



# LITERACY MINISTRY

PROVIDING AN ARISE2READ MINISTRY





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Tonaka Houston cried a lot in her first year of teaching at a Title 1 school in Memphis, Tennessee. The school was one of the lowest-performing schools, absenteeism was a problem and 95% of the children in the school were on the free lunch program. Many did not know how to read. While the situation seemed hopeless to Tonaka, help was on the way.

A simple reading program in the Memphis area helped second graders in Tonaka's class, and many other classes, learn to read using a curriculum based on sight words. Low-income schools in the Memphis area saw 142% increase in children reading sight words on grade level. That program was ARISE2Read, a ministry begun through Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tennessee.

ARISE2Read and Send Relief have partnered to train other volunteers and churches to use sight words to help increase literacy in low-income students. Donna Gaines, founder of ARISE2Read, describes why this ministry is so important: "The Lord commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. These children are my neighbors. This is my motivator, and it has given me a real sense of urgency."

The training for ARISE2Read is simple to provide, and the ministry works with each volunteer spending one hour a week working with two second graders. The results for those children and adults have been life-changing.



# Discover the Needs in Your Community

Before you begin any new ministry, it is important to first take time to discover and understand the unique needs within your community. Explore the physical community, listen to and learn from people living and working in the area and seek God's guidance by prayer-driving and prayer-walking the neighborhood.

To learn more about how to identify needs in your community, download the [\*Discovering the Needs of Your Community\* guide](#).

*If you find that providing literacy training is a need in the community, keep reading! We have practical steps to help you get started.*

If not, check out some of our [\*other ministry guides\*](#) for opportunities that fit your church's gifting and community's needs.





# The Need for Literacy Ministry in America

- Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare.
- Almost 85% of teenagers in the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate.
- More than 70% of prison inmates in the U.S. cannot read above a 4th-grade level.
- Students who are not proficient readers by the 3rd grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.
- 61% of low-income families have no books for children in their homes.
- 75% of Americans who receive food stamps are in the lowest two levels of literacy.
- Teenage girls between ages 16-19 who live below the poverty level and have below-average reading skills are six times more likely to have children out of wedlock than girls who read proficiently.
- But, children in low-income homes who read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade have an 89% rate of graduation from high school.



While these statistics paint a grim picture, there is hope! ARISE2Read found that in one year of working with these at-risk students, students showed a 135% increase in reading skills on the Fry Word grade level test in seven schools. That means that these students moved from a 31% proficiency level in October 2015 to 80% proficiency in May 2016.

ARISE2Read partners with evangelical churches and businesses within local school districts to help strengthen second graders' reading proficiently so they can enter third grade reading at the third-grade level. The program works with each volunteer working individually with two second graders for 30 minutes each. It's a one-hour-a-week commitment per volunteer that will have a lifetime impact on students and communities.

**The bottom line is this: You and your church can be a part of helping eradicate illiteracy in your community.**

## Strategically Considering Ministry Opportunities

Take the next step by enlisting a small group of people within the congregation to assess ministry opportunities by working through the following questions with you:

- **What partnerships in your community have you considered connecting to meet this need and use this resource?** These could include government officials, school officials and teachers, other community churches and leaders, local shelters or other preestablished programs addressing literacy.
- **Who in your church is passionate and equipped to lead or participate in this ministry?** Consider children's workers, parents and/or families, teenagers or youth groups, Sunday school classes, senior adults, anyone with a desire to make a difference in children's lives through reading.
- **What resources and relationships has God given your church to support this ministry?** Consider missions offerings, other financial resources, church members who are connected to local schools and Sunday school classes as places to start.

**These questions can lead this small group of local missionaries to determine whether or not:**

1. There is a desire within the congregation to meet this need.
2. There are resources of people, space and money to meet this need.
3. This ministry is sustainable over time.
4. You feel God leading you as a congregation in this direction.



# STARTING AN ARISE2READ MINISTRY

God may be moving you to be the catalyst of starting a literacy ministry in your community. If so, where do you start? We've provided eight steps that can lead you to successfully meeting this much-needed ministry:



## 1. Create awareness of the need for a literacy ministry.

- Enlist a group of people who are interested in reading and literacy (teachers, school administrators, children's workers, parents, senior adults, teenagers).
- Evaluate what you've learned through local community leaders and individuals about the literacy needs of your community.
- Review what local programs are doing to address literacy needs in your community.
- Contact a local elementary school in a low-income area about working with second graders. Determine how the school wants to handle security with adults coming into the school each week.
- Contact second grade teachers to identify at-risk children who would benefit from one-on-one tutoring.

## 2. Create a ministry plan based on your findings. ARISE2Read uses the simple word curriculum called Team Read. ARISE2Read also provides teacher training in how to use the curriculum and explains the requirements for new background checks for all volunteers. [Contact ARISE2Read](#) or Send Relief for specific instructions about enlisting and training volunteers.

## 3. Enlist an ARISE2Read director. Begin by enlisting church approval and support of the ministry. The director has responsibility for:

- Enlisting leadership team and leading the team to establish program objectives.
- Working with second grade teachers to identify at-risk students.
- Keeping school administrators informed.
- Assigning at-risk students to volunteers.
- Coordinating the schedule of times when volunteers are at the school.
- Keeping track of volunteers and their assigned children.

- Keeping the church staff and church members informed about the program.
  - Continuing to enlist and train volunteers so more at-risk children can be tutored.
5. **Enlist leadership team and establish objectives of the Arise2Read ministry.** Objectives should include:
    - Tutoring second graders in sight words and reading skills.
    - Developing relationships with second graders.
    - Developing relationships with second-grade teachers and school administrators.
    - Developing an after-school club in which spiritual truths can be taught to children.
  6. **Enlist and train volunteers.** Recruit volunteers who will commit to spending one hour each week in the local school with which you are partnering with. Each volunteer will work with two second graders, spending 30 minutes with each child each week.
  7. **Begin the program.** Begin sending volunteers into the school for their first tutoring session. Check with each volunteer after the first week to make sure they feel confident in what they are doing.
  8. **Evaluate the program's success.** Monthly, review how successful the project has been with the following questions:
    - Are things going smoothly within the school with teachers and volunteers? If not, why not?
    - What problems or issues have come up for which you were unprepared? How can these be handled?
    - How good is the relationship with the church and the ARISE2Read program? What can you do to strengthen those relationships?
    - Could you expand the program to include more schools and second graders? What would that take?

## Other Ways to Help At-Risk Children With Reading

- Conduct a book drive once each year to collect new and gently used age-appropriate books that can be given to children to take home.
- Develop a prayer support group to pray for the second-grade teachers, second-grade at-risk children and volunteer tutors by name each week.

### What's Next?

This is your opportunity to start meeting a huge need in your community ...  
one at-risk second-grade student at a time.



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