

Inspiring Kids to Read: The Impact of the Imagination Library

Goals

This session will introduce the Imagination Library, a visionary program begun by acclaimed music icon, Dolly Parton, to give books to young children as a way to foster early literacy, make reading fun, and engender a lifelong love of reading. The latest NAEP results show sharp declines in reading performance and in how often students report reading for fun. Imagination Library addresses these issues directly--and has for over two decades.

Overview

In this session, Jeff Conyers, President, and Nora Briggs, Executive Director, of the Dollywood Foundation, will describe the origin of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, its transcendent evolution from local effort to global presence, and its powerful impact on children and reading. Time is allotted for questions.

Background

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library inspires a love of reading by gifting high-quality books free of charge to children from birth to age five in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and Republic of Ireland. Since its start in 1995, more than 2.8 million children have received books from Imagination Library.

At first, books were distributed to children living in the East Tennessee county where Dolly Parton grew up. The program met with such success that in 2000, the Imagination Library launched nationwide. Just three years later, the Imagination Library had distributed one million books; the count now reaches beyond 229 million books mailed to children across the world. Beginning in 2022, Imagination Library is mailing two million books every month.

Dolly Parton and the Imagination Library have received numerous awards for inspiring a love for reading among children everywhere, including the Library of Congress Literacy Award.