

Colorado Public Libraries Early Literacy Framework

2020 - 2025



COLORADO
Department of Education
Colorado State Library

Introduction

For many years, Colorado public libraries have prioritized early literacy, acknowledging the vital role the public library plays in reaching our youngest residents and those that care for them. These crucial years set the path for future success in learning and in life.

This Early Literacy Framework for Colorado public libraries is intended to point to the next level of early literacy in public libraries for 2020 through 2025. The Colorado State Library recognizes that libraries prioritize their funds, staff, and resources based on their local needs and goals even as they have varied resources, funding, and staff for early literacy. To accommodate local adoption and practices, this framework provides an overarching statewide direction and activities that can be selected and implemented, or not, at the local level. In some communities, public libraries are already aligned with the initiatives outlined in this document. In other communities, the framework is aspirational. In any case, this framework offers a common vision that can ensure alignment across the state over time to address the fundamentally important area of early childhood language and literacy development.

To ensure success with initiatives launched to meet the goals of the framework, the Colorado State Library will:

- provide guidance for local libraries seeking to increase their early literacy portfolio.
- offer leadership to ensure alignment with other state organizations as well as local efforts across the state.
- prioritize early literacy in support of local libraries through professional development, research, resource allocation and recommendations, grants, and early literacy librarian expertise

This document was developed in consultation with library directors, early literacy librarians, and early childhood agencies throughout Colorado. The Framework process and product are a *Growing Readers Together* initiative funded by a grant from the Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation.

Vision

All Colorado children are healthy, valued, and thriving.¹

Mission

Colorado libraries engage with the whole community to inspire a love of reading from the earliest ages and to enhance kindergarten readiness and 3rd grade level reading.

Goals

- I. Colorado public libraries practice a full-spectrum literacy² approach for children from birth.
- II. Colorado library staff reflect and include the diversity of the community in all early literacy services.
- III. All library staff members understand and support early literacy as vital to library and community success.
- IV. All Colorado public libraries have full and sustainable funding to offer essential early literacy services.

¹ This statement is a shared vision articulated in the Early Childhood Colorado Framework <https://earlychildhoodframework.org/>.

² UNESCO provides a definition of full-spectrum literacy: "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

Early Literacy Framework Goals & Objectives

I. Colorado public libraries practice a full-spectrum literacy approach for children from birth.

Brain Building in the Library

- a. Libraries' collections, spaces, policies, staffing, partnerships, and programs address the full-spectrum literacy needs required for healthy early childhood development.
 - i. Staff are trained and knowledgeable in the early learning domains that foster full-spectrum literacy development.
 - ii. Staff connect and refer caregivers to partner agencies for developmental support throughout early childhood.
 - iii. Libraries prioritize access points to early childhood full-spectrum literacy through their collections, spaces, policies, staffing, services, and programs for all young children, families, and caregivers.
- b. Libraries offer opportunities for family members and caregivers to encourage children's experiences that prepare them for kindergarten.
 - i. Collections include rich early literacy offerings for all levels from pre-reading and reading.
 - ii. Parents and caregivers have the resources to be children's first teachers, including Growing Readers Together, 1,000 Books before Kindergarten, and summer learning.
 - iii. Events for babies and toddlers bring in children and their caregivers from the beginning, as well as provide library service outside the library walls in the community.
- c. Libraries collaborate with schools, parents, caregivers, and children to achieve third grade reading level for children 9 and under.
 - i. Staff are trained and knowledgeable to encourage, support, and expand on reading instructional strategies used with children in their schools.
 - ii. Public library collections and programs address the unique interests and needs for children in grades kindergarten through third grade.
 - iii. Public libraries participate in early literacy public awareness campaigns, events, and other initiatives that promote early literacy.

II. Colorado libraries reflect and include the diversity of the community in all early literacy services.

"The Library Speaks My Language and Looks Like Me."

- a. *At home in the library*– All children and their caregivers feel welcome and enjoy being at the public library.
- b. Library staff and leadership represent the diverse make-up of the community served, including languages spoken, ethnicities, and other diversity.
- c. *"Books as Windows and Mirrors,"* Rudine Sims Bishop - Collections include materials in different languages, diverse cultural representation, and merchandising to allow children both to see themselves reflected in the material and to view others' experiences.
- d. Public library offerings include outreach and off-site programs to children and families throughout the community.
- e. Library staff are information conduits that partner with and connect children and their families and caregivers to other community organizations and opportunities.

III. All library staff members understand and support early literacy as vital to library and community success.

Early Literacy is Everyone's Job

- a. Library leadership is committed to full-spectrum literacy as a model for early literacy offerings.
- b. The library culture includes hiring, training, and evaluating staff with early literacy as part of their work. All staff appropriately cultivate child-centered relationship building in the community. They are all advocates for full-spectrum literacy.
- c. All library staff have training and expertise in human development, including working knowledge of early childhood development milestones, local agencies, and library strategies for addressing the needs of our youngest children.
- d. Early literacy staff and partners are valued as essential to library success.

IV. All Colorado public libraries have full and sustainable funding to offer essential early literacy services.

Libraries - Fully Funded for All Children

- a. Every Colorado public library system as at least one youth services librarian with early literacy and full-spectrum literacy competencies.
- b. Funding is available for early literacy materials in various languages and with diverse offerings.
- c. All libraries to have dedicated funding for early literacy spaces with brain building activities, events, and informal learning.
- d. Colorado libraries are interconnected with other agencies and supports for early childhood development, kindergarten readiness, and 3rd grade level reading.
- e. Funding and other resources are available and allocated for library staff to provide outreach services throughout each community.