



Office of Superintendent Kathy Hoffman
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Arizona Awarded \$20 Million Federal Grant to Improve Literacy

The U.S. Department of Education awarded the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) a \$20 million Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD) to improve language and literacy skills for students most in need of additional supports. The grant will span five years at \$4 million per year. Arizona's CLSD grant project was developed through the collaboration of ADE, Read On Arizona, and First Things First.

The grant will help advance literacy outcomes in Arizona by expanding professional development in evidence-based reading instruction for early care and education providers and PreK-12 educators; implementing high-quality language and literacy strategies to support struggling readers; and strengthening community collaborations that drive higher language and literacy achievement for children from birth through high school.

Arizona's CLSD project will target children living in poverty, English learners, children with disabilities, Native American students, and those reading well below grade level, reflecting the federal grant program's emphasis on supporting underserved children.

"This investment comes at a critical time and will bring needed resources to Arizona's students and schools," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman. "It's more important than ever that we do our best to support underserved students and those who are struggling with their literacy skills."

The grant award highlights Arizona's collaborative approach to improving language and literacy reading outcomes through Read On Arizona.

"We have been making steady progress on literacy because partners are all rowing in the same direction," said Arizona Literacy Director Terri Clark, who leads Read On Arizona. "This grant is a product of our close collaboration, and it gives us the opportunity to scale up strategies that work where they are needed most — low-income communities in all parts of the state. As a result, more of our children will reach their reading potential. That's what Read On Arizona is all about."

The comprehensive literacy strategies included in Arizona's CLSD project also reflect that the skills needed to be a proficient reader start developing from birth.

"Children begin developing language and pre-literacy skills long before they enter kindergarten," said Marilee Dal Pra, chief executive officer of First Things First. "This grant will help us support educators in childcare and preschool settings with the research-based tools they need to ensure young children start school ready to learn to read."

As a requirement of the federal grant, ADE will create a competitive sub-grant program in Spring 2021 that will distribute 95% of the awarded funds to support language and literacy efforts serving the needs of Arizona's most-disadvantaged students in geographically-diverse schools and communities across the state. Funds will be awarded across the education continuum, from birth through high school, through an estimated 15-25 sub-grants. Representatives from ADE, First Things First, Read On Arizona and other key literacy partners will be involved in executing the grant.

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About ADE

Equity for all students to achieve their full potential. This is the guiding vision of the Arizona Department of Education — the state agency tasked with overseeing Arizona's K-12 public education system. Our department, led by a publicly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, is comprised of more than 600 staff across four state offices working to serve Arizona's students, families, educators, and school communities.

About First Things First

First Things First is a voter-created, statewide organization that funds early education and health programs to help kids be successful once they enter kindergarten. Decisions about how those funds are spent are made by local councils staffed by community volunteers. To learn more, visit FirstThingsFirst.org.

About Read On Arizona

Read On Arizona is Arizona's early literacy initiative — a statewide, public/private partnership of agencies, philanthropic organizations, and community stakeholders committed to improving language and literacy outcomes for children from birth through age eight, with strategic focus on school readiness and third-grade reading proficiency. The Read On Arizona advisory board consists of members from the founding partners — Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Community Foundation, First Things First, 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. For more information, visit www.ReadOnArizona.org.