

Executive Summary

Pursuant to [ORS 327.839](#), this report is being submitted by the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) to inform the legislature on the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, incorporated below. DELIC developed the plan as a comprehensive framework aimed at improving early literacy outcomes for children from birth through age five. Grounded in the goals of the Early Literacy Success Initiative (HB3198), the plan emphasizes equity, cultural responsiveness, inclusivity, and addresses disparities in access to quality literacy programs and services.

The Birth Through Five Literacy Plan aims to transform early literacy in Oregon by:

- Empowering families as children's first teachers.
- Equipping educators with tools and training to address diverse needs.
- Supporting Tribal Nations in preserving and revitalizing Native American languages.
- Bridging gaps in access to create an inclusive and more equitable early learning system.

Key Survey Findings on Early Literacy in Oregon

27% of survey respondents, including families and early learning professionals, identified **access to books** in families' primary language as a critical need.

23% of survey respondents would like to see more activities that offer ways for **families to learn and connect** with each other around topics including literacy.

16% of early learning professionals expressed a desire for training on **supporting multilingual learners**.

The plan recognizes the critical period of brain development between birth and age five when a child's foundational skills for literacy are established. It also acknowledges the essential role of families, educators, and Tribal Nations in fostering these skills. Importantly, the plan is **informed by robust community engagement efforts**, including input from families, educators, and consultation with Tribal Nations within Oregon's borders. Through a partnership with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT), DELIC hosted [multilingual surveys and discussions](#), ensuring that diverse voices shaped the plan's development.

A fundamental priority of the plan is to **address disparities and promote equity**. Oregon's diverse population includes a growing number of children from historically marginalized communities. Nearly 15% of children under age five live below the federal poverty level (FPL)¹ and experience significant disparities in access to early literacy programs. Furthermore, 44% of children aged five and below are children of color², yet the early learning workforce remains predominantly white (67%).³ Research highlights the

importance of culturally responsive programming and the integration of home languages in early literacy efforts. For example, studies show that incorporating a child's home language strengthens family bonds and enhances literacy outcomes.⁴

1. The 2024 federal poverty guidelines are \$25,820 for three persons in a household and \$31,200 for four persons in a household

2. Oregon Early Learning Council. (2023). *Raise Up Oregon: A Statewide Early Childhood System Plan 2024-2028*. Salem, OR: Department of Early Learning and Care.

3. Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education, Portland State University, & Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, Oregon State University. (2023). *Oregon early learning workforce: Nine years beyond baseline, comparison of 2012 and 2021*. Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education.

4. Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition*. Cambridge University Press.

Key Components of the Plan

The **Birth Through Five Literacy Plan** has three key goals informed by community input, which also serve as the plan's components:

Goal 1: Expand Culturally Specific Early Literacy Programs

- Provide professional training and culturally relevant resources
- Fund programs to develop and distribute home language literacy materials
- Support workforce with literacy pathways and increased access to professional development

Goal 2: Promote the Capacity of Programs that Engage Families in Early Literacy

- Strengthen connections between DELC and libraries
- Increase access to book distribution and culturally responsive family education
- Elevate family voice to shape policies and investments

Goal 3: Support Language Revitalization Efforts for Tribal Nations

- Consult with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribal Nations within Oregon's borders to develop resources and expand language preservation efforts
- Respect Tribal sovereignty through non-competitive funding processes

Phased approach to implementation

To support sustainable development and investment of the system structures necessary for success, the plan will be implemented in an overlapping phased approach that builds toward full implementation.

Initial Phase:	Develop foundational resources and elevate family voice in decision making.
Growth Phase:	Expand workforce training and strengthen family engagement programs.
Scale-Up Phase:	Increase provider access to culturally specific literacy materials and flexible funding.
Evaluation Phase:	Assess progress, gather community feedback, and adapt strategies as needed.

In summary, the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan is a transformative framework that addresses systemic disparities and fosters a culturally responsive, inclusive early learning system. By centering families, supporting early educators, and consulting with Tribal Nations, the plan lays the groundwork for equitable literacy development in Oregon. With an additional investment of approximately \$12.5 million in the Governor's Recommended Budget for the 2025–2027 biennium, DELC would invest in the plan's components, building foundational supports in the early learning system to ensure every child in Oregon has the opportunity to achieve their full literacy potential.