

Libraries for Literacy Program

Libraries Building Stronger Communities through Literacy Instruction



Adam Wright, Executive Director

**North Texas Regional Library System, Inc
6320 Southwest Blvd, Suite 101
Fort Worth, Texas 76109
817-377-4440
fax: 817-377-8020**

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Introduction -

Established in 1969 as one of ten Texas Library Systems, the North Texas Regional Library System (NTRLS) acquired not-for-profit status in 1994 for the purpose of enlarging its funding base. Regional systems exist to promote and assist in the development of strong community libraries. NTRLS can set policies for the use of its own services, but each member library is autonomous. Current members include 74 public libraries located in twenty counties, incorporating the Tarrant County and Denton Counties and a geographic region bordering the Red River, and other western and southern counties. The NTRLS service population is diverse and numbers nearly 2.5 million. It encompasses a geographic area of 16,489 square miles.

Libraries within this geographic range may become NTRLS members by meeting criteria set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC). Application for membership is made when the library's annual report is filed each April with TSLAC.

With such a large service population, NTRLS realizes it can play an important role in helping member libraries build stronger communities through literacy instruction. NTRLS will offer grants to member libraries to host literacy instruction programs. This literacy instruction will be provided by a qualified organization, and member libraries will use the grant funds to help the literacy students offset the costs of childcare, transportation, and materials.

Statement of Need –

Reading is fundamental to our everyday lives. Imagine how difficult it would be to exist in today's world without the solid ability to read. According to the 1993 Texas Adult Literacy Survey, between 25 and 27 percent of Texans, 3.5 million, are unable to read beyond the basic level.

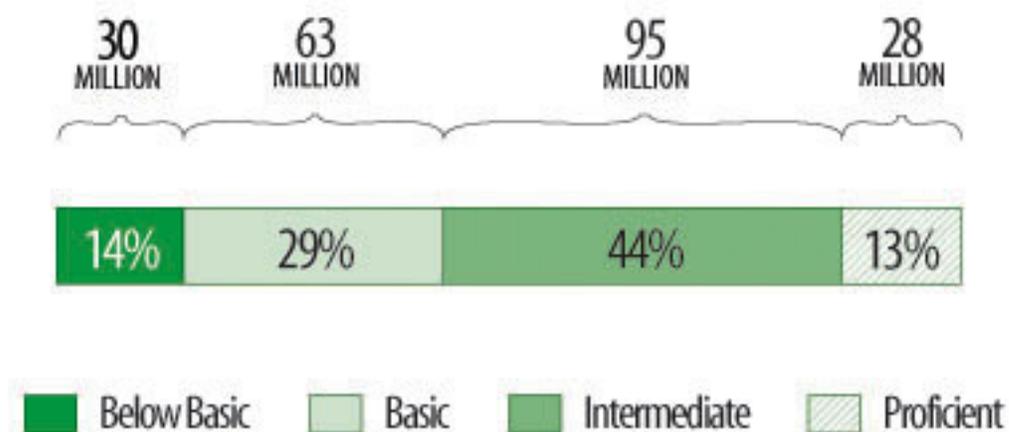
Nationally, the picture is even more bleak. According to National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 14% of Americans were below basic in the literacy skills in 2003. (http://nces.ed.gov/naal/kf_demographics.asp)

Below Basic: no more than the most *simple* and *concrete* literacy skills

Basic: can perform simple and everyday literacy activities

Intermediate: can perform moderately challenging literacy activities

Proficient: can perform complex and challenging literacy activities



Here are some additional alarming facts about literacy in Texas and the United States.

Adult Literacy Statistics:

- ❖ **NATIONAL:** One in four adults do not have the literacy skills necessary to manage in today's world, according to a new report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). At least one in every four adults failed to reach minimum levels of literacy for coping with everyday life and work in a complex society.
- ❖ **STATE:** The Texas Education Agency, Austin and Texas released goals of the long-range plan in a recent issue of *Texas Education Today*. The items

include increasing adult literacy by 10%, increasing the number of children who attend pre-kindergarten classes, and strongly involving parents in their children's education.

- ❖ **LOCAL:** A survey conducted by the United Way of Greater Wichita Falls and the Wichita Adult Literacy Council requested information from 140 service agencies, organizations, schools, and businesses. Forty-three of the 49 surveys returned indicated a strong need for additional literacy services. Of the 131,664 Wichita County population, 23% are functionally illiterate and 18% of this population 16 years and older are functioning at the lowest levels of literacy with 14,711 people in Wichita Falls alone. Over 9% of 9th graders or below have dropped out of school and 13% of the population 19 years or older do not have a GED or high school diploma. In Wichita County, 12.34 % of the population speaks a language other than English in the home; most of these individuals speak either Vietnamese or Spanish. Of those people, 36.82% speak little or no English (Census 2000).

Tarrant County has the largest population of any of the NTRLS counties. The Tarrant Literacy Coalition(TLC) has identified 230,000 individuals, or 20% of the population, whom cannot read a book. Despite this overwhelming need, TLC has determined that existing literacy programs only serve about 10,000 individuals in Tarrant County.

Libraries are positioned perfectly to assist with this growing problem. There are several advantages to using public **libraries** for adult **literacy** programs:

- **Libraries** are used by all sectors of the community and participants do not have to be identified as anyone other than **library** users when they come in to use the photocopier, borrow videotapes, listen to music, read magazines or bring their children in to use **library** facilities such as story time, school holiday activities or to borrow materials.
- **Libraries** are usually centrally located and accessible by public transport.
- **Libraries** have easy access to the resources needed to run an adult **literacy** program--printed and spoken word books, magazines, videos, and newspapers.
- Most **libraries** can provide space for students and tutors either during or after hours.
- Public **libraries** are committed to support individuals in the lifelong learning process and cater to peoples' interests from birth to death.
- The **library** service already exists and will continue to do so while the life span of other agencies may vary considerably.

(Libraries and literacy: 'One of the best systems in the world because everyone can use it'. APLIS, Jun95, Vol. 8 Issue 2, p86, 12p)

Organizational History –

NTRLs is a non-profit regional library system funded through federal and private monies. The System provides consulting services, continuing education, and library services to 74 public libraries in the following counties: Archer, Baylor, Clay, Cottle, Denton, Erath, Foard, Hardeman, Hood, Jack, Johnson, Montague, Palo Pinto, Parker, Somervell, Tarrant, Wilbarger, Wise, Wichita and Young.

On a biennial basis, NTRLs must submit a long range plan to the Texas State and Library Archives Commission (TSLAC). This plan outlines how NTRLs will utilize the federal monies granted to it by TSLAC. A plan of service is then submitted on an annual basis providing even more detail on how funds will be spent. Grants have ranged from over \$900,000 to just under \$500,000.

NTRLs offers products and services through four main projects: Administration, Consulting, Continuing Education and Targeted Services. The Targeted Services project addresses community needs of member libraries because it focuses on providing services to the communities of the member libraries, and it allocates System staff and other resources to carry out these services. The project also allocates a small amount of funds to be used to help libraries establish services and programs in their communities. Consulting and Continuing Education will work closely with the Targeted Services project by providing guidance to NTRLs libraries on how best to carry out the services funded through this project.

NTRLs has recently released a five-year plan for years 2009 to 2014. One of its strategic priorities is to retain leadership in state-of-the-art technology and innovative services. One way that NTRLs will accomplish this priority is by assisting member libraries to adjust to new paradigms and community needs including education and literacy.

NTRLs is governed by a nine-member board of directors. Seven directors represent specific regions of the System while two are at-large bids. Each board member has had a long history with libraries and all understand the importance of books and education to their communities. The NTRLs Executive Director has been a librarian for 12 years and has been working with NTRLs member libraries to develop their service offerings since 2002. NTRLs staff has a combined experience of over 50 years in assisting libraries.

NTRLs has partnered with two literacy instruction community groups including Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc. and Literacy Instruction for Texas (LIFT). These partners will be providing the literacy instruction in the NTRLs libraries.

Project Narrative –

Libraries for Literacy will endeavor to establish literacy instruction programs in all types of north Texas libraries. The project will be facilitated by NTRLs and supported by partner organizations. NTRLs will rely on its partners

to provide the instruction and give advice on best practices when it comes to literacy instruction.

The Libraries for Literacy council was created by NTRLS as an advisory body to the project. This body will work closely with NTRLS and its partners in guiding the project administration and implementation. The council will meet on a quarterly basis to hear progress reports from the Libraries for Literacy coordinator. The council will advise NTRLS on both strategic and tactical directions. Council members are listed below.

- Adam Wright, Executive Director, North Texas Regional Library System
- Carolyn Davidson, Assistant Director, North Texas Regional Library System
- Elizabeth Stewart, Program Coordinator, Libraries for Literacy, North Texas Regional Library System
- Judy Austin, Leonard Middle School, Fort Worth Independent School District
- Connie Barnes, Adult Services Librarian, Watauga Public Library
- Lesley Daly, Director, Wichita Falls Public Library
- Anne Downey, Outreach Librarian, University of North Texas Libraries
- Woody Evans, Tarrant County Community College
- Sandra McCurdy, Assistant Director of Library Services, Tarrant County Community College.
- Jo Anna Patton, Fort Worth Independent School District
- Sara Shelton, Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc. (WALC)
- Cary Siegfried, Director, Arlington Public Library
- Judie Smith, Public Services Librarian, Tarrant County Community College

The Libraries for Literacy coordinator will be the facilitator of the program and handle the daily activities of the program. With the assistance and oversight of the NTRLS Executive Director, the project coordinator will carry out all directives handed down by the Libraries for Literacy council. The coordinator will be responsible for answering questions about the program as well as keeping the project on its proposed timeline. The coordinator will work closely with NTRLS development staff to acquire funding for the project.

NTRLS libraries, both members and non-members, will be responsible for the administration of each literacy instruction program taking place in its facility.

NTRLS Libraries will have four levels of participation.

Level One

Grant Amount: \$0

- Library provides a space for literacy classes and takes no other involvement.

Level Two

Grant Amount: up to \$10,000

Allowable Costs: Outreach materials to promote programs, Materials and Training for Literacy Instructors.

- Library provides a space for literacy classes and takes an active role in scheduling the classes.
- Library receives material to promote the classes to the community.

Level Three

Grant Amount: up to \$15,000

Allowable Costs: Childcare, Transportation, Outreach materials, Materials for literacy instruction.

- Library provides a space for literacy classes and takes an active role in scheduling the classes.
- Library administers a program to reimburse literacy students for costs.
- Library receives material to promote the classes to the community.

Level Four

Grant Amount: Up to \$20,000

Allowable Costs: Childcare, Transportation, Outreach materials, Performers fees, Staff salaries.

- Library takes an active role in many aspects of literacy instruction including working with literacy instruction partners to train tutors and library staff.
- Library works to provide performers to children for the duration of the literacy instructions (classroom style only).
- Library provides a space for literacy classes and takes an active role in scheduling the classes.
- Library administers a program to reimburse literacy students for costs.
- Library receives material to promote the classes to the community.

NTRL's eventual goal is to establish a grant program to assist all types of libraries in funding the various levels of participation. This grant program will be administered by the Libraries for Literacy Council and be open to any library in NTRL's geographic region. Libraries will be required to submit a grant application to be reviewed by the council.

In the short term, NTRL will seek out libraries to volunteer to host a level two literacy program in their communities and then apply for grants to seed these efforts. In this way, NTRL can apply for grants funding specific types of literacy instruction while at the same time build some proven models in several of its libraries. Once several pilot projects have been established, NTRL, and its partners, will seek to fund its own grant program through fundraising and grant writing.

The oversight of the Libraries for Literacy grant program will be shared by both the coordinator and the NTRLs Executive Director.

NTRLs will provide toolkits to each participating library and then assist them in setting up the foundation for literacy instruction including introducing them to literacy instruction partners. The toolkit will be designed by a librarian with specific experience in establishing literacy instruction in libraries. These toolkits will cover the following types of literacy instruction.

Adult Literacy Classes - The [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) has drafted the following definition: "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society."

Family Literacy Classes - Family literacy services as defined under the [Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998](#) means "services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities: (1) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children; (2) training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; (3) parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and (4) an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences." The essence of family literacy is that parents are supported as the first teachers of their children. Programs work with individuals as well as with the family unit combining the four components to create a comprehensive program

English as Second Language Classes (ESL) - English Literacy programs are designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language. Individuals of limited English proficiency are those who have a limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language; whose native language is a language other than English; or who live in a family or community where a language other than English is the dominant language.

Libraries who do not wish to hold literacy instruction sessions, but wish to assist with publicity and volunteers will be allowable. Many academic libraries might take on this role as they often have paid literacy courses available through their schools' adult education programs.

NTRLs will also act as an information clearinghouse for libraries when it comes to literacy. A website will be created for libraries to reference when exploring various literacy programming options. This website will include helpful hints on what needs to be done to establish a literacy program in a library as well as instructions on how a North Texas library can apply to receive grant funding for the project.

The Libraries for Literacy program will also work with the United Way of Tarrant County and the Tarrant Literacy Coalition to provide informational services over the phone for individuals seeking literacy instruction classes.

Here is a brief description from Sue Matkin, Vice President of the United Way of the Tarrant County, on how these three organizations can work together.

“We brought together over 200 individuals to develop a strategic plan to address adult literacy in Tarrant County. We found that there is a severe shortage of literacy programs, little or no training for volunteer instructors, very sporadic data collection and no resource or referral for adults looking for literacy programs/providers. It is United Way's intention to utilize 211 to provide referral services for adults looking for classes as well as those wanting to volunteer with literacy programs. The library system literacy programs will be added to our data base for the 211 information and referral specialists to use. At the same time, the library literacy program manager can use the 211 data base on line to assist with individual requests that do not fit the library sites. The Tarrant Literacy Coalition will also provide free training for any library volunteers. Between the Coalition and United Way, I believe there are a lot of resources we could leverage with your programs.”

At the same time, NTRLS will be a main contact for the general public who might be interested in literacy instruction. NTRLS will field questions concerning the Libraries for Literacy program.

NTRLS will also take a pro-active approach to contacting libraries about the Libraries for Literacy program. The coordinator will make weekly phone calls to library directors informing them of the program as well as send out letters and emails. A quarterly workshop will also be offered to teach librarians about the program. This quarterly workshop will be designed and conducted by the NTRLS Executive Director and Libraries for Literacy coordinator. NTRLS will also work with local news media to publicize the program.

Literacy Instruction –

NTRLS will rely on its literacy partners to provide the actual literacy instruction in the libraries. These literacy partners rely on volunteers to provide the needed training for the program's students. The Libraries for Literacy program will make an attempt to create a lifetime-literacy curriculum for program students. In this way, a person can take as long as they need to accomplish their literacy goals and not lose sight of where they are in their achievement. All forms of literacy training will be offered through Libraries for Literacy including Reading/Writing, Family Literacy, English as a Second Language and GED preparation.

Verizon Life Span Literacy Matrix was created to achieve some consistency in literacy achievement and to assist broad collaborations in creating a community-wide literacy initiative.

“This tool outlines literacy outcomes, appropriate instruments for measuring the outcomes, and effective research-based practices that enable programs and individuals to increase literacy development across the life span. The outcomes, measures and key practices are culled, to the extent possible, from the latest research syntheses, additional further research and other relevant sources specific to the selected populations. Gaps in outcomes or practices in the matrix most likely pinpoint gaps in the research.”

For more information on this matrix, please see the document attached.

The Matrix covers all ages from pre-kindergarten to adult learners and provides outcomes, measures and key best practices for literacy instruction partners. Libraries for Literacy will attempt to implement its lifetime-literacy curriculum, based on the Verizon matrix, in various library settings. The type of library and type of literacy instruction will be determined by the age group of the community the library serves. For instance, school libraries would work with the pre-k to high school age students while university libraries would work with college and university students. Public libraries would be able to work with any of the age groups.

Libraries for Literacy will be the glue that ties the various library literacy instruction endeavors together. A school library might offer reading/writing instruction to its students, but not to the parents of a child. The parents would need to find a public library offering the instruction. By calling Libraries for Literacy, the parents would be told about all the possible options available in libraries for their entire family.

Timeline –

The Libraries for Literacy project will begin efforts in January 2008 with the first meeting of the Libraries for Literacy Council. In March 2008, NTRLS will submit a grant application to the Texas Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) to fund the Libraries for Literacy coordinator position from September 2008 to August 2009 as well as other administration costs such as website fees, supplies and telecommunication costs. NTRLS will also pursue other grant opportunities in 2008 to help fund the Libraries for Literacy’s own grant program. Some possible funding sources include Dollar General, Barbara Bush Foundation and Verizon. Despite funding levels, NTRLS anticipates it will be able to promote and offer the literacy toolkits to libraries in Spring 2008 with the goal of literacy instruction to start by Summer 2008.

NTRLS does anticipate seeding three pilot projects: Alvarado, Saginaw and Seymour. NTRLS will fund these projects through a grant from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. A tentative timeline is shown below for these pilot projects. In addition, grant funds will be used to create a Libraries for Literacy website.

Task	Target Date
1. Kick-off Meeting with Alvarado <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out which literacy instructions are required in the community • Review project roles for all partners • Review timeline • Review procedures and policies 2. RFP released for Libraries for Literacy website	Week of 9/1/2008
Kick-off Meeting with Saginaw <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out which literacy instructions are required in the community • Review project roles for all partners • Review timeline • Review procedures and policies 	Week of 9/8/2008
Kick-off Meeting with Seymour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out which literacy instructions are required in the community • Review project roles for all partners • Review timeline • Review procedures and policies 	Week of 9/15/2008
1. Academic and School Libraries advertise for volunteers for the literacy program in the public library. 2. Literacy Materials ordered for each community	9/16/2008 to 10/16/2008
Bids for website received and evaluated. Award given.	10/1/2008 to 10/31/2008
Volunteer Training	10/16/2008 to 11/16/2008
Literacy Classes advertised to communities	11/17/2008 to 12/31/2008
1. Literacy classes held in public libraries. School and academic libraries continue to advertise the program for volunteers and students. Evaluations taken and initial surveys released. 2. Libraries for Literacy website released (1/1/2009)	1/1/2009 to 8/31/2009

Task	Target Date
Final Evaluation material filled out by volunteers, students and community residents. Provide a toolkit of the pilot project for others to utilize in their own communities.	9/1/2009 to 9/30/2008
Evaluation results sent to TSLAC	10/1/2009

Budget –

Preliminary budget calculations indicate nearly \$30,000 to pay for the coordinator’s salary and benefits. Twenty-thousand dollars will be needed to pay for the Libraries for Literacy website, supplies and telecommunication costs. To effectively establish this program in libraries, the Libraries for Literacy project will need \$1 million dollars to establish its own grant program for libraries. Total expected costs then would be \$1,050,000.

Funding Strategy –

In order to acquire needed funds for Libraries for Literacy, NTRLs will seek \$60,000 from TSLAC to pay for the coordinator position and infrastructure costs. Most of the Libraries for Literacy grant program funds are unallowable in the TSLAC grant so will have to be obtained from other funding sources such as Dollar General, Barbara Bush Foundation and Verizon.