

# STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS

## Imagination Library of Oklahoma

Providing free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five to ensure a foundation in reading and literacy that supports preparation for school

### WHY IS THIS INITIATIVE NEEDED?

Pandemic disruptions have caused many early-grade readers to fall behind in attaining the literacy skills critical to their future academic success. [Research into reading deficits in young learners](#) suggests that 90% of first-graders with low reading skills will remain poor readers for life. Nearly 50% of kindergartners are likely to struggle in reading in fall 2022.

To combat these issues, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), in partnership with Dolly Parton's Dollywood Foundation, will establish the Imagination Library of Oklahoma, a program that mails free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five on a monthly basis regardless of family income. This program will allow Oklahoma families to build a personal library and encourage literacy at home, thus preparing students to enter school ready to learn.

### HOW WILL THIS INITIATIVE WORK?

Authorized by Oklahoma State Statutes [70 O.S. § 3-104.10](#) and [§ 3-104.11](#), the OSDE will partner with community-based nonprofits to establish Imagination Library affiliates serving all 77 Oklahoma counties. Local affiliates will enroll families and fundraise for 50% of program costs, and the OSDE will contribute a 1:1 match with federal pandemic relief dollars to provide books at no cost to families on a monthly basis.

### WHAT IS THE RESEARCH BASE FOR THIS INITIATIVE?

- An [Arkansas study](#) showed that Imagination Library participants scored higher on kindergarten readiness assessments, were less likely to be retained from kindergarten through third grade and had higher proficiency rates on third-grade assessments than nonparticipating peers.
- [Dr. Chad Waldron's study of Imagination Library participants](#) showed they performed better on letter identification and word and letter concepts than nonparticipants.
- [Interviews with participating families in Ohio](#) found that the program helped build routines for reading, increased reading frequency and allowed multiple family members to participate in literacy experiences.

### WHAT IS THE OSDE'S TOTAL INVESTMENT IN THIS INITIATIVE?

The OSDE will use approximately \$2.5 million of its federal emergency relief funding to match local funds in support of the program, ensuring up to 2.3 million books are distributed to Oklahoma children by the end of 2024.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How can I sign my child up for the program?**

To see if a program is currently available in your area, please visit the [availability page from Imagination Library](#) and follow the steps to enroll.

### **What if the program is not available in my area?**

The Imagination Library program is expanding rapidly across Oklahoma. If there is not an affiliate where you live, check the [availability page](#) frequently. If you would like to be notified when an Imagination Library affiliate has been established in your area, please complete the “New Program Alert” form when prompted on this webpage.

### **My child is enrolled in an existing affiliate. Will the OSDE provide a match for children already enrolled in the program before this initiative was announced?**

Yes. All affiliates operating prior to the launch of the statewide program are eligible to receive match funding and additional affiliate support from the OSDE.

### **My organization is interested in partnering with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to provide books in my community. How can I get involved?**

Whether you are interested in serving as a local affiliate, working alongside others in your community to enroll children, or providing financial support, please reach out to Laura Sikes, Director of the Imagination Library of Oklahoma, at [Laura.Sikes@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Laura.Sikes@sde.ok.gov) to discuss opportunities.

### **What types of books will my child receive?**

All Imagination Library titles are published by Penguin Random House and are carefully selected by a panel of literacy and education experts. The Imagination Library Book Selection Committee meets annually to review and refresh the book list, drawing on their years of experience in early childhood and education to ensure each book is age-appropriate and that the list features a broad range of titles, authors and genres.

### **What if I have multiple children who are eligible to receive Imagination Library books?**

Each age group has a unique book list, so children of different ages will receive their own titles each month. The only books they will receive in common are the first and last ones in the program.

### **How can I donate to the program?**

Donations are welcomed and will expand opportunities to students beyond the expiration of federal funds at the end of 2024. Donations to the statewide program’s revolving fund must be made by check to the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Attn: Imagination Library Revolving Fund, and mailed to 2500 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Suite 415, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. To donate to an affiliate in your area, please use the search function on the [find my program page](#) to find your local affiliate and contact them directly.

*Find additional information on the [Imagination Library of Oklahoma OSDE webpage](#). For questions contact Laura Sikes, Director of the Imagination Library of Oklahoma, at [Laura.Sikes@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Laura.Sikes@sde.ok.gov).*

*For information about federal education relief funding, see the [American Rescue Plan FAQs](#).*