



# Childhood Literacy

Why is this  
initiative  
important?

Learning to read is a critical component of future academic and life success. Once children have mastered literacy, learning in all areas is considerably easier. The longer children struggle with reading and comprehension, the further behind their peers they become, which for some leads to dropping out of school and a life of continued struggle.



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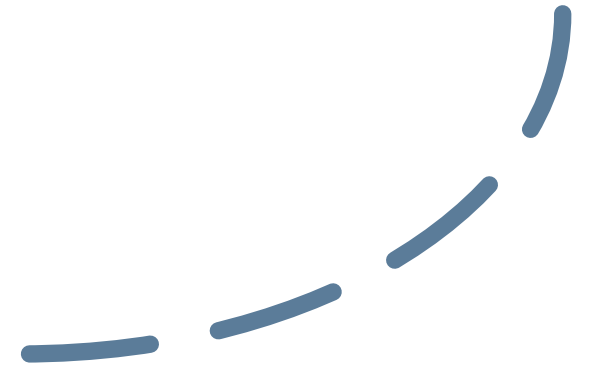
What are we  
doing in this  
initiative?



The Weld Trust will expand funding for literacy and parent engagement projects, and ensure parents have easily accessible literacy materials and support.

Additionally, The Weld Trust will support literacy in schools through training programs and staff professional development to assist students.

Outside the home, The Weld Trust will support efforts to provide high-quality early childhood experience either in formal centers or through family, friend, and neighbor networks.



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What are the priorities in this initiative?

- **Curriculum Development**

Increase the high-quality curriculum and literacy-focused support in schools.

- **Early Childhood Education (ECE) Programs**

Increase the number of developmental screenings to ensure children are kindergarten ready, as well as increase the training and participation for ECE caregivers.

- **Out of School Time (OST) Programs**

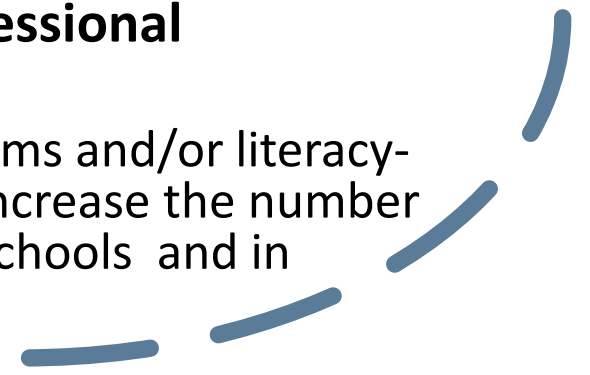
Increase in participation in tutoring, library, or Out of School Time programs.

- **Parent Programs and Education on Literacy**

Increased access to high quality information for parents.

- **Skills Development/Training Programs/Professional Development**

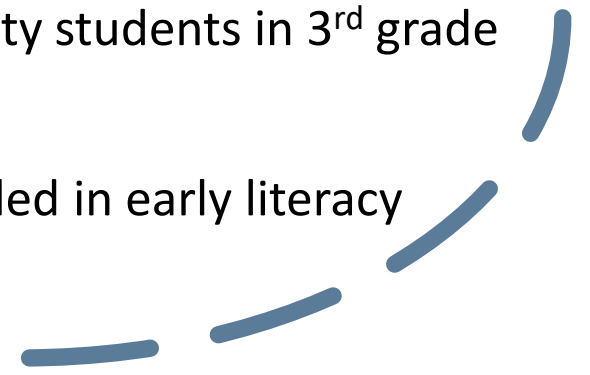
Increase the number of teacher training programs and/or literacy-focused professional development, as well as increase the number of literacy-focused support staff and tutors in schools and in after-school programs.



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What are our goals for this initiative?

- Help in the development/establishment of a comprehensive system of classes for parents.
- Ensure parents have the literacy resources and skills they need to help their child be ready for Kindergarten.
- Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide at the Kindergarten level.
- Increase the percentage of children in Weld County enrolled in high-quality Early Childhood Education programs.
- Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) countywide so that Weld County is 5% below the statewide average at the end of third grade.
- Increase in the number and percent of Weld County students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade who are at a proficient reading level.
- Increase the number of teachers certified and skilled in early literacy instruction.



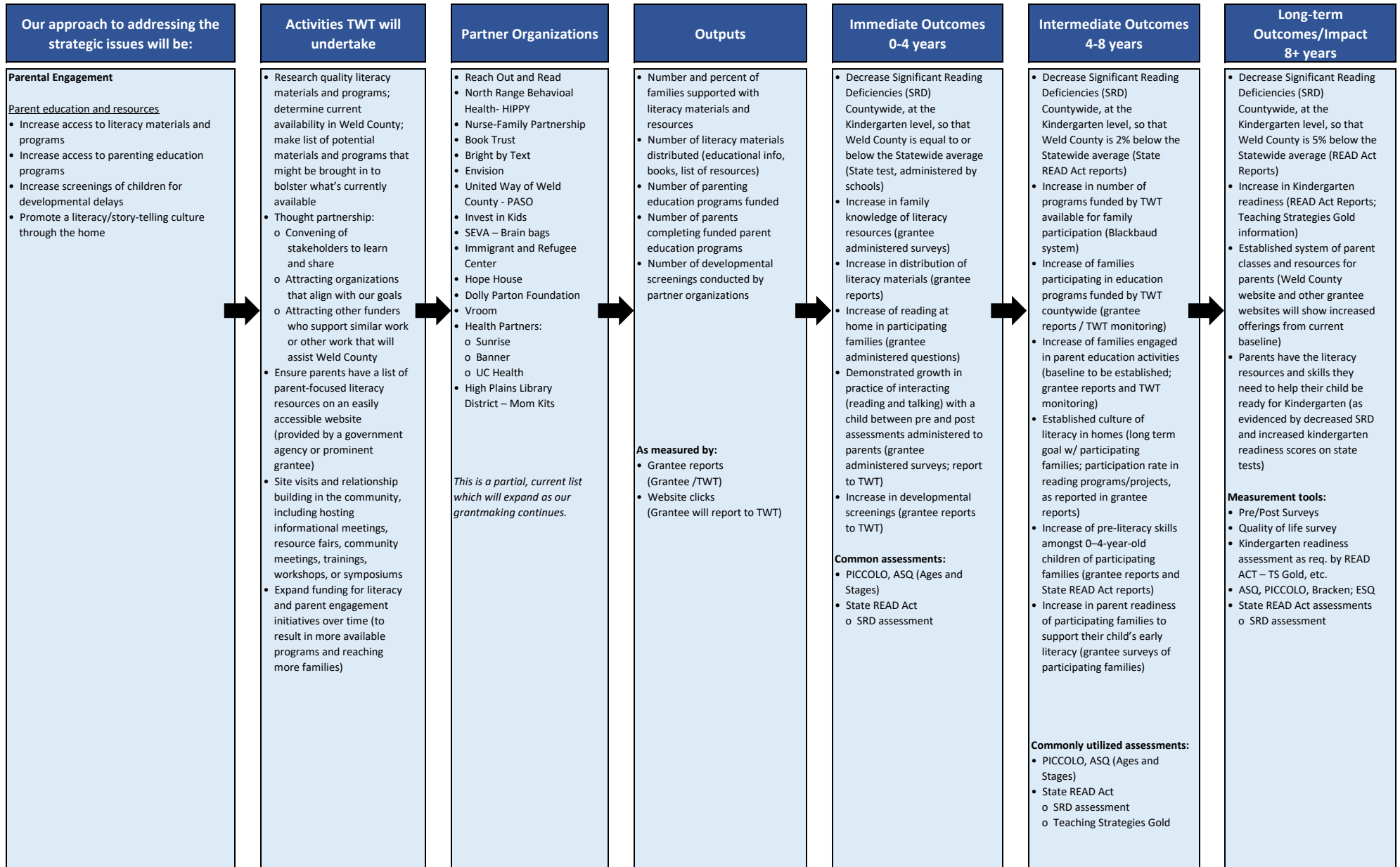
## Childhood Literacy Logic Model

**Mission Statement:** To promote excellence in health and education in Weld County.

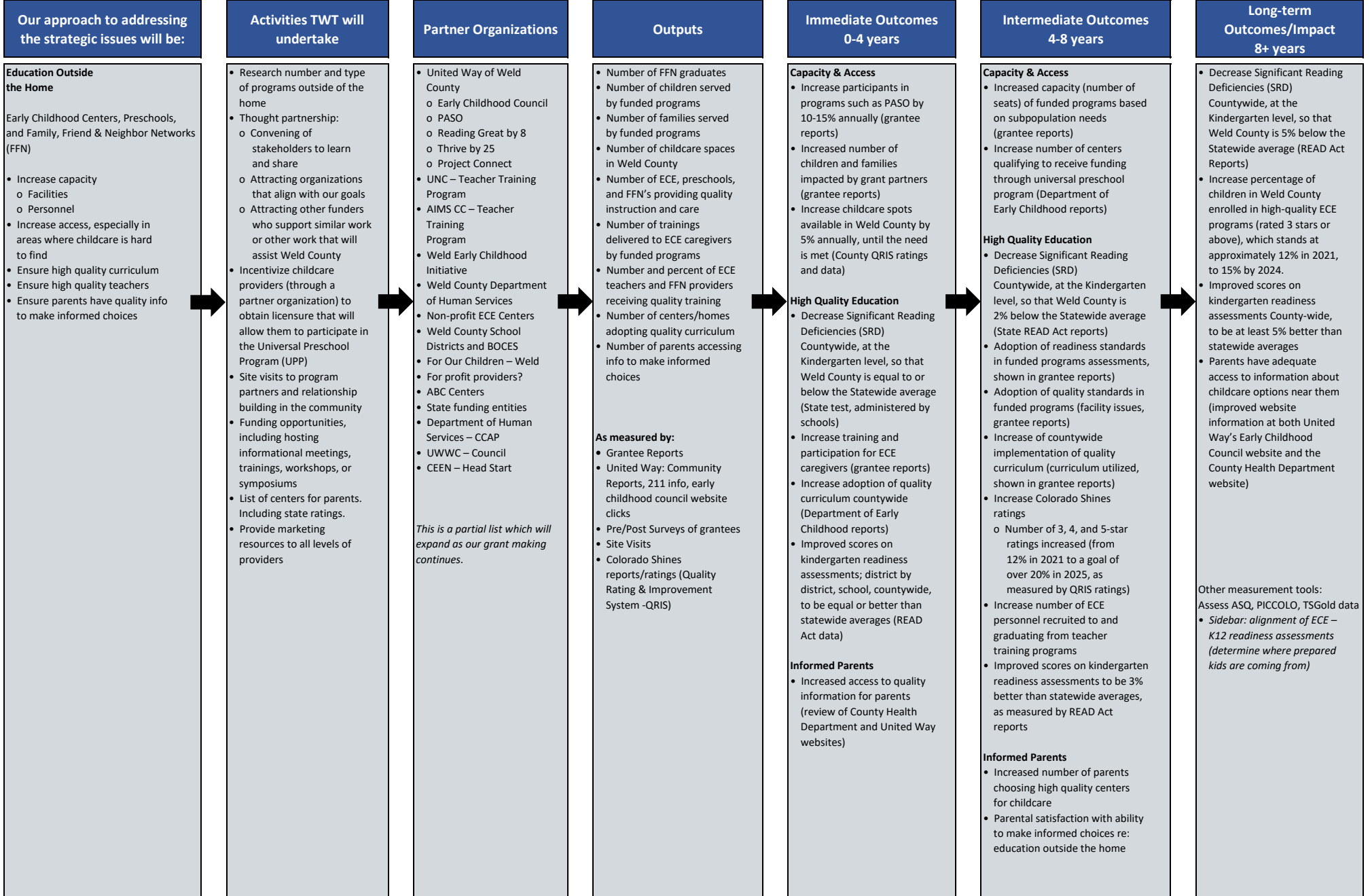
**Initiative Statements** – The Weld Trust will support organizations that can improve childhood literacy education and resources for families.  
The Weld Trust will fund organizations that market and promote quality resources for families that will improve childhood literacy.

### BIRTH TO FOUR YEARS

The Weld Trust will focus the majority of our funding on children 0-4 years old, providing resources and education for parents and increasing capacity, access, and training in Weld County with an emphasis on rural areas (through early childhood centers, preschools, and Family, Friend, Neighbor (FFN) networks). Our goal is also to increase the number of parents who are actively engaged with their children's literacy development. We want to ensure students will enter school meeting developmental milestones, since students who enter kindergarten meeting developmental milestones are more likely to read proficiently by third grade. We also believe that children who are in a safe, nurturing environment from the earliest age have better outcomes later in life. Unfortunately, many children – especially those living in low-income families – have not met the developmental milestones that are essential for future success in school and in life.<sup>1</sup>



**BIRTH TO FOUR YEARS (continued)**



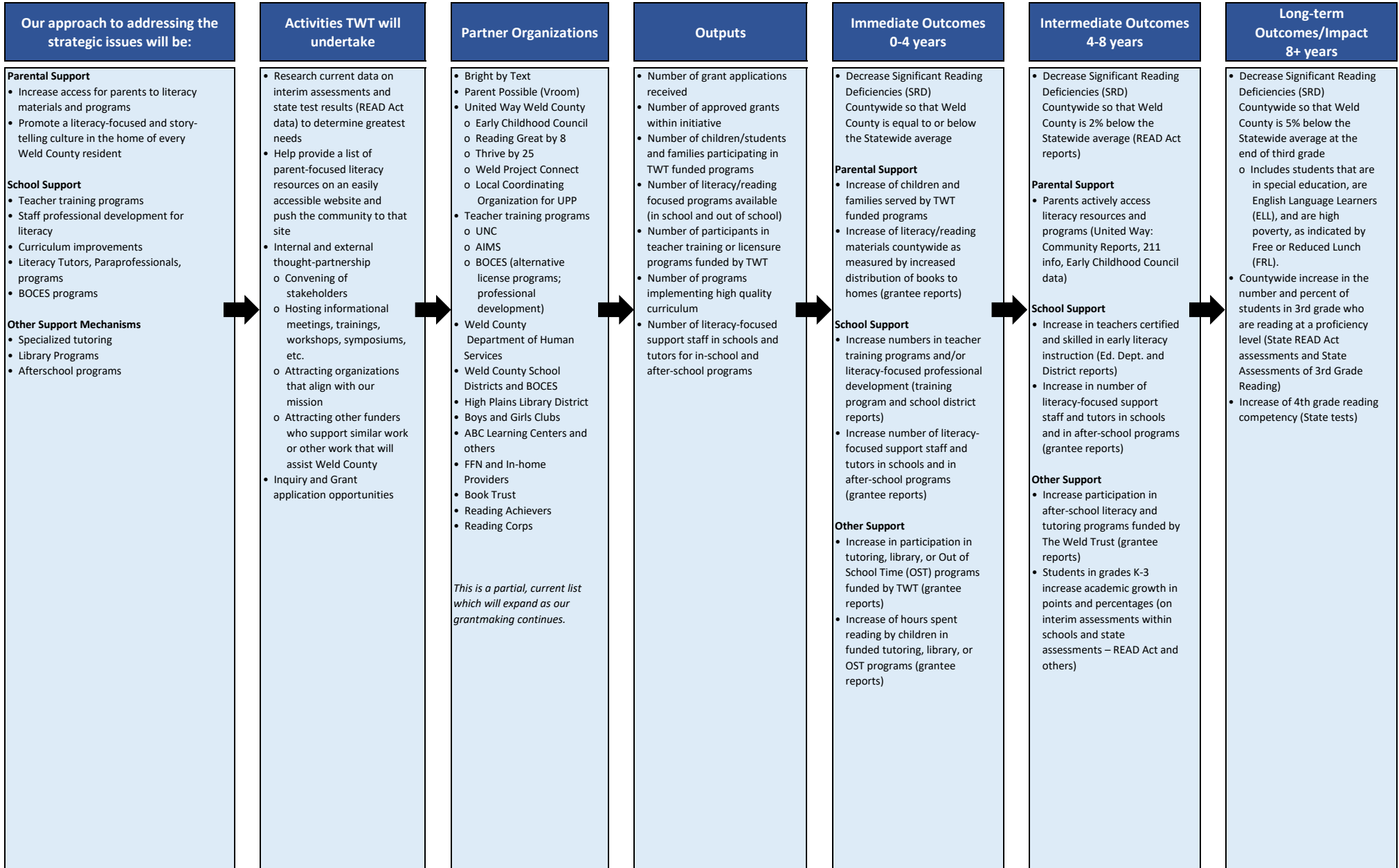
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### FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS AND BEYOND (K-12)

The remaining balance of funding will be invested in children 5-8 years-old, with a focus on helping parents, teachers, schools, and other support mechanisms (tutors, after-school programs, etc.) provide effective literacy interventions to enable children to read as early as possible. Our goal here is to increase the percentage of students reading by third grade, which research shows to increase overall graduation rates.<sup>2</sup> We also realize that not all children are going to reach reading proficiency by the end of third grade, so we will look for programs that effectively and efficiently help students who are behind progress toward grade-level proficiency as quickly as possible.



## ASSUMPTIONS and ECOSYSTEM

The READ Act requires use of an interim assessment to determine whether a student has a significant reading deficiency (SRD) in grades K through 3. The most commonly used assessment in Colorado in the 2020-2021 school-year was Acadience Reading (formerly known as DIBELS Next), but there are a number of acceptable assessment alternatives authorized for use by the State. The state SRD rate for 2020-2021 was 22.8%. By grade level the state rate was: Kindergarten 17.3%, First 26.6%, Second 23.8%, Third 23.3%.

(<https://www.cde.state.co.us/code/readactdashboard>)

- Six school districts in Weld County have overall SRD rates higher than the state. These include Ault-Highland RE-9, Greeley 6, Johnstown-Milliken RE-5J, Platte Valley RE-7, Weld RE-3J, and Weld RE-8.
- Nine out of thirteen districts in Weld County have higher SRD rates than the state in at least one grade level K-3.
  - Districts with SRD rates higher than the state overall or specific grade level would be areas to target.
- This data also shows that as students progress from K to 3, higher percentages of students have SRDs. This indicates that students who enter K at grade level are falling behind as they progress.

High quality early childhood education is related to better performance on child outcomes including cognitive, language, and communication. Research shows that the relationship between quality and outcomes has been stronger for disadvantaged children. Data shows that modest improvements in the quality of educational experiences for low-income children during preschool years have significant effects. One suggested avenue for improving quality is offering high-quality professional development opportunities for classroom teachers.<sup>3</sup>

The Colorado Legislature, with support and prompting from Governor Jared Polis, recently passed legislation calling for implementation of a Universal Preschool Program (UPP), enabling families to enroll their 4-year-old child in 10 hours per week of paid childcare. In addition, the Governor has established a new Cabinet-level department within his administration to be known as the Department of Early Childhood. This new Department will oversee 32 regional “Local Coordinating Organizations (LCO’s) that will implement the Universal Preschool Program in their region, with a start date of Fall 2023. There are numerous challenges to be overcome before the start date of the new UPP, including adequate facility space and openings (childcare spots) to accommodate the additional children expected to be served, making a high-quality curriculum selection, and making sure there are adequate numbers of well-trained teachers for the additional children. It is expected that the LCO will develop and implement a plan that will cover these issues, as well as the equitable distribution of funds for the new program.

- (1) The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot: Early Reading Proficiency in the United States. Page 2.
- (2) The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading. Baltimore, MD: Author.
- (3) Neuman, S. B., Dickinson, D. K., & Sprague, K. E. (2003). The Nature and Impact of Early Childhood Care Environments on the Language Development of Children from Low-Income Families. In Handbook of Early Literacy Research (pp. 263–280). essay, Guilford Press.

## EXTERNAL FACTORS (barriers/facilitators)

The Weld Trust recognizes that there are many external factors that affect childhood literacy. While some of these factors are being addressed in other funding initiatives, these need to be taken into consideration when evaluating progress towards the distal outcomes. Identifying these external factors can help inform funding decisions across multiple initiatives. Some external factors that have been identified include:

- Family dynamics including employment, behavioral health, housing stability, food security
- Poverty
- Transitory families
- Lack of transportation
- Subjectivity and biases
- Language barriers
- Shortage of qualified educators, over-burdened and under-paid educators
- COVID – Mandates and school closures
- Majority of ECE providers are for-profit entities
- Differing childcare/ECE philosophies