

The Overlooked Early Years

In a working-class neighborhood, Maria is born into a family where both parents work multiple low-wage jobs and are barely making ends meet. Her grandparents, who have cared for her from infancy, provide a nurturing home but lack the means to expose her to high-quality early literacy resources.

While some reading resources exist in Maria's community, they are difficult to access. The nearest public library offering early literacy programs, is oversubscribed and often attended by families from outside the area who can afford the time and expense of driving there. Affordable early childhood education centers are limited, with lengthy waiting lists, and even at \$10 per day, they are still unaffordable for Maria's family.

Her early years lack exposure to books, interactive language-building activities and a language-enriched environment, which are crucial for literacy development, leaving Maria with a lower vocabulary than her peers.

By the time Maria begins kindergarten, she is already at a disadvantage. Her teachers notice her struggles and seek a psychoeducational assessment, however the school does not have funding to provide one for free and her family cannot afford a private assessment. By the end of third grade, Maria cannot read at third grade level and, unfortunately, the system has failed to intervene during critical early years.



Maria

