

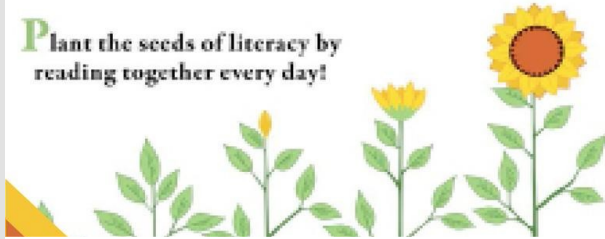


Nebraska

Growing Readers

Newsletter
May 2024

Plant the seeds of literacy by reading together every day!



Adopt Shared Reading Habits

Summer will soon be here, and, while it's a great opportunity to play outdoors with your children, don't forget to make time for reading. The reading habits you introduce your young ones to now, will establish the foundations that will lead to later success.

After all, the years before elementary school are a time for children to learn from you a lot about how to use books. Modeling to infants and toddlers how to hold the book, turn the pages and where to start reading are simple but powerful ways to prepare children to be successful once they go to school.

Note: After you register, books take approximately four weeks to arrive. If you haven't received them yet, they are on the way! Thank you for your patience during this processing time. While you wait, we still invite you to engage with the program, get families excited to receive books, and utilize the online library.



The program is going great! It is so good to see the students and families excited to select their own titles. In total, families have selected over 300 books. I love literacy! To see the look on families faces as they grow their home libraries is amazing!

--Andrea Foster, Educare Kellom in Omaha

NGR News



Nebraska Growing Readers Books Make a Difference in an Unexpected Way

Liam Al-Hindi explains that students in the Metropolitan Community College Adult Education program take standardized testing when they reach 40 hours of instructional time in a class. Al-Hindi is one of a group of dedicated instructors at Metro who teach Adult Education classes to English-language learners as part of the Learning Community North Omaha - Parent University. He says, “we all love what we do!”

He goes on to explain that students test at different times because they can gain instructional hours from work outside the classroom. Two students recently hit the 40-hour mark, and when their test results came back, Al-Hindi says, “both of them showed really promising gains in reading.” As part of his testing process, Al-Hindi holds individual debriefs with students to find out what has been working and what hasn’t. When he spoke with the two students separately, he said, “Your reading went up a lot. Can you tell me what you’ve been doing, because it works?” Both of them, he reports, said that using Nebraska Growing Readers books

helped a lot, adding in a subsequent meeting that they said they particularly enjoyed reading to their children.

The Nebraska Growing Readers (NGR) program has aimed primarily at providing free books for licensed childcare providers who can share them with their families, but the books have also been distributed to other organizations where children and families can access them. Al-Hindi said he learned of the program in December of 2023 when his Director showed him the books, which they thought could be useful for the adults in ESL classes to use. The books were made available in the Metro library and, in February, Al-Hindi and other instructors began handing books out to their students. He says that his students take books home to read to their children and to use in practicing their study of English.

[Read the full story.](#)



Coming Soon--Mailing Books Directly to Incoming Kindergartners!

One of the next steps for Nebraska Growing Readers is sending books directly to the homes of kids who will be starting kindergarten this fall. Children at your child care are invited to participate! We will be sending more information very soon about getting them registered, so watch your email!

Reading Tips

Nebraska Growing Readers supports the adoption of shared book reading in home and educational settings. To promote this, early childhood professionals might invite families to decorate a cardboard box or plastic container that can be used to store books at home. Families can personalize the book box by adding their child's name, colorful stickers, and bows.

Making a special place to keep books helps children know where to find their books in their favorite reading spot. This book box can be the perfect place for children to store their Nebraska Growing Readers books.

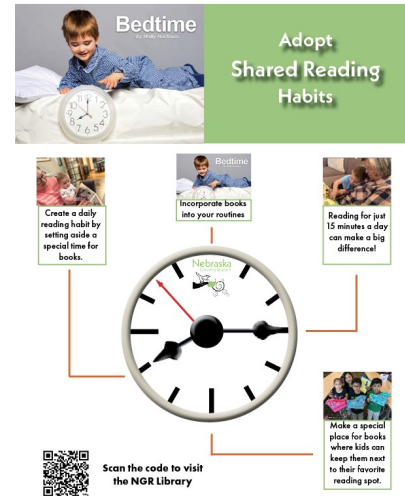


Shared Reading Habits

There are many ways to support the adoption of shared book reading, including:

- Create a daily reading habit from birth
- Find a special place to keep books at home
- Set aside a special time for reading
- Use the [Unite For Literacy website](#) to read and listen to books in different languages

You can download the flyer that highlights shared reading by clicking on the image.



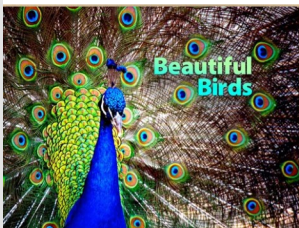
Nebraska Book Spotlight



Bedtime leads children through the familiar bedtime rituals that are part of healthy development and that include reading as an important part of bedtime. The book can be an introduction to telling time, a fun game of "what's next?", or just a nice way to wind down and relax before bed.

-read books about bedtime
-relax and have fun when you read

[Read *Bedtime*](#)



Beautiful Birds is full of lovely photos of birds in action. The book provides opportunities to talk about different colors, to learn different types of birds, to think about the things that birds do, and to talk about when and where we find birds.

-learn the names of familiar birds
-take time to watch the birds that live near you

[Read *Beautiful Birds*](#)

Did you enjoy *Bedtime* and *Beautiful Birds* selections? Want to read more springtime books or see other books available in the NGR Library?

[Visit the NGR Library](#)

Join Our New Facebook Group

Nebraska Growing Readers has a new Facebook Group where you can get up-to-date information about the program; engage with this program and the other NGR provider sites; and share ideas, resources, and tips for getting kids excited about reading.

[Follow Us on Facebook](#)

This private group, will require you to answer a question to get in. There are no wrong answers. We just want to assure a safe space specifically for providers.

Learn More through NGR Webinars

Join us for an NGR webinar in May! We have set up several opportunities for you to learn more about the program, get to know the NGR team, and be in the know about all things Nebraska Growing Readers. The presentation includes:

- An overview of what NGR is;
- A discussion of what role you as a provider play in this work;
- More information about Kindergarten home mailings;
- An overview of our upcoming projects;
- A Q-and-A session for the rest of the hour.

The NGR Webinar is offered on three occasions and a recording will be available in the NGR Provider Facebook group. Zoom links will be shared via email and on our Facebook Group before the events.

1. Tuesday, May 14 at 1pm
2. Thursday, May 16 at 6pm
3. Sunday, May 19 at 2pm



Completed Family Surveys Help Us Help You

If you are a registered NGR early childhood professional, please encourage your families to complete the family survey you'll find using the QR code below (or copy and paste the link provided into your browser). This information helps us continue to fund the Nebraska Growing Readers initiative so that we can keep providing your families with free books. You should have received posters you can display to make it easy for families to link to the survey (you can download extra posters by clicking on the image).

The survey is now available in Spanish! It is still the same link, but the first question now offers a language drop down menu to choose between English or Spanish.

When all of your families have completed the survey, please send an email to [Wendy Keele](mailto:Wendy.Keele@nebraskagrowingreaders.org), and we will enter your name in a drawing for a chance to win a \$20.00 Amazon gift card. Thank you for your cooperation!



Scan the QR code with your phone to access the family survey.

Copy and paste link: https://ncff.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1BondGGIrUJr6v4

Learn more about Nebraska Growing Readers and find resources to help you connect with families by visiting our website.



Your book garden could be in your own backyard

- Scan the code below with your smart phone to complete a brief survey
- You will receive free monthly books from Nebraska Growing Readers through your provider
- Find books that are connected to the culture, language, and area appropriate for your child
- Access a library of Nebraska-related books as well as the entire Unite for Literacy library



Click on image to download a copy.

Visit the NGR Website



NGR Resources Help You Connect with Families

We have resources available on the NGR website so that you can better connect with families about shared reading habits and available materials. You can, for example, **click on the image to download a "Free Books" sign that has an enlarged QR code that links to the NGR library.**

[View More Resources.](#)

Send us your family pictures!

We'd love to see pictures of your family reading Nebraska Growing Readers books and include them in our newsletter. Please send your photos to [Ivan Young](#) and feel free to include comments on what your children enjoy about reading and the books you read to them.



Nebraska Growing Readers is a collaboration between Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Statewide Family Engagement Center, and Unite for Literacy.

If you need to change the quantity of books you are receiving or would like to be receiving some books in Spanish, please contact [Wendy Keele](mailto:wkeele@nebraskachildren.org) (wkeele@nebraskachildren.org) or [Greta Carlson](mailto:gcarlson@nebraskachildren.org) (gcarlson@nebraskachildren.org) to get that changed for your next shipment.



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