

Oregon's Community Early Literacy Framework

A Guide to Fostering Joyful Literacy
Learning in the Home and Community



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DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Centering Joy in Literacy Learning for Children

“Centering joy means valuing the humanity of children by inviting the fullness of their being into their educational experiences so that they can come alive through their learning and lean into their innate wisdom and inclinations. To put it simply, when we choose to center joy, we ensure that what we are doing allows children to be more free.”

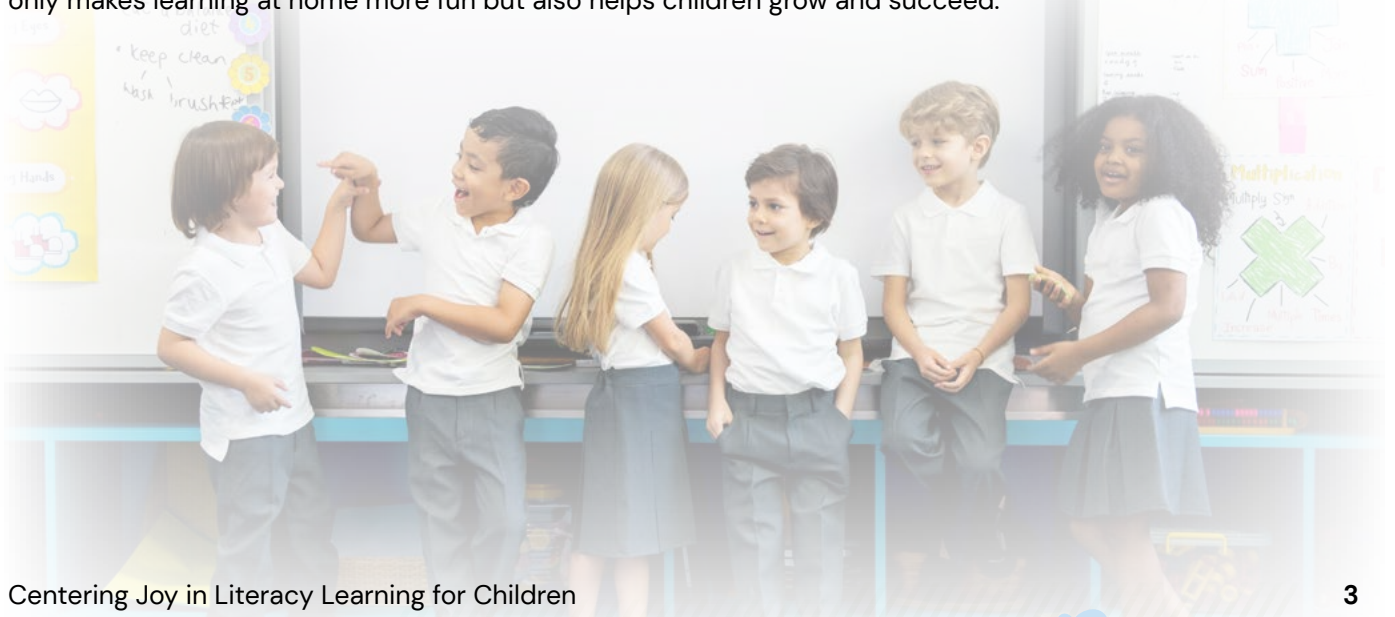
–Zakiya Jackson, Educator and Advocate

Developing a child’s lifelong love of literacy (reading, writing, speaking and listening) begins by centering joy. Joy is a natural component of early childhood literacy as families interact with their child(ren) by singing songs, narrating actions, making silly faces, mimicking their children and more.

While our work in schools, communities and homes often focuses on specific practices and methods, it is vital that we center joy in literacy learning. Joy, literacy and freedom are intertwined: “the freedom promised by literacy is both freedom from—from ignorance, oppression, poverty—and freedom to—to do new things, to make choices, to learn.” ([Matsuura, 2001](#))

The Community Early Literacy Framework prioritizes infusing joy into literacy learning for children. This idea is based on Dr. Gholdy Muhammad’s work in *Cultivating Genius*. Dr. Muhammad (an Associate Professor of Language and Literacy at the University of Illinois –Chicago) uses a comprehensive approach that nurtures the whole child by centering joy in learning.

In *Cultivating Genius*, Gholdy Muhammad explains how to make learning fun and meaningful for children by including their cultural backgrounds and histories in their reading and activities at home. When children see their own stories and experiences in the books they read and the activities they do, they feel more excited and happy about learning. Families can choose books and activities that relate to their child’s life, making learning more interesting and enjoyable. By creating a home environment where kids feel proud of who they are and where they come from, families can help them be more curious and eager to learn. This approach not only makes learning at home more fun but also helps children grow and succeed.



Centering Joy in Literacy Learning for Children



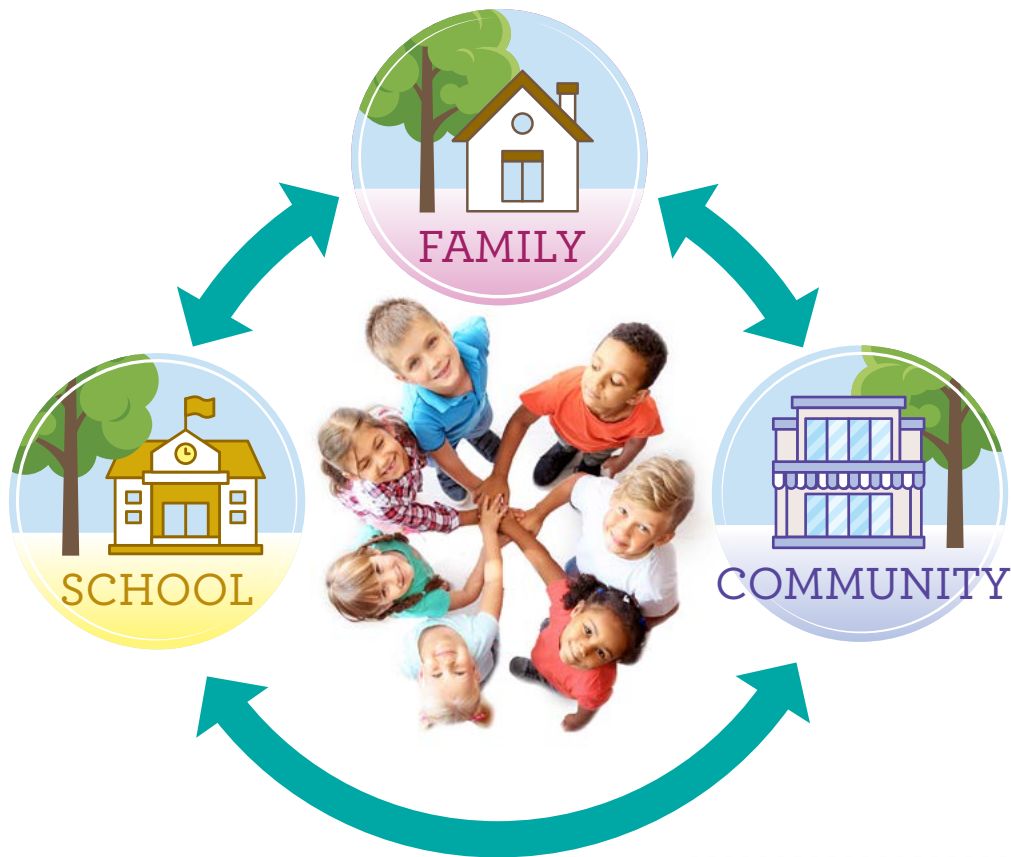
Introduction & Purpose

Oregon’s children are a vibrant tapestry of cultures, languages and strengths. The Community Early Literacy Framework (CELF) celebrates this rich diversity and empowers communities to build upon the existing foundation of literacy already thriving within families and neighborhoods.

The CELF is intended for use by families and communities of Oregon students in Pre-K to grade 3. In this context, we intentionally use the word families to include parents, grandparents, extended family members, chosen family and any caregiver and/or meaningful adult in a child’s life. Our audiences also include community-based organizations (CBOs), public libraries, early learning hubs, providers of early learning and post-secondary institutions of education in order for these entities to understand the early literacy learning already occurring in homes. Harnessing students’ and families’ rich funds of knowledge and utilizing the best practices outlined in this framework, will help programs build upon the foundation students bring while also supporting the alignment of current services being provided.

The CELF harnesses the collective wisdom and resources to nurture a lifelong love of reading and writing in every child. This framework complements the [Oregon Early Literacy Framework](#) by focusing on the essential literacy learning that happens outside of the school day. Together, these frameworks describe a comprehensive system of support that ensures all children have the opportunity to reach their full literacy potential.

In addition to the CELF, the [Community Early Literacy Guidebook](#) will serve as a foundational resource to those organizations implementing early literacy programs throughout the state of Oregon. It outlines the specific domains and indicators that programs should have in place to best support the communities and families they serve.



THE CORE PURPOSES OF THIS FRAMEWORK ARE TO:

- Honor the rich, diverse cultural and linguistic heritage of Oregon’s children and families.
- Affirm and build upon the literacy learning already occurring in children’s homes and communities as the foundation to all learning.
- Center and infuse joy in early childhood literacy experiences
- Bridge the relationship, communications and resources between homes, communities and schools.
- Foster a state-wide understanding of research-aligned early literacy best practices that occur outside of school.

An Invitation for community, by community

The CELF was developed in partnership with the community, designed to serve as a foundational resource to accelerate literacy rates in Oregon; to signal the essential relationship between communities, students and schools, and to deepen Oregon’s collective commitment to lifting literacy in Oregon for every child.

Throughout spring of 2024, Oregon Department of Education (ODE) partnered with Oregon’s Kitchen Table (OKT) to hear from community groups and families of young children throughout Oregon about what guidance, tools and resources would be helpful for growing and developing early literacy supports for children. Nearly 1,000 people from across Oregon participated in the different forms of engagement activities, and eleven languages were represented in these various engagement opportunities.

THIS FRAMEWORK IS GROUNDED IN FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Every child is full of literary promise.
2. Families are children’s first, most important and ever-present teachers.
3. When families and educators partner in children’s’ learning experience, learning increases
4. Communities are inherently rich with language, culture, identity, tradition, language and literacy. When children’s learning experiences reflect their identities, literacy learning soars.



Section One: Bringing All Children to the Literacy Table

All students are full of literary promise and deserve the opportunity to actively engage in their learning. This section emphasizes research-aligned strategies and practices to support literacy learning in early elementary grades, particularly for students who have historically experienced academic disparities. It advocates for literacy practices that recognize and affirm key aspects of students' intersectional identities, cultures, backgrounds, lived experience and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Students in each of the identity and experience groups below have expansive funds of knowledge and nuanced histories that reach far beyond the scope of this framework. This framework includes strategies to support students in the below sections in order to increase awareness of their unique needs and to connect families and communities with strategies to increase support, exactly where they are right now. These ideas build upon the recommendations that are woven throughout subsequent sections of the framework, and are best implemented when students are empowered with voice and choice in a learning experience that reflects the cultures, identities and assets that they hold.

The Oregon Department of Education acknowledges that each of the student groups outlined in this section represent multiple expansive diaspora of cultures and identities. The content provided in this section is intended to serve as an initial curation of research-aligned strategies and practices. Future additions to the Community Early Literacy Framework will represent a more complete representation of the student groups outlined below that are designed to meet the strengths and needs of students who hold these specific identities.

Sources for this section: [Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably](#)



Racially diverse students

Families support their children by cultivating home environments that: (1) affirm their racial and cultural identities, (2) harness intersectional cultural perspectives and (3) expose children to appropriate and responsive concepts that promote thriving and surviving in contemporary socio-political contexts that are unique to each community. This involves open discussions about race, cultural heritage and advocating for inclusive and equitable educational practices that go beyond celebrating diversity. Fostering and deepening networks of support within communities ensures that children understand the beauty, power and potential of their racial identities.

In school and learning environments, students benefit from culturally relevant and responsive teaching practices that comprehensively reflect their identities and experiences. Incorporating diverse texts and materials that accurately and respectfully represent their cultures and histories can enhance engagement and literacy outcomes. Addressing systemic inequities through inclusive curricula, anti-bias education and equitable access to culturally affirming resources is critical. Building strong, affirming relationships between educators, families, and students helps foster a positive learning environment that supports academic success.

Note: It is imperative to understand that the racially diverse student groups are not a monolith. Implementing strategies and practices to support racially diverse student groups requires nuance and understanding of unique and intersectional identities.

Sources for this section: [Resource Pages for Families and Educators \(Learning for Justice\)](#), National Equity Project [Leading for Equity Framework](#), National Equity Project [Equity Tools](#), [Building Equitable Learning Environments \(BELE\) Framework](#), and [Why We Use BIPOC](#)

Multilingual students

Multilingual students thrive in learning environments that value and incorporate their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Instructional strategies should include scaffolding, visual supports and opportunities for native language use alongside English instruction. Promoting biliteracy and leveraging students' home languages as assets can accelerate literacy development. Providing culturally responsive teaching and ensuring access to bilingual resources and materials are also essential practices.

Multilingual families can enhance their children's literacy by embracing and using their home language(s) in everyday interactions. Key strategies include: (1) reading books in both the home language and English, (2) discussing stories to build vocabulary and comprehension and (3) encouraging writing in both languages. Families can integrate cultural stories and traditions, use bilingual resources and communicate regularly with teachers to support their child(ren)'s bilingual development. Creating a language-rich environment where literacy activities are fun and engaging is crucial. (See Key Practice #5 for more information.)

Sources for this section: [For Families | Colorín Colorado](#) and [Oregon Grade 1 English Language Proficiency \(ELP\) Standards](#)

Students experiencing reading difficulties

It is common for children, especially young children, to develop at different rates. There is a range of typical development that we can all expect to see in our children. If families notice that their child's reading development is significantly discrepant from siblings or peers, their child may need some additional support to establish their foundational reading skills.



Families can support children with reading difficulties by engaging in structured literacy programs that emphasize explicit, systematic teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Incorporating activities that tap into multiple senses such as sight, hearing and touch can enhance learning. Providing a supportive and patient home environment, where reading is fun and stress-free is essential. It is beneficial to break reading tasks into manageable steps and use aids like audio books and assistive technologies. Reading aloud to children and involving them in discussions about stories can improve comprehension and vocabulary. Ensuring regular communication with educators and being proactive in seeking resources and interventions tailored to their child's needs are essential.

If families observe their child experiencing difficulties reading, it is important to share concerns with their child's teacher and/or pediatrician. It is a misconception that signs of dyslexia (or other reading difficulties) can only be seen after two or three years of reading instruction. Early indicators (prior to age 5) may include:

- Difficulty learning common nursery rhymes
- Difficulty learning to sing or recite the alphabet
- Slow speech development
- Difficulty recognizing letters of their name
- Muddles/mixes words (e.g. hekalopter, flutterby)
- Forgets names of friends, teachers, colors, etc.
- Confusion between directional words (e.g. up/down)
- Family history of dyslexia/reading difficulties

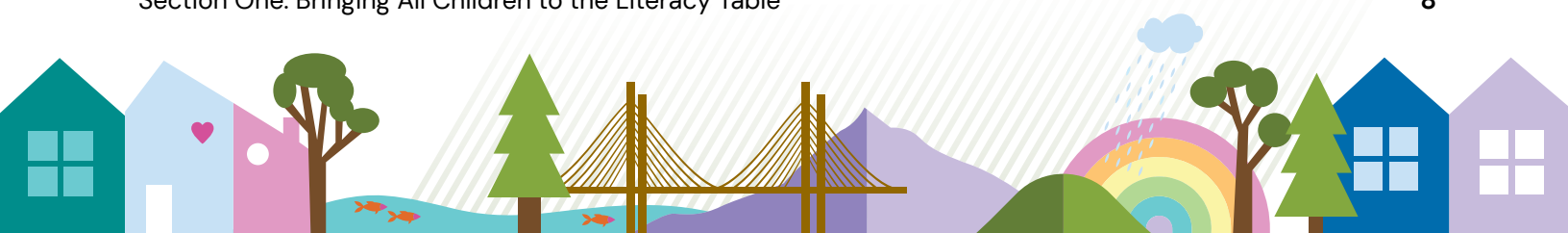
Early screening and screening done by a professional is key. A child's school or pediatrician can provide expert advice and, if needed, information around testing to determine what the causes of the difficulties are.

It is imperative to note that unless there is something specific affecting cognitive development, most children that have difficulties with reading have the same cognitive abilities as their peers. This is important because even if they need tailored instruction, they still very much need the instruction all students receive and to be challenged intellectually.

Understanding how schools are supporting children with reading difficulties and partnering with them is also important. As appropriate, families may request an academic evaluation to determine if a formal support document is appropriate. Individualized education plans (IEPs) and/or 504 plans are the two school-based legally required plans that support students who experience disabilities that impact their academic performance. These plans are based on a comprehensive evaluation of a student's strengths, needs, and aspirations. They are developed by a team of individuals, that include a parent or family member, and implemented by a school. 504 plans are less intensive, and are appropriate for students who can access their education with the support of accommodations. Individualized education plans (IEPs) are more substantial. They outline the accommodations, modifications, services and specially designed instruction that a student requires to access the curriculum and instruction provided in the classroom.

Schools and public libraries may also offer tools like audio books and reading software. Any student with visual, physical, perceptual or reading difficulties should be referred to [Oregon's Talking Book and Braille Library](#) where they can access free audio books and magazines, players and accessories free through the mail or online.

Sources for this section: [Effective Reading Instruction \(International Dyslexia Association\)](#), [What is dyslexia? It's a Myth that Young Children Cannot Be Screened for Dyslexia!](#) and [National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled](#)



Students with IEPs and/or 504 plans

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are entitled to tailored instructional strategies and supports as outlined in their individual plans. Differentiated instruction, personalized learning goals and regular progress monitoring are effective practices for all students, including those with IEPs. Collaboration among educators, families and specialists is crucial to ensure students who require individualized education plans (IEPs) and/or 504 plans receive appropriate accommodations and modifications. Integrating assistive technologies and adaptive tools can also facilitate access to the general curriculum and enhance their literacy skills.

As experts in the unique needs of individual students, parents/caregivers are critical members of the IEP team and IEP process. Harnessing the deep knowledge and understanding families have of their children ensures IEPs address their child's unique needs. Robust and open lines of communication between families and educators enhance the efficacy and quality of the services, accommodations and modifications documented in the IEP. At home, creating a structured and supportive learning environment helps reinforce the goals set in the IEP. Utilizing resources like assistive technologies and seeking additional support outside of school can further aid a child's learning. Further, [FACT Oregon](#) has community resources to empower families in advocating for their child(ren) and their education.

Sources for this section: [About IDEA \(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act\)](#) and [Learn the Law Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)

Students experiencing housing insecurity

For students experiencing housing insecurity, maintaining routines and ensuring a connection to community, cultural and school resources can have significant positive impacts on literacy development.

Local resources can be leveraged to support meeting critical needs within this community. Local libraries and community organizations often provide free access to books, computers and literacy programs which can be crucial resources for students experiencing housing insecurity. Families can also benefit from participating in community-based literacy programs that offer tutoring and educational activities. Portable "reading kits" with books and writing materials can help maintain literacy activities in any location. Utilizing free online resources and educational apps available through public Wi-Fi can also support ongoing learning.

Schools can provide essential services such as meals, clothing, academic support and access to healthcare services. School counselors can also be a powerful resource in supporting families with education stability and accessing McKinney-Vento Act protections, which help ensure consistent school attendance and access to educational resources. Local McKinney-Vento liaisons, which schools are required to have, are also great access points to receive support. Families can find their district liaison on the contact list found [here](#) or through their school.



Below are some relevant connection points between the McKinney–Vento Act and early childhood programs (Moore, 2018):

- State McKinney–Vento plans must describe procedures to ensure that preschoolers experiencing homelessness have equal access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEA as provided to other children in the state (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(i)).
SEA: State Education Agency, which in Oregon is Oregon Department of Education (ODE)
LEA: Local Education Agency, which is the local school district
- Local McKinney–Vento liaisons should identify preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities with outside agencies (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)).
- Local educational agencies (LEAs) that offer a public preschool education must ensure that homeless children have the same access to that education as is provided to non-homeless children (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g) (4)).
- Local McKinney–Vento liaisons must ensure that homeless children and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and other preschool programs administered by the LEA; and referrals to health care, dental, mental health, and other appropriate services (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(iii)).
- LEAs may use McKinney–Vento subgrant funds to provide preschool-aged children with developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local funding (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(6)).

Sources for this section: [National Center for Homeless \(NCHE\) Education](#), [NCHE Parent Resources](#), [NCHE Preschool Early Childhood](#), [Overcoming Homelessness Through Education](#), [ODE McKinney–Vento Students & Families](#), [Strategies for Supporting Student Experiencing Homelessness](#), and [School Help For Homeless Children with Disabilities: Information for Parents](#)

Students in foster care

Students in foster care often face unique challenges, including frequent school changes and emotional stress. Families can support their foster children by creating a stable and nurturing environment that promotes emotional and educational well-being. Establishing consistent routines and open communication helps foster children feel secure and understood.

Engaging with educational and community resources, including individualized tutoring extracurricular activities and identity-affirming or culturally specific activities, can bolster their academic success. Families can also advocate for the child's needs through close collaboration with caseworkers and educators. Providing access to trauma-informed care and mental health services is essential to address the unique challenges faced by foster children, and which directly impact their literacy development and academic performance.

Sources for this section: [Resources – Foster Care Alumni of America](#), [Child and Family Services Practice Model: A Safe and Permanent Family for Every Youth](#), [Foster Care: The Basics](#)



LGBTQ2SIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, nonbinary, queer, questioning, Two Spirit, intersex, and asexual [+]) students and families

Inclusive and affirming environments both at home and in educational settings benefit all students and are especially impactful for LGBTQ2SIA+ students. Research has shown there is significant positive impact when families can access diverse books/reading materials that reflect LGBTQ2SIA+ experiences and identities by increasing visibility and fostering a sense of belonging through affirming representation.

Local libraries can be excellent resources for accessing books and reading material that is affirming of LGBTQ2SIA+ identities. Encouraging open dialogue about gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientations and different kinds of families helps validate a child's experience and increase supportive behaviors among families. Families can work with school staff to advocate for safe and supportive school environments, ensuring that children and families feel accepted and respected. Families can also identify and nurture trust with community-based organizations, other caregivers of LGBTQ2SIA+ children or LGBTQ2SIA+ families and caregivers in order to strengthen advocacy skills needed to request support for their children.

Sources for this section: ODE [LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan](#), [Supporting Gender Expansive Students: Guidance for Schools](#), [Rainbow Book Lists](#) by the American Library Association, [Elementary Booklists](#) by Welcoming Schools, PFLAG Support Groups and [Resources for Families](#) (PFLAG), and [Family Acceptance Project LGBTQ Youth & Family Resources](#)



Implementation: Domains, Indicators, and Components

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Section Two: Literacy Beyond the Bell

Literacy development occurs long before students ever step foot into a classroom. Literacy learning also occurs outside of the school day, after children begin attending school.

“Parents and families are the first, most important teachers in a child’s life. Before a child learns to read and write, they learn to listen and speak. Literacy learning starts at home in a child’s first three years of life – in the lap of a trusted and caring adult. Brain science tells us that children are developing these skills from birth, which is why support for children to gain early literacy skills is absolutely critical even in the first few years of life – long before they enter preschool or kindergarten.”

–Oregon’s Early Literacy Framework

Community-based organizations and local partnerships can enhance literacy by providing resources and creating literacy-rich environments outside of school. This section underscores the importance of recognizing and utilizing the various ways literacy occurs beyond the bell.

Literacy lives in the home

Children first encounter language through everyday interactions with their families in their homes; this is where literacy development begins. Parents, grandparents, guardians and extended family members have significant impacts on a child’s literacy journey. Families play a crucial role in fostering early literacy by engaging in activities such as singing, chanting, rhyming, storytelling, reading aloud and more. These activities joyfully build essential skills such as vocabulary, phonemic awareness and narrative understanding. Homes rich in language experiences and books create an environment where children experience listening, speaking, reading and writing as enjoyable and integral to daily life. Additionally, understanding and harnessing the ways in which literacy learning is embedded in cultural traditions and routines affirms students’ identities and enhances children’s cognitive and emotional connection to learning.

Sources for this section: [American Academy of Pediatrics Early Literacy](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice](#), [Improving Our Schools, One Family At A Time](#)

Literacy lives in the community

Communities are pivotal in reinforcing and expanding literacy skills outside the home. When communities actively promote literacy, they create a culture of learning that supports children’s academic growth and lifelong literacy engagement. Local environments—including tribes, libraries, museums, parks and community centers—provide spaces where children can access diverse reading materials and participate in literacy-enhancing activities and language revitalization outside of the school day. Community events such as story hours, book fairs and cultural festivals offer opportunities for exposure to diverse literacy learning opportunities where children can engage with language in various contexts. Such experiences broaden children’s discovery of different genres, ideas and perspectives, fostering joy and a love for literacy and learning.

Sources for this section: [Research on Motivation, Literacy, and Reading Development: A Review of Best Practices](#), [Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills](#), [Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners](#)



Literacy lives in community-based organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs), libraries and after-school programs play a crucial role in promoting literacy among children, particularly those who have been historically and persistently marginalized. These organizations may offer indigenous language revitalization and targeted literacy services such as after-school tutoring, summer reading initiatives and family literacy workshops that address the specific needs of unique communities. By extending learning beyond the school day, these programs contribute significantly to academic success and lifelong literacy.

CBOs also often collaborate with schools and libraries to provide comprehensive, integrated literacy services that extend learning opportunities outside of traditional classroom settings. They create supportive environments and provide access to books and educational materials, playing a crucial role in improving literacy outcomes and working toward educational equity.

Sources for this section: [Afterschool Achievement: Strengthening Literacy and Other Skills](#), [Effective Out-of-School Time Reading Programs](#)



Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 5



Section Three: Early Literacy, Language and the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon

Introduction

The nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon have been stewards of their languages, cultures, and lands since time immemorial. House Bill 3198 marks a significant step in supporting early literacy and language revitalization efforts within these tribal communities. This bill establishes the Early Literacy Success Initiative, aiming to enhance early literacy for children from birth to grade three, focusing on culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate practices. As part of this initiative, the state is providing \$2 million in grants, divided among the nine tribes, to support early literacy and language in their Tribe(s). As we move forward, we will closely collaborate with the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon to ensure that their unique perspectives on consultation, communication, and sovereignty are respected and integrated into the framework. This evolving document will be continuously shaped and refined by the voices and leadership of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon.

Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty

The nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon are sovereign nations, a status that acknowledges their inherent rights to self-governance and self-determination. As sovereign nations, they have unique legal and political relationships with state and federal governments. It is a fundamental requirement and a legal obligation for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to engage in timely and meaningful consultation with the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon on matters that may impact their communities. This consultation process is not merely a courtesy but a critical component of respecting tribal sovereignty and educational sovereignty. Educational sovereignty is the inherent right of tribes to define and reach their own educational goals for their students, families, and communities.

The requirement for consultation arises from the recognition that any action by the ODE can have substantial direct effects on tribal interests, including policies, regulations, and initiatives that influence the educational landscape. The consultation process is designed to facilitate open communication and collaboration, allowing tribes to provide input and guidance on issues that affect their people. This includes actions related to early literacy and language efforts, which are crucial for preserving cultural heritage and fostering a strong sense of identity.

This framework will be continuously shaped and refined through ongoing consultation and collaboration with tribal leaders, ensuring it remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. By honoring tribal sovereignty and educational sovereignty and maintaining open lines of communication, we aim to create a framework that is not only effective but also respectful of the rich cultural heritage and self-governance of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon.



Cultural Relevance

Cultural relevance is a fundamental aspect of both language revitalization and educational practices within tribal communities. Recognizing the unique cultural contexts of each tribe, we commit to developing guidance tailored to the unique needs of each community. The nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon will play a pivotal role in shaping this framework. Their insights and knowledge will be invaluable in ensuring that the guidance is not only accurate but also culturally resonant. These collaborations will focus on developing culturally appropriate resources, educational programs, and community-based activities that promote the use and teaching of tribal languages.

Continuous Improvement

To ensure the framework remains relevant and effective, we will establish a continuous feedback loop with tribes. This process will involve regular tribal consultations and other avenues for tribes to provide input on new developments. By maintaining an open line of communication, we will stay attuned to the evolving needs and perspectives of the tribes. We are committed to regularly updating the document, incorporating new insights, and addressing any emerging challenges. This ongoing adaptation will help the framework to continuously reflect the unique cultural and educational goals of the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon, ensuring that it remains a dynamic and responsive guide.

Conclusion

We deeply appreciate the essential contributions of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon and their leadership in this initiative. This framework is more than just a document; it is a call to action for all partners to actively support the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages. As we move forward, we anticipate a future filled with continued collaboration, shared learning, and collective growth. Together, we will work to honor and sustain the rich cultural heritage of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon, ensuring it thrives for generations to come.



Section Four: Key Practices to Honor the Literary Genius of Oregon's Children

This section emphasizes the value of recognizing and nurturing the inherent literary capabilities in children. It advocates for: (1) respecting the literacy learning that occurs in homes, tribes, and communities and (2) stressing the importance of increasing access to tools, services and literacy materials that reflect the identities of children and their families and (3) fostering partnerships between families and schools.

The focus is on celebrating the diverse cultural identities and languages children bring to their literacy journey, thereby enhancing their learning experiences. Research (cited at the end of Key Practice #1) is clear about how multilingualism and ongoing literacy development activities at home in a child's first language(s) are assets that support cognitive growth as well as English language development.

Sources for this section: [Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue: Cultural Identity](#)

Key Practice #1: Honor cultural identity and multilingualism for literacy acceleration

Families' cultural and linguistic identities are assets which provide rich sources of knowledge, traditions and histories that bring immense value when systems acknowledge, reflect and honor them. Heritage language and languages spoken at home are fundamental to a child's literacy and overall educational success. Research indicates that maintaining and developing a child's home language, alongside learning a second language, enhances cognitive abilities and literacy skills. Dual language programs and reading in a child's first language provide a strong foundation for literacy development and are linked to higher academic achievement. Encouraging children to speak, read and write in their home language supports their identities and accelerates their ability to acquire new languages and literacy skills.



Culture, identities and language play a pivotal role in children’s lives and their communities. Cultural identity refers to a feeling of belonging and identification with a certain group that often reflects a person’s religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation and race. Cultural identity is developed and preserved through sharing and honoring traditions, heritage, language, customs and beliefs (Chen, 2014). The identities that a child holds and the language(s) they speak shape the way they perceive and access the world around them and their journey to developing early literacy skills.

“Families and caregivers—often childrens’ first teachers at home and in the community—bridge the development of a child’s identity to their development as readers and scholars within and outside of the PK–3 school setting.”

–Oregon’s Early Literacy Framework

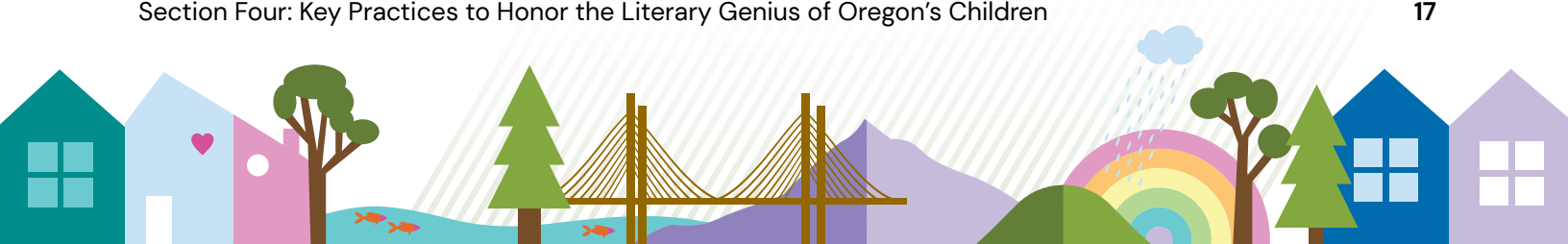
WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Engage in cultural traditions:** Participate in family traditions, celebrations and rituals to strengthen cultural connections.
- **Share stories and heritage:** Tell stories about your family’s history and cultural heritage to enrich children’s understanding of their background.
- **Encourage bilingualism:** Support the use of both the home language and English through conversation, reading and writing activities.
- **Expose children to multicultural books:** Provide books and reading materials that reflect diverse cultures, languages, gender identities and sexual orientations.
- **Celebrate cultural diversity:** Participate in community events and cultural festivals that highlight different traditions and languages.

Sources for this section: [The Benefits of Multilingualism to the Personal and Professional Development of Residents of The US](#), [Benefits of Multilingualism in Education](#), [Benefits of Multilingualism](#), [Reading the Rainbow: LGBTQ-inclusive literacy instruction in the elementary classroom](#), [Multicultural Inclusion of Lesbian and Gay Literature Themes in Elementary Classrooms](#), and [LGBTQ-inclusive curricula: why supportive curricula matter](#)

Key Practice #2: Engage in home-based literacy activities

There are a variety of literacy activities at home that are crucial for a child’s literacy development. These activities not only enhance vocabulary and comprehension skills, but also foster a love for reading. Encouraging reading and providing a language-rich environment in home and heritage language(s), as well as English, contribute significantly to a child’s early literacy skills. Research shows that children who are exposed to diverse literacy experiences at home are better prepared for academic success and have stronger literacy foundations.



WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Read together regularly:** Reading helps children improve cognitive skills, enlightens them to new ideas and develops their critical thinking skills.
- **Engage in storytelling:** Tell stories that involve your family’s culture and history, or encourage your child to create their own imaginative stories.
- **Narrate what you are doing aloud:** While engaging in daily activities, narrate aloud what you are experiencing, using sensory descriptive rich language. (i.e. while cooking, you can say, “First, we need to dice 3 green jalapenos” or “I am going to saute this onion. What kind of sound do you hear?”)
- **Discuss books and stories:** Talk about the books you read together, asking questions about the plot, characters and what might happen next.
- **Practice inclusive language together:** Try reading a book or singing a song with different gender pronouns to model use of inclusive and affirming language together.
- **Create a language-rich environment:** Fill your home with books, magazines and other reading materials accessible to your child.
- **Incorporate reading into daily activities:** Read recipes, signs and instructions together to show how reading is part of everyday life.
- **Encourage writing:** Provide opportunities for your child to write, such as keeping a journal, writing letters or creating stories.
- **Visit libraries and bookstores:** Make regular trips to places where they can explore new books and participate in reading activities.
- **Model reading behavior:** Let your child see you reading and express your enjoyment of it.
- **Use technology:** Incorporate educational apps and audiobooks to make reading fun and interactive.
- **Sing songs with your child:** Listening to and singing songs is one of the best ways for children to build their phonological awareness because often each syllable of a word connects to a note. In addition, many songs have rhyming words. Both pieces help children hear the individual parts of each word.
- **Play oral literacy games on the road:** Short drives can lead to high impact results when you play simple games that involve sounds and letters (ex: I spy signs that begin with the letter L, rhyming games/activities).
- **Cook together:** Integrate the language of recipes, foods and culture.
- **Engage in conversations during your day:** Converse with your child in car rides, during mealtimes, while waiting in lines at the grocery store, playing at the park, etc.
- **Drawing:** Ask your child to tell you about their drawing provides an opportunity to connect and practice storytelling.

Sources for this section: [Family Involvement Makes a Difference in School Success](#), [Nurturing the reading brain: home literacy practices are associated with children’s neural response to printed words through vocabulary skills](#), [Family Involvement and Children’s Literacy](#), [Differential Effects of the Home Language and Literacy Environment](#), and [Teaching in Early Childhood Education as a Non-binary Trans Person](#)



Key practice #3: Unlock the power of books

There is a strong correlation between the number of books (in any language) a child has at home and their literacy achievements. Studies have found that access to books significantly boosts children's reading skills, comprehension and academic performance. Children living in print-rich environments develop stronger literacy skills and perform better in school compared to their peers with limited access to books. Having a variety of print materials throughout homes encourages frequent reading, which is a key factor in improving literacy outcomes and fostering a lifelong love of reading.

“In the world of early literacy, there’s a powerful tool that transcends language barriers and cultivates young minds—children’s literature. For Indigenous communities, access to culturally relevant children’s books is not just a window to the world; it’s a mirror reflecting their own rich heritage. ”

–Ronald Kaunda, Educator and Literacy Coach

WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Frequent library visits:** Regularly borrow books from local libraries to ensure a continuous supply of new reading material.
- **Access free print materials:** Check out little [free libraries](#) or sign up for [Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library](#).
- **Book sharing:** Exchange books with friends and neighbors to expand the variety of reading materials available at home.
- **Build a home library:** Create a collection of books and other print materials (magazines, brochures, posters, etc) that are easily accessible and reflect diverse genres and subjects.
- **Rotate books:** Keep a variety of books in different rooms to encourage spontaneous reading.
- **Involve children in book selection:** Let children choose books that interest them to foster a sense of ownership and excitement about reading.
- **Read aloud daily and model thinking aloud:** Share stories with your child to enhance their listening and comprehension skills. Make predictions about what will happen next in the story, retell what’s happened so far, talk about characters and discuss text structures (i.e. table of contents, page numbers, cover page, etc).
- **Encourage independent reading:** Provide opportunities for your child to read on their own and discuss what they have read.
- **Set up a cozy reading space:** Designate a comfortable and inviting area in your home where your child can read.
- **Create themed book collections:** Group books by themes or interests to make choosing a book engaging and educational.

Sources for this section: [Home Libraries](#), [Scholastic Kids and Family Reading Report](#), and [Scholarly culture: How books in adolescence enhance adult literacy, numeracy and technology skills in 31 societies](#)



Key Practice #4: Partner with your child’s school

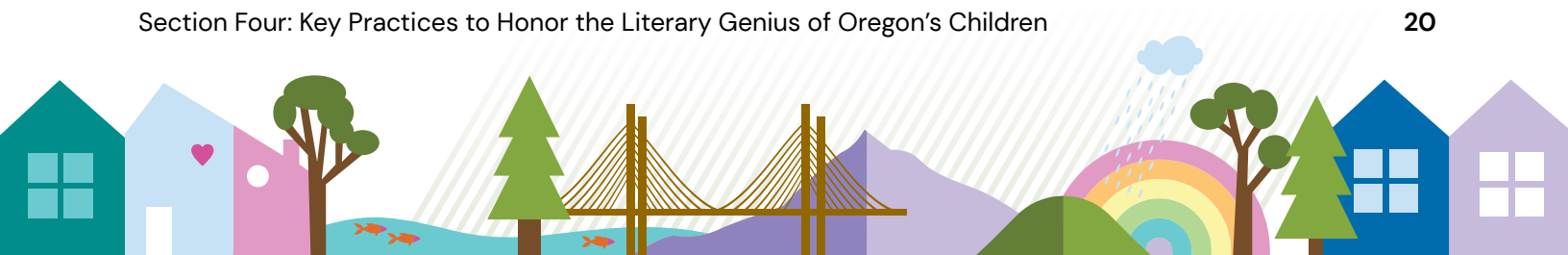
Effective partnerships between families and schools are essential for supporting children’s literacy. Schools can foster these partnerships by creating welcoming environments, providing resources for home-based literacy activities and maintaining open communication with families in order to better connect with cultural literacy practices. Initiating communication and a partnership is the primary responsibility of schools; however, the reality is that this is an area of growth for many schools.

Families can benefit when equipped with knowledge and strategies to advocate for their child(ren), as necessary. When families are actively involved in their children’s education, such as participating in school activities, reaching out to school library staff and reading at home, students tend to perform better academically. If these partnerships are not in place, families can advocate for greater involvement opportunities, and schools can offer workshops to engage families in their child’s literacy development.

WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Participate in school activities:** Attend parent-teacher conferences/meetings, literacy nights and school events to stay informed and involved. If you’re unable to attend in-person, ask the school or your child(ren)’s teacher for alternative ways to participate.
- **Request translation services and materials in home language(s):** Families are legally entitled to be provided with a translator at any conference/meeting and can request materials in their home language(s).
- **Create a reading routine at home:** Dedicate time each day for reading and discussing books with your child to reinforce literacy skills.
- **Communicate regularly with teachers:** Maintain open lines of communication with your child’s teachers to discuss their progress and any support needed.
- **Advocate for family workshops:** Request schools to provide workshops that encourage partnership with families on how to support their children’s literacy at home.
- **Utilize school resources:** Take advantage of resources provided by the school, such as community liaisons, reading lists, educational tools and homework help.
- **Communicate with your child’s school:** Make sure the school office knows what language you need information in and that your contact information is accurate

Sources for this section: [Partnerships for Learning: Community Support for Youth Success](#)



Key Practice #5: Access community literacy resources

Families can enhance their children’s literacy by tapping into community resources including, public libraries, community centers and local literacy programs. Libraries provide free access to books and often have educational workshops and reading clubs tailored for various age groups and interests. Community centers may provide literacy events, such as story hours and book fairs, which encourage reading and learning. Families can also seek out community-based organizations that run after-school tutoring and summer reading programs, creating supportive environments for literacy development outside of school.

WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Visit public libraries:** Explore your local library for free access to books, story hours, reading clubs and educational workshops tailored to different age groups.
- **Attend community center events:** Participate in literacy events such as book fairs, story times and cultural festivals offered by community centers.
- **Join local* literacy programs:** Engage in programs provided by community-based organizations that offer after-school tutoring and summer reading activities. *These vary from community to community.
- **Utilize library resources:** Take advantage of library resources, including book lending, digital collections and literacy support services.
- **Seek family literacy workshops:** Look for workshops and classes that help families affirm existing literacy practices and learn new strategies to support literacy at home.
- **Visit local thrift and second-hand stores:** This can be a fun and low-cost activity to access books.

Sources for this section: [Rediscover Your Public Library](#), [National Center for Families Learning Family Resources](#)

Key Practice #6: Build healthy digital literacy habits at home

Technology offers a powerful way to enhance children’s literacy learning. Digital tools such as e-books, educational apps and online games provide engaging platforms that meet various learning styles and make literacy (i.e. reading, writing, listening, speaking) more accessible. These tools can personalize the learning experience, allowing children to progress at their own pace and focus on areas where they need improvement. However, effective use of technology in literacy development requires a balanced approach that prioritizes ethical, healthy and safe use. Keep in mind that what is right for one family and child, may look different in another home.



To foster healthy and responsible use of technology, families and educators can emphasize good digital habits. This includes setting clear guidelines on: (1) screen time, (2) selecting age-appropriate and educational content, (3) monitoring sites and online activity and (4) encouraging activities that require critical thinking and creativity. Developing digital literacy is also crucial because this is where children learn to navigate online spaces safely and ethically. By integrating these practices, families can create a supportive environment that harnesses the benefits of technology while maintaining the core principles of literacy learning.

WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Setting screen time limits:** Establish clear rules for how long and when children can use digital devices, balancing screen time with other activities.
- **Choosing educational content:** Select age-appropriate programs and websites that promote reading and writing skills. Utilize reviews and recommendations to choose quality content.
- **Encouraging diverse reading formats:** Provide both digital and physical books. Encourage children to explore different genres and formats, such as e-books and audiobooks.
- **Promoting critical thinking:** Discuss the content they are engaging with and ask questions that encourage them to think deeply about what they read and watch.
- **Modeling positive digital behavior:** Demonstrate responsible use of technology by engaging in educational activities and showing balanced screen habits.
- **Ensuring online safety:** Teach children about privacy, respectful communication, and how to recognize and avoid unsafe online situations.
- **Fostering digital creativity:** Encourage children to use technology to create, such as writing their own stories, making digital art or producing videos.
- **Balancing tech with traditional reading:** Combine the use of digital tools with traditional books and reading activities to provide a well-rounded literacy experience.
- **Participating in digital literacy activities:** Join children in exploring educational apps and websites, and make it a shared learning experience.
- **Ongoing open communication around technology:** Discuss regularly with children their digital activities to ensure they are engaging with technology in positive and productive ways.

Sources for this section: [Developing Child Literacy Through Technology](#), [5 Ways To Develop Good Tech Habits at School and at Home](#), [Managing Technology and Screen Time At Home](#), [Technology Literacy in the Home: A Guide For Families](#), and [Screen Time and Children](#)



Section Five: Literacy Landmarks

Understanding the stages of literacy development is crucial for supporting children’s learning. This section outlines the key milestones in literacy from Pre-K through 5th grade. Recognizing these developmental stages helps caregivers and educators provide appropriate support and resources at each step of a child’s literacy journey, from early language skills to more complex reading and writing capabilities. Literacy development happens alongside identity development, including social, cultural, racial, and gender identities, so families are encouraged to nourish literacy skills that are intentionally identity-affirming.

It is important to note that these developmental stages are general and not always linear. Children develop at their own rates, and while we want to look for certain milestones, not all students will achieve these at the same time. As we will discuss in Section 5, if students are not meeting expected landmark outcomes, further assessment may be necessary to determine the potential causes and appropriate response.

Sources for this section: [Ohio’s Ready School Guide For Language and Literacy](#), [The Self- Who Am I?: Children’s Identity and Development through Early Childhood Education](#), and [Engaging Methods for Exploring ‘Funds of Identity’ in Early Childhood Contexts](#)

Pre-K

During the Pre-K years, children continue to develop foundational skills for literacy. Literacy skills are built through conversation and communication with trusted adults, play and engaging in hands-on learning experiences. They start recognizing and naming letters, understanding that print carries meaning and developing phonemic awareness through rhymes and word play. This can look like children holding books, knowing the parts of a book, turning pages and tracking print (these skills are referred to in schools as concepts of print). They also begin to tell stories and understand the concept of narrative. Early vocabulary and oral language skills are critical at this stage.

Milestones:

- Recognize and name letters of the alphabet and its corresponding sound.
- Understand that print represents spoken language and spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound.
- Begin to recognize and produce rhymes.
- Start to tell/retell simple stories and understand sequences.
- Ask and answer questions about a text read aloud.
- Uses drawing, scribbling, body language or non-verbal gestures, letter-like forms and letters to intentionally convey meaning.
- Point out and identify with characters in stories, based on visual cues such as family makeup, cultural identity, assistive devices, skin color, body size and/or gender expression.

Sources for this section: [Oregon’s Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines](#), [Interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to 5](#) [Developmental Stages of Gender in Young Children](#), and [Gender Disrupted During Storytime: Critical Literacy in Early Childhood](#)



Grades K-1

In kindergarten and first grade, children start to develop decoding skills, where they connect letters to sounds and begin reading simple words and sentences. They also improve their ability to write letters and simple words, understand basic grammar and build vocabulary. At this stage, children often start reading simple books on their own and demonstrate an understanding of the content through retelling.

Milestones:

- Identify and produce rhyming words.
- Blend and segment syllables and sounds in spoken words.
- Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.
- Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
- Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by sequences of letters.
- Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- Retell familiar stories, including key details.
- Identify characters, settings and major events in a story.
- Recognize different kinds of families as well as a range of gender expressions, cultural clothing and traditions.
- Use drawing, dictating and writing to compose various types of texts and purposes.
- Explore digital tools to produce and publish writing.

Sources for this section: [Put Reading First: Kindergarten Through Grade 3](#), [PBS Kids for Parents: Literacy](#), [Oregon's Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines](#), [Interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#), [Oregon's Kindergarten ELA Standards](#) and [Oregon's 1st Grade ELA Standards](#)

Grades 2-3

By second and third grade, children develop greater reading fluency and comprehension. They read with greater speed, accuracy and expression, and begin to understand more complex texts. Writing becomes more coherent, and they start using punctuation and grammar more accurately. Vocabulary continues to expand, and they can summarize texts and make inferences.

Milestones:

- Read fluently with appropriate speed and expression.
- Comprehend and summarize more complex texts.
- Write coherent sentences with correct punctuation and grammar.
- Identify and use gender pronouns in speech and learn to adjust pronoun use to affirm others.
- Make inferences and understand deeper meanings in texts.

Sources for this section: [Reading 101 for Parents: Your Second Grader](#), [Literacy Accomplishments: Grade 3](#), [Oregon's 2nd Grade ELA Standards](#), and [Oregon's 3rd Grade ELA Standards](#)



Grades 4-5

In fourth and fifth grades, students transition from basic literacy development towards more complex reading and writing skills. They analyze texts critically, make connections between different ideas and engage with more sophisticated content across various subjects. Their writing becomes more structured, and they can produce longer, more detailed compositions. Vocabulary growth continues, and they understand complex grammar and syntax.

Milestones:

- Analyze and interpret texts with deeper comprehension.
- Make connections between ideas and integrate information from different texts.
- Write with a specific purpose and communicate ideas clearly through writing.
- Use advanced vocabulary and complex grammar in writing and speech.
- Relate concepts to sense of self, family and cultural identities, when presented with affirming and diverse texts.

Sources for this section: [What your 4th grader should have learned](#), [Typical Reading Development](#), [Gender Disrupted During Storytime: Critical Literacy in Early Childhood](#), [Boys, Masculinities and Reading](#), [Oregon's 4th Grade ELA Standards](#), and [Oregon's 5th Grade ELA Standards](#)



Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 5



Section Six: Strengthening Literacy-based Partnerships

One of the core purposes of this framework is to bridge the relationship between homes, communities, and schools. This section focuses specifically on the bridge between schools, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other entities to support literacy development. Families' understanding and knowledge of how these entities coordinate with one another will support this bridge.

Effective partnerships can enhance learning by providing additional resources, filling gaps during out-of-school times and scaling successful literacy models. Examples include collaborations with tribes, local libraries and public-private partnerships that leverage community resources to support literacy initiatives to support the sentiment that we are all in this together.

Schools and community-based organizations

Forming partnerships between schools and community-based organizations (CBOs) creates many opportunities to enhance early literacy development. These collaborations can provide supplementary educational resources, after-school programs and mentorship opportunities that extend learning beyond the classroom.

To create effective partnerships, it is important to recognize the inherent power of schools, as children are required to attend school. Schools need to open doors and be willing to break down barriers to collaborate and elevate the critical work of CBOs.

By working together, schools and CBOs can address specific community needs, promote equity and engage families in literacy activities. Effective partnerships often involve shared goals, regular communication and leveraging each organization's strengths to create comprehensive literacy support networks.

Sources for this section: [Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports](#)

CBOs and local libraries

Local libraries and CBOs can partner to support literacy by providing access to books, hosting literacy programs and creating safe spaces for learning. Libraries provide a vast array of books, allowing children the chance to discover topics of interest. This opportunity for agency in book selection and recreational reading underscores the joy of literacy. CBOs have unique expertise in promoting and supporting reading targeted towards diverse and underserved populations. Together, they can design programs that cater to a community's specific needs, such as bilingual storytimes, homework help and summer reading initiatives, thereby enhancing literacy outcomes and community engagement.

Sources for this section: [Library-Community Partnerships: A Marriage of Strength and Purpose](#), [Foster Partnerships With Community Organizations](#), [Implementing Community Change: Positive and Productive Partnerships](#), and [The Benefits of Community Partnerships](#)



Private and public partnerships

Public-private partnerships leverage the strengths of both sectors to create impactful literacy programs. Businesses can provide funding, resources and volunteers, while public entities like schools and libraries offer infrastructure and expertise. These partnerships can lead to innovative literacy initiatives, such as technology-driven programs, book donation drives and literacy festivals, that might not be possible through public resources alone. Effective public-private collaborations are built on mutual benefits, clear objectives and shared commitment to enhancing literacy.

Sources for this section: [Sustain and Gain: Blueprint For a Long-term Thriving Family Literacy/Parent Engagement Program](#) (pg 1 at bottom)

Scaling and funding successful models

There are several successful models of partnerships that have significantly improved literacy outcomes for children. Programs like Reading Partners, Reach Out and Read and SMART illustrate how collaborative efforts can deliver targeted literacy support to students. These models typically involve detailed planning, alignment of goals among partners and ongoing evaluation to ensure effectiveness. By drawing on the strengths of diverse organizations, such partnerships provide comprehensive and sustained literacy interventions.

Sources for this section: [Reading Partners](#) ([Program Impact](#) and [Project Evaluation](#)), [Reach Out and Read](#) (their [Impact](#)), and [SMART](#)



Appendix A: Resources

*This section will include resources such as the accompanying Toolkit, family-friendly resources/videos/tutorials and any other relevant information as they are developed.

Resources for Literacy-Based Word/Sound Games

[Free Phonemic Awareness Activities](#)

[Phonological and Phonemic Awareness \(Reading Rockets\)](#)

[Phonemic Awareness Activities by Grade Level](#)

Resources for Dyslexia

[IDA Dyslexia Handbook](#)

Library Resources

[Oregon Library Directory](#)

[Dolly Parton Imagination Library](#)

LGBTQ2SIA+ Resources

[ODE & Oregon State Library Addressing Challenged Materials in K-12 Education Guidance \(2023\)](#)

[GLSEN Rainbow Library](#)

[Advocates for Youth Hope in a Box](#)

[Pride and Less Prejudice](#)

[Open Books](#)

[The Make it Safe Project](#)

Family Engagement Resources

[ODE Community Engagement Toolkit](#)

[MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework](#)

Appendix B: Grantee Information

*TBD; Grantee contact information/point person/webpage will be provided here once determined through the RFA process.

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