



Nebraska Growing Readers

Enewsletter
October 2024

Plant the seeds of literacy by
reading together every day!



Nebraska Content

We don't question the value of books about toys or cute baby animals or cartoon characters going on adventures and the impact they have on children's interest in being read to and eventually reading themselves. These things that are part of a child's world, of course, make reading more interesting to them.

But what about books that are relevant in other ways? Not every child has the same home experiences, speaks the same language at home, engages in the same cultural rituals. Does it matter then when children's books speak to a range of cultural experiences? According to an Oakland University study, yes! The study conducted by Professor Tanya Christ of reading and language arts in the School of Education and Human Services concludes, "students' reading comprehension improves when reading culturally relevant books whose characters, places and events align well with their own cultural and experiential backgrounds."

Nebraska Growing Readers has made it a main goal to provide culturally relevant content to young readers so that they can engage with the experiences that feel most important to them. As part of that process, NGR has invited Nebraska authors to write books that speak to specific Nebraska experiences and the diverse range of people who make up our state. On the Nebraska shelves of the NGR Library, you'll find content connected to specific Nebraska places; to different identities, languages, and cultural experiences; and to the familiar things Nebraska children see every day.

In this month's newsletter, we highlight Nebraska-related content and books written by Nebraska authors.

October Webinar Opportunities

October presents 3 Nebraska Growing Readers opportunities to attend the webinar "Developing Effective Strategies when Reading to Young Children." The training will highlight how reading adaptations lead to positive outcomes. Unite for Literacy books will be used as examples of utilizing adaptation.

1. October 15 from 1:00 – 2:00 pm Central Time
2. October 17 from 6:00 – 7:00 pm Central Time
3. October 20 from 2:00 – 3:00 pm Central Time

All three seminars can be accessed through this Zoom link:
<https://uso6web.zoom.us/j/81942821637>

To learn more about this Professional Development Training through NECPRS please click here: <https://necprs.ne.gov/training-public>;

You can also contact [Wendy Keele](mailto:wkeele@nebraskachildren.org) (wkeele@nebraskachildren.org) with any questions.

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



Book Activity Drawing Winners



Thanks to all of you who submitted book activities. We want to congratulate the drawing winners:

Stacy Munster from Little Disciples Preschool in Cozad, NE

"We like using puppets or a felt board to go along with the stories."

Comment: Great idea to extend the story in many sensory ways!

Virginia Tjarks, home provider in Hastings, NE

"Every day we read before nap, so they can relax"

Comment: Way to build reading into routines!

Shari Hutchison, Sixpence home visitor in Lincoln, NE



"On a home visit, the parent read "Numbers All Around", and had her children look around the room and find numbers. It's a very simple activity that both her 2 and 3 year old enjoyed."

Comment: What a simple way to use the book for extended learning, and connecting to math in our everyday world!

NGR News

The changing fall leaves remind us that another year is coming to an end, and, for Nebraska Growing Readers, October brings us to a full year of promoting literacy for the state's youngest children. And what a year! NGR has brought over 800,000 books to children across the state: families take books home from providers to build their own libraries, incoming kindergarteners rush to the mailbox to receive their weekly book mailings, and Community Book Gardens offering free books are blossoming in areas in need of book outlets.

To celebrate that year, we want to review the stories that have chronicled the growth of NGR over the course of the year. We know you've been busy, so in case you missed it, here are those stories again. Find out what other NGR book readers have been up to.



Nebraska Growing Readers Books Make a Difference in an Unexpected Way

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

[Read NGR Books Make a Difference](#)



Books in Little Hands

Both Kim Chase and Amy Standley agree on a very specific detail about Nebraska Growing Readers (NGR) books: they fit well in small hands. While this may seem minor, it means that the children these early childhood professionals work with are holding the books, looking at the colorful pictures, identifying what they see; such moments are the early literacy moments NGR strives for.

Read Books in Little Hands



Literacy as a Little Community Magic

Janelle 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.

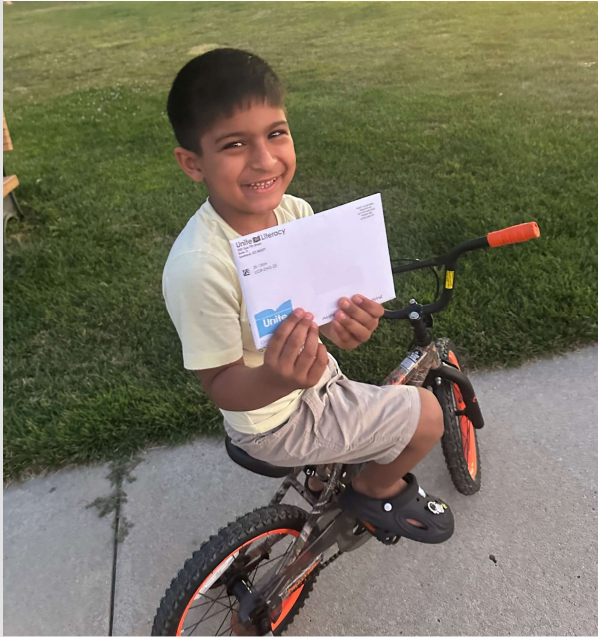
Read Literacy as a Little Community Magic



You've Got Mail

Renae Norenberg, who has owned and operated Nae's Away from Home childcare in Fremont since 1990, says, "my kids just get ecstatic. They watch for the mail. It's like they know when those books are going to be coming. They want to open the door to see if they have a little box on the porch. We can't open them fast enough." Norenberg is talking about the free boxes of NGR books that are sent to early childhood educators who are registered with the program.

Read *You've Got Mail*



Building Book Excitement through Nebraska Growing Reader's Incoming Kindergarten Free Book Program

Literacy is a ritual in the Mohmand household. Fariha Mohmand is an Afghan refugee who says, "literacy is the door to teaching my kids the importance of education." That's why when she saw Nebraska Growing Readers offer to send her son Yousof free books as he prepared to enter kindergarten in the fall, she jumped at the opportunity.

Read *Building Book Excitement*

Share a Nebraska Book

Kids love trucks and *Touch-a-Truck* is chock full of all those big vehicles that fascinate little ones. Firetrucks, boats, motorcycles, and more get them thinkin about their favorites. Use *Touch-a-Truck* to talk about professions and the types of vehicles they use or, better yet, plan a trip to next year's touch-a-truck event and use the book in the lead-up to get kids excited.



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



Mom's Apple Tree can be used to talk about different types of apples or fruit, to explore how things grow, or to share the foods made by apples. Try an apple tasting using several different types of apples. How are they different?



[Read Mom's Apple Tree](#)



Maya the Ranch Dog explores a Nebraska cattle ranch through the eyes of the family dog. This text, appropriate for older children, lets children imagine what the daily routine of a ranch is and has fun with the things a dog might do.



[Read Maya the Ranch Dog](#)

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

[Visit the NGR Library](#)

Share a Nebraska Book

Children will be delighted to discover where the dairy products they drink and eat come from. *Milk for Me* introduces them to the process of milk making from the cow to store to table. Use the book to talk about what other products come from farms or to show them what delicious foods are made from milk.



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.



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](#) (wkeele@nebraskachildren.org) or [Greta Carlson](#) (gcarlson@nebraskachildren.org) to get that changed for your next shipment.



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