



# Early Learning

2025 IMPACT REPORT

[ninepbs.org](https://ninepbs.org)





This past year reminded us of what true community looks like. In the face of one of public media's greatest challenges—the loss of federal funding—our region showed up with strength, generosity, and heart.

At Nine PBS, that spirit fuels everything we do. We listen to our neighbors, respond to what matters most, and build programs that create lasting impact. That commitment was evident this year as our **Community Engagement Model** reached a national milestone with the publication of our guidebook—a resource that will help stations across the country strengthen their own community connections. What began here in St. Louis is now helping to shape the future of public media nationwide.



This year also marked the launch of **The Learning League**—a new name and brand that unites our efforts to help kids, caregivers, and educators learn, connect, and thrive together. It's more than a name; it's a celebration of what happens when learning and growth are at the heart of our mission.

We're also celebrating the many milestones that brought people together: a vibrant **Edcamp** for educators, a new season of **Teaching in Room 9**, joyful **Storytime in the Commons** events, and **Power Hours** that delivered literacy and STEM lessons directly to families across our region.

Turning challenge into opportunity is what we do best. Looking ahead, we're setting an ambitious goal—to double the number of children we serve over the next three years. And if our community continues to show up with the same heart and enthusiasm you brought in 2025, we're confident we'll reach that goal—and have a lot of fun doing it!

Angela Carr  
Vice President and Chief Impact Officer

Nine PBS's Early Learning Initiative work garnered

**7.5M+** IMPRESSIONS

on-air, online, and in the community.

**84%** OF CHILDREN

have increased confidence in reading due to Nine PBS KIDS programming.

Source: Post-activity survey

PBS LearningMedia, a tool for caregivers:

**645K** LOCAL IMPRESSIONS

**198K** LOCAL PAGE VIEWS

Source: PBS's DOMO LearningMedia Local Analytics Dashboard. January 1-November 10.

#### COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED:

Caregivers: **1,200**

• Children (direct and indirect): **21,810**

• Educators: **710**

• Partner individuals: **575**

• Partner organizations: **170**



## UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Build and sustain a network of trusted partners
- Identify themes and set common goals
- Engage diverse voices and develop audiences

## ASSESS COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Collect and analyze feedback, and data
- Track awareness, understanding, and action
- Share insights and adapt



## CREATE CONTENT & RESOURCES

- Create and curate stories
- Develop a multiplatform content strategy
- Incorporate continuous feedback

## DISTRIBUTE CONTENT WITH INTENTION

- Share across Nine PBS, partner, and community platforms
- Use feedback to continuously refine strategy

Through our nationally recognized Model for Engagement, Nine PBS works closely with the community to understand needs, elevate voices, and drive meaningful impact. As a public institution licensed to serve the community, we use this proven model to build trust and support better educational and life outcomes for our neighbors throughout the region. In partnership with PBS, we published a guidebook based on this work—helping stations nationwide strengthen community connections and extending a model born in St. Louis to public media across the country.



**By combining the strengths of Nine PBS and Connected Learning, we're able to provide teachers with the tools, connections, and resources they need to help every child thrive. It's a partnership rooted in shared purpose and genuine respect for the educators who make all the difference.**

—Chris McGee, chief executive officer, Connected Learning

# How We Show Up for Our Community

Nine PBS isn't just where your favorite stories live—it's part of what makes our community special. It's where culture, learning, and local voices come together to provide opportunities and access, ensuring that all who live in our community can thrive.



## Convenings

At our community convenings, the first step in our model for engagement is listening. Educators, caregivers, and partners shared clear insights about resource gaps, educational challenges, and effective practices. Their perspectives reveal what young learners need most. Each engagement directly shapes and strengthens our programs for kids from infancy to eight years old, ensuring that our solutions reflect real experiences and deliver meaningful support.

Examples of some of the important topics we heard in 2025, which helped inform our new digital series, *Nine PBS Reports: Bridging the Childcare Gap*, included:



- Educators' pay
- Childcare deserts
- Student homelessness/transience
- Racially segregated school districts
- Concerns about the short- and long-term impact of the May 16 tornado on children





# How We Serve the Kids in Our Community

A high-quality early childhood education has long been linked to positive life outcomes, including higher high school graduation rates, increased employment achievements, reduced incarceration rates, and improved physical well-being.

## Teaching in Room 9

*Teaching in Room 9*, now in its 10th season, delivers joyful, high-quality early learning for children ages three to five, especially those not enrolled in preschool. Local educators bring literacy, math, social-emotional learning, the arts, health, nutrition, and Spanish together in playful, confidence-building lessons. Through a partnership with Webster University, college students gain hands-on experience in curriculum and media production, supporting both early learning and workforce development. The series airs on Nine PBS and streams on YouTube.

TEACHING IN ROOM 9  
AIRED **216** TIMES ON  
BROADCAST

VIEWED MORE THAN  
**257,000** TIMES ON-AIR  
AND ONLINE



of viewers agree *Teaching in Room 9* helps children learn school concepts at home

(Source: Nine PBS 2025 Community Survey)

## Storytime

Storytime returned in a big way in 2025, with record attendance across three events. We also hosted our first all-ages, neurodiverse-friendly storytime, featuring PBS KIDS's *Carl the Collector*, a warm-hearted autistic raccoon navigating everyday adventures. Our inclusive storytimes combine storytellers, community partners, PBS KIDS characters, games, activities, and literacy lessons to make learning fun for every child.



of caregivers surveyed said they agree that Nine PBS resources better prepare their children for learning.



**I loved everything about it. This was our first time coming and it was amazing. My grandchildren loved it. Keep up the good work.**



## Drawn In

The real worlds of four comic-book-loving kids collide with the comic world in *Drawn In*. This multiplatform initiative supports literacy for kids 5-8 years old in our region. The interactive websites are for both kids (with comics, videos, and games) and caregivers. In 2025, *Drawn In* was made available in English and Spanish.



**Kids enjoy a mix of structure and creative freedom to express themselves. So many kids loved learning about the various features of comics. I also learned some new call-and-response engagement strategies.**

## Power Hours

We make learning fun. Through our Literacy and STEM Power Hours, Nine PBS reached more than 530 children with engaging, hands-on experiences. Using video, print, and digital resources, we sparked curiosity and built family confidence in learning. All lessons align with at least three state standards identified as key achievement gaps for under-resourced schools.



of the children who participated increased confidence around reading

# Who We Serve: Educators & Partners

Nine PBS supports educators and school leaders across the region by building strong networks that advance student outcomes.

## Leaders Luncheon and Edcamp

In April, we convened education leaders and partners to examine regional data, identify classroom challenges, and focus on the greatest needs. Throughout the year, we offered targeted professional development, including Edcamp—our largest event—where teachers shared practical strategies for literacy, STEM, and everyday classroom success.



## Classroom Kits

Watch Party Kits made it easy for educators to bring Nine PBS's What Do I Do with This sustainability series straight into the classroom! Each kit came with a viewing guide, teacher prompts, and hands-on sorting and recycling activities that turned students from watchers into problem-solving champions. Teachers loved how well the kits supported early science skills and critical thinking.

## Our Work with Partners

We collaborate and align our early learning work with **130+** trusted, local, community partners.



**By combining the strengths of Nine PBS and Connected Learning, we're able to provide teachers with the tools, connections, and resources they need to help every child thrive. It's a partnership rooted in shared purpose and genuine respect for the educators who make all the difference.**

—Chris McGee, chief executive officer, Connected Learning

## Professional Development

In 2025, Nine PBS hosted nearly 20 professional development opportunities for educators, supporting nearly **350** educators and impacting **5,250** children.



**I am excited to use the different apps offered... and videos from Teaching in Room in my classroom.**

**98%**

of respondents agree that Nine PBS learning resources better prepare students for success in school.

**92%**

of respondents increased their knowledge about how to implement Nine PBS learning resources into their curriculum.

**85%**

of respondents felt that the content and resources presented were representative of their communities.



**I plan to immediately incorporate the classroom management strategies I learned today.**

## Curriculum-Aligned National Programs from PBS

For more than 50 years, Nine PBS has offered free, research-based PBS KIDS content, helping children ages 2–8 learn and thrive. PBS KIDS doesn't rest on its laurels; instead, it continues to develop new kids shows that align with the times we live in.



*Carl the Collector* follows the everyday adventures of Carl, a warm-hearted autistic raccoon who enjoys collecting things and loves his friends and family in Fuzzytown.

*Weather Hunters* was created by Emmy-winning weatherman and Today show host Al Roker. With a focus on STEM, the series features eight-year-old weather wiz and force of nature, Lily Hunter, and her family.



### PBS LearningMedia

Nine PBS LearningMedia offers free, online educational content to support classroom educators across subjects—from science to math and social studies. Curriculum-aligned videos, interactives, lesson plans, and more are easily searchable by subject, grade, and standard, and can be readily adapted for at-home learning.



PBS LearningMedia,  
a tool for caregivers:

**645K** LOCAL IMPRESSIONS

**198K** LOCAL PAGE VIEWS



**1M+**

PBS KIDS LOCAL USERS





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