



MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

Raising Literacy Levels in Madison County

The Madison County Literacy Coalition is a bold initiative focused on significantly and permanently raising literacy levels in Madison County. It is open to everyone who wants to become part of the solution.

- * Did you know the problem of low literacy in Madison County is so great that approximately 5,500 adults across Madison County cannot read and understand this paper?
- * Did you know that by fourth grade 28% of students in the county are behind in reading?
- * Did you know that 79% of children under 5 years old are not enrolled in early education programs?

The implications for our county's future are enormous and deeply disturbing.

Effective change requires participation from all members of the community. The Madison County Literacy Coalition will provide a method for reliable and effective action. Through a marketing campaign using various media (including radio, television, billboards, and social media) along with community volunteers, we intend to enable existing literacy programs to serve more people in Madison County, thereby significantly and permanently increasing literacy. The coalition will centralize information about literacy agencies and their programs, literacy events in the community, and provide ways everyone can get involved or get access to participate.

Together with our supporters, we envision all residents of Madison County collaborating and using the Madison County Literacy Coalition resources for advancing literacy. People who need literacy services will be able to find them via our community outreach and website. People who want to donate time or money to agencies and services will be able to make their contributions with ease. Literacy service providers will be able to update their information in the community directory, access volunteer information, and know about all requests for help. Access to the community and the providers will be available around-the-clock on our website.

At the heart of the Madison County Literacy Coalition is the belief that Madison County, united in our objective and working as a whole, can change individual expectations and behaviors. The initiative is not reinventing the wheel by creating new programs and services. The coalition is designed to use the power of the community together to move forward. As members of our community, we are all responsible to advocate for and participate in the advancement of literacy for all residents of Madison County. At its core, the Madison County Literacy Coalition is about realizing human potential, the potential of individuals and of humanity. Our premise is based on a belief that the foundation of a thriving democratic society depends on an educated populace. It is the changed attitudes and behaviors of a unified community along with efficient infrastructure and tools that will raise literacy levels permanently.

The Madison County Literacy Coalition is a consensus-building initiative intended to unite the community around the importance of literacy, provide economies of scale to existing organizations to efficiently service those in need and provide hope to residents for sustainable change and an improved future.



MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

Planning Outcomes

The community will create a well-coordinated, integrated system for literacy service delivery. The system will increase literacy levels through a well-managed coalition of organizations dedicated to the vision of 100% literacy and a belief that literacy is a civil right for those of all ages and backgrounds.

The Madison County Literacy Coalition will create a countywide collaborative mechanism for people with limited literacy to gain the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and their families will move toward self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life. The mechanism will be a life-long learning network that is coordinated by the literacy coalition.

The collaborative effort will include:

- Early Childhood Literacy
- K-12 Literacy
- Postsecondary Education
- Adult Literacy
- English as a Second Language
- Family Literacy
- Workforce Skill Development
- Health Literacy
- Computer Literacy
- Financial Literacy

These activities will impact every geographic location in the county and every sector of the community. They are critical to long term economic prosperity.

Proposed Initiatives

Early Childhood

Children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills is needed for success in kindergarten, such as understanding the relationship between symbols and sounds, and the early concepts of numeracy. Research shows that children who are unable to gain these pre-reading skills are unlikely to catch up with their peers during elementary school years and are more likely to drop out of school when they are older.

Action: Implement Imagination Library or similar concept to get books in homes with young children paired with theme-based family activities.

Family

Studies show that family, home and community are the true drivers of a child's education. Consider:

- * Children's reading scores improve dramatically when their parents are involved in helping them learn to read.

MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

* Low family income and a mother's lack of education are the two biggest risk factors that hamper a child's early learning and development.

Literacy is essential to success in today's economy, now more than ever. The family literacy approach harnesses the strength of parent-child bonds to help those who are most at risk of failing economically, emotionally and socially. Success is built by strengthening confidence, increasing ability and broadening outlook. The results have an impact on a personal level as well as a community and national one.

Action: Develop and implement family literacy programs. Develop and implement book give-away program.

Adult

Without literacy skills—the abilities to read, to write, to do math, to solve problems, and to access and use technology—today's adults will struggle to take part in the world around them and fail to reach their full potential as parents, community members, and employees.

Adults need strong literacy skills

...to raise children who have strong literacy skills,

...to be good employees,

...to keep themselves and their families healthy,

...to be active in their communities,

...to advocate for themselves, and

...to avoid crime.

Action: Expand capacity of programs to meet the needs of more learners. Develop and offer literacy training to residents of group homes to promote confidence and increase literacy skills.

Workforce

The definition of literacy has broadened over time because of the changing nature of society. With the growth of technology and the need for higher skill levels in the workplace, students who might once have succeeded effectively in life with an eighth grade reading level and a minimum package of basic skills must now have a high school diploma and college coursework or technical training demonstrating a more diverse and complex set of abilities.

Action: Develop and implement incumbent workforce programming

MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

Capacity Building

Capacity building includes organizational development, the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, within not only the coalition but also the management of relationships between the different organizations, agencies, and sectors (public, private, and community). The growth and development of the Madison County Literacy Coalition depends on thoughtful and strategic actions by the partners to increase the ability of the county to meet its literacy needs.

Action: Develop a Welcome Center at a central location accessible to clients and providers. Develop hub and spoke delivery system starting in high need communities.

Madison County Literacy Coalition Planning Recommendations

The following are working and evolving pieces of the Madison County Literacy Coalition and the work it is doing with its literacy coalition partners.

The goal of performance measurement is to identify the success of the assessment, placement, and outcomes of learners in literacy programs and make recommendations to support enhanced learning and increase success.

Guiding principles include:

- Life-stage framework with a continuum of learning across the lifespan
- Different levels of measurement reflecting the performance of learner, provider, community, and coalition
- Evidence-based, best practices in literacy programming
- Realistic measures, those things where we can affect actual change
- Different types of literacy to be covered include health, financial, and technology

Literacy Standards (proposed)

Early childhood: Each child will be school ready.

School Aged: Each child will read at or above grade level to succeed in school.

Workforce: Each adult will be literate and possess knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the workforce.

Senior Adults: Each individual will read at or above a 6th grade reading level to succeed in navigating health and technical issues.

MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

Coalition Performance Areas will include:

- Provide information on literacy learning opportunities
- Conduct professional development
- Recruit volunteers
- Disseminate information on best/successful practice
- Coordinate literacy activities among funders, sponsors, and service providers
- Track progress in improving literacy in Madison County

Key Action Steps

Advocate for Literacy: Create continuity in services and make services more visible.

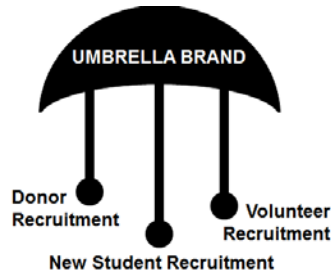
- Create Welcome Center, a one-stop, comprehensive learning center utilizing existing wrap-around partner agencies to support a central location that is accessible to providers and clients alike in Year 1. Using a hub and spoke model, create multiple spokes in outlying parts of the county to network with Center hub in Year 2 and 3. Spokes to be based on community needs as determined in Needs Assessment while leveraging current Read Ahead sites/resources.
- Develop map of services – create alignment – make visual for learners and community in Year 1.
- Create a Literacy Provider Service Directory built off of the Current Services report, easy to access and learner friendly, and distribute it through various venues in Year 1. Venues will include the coalition website and print version, which may be in the form of a special newspaper insert.
- Create Student Literacy groups in each school district to promote literacy awareness and promote positive images such as modeling mentoring, students reading to younger students, etc.

Inform the Community: Maintain a large scale, comprehensive media campaign to build public awareness of literacy.

- Create Marketing Team composed of people with marketing expertise and develop a five-year marketing plan in Year 1. Include Coalition objectives of recruiting new learners, new volunteers, and new supporters.
- Develop campaign to build general awareness of literacy, demonstrate relevance, create a sense of urgency, and define ways to participate in Year 1.

MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

- Develop baseline literacy awareness measures by surveying community.
- Develop an umbrella brand with overarching messages in Year 1. A single message with multiple executions to reach all audiences. Augment with audience-specific messages and tactics.



Donor/Supporter: Economics of issue; make community better; programs in place but need support; give to something that works. This audience includes employers.

New Student: Better life for you and your family; convenient and accessible help

Volunteer: Make a difference; quality of life issues; improve community; emotional appeal

- Develop media campaign and timeline for execution in Year 1.

Tactic	Measurement/Outputs	Outcomes
Collateral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bookmarks, postcards, etc. • ‘Do you know someone?’ Literacy CD/DVD 	Number of materials distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new learners • Number of new volunteers • Number of new donors/supporters
Business Outreach Presentations/Meetings	Number of meetings and resulting partnerships	
Website	Number of visitors/website “hits”	
Community Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Literacy Fair • Coffee Hour/Evening Out 	Number of events and visitors	
Retail Partnership	Number of businesses/locations and resulting donations	
Grassroots Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit families for Imagination Library 	Number of participating organizations	
Billboard Campaign	Number of placements and response	

- Refine methods based on results and feedback from audiences.

MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

- Re-survey community and measure literacy awareness after marketing plan has been operational for two to three years.

Increase Professionalism: Align professional development across the county. Increase professional expertise in teaching reading and math for instructors and tutors.

- Distribute Resource Guide of Best Teaching Practices to all participating trainers in Year 1. Measure dissemination and implementation of Resource Guide through workshop attendance sheets, checklists, and tracking system.
- Distribute school district curriculum maps to all providers in Year 1.
- Identify certificate programs with educational institutions. Collect information, identify linkages, build pathways, and show connections in Year 1. Distribute to participating agencies and trainers.
- Adopt an age-appropriate community and pre-school curriculum/activities around provision of monthly books to engage the family in literacy. Coordinate and train agencies and volunteers in the delivery of the curriculum/activities in Year 1.
- Certify staff and volunteers trained in best practices. Certification will be based on completion of curriculum and demonstrated working knowledge of best practices.

Provide Resources: Secure resources to support literacy programs in Madison County and coalition operations.

- Track literacy funding that is received in the county and identify funding attributable to coalition.
- Convene groups with family literacy components in their programming to discuss how to collaborate and build a comprehensive program. Leverage current funding streams and access new funding to develop countywide family literacy programming in Year 1.
- Convene groups that interact with parents and children (birth to 5 years old) to discuss how to collaborate and build a comprehensive Imagination Library program. Leverage current funding streams and access new funding to implement Imagination Library strategically in Year 1.
- Secure funding for initiatives identified by coalition members and to support coalition operations.
- Develop community book collection and distribution system for gently-used books.

MADISON COUNTY LITERACY PLAN

Evaluate and Report Progress: Measure and report results to the community at end of each year.

- Establish a Performance Measurement Action Team
 - Finalize performance measures and standards framework (i.e. life stage model)
 - Develop performance standards and measures for all literacy issues (e.g., computer, financial, health, etc.)
 - Establish relevant definitions and glossary of terms.
 - Monitor and modify standards and measures as needed
- Develop baseline community literacy indicators to be used by the Coalition in Year 1.
- Develop a centralized web-based data system capable of collecting demographic, trend, assessment, and outcome data for reports to the community, providers, and/or to funders.
- Develop data system standards and criteria for data collection, reporting, and data system development.
- Develop 5-year IT plan to guide system development, implementation, and maintenance.
- Establish data-sharing agreements with coalition partners and data sources.