

2022 SELECT REPORT

It's more than books.
It's the future of Tennessee.



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From the President's Desk

There is a powerful force in people coming together to solve our most pressing issues. Nowhere is this truer than in education. Literacy has become a key issue in Tennessee's discourse from post-secondary education to health, civic engagement, and workforce development. Over the past several decades, literacy has shifted from being seen as a necessary skill to being recognized as a critical, human right for every child - predicting not only the trajectory of their academic success, but their social, vocational, and financial future. We must get reading right.

In 2019, we at Governor's Early Literacy Foundation (GELF) had a vision to bring together early literacy efforts from across the state to build relationships, share ideas, identify opportunities and gaps, and find ways to work together toward the common goal of a literate Tennessee. The Statewide Early Literacy Education Collaborative of Tennessee (SELECT) was ignited. In 2021, we brought together representatives from five regional early literacy efforts to explore what this might look like at a statewide level. We listened, learned, and began to build the framework for SELECT.

In 2022, we began casting a wider net to a broader audience of organizations, agencies, and individuals providing services from every area of the state to help us define the vision and purpose of SELECT. The results were powerful, as we recognized common goals and how collaboration could change the early literacy landscape for Tennessee children. This report is a summary of our discussions.

As we move this work forward, we will continue to expand SELECT's membership to every part of this great state, looking for the bright, hopeful, and passionate people doing great work for Tennessee's youngest citizens. It's more than books. It's the future of Tennessee.

James Pond, President, GELF



"As a former educator, I have seen firsthand the support families need, and SELECT brings together the people who provide that support to make a huge difference in the lives of kids."

Katie Elam, Program Manager, SELECT



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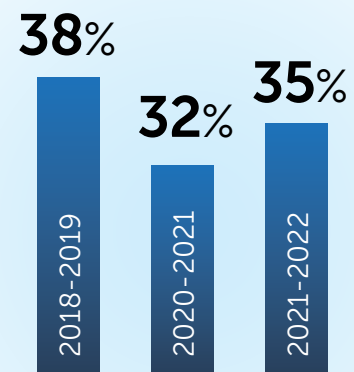
"If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."



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Why SELECT?

Literacy is essential for success in school and life, yet too many of Tennessee's 3rd grade students are not reaching critical literacy benchmarks.



3rd grade reading proficiency change over past 3 years

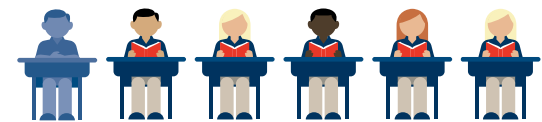
Third grade is an important benchmark in a child's life, marking their transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." If children are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade, they are much less likely to catch up to their peers in middle school and four times more likely to drop out of high school. Early literacy is the most important investment Tennessee can make.

The path to becoming a proficient reader starts long before 3rd grade. It starts long before kindergarten. The path to literacy is paved by the learning opportunities and experiences that a child has from birth. Across the state, hundreds of organizations are working tirelessly to support our youngest learners in early childhood centers, home based care, and out of school settings. Outside of traditional learning environments, there are also organizations indirectly serving families to increase access to books and high-quality resources, support caregiver engagement, and help meet basic needs.

The path to literacy is paved by the learning opportunities and experiences that a child has from birth.

All of these factors directly impact a child's literacy journey, and this work has the potential to drive thousands of students forward, helping them achieve literacy success. But it's often being done in silos with limited resources and operational isolation from partner organizations and schools. Organizations are unsure where to collaborate and learn from others' experiences. Funders are unaware of opportunities for investment. The legislature is missing information to make key decisions related to early childhood. As well, despite outreach efforts, families often don't know where to go to get the literacy support and resources their children need.

That is why Governor's Early Literacy Foundation created SELECT – the Statewide Early Literacy Education Collaborative of Tennessee. SELECT is a collaborative conversation for Tennessee's early literacy leaders to learn, connect, and build awareness about this incredibly important work. As an independent, non-partisan 501c3 public charity, GELF is building SELECT into the open channel through which these conversations can flow.



1 in 6

children who are not reading proficiently in 3rd grade do not graduate high school on time and have higher incidences of poverty and incarceration as adults.

What is SELECT?

SELECT is a collective of organizations across Tennessee coming together to increase the impact of early literacy efforts through community and collaboration. SELECT connects early literacy organizations with one another, providing networking and professional development opportunities, and increasing visibility of early literacy efforts in Tennessee.



Confident
readers

The vision is a Tennessee where all children have equitable access to resources and opportunities to become confident readers, critical thinkers, and lifelong learners.

The mission is to break down silos, build connections, and strengthen the early literacy landscape in Tennessee.



Critical
thinkers

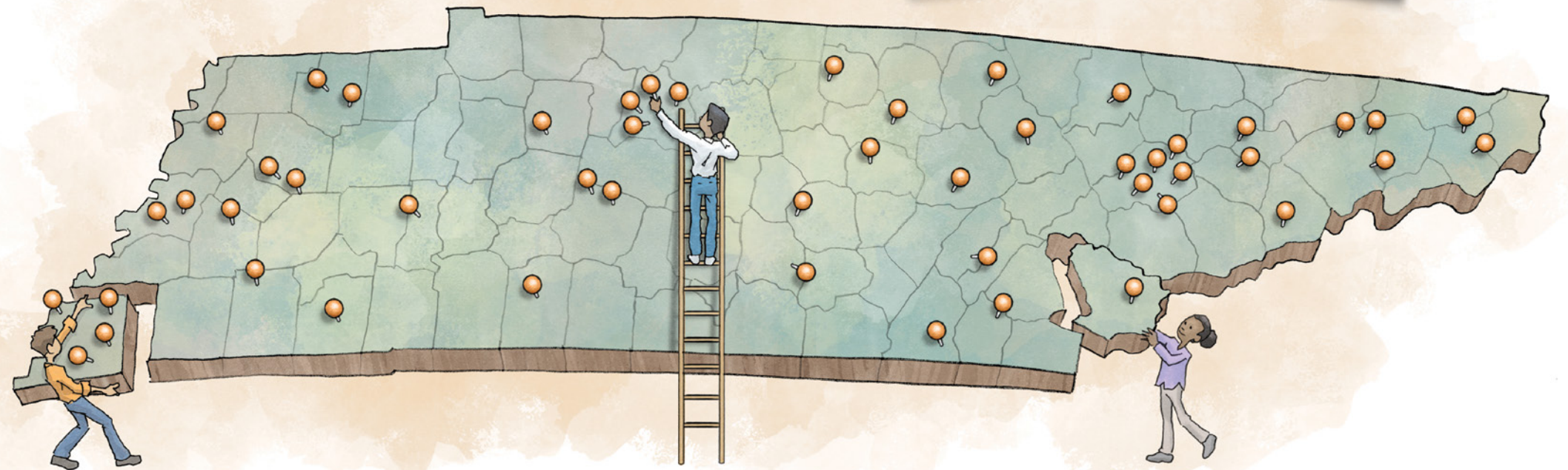
The SELECT community represents partners from every region of Tennessee. Membership currently includes over 70 organizations representing services in 87% of Tennessee's counties. These numbers are changing daily as we meet more organizations doing amazing work and learn about others who are doing the same.



Lifelong
learners

SELECT partners include after school and summer programs, community organizations, libraries, family resource centers, childcare providers, pre-k programs, advocacy groups, funders, education foundations, and business leaders. Our partner organizations represent a holistic approach because we know all too well that positive literacy outcomes and healthy early childhood development go hand in hand.

Ensuring Tennessee's students grow to become confident readers in 3rd grade requires us to break down silos in a comprehensive way. We want to ensure that everyone supporting our young children and their families has a seat at the SELECT table and a voice in the discussion. Through this collaborative, we seek to enhance literacy efforts already underway and expand the reach of partner organizations.



SELECT partnerships build momentum for change through collaboration and connection.

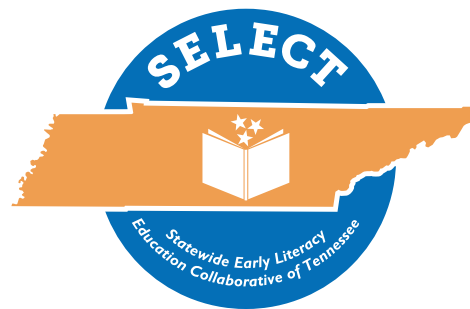
SELECT's June 29th Convening

SELECT brought together its statewide partners for a reception and all-day collaboration session on June 28-29, 2022. Forty-six people from 29 organizations were in attendance. The event gave SELECT partners an opportunity to connect and build friendships, as well as learn about important literacy work happening around the state.

The day began with a welcome from GELF President James Pond, who delivered a powerful personal message around the impact reading can have on one's life. Participants also heard from keynote speakers Michael Haggen, senior VP at Scholastic Inc., and author Stephanie Harvey about the importance of early literacy.

The most important work of the day came through breakout sessions. Groups worked together to craft a vision statement for SELECT and spent time discussing the work that they would like to see SELECT take on to support the organizations taking part in the collaborative.

SELECT partners brought their best critical and innovative thinking to create the vision for SELECT and map out a plan of action for the work ahead.



"I'm excited about connecting with like-missioned organizations and partners to develop solutions for literacy across the state."

– Anasa Franklin, Literacy Midsouth

"Thank you for convening this group! Without organizational efforts like you have started, we continue to do what we do in our region and fail to know what is happening in our region or state. This is energizing!"

– Karin Keith, ETSU





SELECT's June 29th Convening *(Continued)*

SELECT partners created a vision for our efforts and offered a shared commitment to

A Tennessee where all children have equitable access to resources and opportunities to become confident readers, critical thinkers, and lifelong learners.

SELECT partners, together with Governor's Early Literacy Foundation staff, envisioned three pillars of work for the efforts ahead.

LEARNING

- Gain new ways of thinking and ideas about what works.
- Share best practices, lessons learned on the ground, and research findings.
- Share donor and research opportunities.
- Create opportunities to collaborate around service delivery.
- Provide space for innovative thought and partnership.
- Create and maintain current inventory of literacy work, data, and usable resources.

CONNECTION

- Provide opportunities for early literacy organizations to network and learn from one another.
- Bridge gaps, build relationships, and create opportunities for partnership across literacy organizations.
- Collaboratively problem-solve shared challenges.
- Exchange new, innovative ideas and diverse perspectives.
- Connect programs to maximize impact for families and children.

VISIBILITY

- Shine a light on early literacy 'bright spots' across the state.
- Create a unified voice to support early childhood literacy.
- Understand regional and statewide literacy landscapes to break down silos, address gaps, and elevate assets.
- Increase access to potential partners, funders, stakeholders, and influencers in and across communities.



“I like that we can learn from other organizations across the state, build upon programs, and share ideas and resources so we aren't reinventing the wheel. I appreciate the opportunity to network and have a shared group to learn from with a focus on literacy.”

– Gwendolyn Williams,
First 8 Memphis

SELECT Goals and Next Steps

The roadmap is still being built through feedback and ideas from partner organizations. We envision SELECT to always be just that, truly collaborative and driven from within – adapting to the shifting needs of the partners. And we place high value on planning the work and working the plan in the process.

As such, we have three key short term focus areas:

- 1 **Tennessee’s Early Literacy Landscape (TELL) analysis and map**
 - TELL Survey: Quantitative
 - TELL Interviews: Qualitative

- 2 **Meetings & Convenings**
 - Regional Roundtables
 - Annual Statewide Convening

- 3 **Communication**
 - TELL Talks
 - Messaging Toolkit

GAPS

- Literacy support for organizations in rural areas.
- Childcare challenges (seats as well as staffing) across all areas of the state.
- Compensation/ coverage for childcare workers completing TN Department of Human Services required literacy trainings.

1 TENNESSEE EARLY LITERACY LANDSCAPE

One of the most challenging aspects of early literacy education is to know who is doing what and where. Having a resource to provide a clear understanding of the work being done across the state will help us ensure that services are coordinated, efforts are not duplicated, and opportunities to learn are maximized.

Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation is collecting important data, feedback, and input from stakeholders and partners to build the Tennessee Early Literacy Landscape (TELL).

What is TELL?

TELL is a map of the organizations within the SELECT community that support young learners across the state. TELL aims to achieve a few key goals:

- Identify strengths, promising practices, challenges, gaps, and opportunities for growth across the state.
- Create a snapshot of the work happening to support connections across organizations as well as inform legislators and funders of the impact being made within the state.
- Ensure families know where to go for support and services.

Through an online survey and follow-up interviews, GELF is gathering the data needed to have a better understanding of early literacy in Tennessee to build TELL.

Step 1: TELL Survey

This survey is open to organizations, foundations, and other entities who are working to support Tennessee’s youngest learners and their families. While some are directly focused on specific early literacy efforts, others are supporting families, access, teacher preparation, and other key facets of the work. Through the survey, we collect quantitative data related to organizations’ service area, reach, and target audiences.

> **More than 80 TELL surveys have been completed to date.**

Step 2: TELL Interviews

Upon completion of the TELL Survey, each organization takes part in a qualitative interview aimed at capturing organizational strengths as well as current challenges and opportunities. Through the interviews, we collect qualitative data by connecting personally with organizations to learn who and where they are and what they need.

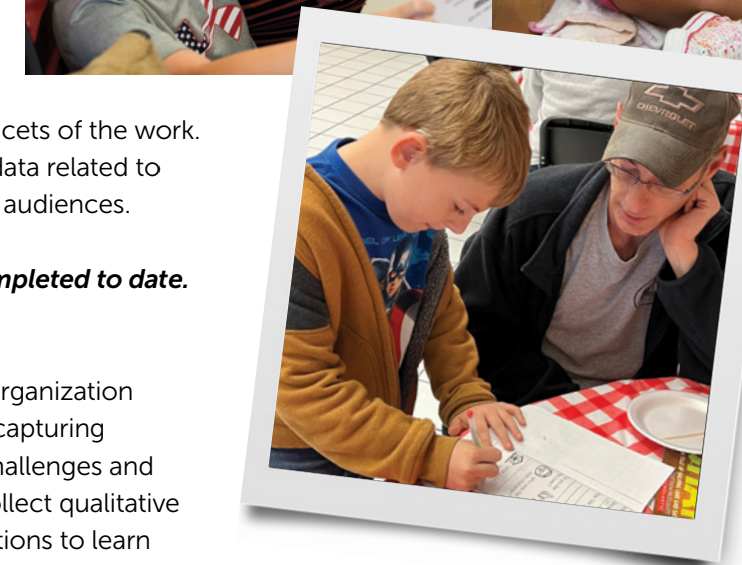
> **More than 60 TELL interviews have been completed to date.**

2 MEETINGS & CONVENINGS

SELECT will convene regionally and statewide throughout the years ahead, creating space where collaboration can flourish. The sequence and format of convenings will be developed by ongoing input and advisory sessions with partners. Additionally, we expect GELF and SELECT partners to facilitate connections between meetings and share knowledge including literacy data, program profiles, success stories, toolkits, research, funding opportunities, and best practice awareness.

3 COMMUNICATION

Through consistent communication with the SELECT community, GELF aims to keep the momentum and resource-sharing going. TELL Talks is a monthly e-newsletter sharing resources, data, and insights collected from organizations. It’s a group conversation for the SELECT community to exchange opportunities and ideas. As SELECT grows, we also plan to distribute a partner social media toolkit to encourage cross-promotion and joint messaging.





Future Forecast

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WHAT'S NEXT?

- Expand the SELECT community.
- Form partner-driven leadership.
- Create strategic convening plan with opportunities for SELECT partners to learn, share ideas, and address critical issues.

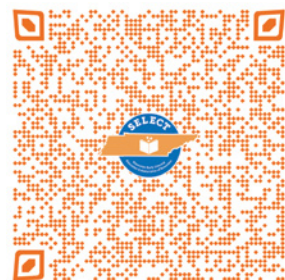
Through SELECT, we aim to facilitate connections, increase awareness, and create spaces for learning. Like you, we believe every child deserves the right to thrive, in school and in life. Literacy makes thriving possible.

We hope you will join us in our efforts and be a part of our early literacy collaborative.

Together, we can help our state's youngest learners achieve important literacy goals that will ensure future success in school, work, and life.

If you are a like-minded organization serving children and families and have not had an opportunity to connect with us, please contact Katie Elam, SELECT Manager at katie.elam@tn.gov.

Fill-out the TELL Survey here.



Every child
deserves
the right
to thrive.

Thank you to our SELECT supporters!

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