

Plant the seeds of literacy by  
reading together every day!

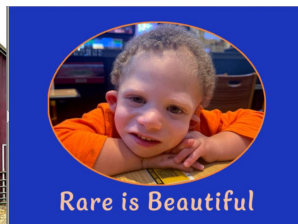


## Cultural and Linguistic Relevance

One of Nebraska Growing Readers' primary goals is to increase access to culturally and linguistically responsive books that reflect Nebraska's diverse population. We want to reach all the state's children whether they live in rural areas, small towns, or big cities. Furthermore, we want to provide books that speak to a broad range of cultural experiences so that families can find books in their native languages and read about the traditions that are connected to their lives.

A 2020 study by Oakland University Professor Tanya Christ revealed that "students' reading comprehension improves when reading culturally relevant books whose characters, places and events align well with their own cultural and experiential backgrounds." Providing such books for families to read to their children at an early age then lays the groundwork for future reading success and has the added benefit of exposing all the children in a program to various backgrounds, which has been proven to increase empathy and to foster positive social-emotional development.

In this month's newsletter, we will look at ways that providing a literacy environment that is relevant to young readers can benefit them, enhance classrooms, and promote strong family-educator bonds.

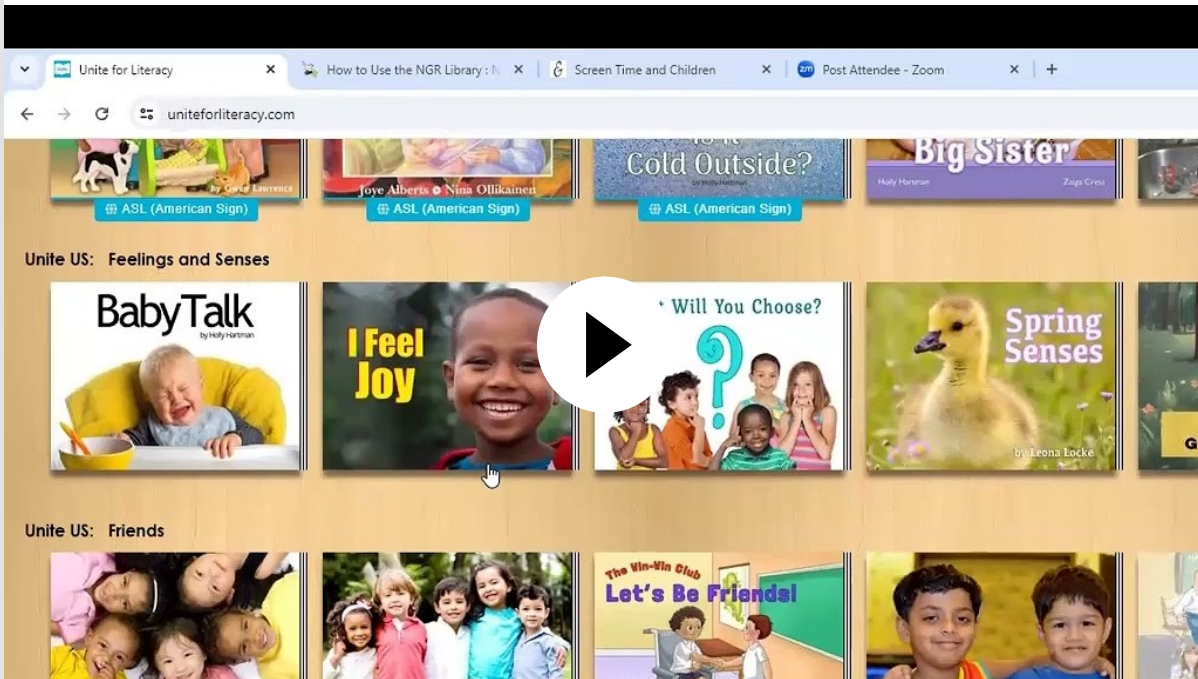


## Reading Tip

Include books that represent a variety of perspectives, especially those that connect to your children. Seeing their perspective as part of your library tells them their voice and experience is important.

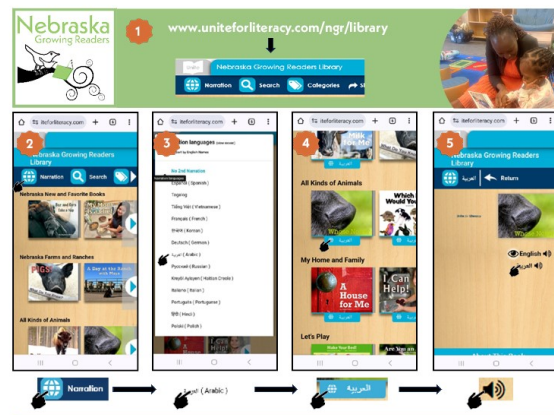
## A Deep Dive into the NGR Digital Library

Click the video below to watch this webinar. For access to a version with the full transcript included, please click [here](#).



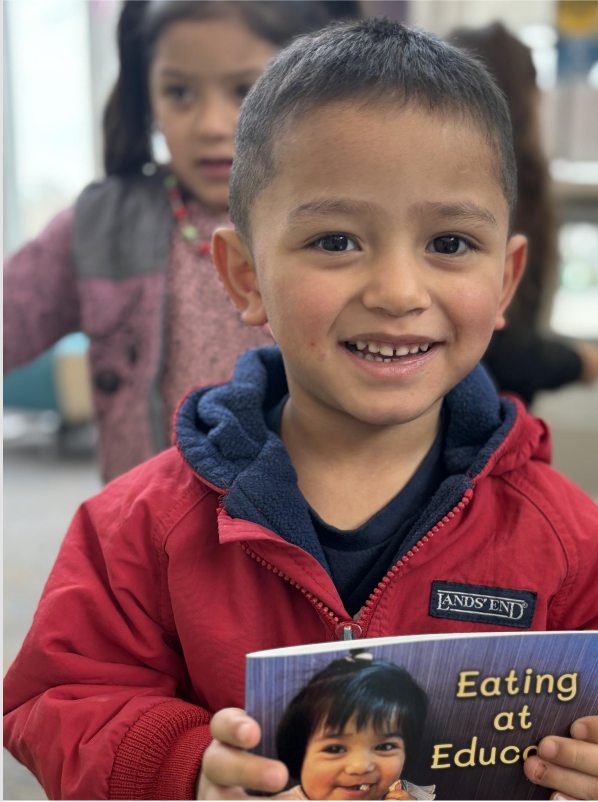
## Digital Library Instructions

You can click on the image to the right to get a downloadable digital library instructions guide for non-English speakers. The guide demonstrates how to find books in the various languages in the digital NGR library.



## Reading Tip

Use the NGR Digital Library for families to access books in up to 50 languages.



## 3,007 Kindergarteners Registered!

In the first month since registration opened, Nebraska Growing Readers has registered over 3,000 kindergartners!

[Learn More](#)

NGR News





## Literacy as a Little Community Magic

At one of the early Nebraska Growing Readers (NGR) events held at Educare Indian Hill, Janelle Nissen describes parents whose “eyes welled up with tears.” She’s talking about the *Eating at Educare* book-signing, a story co-written by the facility’s cook Miss Belinda and Laura Cady, a story featuring other workers, teachers, and children at Indian Hill. Nissen, who is the Director of Educare Indian Hill, says, “watching the parents see themselves in the books; to see them and to see the children see themselves in the book was magical.”

Nissen has been involved with Nebraska Growing Readers since it began in 2023 when Laura Cady began working closely with Indian Hill as a test site for writing books and family engagement. Thanks to Nissen and Cady, it has since been a forerunner in hosting literacy events for the program. As Nissen puts it, “NGR hits our mission of that two-generational home-to-school connection as well as getting books in the home.” What Nissen is doing is building a literacy community, where connections between home and school, involvement of parents and children, events focused on books, unite not only the Educare community but also the local community around reading.

Educare Indian Hill was a Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Sixpence site and helped launch the Nebraska Growing Readers initiative, an event that hosted Nebraska’s First Lady Suzanne Pilleen as an advocate of literacy and the work NGR is doing. Since then, Nissen has found creative ways to build community around literacy and has made NGR a core part of the effort.

[Read the full story.](#)

## Reading Tip

Connect NGR books with items or activities that can be presented in more than one language or that represent another culture. Food is a great way to experience the variety of backgrounds Nebraska children represent. See, for example, *My Mom is a Chef* (click image to see the book), which presents traditional Salvadorian food.



## NGR Website

Nebraska Growing Readers continues to build the resources available for early childhood professionals and families. We invite you to explore the NGR site.

[Visit Our Website](#)

## Nebraska Book Spotlight



*My Farm* is a real farm in Nebraska and is a great way to talk about the different types of places people live. You can use the book to introduce farm animals to children, to talk about what you can do or explore on a farm, or even to introduce foods made from farm products, such as corn and eggs.

-What other animals might live on a farm?  
-What job would you like to do on a farm?

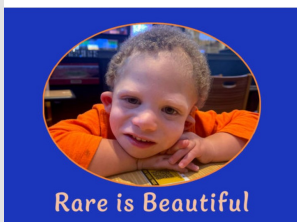
[Read My Farm](#)



*My Busy Family* explores what family means, the types of things families do, and how family members help each other. The book is at a higher reading-level for older children and can be used to get children to think about the different types of families, such as adoptive families or single-parent families.

-Make a list of things you like to do as a family.  
-Plan a time for reading together every day.

[Read My Busy Family](#)



*Rare is Beautiful* is a touching way to get children to think about difference. Who do they know that might be different? But how are they similar as well?

-Talk about how Jeter is just like other kids.  
-Talk about friends that are the same and friends that are different.



Read *Rare Is Beautiful*



*Everyone Reads* includes photos of people from a variety of backgrounds and can be used as a way to talk about cultural differences. It is also a great way to show how important reading is and how it connects people.



Read *Everyone Reads*



*Helping My Mom* shows how, no matter the background, the way families help each other. The book can be used to talk about the chores people do at home, why they do them, and how children can help out in an educational setting as well.



Read *Helping My Mom*

**Did you enjoy reading these books?  
Want to read other books available  
in the NGR library?**

Visit the NGR Library

Reading Tip

Invite a family to share something unique about their background and connect what they share to an NGR book. Be sure to provide that book to children to take home so they can tell their own families what they've learned.



Join Our Facebook Group

Nebraska Growing Readers has a 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

July's webinar is "What You Say Matters" presented by Paula Southworth, who will offer information about how our words affect children's behavior and social emotional development. The webinar is free and awards 1 in-service hour to attendees. Topics include:

- A discussion of how words affect children's behavior;
- Brainstorming alternative phrases to replace "no";
- Learning how to use words to support children's emotional literacy and support social development.

The same presentation will be available at 3 different times:

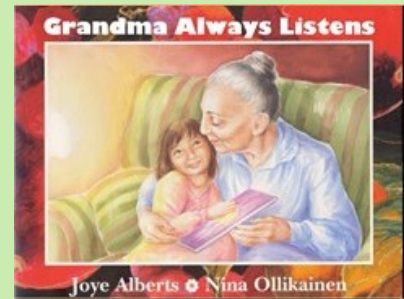
1. Tuesday, July 23 @ 1:00 pm
2. Wednesday, July 24 @ 6:00 pm
3. Sunday, July 28 @ 2:00 pm

To learn more about this Professional Development Training through NECPRS please click here:

<https://necprs.ne.gov/training-public>;

You can also contact [Greta Carlson](mailto:gcarlson@nebraskachildren.org) (gcarlson@nebraskachildren.org) with any questions.

See our [Facebook Group](#) to learn more!



## 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.



### **Our Contact Information**

Nebraska Children & Families Foundation  
215 Centennial Mall South  
Suite 200  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-476-9401  
<http://www.NebraskaChildren.org>

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage email preferences](#)