



## NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email ([david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov))

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### **Nebraska Growing Readers Pilot Program Shows Positive Impact on Book Access and Early Literacy Behaviors**

A statewide pilot program, Nebraska Growing Readers (NGR), demonstrated significant positive associations with book access and early literacy behaviors among young children, according to a 2024 evaluation. The initiative, which began in October of 2023, was a partnership between Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Statewide Family Engagement Center, Unite for Literacy, and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). Using a \$2 million commitment from the NDE, the program distributed an impressive 886,063 books to 37,872 children aged three to five across Nebraska with the goal of fostering improved reading habits and literacy development.

The evaluation examined the impact of the NGR book distribution across three distinct participant groups: Early Childcare Providers, Sixpence Home Visitation Families, and Entering Kindergartners in Lincoln, Omaha, Hastings, and Schuyler. A total of 260 early childcare providers, 155 caregivers, and 132 children from various locations in Nebraska participated in the evaluation. Researchers utilized surveys for families and providers, alongside direct assessments of children's early language/literacy development, protective factors, and behavioral concerns.

Key findings from the evaluation include:

- A notable increase in access to books within participating early childcare centers.
- A significant rise in the frequency of daily reading with children reported by both participating families and early childcare settings following the NGR book distribution.
- A significant correlation between the number of books and the frequency of reading in early childcare settings and among families involved in Sixpence Home Visitation.
- Among Sixpence Home Visitation Families, children with a larger number of books at home showed a significantly higher likelihood of meeting benchmarks for early language and literacy skills.

The evaluation concluded that the Nebraska Growing Readers program is associated with positive changes in book availability, reading habits, and specific language and literacy skills in early childhood. While researchers acknowledged limitations related to smaller sample sizes in some areas, the overall findings suggest that the program effectively encouraged more consistent daily reading practices and holds substantial promise for positively influencing early childhood literacy development across Nebraska.

#### **About Nebraska Growing Readers:**

The Nebraska Growing Readers (NGR) pilot program was a statewide initiative focused on enhancing reading behaviors and literacy development in children aged three to five. By distributing a significant number of books directly to children and

through participating organizations, the program aimed to create a more book-rich environment and encourage early reading habits. For more information on the program visit the [Nebraska Growing Readers website](#). For more details from the program launch see our news release [Growing Readers Initiative](#) online.

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*David Jespersen*  
*Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education*  
*402-471-4537*  
*david.jespersen@nebraska.gov*  
*@NDE\_News*