



When Arizona Reads, Arizona Thrives



Arizona is facing an early literacy crisis.

- Many of the almost 800,000 Arizona children under age nine face significant barriers to school readiness, including poverty (23%), difficulty speaking and understanding English (47.6%), and lack of exposure to books and other literacy resources.
- In 2013, 42% of Arizona's fourth graders fell below basic reading levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Well-established research underscores the vital importance of addressing this crisis.

- Children entering kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed in school rarely meet the critical milestone of reading proficiently by third grade, a strong predictor of future academic and vocational success.
- There is a high correlation between vocabulary size at age three and language test scores at ages nine and 10 in areas of vocabulary, listening, syntax, and reading comprehension. By age four, children from low-income families hear an average of 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.

Success in addressing this crisis will require ensuring that young children in Arizona have strong learning experiences from birth through grade three, rich in literacy and language acquisition at school, at home, and in the community.

The key to Arizona's future is a statewide, community-based literacy project. Educators, families, businesses, public agencies and communities all have a role to play. Only when early literacy becomes everyone's responsibility will we have the kind of impact and change we need to see Arizona thrive.

**Read On Arizona is a
Statewide Collaborative
view all partners at:**
www.readonarizona.org/partners

Read On Arizona is a statewide, public/private partnership of agencies, philanthropic organizations and community stakeholders committed to determining the gaps, identifying solutions, and implementing a collaborative early literacy approach to create an effective, systematic continuum of supports to improve language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children ages 0-8.

Overall Goals

- Increase the % of students reading at or above grade level by third grade to 100%, ensuring that every Arizona student is on track for college and career success.
- Increase the % of children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the language and literacy domain so every child entering school is ready for school success.
- Drive change through capacity building, group solutions, continuous instructional improvement, and integrated and coordinated systems.

TAKE STEPS TO BECOME A READ ON COMMUNITY AND JOIN OTHER CITIES, TOWNS, COUNTIES OR AREAS IN ARIZONA WHO ARE MAKING EARLY LITERACY A PRIORITY IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

How to become a Read On community:

Step 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the challenges associated with achieving third grade reading proficiency for the children in your community

Step 2: Identify key community stakeholders that can work together to make significant improvements in early literacy (i.e., key stakeholders such as: county board of supervisors, city council, mayor, head start/early childhood, libraries, school districts, non-profits, tribal or regional council, etc.). Commit your lead public official to serving on the Literacy Leadership Council, convenes annually and is comprised of community leaders committed to improving early literacy.

Step 3: Determine a planning and convening process using a collaborative approach and a willingness to develop strategies to improve early literacy and grade level reading in the community with actionable steps to begin to address the problem. Strategic areas of focus could include: school readiness, early grade success, summer learning loss, chronic absence, family engagement, etc.

Step 4: Demonstrate a commitment to building awareness on the importance of grade level reading in the community.

Step 5: Draft a letter of intent demonstrating a readiness to participate as a Read On Community and to make early literacy a priority in your community. Please include name and contact information for a Read On Community liaison (*SEE SAMPLE LETTER BELOW.*)

Every community or city is different in their approach and tactics but each of the Read On Communities demonstrates a collaborative approach to making grade level reading a priority in their community. Arizona Read On Communities are connected to technical assistance, access to research and forums, as well as a network of communities that share best practices and innovative solutions.

We encourage and invite you to become a Read On Community today and join a statewide community-based literacy collaborative that will fill the gaps in early literacy and ensure Arizona's children have the literacy skills they need to succeed in school and in life. When Arizona reads, Arizona thrives!



Date

Read On Arizona
1202 East Missouri Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85014
Attn: Arizona Literacy Director

RE: Read On Arizona - Designation as a Read On Community {Sample letter}

Dear Read On Arizona:

I am submitting this Letter of Intent to Read On Arizona. I understand that by submitting this letter that our community is demonstrating a willingness to become a Read On Community and make early literacy a priority in their community through a collaborative literacy project.

{Name of city/community}

Contact: {name and contact info of team or project leader}

After gathering a broad base of support and commitment among our colleagues in the public, private, civic, philanthropic, and/or faith communities, it is with great enthusiasm that {Name of city/community} requests to become a Read On Community network member. We are ready to work together to address the challenges in improving reading achievement in our {city/community}—particularly among our at-risk children—including developing solutions for certain critical areas of focus such as: school readiness, early grade success, family engagement, professional development, chronic absence, and summer learning loss.

Our collaborative of committed partners includes {provide name, organization name, and contact information. If available, you may also want to provide a summary description of the role of each partner.}

As we prepare to engage in this work, we are solidifying a commitment to assess the current status of grade-level reading in our community. We understand we need a coordinated and collaborative approach to address the issue of early literacy in our community.

We will identify goals and map progress as we work to ensure that children become proficient readers by the end of third grade.

Sincerely,

Contact Name

Organization

Contact Information {email, address, phone number}