

Proposal to Provide Literacy Learning Tools for Youth in Warm Springs

Presented to
Oregon Community Foundation

By
Read to Rise



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Introduction

In Central Oregon, the tribal community of Warm Springs is rich in cultural heritage and storytelling traditions, with a new generation eager to learn. However, limited access to books, licensed child care, and early literacy resources puts many children at a disadvantage before they enter school¹. Families face significant barriers to supporting early development during the critical first five years, including a lack of culturally relevant materials, limited preschool availability, and one part-time library aide.

We propose *Read to Rise*, a culturally grounded literacy initiative designed to empower families and improve early literacy outcomes for children under five in Warm Springs. With \$40,000 in funding, we will distribute take-home reading kits, host pop-up literacy events, and integrate story-based learning into existing child care centers. Our goal is to ensure all young children in Warm Springs grow up surrounded by books, stories, and culture.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2023). QuickFacts: Warm Springs CDP, Oregon.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/warmspringscdporegon>



Situation Analysis

Community Background

Warm Springs is a tribal community located in Jefferson County, Oregon, and home to approximately 2,330 residents. Among them, an estimated 135 children are under the age of five, the core focus of our *Read to Rise* initiative. While the area is rich in culture, storytelling, and heritage, Warm Springs also experiences significant disparities in early education access and outcomes. These systemic challenges leave its youngest residents without the foundational tools needed for academic success.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2023), 24.1% of Warm Springs residents live below the poverty line, more than double Oregon's statewide rate of 11.1%. Additionally, Jefferson County is recognized by Oregon State University and the Oregon Early Learning Division as a "child care desert," meaning the number of licensed child care providers falls far short of community needs (OSU/Oregon Early Learning Division, 2022). The region has only one public preschool with two classes (serving 36 students total), a single tribal daycare, and no private early education centers. These limitations make it difficult to meet the demand for high-quality early learning opportunities.

Literacy Proficiency & Early Learning Gaps:

Literacy proficiency data highlights the urgency. In Oregon, standardized literacy testing begins in the third grade, providing a critical measure of how well early learning prepares children for formal schooling. In Warm Springs, only 13% of third graders meet state reading benchmarks, compared to 44% statewide (Warm Springs K-8 Academy, 2025).

This disparity is even more apparent when compared to Jefferson County's overall English Language Arts proficiency rate of 35%. (See

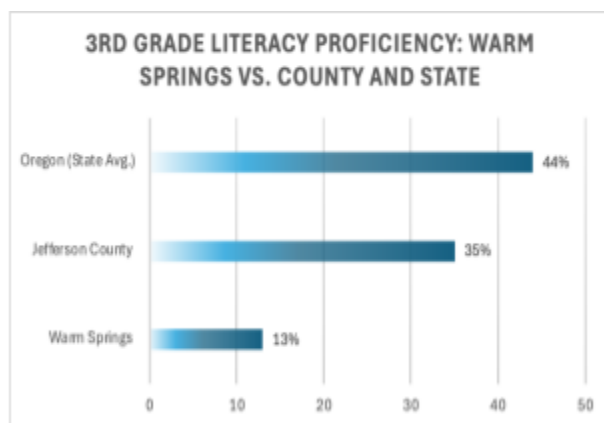


Figure 1

Figure 1). These numbers reflect not only school performance but also the impact of the early years, when access to books, language-rich environments, and culturally relevant resources makes the greatest difference. Without strong early literacy experiences, many children fall behind before they ever enter a classroom, making it difficult to catch up later.

Academic & Literacy Barriers

In Warm Springs, early literacy encompasses more than reading, as it includes exposure to spoken language, communication patterns, and traditional Native storytelling (Ichishkiin and Kiksht). However, many families lack access to tools that support this development. According to the 2022 Jefferson County Early Learning Profile, families in Warm Springs reported:



- Limited access to bilingual or tribally relevant books.
- Difficulty affording or locating age-appropriate materials.
- Inconsistent transportation to libraries or literacy centers.

The Warm Springs Library operates with a single part-time aide and relies entirely on book donations. It offers limited programming, minimal outreach, and restricted hours. While the Jefferson County Bookmobile launched in 2021 to improve access, by 2023 it had missed several services due to staffing shortages, maintenance delays, and limited funding (Jefferson County Library District, 2023). As Roe from Warm Springs Early Childhood Education explained, *“The biggest barrier I see is that we are a very small community with only one store, so it is difficult to have access to books.”*

Cultural Resilience & Opportunity

Despite the challenges, Warm Springs demonstrates strong cultural assets that could support early literacy with better resources. Programs like Tribal Head Start, Ichishkiiin, Kiksht language preservation, and youth-led storytelling initiatives underscore the community's commitment to its future. Roe also highlighted Early Head Start, which offers home visits to support child development from pregnancy through age 3. However, she noted that the program's strict income requirements limit access: *“Only a specific group of people will be accepted.”*

Warm Springs children don't lack motivation; they lack equal opportunity. In Jefferson County, 35% of students meet English Language Arts standards. In Warm Springs, only 13% do. This is not a reflection of community values, but a reflection of systemic inequities in access to early tools for success.

Impact of Reading Aloud on Child Development

Research consistently shows that reading aloud to young children builds essential early literacy and social-emotional skills. According to United Through Reading (2024)², shared reading enhances:

- Vocabulary and comprehension.
- Memory retention and attention span.
- School readiness and emotional bonding.

Studies confirm that children raised in homes with access to books perform better in literacy, numeracy, and long-term academic achievement. For instance, a University of Nevada, Reno study found that children raised with at least 80 books in the home demonstrate significantly higher problem-solving and literacy skills, regardless of their parents' education level.

² United Through Reading. (2024).

<https://unitedthroughreading.org/the-incredible-impact-of-reading-aloud-to-children/>



This evidence supports our *Read to Rise* strategy, which empowers caregivers to lead storytime at home. Bringing books home promotes routine, connection, and confidence in family-led learning, crucial in communities with limited external support.

Current Gaps in Services

While statewide programs like Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and the Bookmobile exist, they fall short of meeting Warm Springs’ unique needs:

- The Imagination Library only partially covers Warm Springs and lacks culturally relevant content.
- Bookmobile services have declined due to irregular schedules and staffing shortages.

These gaps leave families with limited access to books and little external guidance on how to engage their children in early reading. Roe also expressed concern that although our initiative is promising, “*I don’t see anyone wanting to volunteer.*” This insight underscores the importance of providing community incentives and lowering barriers to engagement, strategies that are built into our proposed solution.

Why Books Matter

Access to books is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement and future income. According to Scholastic’s Research Compendium, “*The most successful way to improve the reading achievement of low-income children is to increase their access to print*”³ (Newman et al., 2000)

Closing the Gap Through Literacy Access:

Communities with strong literacy rates tend to share three traits:

- Books are abundant in both libraries and homes.
- Access to materials is easy, regardless of income.
- Caregivers regularly read with their children.

In Warm Springs, where only 13% of children are reading at grade level, expanding access to books is not just an educational strategy; it’s an equity issue. Books that reflect culture and language build not only knowledge but also identity and pride. Our *Read to Rise* initiative is built on this foundation and aims to ensure every child starts school with a strong, culturally grounded foundation.

By investing in books, pop-up events, and family-led routines, we help ensure that Warm Springs children have the same opportunities to thrive as children in better-resourced areas.

³ Newman et al. (2000).

<https://christopherhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Read-A-Thon-Sponsor-Details-2016.pdf>



Objectives

Our *Read to Rise* initiative will address early childhood literacy in Warm Springs by achieving and measuring the following objectives.

1. Improve Early Literacy Outcomes

Achieve at least a 20% increase in literacy readiness among participating children under age five in Warm Springs by spring 2026, measured through pre- and post-program caregiver surveys on reading frequency, vocabulary, and school preparedness.

2. Increase Caregiver Engagement

By the six-month mark, at least 60% of participating families report reading to their children four or more times per week, as captured through post-event surveys and follow-ups.

3. Expand Cultural Engagement

Increase cultural engagement by introducing Ichishkíin and Kiksht elements to children under five and achieving a 20% increase in attendance at tribal storytelling pop-up events by February 2026.

4. Increase Community Engagement

Maintain steady attendance of at least 25 families throughout the 20 pop-up literacy events across five trusted community hubs.

These objectives are designed to deliver direct impact, strengthen local partnerships, and align with state educational goals, ensuring both immediate support and long-term benefit for Warm Springs families.

Solution

The *Read to Rise* initiative delivers early literacy support in Warm Springs through direct, community-centered engagement. Our primary strategy is to host 20 pop-up literacy events that serve as both family programming and the main method for distributing our 150 culturally relevant preschool learning kits. These events will offer bilingual storytime, hands-on learning activities, and book giveaways to foster school readiness and create positive early learning experiences. At each pop-up event, caregivers will receive take-home literacy kits tailored to three age groups (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers). Kits will include bilingual books, counting tools, vocabulary cards, and caregiver guidance sheets designed to support daily reading routines at home.

To maximize participation, we will partner with trusted community organizations, such as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Warm Springs Family Resource Center, and Boys & Girls Club, which will help promote the events and provide accessible hosting locations. While existing programs serve specific tribal groups, *Read to Rise* is designed to reach all families in Warm Springs, regardless of enrollment status.



By embedding cultural relevance and intergenerational storytelling throughout the program, this solution meets the community where it provides educational resources, affirming, and grounded in the identity of Warm Springs youth.

Preschool Preparation Learning Kits

One of the core components of the *Read to Rise* initiative is the distribution of Preschool Preparation Learning Kits to families with children under the age of five in Warm Springs. As outlined in our Situation Analysis, there are approximately 135 children in this age group, and our goal is to ensure that each one receives a kit tailored to their stage of development.

Each kit will include:

- 3–4 bilingual or tribally relevant books
- Alphabet flashcards and counting tools
- Sensory play items (such as textured cards or soft puzzles)
- A “Read Together” caregiver guide with simple routines and prompts
- Tips for using each item effectively at home

These kits are rooted in best practices from early childhood education and have been shown to deliver measurable results. A pilot study published by the National Library of Medicine found that children who received similar school-readiness kits demonstrated significantly stronger gains in early literacy skills, such as letter naming fluency, initial sound recognition, and print awareness, than those who did not.⁴ These tools help bridge the gap long before formal education begins.

Distribution will take place in person at our pop-up literacy events. Families will receive their kits directly from event staff and volunteers, who will provide brief guidance and answer questions. We won’t simply drop off kits at hubs; instead, we’ll create intentional moments of engagement between families and literacy leaders, ensuring that every recipient understands how to make the most of the materials.

This approach reflects a broader strategy supported by United Through Reading, which emphasizes the developmental benefits of reading aloud at home, from vocabulary growth to emotional bonding⁵. Our kits are designed to empower caregivers with approachable, culturally meaningful resources, enabling them to create language-rich environments even if they have limited formal education.

⁴ Pears, K.C. (2014). Immediate Effects of a Program to Promote School Readiness in Low-Income Children: Results of a Pilot Study. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 37(3), 431–460.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4221231/>

⁵ United Through Reading. (2023). The Incredible Impact of Reading Aloud to Children. <https://unitedthroughreading.org/the-incredible-impact-of-reading-aloud-to-children/>



Pop-Up Literacy Events

To address early literacy disparities in Warm Springs, *Read to Rise* will host 20 pop-up literacy events across five trusted community hubs. Designed to be accessible, family-friendly, and culturally grounded, these events bring books, storytelling, and hands-on learning directly into the heart of the community. For families with limited access to early learning tools, these gatherings offer an inviting entry point to literacy.

Event Locations

Pop-up literacy events will be held at the following five trusted community sites:

- Warm Springs Community Center (Library)
- Warm Springs Family Resource Center
- Warm Springs Language Program/Head Start
- Warm Springs Community Action Team (WSCAT)
- Boys & Girls Club at K-8 Academy

Each site will host four events over 60 weeks, spaced every 3 to 4 weeks to maintain engagement.

Event Format

Interactive Storytelling

Each event begins with live storytelling. Trained readers and local elders share early literacy books and traditional legends, helping children connect reading with culture and identity.

Cultural Arts and Crafts

Following storytelling, children participate in hands-on, culturally relevant activities such as storytelling stones, vocabulary games, and beading crafts that preserve local languages (Ichishkiin and Kiksht).

Book Giveaways

Every family receives bilingual, culturally relevant books to build home libraries. A book-sharing model will encourage future donations and create a sustainable community exchange.

These events are intentionally designed to promote literacy, strengthen cultural identity, and foster a shared community reading culture. By partnering with local leaders and trusted locations, we aim to build trust, increase participation, and inspire families to become lifelong literacy advocates.



Home Literacy Integration

To extend the impact of *Read to Rise*, we will bring the initiative directly into families' homes by making it easier for caregivers to lead early literacy. While children benefit from pop-up events and child care centers, home is where consistent reading habits take root.

Each Preschool Preparation Kit will be designed for parent-led learning with simple instructions, bilingual storybooks, and hands-on activities like puzzles, letter cards, and storytelling prompts. Kits will include:

- A short “Read Together” guide showing how to build 10-minute reading routines
- Tips for using each item (books, vocabulary cards, etc.)
- Culturally relevant stories that parents and grandparents can share with their children
- A feedback postcard or QR code link so families can share what worked and what didn’t

Our goal is to empower parents, regardless of their formal education, with tools that feel approachable, fun, and aligned with their family’s traditions. By supporting learning at home, we help ensure that every child grows up surrounded by language, stories, and love.

Technical Plan

Implementation Timeline: Summer 2025 - Spring 2027

Read to Rise will roll out in three strategic phases aligned with our goals: increasing book access, supporting caregivers, and fostering cultural connection. This phased approach ensures thoughtful implementation, community engagement at every step, and alignment with our long-term impact objectives. Below is a streamlined breakdown of key actions in each phase.

Program Timeline Overview



Figure 2



Phase 1: Preparation and Kit Assembly (June - August 2025)

- Purchase materials for 150 age-specific literacy kits (50 per age group: infants, toddlers, preschoolers).
- Assemble kits, consisting of bilingual books, alphabet cards, sensory tools, and reading guides.
- Collaborate with cultural experts to select content for the kits.
- Print feedback materials and organize kits for distribution.

Phase 2: Community Launch and Literacy Pop-Ups (September 2025 - November 2026)

- Host 20 family-friendly pop-up literacy events across five community hubs.
- Distribute kits at events, alongside bilingual storytelling and cultural crafts.
- Honor elders and storytellers with stipends.
- Promote events through flyers and social media.
- Transport and store materials as needed.

Phase 3: Evaluation and Program Expansion (December 2026 - March 2027)

- Conduct pre- and post-surveys with caregivers.
- Continue book giveaways and offer kit replacements.
- Provide participation incentives (gift cards, free books).
- Review feedback and adjust programming accordingly.



Cost

Project Component	Description	Amount
Preschool Preparation Learning Kits	150 kits ⁶ , 50 for each age group (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers).	\$15,000
Kit Maintenance & Replacement	Supplementary books and replacement materials	\$2,500
Pop-Up Literacy Event Materials	Set up, supplies, activities, and snacks	\$10,000
Event Storytellers & Speakers	Honorariums for local elders, tribal leaders, and storytellers	\$4,000
Free Book Giveaways	Culturally relevant and bilingual books to give away	\$2,000
Storage & Transportation	A place to store extra kits and event materials, gas to transport items, etc.	\$2,500
Marketing & Outreach	Flyers, posters, social media ads	\$1,500
Community Incentives	Gift cards or small incentives to support caregiver participation.	\$1,000
Remaining Funds (Flex)	Flexible funds for unexpected needs	\$1,500
Total		\$40,000

⁶ The \$15,000 allocated for Preschool Preparation Learning Kits include materials for 150 kits (50 per age group). Each kit will contain 3-4 bilingual storybooks, culturally relevant sensory tools, basic literacy items (alphabet and counting cards), and an easy-to-follow caregiver guide for each specific age group.



Budget Narrative

Total Requested: **\$40,000**

Our \$40,000 budget is strategically designed to deliver high-impact, culturally grounded early learning support to families in Warm Springs. Funds are distributed across eight key categories that align with our goals of improving book access, fostering cultural learning, and supporting community participation. Figure 3 provides a visual breakdown of cost distribution.

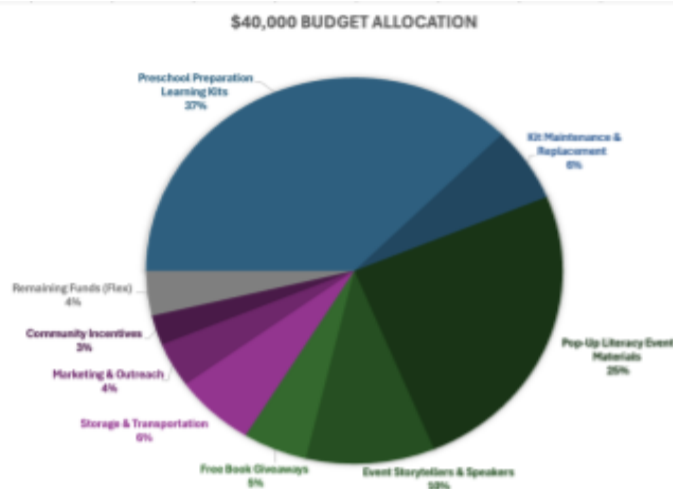


Figure 3

Preschool Learning Kits & Materials (\$17,500)

\$15,000 will go toward producing 150 culturally relevant Preschool Preparation Learning Kits (50 per age group). Each kit includes bilingual books, alphabet cards, counting tools, sensory play items, and caregiver tip sheets. An additional **\$2,500** is set aside for replenishing materials or replacing lost kits throughout the year.

Pop-Up Events & Community Programming (\$16,000)

\$10,000 will go to setup and activity materials for 20 literacy events, with **\$4,000** allocated for speaker honorariums for elders and cultural leaders, and **\$2,000** for free book giveaways to help families build home libraries.

Operation, Outreach, & Participation Support (\$6,500)

\$5,000 will go toward covering transportation and storage logistics, printing and digital marketing, and community incentives (gift cards, book bundles), with a **\$1,500** flex fund for unexpected program needs.

This budget prioritizes impact, scalability, and cultural alignment, ensuring that families not only receive quality materials but also the support to use them confidently and consistently.

Conclusion

Our *Read to Rise* initiative will strengthen community relations, provide culturally relevant early literacy tools, and make learning joyful for young children. In a region where access to early learning resources are limited, we aim to close the gap through take-home literacy kits, free book giveaways, and engaging pop-up events.



Every child deserves to grow up surrounded by stories that reflect their culture and community. This initiative directly addresses early literacy barriers in Warm Springs, offers a culturally grounded, community-based solution, and delivers long-term benefits by preparing children for academic success and lifelong learning.

Aligned with OCF's priorities, advancing equity in rural and tribal areas, supporting school readiness, and encouraging family engagement, this \$40,000 investment will empower families, spark early development, and build a lasting foundation for educational success. *Read to Rise* is more than a project; it is a model for sustainable, culturally rooted literacy in underserved communities.



Appendix

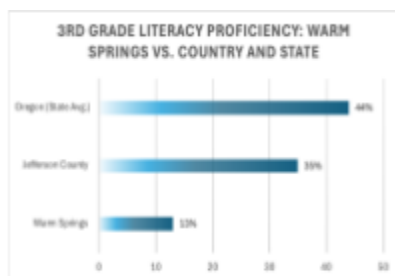


Figure 1

Figure 1: 3rd Grade Literacy Proficiency
Bar Chart created in Microsoft Excel



Figure 2

Figure 2: Program Timeline Overview
Timeline created in Google Sheets

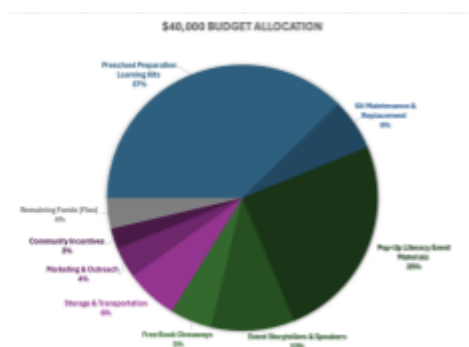


Figure 3

Figure 3: \$40,000 Budget Allocation
Pie chart created in Microsoft Excel



Figure 4: Read to Rise Program Logo
Designed using AI-based visual generation by the project team (2025)



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