



When Arizona Reads, Arizona Thrives

**READ ON ARIZONA
STRATEGIC LITERACY ACTION PLAN
2013-2023**

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Introduction

Arizona is facing a literacy crisis and it begins in early childhood.

Today the literacy skills demanded by 21st century work and learning environments are increasingly more complex. We are unsuccessfully preparing our children to meet that demand. In 2011, 42% of Arizona's fourth graders fell below basic reading levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Certain populations of students are disproportionately affected; 58% of Hispanic students, 65% of Native American students, 70% of students with disabilities, and 86% of students with limited English proficiency scored below basic.

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.

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. And there is a high correlation between vocabulary size at age three and language test scores at ages nine in areas of vocabulary, listening, syntax, phonological awareness 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, philanthropy 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 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 Birth-8.

Read On Arizona builds on the momentum that was created around regional efforts in response to the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and is broader in scope to address the significant challenges Arizona faces in reaching its grade level reading goals. The Read On Cities of Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff and Yuma put together community solution action plans to address literacy challenges such as school readiness, summer learning loss, and chronic absence over a ten-year period. Connecting that work to the Arizona State Literacy Plan, a roadmap to improve language and literacy outcomes, Read On Arizona will direct us towards the bold but achievable goal of reading success for all of Arizona's young children.

The Building Blocks of Early Literacy

Reading is the major foundational skill for all school-based learning, and reading proficiency by third grade is a crucial milestone in a child's future academic success. Third grade reading level is a strong predictor of ninth grade course performance, high school graduation and college attendance. According to the National Research Council for the National Academies, "Academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of third grade. A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from school."¹

To achieve this important milestone, kids need to be on track for success from the time they start school. Research shows that children entering kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed in school rarely read proficiently by third grade.

Language Development

Early language abilities are directly related to later reading abilities, and children develop these skills from birth. At four-to-five months, a child recognizes the sound pattern of his/her name. At eight months, a child distinguishes word patterns. At nine months, a child can hone in on native language and essentially becomes a language specialist.² Language development continues for toddlers and preschool age children, and the amount and diversity of verbal stimulation a child experiences affects the development of processing speed, later vocabulary and executive function. Preschoolers whose parents read to them, tell stories and sing songs tend to have richer language outcomes. They develop larger vocabularies, become better readers and perform better in school.

English Language Learning

English Language Learners (ELL) are a complex group of students, with diverse educational needs, backgrounds, and languages. Some ELL students come from homes where no English is spoken, others have been exposed to or use multiple languages. Some ELL students have lived in the U.S. for over a generation. Some may do well in school while others struggle. Each ELL student falls at a different point in the spectrum and there is no one single strategy to adequately meet the educational needs of this group of students. Research demonstrates the potential of English Language Learners when they are served well can be enormous. A longitudinal study in British Columbia demonstrated that with an intentional and appropriate literacy curriculum ELL students can outperform monolingual students once they overcome initial challenges.³ Strength in a child's first language is critical to their success in learning a second language. We need to support a rich and robust development of home language skills so that ELL students come to the classroom more prepared with the core knowledge and vocabulary in their home language that will help them to thrive as an ELL student.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS:

Every parent needs to know that one of the most important things they can do is give their children words. Between one and three is the time of most rapid language and vocabulary acquisition. The 30 million word gap identified by research begins at about 16 months. Reading is highly dependent on language ability, so children need to hear lots of words and have multiple opportunities to use them. The research is clear and supports that if children have varied opportunities and experiences to hear and use language, their brain develops the connections it needs to learn how to read.

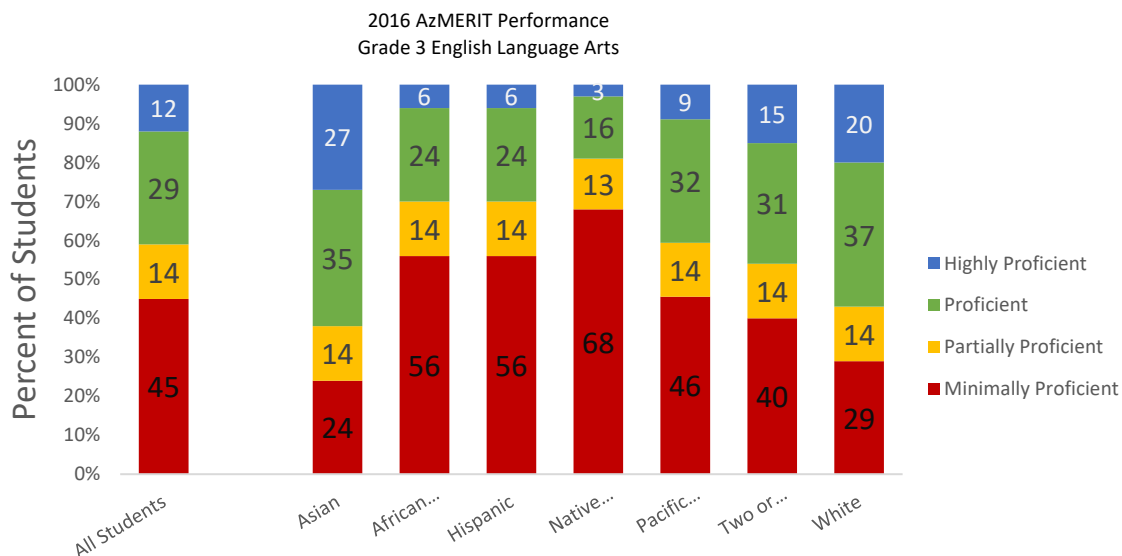
If the adults who influence a child engage in behaviors that promote literacy and reading success then more children will be on track for reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade. Family partnerships play a critical role in the success of this strategy. Awareness of the importance of early literacy and practical tools and activities for parents and caregivers that could benefit most remains fairly low. These families can be guided to talk with their infants and toddlers and build vocabulary, community organizations can be trained to do developmental screenings in infancy, and families can be made aware to seek these supports for their children at the appropriate developmental milestone.

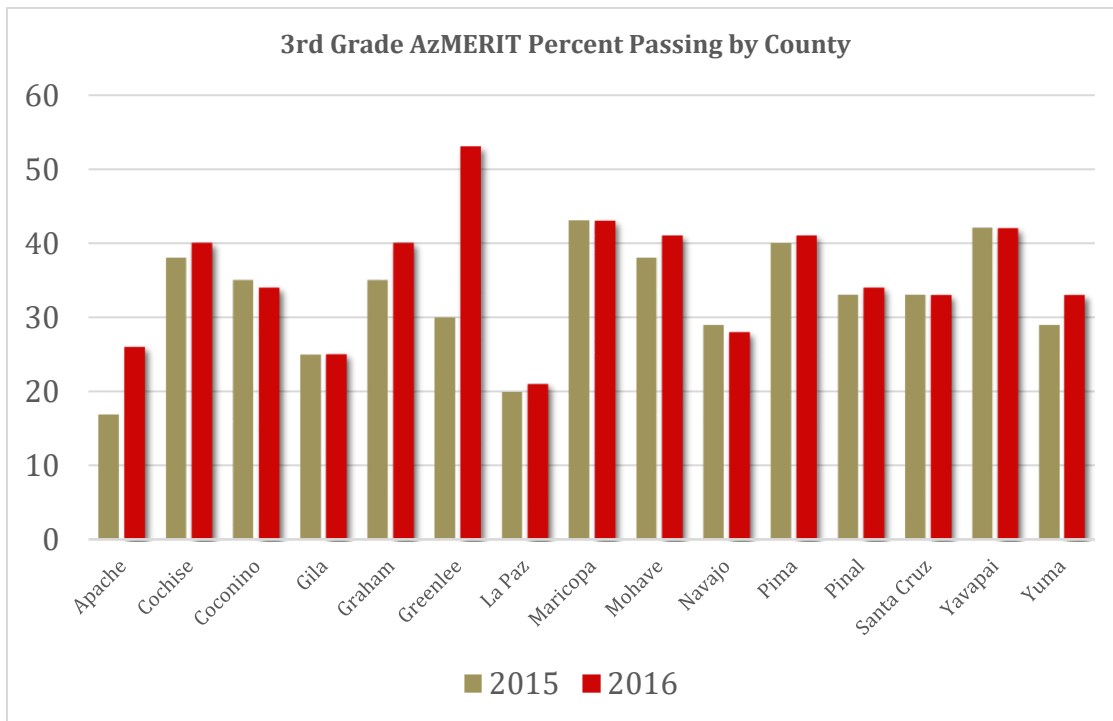
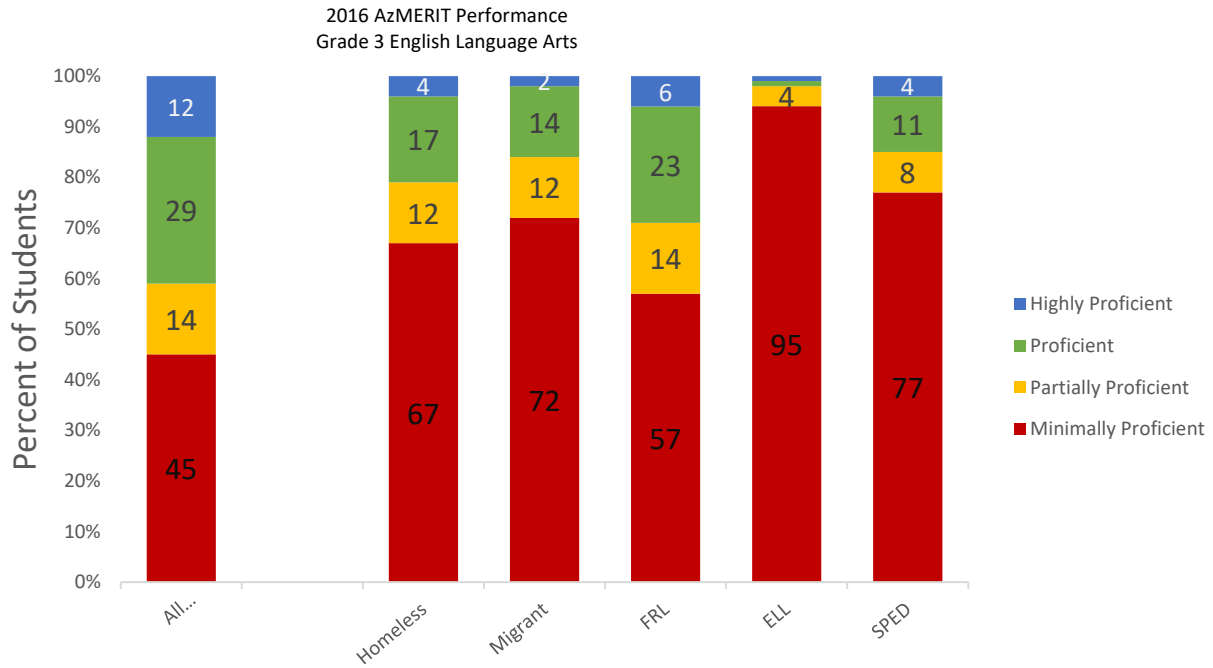
Arizona Literacy Data

ARIZONA INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE STANDARDS (AIMS)

In 2012, 75% of third grade students statewide were at “meets or exceeds” proficiency on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). This represents a gain of 15% over the last ten years, up from 60% of third graders at “meets or exceeds” in 2003.

Arizona transitioned to a new assessment in 2015. In the second year of implementation, 2016, it was determined that only 41% of third grade students scored a proficient or above on the ELA portion of AzMERIT.





Third grade reading levels of students in four Arizona counties (Apache, Gila, La Paz and Navajo) are the lowest in the state, even though some of them increased from the previous year, with fewer meeting or exceeding proficiency on AzMERIT in 2016 than other counties. Only Navajo and Coconino counties saw a decrease in proficiency scores from 2015 to 2016.

There are trends in the AzMERIT results of student subgroups that should be looked at more closely to help

direct and guide our literacy strategies moving forward. Among the three racial/ethnic subgroups with proficiency rates below the overall rate, Native American students scored consistently lower than African American students and Hispanic students. ELL students and students with special needs had the lowest rates of proficiency.⁴

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

In 2015, 38% of Arizona fourth graders fell below basic reading levels on NAEP, 32% scored at the basic level, 22% ranked at proficient and only 7% were designated as advanced. In 1998, 78% of Arizona's fourth graders scored below or at basic and 22% scored at proficient or advanced.⁵ From 2013 to 2015 Arizona scores showed positive gains or remained relatively stable.

In the most recent NAEP report card shows a consistent relationship between performance on vocabulary and performance on reading comprehension. Nationally, in 2011, 4th grade students performing above the 75th percentile in reading comprehension also had the highest average vocabulary scores. Arizona students performed below the national average in 4th and 8th grade in the area of vocabulary.⁶

Raising the Bar For Arizona's Students

ARIZONA COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STANDARDS

The implementation of the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards puts us on track to have the expectations and rigor needed to achieve and increase literacy skills of Arizona's children. Literacy is infused throughout every category of the new standards, a common thread among the four key skills of a 21st Century student: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity.



Comprehension of a math word problem demonstrates key literacy skills. Reading the instructions of a simple science experiment and predicting the outcome demonstrates key literacy skills and reading a passage and being able to communicate (articulate) what was read and demonstrate comprehension will be a key component throughout a student's day not just in a literacy block.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM), mathematics, social studies, English language arts, science, or any individual subject, require a student to have strong literacy skills if they are to achieve the outcome of academic and vocational success. The demand for the highest standards in reading and writing proficiencies is no longer optional. It is a necessity.

MOVE ON WHEN READING LEGISLATION

Taking effect in the 2013-2014 school year, Move On When Reading (ARS-15-701) also raises expectations for our students. It requires that a student not be promoted from third grade to fourth grade if he or she scores well below the requirement on AzMERIT, the state English and language arts assessment, which also includes reading. This indicates that the child is reading at a much lower level



than is expected of a third-grader and needs additional help.

In all, more than 22,000 third-grade students are potentially at risk for not being at grade level. The adoption of these more rigorous standards underscores our highest aspirations for our students and also the extent of the challenge facing Arizona on the path to grade-level reading.

SCHOOL READINESS FOR ARIZONA'S CHILDREN

It is estimated about 33% of incoming kindergartners nationwide enter school without the basic language skills they need to learn to read. In Arizona we don't have a baseline on school readiness for our children. There is a need to support the implementation of the common indicators and benchmarks for school readiness statewide and begin to identify a baseline so that we know what kind of improvement metrics we need in this area. First Things First is working with other state partners to move this work forward, and Read On Arizona should adopt and support the common indicators of school readiness they have identified.

According to the U.S. Census data released from 2015, in Arizona, 37% of three and four year old children were enrolled in a preschool program.⁷ This puts Arizona far below the average for the country which is 48%. Evidence-informed research shows the lasting effects that preschool can have for children in regards to reading achievement and school success.⁸

Barriers to Success

The following is a summary of some of the key challenges that have prevented an effective response to Arizona's early literacy crisis:

1. A lack of information on critical factors involving early literacy prevents a more strategic and intentional approach to finding literacy solutions. Community stakeholders have too little of the right data on existing literacy gaps in the system. Without such baseline data, it is impossible to devise strategic solutions.

There is also a specific need for focus on finding solutions for our English Language Learners, who comprise the largest subgroup scoring below basic on NAEP. Nearly 86% of students with limited English proficiency, 70% of students with disabilities, 65% of Native American Indian students, and 58% of Hispanic students scored below basic in 2011 on NAEP.

2. A lack of communication and coordination among the dedicated educators, literacy providers, volunteers, and administrators working in Arizona's schools, public libraries, faith-based organizations and other non-profit organizations discourages opportunities to leverage one another's efforts.

A more coordinated, integrated early literacy system with a priority on data-driven and evidence-informed programs that link to the standards outlined in the Arizona Literacy Plan, Arizona Infant Toddler Guidelines, Arizona Early Learning Standards, and Arizona College and Career Ready Standards can be designed to transform the system into one that can deliver a continuum of effective literacy supports and services for

children ages Birth-8 in Arizona.

3. There is insufficient access to quality programs that work. Insufficient resources, as well as the ineffective leveraging of resources, constrains access to effective intervention strategies in early literacy development. As a result, far too many children enter kindergarten without the language and literacy skills needed to succeed and are seldom able to catch up.

In particular, a more balanced approach to literacy strategies for Arizona’s rural areas and urban centers is required to provide services and support to those students most in need. A focus on strategies that fill critical gaps such as: access to books, leveraging community resources, capacity building of early childhood educators and strong instructional supports, should be tied to caregiver education that focuses on the whole child.

4. There is a lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of early literacy and grade level reading. The implementation of (ARS 15-701) “Move On When Reading” policy took effect in the 2013-2014 school year. Nearly 22,000 third grade children are potentially at risk for not being at grade level by the end of third grade. According to a report by First Things First, Arizona ranks 44th in the nation in the percentage of parents who read daily to their children, ages birth to five.⁹

Incorporating daily literacy activities into family routines for a child is one of the biggest predictors of a child’s success in reading by third grade. Local, county, regional, and statewide leaders and the communities they represent need to make early literacy their highest priority so we can expand access to the quality literacy supports needed to make grade level reading a reality with early identification and intervention strategies, strong remediation supports, and effective accountability measures with the early literacy system.

The Need for a Collaborative Early Literacy System

Arizona has a State Literacy Plan that is a roadmap to improving language and literacy outcomes, incorporating standards and guidelines for infants and toddlers, early childhood (3-5 year olds) and the K-12 Arizona College and Career Ready Standards. The adoption of Arizona College and Career Ready and the implementation of Move On When Reading present an opportunity, but they will not produce their intended outcomes without a continuum of effective literacy supports and services at every age level for children to stay on track with their development milestones around language and early literacy.

Organizations statewide are coming together to tackle the problem collectively. No one entity can make a dent in the stiff challenges we face in addressing reading proficiency for all of Arizona’s children. This collective and collaborative literacy effort will have a direct impact on the community by streamlining efforts, expanding the reach and range of services, addressing community needs, maximize financial resources and improve programmatic outcomes through a shared vision and intentional commitment to results.

We can’t continue to do things the same way and expect reading levels will change. We can’t expect real

improvements in literacy outcomes unless we know what works, there is fidelity in implementing what works, and an effort to bring them to scale with the same commitment to implementation.

State Literacy Director

The position of State Literacy Director was created in early 2012 by a group of founding partners consisting of the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Head Start State Collaboration Office, First Things First, Helios Education Foundation, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, and other philanthropic and nonprofit partners. The newly created position is intended to promote literacy throughout Arizona and work with existing nonprofits to build a continuum of literacy services for Arizona's young learners.

The Arizona Literacy Director will lead state efforts to methodically connect existing public and private early literacy investments and identify opportunities to address critical gaps. The Arizona Literacy Plan, Arizona Infant Toddler Guidelines, Arizona Early Learning Standards, and Arizona College and Career Ready Standards provide the framework for the state's literacy directives and the director will ensure these efforts move forward.

The Arizona Literacy Director will also oversee the state's involvement in the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, assisting state and local planning efforts to implement strategies to increase grade-level reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The director will represent the state on literacy matters pertaining to children birth to grade 3 and communicate a message of urgency to elevate early literacy as a statewide priority.

Major Responsibilities and Key Tasks:

- Work with stakeholder agencies to identify current language acquisition, emergent literacy, and literacy initiatives already in place in Arizona and identify critical gaps.
- Promote the Arizona Literacy Plan, Arizona Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines, Arizona Early Learning Standards, and K-12 Arizona College and Career Ready Standards and ensure the goals are integrated into existing and new literacy initiatives.
- Lead a coalition of stakeholders to develop and implement a plan to promote early literacy investments in Arizona.
- Provide statewide guidance, information, and technical assistance on prevention, intervention and use of core curriculum and assessment to improve language and literacy outcomes.
- Promote the adoption and sustained use of evidence-informed early literacy learning practices throughout the state.
- Work with stakeholder agencies to make language acquisition, emergent literacy, and literacy a priority in state policy decisions.
- Oversee the state's involvement in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and work to embed early literacy messaging into existing public awareness campaigns.

The State Literacy Director has worked with the core partners in the development of this overall strategic

literacy action plan for Arizona in an attempt to coordinate the existing initiatives and early literacy work within the state under one overall umbrella initiative called Read On Arizona.

The work of the State Literacy Director is at times broader than the scope of any one community or regional literacy initiative that works under the Read On Arizona heading. Read On Arizona builds on the momentum of the regional efforts initiated during Arizona's collective planning for the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

The State Literacy Director will focus on connecting that work to the Arizona State Literacy Plan, a roadmap to improve language and literacy outcomes, and through that, Read On Arizona will direct us towards the bold but achievable goal of reading success for all of Arizona's children ages Birth-8.

Read On Arizona

MISSION

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 approach to improving language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children ages birth through the end of third grade.

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

VISION STATEMENT

A future where Arizona children have the skills they need to read, learn and succeed in college, career, and life.

VALUES STATEMENT

This collaborative is committed to:

- Data-driven decision making
- Effective, research-informed strategies
- Collaboration and intentional alignment and leveraging of existing services and resources
- Quality, effectiveness and fidelity to implementation
- Impact and continuous improvement for all

VISIONARY COMMUNITY GOALS

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

RESULT

Accelerate progress towards school readiness and third grade reading proficiency.

TARGETS

In 2016/2017:

- Decrease the 3rd grade reading proficiency gap for economically disadvantaged students by 5%.
 - Indicator – Increase in number and percent of economically disadvantaged students reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

- Decrease the school readiness gap for economically disadvantaged 4 year olds by 3%.
 - Indicator – Decrease the number and percent of 4 year olds scoring below on Teaching Strategies Gold in the language and literacy categories.

STRATEGIES

1. **Read On Arizona and Communities Network:** Build a continuum of supports and services through a network of partners that make early literacy a priority and foster a collaborative effort. Increase capacity by leading a coalition of stakeholders to develop and implement a plan to build alignment around a common early literacy agenda for cross-sector engagement and support.
2. **Data Integration:** Develop a collective approach to identifying effective services, critical gaps, and comprehensive baseline data and data analysis to devise strategies for improvement.
3. **Continuum of Effective Literacy Practices:**
 - a. **Language and Literacy Strategies (0-8):** Increase capacity of literacy providers to build a foundation of meaningful early learning experiences to ensure that children make progress in a range of contexts and across learning areas.
 - b. **Screening and Assessment:** Improve screening and assessment to ensure that each child receives the supports and interventions required to reach developmentally appropriate milestones.
 - c. **Professional Development:** Improve the coordination and alignment of QUALITY professional learning related to language and literacy development by increasing the capacity of practitioners in the field.
 - d. **Family Engagement Strategies:** Improve the coordination and alignment of QUALITY family engagement related to language and literacy development by increasing the capacity of families with children 0-8.
4. **Awareness and Technical Assistance:** Provide state-wide guidance, information, and technical assistance on messaging related to improving language and literacy outcomes. Lead a coalition of stakeholders to develop and implement a plan to promote early literacy investments in Arizona.

Current Literacy Services and Gap Analysis

Read On Arizona's core partners surveyed literacy practitioners throughout the state to conduct a current services and gap analysis. One-on-one interviews with key program directors, school leadership, regional educators and community stakeholders were a key part of the gap analysis as well.

The follow are some of the preliminary findings from the current services and gap analysis survey:

- 1. The early literacy system is fragmented.** Providers work hard to improve literacy levels and provide supports for the learners they serve, but they do so often times in their own silos with limited collaboration within a broader group or the necessary integration.
- 2. Quality standards exist but are sometimes disconnected from the programs that could benefit.** There is a need for sharing effective practices in key areas that demonstrate the standards and are based on evidence-informed research.
- 3. Outcomes are measured differently across program types, making it hard to communicate or effectively demonstrate impact.**
- 4. There is little collective shared data to determine how many learners are receiving what kinds of services along the continuum, and so there is less ability to leverage resources.**
- 5. Literacy services for English Language Learners, Native American learners and students with special needs are critical and most regions are not able to meet current needs.** A coordinated approach to serving these students with effective curriculum and services is crucial.

Read On Arizona: Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

It is unacceptable that only 41% of Arizona’s kids are proficient readers by the time they get to fourth grade. It is an issue we have long been wrestling with, but with little progress. If we want to truly move the needle on third grade reading proficiency, it cannot be “business as usual”. We need to broaden the circle and include all stakeholders in the solution. We have to be intentional about the strategies and approaches and focus on the skills that matter most. We have to make early literacy a priority in all the environments that support children and students. This infusion of literacy throughout the classroom day, throughout the day of a child and in all the environments that influence a child, is the connected and coordinated alignment that Read On Arizona is determined to provide. Below are the goals, objectives and outcomes of the Read On Arizona initiative as well as specific strategies it will pursue over the next ten years.

GOAL:	OBJECTIVE:	OUTCOMES:
<p>Increase the % of students reading at or above grade level by 3rd grade to 90% by 2039...</p> <p>Increase the % of children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the language and literacy domain</p> <p>Drive change through capacity building, group solutions, continuous instructional improvement, and integrated and coordinated systems</p>	<p>Create a continuum of literacy services for Arizona’s children ages Birth-8.</p> <p>Create and maintain links to existing efforts.</p> <p>Build alignment around a common early literacy agenda for cross-sector engagement and support.</p> <p>Work with stakeholder agencies to identify current language acquisition, emergent literacy, and literacy initiatives already in place in Arizona and identify critical gaps.</p> <p>Promote the Arizona Literacy Plan, Arizona Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines, Arizona Early Learning Standards, and College and Career Ready Standards and ensure the goals are integrated into existing and new literacy initiatives.</p> <p>Lead a coalition of stakeholders to develop and implement a plan to promote early literacy investments in Arizona.</p> <p>Provide statewide guidance, information, and technical assistance on prevention, intervention and use of core curriculum and assessment to improve language and literacy outcomes.</p> <p>Promote the adoption and sustained</p>	<p>Improved language and vocabulary development for Birth-5 year olds to close the 30 million word gap</p> <p>Improved school readiness</p> <p>Improved 3rd grade reading proficiency</p> <p>Improved 8th grade reading performance</p> <p>Improved 9th grade course performance</p> <p>Increase in high school graduation rates</p> <p>Increase in college attendance and graduation</p> <p>More students ready to work and meet the global demands of Arizona’s economy</p> <p>...a thriving, globally competitive workforce for Arizona</p>

	<p>use of evidence-informed early literacy learning practices throughout the state.</p> <p>Work with stakeholder agencies to make language acquisition, emergent literacy, and literacy a priority in state policy decisions.</p> <p>Oversee the state’s involvement in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and work to embed early literacy messaging into existing public awareness campaigns.</p>	
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Read On Arizona: Strategies

<p>1. DATA INTEGRATION AND SYSTEM LINKAGES Develop a collective approach to comprehensive baseline data and data analysis to devise strategies for improvement.</p> <p>Facilitating Organizations: AZ Department of Education and First Things First</p>
<p>ACTION ITEMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a strategic commitment to early identification and reading assessments earlier than 3rd grade. • Support the development and adoption of a Kindergarten Developmental Inventory Tool. • Support the implementation of school readiness indicators and benchmarks. • Identify quality literacy services and critical gaps through literacy assets survey and regional community scans. • Make integration and system linkages a priority for the continuum to create a shared process that informs the collective work of all stakeholders. • Create a data management and integration task force to focus on shared data, appropriate formative and summative assessments and performance-based analytics to disseminate common metrics with initiative partners to track improvement in literacy efforts. • Determine what additional data needs to be gathered in order to make informed decisions regarding literacy solutions and guide analysis of data for program improvements aligned to standards.

2. READ ON COMMUNITIES NETWORK

Build a community of practice through a network of communities that make early literacy a priority. Facilitating Organization in each Read On Community or City convenes and fosters collaborative effort

ACTION ITEMS:

- Develop and support Read On Communities Network and implementation of pilot literacy strategies.
- Develop common metrics to measure success.
- Build and expand on existing collaborative and bring together innovative partnerships.
- Provide technical assistance to Read On Communities.
- Develop Toolkit for becoming a Read On City.
- Increase coordination between literacy providers.
- Increase access to and support the improvement of out of school/extended learning opportunities.
- Support and develop strategies to improve school attendance and decrease chronic absence statewide.
- Identify effective interventions for strategic focus areas (ELL, special needs, etc.) along the continuum and leverage existing services to maximize impact.
- Implement evidence-informed intervention strategies as early as possible.
- Disseminate effective practices implemented by Read On Communities

3. EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Implement strategies to develop and strengthen literacy and language acquisition along the continuum. *The right program, at the right time, for each child.*

Facilitating Organizations: AZ Department of Education and First Things First

ACTION ITEMS:

- Use the AZ State Literacy Plan, Arizona Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines, Arizona Early Learning Standards and K-12 Arizona College and Career Ready Standards to develop standards of effective practices for literacy supports in identified areas such as English Language Learners, Native American learners, family partnerships, professional development, etc.
- Focus on making a priority language-rich curriculum coordinated for impact with a fidelity to implementation. The right program, for the right child at the right time in the right amount.
- Prioritize ongoing assessments and screenings as early as possible.
- Work with partners to extend literacy effective practices throughout the state.
- Provide links to educational resources and helpful sites for parents and early childhood professionals, elementary educators and engaged stakeholders.
- Develop and implement statewide volunteer program pilot (AARP Experience Corps, Literacy Connects, Read Better Be Better, etc.)

Family Partnerships:

Increase the capacities (competence and confidence) and active engagement of families to be their child's first language and literacy teacher and support.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Link families to existing community resources and build awareness of literacy milestones.
- Develop a coordinated communication plan for literacy messaging to families around language and literacy skill acquisition for their child.
- Link family engagement efforts to language, literacy and reading.
- Develop a toolkit for parents and caregivers regarding Move On When Reading.

Professional Development:

Strengthen the practitioners/early childhood teacher training around early literacy AND reading instruction. Commit to an atmosphere of continuous improvement, peer learning.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Develop a community of practice collaborative model for literacy instructional support.
- Identify and develop effective school transition practices and alignment to standards
- Align higher education teaching programs and teacher training with the needs of the system in regards to literacy and reading instruction, both pre-service and in-service.
- Focus on teacher collaboration, peer learning, coaching across disciplines and grade levels around literacy.
- Work with partners to develop intentional, effective literacy training for educators, teachers, families and practitioners working with children.
- Develop a protocol and toolkit for joint professional development between preschool and kindergarten sites and build awareness of the alignment between early learning standards and Arizona College and Career Ready standards.

Ongoing Screenings and Assessments:

Strengthen the practitioners/early childhood teacher training around early literacy AND reading instruction. Commit to an atmosphere of continuous improvement, peer learning.

- Appropriate developmental screenings and assessments as early as possible and ongoing at critical junctures (vision, hearing, asthma, speech and other developmental screenings)

4. AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Increase awareness and depth of understanding of the importance of early literacy and grade level reading.

Facilitating Organizations: First Things First and Piper Charitable Trust

ACTION ITEMS:

- Develop a coordinated and comprehensive communications plan for literacy messaging to families, practitioners, educators, and community stakeholders including a system of communication for sharing information with Read On Arizona network partners (e-newsletter, website, etc.).
- Initiate a statewide campaign for grade-level reading proficiency that includes literacy standards in ways that can be easily understood by all stakeholders involved in helping a child acquire the appropriate literacy skills (grassroots campaign: “Bring Me Words”; visual tool of literacy milestones ages Birth-8, etc.).
- Develop a collective statewide volunteer training model to effectively engage literacy volunteers in local schools.
- Develop Literacy Leadership Council for Read On Arizona to encourage cross sector support and engagement, made up of key community stakeholders. Meets annually for update on the “State of Early Literacy” from Read On AZ.
- Provide links to educational resources and helpful sites for parents and early childhood professionals, elementary educators and stakeholders.
- Develop an advocacy campaign for early literacy (expanded access to preschool, full day kindergarten, chronic absence, etc.).
- Create a policy agenda to support early literacy priorities.
- Change the conversation around early literacy in the broader context of social issues.
- Support the implementation of “Move on When Reading” retention policy by developing and supporting strong remediation strategies along with early identification and intervention strategies.

Read On Arizona Action Steps:

ACTION STEPS:	TARGET DATE:	RESPONSIBILITY:	STATUS/DATE:
Create AZ Early Literacy Advisory Board (AZELAB) to guide the work of the State Literacy Director.	July 2012	Founding Partners	Established July 2012
Implement a current services and gap analysis and community scans	Oct. 2012 - March 2013	Read On Arizona and community partners	In process
Develop Early Literacy Action plan, budget and resource development plan.	January 2013	State Literacy Director	Draft for review by AZELAB Dec. 2012
Build infrastructure and convene working groups *working groups will develop annual work plans	January 2013	State Literacy Director, AZELAB, task force groups	Ongoing
Develop Read On Communities Network, including a toolkit on how to become a Read On City	Ongoing	State Literacy Director	Network established; Toolkit draft form
Presentation to stakeholders: ADE, FTF, Piper Charitable Trust, Helios Education Foundation, Funders Collaborative Valley of the Sun United Way United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona United Way of Northern Arizona United Way of Yuma Arizona Ready Council Mayor's Education Roundtable League of Arizona Cities and Towns annual mtg.	Jan. – Aug. 2013	State Literacy Director	Pending
Provide Technical Assistance to Read On Communities and community partners	Ongoing	State Literacy Director and AZELAB	Ongoing
MOU with Founding partners	Jan. 2013	Founding partners	Jan. 2013
Read On Arizona Launch Event	Feb. 2013	ALL	
Support First Things First with technical assistance in infusing literacy strategies throughout programs and services	Ongoing	State Literacy Director and FTF	Ongoing
Support Arizona Department of Education with technical assistance in implementation of Move On When Reading	Ongoing	State Literacy Director and ADE	Ongoing
Develop Toolkit for families regarding MOR	Jan. 2013	Family partnership task force	In process
Read On Arizona presentation to Chambers and other local leadership and volunteer groups	Feb. 2013	State Literacy Director	Planning stage
Develop a multi-year statewide communications plan, website and e-newsletter	March 2013	State Literacy Director/Expect More Arizona	Begin discussions
Develop general coordinated volunteer training model to prepare literacy volunteers for literacy support in local schools.	Spring/Summer 2013	State Literacy Director ADE ABEC	Begin discussions with ABEC and ADE
Develop and implement grassroots social campaign promoting language/vocabulary development and reading.	Sept. 2013	State Literacy Director/Expect More Arizona	Ongoing
Identify, develop and implement statewide menu of volunteer options	Fall 2013/spring 2014	ADE, State Literacy Director, Core partners	In process
Convene Literacy Leadership Council.	Jan. 2014	State Literacy Director	Pending
Develop budgets and metrics for capacity projects and scalable pilots.	Ongoing	State Literacy Director, AZELAB and partners	In process
Ongoing resource development including federal, state, regional, corporate and philanthropic dollars.	Ongoing	ALL	In process

The Process

This plan weaves together the strategic areas of focus that will guide the work of Read On Arizona over the next ten years. Each is action-oriented and results driven. Implementing the plan requires a coordinated multi-year effort with full and consistent participation from all stakeholder groups, including service providers, elected officials, businesses, the philanthropic community and the education system. Read On Arizona is actively building the collective literacy network of communities that can help transform Arizona. Read On Arizona stakeholders will work together using data and key benchmarks to monitor progress. Read On Communities and partners will establish specific measurable goals and track implementation strategies with data. Read On regions will share effective practices and the Read On Communities Network will become a community of shared learning.

Each year Read On Arizona will share the results with the Arizona Literacy Leadership Council to identify what strategies are moving the needle, lessons learned on the path to grade level reading as well as challenges and obstacles still to be addressed. The Arizona Literacy Leadership Council is made up of community leaders and stakeholders from across various sectors representing Arizona's vital industries, high education institutions, philanthropic organizations and public agencies committed to making early literacy a priority.

The Solution

This strategic literacy action plan includes existing efforts and solutions from initiatives across Arizona. Hundreds were involved in creating and informing this plan's development. The plan is supported by a framework built around effective practices and quality standards as well as strategies for the entire continuum from ages Birth-8. It includes strategic areas of focus around: school readiness, early grade reading, effective practices, data integration and linkages, family engagement and partnerships, professional development and community involvement. The goal of Read On Arizona is to transform the early literacy system to one that is comprehensive, coordinated, aligned with district strategies and goals and measurable.

Call to Action

To realize the visionary goal of 100% of third graders at or above reading proficiency we need everyone to play their part. Volunteer to read to a preschool class, tutor or mentor a student who needs help in building their literacy skills, adopt a community library or organize a local book drive. Family, friend and neighbor care, child care providers, preschools, elementary schools, afterschool and summer programs, community libraries and the local grocery store can all provide rich language experiences for young children and present opportunities to improve emerging literacy skills.

Most importantly, we have to actively change our behavior in how we value the development of early literacy skills. Improving the skills of Arizona's young children is everybody's business and everyone needs to play their part. Everyone has a part to play in transforming the literacy skills of Arizona's children.

Every member of the community can:

- Read to children.
- Promote the importance of early literacy whenever the opportunity arises.
- Volunteer with a literacy service provider.

Business stakeholders can:

- Incentivize employees to volunteer as a reader or tutor at a local school.
- Offer on-site literacy training to employees.
- Support Read On Arizona partners through financial and in-kind donations.
- Inform employees about early literacy and distribute articles and information around the issue.
- Host literacy fairs, conduct book drives, or sponsor family literacy events at local schools.

Schools can:

- Make a commitment to implementation with fidelity and through Arizona College and Career Ready, that infuses literacy in every content area, continue to have high expectations for all students.
- Carefully monitor students for literacy needs and provide individualized attention when needed.
- Provide additional tutoring and referral to community-based literacy resources.
- Work with families and parents as full partners in the success of their child.

Literacy providers can:

- Commit to an effective practices framework.
- Make data collection, tracking and assessment a priority.
- Collaborate with providers within the early literacy system to ensure more children are served.

Institutions of Higher Education can:

- Help support the early literacy system through evaluation and assessment, curriculum development and training, etc.
- Make literacy instruction in pre-service curriculum and training for new teachers a priority.
- Partner on developing models for capacity building and research findings regarding literacy.

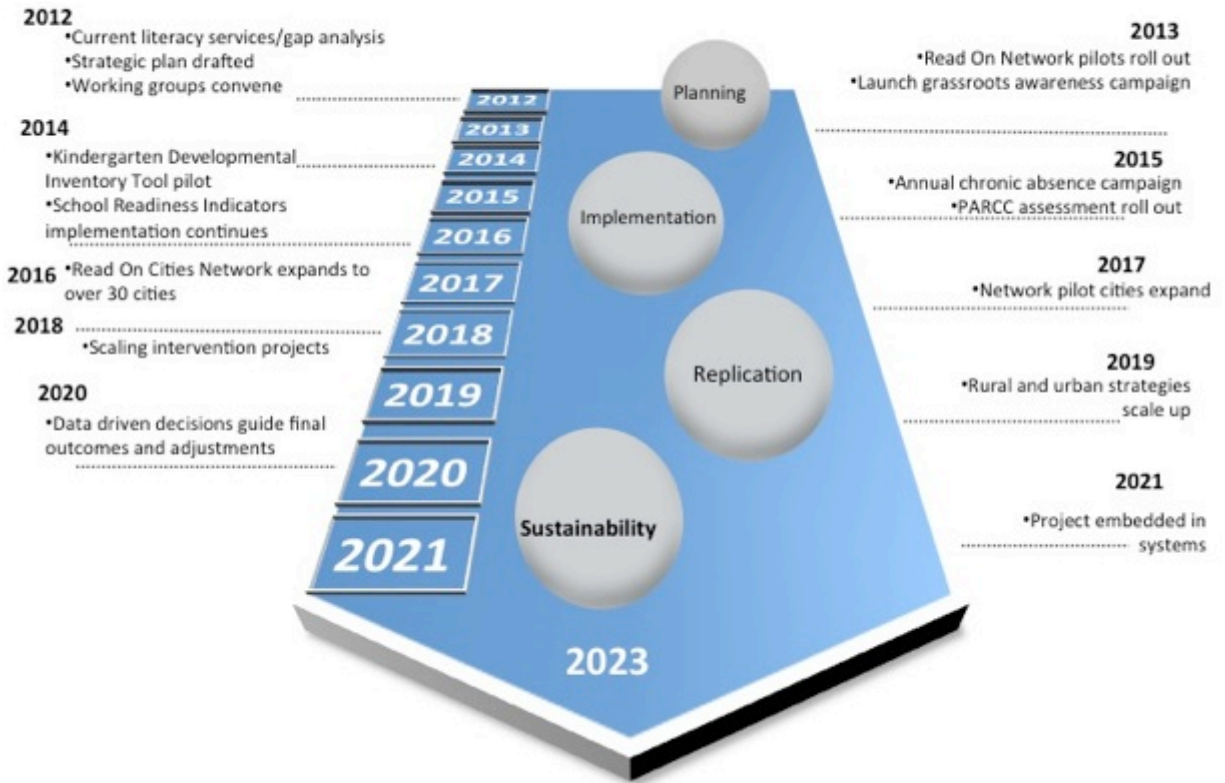
Philanthropic organizations can:

- Require service providers to connect to standards and work within the effective practices framework to improve program quality and outcomes.
- Include literacy as a priority across all program areas.
- Leverage national and local relationships to support Read On Arizona.

Elected officials can:

- Make early literacy a policy and funding priority to ensure Arizona thrives in a global economy.
- Use their leadership platform to promote literacy and build awareness.
- Mayors Education Roundtable can incorporate Read On Arizona's collaborative model into efforts across Arizona.

TIMELINE: 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

Core Partners*:

City of Buckeye
 City of Chandler
 City of Goodyear
 City of Mesa
 City of Payson
 City of Phoenix
 City of Scottsdale
 City of Tempe
 First Things First Gila County Regional Council
 Santa Cruz County Office of Education
 Cochise County Office of Education
 United Way of Northern Arizona
 United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
 United Way of Yuma
 Valley of the Sun United Way

Collaborative Partners:

Achievement Learning
 Advocacy and Communication, Inc.
 America Reads
 Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children
 Arizona Business Education Coalition
 Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
 Arizona Charter Schools Association
 Arizona Head Start Association
 Arizona Literacy and Learning Center
 Arizona Ready Education Council
 Arizona State Library
 Arizona State University, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College

Association for Supportive Childcare
 AZ K-12 Center
 Boys and Girls Club
 BUILD Arizona
 Central Arizona College
 Chicanos Por La Causa
 Children’s Action Alliance
 The Children’s Museum of Phoenix
 Educare Arizona
 Eight, Arizona PBS
 Elevate Phoenix/Phoenix Reds
 Expect More Arizona
 Experience Matters
 First Book
 Flinn Foundation
 Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning
 Governor’s Office of Education Innovation
 Greater Phoenix Educational Management Council
 Hands On Phoenix
 International Dyslexia Association- AZ
 Jumpstart
 KPMG
 Lakeshore Learning
 Maricopa County Head Start
 Northern Arizona University, College of Education
 Parent Teacher Association of Arizona
 Paradise Valley Community College
 Phoenix Public Library
 Raising A Reader
 Reach Out and Read Arizona
 Reading Is Fundamental
 Rodel Foundation
 Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Schools
 Sanford Inspire Program
 Southwest Human Development
 Southwest Institute for Families and Children
 Stepping Stone Foundation
 Target
 Toyota Family Literacy Program
 University of Arizona College of Education
 WestEd
 And more...

*Convening role

Read On Communities Network

Read On Arizona is about creating communities of practice and collaboration. Read On Arizona will develop a network of communities, towns, cities across Arizona that have a commitment to collaboration and a focus on early literacy. The initial four cities stretch from one end of the state to the other and represent the diversity within Arizona's geographic borders. Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff and Yuma are the flagship Read On Cities.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in early 2012 encouraged communities across the United States to develop community solutions action plans around third grade reading proficiency. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading targeted three challenges to students' reading success that are widespread, consequential and amenable to community solutions:

School Readiness:

- Too many children from low-income families lack early interactions that foster linguistic development.
- Research show that children from low-income environments do not have the basic language skills that support reading success.

Attendance Gap:

- Chronic absence is a problem for 1 in 10 kindergartners and first-graders nationwide; in some school districts, the ratio is as high as 1 in 4.
- For low-income children, chronic early grade absence predicts the lowest levels of achievement in higher grades.

Summer Learning Gap:

- Summer learning experiences during the early school years impact academic achievement.
- 18% of low-income children vs. 29% of middle-income children participate in summer learning programs.
- Low-income children fall behind during the summer by as much as two months of reading achievement, while their middle-income peers make slight gains.
- Summer learning loss is cumulative.

Arizona submitted a collective statewide plan including four cities (Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff and Yuma) to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the Civic League's All America City Award competition. There were 144 communities that applied and Arizona was one of 32 finalists considered for All America city designation. It did not receive an All-America City Award but its statewide approach became a model for the Campaign and for other regional efforts throughout the United States.

The vision over the next ten years is to build a network of Read On Communities across Arizona focused

on a collaborative approach to solutions in early literacy. The goal is to invite every city and town in Arizona to pledge to become a Read On City. Over the next ten years with a community approach real impact to some of the challenges facing literacy can be made. And the solutions will be organic to the communities themselves. Rural or urban, public or charter... organic solutions will be driven by collaboration. In one community there might be a focus on extending the learning day for a child, in another it might be focused on strengthening the transition into kindergarten and for another it might be a commitment to increasing the number of books a child has access to or strengthening the curriculum for English language learners used from Pre-K to third grade.

Working with core partners such as First Things First and their Regional Partnership Councils along with the communities they serve there is an opportunity to provide technical assistance, access to research and data as well as literacy solutions meeting the organic needs of each community throughout Arizona.

These are the existing Read On Communities under the Read On Arizona umbrella:

- Read On Avondale
- Read On Buckeye
- Read On Bullhead City
- Read On Chandler
- Read On Cochise County
- Read On Copper Corridor
- Read On Flagstaff
- Read On Globe Miami
- Read On Goodyear
- Read On Greater Surprise
- Read On Hualapai
- Read On Maricopa County
- Read On Phoenix
- Read On Mesa
- Read On North Gila County
- Read On Northern Pinal County
- Read On Phoenix
- Read On Prescott
- Read On San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Read On Santa Cruz County
- Read On Scottsdale
- Read On Tempe
- Read On Tolleson
- Read On Tucson/Sahuarita/Ajo
- Read On Yuma County



Read On Arizona is a public/private collaboration committed to building an early literacy system that improves language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth through age eight—delivering the right program at the right time to every child.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Read On City Toolkit and sample letter

Appendix B: Resources and Related Links

Appendix C: Arizona State Literacy Plan (developed by the AZ Dept. of Education) (separate document)

Appendix D: Arizona Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines (separate document)

Appendix E: Arizona Early Learning Standards (Pending Revised) (separate document)

Appendix F: Arizona College and Career Ready Standards- English Language Arts and Literacy (separate document)

Appendix G: Read On Arizona Community Solutions Action Plan, March 2012 (separate document)

Appendix A: Read On City Toolkit:

TAKE STEPS TO BECOME A READ ON CITY AND JOIN OTHER COMMUNITIES IN ARIZONA WHO ARE MAKING EARLY LITERACY A PRIORITY IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

TO BECOME A READ ON CITY:

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: city council, mayor, libraries, school districts, local head start, early childcare center, non-profits, 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 City and to make early literacy a priority in your community. Please include name and contact information for a Read On City 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 City 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!

SAMPLE READ ON CITY LETTER OF INTENT:

Date

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

RE: Read On Arizona- Designation as a Read On City (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 City and make early literacy a priority in their community through a collaborative literacy project.

Sincerely,
{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 City 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.

Contact Name
Organization
Contact Information (email, address, phone number)

Appendix B: Resources and Related Links

The following links provide additional information around early literacy for parents, caregivers and educators:

ADE (Arizona Dept. of Ed.)	www.azed.gov/k12-literacy/arizona-state-literacy-paln-home-page/
American Library Association	www.ala.org/alsc/issuesadv/borntoread
Best Evidence Encyclopedia	www.bestevidence.org
Campaign for Grade Level Reading	www.gradelevelreading.net
Colorín Colorado	www.colorincolorado.org
Edutopia	www.edutopia.org/grade-level-k-2
Florida Center for Reading Research	www.fcrr.org/
Fred Rogers Center Early Learning	www.ele.fredrogerscenter.org
Get Ready to Read	www.getreadytoread.org
Harvard (Lead for Literacy series)	www.isites.harvard.edu/lesaux
National Center for Family Literacy	www.famlit.org/ncfl-family-literacy/
PBS Learning Media	www.pbslearningmedial.org
Reading Is Fundamental	www.rif.org/educators/
Reading Rockets	www.readingrockets.org/
Teaching Channel	www.teachingchannel.org/
Thinkfinity	www.thinkfinity.org/welcome
What Works Clearinghouse	www.whatworks.ed.gov
Zero to Three	www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/

¹ National Research Council for the National Academies, Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998.

² Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Temple University: *Language for Reading: Lessons from the Crib for the Classroom*, 2011.

³ Noni Lesaux and Linda Siegel, *Developmental Psychology: The Development of Reading in Children Who Speak English as a Second Language*, 2003.

⁴ Arizona Department of Education, AzMERIT; 2015-2016

⁵ National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); Reading Assessments, 1992-2011.

⁶ *Vocabulary Results from the 2009 and 2011 NAEP Reading Assessments*.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

⁸ W. Steven Barnett (2008). *Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*. National Institute for Early Education Research Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

⁹ *Ready for School. Set for Life: Creating the Model Early Childhood System*; First Things First, 2011.