



Childhood Literacy



Why is this initiative important?

Learning to read is a critical component of future academic and life success. It is said that one has to learn to read so that they can read to learn. 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.



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, including tutoring when necessary.

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

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.



What are the priorities in this initiative?

Curriculum Development

Increase the high-quality curriculum and literacy-focused support in schools or for home-schoolers.

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. Additionally, support children with access to quality care.

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.



What are our goals for this initiative?

- Establish system of parent classes and resources for parents.
- Ensure parents have the literacy resources and skills they need to help their child be ready for Kindergarten.
- Increase in Kindergarten readiness.
- 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 3rd grade who are at a proficient reading level.

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

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. ¹

	1. Parental Engagement (Parent education and resources)
	Increase access to literacy materials and programs
	Increase access to parenting education programs
	Increase screenings of children for developmental delays
	Promote a literacy/story-telling culture through the home
	2. Education Outside the Home (Early Childhood Centers, Preschools, and FFN Networks)
	Increase capacity
Our approach to addressing the strategic	o Facilities
issues will be:	o Personnel
	Increase access, especially in areas where childcare is hard to find
	Ensure high quality curriculum
	• Ensure high quality teachers
	Ensure parents have quality info to make informed choices
	Commonly utilized assesments: PICCOLO, ASQ (Ages and Stages), Bracken, ESQ, State READ Act (SRD assessment), Teaching Strategies Gold information, grantee reports,
	grantee administered surveys, grantee's website clicks, Quality of life survey, pre-post surveys, United Way (Community reports, 211 info, Early Childhood Council), Colorado
	Shines reports/ratings (QRIS), County Health Department
	1. K-12 Education System
Partner Organizations	2. Health Partners
	3. Higher Education
	4. Nonprofit Service Providers
	5. Government Agencies
	6. Other Funders
	7. Industry Associations
	8. Collaborative Efforts

BIRTH TO FOUR YEARS

Activities TWT will undertake

1. Quality Materials

Research quality literacy materials and programs; determine current availability in Weld County; make list of potential materials and programs that might be brought in to bolster what's currently available

2. Thought partnership/Communal Meetings

Site visits and relationship building in the community, including hosting informational meetings, resource fairs, community meetings, trainings, workshops, or symposiums

Attract other funders who support similar work will assist Weld County

3. Literacy Resources/Programs

Ensure parents have a list of parent-focused literacy resources on an easily accessible website (provided by a government agency or prominent grantee)

4. Literacy and Parent Engagement

Expand funding for literacy and parent engagement initiatives over time (to result in more available programs and reaching more families)

- 5. Research number and type of programs outside of the home
- Incentivize childcare providers (through a partner organization) to obtain licensure that will allow them to participate in the UPP

Outputs

- Number and percent of families supported with literacy materials and resources
- Number of literacy materials distributed (educational info, books, list of resources)
- Number of parenting education programs funded
- Number of parents completing funded parent education programs
- Number of developmental screenings conducted by partner organizations
- Number of FFN graduates
- Number of children served by funded programs
- Number of families served by funded programs
- Number of childcare spaces in Weld County
- Number of ECE, preschools, and FFN's providing quality instruction and care
- Number of trainings delivered to ECE caregivers by funded programs
- Number and percent of ECE teachers and FFN providers receiving quality training
- Number of centers/homes adopting quality curriculum
- Number of parents accessing info to make informed choices

Immediate Outcomes 0-4 years

- Decrease Significant Reading
 Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide, at
 the Kindergarten level, so that
 Weld County is equal to or below
 the Statewide average
- Increase in family knowledge of literacy resources
- Increase in distribution of literacy materials
- Increase of reading at home in participating families
- Demonstrated growth in practice of interacting (reading and talking) with a child between pre and post assessments administered to parents
- Increase in developmental screenings

Capacity & Access

- Increase participants in programs that result in additional qualified childcare providers (i.e. PASO) by 10-15% annually
- Increased number of children and families impacted by grant partners
- Increase childcare spots available in Weld County by 5% annually, until the need is met

Intermediate Outcomes 4-7 years

- Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide, at the Kindergarten level, so that Weld County is 2% below the Statewide average
- Increase in number of programs funded by TWT available for family participation
- Increase of families participating in education programs funded by TWT county wide
- Increase of families engaged in parent education activities
- Established culture of literacy in homes (long term goal w/participating families; participation rate in reading programs/projects)
- Increase of pre-literacy skills amongst 0-4-year-old children of participating families
- Increase in parent readiness of participating families to support their child's early literacy

Capacity & Access

- Increased capacity (number of seats) of funded programs based on subpopulation needs
- Increase number of centers qualifying to receive funding through universal preschool program

Long-term Outcomes/Impact 8+ years

- Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide, at the Kindergarten level, so that Weld County is 5% below the Statewide average
- Increase in Kindergarten readiness
- Established system of parent classes and resources for parents
- Parents have the literacy resources and skills they need to help their child be ready for Kindergarten (as evidenced by decreased SRD and increased kindergarten readiness scores on state tests)
- Increase percentage of children in Weld County enrolled in high-quality ECE programs (rated 3 stars or above), which stands at approximately 12% in 2021, to 15% by 2024.
- Improved scores on kindergarten readiness assessments County-wide, to be at least 5% better than statewide averages
- Parents have adequate access to information about childcare options near them (improved website information at both United Way's Early Childhood Council website and the County Health Department website)

BIRTH TO FOUR YEARS (Continued) Immediate Outcomes Intermediate Outcomes Long-term Outcomes/Impact **Activities TWT will undertake** Outputs 0-4 years 4-7 years 8+ years (continued) (continued) **High Quality Education** High Quality Education • Decrease Significant Reading • Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide, at Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide, at the Kindergarten level, so that the Kindergarten level, so that Weld Weld County is equal to or below County is 2% below the Statewide the Statewide average average Increase training and participation Adoption of readiness standards in for ECE caregivers funded programs Increase adoption of quality • Adoption of quality standards in curriculum countywide funded programs Improved scores on kindergarten • Increase of countywide readiness assessments; district by implementation of quality district, school, countywide, to be curriculum equal or better than statewide • Increase Colorado Shines ratings o Average averages o Number of 3,4,5-star ratings increased (from 12% in 2021 to **Informed Parents** Increased access to quality a goal of over 20% in 2025) information for parents • Improved scores on kindergarten readiness assessments to be 3% better than statewide averages Informed Parents • Increased number of parents choosing high quality centers for childcare • Parental satisfaction with ability to make informed choices re:

education outside the home

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

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. 2 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.

1. Parental Support • Increase access for parents to literacy materials and programs • Promote a literacy-focused and story-telling culture in the home of every Weld County resident 2. School Support • Staff professional development for literacy • Curriculum improvements • Literacy Tutors, Paraprofessionals, programs Our approach to addressing the strategic • BOCES programs issues will be: 3. Other Support Mechanisms Specialized tutoring • Library Programs Afterschool programs Commonly utilized assesments: State READ Act (SRD assessment), Teaching Strategies Gold information, grantee reports, grantee administered surveys, United Way (Community reports, 211 info, Early Childhood Council data) 1. K-12 Education System 2. Higher Education 3. Nonprofit Service Providers 4. Government Agencies **Partner Organizations** 5. Other Funders 6. Industry Associations 7. Collaborative Efforts

FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS AND BEYOND (K-12)

Activities TWT will undertake

- Research current data on interim
 assessments and state test results (READ
 Act data) to determine greatest needs
- Help provide a list of parent-focused literacy resources on an easily accessible website and push the community to that site
- 3. Internal and external thought-partnership
 - Convening of stakeholders
 - Hosting informational meetings, trainings, workshops, symposiums, etc.
 - Attracting organizations that align with our mission
 - Attracting other funders who support similar work or other work that will assist Weld County
- 4. Inquiry and RFP opportunities

Outputs

- Number of RFP submissions
- Number of approved grants within initiative
- Number of children/students and families participating in TWT funded programs
- Number of literacy/reading focused programs available (out of school)
- Number of programs implementing high quality curriculum
- Number of literacy-focused support staff in schools and tutors for after-school programs

Immediate Outcomes 0-4 years

 Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide so that Weld County is equal to or below the Statewide average

Parental Support

- Increase of children and families served by TWT funded programs
- Increase of literacy/reading materials countywide as measured by increased distribution of books to homes

Other Support

- Increase in participation in tutoring, library, or Out-of-School Time (OST) programs funded by TWT
- Increase of hours spent reading by children in funded tutoring, library, or OST programs

Intermediate Outcomes 4-7 years

 Decrease Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide so that Weld County is 2% below the Statewide average

Parental Support

 Parents actively access literacy resources and programs

Other Support

- Increase participation in afterschool literacy and tutoring programs funded by Weld Trust
- Students in grades K-3 increase academic growth in points and percentages

Long-term Outcomes/Impact 8+ years

- Decrease Significant Reading
 Deficiencies (SRD) Countywide so that
 Weld County is 5% below the
 Statewide average at the end of third grade
- o Includes students that are in special education, are English Language Learners (ELL), and are high poverty, as indicated by Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL).
- County-wide increase in the number and percent of students in 3rd grade who are reading at a proficiency level
- Increase of 4th grade reading competency

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. o 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.³

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