



Early Learning

WHY NINE PBS?

HISTORY

Five years ago, Nine PBS's Early Learning Initiative began as a seedling of an idea, planted in direct response to the community's expressed needs. In the beginning, the initiative boasted one team member and an intern.

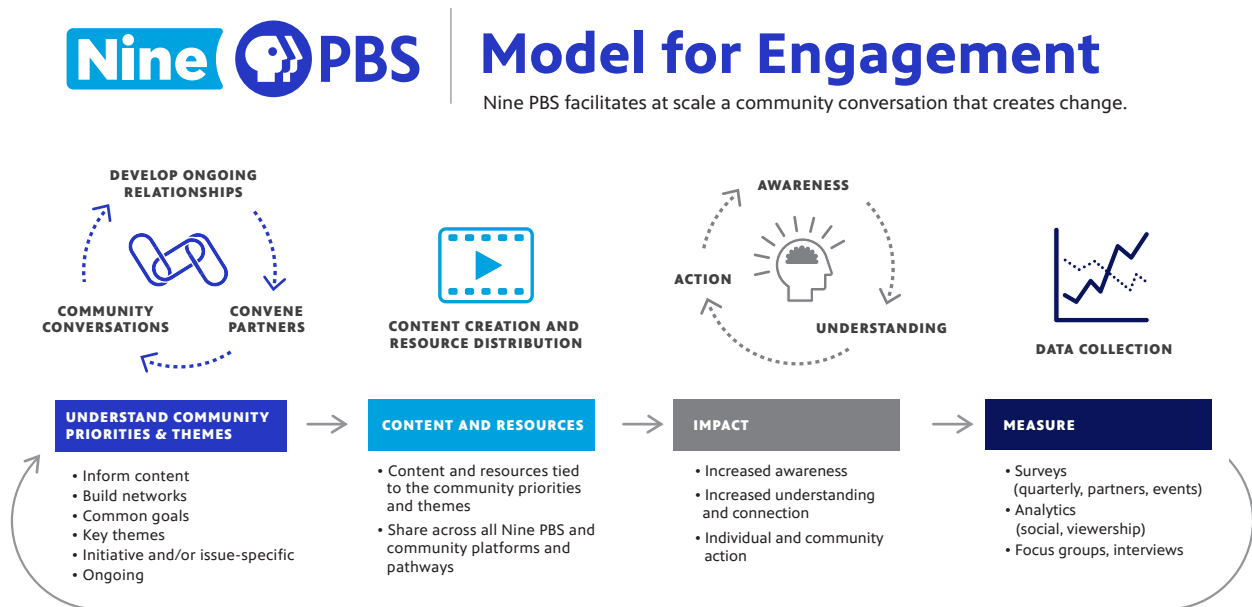
As Nine PBS's roots grew deeper into the community, the Early Learning team became a valid and trusted community partner in St. Louis's early education world. Community partners continued to imagine increased, varied, and more complex ways Nine PBS could join in the work to advance outcomes in our youngest and most vulnerable learners.

The team is now proudly connected to more than 130 community partners, offering each connection a variety of support aligned with community priorities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Nine PBS anchors our work in what is most important to the community. We regularly convene our trusted community partners around early education through our Model for Community Engagement.

This model ensures that "community engagement" has real meaning: conversation, collaboration, and outcomes. The partner meetings and community conversations facilitated by our community engagement model make Nine PBS a better community member and a relevant institution in the daily lives of the kids across our region.



FAMILIAR JOURNEY, NEW MAP

In June 2022, our Board of Directors approved a new three-year strategic plan. The plan grounds Nine PBS and all our work in a core purpose: to magnify and deepen understanding of our community to help our region flourish.

OUR VALUES



VISION OF EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

Using a “highest need for highest impact” lens, our long-term vision for Nine PBS is to be a training hub for educators and caregivers across the region, where they can gain fluency using PBS KIDS media, curriculum, and resources to improve the educational experiences of young learners. By supporting underserved communities in our region, Nine PBS ensures that our work eliminates barriers for children and families.

GOALS OF EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

- **Increase** third grade literacy
- **Increase** school readiness
- **Decrease** the digital divide

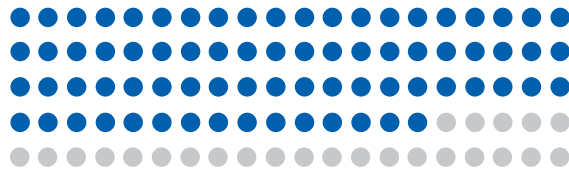
INCREASE THIRD GRADE LITERACY

Nine PBS works with schools serving our region's highest need neighborhoods to help close this achievement gap.

Third grade is an important milestone for young learners. In the years leading up to third grade, students are learning to read. In fourth grade, education then shifts to reading to learn. For students reading below grade level, as much as half of what they are taught will be inaccessible (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Children who are not reading on grade level by third grade are more than four times as likely not to graduate high school (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012).

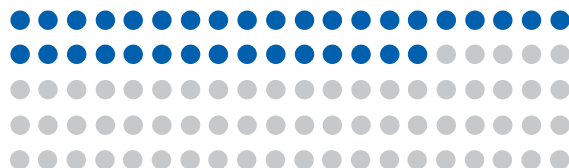
IN ST. LOUIS

75% of Black third graders are not reading on grade level



COMPARED TO

35% of white students



SOURCE: *St. Louis American*, April 6, 2022



DRAWN IN

WATCH. READ. PLAY. LEARN.

Drawn In is a series of epic adventure stories set in a bustling Midwest city following four kids—Tyler Agbani, Nevaeh Campbell, Jady Harris, and Yeong-Ja “Grace” Park—who love comic books. In every adventure, their real world collides with characters from the comic world and the kids must catch and restore them to save the city from cartoon mayhem. Rooted in a literacy curriculum designed to improve grade-level fluency among kids ages 6-8, *Drawn In* is codeveloped alongside the Academy Award-winning, Black-led, St. Louis-based studio, Lion Forge Animation. *Drawn In* characters represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds and social identities, reflecting the children in our community.

To be an accessible resource anchored in the community, the *Drawn In* initiative relies on multiple tools and touchpoints for kids, families, and educators. The initiative creates opportunities for the community to watch, read, play, and learn. Kids can watch video shorts on-air and online, read print and digital comics, play at community events like Storytime in the Commons, and learn through interactive educational games online and curriculum-based comic book writing workshops.



DRAWN IN IS A MULTIFACETED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE WHICH HAS:

Broadcast 4 specials featuring the animated shorts enhanced with live-action segments to reinforce the vocabulary words

Created 4 issues of the comic, with more than 220,000 comics distributed in the community

Created 16 video shorts

Hosted 50 Literacy Power Hour sessions within our 3 priority neighborhoods

Facilitated train-the-trainer sessions, helping the Nine PBS team pave the way for community partners to independently host Literacy Power Hours

Developed Drawnin.org, which houses the comics, video shorts, and educational games

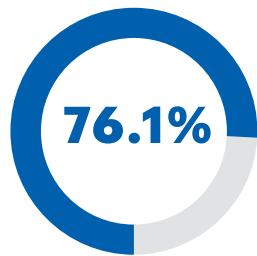
INCREASE SCHOOL READINESS

Lack of access and affordability are why Nine PBS and public media remain a vital source for early childhood education across our region.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that families devote no more than 7% of their income to childcare. By this definition, only 10.6% of Missouri families can afford childcare (Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education, 2019). For those few who qualify for financial subsidies, access to high-quality early childhood education is still limited.

THE PERCENTAGE OF ST. LOUIS CHILDREN AGES 3 AND 4 WHO ATTENDED A PRESCHOOL CLASS:

White children



Black children



SOURCE: City of St. Louis, December 14, 2022



NINE PBS KIDS

Curriculum-based PBS KIDS® content is unique in the children’s media landscape. Nine PBS KIDS is the only free, over-the-air, 24/7 television service for young children in our region. This community presence helps to make Nine PBS a trusted community resource.

LOCAL PBS KIDS VIEWS

- **Digital: 51+ million ON DEMAND OR LIVESTREAM VIDEO**

PBS Business Intelligence Domo Report, January–December 2022

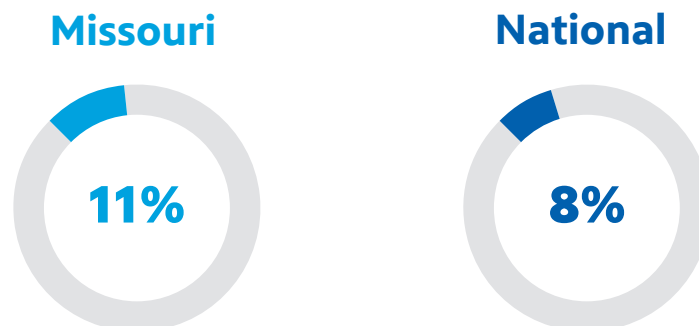
- **On Air: 28+ million LOCAL VIEWS**

Nielsen/TRAC Media Services, January–December 2022

NINE PBS WORKS TO SUPPORT EDUCATORS SO THEY BUILD SUPPORTIVE NETWORKS AND INCREASE THEIR SKILLS.

The state of Missouri is experiencing the lowest teacher retention rates in the United States.

TEACHER ATTRITION RATES:



OVERALL, THE STATE HAS 3,500 POSITIONS THAT ARE EITHER VACANT OR HELD BY UNDERQUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS.

SOURCE: *Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021*

EDCAMP UNCONFERENCE

The first Nine PBS Edcamp took place in fall 2018 and has returned annually at the request of area educators. To meet the demand for educator-led professional development, Nine PBS hosted the unconference twice in 2022. Over the two events, 209 teachers joined in the conversation, impacting at least 3,100 early learners.

EDCAMP GIVES TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME TOGETHER, SHARE IDEAS, TALK ABOUT THINGS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN GOING ON IN THEIR CLASSROOM. THEY NEED TO BOUNCE IDEAS OFF ONE ANOTHER. [IT'S] A GREAT SPACE AND A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO DO THAT.

— EDCAMP PARTICIPANT, 2022

97% of attendees could imagine themselves using the ideas and resources they learned at Edcamp with young learners

87% of attendees felt their professional development needs were met



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS

Over the year, Nine PBS's professional development offerings impacted 330 educators and nearly 5,500 students through 39 uniquely designed sessions, including structured and unstructured learning sessions called Playful Learning for Educators (PLE), book clubs, and online/in-person group discussions. Sessions are designed to spark ideas and thoughts around complex issues teachers face.

Our professional development for educators is designed for educators working with children 2-8 to bring media-rich, play-based, and learner-centered experiences to their own classroom environments and communities. In each session, educators experience hands-on active play, which builds their confidence and interest around bringing PBS KIDS resources back to their classrooms.

 **PBS MAKES SUCH A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN IN OUR COMMUNITIES, AND I AM SO PROUD TO BE A PART OF IT ALL.**

— PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANT, 2022

LIVING ST. LOUIS SPECIAL: KIDS, FAMILIES, AND MENTAL HEALTH

One of the biggest consequences of the pandemic—struggles with staying mentally healthy—has been particularly acute for kids and educators. Nine PBS's *Living St. Louis Special: Kids, Families, and Mental Health* debuted on May 23, 2022, and tackles topics such as the increased rates of anxiety, stress, and depression in educators and kids and the resources available to help. The special was viewed nearly 400,000 times on air and online, helping to increase awareness and reduce stigma around mental health.

Kids, Families &

Mental Health

A LIVING ST. LOUIS SPECIAL

STORYTIME IN THE COMMONS

In September 2022, Nine PBS welcomed the chance to revive a community favorite: Storytime in the Commons. On September 24, 500+ community members gathered to celebrate Be My Neighbor Day. Children and families met characters from *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, participated in multicultural activities, like necklace making and a drum circle, and felt the joy of storytelling.

On October 22, 550+ community members once again gathered in the Jack Galmiche Public Media Commons for Storytime in the Commons, this time to celebrate Nine PBS's own *Drawn In*. The community enjoyed hearing the voice actors of *Drawn In* read an edition of the comic, meeting the actors for autographs, and watching the first video short.



BRIGHT BY TEXT

Families and early educators can text the word CARE to 274448 to receive fun tips from trusted experts to support healthy child development, available in English and Spanish. In 2022, this support expanded and now reaches from prenatal to 18 years old.

THESE HELPFUL TEXT MESSAGES INCLUDE:

- Age-specific information that changes as children grow
- Timely news on local resources and events
- Links to online learning materials accessible on any smartphone
- Advice on challenging behaviors, when caregivers need it most



- **94%** of surveyed participants agree or strongly agree that as a result of Bright by Text they know more about what their child should be learning and doing at this age
- **78%** agree or strongly agree that Bright by Text has helped build a stronger bond with their child
- **81%** are likely to recommend Bright by Text to a friend

SOURCE: *Bright by Text, November 17, 2022*

NINE PBS POWER HOUR SERIES

Quality time between caregivers and children is instrumental to healthy child development. Dedicated time together can develop social-emotional, cognitive, language, and self-regulation skills (America Academy of Pediatrics, 2018).

AN HOUR DEDICATED TO EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES CAN OFFSET THE BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS EXASPERATED BY 2.33 HOURS OF UNSTRUCTURED TIME.

SOURCE: *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016*

POWER HOUR SERIES (CONTINUED)

Nine PBS is dedicated to supporting out-of-school learning to increase school readiness. During the summer and other out-of-school times, students can experience a “slide,” or some loss in academic achievement. To help students practice school skills during these times, Nine PBS hosted 98 Power Hours in our priority neighborhoods of North St. Louis, North St. Louis County, and East St. Louis. The Power Hour series included literacy, science, and financial literacy. Each session was an opportunity for children and their families to gather, share a meal, and learn together. Power Hour lessons are designed by Nine PBS to align with state and federal curriculum standards. Lessons include hands-on activities to help enhance learning.

IN 2022, POWER HOURS IMPACTED 500+ KIDS AND 150+ CAREGIVERS FROM OUR PRIORITY NEIGHBORHOODS.

86% of caregivers reported their children looked forward to Power Hour sessions

82% of parents/caregivers agreed they learned something about their children through Power Hours

“I HAVE HAD TO WORK A LOT LATELY. I LOVED HEARING MY CHILDREN’S IDEAS AND SEEING HOW THEY MADE THEM COME TO LIFE. IT GAVE US THE TIME TO CREATE TOGETHER.”

— POWER HOURS PARTICIPANT

“THIS WAS A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY! WE LOVED THE SESSIONS. MY SON GAINED SO MUCH CONFIDENCE!”

— POWER HOURS PARTICIPANT



WITTCOFF FELLOWSHIP

In 2022, the Raymond H. Wittcoff Fellowship expanded. In addition to the focus on North St. Louis, North St. Louis County, and East St. Louis, two additional fellows focused their energy on supporting rural communities and general support of early educators in the St. Louis region, respectively. In addition, Nine PBS created a full-time position to remain a steadfast touch point between the community and each cohort of fellows.

Through the work of the fellows, four new Nine PBS learning nooks were created in partnership with Agape Help House, Uni-Pres Kinder Cottage, Morningstar Academy, and Magic Happens Here. These learning nooks are small spaces, hosted by the community partners to connect early learners to PBS LearningMedia resources to increase school readiness. Wittcoff Fellows furnish the nooks with bookshelves, tables, books, educational toys, PBS Playtime Pads, and other early learning resources.

THE IMPACT OF THE RAYMOND H. WITTCOFF FELLOWS IN 2022 IS SIGNIFICANT:

- **111** connections to early education organizations
- **99** new community connections
- **616** resources distributed
- **428** families supported



“THE FUTURE IS HERE. AS A CHILD WHO GREW UP WATCHING NINE PBS, A TEACHER WHO USED ITS RESOURCES TO CONNECT TO THE CLASSROOM, AND NOW WITTCOFF EDUCATION FELLOW, IT IS IN MY HEART TO CONTINUE EXPANDING THE LEGACY OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND CIVIC EDUCATION.

— KAYLA MOORE, RAYMOND H. WITTCOFF EDUCATION FELLOW

■ DECREASE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Nine PBS is determined to work toward decreasing the digital divide so more children can use online resources from home.

Education continues to rely on access to reliable internet connection in family homes. Digital devices connected to the internet are a tool for children to enhance their education. Still, unreliable and unaffordable internet plans make it difficult for many families to benefit from digital learning.

HOMES WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS



SOURCE: *National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2021*

PBS LEARNING MEDIA

Nine PBS LearningMedia provides educational content online that is perfect for distance learning and resources that are easily searchable by subject, school standard, and grade (prekindergarten, early elementary, upper elementary, middle school, and high school).

USERS: 124,227 IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION

PAGEVIEWS: 360,419

SOURCE: *PBS Business Intelligence Domo Reports, 2022*



TEACHING IN ROOM 9

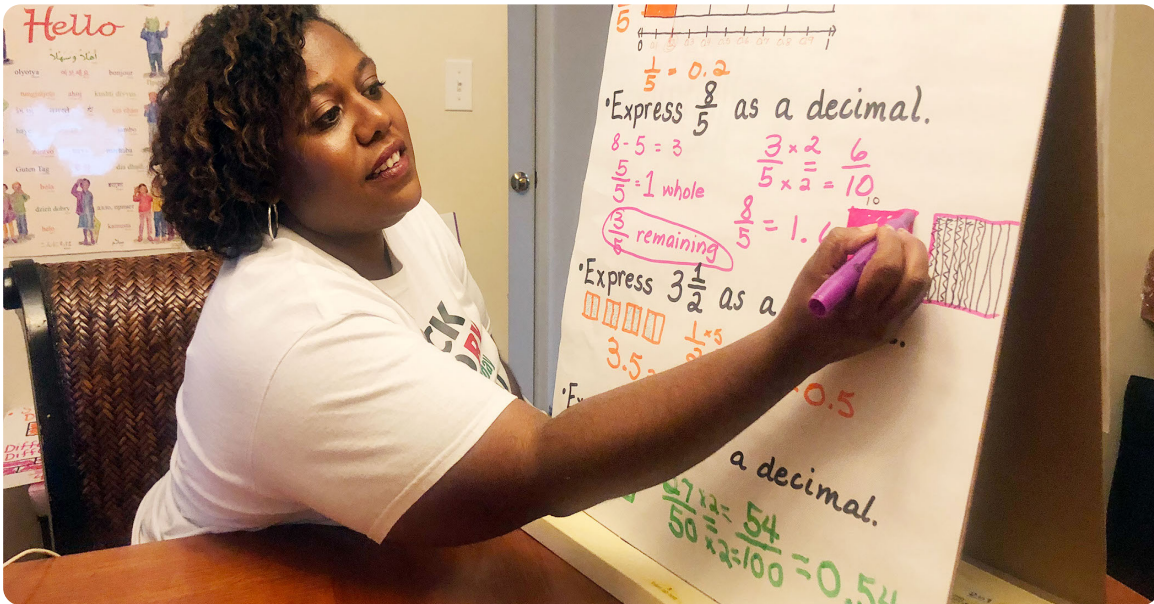
Since its 2020 launch, *Teaching in Room 9* has remained the region's largest classroom—reaching more than 157,000 kids ages 2-11 and accruing 3.7 million views. *Teaching in Room 9* airs daily on our main channel, making it accessible in 95% of homes across the St. Louis region, regardless of internet connectivity (Nielsen/TRAC Media Services, 2022).

What started as a pandemic strategy has become important for children in all situations, especially the 54% of three- and four-year-olds not in school (Kids Count, 2021). In May 2022, Focus St. Louis recognized the efforts of *Teaching in Room 9* with the Demonstrating Innovative Solutions Award at the annual What's Right with the Region Awards.

71%

agree that *Teaching in Room 9* helps support the educational needs of children.

SOURCE: *Nine PBS Community Survey, August 2022*



“WHETHER FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE UNABLE TO COME TO SCHOOL DUE TO ILLNESS OR OTHER REASONS, FOR DAYS WHEN SUBSTITUTES ARE HARD TO FIND AND YOU STILL NEED RELIABLE TEACHING TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS, OR WHEN YOU NEED TO GET NEW IDEAS AS A TEACHER—THIS PROGRAMMING CAN BE USED BY ALL.”

— JULIA ST. LOUIS, *TEACHING IN ROOM 9* INSTRUCTOR AND FIRST-GRADE TEACHER

Nine PBS

PBS KIDS



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the trio foundation of saint louis

YouthBridge Community Foundation

Joseph and Sandra Lehrer, in memory of Ted Koplar

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