

HB 3198 with amendments expanding literacy supports to youngest learners.

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-chairs Hudson and Wright, members of the committee.

My name is Tim Buckley, and I am a contract employee of Community Business and Education Leaders (CBEL) in the Salem/Keizer area. CBEL is an anti-poverty program that employs Marion/Polk Early Learning Hub as an "Impact Initiative" partner in our work in several poor neighborhoods in the Salem/Keizer area. The early learning aspect of our program is crucial to close the academic gap that exists between affluent and poor children as they enter kindergarten.

They say, "the proof is in the pudding". The following national data on early literacy learning and the gap between affluent and poor families (# 1- 4) contrasts with bolded and bullet-pointed list of results of early literacy teaching in the home and pre-kindergarten.

1. In a study of nearly 100,000 U.S. school children, access to printed materials was the key variable affecting reading acquisition.
2. Children who are read to at least three times a week by a family member are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading compared to children who are read to less than 3 times a week.
3. In middle-income neighborhoods, the ratio of books per child is 13 to 1; in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 age-appropriate book for every 300 children.
4. 80% of preschool and after-school programs serving low-income populations have no age-appropriate books for their children.

When pre-K literacy and reading are initiated:

- **Kindergarten readiness assessment scores rise significantly; in some cases as much as double.**
- **Higher post-test gains for 1st-grade students who were actively engaged in pre-K reading programming.**
- **School-wide standardized reading scores increase by several percentage points each year as these early-learners progress through the school system.**
- **Increased awareness of the importance of developing early literacy skills - in the home, and throughout the community.**

Here in the Salem/Keizer area, where the Marion/Polk Early Learning Hub has been doing this work, the data is equally clear.

- Parents, particularly mothers, report a boost in their children's enthusiasm for learning after taking the Ready for Kindergarten program, taught by parents at home.
- Parents also report that children who were "shy" developed more "confidence" in the classroom, no longer tentative but eager to participate. This tracks with better class attendance and better academic results.
- Parents remarked that because of the Ready for Kindergarten program, their relationship with their young children became closer: more fun in the midst of learning.
- The Ready for Kindergarten parent training is frequently done in small groups and facilitated by a person who is fluent in the culture and languages of the families. This helps to build trust in the program and, thus, more use of the materials in the home.