



Building an early literacy system that delivers the right program at the right time to every child

Read On Arizona Founding Partners

Arizona Community Foundation

Arizona Department of Education

First Things First

Head Start State Collaboration Office

Helios Education Foundation

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

www.ReadOnArizona.org



When Arizona Reads, Arizona Thrives

Arizona is battling a literacy crisis. It begins in early childhood.

- ★ In 2011, 42% of Arizona's fourth graders fell below basic reading levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- ★ Many of Arizona's 800,000 children under age nine face significant barriers to school readiness, including poverty (23%), difficulty speaking and understanding English (48%), and lack of exposure to books and other literacy resources.
- ★ Arizona's mandatory retention policy, Move On When Reading (ARS 15-701), takes effect in the 2013-2014 school year. It requires students to master reading at grade level by the end of third grade—those who score in the "falls far below" category will be held back. Nearly 22,000 of Arizona's third-graders are at risk.

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 age nine. By age four, children from low-income families hear an average of 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.

Success in tackling this crisis requires that young children in Arizona have strong learning experiences from birth through third grade—rich in literacy and language acquisition at school, at home, and in the community.

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, public/private partnership of agencies, philanthropic organizations, and community stakeholders **committed to creating an effective continuum of supports to improve language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth through age eight.**

Visionary Community Goals

- ★ Ensure every child entering school is ready for school success by increasing the % of children demonstrating school readiness in language and literacy at kindergarten entry.
- ★ Ensure every student is on track for college, career, and life success by increasing the % of students reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade to 100%.
- ★ Driving change through capacity building, group solutions, continuous instructional improvement, and integrated and coordinated systems.

Read On Arizona builds on the momentum created in response to the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Read On Arizona communities have plans in place to address literacy challenges such as school readiness, summer learning loss, and chronic absence over a 10-year period.

Connecting to the Arizona State Literacy Plan, a roadmap to improve language and literacy outcomes, Read On Arizona is the catalyst to the bold but achievable goal of reading success for all of Arizona's children from birth through age eight.

Challenges and Solutions

Four key barriers prevent an effective regional response to Arizona's early literacy crisis. Read On Arizona's 10-year strategic plan includes critical components to address these challenges:

Challenge 1

Lack of awareness and attention given to early literacy. Arizona's Move On When Reading retention policy spotlights the critical need to increase the depth of understanding around the importance of early literacy and grade level reading as a specific indicator that impacts the success of all learners.

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Engagement and Action. Local, county, regional, and statewide leaders and the communities they represent must make early literacy a priority to ensure expanded access to quality literacy supports.

Challenge 2

Lack of information on critical factors involving early literacy prevents the development of effective solutions. Community stakeholders have too little data on existing literacy gaps in the system.

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Improve data integration and system linkages. Build on comprehensive baseline data and analysis to devise strategies for improvement. Create a data management and integration task force to focus on collaboration around shared data and accountability systems.

Challenge 3

Lack of communication and coordination. Opportunities to leverage efforts and strengthen literacy impacts among providers, volunteers, and administrators working in Arizona's schools, public libraries, faith-based organizations, and other nonprofits are missed.

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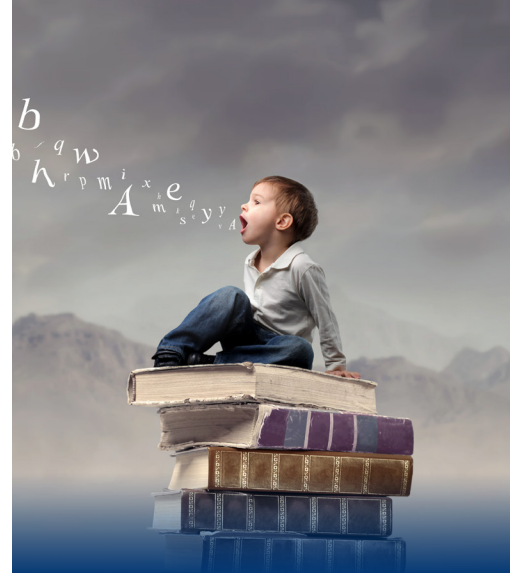
Read On Network. Bring together innovative partnerships and develop pilot strategies that build a network of communities developing a literacy system focused on language-rich and engaging programs, ongoing screenings and assessments, professional development, and family supports.

Challenge 4

Insufficient access to programs that work. Insufficient resources, as well as ineffective leveraging of resources, leads to lack of access to programs that work. Children do not enter kindergarten with the needed language and literacy skills necessary to succeed and are rarely able to catch up.

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Continuum of effective practices. Convene experts in task forces around strategic areas of focus (ELL, curriculum and instruction, family engagement, professional development, etc.). Leverage existing resources to maximize impact and develop and strengthen literacy and language acquisition along the continuum.



To join the effort visit

www.ReadOnArizona.org



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