



NEWS RELEASE

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Growing Readers Initiative

Children who are on track to read by third grade have a significant advantage for future learning. Families that encourage reading in the home and read with their children are critical to early reading success. With that in mind, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is committing \$2 million to the Nebraska Growing Readers Initiative to send age-appropriate books to families and childcare providers across the state. The program will also support strategies and training for reading to preschool children, particularly in “book deserts” where access to books is scarce.

With this investment, the goal is to provide dozens of age-appropriate children’s books to thousands of children in households throughout the state and give access to books to 1,000 early childhood providers.

“It is well known that children learn to read through third grade, then they read to learn,” said Commissioner of Education Brian Maher. “With this investment we want to help more families give their children the best chance to succeed.”

Together with partners at the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Statewide Family Engagement Center, and Unite for Literacy, the project will distribute more than half a million books.

“Nebraska Children envisions a state where every child has the resources and support to thrive. We are excited to partner with the Nebraska Department of Education and Unite for Literacy on this statewide effort to expand access to books for Nebraska’s youngest children as well as encourage parents to read with their children on a daily basis,” said Mary Jo Pankoke, President and CEO of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

The Nebraska Growing Readers Initiative will deliver a predetermined number of books based on need to 18 sites across Nebraska. Each site will also receive a high level of technical assistance. The project will use data and interactive mapping tools to monitor progress and to provide feedback for stakeholders and childcare providers.

The goal of the project is to make Nebraska one of the nation’s most extensive book gardens, eliminating book deserts across the state. For more information on the project visit <https://www.singasongofsixpence.org/news/nebraska-growing-readers/>

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