

August 21, 2013

To Supervisors of Youth Services Librarians and Public Library Boards:

We are pleased to launch **Growing Wisconsin Readers**, a three-year early literacy initiative based in Wisconsin public libraries. The primary goal of the initiative is to provide resources to caregivers about how to read effectively with babies, toddlers, and young children. The secondary goal is to visibly showcase ways in which public libraries support early literacy in communities throughout Wisconsin. Your library can play a key role in the success of this statewide endeavor.

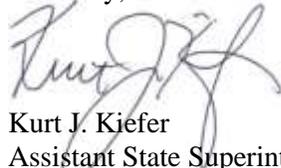
Public libraries have long been seen as a place of learning and discovery for all ages, particularly young children. The period from birth to kindergarten is crucial for developing language and early literacy knowledge, skills, and dispositions (or attitudes). Children with literacy experiences at this age do better in school and in life. Youth services librarians have served as leaders in the field of early literacy for decades, and recently this role has expanded in response to research about early childhood development and interventions. From the increase in four-year-old kindergartens offered in the state to the investment in early learning at the federal level, a spotlight is on early literacy.

As a community development resource, your public library is in a pivotal position to demonstrate your commitment to early literacy through the Growing Wisconsin Readers initiative. Growing Wisconsin Readers materials include an integrated brochure, poster, and a mobile-friendly website produced in English, Spanish, and Hmong. In addition to displaying brochures and posters at your library, we ask that you also distribute these materials to community locales frequented by families with young children. Now, more than ever before, please consider the essential outreach opportunities for your youth services librarian, both in and outside the library, to promote early literacy on behalf of your library. As the project progresses, we hope to expand and focus outreach to those who might need the most help in planting the seed for lifelong learning.

Additional information can be found on the attached FAQ or at [GrowingWisconsinReaders.org](http://GrowingWisconsinReaders.org). This fall, a regional workshop will be held in your area that your youth services librarian is requested to attend. Ask your youth services librarian or system youth services consultant for more information about this initiative and its potential local impact.

Thank you for your considering this important initiative on behalf of your Wisconsin community.

Sincerely,



Kurt J. Kiefer  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Division for Libraries and Technology

KJK:tms

Attachment



## Overview

- Early literacy initiative based in Wisconsin public libraries
- Resource for caregivers of children ages 0-6
  - Reading tips
  - Recommended authors
  - Facts about early literacy benefits
- Integrated brochure, poster, and mobile-friendly website
- Collaboration with state and local partners
- Early literacy is the seed for growing lifelong learners



# FAQ

## WHAT IS GROWING WISCONSIN READERS?

Launched in 2013, [Growing Wisconsin Readers](#) is a three-year early literacy initiative based in Wisconsin public libraries. It is coordinated by the Public Library Development Team ([PLDT](#)) at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction ([DPI](#)) and supported by Library Services and Technology Act ([LSTA](#)) funds awarded to the DPI by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services ([IMLS](#)). The primary goal of the initiative is to provide resources to caregivers (e.g., parents, grandparents, guardians, childcare providers) about how to read effectively with babies, toddlers, and young children. The secondary goal is to visibly showcase ways in which public libraries support early literacy in communities throughout Wisconsin. Growing Wisconsin Readers materials include an integrated brochure, poster, and a mobile-friendly website produced in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

## WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF GROWING WISCONSIN READERS?

Growing Wisconsin Readers will increase the awareness of early literacy benefits within libraries and communities. The period from birth to kindergarten is crucial for developing language and early literacy knowledge, skills, and dispositions (or attitudes). Children with literacy experiences at this age do better in school and in life. The Growing Wisconsin Readers initiative aims to support caregivers of young children with information about early literacy so they can prepare children for learning at school and beyond.

Rooted in public libraries, Growing Wisconsin Readers will help bridge early literacy experiences with public education. It will serve as a statewide model while simultaneously supporting local library efforts. Public libraries will develop and maintain stronger community relationships as a result of the Growing Wisconsin Readers initiative. Libraries will enrich services to children, families, and caregivers while fortifying connections with childcare providers, community locales that serve families with young children, and public schools. Highlighted by the 2011 Read to Lead Taskforce, Wisconsin is committed to comprehensive efforts to ensure that all students have the most crucial skill they need to excel in life: the ability to read. Growing Wisconsin Readers directly supports this important work by fostering reading readiness skills in our youngest learners. A young child's experience with books and libraries, shared with caring adults and siblings, is a positive indicator of reading readiness by school-age. Children exposed to early literacy activities and reading experiences are better positioned for success in school and success in life.

## WHAT MATERIALS ARE INCLUDED IN THE GROWING WISCONSIN READERS INITIATIVE?

Growing Wisconsin Readers materials include an integrated brochure, poster, and a mobile-friendly website produced in English, Spanish, and Hmong. The brochures provide the leading thrust of the initiative. Brochures and posters are on display at public libraries, but more importantly, they will also be provided to and distributed by childcare facilities, medical clinics, religious centers, and other community locales frequented by families with young children. The brochure, written for an adult audience in accessible (non-academic) language, identifies developmentally appropriate reading habits, recommended authors, and key facts about early literacy practices as related to brain development and school success. The brochure is customizable by local libraries; e.g., contact information and story time schedule. To maximize visibility and access to the Growing Wisconsin Readers website, the brochure includes a QR code.

The website, [GrowingWisconsinReaders.org](http://GrowingWisconsinReaders.org), provides secondary access to Growing Wisconsin Readers and directly complements the brochure by providing additional interactive information; e.g., more author recommendations, links to online library catalogs, and multimedia offerings. As families increasingly rely on smart phones, tablets, and laptops for access to online content, Growing Wisconsin Readers offers reliable information at their fingertips. Not only will caregivers find validation about how to read and what to read, but they will understand why reading to young children is essential. The website also provides content support and tools for librarians, such as ready-to-go templates and resources.

## WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH GROWING WISCONSIN READERS?

Growing Wisconsin Readers was introduced to the Wisconsin public library community at the May 2013 Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries (WAPL) annual conference in Lake Geneva. Growing Wisconsin Readers will be featured as part of an early literacy preconference at the 2013 Wisconsin Library Association annual conference in Green Bay in October.

Workshops co-hosted by the state's 17 library systems will be held at eight regional locations in the fall of 2013.

Youth services librarians as well as early childhood and literacy advocates will be invited to attend. Workshop content will include a formal introduction to the Growing Wisconsin Readers initiative in addition to other early literacy topics.

An early literacy symposium is planned for early spring 2014 in Stevens Point. The symposium will feature state and national presenters, including experts in the field of early literacy and public libraries.

## WHAT GRANT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH GROWING WISCONSIN READERS?

Mini-grants were made available to public libraries through a streamlined application process during the summer of 2013. Mini-grants were awarded to 40 small to mid-sized public libraries to establish/enhance a 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program or an early literacy activity area. These early literacy mini-grant projects will begin during the fall of 2013.

Funding for larger early literacy projects is available to public libraries and public library systems in Wisconsin through the [LSTA competitive grant process](#). The application deadline for 2014 grant projects is September 13, 2013. The Public Library Development Team will recommend to the LSTA Advisory Committee that this category received continued funding in 2015.

## WHAT MAKES GROWING WISCONSIN READERS COLLABORATIVE?

Growing Wisconsin Readers is coordinated by the Public Library Development Team ([PLDT](#)) at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction ([DPI](#)) and supported by Library Services and Technology Act ([LSTA](#)) funds awarded to the DPI by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services ([IMLS](#)). Support for the initiative is provided by the [Cooperative Children's Book Center](#), [Reach Out and Read Wisconsin](#), [TeachingBooks.net](#), the [Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and the [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards](#). The [17 public library systems](#) in Wisconsin play a role in training and distribution. The [Youth Services Section](#) of the Wisconsin Library Association assists with collegial support and training. Collaboration is encouraged on the local level between public libraries, childcare facilities, literacy agencies, public schools, and other community development agencies.