



## **PATHWAY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: KINDERGARTEN READINESS INITIATIVE**

**OVERVIEW:** The Kindergarten Readiness Initiative prepares children for school and sets them on a pathway for successful lifelong learning through innovative programs and materials.

**CHALLENGE:** The 27th Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County reports that 48% of children in Orange County are not ready for kindergarten. According to the report, “a child’s academic success is heavily dependent upon their readiness for kindergarten. Children who enter school with early skills, such as basic knowledge of math and reading concepts as well as communication, language, social competence, and emotional maturity are more likely than their peers without such skills to experience later academic success, attain higher levels of education and secure employment.”

**SOLUTION:** The goal of the Kindergarten Readiness Initiative (KRI) is to support the families of children entering kindergarten in acquiring the skills necessary to be successful. The KRI committee was established in 2020 to create staff professional development resources, kits for parents and children, and patron outreach such as targeted social media posts, live Zoom storytimes, and dedicated webpages to provide that support. One of the primary goals of the initiative is to ensure that OC Public Libraries delivers high-quality, high-impact school readiness storytimes to its communities. Library staff present a weekly virtual storytime for children and families. These storytimes include Parent Patter that explains the “why” of the stories, fingerplays, and activities chosen so that caregivers understand the early learning benefits of storytime and feel confident using the same strategies on their own. In 2021, the committee assembled 500 backpacks covering 13 different competencies, including those that were found to be at a deficit in The 27th Annual Report. Each thematic backpack contains two books, related manipulatives (e.g., magnify glasses, egg shakers, puzzles, puppets, etc.), and a staff created handout. The handout lists suggestions to caregivers on how to maximize the provided materials through specific rhymes, fingerplays and activities they can do with their children. These backpacks are available for all OC library patrons to borrow and use at home for three weeks. OC Public Libraries also launched a Kindergarten Readiness (KR) section on its website, which links caregivers

to free community resources, book lists, and library e-media and digital content safely from home. The webpages offer a breadth of educational resources caregivers can use with their children. The pages are updated monthly with a Rhyme of the Month staff video, Kindergarten Readiness activities, and links to upcoming library programs. The committee distributes flyers with a QR code that directs patrons to the KR pages, at branches and outreach events throughout the county.

**INNOVATION:** The Kindergarten Readiness Initiative makes learning accessible and fun for children and families through reading, singing, movement, and play. The KR backpacks allow families to cultivate school readiness skills from the comfort and support of their home environment. Kindergarten Readiness is innovative in educating caregivers by demonstrating the “why” of the programs and providing them with resources to conduct similar skill developing activities. Lastly, the dedicated KR pages on the library’s website and frequently updated social media content make the resources accessible from any electronic device.

**RESULTS:** More than 2,500 families have attended Kindergarten Readiness Zoom storytimes since their launch in January of 2021. While initially created in response to stay-at-home orders, virtual storytimes have continued as they have reduced barriers to access for patrons who are unable to attend in person. In addition, there have been more than 90 in-person Kindergarten Readiness storytimes since the launch, providing nearly 2,100 children and their families the opportunity to participate in enriched storytimes and form connections with other families in their community. Patron response to the backpacks has been overwhelmingly positive. Since being added to the collection, the Kindergarten Readiness backpacks have circulated more than 3,800 times.

**REPLICABILITY:** OC Public Libraries Kindergarten Readiness Initiative can be easily replicated by other California libraries. The Backpack content lists are available to be adapted to meet the needs of any community.

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**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:** [OCPL Kindergarten Readiness - Google Drive](#)