

MICHIGAN'S LITERACY SCAN RESEARCH REPORT AND

BIRTH TO FIVE LITERACY SUPPORT NETWORK HUB GRANT INVESTMENT STRATEGY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall 2021, the Michigan Department of Education Office of Great Start (OGS) will launch the **Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hub Grants**. These grants aim to provide communities across the state of Michigan with a support structure and resources so that children, families, and educators can have equitable access to materials, training, and other supports for the development of birth-to-five literacy. OGS will award grant funding to encourage local organizations and agencies to develop equitable, effective, and sustainable birth-to-five initiatives as well as to help establish regional Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hubs. This initiative is supported by Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) resources awarded to Michigan in 2019 and renewed for 2020-2022.

Why?

- Literacy achievement is a statewide priority included in the eight goals of Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan, requiring dedicated resources and guidance from the state.
- OGS recognizes that families, communities, and child-serving agencies need to work together to support birth-to-five literacy development through research-based programming.
- While there are a wide variety of programs and services aimed at supporting birth-to-five literacy across the state, not all Michigan children have equitable access to these opportunities, and there is no centralized access point.
- The state of Michigan is committed to equity and recognizes that local communities' innovative practices can help ensure equitable access to birth-to-five literacy learning opportunities

What?

- OGS will establish 10 regional Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hubs as a collaborative effort to support family and provider engagement in birth-to-five literacy.
- The hubs will be spaces where local children, families, and educators can access effective and relevant birth-to-five literacy resources and programming.

How?

- OGS will provide funding to 10 regional hubs to offer birth-to-five literacy professional development, coaching, and program support.
- Hubs will receive funding based on their plans to promote equity, effectiveness, sustainability, and measurability for programming and initiatives in their local regions and communities.
- The role of the Birth to Five Literacy Support Network will be to increase community-based support for birth-to-five literacy across the state and mitigate disparities in access to research-based, culturally relevant opportunities.

Who?

- The 10 regional network hubs could include Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Great Start to Quality Resource Centers, nonprofit organizations, Michigan public libraries, and other community programs and agencies.

When?

- Applications are due by **July 26th, 2021, at 2 p.m.**
- The 10 regional hubs will be named in Fall 2021 and will receive start-up funding through December 2022.
- For more information about the grant application process and timeline, please visit https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-80635_86000-497719--,00.html

The Literacy Scan

OGS collaborated with School Readiness Consulting (SRC) to plan and conduct a statewide scan to identify innovative birth-to-five literacy practices and the challenges that communities face in supporting strong birth-to-five literacy outcomes across the state.



The SRC study team collected and analyzed qualitative data from individual interviews with state and local leaders; the comments of panelists from a Listen and Learn Symposium; and individual or group interviews with program leaders, community partners, and families from six programs identified as implementing innovative strategies from community members.



The team gathered quantitative data through a survey in which regional birth-to-five literacy stakeholders identified local-level literacy activities and needs. Overall, 143 Michigan stakeholders were engaged in this process. The scan and findings inform OGS's efforts to identify what is currently happening in the state, the gaps in birth-to-five literacy programming and initiatives, and recommendations for state support and funding.

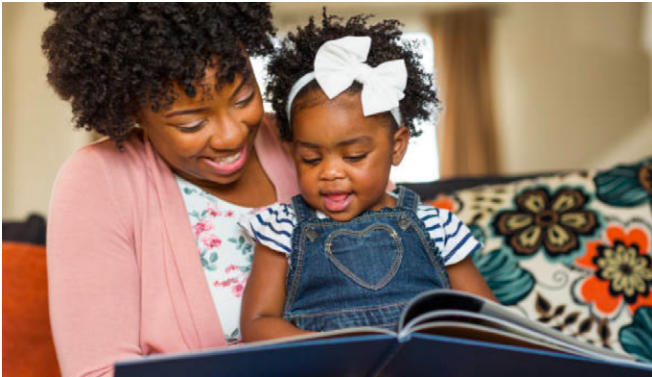
The final report includes a framework and criteria to inform the grant application and process for this Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hub Grant Investment Strategy.¹ The 10 regional birth-to-five literacy support network hubs will collectively form a statewide network.

¹The report and the grant framework are considered an "investment strategy" because they offer empirically based criteria and priorities to guide how OGS selects the birth-to-five literacy hubs that will be funded.

KEY FINDINGS

What's working well about local birth-to-five literacy initiatives?

The birth-to-five literacy scan highlighted the innovative practices, programming, and resources that Michigan's communities are using to support birth-to-five literacy. Key aspects of these birth-to-five literacy initiatives include the following:



- **Connections to families and the community are facilitating local literacy initiatives.** Innovative initiatives recognize that birth-to-five literacy is closely tied to family well-being and multi-generational literacy. These initiatives address the needs and assets of the families and communities that the initiatives serve. The initiatives are continually improved based on community stakeholders' feedback.
 - » Among survey respondents, **53.1%** reported that having families who are actively engaged as partners in their children's literacy development enables and benefits birth-to-five literacy programming.
- **Effective use of local resources and partnerships is supporting birth-to-five literacy initiatives.** Innovative literacy initiatives provide children and families with resources that are evidence-based and developmentally appropriate. The initiatives also use existing resources (including local cross-sector partnerships) in flexible and new ways.
 - » Among survey respondents, **58.3%** reported that using existing resources effectively and creatively made literacy programs in their community innovative.
 - » Among survey respondents, **55.2%** reported that cross-sector partnerships (such as public-private partnerships, collaboration across different types of organizations, and nontraditional partnerships) made the respondents' programs innovative.

KEY FINDINGS

How will this opportunity improve on local literacy efforts?

Michigan communities and regions need additional support and funds in order to continue supporting literacy development among all young children and their families, especially those who face vulnerability factors.



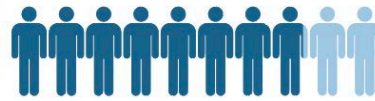
- **Advance equity-focused programming:** There is a need for innovative programs to prioritize equity and target racial and ethnic disparities in terms of literacy learning opportunities, to incorporate anti-racist frameworks in programming, and to further prioritize resources and programming for communities experiencing “vulnerability factors” (that is, communities that have historically been under-supported within the early childhood system –including racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; those experiencing poverty, homelessness, and other economic hardships; those with limited English proficiency; children with special needs; and communities that are geographically isolated).
 - » “When considering early learning from an equity perspective . . . strong family engagement practices are key. Innovation starts within communities—they know what their children need and what will work and what won’t work.” – **Early childhood state leader**
 - » Of the surveyed programs, **55.2%** are intended for all children and families in the community and don’t target specific vulnerable populations.

- **Provide more resources to programs:** Participants shared that the greatest obstacle for birth-to-five literacy innovation is limited financial resources and personnel.

Lack of Financial Resources



Western Region
81.5%



Eastern Region
77.8%



Upper Peninsula
& Northern Lower
Region **77.8%**



Southeastern
Region **64.3%**

- » Half of survey respondents (**51%**) reported lacking time and organizational capacity to develop literacy initiatives.

KEY FINDINGS

How will this opportunity improve on local literacy efforts? (cont'd)

- **Enable evaluation and ongoing improvement:**

Programs have limited internal capacity or expertise to effectively utilize systematic evaluation methods. There is a need to help build community partnerships to support evaluation and create a culture of data-based decision-making within communities.



» *“Being a data-driven organization, however that data might come, whether it’s qualitative or quantitative, we recognize it’s important and we still haven’t gotten some mastery around. What do we want to measure? I think that that’s an area of growth and opportunity. Just the capacity issue. We don’t have the capacity internally to do it.”*

– **Cofounder of community program, Southeastern Region**



WHAT'S NEXT FOR BIRTH-TO-FIVE LITERACY EFFORTS?

The state of Michigan and OGS can address existing local needs by providing funding, training, and networking opportunities through the Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hubs. Based on the state's goals and the study findings, the Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hubs will promote local birth-to-five literacy programming in the following areas:



Equitable access to birth-to-five literacy supports that lead to positive outcomes by incorporating the strengths and values of local children and families in program practices and materials and prioritizing resources and programming for communities that reflect the state's described "vulnerability factors."



Support for evidence-based and/or research-backed practices, informed by the community, by providing birth-to-five literacy programming that is aligned with current research on child development, partnering with the community in generating and informing local approaches to birth-to-five literacy, and engaging in a reflective process alongside families and communities to assess and improve quality on an ongoing basis.



Organizational capacity to implement and sustain birth-to-five literacy programming by aligning local efforts with statewide priorities and existing resources; leveraging existing capacity and cross-sector collaboration to sustain birth-to-five literacy efforts in families, programs, schools, and the Birth to Five Literacy Support Network Hub; leveraging existing capacity and cross-sector collaboration to sustain the regional birth-to-five literacy strategy; and telling a compelling story about the regional birth-to-five literacy strategy and the Birth to Five Literacy Support Network.



Measurable positive impacts on birth-to-five literacy in the region by supporting local birth-to-five literacy partners in efforts to evaluate birth-to-five literacy programming, defining meaningful and realistic targets for birth-to-five literacy programming and strategy, collecting and reporting data to demonstrate the reach and impact of the regional birth-to-five literacy strategy, and utilizing data to make decisions and drive continuous improvement.

For more information about the grant or the study, please visit https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-80635_86000-497719--,00.html

