



Eliminating Barriers. Inspiring Young Minds.

FUELING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Impact Report 2022-23



We envision a world where every child has access to a quality education.

We level the educational playing field for kids in need.

Eliminating barriers. Inspiring young minds.



Founded in Washington, D.C. in 1992, First Book is an award-winning nonprofit social enterprise dedicated to eliminating barriers to learning and inspiring young minds.

Leadership: [Executive Team](#) [Board of Directors](#) [Publishing Committee](#) [Advisory Council](#)

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Dear Friends:

2022-2023 marked a dramatic call to action for the nation and the world: to respond to the catastrophic impact of the pandemic on our children, and the educators and other caring adults who support them.

The impact has been especially devastating for the children First Book serves - the millions of children ages 0-18 growing up in historically under-resourced, low-income communities.

To address the enormous challenges, First Book is building on our more than 32 years of experience. First Book is not a traditional charity. As a nonprofit social enterprise, we borrow the best strategies from the private sector and apply them to the challenges in the social sector. This includes identifying market failures in our educational systems that lead to and perpetuate educational inequities, and then building scalable solutions that become self-sufficient over time. First Book's social enterprise models ([pages 6-9](#)) are grounded in data and insights from educators and our ability to rapidly respond with targeted, effective partnerships and programs that remove barriers to learning.

Below and throughout our 2022-2023 Impact Report, we highlight how First Book is building on every front to meet the challenges - by

elevating the collective voice of our Network members, continuously innovating, building new partnerships, serving as the catalyst for new collaborations with other nonprofits, and empowering kids and educators with affordable, high-quality educational resources.

At First Book, we know that education not only changes individual children's lives, but also serves as our nation's foundation, the cornerstone for our workforce, our national economy, and our democracy.

Our future innovators, doctors, scientists, peacemakers, and community builders are in our classrooms and communities right now!

These bright, beautiful kids and the educators, community providers, and caring adults who make up the First Book Network need our support. They are depending on us to deliver on the promise of equitable education for all children. Their futures—and ours—depend on it.

With gratitude,
Kyle Zimmer



“We want every single child to have the benefit of a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code – and we want every educator to have the resources they need to make that happen.”

Kyle Zimmer
President, CEO, and Co-Founder

First Book: Building Educational Equity on Every Front

Here are a few of First Book's 2022-2023 initiatives to build educational equity on every front:

- 1. Reading:** National data reveals that, post-pandemic, 68% of ALL 4th graders are not reading proficiently. The number is even higher for children of color: 80% of Black, Latino, and American Indian 4th graders are not reading proficiently.¹
 - First Book is fueling classrooms and programs with relevant, diverse books; partnering with Reading Universe on a new multi-media platform for educators to promote the science of teaching reading; and launching groundbreaking new collaborations among nonprofits to strengthen the market demand and market power for affordable, diverse books.
- 2. Mental Health:** In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics declared children's mental health a national emergency.²
 - Informed by a First Book Research & Insights survey, First Book launched new resources developed with national experts to support the wellbeing of students and educators.
- 3. Data on Diverse Books:** For decades, educators have been concerned about the lack of books where children can see themselves and learn about others. But limited data exists regarding the difference access to diverse books actually makes, if any.
- 4. Book Bans:** Book censorship and book bans have increased exponentially. In 2023, 47% of the titles targeted for censorship represent the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals.³
 - In a First Book Research & Insights study, members reveal the impact that the conversations about banned books are having on educators and students.
- 5. Teacher Morale:** Unprecedented numbers of teachers are leaving the profession and fewer are choosing to become teachers.
 - First Book supports educators by listening to and elevating their voices; providing donor funding that teachers can use to select high-quality resources at the lowest prices or for free; working with outside experts to expedite professional development materials on topics identified by members; and championing the role that educators and caring adults play in children's lives.

¹ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2022, November 4). Since pandemic's start, 42 states see rise in fourth-graders below reading proficiency. <https://www.aecf.org/blog/fourth-grade-reading-proficiency-2022>

² A declaration from the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association, October 2021

³ The American Library Association and Unite Against Book Bans. <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/2023-book-bans/>

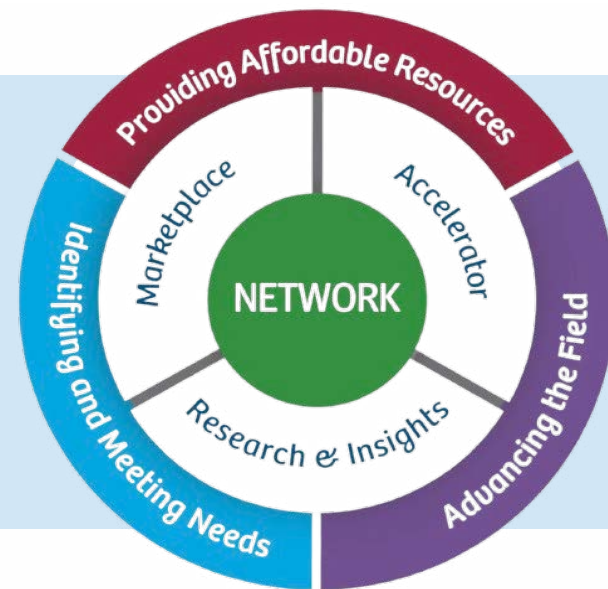
Furthering Equity in Education

Our Model of Change

Through its educator-driven model of change, First Book furthers educational equity for children from birth through age 18 who are growing up in underserved communities.

The First Book Network

First Book is driven by the largest and fastest growing community of individual teachers, professionals, and volunteers dedicated to serving children ages 0-18 in under-resourced communities across North America.



First Book supports these educators and the children they serve through three pillars: First Book Research & Insights; the First Book Accelerator, and the First Book Marketplace.

First Book Research & Insights

Powered by our community of nearly 600,000 members, First Book's research arm conducts qualitative and quantitative market research to understand the needs of educators and the children they serve.

It's impossible to imagine that we can develop viable solutions without the insights of the people working directly in the lives of children every day! Yet, the sad truth is that they are rarely consulted.

Our research studies aggregate the insights and amplify the voices of educators in the field, identifying barriers to equitable education and helping to inform solutions. Those in our Network are engaged and responsive because they know that First Book acts on their input and makes their voice part of the national discussion.

Through online surveys, virtual focus groups, built-in feedback mechanisms, on the ground studies, and other strategies, educators provide input guiding the programs, partnerships, and resources we offer. In addition,

commissioned research through Research & Insights is increasingly being used to refine the development of educational products, curricula, digital resources, policies, and the practical applications of evidence-based strategies. This enables companies and experts to integrate educator input in the design phase. This also ensures that products and resources are more relevant and impactful for children and educators in under-resourced communities.

First Book Accelerator

Free resources for educators, informed by First Book Research & Insights

Teachers and others serving children in need increasingly find themselves facing challenges that were not part of their training. Children struggling with mental health issues, grief and loss, and trauma, for example, can find it difficult to focus on learning.

Through First Book Research & Insights, educators identify these and other topic areas that they feel ill-equipped to address. To support educators, First Book collaborates with outside experts to expedite the development of free Accelerator resources that turn experts' evidence-based strategies into actionable tools - such as videos, downloadable guidebooks, webinars, and related resources. These free resources are often paired with curated book collections to foster conversations and/or to support individual children in and out of the classroom.

In 2023, nearly half of First Book members responding to a survey said they have downloaded an Accelerator resource in the last 2 years. Ninety-five percent of those said the Accelerator resource they used was of good or excellent quality.



First Book Marketplace

The First Book Marketplace is our award-winning, nonprofit eCommerce site that provides 24/7 access to a wide range of professionally curated, diverse, culturally relevant books and resources - all offered at deeply discounted prices, or for free.

25,494,093

Total number of books and nonbook items distributed through the First Book Marketplace in 2022 and 2023

The First Book Marketplace's unprecedented economic model aggregates the buying power of our members, creating a new market and enabling First Book to drive down costs while increasing the relevancy (both content and format) of books and educational products to better meet the needs of children in under-resourced communities. A small mission-margin built into prices on the First Book Marketplace contributes to First Book's ability to become self-sustaining over time, as the First Book Network continues to grow. Outside funding recruited by First Book supports educators with limited or no budgets.

This creates a win-win-win, providing children living in poverty with beautiful, relevant new books and resources; enabling educators to select what they need for the kids they serve; and creating a new market for publishers, content producers, and others.

"First Book has provided all of my students with so many literacy opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise had access to! With affordable books, we have expanded our school and classroom libraries—providing more independent reading opportunities for more of our students every day. Curated collections in the First Book Marketplace allow us to focus our collection development on areas of diversity and inclusion that help our students see themselves and others as the heroes of stories."

Claire R.
First Book member

Who can sign up with First Book?



Librarians & Library Staff



Title I Eligible Teachers & Paraprofessionals



Shelter & Healthcare Providers



Early Childhood Educators



Community Program Providers



Faith-Based Program Leaders



After School Program Providers



Military Family Program Staff

First Book members work in classrooms, before and after school programs, summer and early childhood programs, shelters, faith-based organizations, health clinics, libraries, community programs, military support programs, and other settings serving children from low-income households. As this community grows, it becomes an even more powerful market force to drive change.

...and many more!



The Power of Collaboration: Impact in Action

On the following pages, we share case studies regarding a few First Book initiatives during 2022-2023 that enabled us to amplify the voice of educators serving children in low-income communities on the national stage and build real-time partnerships and resources to remove barriers to learning.

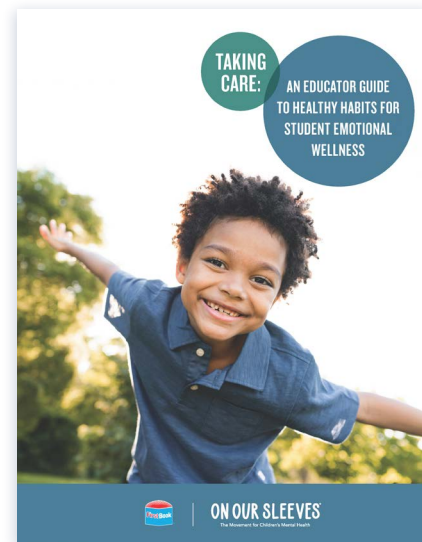
Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing

In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children’s Hospital Association jointly declared a National State of Emergency in Children’s Mental Health, citing the stress of the pandemic and inequities resulting from structural racism.

First Book Research & Insights: Between mid-December and mid-January, First Book surveyed members to identify the challenges facing educators in supporting their students’ mental health and determine what resources educators needed to support their students. Nearly 1,000 educators completed the survey. Among the report findings:

- Survey respondents reported that more than half (53%) of their students were struggling with mental health issues;
- 98% of educators said that current mental health challenges experienced by students are a barrier to education;
- 93% of educators became aware that a student was struggling with mental health issues due to a noticeable change in behavior;
- 85% said that they felt that supporting their students’ mental health was a high or emergency priority; and
- Only 20% of educators felt adequately prepared to support their students’ mental health.

First Book Accelerator: First Book partnered with the mental health experts at The Kids Mental Health Foundation, (formerly On Our Sleeves), a national movement affiliated with Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Ohio, whose mission is to break stigmas around children’s mental health. Together we created [*Taking Care: An Educator Guide to Healthy Habits for Student Emotional Wellness*](#), designed to help teachers and others learn about best practices and activities to optimize children’s emotional resilience and decrease stress and anxiety. The free guide highlighted how to respond to common behavioral issues, and when to seek additional support, including suicide prevention protocols. The guide also featured a section on self-care for educators.



First Book Marketplace: In early April 2022, First Book launched the *Taking Care* guide on the First Book Marketplace. The free guide has become one of First Book’s most frequently downloaded Accelerator resources - downloaded by over 30,000 educators to date, reaching nearly one million students across the country.

First Book’s professional curation team also created book collections to support children experiencing mental health challenges. The social and emotional learning collection includes stories that help younger children identify and name their feelings and moods, and stories to help children of all ages deal with feelings of grief and loss. The *Taking Care* guide highlighted the collections and how teachers can use the books with children.

This expedited research-to-resources cycle underscores the strength of First Book’s model - to generate firsthand, real-time data and insights from educators and quickly respond with expert-informed resources - all in a matter of months.

“Students need help and resources more now than they ever have before, and it is difficult to manage the increase in needs with an already overwhelming workload that accompanies a normal year. Educators need support for themselves as well as easy-to-implement supports for students.”

First Book member



First Book Research & Insights: The Positive Impact of Diverse Books

For decades, educators have been deeply troubled by the lack of books where children can see themselves and learn about others. In our increasingly diverse nation, this has become an even greater impediment to educational equity. But do diverse books actually make a difference?

In 2023, First Book conducted a six-month pilot study involving nearly 450 educators to explore the impact that diverse books have on student reading. First Book started by surveying participating educators about their students' reading engagement and achievement, and then enabled educators to select and add diverse books from the First Book Marketplace to their classroom libraries.

In follow-up surveys conducted every two months, educators reported that after adding diverse books to their classroom libraries:

- collective student reading time increased by 4 hours per week;
- students' reading scores were 3 percentage points higher than national annual expected averages with the lowest-scoring students showing the greatest gains (+11%);
- classrooms that added bilingual and LGBTQIA+ titles cited the greatest improvements.

In her remarks at the 2023 National Book Awards, Oprah shared First Book's research findings, stating: **"This year the nonprofit First Book found that just six months after diverse books were added to classroom libraries, classroom reading time increased by four hours per week."**



Oprah Winfrey at the 2023 National Book Awards

The survey also revealed that while educators almost uniformly believe that a diverse classroom library is important, most classroom libraries fall far short of representing or reflecting the current diverse student population.

These preliminary results shed light on the potentially profound benefits of diverse books - and First Book Research & Insights plans to conduct further studies to learn more.

Read First Book's full report on the positive impact of diverse books [here](#).

How the National Conversation on Book Bans Impacts Students and Teachers

More than 1,500 educators responded to a 2023 First Book Research & Insights study on the impact that conversations about book challenges and bans are having on teachers and students. The study, Educator Insights on the Conversation Around Banned Books, revealed a significant chilling effect: the negative impacts are being felt far beyond the districts that have experienced book bans directly.

Among the findings:

- More than 70% of respondents said that restricting book access decreases student engagement in reading; 40% said that book bans contribute to a sense of erasing people and history; and 36% said that book bans discourage students' critical thinking.
- While one-third of survey respondents report facing book bans or restrictions, 65% said that the current book banning climate is having a negative impact on their ability to teach.
- 71% of educators feel that book banning undermines teacher expertise, makes them feel distrusted, and increases stress.

In addition to undermining student learning and demoralizing educators, what makes these findings additionally concerning is that the efforts to restrict access to books have targeted diverse books - at the very time when we need to invite ALL children to read diverse books in order to learn about themselves and each other.

Read First Book's full report on the banned books survey [here](#).



Partnering with General Motors to Drive Opportunities in STEM

For children in under-resourced communities, the saying “you can’t be what you can’t see” rings especially true when it comes to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Yet building future innovations depends on ensuring that the STEM field is as diverse as the world we live in.

That’s why First Book and General Motors (GM) have collaborated to inspire a generation of students to explore STEM and diversify the field. In 2022 and 2023, First Book and GM worked together on these exciting STEM initiatives:



STEM Careers All Year - Through this series of virtual classroom events, 123,030 students had the chance to meet scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and other STEM professionals working at GM. The GM professionals shared their path from discovering and furthering their interest in STEM to how they use STEM in their current jobs. In addition to answering questions from students, the GM professionals, often accompanied by an author, read aloud from a book featured in a curated [Diversity in STEM](#) collection on the First Book Marketplace.

STEM Defines Our Future - This video series features GM employees sharing their personal experiences ranging from how to build a car to why soft skills such as teamwork, inclusivity, empathy, and collaboration are critically important to a successful STEM career. A companion educator guide includes lessons and teaching strategies that enable educators to connect the videos to classroom discussion and activities.

STEM Book Distributions - First Book and GM also worked together to increase access to diverse STEM books through local community events. This included working with Blue Star Families to distribute 35,000 STEM books to Title I teachers, military families, and community members in Tacoma, Washington, and in Washington, D.C.



“Literacy is foundational to the academic and professional success of all students and fostering an interest and pursuit of STEM careers begins with a mastery of reading skills.”

Hal Garling
Corporate Grantmaking Lead at General Motors



Inspiring Young Changemakers: A Timely Collaboration

We live in a time of accelerated change and complex, interconnected world issues. Tackling these issues will require that everyone, regardless of geography, race, or socio-economic background, adapt to and create change for the common good. Yet too often young people, especially those growing up in historically marginalized communities, feel powerless to affect change.

With generous support from Swiss Haute Horlogerie manufacturer Audemars Piguet, First Book and Ashoka, the largest global network of leading social entrepreneurs, are collaborating on Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World, a multi-year initiative to help educators working in low-income communities to inspire and support their students as changemakers.



First Book Research & Insights: To inform the initiative, First Book surveyed its members to understand how they viewed changemaking and what resources they felt would be helpful to support their students. In this 2022 survey, 82 percent of First Book educators responding indicated that it is urgent to develop changemaker mindsets among the young people they serve; however, only 26 percent feel prepared to do so.

First Book Accelerator: In response, First Book and Ashoka created a series of free resources, videos, and workshops for educators offering actionable and practical ways to inspire students to build on their unique perspectives and lived experiences to become changemakers.

These resources included [Time for Change](#), an introductory guide to changemaking for educators; [public service announcements](#) featuring youth changemakers, which aired on TV stations across the country; and step-by-step guides on practicing key changemaking skills, including empathy, teamwork, leadership, and action.

“The Inspiring Young Changemakers videos were awesome. The kids really enjoyed them, and they’re easy to understand. Whether they are on grade level, below, or above, everybody enjoyed the videos equally. They’re very well put together, and some really good information.”

Cathy
First Book educator



First Book Marketplace: Educators can download or view the resources free of charge on the First Book Marketplace. In addition, there are curated book collections to inspire kids to solve problems they care about, as well as books on social and emotional learning that model changemaking skills.

In 2023, First Book, Ashoka, and Audemars Piguet announced plans to expand the Time for Change movement to five new countries: Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the United Kingdom. Teach For All will join the initiative to support this international expansion.

54%

of educators who downloaded and used the Time for Change guide felt very or extremely prepared to develop their students as changemakers

Resilience in the Face of Loss: A Partnership with the New York Life Foundation

Navigating grief and loss at a young age presents unique challenges that can have lasting effects on a child's emotional wellbeing and development. It's estimated that 1 in 12 U.S. children will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18. Other family and life circumstances can also deeply impact a child: from the death of a grandparent to housing instability, community-based violence, and weather disasters. These issues can be challenging for children to process, and make it difficult to focus on learning.

Since 2018, First Book and the New York Life Foundation have collaborated to provide support and educational resources to educators and parents in communities nationwide experiencing grief, loss, and healing.

In 2022 and 2023, First Book and the New York Life Foundation:



- Continued to expand the First Book Marketplace's curated [Grief, Loss, and Healing section](#), with titles and resources tailored to support children ages 0-18.
- Awarded funding to schools/programs in 31 cities through the **Better with Books Awards** initiative, enabling educators to purchase books from the First Book Marketplace, offering comfort, coping techniques, and guiding grief and loss conversations.
- Developed and launched free resources with actionable tips in both English and Spanish to support grieving students and their families. The new toolkit, **Support Strategies for Educators of Children Experiencing Grief**, was used by educators supporting more than 90,000 students. In a follow-up survey, 60% of educators said that the toolkit encouraged more meaningful conversations with students; 56% said it helped them identify the signs that a student may be experiencing grief and/or loss; and 53% said it provided them with tactics that have promoted the healing process for children experiencing grief and/or loss.
- Provided \$72,450 in Rapid Response grants to 82 educators, following community tragedies such as the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, TX, and the Maui wildfires. These funds equip educators, counselors, psychologists, and other social service providers with the support they need to help impacted families.

207,000

Books Distributed

3,038+

Resources Downloaded

15,000+

Educators Engaged

673,500+

Children Reached

Celebrating Disney's Impact and Support of Kids in Need

Since 2000, Disney has been a long-standing supporter, providing mission-critical resources, transformational financial contributions, and strategic guidance to First Book to support our educators and the kids we serve. As our largest donor of in-kind inventory, Disney has helped grow the First Book Network to a community of more than 575,000 members and put tens of millions of books into the hands of kids in need across the country. Disney, alongside their employees and cast member VoluntEARS have provided crucial support to further First Book's mission and change the lives of kids through their dedication to equal education for all.

As the country emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, Disney and First Book returned to in-person community events in Anaheim, CA, in the fall of 2022 and the spring of 2023. Through two magical Family Festivals events hosted at Anaheim area libraries, more than 200+ Disney VoluntEARS from Disneyland Resort and Disney Publishing distributed over 50,000 books to build classroom and home libraries for over 3,000 educators, kids, and families. In addition to in-person events, Disney Publishing books have brought the joy of reading to kids in all 50 states and Puerto Rico through the First Book Marketplace!

The
WALT DISNEY
Company



We are grateful for Disney's generous support in the form of new books, educational resources, VoluntEARS support, and dynamic programming for children in need to help First Book and the educators we serve inspire the next generation of storytellers, creatives, and young leaders!

Grief, Loss, & Healing

Explore the Grief, Loss, & Healing category to find well-crafted books that help students build resiliency, offer comfort and validation, introduce coping techniques, and help guide conversations about grief and loss.



"Thank you to Disney and First Book for making it possible for me to help foster the Magic of Storytelling to as many children as possible. In some cases, the books they take home may be the only thing that they truly own."

Lisa F.
First Book educator

New Research-Based Tool to Evaluate and Advocate for Classroom Libraries

For millions of children growing up in book deserts, classroom libraries can often be their primary source for accessing books, making them vitally important literacy assets.

In 2022, First Book partnered with renowned literacy expert Dr. Susan Neuman to create a research-based tool that could be used to evaluate, bolster, and advocate for literacy rich classroom libraries.

First Book Research & Insights: First Book and Dr. Neuman beta-tested the checklist with 1,200 educators - and, as part of that process, First Book also conducted a survey of those educators to learn how they rate their own classroom libraries and how they created them. Among the survey findings:

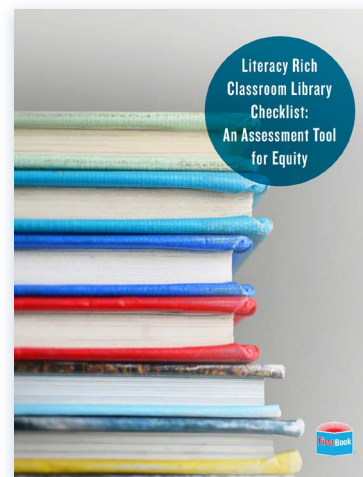


- Nearly half of educators (47%) reported that it took 6+ years to build their classroom library; nearly one-third of the educators (28%) said it took 10+ years.
- 96% of educators spend their own money on books for their classroom, spending an average of \$346 annually.

First Book Accelerator: Input provided by First Book members through beta-testing informed the [Literacy Rich Classroom Library Checklist: An Assessment Tool for Equity](#). In addition, First Book hosted a free, live webinar with Dr. Neuman discussing her findings on creating literacy rich environments, as well as a panel discussion with educators.

First Book Marketplace: The checklist, which is available for anyone to download for free on the First Book Marketplace, also features links to potential community funding sources, and suggestions regarding how to use information from the checklist to support requests for classroom library funds.

See this [Publishers Weekly article about the Literacy Rich Classroom Library Checklist](#).



78%

found the checklist to be very or extremely useful in identifying what makes a classroom library "literacy rich."

Equipping the Builders of Tomorrow, Thanks to the LEGO Group

The LEGO Group has supported learning through play for the children served by First Book for years. In 2022 and 2023, this included the launch of two new LEGO® "Build the Change" Course Packs: "A Future Without Waste" and "Human Impact: Saving Today's Dinosaurs" as well as a refreshed version of the "Biodiversity and Climate Change" Course Pack. The "Build the Change" Course Packs are designed to help equip the leaders of tomorrow with the knowledge and skills they need to become engaged and successful 21st century citizens. These valuable resources expand experiential learning for children ages 7-12, and provide new ideas for educators to bring the issues to life in and out of classrooms and community programs.



First Book Research & Insights: The LEGO Group worked with First Book Research & Insights to gather feedback on the value and type of content as well as the usability of the Course Packs from First Book educators using the resources in the classroom. The research generated both qualitative and quantitative data from educators, and helped create Course Packs that meet the needs of children and educators served by First Book.

First Book Accelerator: In addition to using insights from educators to help guide the LEGO Group's creation of the course packs, First Book's Accelerator arm utilized the feedback to create additional free resources that brought to life the sustainability concepts in a local, or U.S.-focused context.

In addition, First Book and the LEGO Group developed virtual events to further engage students and support educators. Each event focused on a different topic, including: how humans can have a positive and negative impact on biodiversity; how to create a future without waste through a circular economy; and how people are developing innovative ideas to repurpose and reuse everyday items to create positive change. The events featured special guests from nonprofit partners, such as the Word Resource Institute (WRI), The National History Museum in London, The Maryland Zoo, and more.

First Book Marketplace: The "Build the Change" Biodiversity and Climate Change course pack was downloaded 2,000 times in just 2.5 months, reaching an estimated 45,000 students. In addition, during 2022-2023, the LEGO Group donated more than 92,000 LEGO® Brick Play Boxes to First Book classrooms through the LEGO Replay Program. The program encourages families to return LEGO sets that they are no longer using, to be donated to other children.

First Book + KPMG and KPMG Family for Literacy Celebrate 15 Years

Since 2008, KPMG has collaborated with First Book through the KPMG Family for Literacy (KFFL) program to support our shared mission of increasing equal access to quality education for children in low-income communities. In April 2023, KPMG and First Book celebrated the 15th anniversary of our collaboration with the **KFFL Lighting the Way for Literacy program**, which addressed educational inequity. A total of 65 KPMG offices participated in this milestone program by distributing 80,000 books and over 6,500 book lights to First Book educators across the country.



Throughout the years, KPMG has continued to support the growth and evolution of First Book in various ways, such as providing transformational financial support to enhance operational systems and capabilities. At the end of 2023, KPMG committed to helping First Book evolve its IT infrastructure and support the implementation of AI technology. These advancements will enable First Book to expand its Network and reach more educators serving children in need. Additionally, KPMG has been a critical thought partner and business advisor to First Book. Their participation as members of the First Book Board of Directors has contributed to the overall governance of the organization and the advancement of its operations.

Thank you to KPMG for supporting First Book and empowering the workforce of the future through equitable access to quality education and enhancing the wellbeing of our communities.

Adding a Little More Heart to Reading with Build-A-Bear Foundation

In January 2022, in honor of Build-A-Bear's 25th Anniversary year, Build-A-Bear Foundation and First Book announced a joint goal to distribute 125,000 books to educators serving kids in need across the U.S. and Canada. Build-A-Bear Guests were invited to support this effort through in-store and online donations. Launching on National Teddy Bear Day in September, a new giveback opportunity was added via sales of Read Teddy, a legacy furry friend released from the Build-A-Bear vault with a fresh design.



To help amplify community impact during Build-A-Bear's milestone year, a unique three-way partnership was formed with another First Book partner: The Busload of Books Tour featuring Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr, the dynamic author/illustrator duo behind popular titles such as *The Cookie Chronicles* series and *Everywhere Wonder*. The Busload of Books Tour spent the 2022-2023 school year on the ultimate 50-state road trip, visiting Title I schools and sharing 25,000 free books with students and teachers who otherwise would not have access to them. This partnership trifecta helped raise awareness for an urgent lack of access to books in under-resourced communities. Together with Build-A-Bear Foundation and First Book's efforts, a collective 150,000+ books were donated to kids in need.

Finally, in November 2023, Build-A-Bear Foundation reunited with First Book and The Busload of Books at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference in Cincinnati, OH. Here they showcased the impact of this amazing journey on thousands of educators. They also shone a light on complementary research conducted by Washington College, studying the tour's effects on students' attitudes toward reading, writing and drawing.

Since the partnership's launch in 2022, Build-A-Bear Foundation has donated 225,000 books to communities in need through First Book. This inspiring relationship has now grown to a NEW five-year commitment, which reflects a joint pledge to inspire creativity through reading. Together, First Book and Build-A-Bear Foundation are on a mission to distribute one million books and 100,000 furry friend "reading buddies" by 2027. First Book is proud of this life-changing partnership with Build-A-Bear Foundation that adds a little more heart to the lives of educators and the kids they serve.

It's much less intimidating to read to a sweet bear than an adult. All my kids are going to want to read aloud.

First Book educator



Celebrating 15 Years of Partnership with dd's DISCOUNTS

The dd's DISCOUNTS Youth Literacy Fundraiser is an annual three-week point-of-sale fundraiser where dd's customers across the country raise funds on behalf of First Book member schools and programs in their local communities. A unique program with national reach and a hyper-local impact, the Youth Literacy Fundraiser matches each individual dd's DISCOUNTS Store with a First Book member school or program within 5 miles of the store's location. This fundraising format ensures that dollars raised in a community, stay in a community in order to maximize local impact.



Since 2009, First Book and dd's DISCOUNTS have distributed over 2.5 million books to kids in need across the country and dd's DISCOUNTS Associates have raised over \$7 million for their local communities. Every Back-to-School season, dd's has gone above and beyond to ensure that all Associates are informed about the First Book mission to energize them to raise more funds to infuse brand new books into their local communities. Every year participating schools are invited and encouraged to make visits to their local store and speak with dd's Associates and customers to rally support and increase donations. In 2023, 100 percent of respondents to our annual participant survey stated that they were satisfied with the fundraiser and would participate again, if given the opportunity.

As we head into another fundraising season with dd's DISCOUNTS, we are so grateful for this transformative partnership and their continued support of First Book educators and their students' literacy.

First Book and The American Federation of Teachers Open the World with Books!



For more than 10 years, First Book and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have worked together to provide books and educational resources to build classroom libraries and fuel learning in Title I schools nationwide.

In 2022 and 2023, this partnership grew even stronger with the launch of AFT's **Reading Opens the World**, an initiative that has distributed TWO MILLION books at school festivals, family events, and community celebrations across the country.

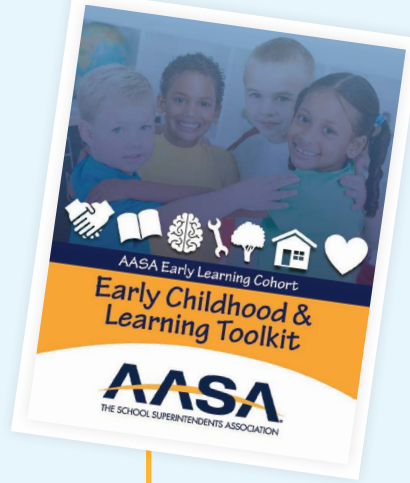
Given the detrimental impact of the pandemic on student reading scores, increasing access to books has been even more important. Reading Opens the World does that and more, by:

1. Giving teachers and school staff books, tools, and professional development that translates the science of reading into useable resources to help students read and read well;
2. Providing parents and caregivers with fun and research-based tips to support literacy.
3. Strengthening connections between families, communities, educators, and schools to be partners in students' literacy; and
4. Giving children and young people the opportunity to select their very own free books to inspire their love of reading, and build home libraries, with stories for them to cherish and keep.

"Books not only bring joy, they really do open a world of opportunity and ideas," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "As others are banning books, we are distributing millions of books together with First Book - and continuing our efforts to create a nation of joyful and confident readers."



2022



Early Childhood and Learning Toolkit with AASA, The School Superintendents Association

First Book CEO Kyle Zimmer and other members of the AASA Early Learning Cohort launched the [Early Childhood and Learning Toolkit](#) at AASA's conference in Nashville.

First Book launched new mental health resource for educators

Taking Care: An Educator Guide to Healthy Habits for Student Emotional Wellness is free to download on the First Book Marketplace.

First Book at the World Economic Forum

First Book joined world leaders at the 2022 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, sharing ideas and strategies with other leading social entrepreneurs from around the world.

The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund

For the 3rd year, The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund selected First Book as a recipient of donations from readers, with editorial coverage starting in October.

Happy SULWE Day!

Academy Award-winning actress and *New York Times* bestselling author Lupita Nyong'o, Lancôme, and SimonKIDS provided 60,000 copies of her powerful story *Sulwe* to First Book, reaching more than 1,000 classrooms!

Amanda Gorman & Change Sings!

Penguin Young Readers generously donated thousands of copies of Amanda Gorman's book, *Change Sings*, to be distributed by First Book. Amanda also recorded a special message for First Book educators.

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Time for Change Launched

This multi-year initiative to inspire young people as changemakers brings the expertise of Ashoka to the First Book Network, thanks to the generous support of Audemars Piguet.



First Book turned 30!

First Book celebrated 30 years of bringing books and resources to kids in need!



550,000th educator joined First Book Network

Tamika, a New York City middle school teacher, became the 550,000th educator in the First Book Network.

30,000 Books for Afghan refugee families

First Book and nonprofit publisher Room to Read partnered to distribute 30,000 books in Dari and Pashto to Afghan refugee families through First Book's community of educators.

New York Times Games

New York Times Games invited Spelling Bee players to "game for good" and help donate to First Book.

Making Philadelphia Book Wishes Come True

With the support of our partners, the William Penn Foundation, Read by 4th, and the Philly Book Bank, the Philly Book Wish Program allowed Philadelphia-area Title I schools and community programs to apply for up to \$5,000 worth of brand-new, diverse books from the First Book Marketplace to get kids excited about reading.

87

Grants Awarded

28,402

Books Distributed

64,550

Children Reached

2023



First Book featured by the World Economic Forum and the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

Kyle Zimmer, a long-standing Fellow with the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, joined global innovators in Switzerland for the 25th anniversary of the Schwab Foundation, a sister program of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The Schwab Foundation and WEF created a special [First Book video](#).



First Book's New Look

To celebrate First Book's more than 30 years of dedication to educational equity, the organization launched a fresh look and updated messaging.



The First Book Open

First Book and partners Topgolf and World Golf Tournament invited golf enthusiasts and First Book supporters to a month-long virtual golf tournament, with the goal of providing more children and educators with books and educational resources. A big thank you to the more than 30,000 players who participated, playing more than 226,000 rounds of virtual golf in this inaugural First Book Open.



Basic Needs Closets

First Book, the Delaware Lt. Governor's Office, and the Delaware Department of Education relaunched an initiative to create school-based Basic Needs Closets, stocked with toothpaste, shampoo, and other items.



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First Book featured by the Library of Congress

First Book was among those featured by the Library of Congress in its video celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Library of Congress Literacy Awards. In 2015, First Book received the Library of Congress David M. Rubenstein Prize for outstanding and measurable contributions to increasing literacy levels.

Busloads of Books Tour on The Drew Barrymore Show

First Book and Build-A-Bear Foundation partnered with children's book author and illustrator Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr to give books to Title I schools through their year-long Busload of Books Tour. The couple and their children and dogs toured the country in a renovated school bus. The pair donated 25,000 of their own books, and First Book and Build-A-Bear Foundation supported them with an additional 125,000 books.

Time for Change to expand internationally

First Book, Ashoka, and Audemars Piguet announced plans to expand the Time for Change movement to five new countries: Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the United Kingdom. This second phase of the Time for Change initiative will include a new implementing partner, Teach For All.



National Book Access Association

First Book became the fiscal sponsor for the newly formed National Book Access Association.

First Book at the Clinton Global Initiative

At the 2023 Clinton Global Initiative, Kyle Zimmer shared new First Book Research & Insights' study findings about the impact of diverse books on reading achievement and announced a Commitment to Action by the Diverse Books for All Coalition.

First Book featured in NYT Annual Giving Campaign

For the 4th consecutive year, *The New York Times* named First Book as a beneficiary of The *New York Times* Communities Fund for 2023, a holiday season giving campaign that raised more than \$7.4 million shared by ten recipient organizations.



First Book is creating significant impact:

For Historically Underserved Children

- 66% of educators said they give books from First Book to children to take home and keep; 42% said that without First Book, the children they serve would have no or very few new books.
- 56% said that First Book's selection of diverse books has helped strengthen students' love of reading.
- 33% said that they use books and resources from First Book to encourage attendance, reward classroom behavior, etc.

For the First Book Network

- 80% of educators said that First Book allows them to stretch their dollars so that they can support more kids.
- 63% said that First Book helps them support reluctant readers.
- 57% report that First Book helps them be the best educator they can be.

For the Field

- First Book lowers the cost of high-quality books/resources and increases access to diverse/relevant content.
- First Book's research reveals educator insights that can inform educational strategies, products, and services to increase effectiveness and adoption rates.
- First Book provides a trusted, cost-effective channel to reach educators with evidence-based strategies, professional development materials, and resources supporting the whole child.
- First Book is building collaborations that unify and benefit nonprofits serving children in under-served communities, to maximize collective market power and accelerate social sector progress.

2022-2023

By the Numbers

11.6M

Children served

225M

Books and resources distributed since First Book's founding

584,000+

First Book members as of Dec. 31, 2023

62,000+

New members joined the First Book Network

25,494,093

Books and resources distributed through the First Book Marketplace

66

Number of research studies conducted by First Book Research & Insights

32+

Number of First Book Accelerator resources launched (Video and print-on-demand)



Close Up: First Book's Stories for All Project™

The Stories for All Project™ is First Book's ongoing initiative to elevate books with stories and characters where children can see themselves and learn about others. The collection includes nearly **6,200 titles**, each handpicked by First Book's professional curation team for its impact, authenticity, and ability to engage readers.

87-88%

of all purchases by First Book members included at least one diverse book.

54-56%

More than half of the total books members purchased from First Book were diverse.

A New Level of Collaboration

First Book is developing innovative collaborations to strengthen the sector, accelerate the speed of change, and further our collective ability to create systemic change. These field-leading initiatives include the following new collaborations launched in 2022 and 2023:

Diverse Books for All Coalition

In 2022, with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, First Book launched the Diverse Books for All Coalition, a national consortium that now numbers more than 50 nonprofit and member-based organizations working together to increase access to diverse children's books for the children we all serve - and make those books more affordable.

While publishers have been making progress on elevating diverse content, those books are still too few and too expensive. In our diverse world, this puts all our children at a disadvantage - and this under-representation is especially inequitable for children in low-income communities, their families, and the early childhood providers who support them - negatively impacting millions of children.

To accelerate book equity at the speed and scale needed requires new cross-sector strategies, laying the foundation for racial and educational equity during a child's critical earliest years (ages 0-8), when their self-identities and their attitudes about race are beginning to form.

At the 2023 Clinton Global Initiative, the Coalition announced a Commitment to Action, based on a multi-pronged strategy, including:

- using the Coalition's collective purchasing power to influence the availability and pricing of diverse children's books for members, who serve children in low-income communities. Together, Coalition members represent more than 20% of the children's retail market, providing significant leverage to increase the number, affordability, and variety of diverse books.
- championing the importance of diverse books for all children; and
- providing educators, parents, and caregivers with support and resources to advocate for and use diverse books.

The Coalition is working to double the number of affordable, quality children's books by and about diverse races, cultures, identities, and abilities within five years.

National Book Access Association

First Book serves as the fiscal sponsor for the National Book Access Association - a new trade association formed to provide training, share best practices, and build needed resources for the estimated 2,000 plus local nonprofits that distribute books as part of their broader missions.

The association's goal is to support the field of book access professionals, as well as to make a collective and meaningful impact in the lives of individuals who lack access to books and reading materials, and the people who serve them.

Through networking and learning initiatives, the association aims to foster a sense of community among book distribution organizations, providing opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and support.

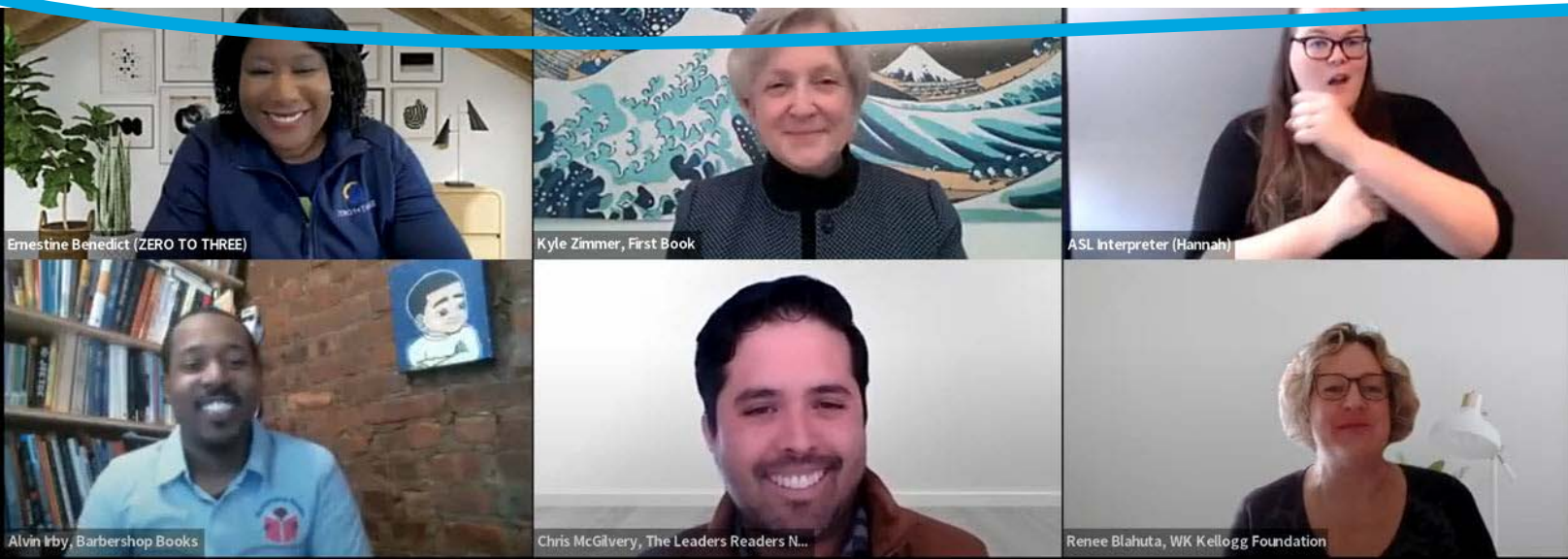
Reading Universe

In 2023, First Book, the Barksdale Reading Institute, and WETA/ Reading Rockets joined forces to launch Reading Universe, a multi-media online platform bringing educators free, evidence-based resources for teaching reading and writing. This step-by-step professional development tool for teachers, paraprofessionals, and reading coaches includes lesson plans, in-classroom videos, printable activities, and decodable texts.

Reading Universe builds on 50 years of education research and the success of the Barksdale Reading Institute, which catapulted reading scores in Mississippi from among the worst in the nation to 21st in 2022. With reading scores at historic lows due to pandemic learning loss, this instructional resource is an important asset for educators working to implement the science of teaching reading.

First Book Research & Insights informed the development of Reading Universe through focus groups, educator surveys, and usability testing, as well as in-depth 1:1 interviews to gather insights on the quality and effectiveness of the Reading Universe platform and ensure that it addresses educators' needs.

Reading Universe is made possible by generous support from Jim & Donna Barksdale, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), The Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, and three anonymous donors. [Learn more about this new resource here.](#)



“As a former Head Start teacher, an avid reader, and a lifelong believer in the power of education, I’m thrilled that together we are leading the charge to effectively support educators as they build on their skills, and work to teach each and every child how to read.”

Sharon Percy Rockefeller,
President and CEO of WETA

Looking Ahead

First Book Priorities in 2024

At First Book, we believe education offers the best path out of poverty. We remain fiercely committed to empowering teachers and practitioners, elevating their voice, and providing the resources they need to remove barriers to learning and bring the full power of quality education to every child. During 2024, our priorities are to:



Grow the First Book Network.

By joining First Book, teachers and those supporting children in under-resourced neighborhoods become part of a community: with the ability to make their voice heard; to drive the creation of the very resources they need; to access the widest range of professionally curated books, educational resources, and professional development resources created with field-leading experts - all at the lowest prices possible or for free. Just as critically: as the Network grows, First Book is able to leverage the collective market power of members to drive systemic change.



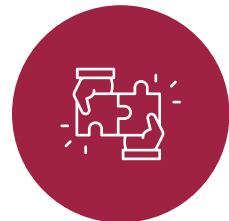
Pilot the use of AI.

First Book will be exploring opportunities to apply AI in ways that improve operational efficiencies and allow us to serve more First Book members and reach more children with more resources.



Build the capacity of First Book Research & Insights.

First Book has become a leading institution promoting the collective voice of teachers and practitioners who work with children in classrooms and programs every day. First Book research is being used to inform product design and educational strategies and refine curriculum and teaching practices. In addition to gaining insights that can help close achievement gaps, listening to and acting on educator input will drive transformative change.



Explore opportunities for innovative, cross-sector collaborations.

First Book has seen deeply entrenched educational inequities expand dramatically due to the pandemic. But the pandemic also led to new partnerships and cross-sector collaborations that we've never seen before. To further educational opportunity, it's essential that we work together across sectors and in new ways. First Book is committed to collaborating with educators, fellow nonprofits, corporate partners, academic and early childhood experts, and individuals committed to furthering educational equity. We are a cohort of change makers working together to build and implement solutions that eliminate the barriers to educational opportunity for all, once and for all.

Financials

This summary presents financial information extracted from First Book's audited financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2023. An independent public accounting firm has issued an unmodified opinion on these statements.

Statement of Financial Position

(in thousands)

ASSETS	2023	2022
Cash and cash equivalents	6,565	10,159
Account receivable, net of credit losses	1,215	1,427
Contributions receivable, net of allowance	6,390	1,004
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	603	439
Donated inventory	15,624	21,264
Purchased inventory	3,354	3,644
Right of use asset	1,898	843
Total Assets	35,649	38,781
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	3,233	3,583
Accrued expenses	534	482
Grant payable	1,035	1,802
Deferred revenue	479	358
Operating Lease Liability	1,907	827
Total Liabilities	7,108	7,051
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	14,603	23,225
With donor restrictions	13,866	8,505
Total Net Assets	28,470	31,730
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	35,649	38,781

Statement of Activities

(in thousands)

	2023	2022
Support and Revenue		
Contributed goods	47,988	66,915
Contributions	20,750	22,863
Marketplace activity	16,199	14,838
Other Income	189	42
Total Support and Revenue	85,127	104,658
EXPENSES		
Program services	82,365	116,090
Management and general	3,198	2,239
Fundraising	2,823	2,131
Total Expenses	88,387	120,459
Change in Net Assets ¹	(3,260)	(15,801)
Net assets, beginning of year	31,730	47,531
Net assets, end of year	28,470	31,730

¹ Notes to Financial Statements: In-Kind/Non-cash contributions are recorded as in-kind revenue at fair market value (FMV) upon receipt and expensed at FMV upon distribution. Timing disparities between receipt and distribution can affect net income from operations within each calendar year. However, the income statement impact reflects mission-related resource allocation and does not affect cash flows.

Use of Funds

For the year ended December 31, 2023
(in thousands)

Total Expenses: \$88,387

3% Fundraising: \$2,823

4% Management & General: \$3,198

93% Program Services: \$82,365

Thank You to First Book Supporters – and how you can help

Thank you to our corporate and nonprofit partners, publishing partners, in-kind donors, individual donors, and First Book champions, one and all. Your support means everything to us and to the children and educators we serve every day. We cannot do it without you, and we are eternally grateful.

Collaboration is the key.

If you, like us, believe that education transforms lives, we invite you to help!

First Book is expanding to reach the millions of children in under-resourced communities around the country: to inspire a love of learning and support the teachers and adults with every resource they need to unlock the power of education. Here are four ways to get involved:

[PARTNER](#)

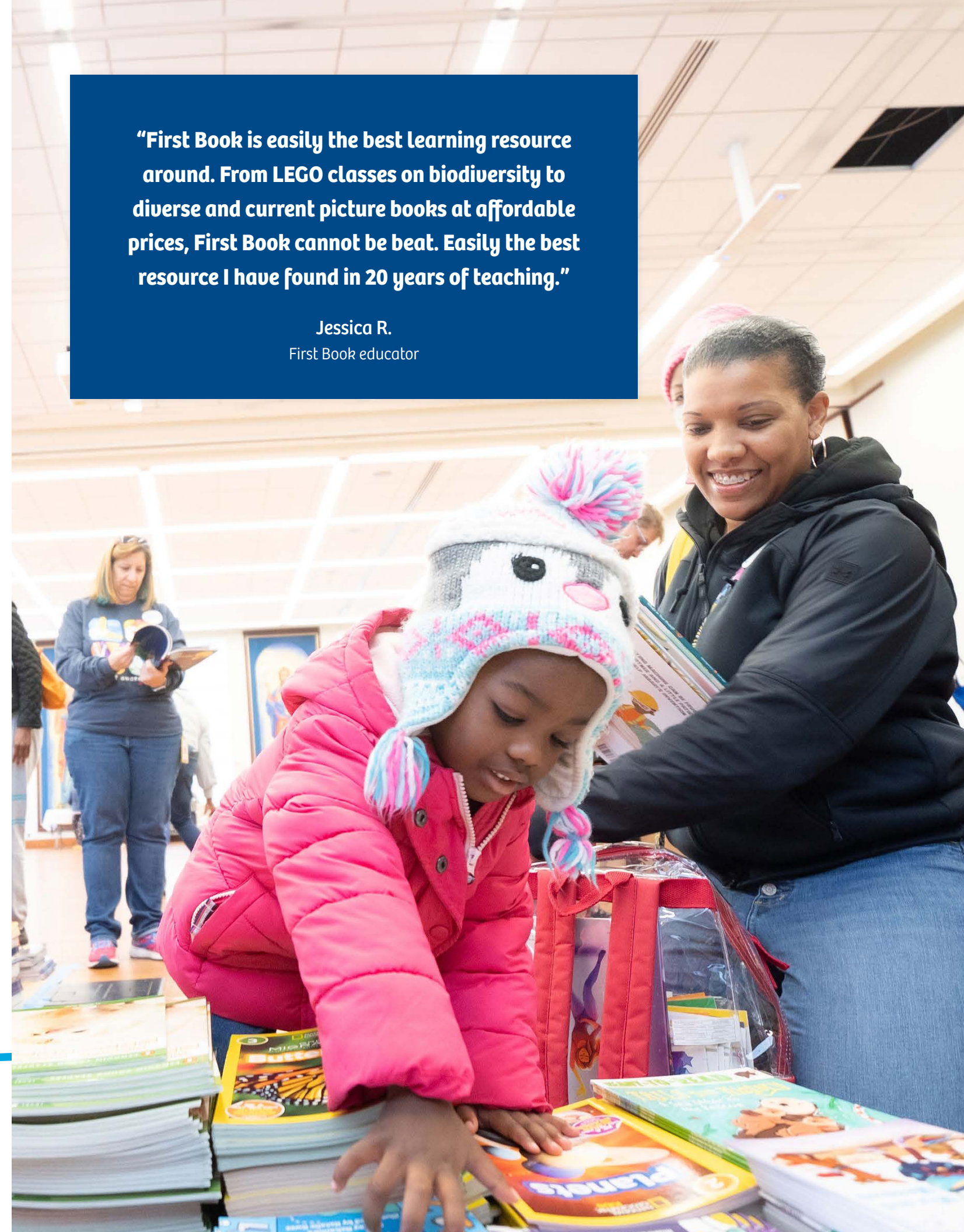
[DONATE](#)

[JOIN](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

“First Book is easily the best learning resource around. From LEGO classes on biodiversity to diverse and current picture books at affordable prices, First Book cannot be beat. Easily the best resource I have found in 20 years of teaching.”

Jessica R.
First Book educator



“First Book is the BEST resource for teachers and schools. Because of First Book, I can afford to keep my library fresh and relevant. My students are reading more than ever, and my passion for teaching and working to develop lifelong readers has been reinvigorated.”

Morgan W.
First Book member

