voices throughout the pilot (e.g., parent ambassadors)
- Providing technical assistance for families having difficulty downloading the app
- Integrating Vroom into partner organizations’ programming



Impact of Vroom Partners:

More than 192,000 children under five years live in Dallas County. The organizations that participated in the pilot reach more than 6,000 families of children ages 0-5 annually.

Do Something Today!



PARENTS
Engage

Download the Daily Vroom app and be a brain-builder for your child at joinvroom.org



NON-PROFIT LEADERS
Partner

Learn more about how to partner and share Vroom by contacting Meredith.Reid@commit2dallas.org



COMMUNITY MEMBERS
Volunteer

Find literacy volunteer opportunities to help students at earlymattersdallas.org/tutor



About The Bright Spot Series

The Commit! Partnership is excited to highlight and share successful, data-backed practices that are moving the needle for students in Dallas County through the Bright Spot Series.

You can find more information about the Bright Spot Series, as well as download materials on our website:

View more at Commit2dallas.org/category/bright-spots • For general inquiry, contact Carissa.Grisham@commit2dallas.org



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