

# Growing Readers Together

Engaging Family, Friend & Neighbor Caregivers in Early Literacy



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

## Children Under Six and Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Caregivers

According to the 2013 report *School Readiness for All: The Contribution of Friend, Family, and Neighbor (FFN) Care in Colorado*, in 2013 an estimated 142,100 children under six experienced some type of unlicensed, informal childcare. Because FFN care is so prevalent, it is important to learn more about these caregivers and how best to support them. Through a series of community conversations, *School Readiness for All* begins to build a context around these caregivers by identifying their needs. One major outcome highlighted in the report is caregivers' desire for information and support: "the strongest message across conversations was the near-uniform interest on the part of FFN providers in receiving information and training resources."

## Public Libraries

A study conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project indicates that "64% of U.S. public library directors report librarians engage informal caregivers (e.g., grandparents, home-based caregivers, etc.) of young children in early childhood program activities daily or a few times a week."

To provide local context, in June 2016 State Library staff surveyed Colorado public library directors to ascertain their interest in and capacity for supporting FFN caregivers in their communities. Thirty-eight of the directors surveyed (38%) indicated interest, but felt they would need assistance with outreach to FFN (86%), expansion of community partners (80%), display and play resources in the library (73%), materials for young children in the library and available for check out (61%), and staff training (61%) in order to adequately reach this population.

## An Opportunity Realized

Growing Readers Together (GRT) was thus created to support local public libraries as they identify, locate and build partnerships with FFN caregivers in their communities. Through connection with their local public library, FFN can better support the early literacy development of their young charges. Likewise, libraries can expand and enrich their early literacy services to the community.

## Goals & Objectives

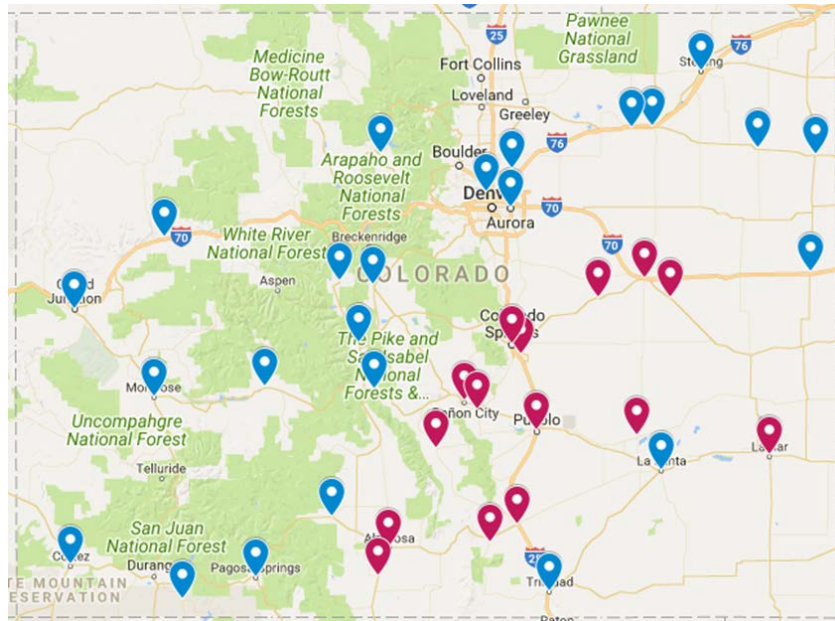
In order to build bridges of support between Family, Friend & Neighbor Caregivers and public libraries, Growing Readers Together has adopted the following goals:

- FFN caregivers will have the skills, confidence, and resources to engage the children in their care with early literacy materials and activities daily.
- Public library staff will have strategies to connect FFN caregivers in their area with early literacy services both in the library and through local partners.
- Growing Readers Together will develop state-level infrastructure for early literacy support to FFN caregivers and the children in their care.
- Children under six across Colorado will be exposed to language and literacy-rich experiences in informal childcare settings and at the library.



## Participating Communities

In its first two pilot years, Growing Readers Together focused on communities mainly outside the Denver Metro area. Now in its third year, GRT has expanded to increase participation across the state. The participating libraries represent small, medium and large cities and towns, whose experiences provide diversity in terms of the strategies used to reach FFN providers as well as strategies used to engage them in developing early literacy skills. The map below depicts the libraries/communities that have been or currently are in Growing Readers Together:



### Participating Libraries 2018-19

- Aurora Public Library
- Burlington Public Library
- Cortez Public Library
- Del Norte Public Library
- East Morgan County Library District/Brush
- Fort Morgan Public Library
- Garfield County Public Library District
- Grand County Public Library District
- Gunnison County Library District
- Ignacio Community Library District
- La Junta/Woodruff Memorial Library
- Lake County Public Library/Leadville
- Mesa County Public Library District
- Montrose Regional Library District
- Northern Chaffee County Lib District/Buena Vista
- Park County Public Library
- Rangeview Library District/Brighton
- Southern Chaffee County Regional Lib District/Salida
- Sterling Public Library
- Trinidad Carnegie Public Library
- Upper San Juan Library District/Pagosa Springs
- Westminster Public Library
- Wray Public Library
- Yuma Public Library

### Participating Libraries 2016-18

- Alamosa Public Library
- Canon City Public Library
- Combined Community Library (Ordway)
- Conejos County Library District
- John C. Fremont Library District (Florence)
- La Veta Public Library
- Lamar Public Library
- Limon Memorial Library
- Lincoln County Bookmobile
- Pikes Peak Library District (El Paso County, CO Springs)
- Pines & Plains Libraries (Elbert County)
- Pueblo City-County Library District
- Security Public Library
- Spanish Peaks Library (Walsenburg)
- West Custer County Library District (Westcliffe)

## Where can I learn more?

- <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/growingreaderstogether>
- <https://www.facebook.com/growingreaderstogether/>