



NORTHEAST REGION

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REACH OUT AND READ NORTHEAST PUBLISHES PICTURE BOOK ENCOURAGING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DIVERSITY, EQUITY

Talk Baby Talk features diverse characters and will be available in multiple languages

BOSTON (Sept. 26, 2023) - In an effort to increase access to books that are representative of families from all races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds, the nonprofit [Reach Out and Read](#) Northeast announces the publication of its first commissioned children's book, *Talk Baby Talk*. The board book is reflective of Reach Out and Read's mission, which focuses on the parent/caregiver-child relationship through daily reading. The nonprofit partners with medical providers across the country who offer parents and caregivers guidance about the importance of reading and distribute free, age-appropriate books during well-visits from birth to age five. *Talk Baby Talk* will be available in select clinics of Reach Out and Read Northeast this fall.

Each year, Reach Out and Read Northeast serves an estimated 435,000 children at 528 clinics across Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Upstate New York. The initial 10,000 copies of *Talk Baby Talk* will be distributed at those clinics serving underrepresented communities.

Bilingual books can be up to three times as expensive as their English-only counterparts. *Talk Baby Talk* will be available in six languages, and, like all Reach Out and Read books, is free to families at participating clinics. Each spread features a different group of diverse characters and families, and the book has been translated into the languages most requested by clinics in the Northeast region: Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Pashto, Dari, and English.

Talk Baby Talk is written by [Tricia Elam Walker](#) and illustrated by [Cbabi Bayoc](#). Walker is an award-winning author in addition to her work as an attorney and educator. Bayoc is an internationally known artist whose work has appeared in New York Times bestsellers, magazines, and even an album cover.

"We are fortunate to have Tricia Elam Walker and Cbabi Bayoc as the creatives behind this important book," said Reach Out and Read Northeast Executive Director Alex Chu. "They both possess a massive amount of talent, and there are not two creators with a better understanding of the value diversity plays in children's books."

Reach Out and Read Northeast hopes *Talk Baby Talk* will further discussions centered around diversity in children's books in two ways: in the characters and life experiences that appear between the pages and also within the publishing industry that creates the books. In 2022, only 39 percent of books reviewed by the Cooperative

Children’s Book Center (CCBC) had at least one BIPOC primary character. Data from the CBBC shows that only 13 percent of children’s books had at least one Black or African creator, 18 percent had at least one Asian creator, and 11 percent had at least one Latino creator. Because fewer diverse books are published, they’re often more costly for Reach Out and Read to buy and distribute to children and families.

“I’m so excited about this book being out in the world! My mom was a children’s librarian, so reading was critical to my development,” Walker said. “I’m delighted to be part of Reach Out and Read’s mission of giving books to people in need and representation within those books!”

“Through data and research, we determined that, on a whole, representation of protagonists in children’s books is disproportionately skewed to white families — with 50 percent white, 30 percent animals, and the remaining 20 percent being folks of color who we want to serve through this program,” Chu said. “This book is an example of our proactive approach to address representation so that we don’t perpetuate inequities already built into the system.”

Talk Baby Talk also celebrates and demonstrates the ways babies and trusted adults communicate with each other. The early “serve and return interactions” shown in the book are fundamental to healthy brain development. Examples are woven throughout, giving parents and caregivers meaningful ways to engage with their child through sounds, gestures, and actions.

“When a baby or child reacts by cooing or pointing, those interactions really lay the groundwork for essential skills like communication, emotional regulation, and social bonding,” said Reach Out and Read CEO Marty Martinez. “Creating those special moments that matter between a parent/caregiver and their child are what drives this organization to help shape and set the stage for a lifetime of learning and well-being for the millions of kids we serve.”

Reach Out and Read recognizes *Talk Baby Talk* as a major milestone in its ongoing mission to foster healthy brain development and build important relationships through meaningful interactions. It is committed to expanding access to resources for families across the country.

Several *Talk Baby Talk* events will celebrate the book. In-person launch parties will be held Oct. 21 at 1 p.m. at Possible Futures, in New Haven, Conn. as well as on Nov. 4 at 1 p.m. at Frugal Bookstore in Roxbury, Mass. To watch the initial virtual book launch of *Talk Baby Talk* please click [here](#).

About Reach Out and Read Northeast: Reach Out and Read Northeast is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that promotes early relational health and language development at well-visits in clinics throughout Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Upstate New York. The organization has partnerships with medical providers at 528 program sites in the region serving 435,000 children and their families. To learn more, please visit reachoutandread.org/affiliate/Massachusetts.

About Reach Out and Read: Reach Out and Read is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together. As the only evidence-based national pediatric model focused on emotional connections endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read serves children in all 50 of the United States through 6,000 clinics and 33,000 clinicians. For more information, visit reachoutandread.org.

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