



GROWING READERS TOGETHER

Best Practices for Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers in Early Literacy Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Family, Friends, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers play a critical role in the child-care landscape of the United States yet because of the informal nature of their work, these caregivers often do not have the same access to support as licensed care providers. High quality care is critical to healthy development during childhood and many FFN providers have a desire to increase their knowledge and understanding in this area. Libraries are well positioned to meet this need through outreach, collaboration, and partnerships.

Growing Readers Together (GRT) was developed to support libraries developing services for FFN providers across Colorado. Throughout the first four years of the program, the grant goals were:

1. FFN caregivers in Colorado will have the skills, confidence and resources to engage the children in their care with early literacy materials and activities daily.
2. Public library staff in Colorado will have strategies to connect FFN caregivers in their area with early literacy services.
3. The Colorado State Library will develop state-level infrastructure for early literacy support to FFN caregivers and the children in their care.
4. Children under six throughout the state will be exposed to language and literacy-rich experiences in informal childcare settings and at the library.

The 50 individual library locations representing 37 library systems that participated in GRT demonstrated the potential to leverage staff expertise and build upon existing community relationships to connect FFN providers with needed resources in the areas of early literacy and childhood development. An analysis of the participating libraries' project plans, grant activities, and narrative experiences identified the following best practices categorized into three themes:

Identifying and Understanding the needs of FFN Caregivers

- **Partner with community organizations that have established relationships and trust with segments of the community that may contain FFN caregivers.** Identify organizations who may have shared goals to gain a deeper understanding of FFN needs, cross promote services, and develop collaborative programming.
- **Be visible in the community.** Engage in outreach efforts outside the library to reach potential users who may not be current patrons, lack transportation, or experience some other access barrier.



Growing Readers Together at the first annual "Strolling Thunder" event, Colorado State Capitol, July 2019



- Use language that resonates with the community.

The term FFN may not be effective in identifying providers. Find language and phrasing that feels comfortable for library staff and helps FFN providers identify themselves and their role in childcare.

- Look inside the library and involve all library staff.

Engage all staff in promoting FFN services and build connections with attendees of early literacy programming to uncover FFNs who already utilize the library.

Engaging FFN and Promoting Early Literacy Practices

- Model early literacy practices during programming.

Adopt a full-spectrum literacy approach that engages children and models early literacy techniques for caregivers.

- Disseminate resources that encourage early literacy activities at home.

Promote the practice of early literacy activities outside of the library by providing access to and distributing materials that can be used at home such as story time kits, early literacy activity ideas, and printable activities.

- Create a library environment that fosters early literacy practices.

Provide a space that encourages interaction between caregiver and child and promotes learning activities.

Playful and interactive spaces encourage longer visits to the library.

- Take services outside of the library to places FFN naturally go.

Increase convenience by taking services and programs off-site to locations that FFN naturally go. Off-site programs may also reach additional audiences who may not frequent the library.

- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity.

Work to ensure the diversity of the community is reflected within the library. Build collections that show diverse cultural representation and provide materials in languages spoken in the community.

- Promote participation in reading programs.

Utilize local and national programs that gamify reading to encourage daily practice.

Creating Community

- Dedicate time to informal interactions.

Provide time and space for FFN caregivers to connect informally in order to increase interactions among providers and with library staff.

- Invest in FFN care development.

Invest in FFN providers' own development by providing learning events and materials on topics related to child development and care.

- **Develop consistent touch points.** Foster relationship development through consistent effort and interaction. Develop methods to stay in touch with caregivers regularly that do not depend on library visitation such as social media groups or newsletters.
- **Provide training opportunities for staff to develop new skills.** Equip staff with the tools to model early literacy techniques and develop soft skills to improve personal interactions and develop meaningful relationships with FFN caregivers.
- **Serve as an information conduit.** Build community knowledge by informing FFN caregivers about the resources available to them through other community organizations and providing direct referrals to services.

GRT libraries demonstrated that outreach and partnerships were critical in developing relationships with FFN caregivers. Through consistent efforts, libraries were able to reach new audiences and promote the adoption of early literacy practices. Libraries were able to build relationships with FFN caregivers by providing welcoming spaces, connecting caregivers to resources and services to improve their quality of care, and fostering a sense of community among providers and library staff.



Special events for FFN can include the children in their care while building community among caregivers.

BACKGROUND

Growing Readers Together (GRT) is a project to provide training and support to Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers in the area of early literacy through public library programming and services. FFN caregivers are also referred to as kith and kin childcare, home-based care, and informal care. These childcare arrangements are unlicensed and play an integral role in the childcare landscape of the United States. FFN caregivers are demographically diverse and possess a range of knowledge and experience with childcare. Because of the informal nature, FFN caregivers are often overlooked by traditional childcare support services.

School Readiness for All, a report released in 2013 by the FFN Learning Community, concluded that over 300,000 Colorado children under six spent some time in unlicensed childcare or with a stay-at-home parent. FFN providers surveyed in the report indicated an interest in receiving training in childhood development and early literacy techniques. Respondents also expressed a desire for informal learning environments that incorporated social interaction with learning. These findings suggest that public libraries are uniquely positioned to support FFN caregivers. Public libraries have long fostered early literacy by providing access to reading materials and programming that model early literacy techniques while recent trends in space design encourage social connection and interaction with the incorporation of play spaces and informal gathering places within the library.

Guided by these findings and with financial support from the Buell Foundation, CSL began GRT in 2016 as a pilot project with fifteen libraries to assist them in identifying FFN caregivers in their communities and developing services and programs to support FFN needs. GRT had four main goals:

1. FFN caregivers in Colorado will have the skills, confidence and resources to engage the children in their care with early literacy materials and activities daily.
2. Public library staff in Colorado will have strategies to connect FFN caregivers in their area with early literacy services.

3. CSL will develop state-level infrastructure for early literacy support to FFN caregivers and the children in their care.

4. Children under six throughout the state will be exposed to language and literacy-rich experiences in informal childcare settings and at the library.

Building upon the initial success of the program, GRT expanded in 2019 to include 50 library locations representing 37 library systems. This report summarizes key insights and best practices learned through GRT for libraries interested in promoting early literacy among FFN caregivers.

Methods

Four years of evaluation data were analyzed to identify best practices in supporting FFN caregivers including: grant implementation plans and monthly activity reports submitted by the 50 participating library branches; FFN caregiver, librarian, and stakeholder interviews conducted during years 1-3 of the project; and four webinar meetings with some of the library participants. Grant implementation plans contained information provided by participating libraries on activities and expenditures in the context of the overall grant goals. These plans provided insights into how participating libraries interpreted and adapted the grant goals for their local communities and formulated outreach and partnership strategies. Monthly activity reports provided detail on the implementation and quantity of grant activities. Surveys captured a mix of free-text responses and output data. Interviews with librarians and stakeholders were conducted during the first



Even small spaces can support early literacy.

three years of the grant and provided further insights into program implementation along with capturing participants experiences and sentiments towards the program. Finally, discussions during virtual meetings hosted by the Colorado State Library with participating libraries were also evaluated. These meetings provided an opportunity for librarians to discuss their local practices, ask questions of other participants and develop relationships among themselves. Virtual meetings and interview transcripts were analyzed for patterns and common themes expressed by participating libraries using Maxqda software.

Five additional semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of effective practices once initial best practices were identified. Libraries were selected to participate in follow-up interviews based on information submitted in grant plans and subsequent monthly reports that demonstrated effective outreach techniques, partnership development and program implementation.

Recommendations

The best practices laid out below focus on effective techniques related to program goals one, three, and four as identified in analyzing the grant activities and experiences of GRT libraries. These practices are categorized by: Identifying and understanding the needs of FFN caregivers, engaging FFN caregivers and promoting early literacy practices, and creating community. In addition to these practices, it is important to note that many GRT libraries participated in multiple years of the grant program and their focus and approach evolved over that time. During the first year, libraries often focused on identifying FFN, building relationships with partners and caregivers, and

redesigning spaces to promote early literacy practices and interaction. In subsequent years, libraries were able to build off the work in year one by offering more targeted programs and services to FFN and implementing additional best practices.

Identifying and Understanding the needs of FFN Caregivers

Being focused, patient, and persistent are key in identifying and establishing relationships with FFN providers. These caregivers are diverse demographically which can make identifying them difficult. Caregivers may not fit the stereotypical look and may be grandfathers, older siblings or aunts. Caregivers may also shift in and out of providing care, complicating outreach efforts. Despite these challenges, GRT libraries developed many effective strategies for reaching FFN caregivers including:

- **Partner with community organizations that have established relationships and trust with segments of the community that contain FFN caregivers.** Partnering with organizations that are known and trusted by FFN caregivers has many benefits. These organizations can provide a wealth of information and knowledge about FFN providers, their unique challenges and insights into how to deliver effective services to this demographic. Partnerships can be especially beneficial in reaching marginalized groups such as tribal or non-English speaking communities. One library (Fort Morgan) noted, “When it comes to creating partnerships, I have reached out to groups within the community that have similar goals in reaching out and supporting our community families who might need extra help with resources and access to literacy tools.” Approaching partnerships in this manner, allowed the library to develop a deeply collaborative partnership with the Family Resource Center that involved developing programs and sharing translation resources. Working with organizations that may operate around FFNs such as schools and daycares was also effective for many GRT libraries. Schools were often willing to share information with families via older siblings and daycares helped connect children on waitlists to GRT services.

- **Be visible in the community.** “If you stay in your own little bubble and expect them to come to you it’s not gonna happen,” noted one librarian (Lincoln coun-

ty) about the importance of getting outside the library walls. FFN providers may not be established library users for many reasons. For some, transportation barriers may prevent travel, or they may be unaware of the benefits or resources the library offers. Engaging in outreach efforts such as community festivals, farmers’ markets, school events, and resource fairs outside of the library will reach potential users who otherwise would not visit the library. After engaging in outreach events, one librarian (Limon) recalled more enthusiastic engagement, “I just think we have touched so many new people, folks we’ve never talked to before. We can let them know about the services we offer. We just participated in the county fair, we had kids coming up to us enthusiastically. At the preschool this morning too, they give you hugs, and they know us because we are in the right space and more visible in the community as a whole.”

- **Use language that resonates with the community.** Many FFN providers may not be familiar with the term FFN and may not identify themselves as an FFN provider. Finding language and phrasing that feels comfortable for staff and helps providers identify themselves is important for effective outreach. Experiment with alternative terms such as home-based care or asking if they provide care for other people’s children when having an in-person interaction. One librarian (Pikes Peak), Colorado Springs recalled developing a method that worked for her, “I have had to learn how to approach FFNs. I had to find the right wording to use at the food sites. I had to learn to identify myself first, offer a schedule of programs and then approach folks by asking if anyone did babysitting for [children] 0-5 [years old]. That seemed to work the best.”

Quick tips:
Word-of-mouth advertising was found to be the most effective method of marketing by GRT libraries. Provide program attendees with handouts they can share with friends that include literacy tips and upcoming events. Advertise events on social media and encourage attendees to share with their contacts.

- Look inside the library and involve all library staff.

Build connections with attendees of early literacy programming to uncover FFNs who already utilize the library. Enlist the help of other library staff in promoting FFN services. Educate staff on what services are being provided to FFN and why. Provide key talking points that desk staff can use during routine transactions to help promote services and remind programming staff to promote FFN services during adult and children's programming. As one librarian (Pines and Plains, Elbert county) noted, "The circulation desk librarians across the district have been very helpful in getting the word out to our patrons about story time and the early literacy bags. I gave them all of the information they needed to know how to sell GRT and they've taken it and run with it. They're almost relentless about asking grandparent-looking folks if they're taking care of the children with them on a regular basis and then getting them materials if that's the case." Another librarian (Alamosa) noted the impact of involving more staff, "Being a Growing Readers Together library has really empowered our whole staff to be more open to children and families and has helped to create more of a culture of community. I see staff really taking more of an interest in families, and that's wonderful."

Engaging FFN and Promoting Early Literacy Practices

GRT libraries created innovative programming and support materials to educate FFN providers on early literacy techniques and encourage daily practice. Libraries found that offering varied levels and types of engagement allowed FFN providers to engage in early literacy services that fit their needs best. Implemented together, the best practices around engaging FFN and promoting early literacy practices create a dynamic environment that builds confidence and supports learning through active participation. Best practices identified include:

- Model early literacy practices during programming.

Adopt a full-spectrum literacy approach that engages children and models early literacy techniques for caregivers. Explain activities during programming in a way that lets children know what to expect and educates caregivers on the practices being demonstrated. Many GRT libraries found it effective to incorporate the five literacy themes of reading, writing, singing, talking,

playing into programs. One librarian (La Veta) noted the impact on caregivers, "It's hard to put that into words. I think I saw a lot of positive engagement."

- Disseminate resources that encourage early literacy activities at home.

Promote the practice of early literacy activities outside of the library by providing access to and distributing materials that can be used at home. GRT libraries received funding to purchase early literacy items for FFN caregivers to enhance literacy materials available at home. These giveaway items were well appreciated by caregivers and led to more frequent practice of early literacy activities. One noted, "To be honest, I started reading more to the kids. More age appropriate books, which I really didn't have. It gave me a good tool." While another caregiver expressed that, "It is so important to know about other things we can do to encourage children to read and explore, to help build those skills. For them to provide free things with the information that goes along with them is an awesome opportunity. It's really beneficial for someone to get those things." When looking for funding to purchase and distribute materials, consider local community organizations who may be interested in partnering with the library to support this work. Additionally, watch for funding opportunities from literacy programs such as Vroom which occasionally provide funding opportunities.

In addition to giveaway items, GRT libraries created circulating early literacy kits that contain books, music, play materials, and guidance for usage that make early literacy practices convenient and approachable for FFN caregivers. Modeling the usage of kit materials in library programming can promote the kits while increasing confidence in their usage. Furthermore, creating low-cost items such as flyers with early literacy principles and activity ideas can help spark new ideas for incorporating literacy activities at home. The Colorado Day by Day Family Literacy Activity Calendar, available in English and Spanish, was developed as a part of GRT to encourage simple ways to incorporate literacy activities into every day.

- Create a library environment that fosters early literacy practices.

Provide a space that encourages interaction between caregiver and child. Comfortable seating areas that include age appropriate manipulatives and toys make the library a destination for learning and play. Additionally, consider low shelving

or browsing bins to facilitate children's access to materials and encourage self-selection of books. One librarian (Burlington) described the impact of new shelving, "We put up our new kid's shelves. Little book browsers right at kid's level, with the covers facing out. Everything is on display and easily at hand for kids. The people who have come in and seen them are through the roof with excitement. The cool ones are the kids, they come around our little corner to see the shelves, and their whole face lights up. 'WHOA, they are just my size.' 'Whoa, look at the books.' 'Whoa, mom I want to get a book.' Anything to help our kids feel empowered, independent, and give them options to select and choose will only help our community."

Several GRT libraries also noted that the culture of their organizations changed to be more family friendly encouraging play and the noise that comes with it. One librarian (Pines and Plains, Elbert county) described a particularly well-received craft activity stating, "I did a sensory activity for one of my story times in January- we made snow dough. The kids absolutely loved it. We had "snow" all over the place. I had to get the big "Ghostbusters" style vacuum cleaner out to clean up the mess.... The parents and FFNs were quite happy that we made the mess at the library and they didn't have to deal with it at home. We also got out a lot of the manipulative that we ordered last year in Kiowa. Up until now, we really didn't have a lot of space for them. We've opened up some bottom shelves to store them. The kids had so much fun! They lined the aisles with magnetic letters, numbers and puzzles. No one wanted to go home after story time."



Playing with letter-shaped magnets reinforces the idea that letters have sounds and can form words.



Interactive boards help develop fine motor skills used in writing.



Providing opportunities for children to explore and lead their own learning is a great way to support literacy development.

- Take services outside of the library to places FFN naturally go. FFN providers may not be regular library users for a variety of reasons such as transportation issues, time, or convenience of the library location. According to a librarian (Canon City), “The best strategy was going out to the places that they were at originally.... The farmer’s market was one of our better outreach programs that we did.... The farmers market has become a gathering spot for many of our FFN providers. We have been doing story times at the farmers market for the last 4 weeks and the attendance has grown over that time. Many of the FFN providers and parents have been using this time to discuss events that are coming up and sharing resources.” Another library (Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs) listed and reflected on outreach events, “...playgroups started by Alliance for kids, visiting playgroups run by Catholic Charities, and at summer food giveaways arranged by the local school district and Care and Share. These outreach opportunities shed a lot of light on where the library can connect with families.” Other locations frequently used by GRT libraries include parks, malls, and community centers. As GRT libraries discovered, taking services and programs off-site will increase the likelihood of attendance and reach additional audiences who may not frequent the library.

- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity. Provide early literacy materials and handouts in languages appropriate for the target community to facilitate engagement and ensure all caregivers feel welcome. Build early literacy collections that include diverse cultural representation and reflect the languages spoken in the community.

If bilingual services are not available at the library, consider working with a partner organization to translate materials. Many GRT libraries worked with partners to translate and disseminate early literacy materials in non-English languages.

- Promote participation in reading programs.

Encourage participation in programs that promote consistent reading such as 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, Bright by Three and Summer Reading Programs. These programs enhance and support early literacy efforts of the library by providing additional early literacy resources and encourage consistent reading through goal setting and gamification. One grandparent noted, “1,000 books before kindergarten was very good for my grandson. For every 100 books, Miss Debbie gave him a book prize and he really liked being able to choose a book, alphabet magnetic tiles and gummy worms called “bookworms”-I loved that”

Creating Community

Creating a sense of community and connection among FFN providers and between FFN providers and library staff increases the likelihood of continued engagement with early literacy services. FFN providers reported feeling like the library was a safe and welcome space for them to take children in their care and a supportive environment for them to meet other FFN providers.

- Dedicate time to informal interactions. Provide time and space for FFN caregivers to connect informally in order to increase interactions among providers and library staff. Consider scheduling time before or after early literacy programming specifically for free play time when FFN providers can connect while children play in a safe space. Ensure caregivers and children that they are welcome by encouraging interaction and play. Many GRT libraries described using informal interactions before and after programs to develop relationships with caregivers and children. One librarian (Gunnison) noted that through these interactions and learning about the children and caregiver’s backgrounds, she was able to identify how GRT could meet their specific needs. For example, she was able to distinguish which FFN providers were just beginning to implement early literacy practices and which caregivers had teaching experience and just needed more resources at home to enhance what they were already doing.

- Invest in FFN caregivers' development. Acknowledging their important work and the role they are already playing, demonstrate an interest and investment in FFN providers' own development by providing learning events on topics related to child development and care. These events provide multiple opportunities to learn, build social connection, and recognize the role of FFN providers in guiding the development of children in the community. This was named by one librarian (La Veta) as one of the greatest impacts of GRT, "I think the thing that had the greatest impact of the GRT program was that the FFNs in our community felt valued for what they were already doing. The recognition that those who care for young children have an essential role in the children's education and development empowered, challenged, and encouraged them to take that role seriously. The FFNs also appreciated the new ideas and the resources made available to them."

In addition to events, many GRT libraries enhanced their parenting and early childhood development collections. Locating these collections in the youth area facilitates easy access for caregivers who visit the library with children.

- Develop consistent touch points. Consistent effort and interaction are needed to develop meaningful relationships with new target audiences. Develop methods to stay in touch with caregivers regularly that do not depend on library visitation such as social media groups or newsletters. Use these channels to share early literacy tips and activities as well as promote library events and connect caregivers with additional resources and support organizations. One librarian (Limon) noted the impact of creating a Facebook group for FFNs, "Our [Facebook] group continues to promote [events] and gain visitors and we are using our library web pages to further get the word out. Members of the group are beginning to connect outside of the group and planning play dates...." The group allows the library to promote information as well as for members to interact and connect.

- Provide training opportunities for staff to develop new skills. Librarians take pride in the programming and services they deliver; however, many librarians do not have experience teaching or modeling early literacy skills. Ensuring staff have opportunities to further

their learning and gain new skills leads to increased confidence and more effective services. Several GRT librarians described increased enthusiasm and confidence in delivering early lit-

eracy programming after receiving additional training. One librarian (Burlington) said, "I was able to attend another library['s story time] and got a great feel for how it should look. I've been able to mirror what they do, add my own flavor, and have fallen in love with my Toddler Story Time. In the last three weeks, it's gone from 10 minutes to 45 minutes, I've added singing and dancing, we read multiple stories, and it has become one of the best times of my week instead of a chore to simply get through. I enjoy it, which means I know the family and kids are enjoying it too."

Similarly, actively promoting events and services can feel uncomfortable for staff not used to engaging in outreach. Providing professional development opportunities that equip staff with the tools to teach and confidence to demonstrate their skills to caregivers along with developing soft skills to improve personal interactions will help staff succeed in developing meaningful relationships with FFN caregivers.

- Serve as an information conduit.

Build community knowledge by informing FFN caregivers about the resources available to them through other community organizations and providing direct referrals to services. Utilize the information learned through partnerships and outreach to connect community partners who are working towards similar goals. Creating coalitions can result in more effective strategies to tackle community issues. For example, Canon City worked with a community mental health specialist to develop a series of programs that engaged children in creating their own books about themselves while evaluating them for kindergarten readiness and educating caregivers on early literacy and childhood development principles.

Quick tip:
Evaluate the names of current early literacy programming for inclusiveness. Consider renaming programs such as Mommy and Me story times to appeal to a wider audience.

The librarian noted, “Really lessons learned is that as a library people want to partner with us. If you are open to new ideas and new ways of doing it, the community organizations are going to be there to support you with it. I thought I’d have to do it all myself, but I got more support throughout the community from FFNs and local daycares.”

Solutions to common challenges

Creating a program plan that takes into account program activities and the resources needed can help identify potential obstacles to successfully developing services for FFN providers. GRT libraries identified time and staffing as the largest challenges to serving FFN providers. Below are some strategies developed to help mitigate these issues.

Quick tip:
Consider the different demographics of FFN when developing learning events. For example, grandparents or older FFN may be interested in topics such as lifting children safely while other FFN may be interested in how to become a licensed caregiver.

- **Find ways to integrate services to FFN providers into existing library programs when possible.** Many GRT libraries found that holding additional story times or events just for FFN involved too much time and often resulted in few attendees. Instead many libraries focused on promoting FFN services during regular early literacy programming and being intentional about having conversations with attendees before or after events to identify FFN caregivers. Libraries reported an enhanced focus on modelling early literacy techniques during all events with children and making flyers and signage, available throughout the library, explaining the benefits of these practices.
- **Build upon existing external resources.** There are numerous early literacy resources available, often for free, already. Take time to investigate resources that fit your community and library’s needs and find ways to enhance or add value. For example, many libraries promoted educational apps such as Vroom (<https://www.vroom.org/>) and created additional activities or resource kits that aligned with the app recommendations. Other commonly promoted programs include those already mentioned such as 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, Bright by Three, and Colorado statewide summer learning program, and One Book Colorado, a book for every 4-year-old.
- **Recruit volunteers.** If staffing is an issue for your library, consider recruiting volunteers to assist with activities. Look for individuals who may have skills that would benefit the work such as emergent or retired educators.



CONCLUSION

FFN caregivers play a critical role in the childcare environment of many communities; however, these informal childcare providers often do not receive the same level of support traditional caregivers have access to. Public libraries have the potential and unique opportunity to fill this gap in need and foster the high-quality care practices that are critical to healthy childhood development. As one librarian (Wray) noted, “The importance of the recognition of FFN’s was phenomenal. It created a sense of value for them and introduced them to services they didn’t know about or missed out on. They were so happy and appreciative to be thought of.”

GR libraries demonstrated that successful strategies for reaching FFN caregivers depend on robust outreach efforts, strong partnerships with community organizations, and fostering a sense of community. Developing language that helps FFN providers identify themselves and see their role in guiding childhood development is key to helping caregivers connect to services at the library. The library must be proactive in developing relationships with FFN providers by taking services outside of the library to convenient locations, working with community partners, and providing consistent, quality touch points. Library staff can increase the skill and confidence of FFN providers by modeling early literacy techniques and ways of engaging with children. Providing access to age appropriate materials both in the library and for home-use that encourage engagement around learning between caregiver and child help reinforce the importance of early literacy. Finally, promoting a child-friendly library environment by providing comfortable seating, low shelving with easy access to literacy materials, and spaces for learning through play encourages caregivers to see the library as a destination and welcoming space.

ⁱ According to UNESCO, “Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.” Entrance into this continuum of learning begins at birth and sets a child on the path to full-spectrum literacy throughout their lifetime. For our youngest children, full-spectrum literacy includes all aspects of school readiness and preschool to third grade components:

- language and literacy development, reading skills development through 3rd grade (including digital literacy development);
- cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development);
- executive function and approaches toward learning (desire to learn, independent inquiry, curiosity, and persistence);
- physical well-being and motor development (gross and fine motor skills);
- social and emotional development