



Family Literacy in America

Find a family literacy program in
your area at statehumanities.org.

Are you able to read this?

Thirty-two million American adults cannot understand this text. A full half of the adult population in this country cannot make sense of a book written at an 8th grade reading level. And children who struggle to read by fourth grade are four times as likely to drop out of school. These numbers are startling—America has a big problem with illiteracy. When someone struggles to read, they face limited job prospects, difficulty paying bills and taking medications, and a diminished quality of life. However, the effects of illiteracy extend far beyond the individual. When people cannot read, they cannot fully participate in civic life, they are far more likely to require social services or be incarcerated, and they have dramatically limited social mobility. When family members cannot read, they stand a good chance of passing on their illiteracy to their children. A shocking 72 percent of children whose parents have low literacy will spend their own lives struggling with low or no literacy as well.

“ One of the best ways to combat illiteracy and improve reading skills for parents and children is to offer families many options for literary engagement. ”

But that cycle can be broken. The state humanities councils have pioneered some of the most effective and widely replicated family reading programs in the country, like *Prime Time*, which was created by the **Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities** in 1991. Since then, *Prime Time* has served more than 40,000 families across 40 states, including a program sponsored by the **Michigan Humanities Council** that brings together parents and children for a free meal, stories, discussion, a book to take home, and weekly door prizes. *Prime Time* strengthens family bonds and promotes reading for parents and children by making library visits exciting, memorable, and family-centered.

Case in Point

Missouri Humanities' *Read from the Start* initiative has a clear goal: to help parents and caregivers read to their children early and often, and so promote a lifetime of reading. *Read from the Start* does this with the help of trained discussion leaders, complimentary books, and dynamic literacy activities that supercharge story time.



ARIZONA HUMANITIES

Arizona Author Rodo Sofranac reads to children and families at the Hop, Skip and Jump into Reading program at the Perry Branch Library in Gilbert, AZ



HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

Prime Time Family Reading in Lincoln, Nebraska



Half of the adult population in this country cannot read a book written at an 8th grade reading level.

Many adults who grapple with low literacy come from underserved populations and recent immigrant communities. Programs like *MOTHEREAD/ FATHEREAD* have found success with these groups by combining literature and interactive lessons for children with curricula for parents on everything from child development to adult employment skills. Over nearly two decades, **Humanities Guåhan** has partnered with more than 53 nonprofits in Guam to facilitate *MOTHEREAD/ FATHEREAD* programs and strengthen families. Programs like this and *Prime Time* have been effective, in part, because they have been rigorously studied and evaluated over decades of implementation and this research ensures high-quality, useful lessons for families.



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One of the best ways to combat illiteracy and improve reading skills for parents and children is to offer families many options for literary engagement, and that's just what **Humanities Iowa** has done through their support of *Everybody on the Same Page*, which sponsored 33 programs for more than a thousand children

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at the Carol Public Library. At the Paterson Free Public Library, the **New Jersey Council for the Humanities** created *ComicLit*, which uses comic artists and highly trained facilitators to promote reading, writing, and comprehension skills. And each year the **South Dakota Humanities Council** hosts *One Book South Dakota*, which loans copies of a selected book to groups across the state and then pairs them with scholars for a lively and informative discussion.

Poor literacy can stunt a child's potential and stop adults from fully engaging with our world, but poor literacy can also be improved, and the state humanities councils are determined to help families across the country better their lives through the written word.

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