



February 23, 2015

My name is Lisa Harnisch, and I am the Executive Director for Early Learning Hub, Inc. It is with pleasure that I offer support for the Age 3 to Grade 3 literacy initiative. Reading by third grade is one of the single greatest predictors of lifelong success, including high school graduation. And, in Marion County, we know that 42% of children are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

Over the last year, in Marion County we have begun to align and coordinate resources to better meet the needs of children ages 0 through 5 all with the focus of children better prepared for kindergarten, families that are stable and attached and services that are coordinated and aligned. We are approaching this from multiple levels and across sectors in our community. As an early learning hub, we have several initiatives that include strategies to increase parent engagement, focus on quality early learning environments, and assist in the transition between early learning environments and kindergarten. Below are specific examples of how we are reinforcing the message that literacy is critical to the future success of children in our community and to the future workforce:

- In our neighborhood school catchment areas, we have vertically aligned professional development cadres for child care, early learning providers, Head Start, and kindergarten teachers to align curriculum and better understand how to prepare children for success in kindergarten.
- In our neighborhood schools, we hold family literacy nights and other parent engagement activities focusing on literacy and kindergarten readiness activities to connect families of preschool age children to their neighborhood schools.
- Local area physicians and pediatricians participate in Reach Out and Read where at well-child visits, doctors give each child an age-appropriate book and emphasize the importance of reading and literacy to their parent.
- Conducted kindergarten readiness training for child care providers stressing the important role they play in getting kids and families ready for kindergarten.
- In partnership with our Coordinated Care Organization, we send out kindergarten registration information and kindergarten readiness information to families participating in the Oregon Health Plan.

This work is one of the most critical things we can do to better support our children and families today. The coordinated and cross-sector approach to literacy will yield a higher literacy rate overall. We know the need is great in our community and our state. We need the increased 3 to 3 support and investment to address learning gaps early to support literacy development – and a life-long love of learning.

Thank you.

Lisa Harnisch  
Executive Director