



RESPONSE TO RECOVERY

Strategic Priorities for Early Literacy 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruptions and challenges in all aspects of life, including education. The following strategic priorities provide a framework for Read On Arizona partners to focus our collective efforts during the current transitional period — from response to recovery — to help **minimize learning loss** for young children and find opportunities to **accelerate progress toward improved school readiness and third-grade reading outcomes**.

1 Effective Teaching & Learning

To mitigate the effects of lost school days due to the pandemic and keep students advancing, it is critical that we focus our efforts on delivering **high-quality, language-rich early learning experiences, and evidence-based, effective PK-3 literacy instruction and interventions**. That means committing to literacy instruction and supports based in the science of reading while also meeting the social-emotional needs of our young children that are primary to their learning.

In September 2020, Arizona was awarded a federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant — totaling \$20M over five years — to support high-need populations with wide-scale professional development in the science of reading, implementation of evidence-based literacy practices, strengthening teacher preparation, and more. Arizona's CLSD application was developed by Read On Arizona, the Arizona Department of Education and First Things First.

2 Family & Community Engagement

Early literacy outcomes are driven by the learning that happens at home and in community settings as well as in the classroom. Now, with more young children not in child care or PK-3 classroom settings, there is a critical need to **connect families with high-quality, developmentally-appropriate tools, resources, and information** so they can effectively support their child's language and early literacy development.

Read On Arizona's network of local literacy collaboratives — Read On Communities, acceleration zones, and AZ Family Engagement Center sites — are well-positioned to implement effective practices and support families with virtual literacy programming, book distribution, chronic absenteeism interventions, and targeted language and literacy resources.

3 Screening & Assessment

With statewide assessments disrupted last year due to the pandemic, there is an urgent need to **enhance Arizona's system of screening and assessment from early childhood to third grade** to establish comprehensive, evidence-based measures, identify children who are at risk, and ensure that each child receives the support needed to achieve early literacy milestones.

Recently-passed legislation (SB1318) provides for the screening of all K-1 students for characteristics consistent with dyslexia; at least one K-3 teacher at every Arizona school to receive dyslexia training; and a dyslexia specialist designated by the Arizona Department of Education to support schools and develop annual dyslexia training opportunities.

About Read On Arizona

Read On Arizona is our state's early literacy initiative. Launched in 2013, partners in Read On Arizona take a collective impact approach to improving language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth to age eight, with strategic focus on school readiness and third-grade reading proficiency.



Read On Arizona isn't a non-profit organization or an awareness campaign. It's a statewide collaboration. Led by the state literacy director, it's a commitment among the key players in education and philanthropy in Arizona to work together in coordination and alignment, share data, maximize investments, and take the strategic, comprehensive, collective approach required to drive large-scale change. We've made significant progress — **third-grade reading scores have steadily improved over the last five years, statewide and in every Arizona county** — but there's much more to do.

The Read On Arizona collaboration provides leadership at the state level through an advisory board consisting of members from the founding partners — First Things First, Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Community Foundation, Helios Education Foundation, and Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, which provides backbone support — as well as the Arizona State Board of Education, the Governor's Office of Education, and several other philanthropic organizations and key literacy stakeholders.

Read On Arizona also supports local literacy efforts through a network of Read On communities. Each works with a wide array of local stakeholders, including schools and school districts, local governments, early learning programs, businesses, faith communities, and non-profit organizations working directly with families. Each applies the same strategic approaches of the statewide Read On Arizona collaboration to coordinate and maximize their collective efforts in their local community.

Learn more at ReadOnArizona.org.

Guiding Principles

The following principles have guided our collective work to date and remain essential to achieving Arizona's long-term goals for third-grade reading success:

- **Collaboration and Sustainability:** The ongoing commitment of state and local partners to work collectively — in alignment with shared goals, measures, strategies and investments — is key to an effective near-term response to the crisis as well as long-term, large-scale improvement in third-grade reading outcomes.
- **Equitable Access:** Targeted strategies and investments are needed to eliminate the persistent achievement gap between all students and several important subgroups, especially economically-disadvantaged students.
- **Data Sharing and Analysis:** Comprehensive data and effective data analysis should inform strategies, identify gaps and trends, and drive instructional decisions at all levels, from state to student.
- **Policy:** Meaningful change is driven by a shared policy agenda related to early literacy.
- **Communication:** Consistent messaging around early literacy priorities is needed to raise awareness and fuel collaboration among partners, practitioners, and Arizona families.

FOUNDING PARTNERS / ADVISORY BOARD

