



Community Engagement

Early Literacy in the Community and at Home

In 2023, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek and the Oregon Legislature started the Early Literacy Success Initiative to help children in Oregon learn reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is supporting families and community groups as they help children develop those skills. ODE wants to create materials and tools for those community groups as they help families and children.

ODE worked with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT) to find out what people need to help children develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. What ODE heard will shape their materials and tools for community groups.

OKT used surveys and gatherings to hear from people all across Oregon. This summary tells what OKT heard.

ABOUT OREGON'S KITCHEN TABLE

OKT is part of Portland State University. OKT works to give all people a voice in public decisions. We talk with people who usually aren't included in these decisions. We help people discuss state, local, and regional issues. We use many ways and many languages to learn what

people think and experience. And we value the wide range of ideas and experiences that people tell us about.

HOW WE HEARD FROM PEOPLE

We used the following tools to find out what people think and feel about what people think and feel about supporting children develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills:

- Paper surveys
- Online surveys in nine languages
- OKT discussions with families and with community groups
- A guide for people to host their own discussions

We used the following tools to tell people about the surveys and events:

- Social media
- Group messaging platforms
- Email and text messages
- Phone calls
- In-person outreach

WHAT WE ASKED PEOPLE ABOUT

First, we told people about how ODE will support community groups to help families and children develop those early literacy skills. Next, we asked people about the following:

- What activities they do with their families and / or children to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills
- What activities they would like to see more of in their community
- What they want to learn more about to help children develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills
- Barriers they see in helping families and children to develop those skills
- If they are part of a community group, how they partner with schools
- What hopes they have for children in their families and communities about early literacy

The survey also asked people the ages of the children they support or who are in their family, where they live, their age, their race, ethnicity or Tribe, and the language they prefer to use.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

We heard from nearly 800 people. About half of the people prefer to receive information in a language other than English. Many people belong to a group that faces unequal access to educational opportunities.

They shared in the following ways:

- 391 people answered surveys
- People attended 12 meetings run by community organizers
- People from community groups attended 10 discussions on Zoom
- People from 17 organizations told us what people are saying about early literacy in their communities

WHAT WE HEARD

We learned a lot about what people are doing and want to see more of to help children develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Many community groups are already doing a lot in their communities. Many families are also doing a lot to help their children. Both community groups and families want more support.

What people agreed about

- Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are important throughout families' daily lives. That can feel hard. But it also means there are many ways to support children learning them.
- It is important to honor and celebrate what families and communities are already doing.
- It is important that the places and people who help families and children are joyful and fun. It is also important to have a warm welcome from the start.
- People want to have or offer more tutoring. But people think that will be hard to do.
- Community groups want to partner with schools. They want to work together to help families and children.

What people disagreed about

- Some people think technology can help support children develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Other people think that it is better to use hands-on materials.

- Many people want to make sure that community groups know about and use research and evidence to understand what might work best for children. Other people worry that research and evidence will not be in plain language. Some people want to make sure children will still have fun.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

People's comments give ODE ideas about what to include the materials and tools for community groups. ODE also heard new ideas about how to get input in the future. People are eager to be part of helping children in Oregon develop early literacy skills in many ways.

ODE could do the following:

- Update materials and tools over time
- Talk more with people whose children learn in two or more languages
- Help people celebrate and learn from each other
- Help connect community groups more with schools. This is so they can work together more.

CONCLUSION

Many people want to be part of helping children in Oregon develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. They hope that community groups can work more with families and schools.