

- Building Strong Communities
- Helping Youth Succeed
- Building Healthy Families

MSU Extension's Children, Youth and Family Programs help families succeed by improving life in homes, schools and communities. Educational opportunities are designed to meet the needs of people at all stages of the life cycle.

SUPPORTING LITERACY DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFE CYCLE

The need to prepare Michigan children to read well and independently is critical.

- Four out of ten K–3 children are at risk in terms of literacy development. 40.6 percent of fourth-graders scored below satisfactory on the reading portion of the 2002 Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests (Michigan Department of Education, 2002).
- Three quarters of students who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school. Young people with limited reading abilities are ultimately denied the opportunity to contribute to and fully participate in our society (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

MSU Extension's Children Youth and Family programs, which include 4-H, have the potential and expertise to develop and provide research-based, experiential literacy programs that address the needs of families, young children, and youth across the state.

Directly to Families

Helping families learn to support children's literacy development:

- Enlist family members to support children's literacy development in the preschool and school-age years – 4-H Club Read promotes family literacy and home-school connections by educational, interactive programs, and direct support.
- Support parents' literacy understanding and growth – The "Pyramid Through the Pages" resource for home visits by Family Nutrition Program (FNP) staff includes books, literacy activities and "Raising a Reader" tip sheets.
- Create activities to bring parents and children together to interact with literacy programs – Themed backpacks of books, activities, and tip sheets (such as the Weekend Family Nutrition backpacks that were developed through a Michigan Nutrition Network grant) are placed in libraries, schools, or classrooms.

During Out-of-School Time

Increasing literacy activities in all out-of-school programs:

- MSU Extension partners with 21st Century and other and local agencies – Provides curriculum, program support and community leadership for after-school programs with literacy components to build capacity to address literacy needs.
- 4-H Club Read: Michigan's Reading Readiness AmeriCorps Literacy Project – K–3 programs to address in- and out-of-school literacy with AmeriCorps volunteers have served 12,192 children and 3,876 families since 2000.
- Fun Zone: Safe Places After-School VISTA Project 1999–2003 – Concentrated social competencies, positive values and identity, and service to others reached more than 4000 low-income youth and recruited nearly 600 volunteers.
- Curriculum support for out-of-school programs – MSU Extension offers research-based, experiential educational materials that teach reading, skills, and subject matter. Examples include *Sew, Read!* (combines children's books and basic sewing, reading, math and geography skills), *Team Nutrition* and *Conflict Resolution Through Children's Literature*.

Partnering With Community Agencies

To support and expand literacy efforts to children, youth and families through:

- Schools and in-school support
- Curriculum for school use such as the Team Nutrition booklist and the "Pyramid Through the Pages" curriculum that link reading and nutrition.
- Support for community agencies such as local nonprofits (such as FIA, probate courts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and environmental groups) that provide out of school, mentoring, or other literacy-focused programs.
- State and national partners to identify resources to address local needs. Corporation for National and Community Service, which provides AmeriCorps and VISTA members; Reading Is Fundamental, which provides books; and the Food and Nutrition Program (FNP).
- Training opportunities by MSU Extension staff in skills or curriculum to support literacy such as, training CNCS members to prepare them to provide service and train community volunteers in local 4-H Club Read, AmeriCorps, or VISTA programs.

Children's success in mastering reading and literacy skills is vital to their future achievement, the future of local communities, and the future of our state.

In the future, MSU Extension's Children Youth and Family Programs will continue to expand programs that support literacy development across the life cycle in the areas of:

- Supporting family literacy based on four components of family literacy programs. These programs will create activities that:
 - Bring the parent and child together to interact in literate ways.
 - Encourage understanding of age-appropriate expectations.
 - Train the parent to support literacy development.
 - Support the parent's literacy growth.
- Supporting the increasing need for quality out-of-school programming that includes literacy components during informal and formal programs. A statewide goal will be established to encourage every after-school and summer program to include a literacy component such as:
 - Experiential learning activities.
 - Adults who provide and model literate activities (reading, writing and speaking).
 - Reading programs and daily reading.
 - Program staff training in tutoring, homework support and motivating reading.
 - Exploring a partnership with Michigan Department of Education as supplemental service providers within the No Child Left Behind Act.
- Michigan State University and MSU Extension, with local partners, will mobilize resources to address literacy needs.
 - National and state standards for literacy will be supported for student success.
 - Local literacy coalitions and collaborations can build capacity to address this issue.
 - Government and community agencies, schools, nonprofits and faith-based organizations must be part of the local coalitions to address local literacy needs.
 - MSU Extension can assist with needs assessment within communities to identify the needs and resources to build community-wide plans to address literacy.
 - Marketing and publicity through established MSU Extension channels and the MSU Extension network can further strengthen local efforts.

MSU Extension's outreach education is networked across the state and ready to address literacy issues in every county to reach families, young children and youth.

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Bringing Knowledge to Life!

MSU Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities. This organization provides access to research, knowledge and programming in all 83 Michigan counties. It is funded jointly by county boards of commissioners, the state of Michigan through Michigan State University, and federally through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.