



Region 2 Mini-Grant Program

Promising Practices & Learning

Locally designed approaches to
strengthening family engagement

Round 1 | 2024-25

The project described was supported by MiFamily Engagement Centers funding from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.

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About the Mini-Grant Program

The Region 2 MiFamily Engagement Center Mini-Grant Program invests directly in schools and community organizations to strengthen family engagement through locally designed solutions.

The mini-grant program is one strategy of the Region 2 MiFamily Engagement Center, which supports family engagement across northwest Lower Michigan. The Engagement Center is part of Michigan's statewide investment in building the infrastructure, relationships, and capacity that support strong family-school-community partnerships.

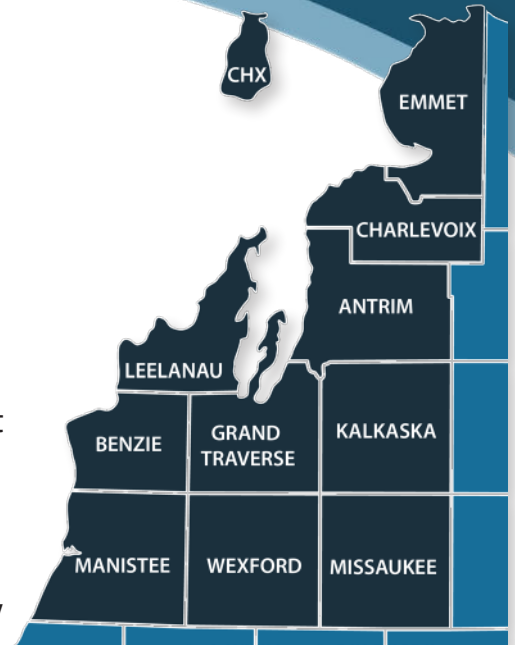
Round 1 grants were awarded through an application and review process, with funding recommendations made by a regional grant review panel.

Rather than prescribing a single approach, the program provides resources for organizations to respond to the needs, relationships, and opportunities within their own communities. The grants also create an opportunity to learn across projects: what worked, what changed, what was adapted, and what others might build upon.

This collection captures that learning through the experiences of Round 1 grantees and is intended to help educators, community organizations, and family engagement leaders consider what might be adapted in their own communities.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Beltz
Coordinator,
MiFamily Engagement Center Region 2



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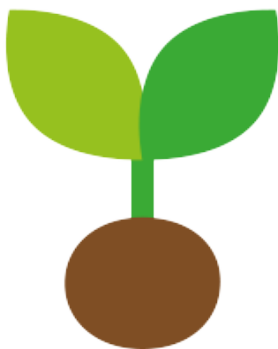
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Round 1 at a glance

Round 1 launched in December 2024 as the Region 2 MiFamily Engagement Center was being established. Funds were distributed in February 2025, projects concluded by Sept. 30, 2025, and follow-up reporting was completed in October 2025. As the inaugural grant round, the implementation period was shorter than subsequent rounds.

15 Projects • \$164,000 Invested • Two Focus Areas

Round 1 supported 15 locally designed projects, with awards ranging from \$1,395 to \$31,675. Applicants were invited to propose projects in two focus areas: **literacy and relationship building.**

Literacy

Projects strengthened families' role in children's literacy development through literacy modeling, books and materials, family learning experiences, home-visiting support, and family-school connections.

Relationship Building

Projects created intentional opportunities for families to build relationships with educators, other families, and community organizations.

Communities & Settings

Projects took place across schools and ISDs, early childhood programs, libraries, home visiting, neighborhood centers, after-school programs, community and faith-based organizations, businesses, and other community settings throughout Region 2.

Reach

Because projects differed significantly in purpose and scale, grantees measured reach in different ways. As a result, Round 1 does not have a single measure of overall reach. Individual profiles include the reach reported by each grantee.

What we learned across Round 1

Looking across the 15 projects, several themes emerged.

Relationships created the conditions for engagement.

Across both literacy and relationship-building projects, relationships connected families with educators, other families, community organizations, and resources. Activities and resources often served as the entry point; relationships helped make the engagement meaningful.

Several projects built capacity beyond the activity.

Projects paired resources and experiences with modeling, coaching, knowledge, skills, or strategies that families and professionals could continue using beyond the immediate activity.

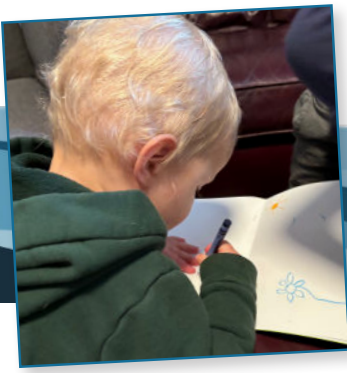
Local context shaped the work.

Schools, libraries, neighborhood centers, home-visiting programs, after-school programs, businesses, and other existing settings provided natural places for engagement. Projects also adapted activities, outreach, partnerships, and resources in response to what they learned during implementation.

Family participation was more visible than family influence.

Projects documented attendance, feedback, and participation more consistently than how family input shaped decisions or practices. Round 1 highlighted an important distinction between hearing from families and being able to see what changed because of their input.

Taken together, Round 1 shows that meaningful family engagement can take many forms when locally designed approaches build from relationships, community context, and learning along the way.



About the Project Profiles

Each profile tells the story of one Round 1 project through a consistent format:

The Practice - What the organization did

Why This Practice? - What makes the approach worth learning from

Evidence & Learning - What happened and what was learned

Framework Connections - Connections to MiFamily, NAFSCE, and implementation

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It - Practical considerations for another community

A practice is described as **promising** when the experience offers meaningful evidence, learning, or insight that may be useful to others. **Promising does not mean proven.**

The profiles are informed by three complementary lenses:

MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework provides Michigan's framework for high-impact family engagement.

NAFSCE Family Engagement Core Competencies identify the knowledge and skills professionals need to build effective partnerships with families.

Implementation considers the conditions that help practices take hold, adapt, and continue.

Together, these lenses help connect individual project experiences to broader family engagement practice and learning.

Project Evidence

Profiles draw on grantee applications, implementation updates, follow-up reports, surveys, participation records, and other documentation submitted to Region 2. Because reporting methods and available evidence varied across projects, the type and depth of evidence presented also vary. Findings should therefore be understood as project-level learning rather than formal evaluation results.

[MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework](#)

[NAFSCE Family Engagement Core Competencies](#)

[National Implementation Research Network](#)

Relationship Building

5toONE Neighborhood Center Family Engagement

Building relationship infrastructure through neighborhood-based family engagement

Great Start Collaborative & Family Coalition Traverse Bay / Northwest Education Services | \$25,000 |
Children birth–5 and their caregivers

The Practice

5toONE Neighborhood Centers provide consistent, welcoming spaces where families and young children can connect, learn, and build relationships close to home. Through play-based learning, caregiver-child activities, parent-to-parent connections, and access to community resources, Neighborhood Centers create regular opportunities for families to engage with one another and their communities. The grant supported programming across existing centers, along with coordination, coaching, training, and opportunities to expand access.



Why This Practice?

Consistency creates opportunities for relationships to develop. Families have regular opportunities to return, build connections, and develop trusted relationships over time.

A shared framework supports local adaptation. Neighborhood Centers use the Strengthening Families and HOPE frameworks while responding to the needs of individual communities.

Community partnerships extend the reach of the work. Neighborhood Centers bring together local organizations, resources, and community spaces to create accessible opportunities for families to connect.

Evidence & Learning

Between fall 2024 and fall 2025, the network hosted more than **185 playgroup sessions across 10 locations**, reaching more than **2,200 children and 1,800 caregivers**. The organization estimated that **1,500–1,800 families** were directly impacted.

98% of participating caregivers reported feeling more connected to their communities and better supported in their parenting roles. Partners also reported that families returned year after year, parent-led activities were welcomed, and some families incorporated the playgroups into their regular weekly routines.

➔ *What makes this promising?*

5toONE illustrates how consistent, neighborhood-based opportunities can create repeated pathways for families to build relationships, access resources, and feel connected to their communities.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Build consistency across sites while allowing local partners to adapt programming to community needs and use feedback to strengthen implementation.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Build on trusted places and existing community relationships.
- Create a consistent, low-barrier opportunity for families to connect.
- Give local partners flexibility to respond to their communities.
- Pair consistent programming with coaching, resources, and opportunities for local adaptation.

Building Stronger Communities Through Family Fun Events

Connecting working families, businesses, and community resources

Alliance for Economic Success | \$10,500 | Wexford & Missaukee County families with children/grandchildren

The Practice

The Alliance for Economic Success (AES) created family-focused events at local businesses to strengthen connections among employers, employees and their families, and community resources. Events included shared meals, family activities, literacy resources, and opportunities to learn about local supports such as childcare, YMCA programs, and other family services.

Why This Practice?

The workplace created a pathway to family and community connection. The project brought family engagement into a setting where working parents were already connected.

Family experiences were paired with resource connections. Events gave families opportunities to spend time together while learning about local programs and supports.

The project explored a role for businesses in family engagement. Employers became partners in creating opportunities for families to connect with one another and with community resources.

Evidence & Learning

The project engaged **2 local businesses and approximately 50 families** through two family events. **65 children** received bookstore gift cards to select a book. Events connected families with community resources including YMCA programs, childcare, and CAPS Crew programming.

AES reached out to **more than 15 businesses**, but fewer businesses participated than originally anticipated. The two participating businesses were highly engaged, and families responded positively to the opportunity to connect in a relaxed, family-centered setting. The project also returned a portion of the grant funds that were not used.

What makes this promising?

→ AES offers an example of using the workplace as a pathway to connect working families with one another and with community resources, while providing insight into the opportunities and challenges of engaging employers in family-centered work.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: The experience highlighted the importance of partner engagement, participation, and available capacity when introducing family engagement into a new setting.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Identify businesses with an interest in supporting employees and families.
- Build relationships with employers and understand their capacity before planning events.
- Make the experience valuable to families, rather than focusing primarily on resource distribution.
- Integrate community resources into family experiences in ways that feel useful and natural.



Communities In Schools of Northwest Michigan – Relationship Building

Embedding consistent relationship-building support within schools

Communities In Schools of Northwest Michigan | \$20,000 | Children K–12 and their families

The Practice

Communities In Schools of Northwest Michigan (CIS) placed site coordinators within 9 school buildings to serve as points of contact for students and families. Coordinators built relationships through regular communication, individualized support, referrals to community resources, advocacy during IEP and child study meetings, and participation in school/family events. The model connected students and families with schools, community organizations, and resources while supporting academic, social-emotional, and postsecondary goals.



Why This Practice?

Consistency creates opportunities for relationships to develop.

Site Coordinators are present within schools through the year, creating repeated opportunities for students & families to connect with a familiar person.

Relationship-building is connected to practical support. Coordinators help families navigate resources, access community services, and participate in school processes such as IEP and child study meetings.

Community partnerships extend the connections available to families. Coordinators worked with organizations such as CLEO and the local Health Department and connected students and families to college, career, and community opportunities.

Evidence & Learning

During the 2024–25 school year, the sites funded through the grant reported:

• 2,276 students served • 790 parents engaged • 262 students case managed, incl. assessments & plans

Among case-managed students, **94% met their attendance goal, 100% met their behavior goal, 91% met their academic goal, 85% met their social-emotional learning goal, and 100% met college and career readiness goal.** Also, 99% of K-11 students were promoted and 93% of 12th-graders graduated/earned GED. CIS identified additional engagement and partnership opportunities as next steps.

What makes this promising?

→ CIS offers an example of embedding a consistent relationship-building role within schools, connecting students and families with people, resources, and opportunities throughout the school year while continuing to explore how to deepen family engagement.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Engagement for all families

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Embed the practice within an existing school structure, build partnerships around student and family needs, and adapt supports as needs and opportunities emerge.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Identify a consistent person or role who can serve as a point of connection for students and families.
- Build enough presence within the school community for relationships to develop over time.
- Connect relationship-building with resource navigation, advocacy, and individualized support.
- Build partnerships with community organizations around identified student and family needs.
- Create multiple opportunities for families to connect beyond traditional family events.

Compass Family Engagement Events

Creating intentional spaces for families to connect, belong, and build community

Compass After School Program, Petoskey United Methodist Church | \$2,000 | K-5 families

The Practice

Compass After School Program used the grant to create intentional opportunities for families to connect within the after-school setting. The project included shared meals, seasonal family activities, and opportunities for parents to connect with one another while children built friendships and a sense of belonging. The original plan included three family engagement events during the school year, with outreach to prospective families as an additional goal.

Why This Practice?

The after-school setting provided a natural place for family connection. Compass created time and space for families to share meals, connect with one another, and build relationships with staff.

Shared experiences created opportunities for connection. The events centered on meals and activities rather than simply providing information to families.

Participation could be flexible. When families could not stay for an event, Compass provided take-home meals as another way to participate.

Evidence & Learning

The project directly engaged **12 families, including 14 children**, with attendance reported at **nearly 100% for each event**.

Families described sharing meals, meeting other parents, and feeling supported in the community as meaningful. Parents reported developing friendships, while children built friendships and confidence and frequently asked when the next family event would occur.

The project also provided implementation learning. Outreach to prospective families through the McLaren Health Fair could not be completed after the event was canceled because of an ice storm. Food costs and anticipating participation were additional implementation considerations.

What makes this promising?

Compass provides an example of using an existing after-school setting and shared experiences to create opportunities for families to build relationships and a sense of belonging.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate

Implementation: Create a consistent rhythm of engagement, learn from participation, and adapt logistics to respond to family circumstances.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Build family engagement into an existing program families already use.
- Create regular opportunities for families to connect rather than relying on a single event.
- Use shared meals and activities as natural opportunities for relationship-building.
- Offer flexible ways for families to participate when they cannot stay for the full event.
- Start small, learn what families value, and build from there.



Family Bridge

Building relationships first to strengthen family engagement and student success
Cadillac Area Public Schools | \$31,675 | Kindergarten–Grade 5 families

The Practice

Cadillac Area Public Schools used the Family Bridge grant to create multiple opportunities for educators to build relationships with families and connect them with supports. The project included a “Coffee and Chat” family adoption approach, summer learning supports, a community-wide *The Anxious Generation* book study, and a small-group *Shiloh* family book study. Staff also developed a resource dashboard to help educators connect families with community supports.



Why This Practice?

Relationships were used as a starting point. Informal opportunities such as Coffee and Chat gave staff space to learn from families, understand barriers, and identify supports for their children.

Families had multiple ways to participate. Opportunities included individualized support, summer learning, community conversations, and family book studies rather than a single prescribed approach.

Family engagement was connected to learning. The *Shiloh* book study combined dinner, reading, writing, discussion, and interactive activities to create opportunities for parents and children to learn together.

Evidence & Learning

The project reported impacting approximately **85 families**, with impact examined through family and staff surveys and attendance and academic data for participating students.

The *Shiloh* book study provided a strong example of sustained family participation. Families met weekly for a few months, and the teacher reported that parents and children were reading and talking together, sharing ideas from their conversations, and developing empathy and understanding through the book.

The community *Anxious Generation* book study engaged approximately **35 participants** and created opportunities for families, educators, and community members to discuss students, technology habits, and possible responses.

What makes this promising?

→ Family Bridge provides an example of using relationship-building, listening, and multiple entry points to create opportunities for families to become more connected to their children’s learning and to available supports.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families • Reflect

Implementation: Create multiple entry points, respond to family needs and participation, and connect new approaches to existing relationships and structures.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Start with listening and relationship-building when exploring family needs and priorities.
- Offer multiple ways for families to engage rather than relying on one format.
- Create opportunities for families to participate in settings that feel comfortable and accessible.
- Pair relationship-building with practical support for children’s learning.
- Use smaller opportunities for sustained engagement to build toward deeper family partnership.

Hero's Quest: A Percy Jackson Wellness Games for Kingsley

Using play, literacy, and wellness as a bridge to community connection

Kingsley Branch Library, Traverse Area District Library | \$3,100 | Multigenerational families

The Practice

Hero's Quest transformed a newly renovated community park into a six-week opportunity for family connection through literacy, fitness, play, and wellness activities. Families participated in boxing, yoga, cardio drumming, scavenger hunts, walking challenges, and team games, while 17 community partners contributed activities and resources.



Why This Practice?

Shared experiences created an entry point for connection.

Children and caregivers participated together in activities that made connecting with others feel natural and enjoyable.

Community partners became active participants. Partners contributed activities and experiences that created opportunities to interact with families rather than simply providing information or resources.

The library became a connector among families and community partners. The project opened conversations and connections related to food access, youth health, books, and mental health.

Evidence & Learning

532 attendees participated over six weeks, with families ranging in age from **2 to 77**. **Seventeen community partners** participated.

Fifty-two participants completed the impact survey, and the library conducted individual interviews with its **17 community partners**. Participants reported learning about new activities and community resources, while partners expressed interest in continuing the work.

The team also learned that bringing families and community partners into the same space did not necessarily result in connection. Structured activities for children provided a more natural way for partners to interact with caregivers and share resources.

What makes this promising?

→ Hero's Quest provides an example of how intentional activity design can create pathways for families and community organizations to connect around shared interests.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Design intentional opportunities for connection rather than assuming relationships will develop simply through shared participation.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Start with an activity or interest families genuinely want to experience.
- Use children's interests as an entry point for caregiver engagement.
- Give community partners an active role rather than simply providing resource tables.
- Pay attention to how families and partners interact and adapt the design based on what you observe.

Lake Ann Elementary Family Relationship Building Plan

Creating multiple pathways for families to connect, participate, and belong

Benzie Public Schools – Lake Ann Elementary | \$13,180 | PK–5 families

The Practice

Lake Ann Elementary developed a family relationship-building plan designed to create meaningful opportunities for families to participate in school life. The project included eight after-school family nights, Coffee and Conversation opportunities, and Foundation Friday events. The school also considered potential barriers to participation and included supports such as childcare and transportation assistance.

Why This Practice?

Multiple pathways created opportunities for participation.

Families could engage through larger family nights as well as smaller opportunities to connect with school staff.

The school considered potential barriers. The plan included supports such as childcare and transportation assistance based on anticipated participation needs.

Family engagement was connected to belonging. The project focused on creating opportunities for families to become part of the school community rather than simply increasing attendance at school events.

Evidence & Learning

Across eight family nights, participation ranged from **114 to 254 individuals**, including parents, family members, siblings, and students. Coffee and Conversation and Foundation Friday events brought an additional **5-12 parents or family members** at a time.

Families responded positively to the family nights and encouraged the school to continue offering them. The school reported receiving more positive feedback than expected, including appreciation for the opportunities to be part of a supportive community and involved in their child's school.

The project also provided information about participation supports. Most families did not use the childcare or Benzie bus tickets that had been planned. This gave the school additional information about which anticipated barriers were most relevant to participating families.

What makes this promising?

→ Lake Ann provides an example of creating multiple opportunities for family connection while using participation and family feedback to learn which supports are most useful in its community.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Engagement for all families • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Reflect

Implementation: Plan for potential barriers, learn from participation, and adjust supports based on what families communicate and use.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Offer more than one way for families to connect with the school.
- Consider potential barriers to participation when designing events.
- Ask families which barriers and supports are most relevant rather than relying only on assumptions.
- Use participation and family feedback to inform future supports.
- Create opportunities for families to participate school community members, not simply as attendees.



Northern Blooms Community Center

Using community storytime to build relationships, belonging, and access to resources

Northern Blooms Montessori | \$1,395 | Families with children ages 12 months–6 years

The Practice

Northern Blooms Montessori used its free monthly Community Storytime as a consistent gathering place for families. Each event combined stories, snacks, and creative activities with a community partner whose expertise connected to the month's theme. Located within the Commongrounds Cooperative, the program provided a setting where families could participate alongside organizations offering resources.



Why This Practice?

Consistency created repeated opportunities for connection.

Families returned month after month, creating opportunities for relationships among families, staff, and community partners to develop.

Community partners became part of the experience. Partners participated in storytime sessions and connected families with experiences and resources beyond the event.

Storytime connected families with the broader community. Some families continued engaging with partner organizations after participating in collaborative storytime activities.

Evidence & Learning

The project reported **20 families impacted**, with an average of **12 families attending each storytime session**. Many families returned from month to month.

Northern Blooms partnered with **9 organizations**, including several that participated in multiple sessions. During the grant period, **6 new partners** joined the storytime effort.

The project documented examples of families continuing their engagement with community partners outside of storytime. For example, **5 families attended a biking program with Norte** following a collaborative storytime session. Families also reported arranging playdates and continuing conversations.

The team learned that trusted messengers mattered. When some families were not responding to broader outreach, community partners shared information through their networks and reached additional families.

What makes this promising?

➔ Northern Blooms provides an example of how a consistent, accessible community gathering can create connections among families and provide pathways to community experiences and resources.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Build a consistent practice through existing community relationships, and use participation and partner experience to inform outreach.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Create a predictable, recurring opportunity for families to connect.
- Partner with organizations that can contribute meaningful experiences or resources.
- Make participation free and accessible whenever possible.
- Consider using trusted community partners as messengers to reach families.
- Look beyond attendance to see whether connections lead to additional community experiences.

Strong Beginnings: Power of Nutrition Engagement Night

From family-informed nutrition education to ongoing family connection

Strong Beginnings Preschool, East Jordan & Boyne City | \$2,000 | Families of preschool-aged children

The Practice

Strong Beginnings used family input to shape a nutrition-focused family engagement experience centered on positive, intentional mealtimes. Families prepared a freezer meal together, received individualized resources and practical tools, and had opportunities to connect with other families. When illness resulted in lower-than-anticipated participation, the program adapted its use of remaining funds to create additional opportunities for family connection throughout the summer.



Why This Practice?

Family voice shaped the experience. Resources were individualized based on information gathered from families, including their routines, needs, and circumstances.

Practical supports accompanied the learning. Families received tools and resources they could continue using at home, including crockpots for families who needed them.

The project adapted while maintaining its focus. When participation in the original event was affected by illness, Strong Beginnings used remaining funds to create additional opportunities for family connection.

Evidence & Learning

28 families participated in the nutrition event, with approximately **30 additional families** engaging in the summer connection activities.

Families reported learning about intentional mealtime routines, conversation starters, and involving children in meal preparation. Families also shared their own routines, activities, and strategies with one another through the summer.

The experience provided an example of how a planned family engagement activity can evolve in response to circumstances while continuing to create opportunities for connection.

What makes this promising?

→ Strong Beginnings provides an example of combining family input, practical supports, and flexibility to create opportunities for learning and continued family connection.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Engagement for all families

NAFSCE: Reflect • Connect • Collaborate

Implementation: Adapt the approach when circumstances change while maintaining purpose of the work.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Start with a need or interest identified by families.
- Pair learning with practical resources families can use at home.
- Create opportunities for families to learn from and connect with one another.
- Identify the core purpose of the practice so the approach can adapt when circumstances change.

CLEO Literacy Project

Making early literacy visible, accessible, and connected to family learning

Communities In Schools of Northwest Michigan & Central Lake Early Opportunities | \$3,888.14 |
Families with children birth–5

The Practice

The CLEO Literacy Project built on the existing Central Lake community playgroup by creating an organized, print-rich environment and intentionally embedding early literacy into play, routines, and family interactions. The project added accessible storage and labeling systems, monthly book distribution, literacy-focused lesson plans, and explicit modeling of the Birth to Age 3 Literacy Essentials for parents/caregivers. Families suggested books and shared how they use literacy skills daily.



Why This Practice?

The environment became part of the learning. Print labels, organized materials, books, and visual supports made literacy practices visible throughout the playgroup rather than limiting literacy learning to structured activities.

Parents were shown the “why,” not just the “what.” Facilitators connected activities to specific early literacy skills and invited families to consider how those skills appear in their own routines.

Families helped shape the literacy experience. Parents suggested books and contributed to the playgroup’s literacy activities. One parent-selected favorite became part of the library, and the parent later returned to read it during circle time.

Evidence & Learning

A staffing transition delayed the original timeline, but all three primary objectives were ultimately met. Monthly book distribution and family education continued beyond the original grant period and were scheduled to continue through June 2026.

Families showed interest in the new materials and in learning how the activities supported early literacy. Staff reported that the focused effort created sharper communication between facilitators and caregivers about the literacy skills embedded in playgroup activities.

The project also created an opportunity to strengthen alignment between the playgroup and Central Lake Public School’s literacy goals, a long-standing priority of the CLEO partnership.

What makes this promising?

CLEO provides an example of how a relatively small investment can build on an existing community setting to make early literacy practices more visible, intentional, and accessible for families.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Build new practices into an existing structure, use feedback to refine implementation, and connect community-based and school-based practice.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Strengthen an existing family space rather than creating an entirely new program.
- Make literacy visible through the environment, materials, and everyday routines.
- Explain the how and why behind activities so families can apply the learning at home.
- Invite families to shape materials and resources.
- Look for opportunities to connect community-based early learning with school-based goals.

Family Literacy Plan

Extending literacy learning from school into the summer and home

Mesick Consolidated Schools – Floyd M. Jewett Elementary | \$23,700 | K–5 students and their families

The Practice

Floyd M. Jewett Elementary used the Kids Read Now program as the foundation for a family literacy plan designed to maintain reading engagement during the summer. The project combined literacy events and workshops on at-home reading strategies with summer reading materials and staff contact with families. The goal was to help parents/caregivers reinforce literacy learning at home while maintaining a connection between school and family during summer.



Why This Practice?

Family engagement was connected to an existing literacy practice. Rather than creating a separate literacy initiative, the school used Kids Read Now as a structure to support families.

Support continued beyond the school year. Staff contacted families throughout the summer to encourage participation and reinforce at-home literacy strategies.

Multiple access points supported participation. The original plan included morning, evening, and virtual opportunities to accommodate different family schedules and barriers to participation.

Evidence & Learning

The project reached approximately **250 students and 200 families**.

Kids Read Now participation increased from **168 students in 2024 to 249 students in 2025** who reported reading at least one book through the program. The school connected this increase with the addition of staff summer contacts and family supports.

The school reviewed MClass (DIBELS) reading data and reported that beginning-of-year results showed marked improvement compared with the previous year's results, as well as slight improvement compared with the previous end-of-year data, indicating that students maintained reading skills over the summer.

The implementation experience also revealed an important challenge: summer family contact required more staff capacity than anticipated, and some families were difficult to reach. However, the school reported stronger program participation and earlier investment from parents in their children's schooling.

➔ *What makes this promising?*

Mesick provides an example of extending an existing literacy practice into the home by combining accessible reading resources with intentional family communication and educator support.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Engagement for all families • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Reflect

Implementation: Embed family engagement into an existing practice while identifying the staffing and communication conditions needed to sustain implementation.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Build family engagement into an existing literacy program rather than creating a parallel initiative.
- Pair take-home materials with explicit guidance for families.
- Maintain communication with families beyond individual events.
- Offer multiple ways for families to participate when schedules or access are barriers.
- Plan realistically for the staff capacity required for sustained family outreach.

Healing Roots Family Literacy Improvement

Building family literacy through personalized resources and home-based learning

Healing Private Wounds – Healing Roots Parents as Teachers Program | \$3,500 |
Families with children birth–5

The Practice

Healing Roots used its home-visiting program to increase families' access to books while building parents' knowledge and confidence in supporting early literacy at home. Parents helped identify their child's interests and needs, and the program created individualized literacy kits with books, games, and other materials. Literacy activities were incorporated into home visits from March through September, giving parents ongoing opportunities to practice and learn alongside their children.



Why This Practice?

Resources were personalized to the child. Parents selected books and activities based on their child's interests, making materials more relevant to each family.

Learning happened within the home. Home visitors connected books, games, rhymes, songs, and reading strategies to families' existing routines rather than treating literacy as a separate activity.

Access and engagement were addressed together. The project responded to barriers such as limited access to age-appropriate books, transportation challenges, and the cost of literacy materials.

Evidence & Learning

15 families / approximately 20 children were identified in the original project scope.

The project was implemented as planned. A follow-up survey showed **an increase in knowledge of and time spent on literacy-based activities in every household.**

Parent feedback described stronger family connection and increased confidence in supporting children's learning. One parent shared that the activities helped them "connect with my son on a whole new level," while another said the project demonstrated the importance of books and made literacy materials more accessible.

What makes this promising?

→ Healing Roots provides an example of pairing personalized literacy resources with parent involvement and home-based support, giving families repeated opportunities to use literacy strategies with their children.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Engagement for all families

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Integrate a new practice into an existing relationship-based structure rather than treating it as a stand-alone activity.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Ask parents what their children enjoy and need before selecting resources.
- Pair materials with modeling and coaching so families know how to use them.
- Build literacy activities into existing home or family routines.
- Consider access barriers such as transportation and the cost of books and materials.
- Use family feedback to refine resources and future practice.

Little Literacy Learners at Early Head Start

Equipping families with practical tools for everyday literacy and language

PoWeR! Book Bags | \$10,000 | Children & families enrolled in Early Head Start across Northwest Michigan

The Practice

PoWeR! Book Bags partnered with Early Head Start to support parents and caregivers in building literacy and language learning into everyday interactions with their children. Early Head Start teachers modeled how to use PoWeR! materials and provided coaching on activities families could incorporate into daily routines. The project served children enrolled in both site-based and home-based Early Head Start programs.



Why This Practice?

Families learned through modeling and coaching. Rather than simply providing literacy materials, teachers demonstrated how parents could use them with their children.

Literacy was embedded in everyday interaction. The project emphasized talking, singing, language play, and engaging with books - not just formal reading activities.

Family feedback led to an unexpected adaptation. Book-specific bookmarks became a practical tool that helped caregivers know how to engage with the book and child. Families reported using them repeatedly.

Evidence & Learning

317 families were identified as impacted by the project. **3,290 books** were delivered to Early Head Start site- and home-based programs, and **317 PoWeR! Literacy Bags** were distributed during the grant period.

Early Head Start partners reported an overwhelmingly positive response, including **families engaging more, reading more, and talking and singing more with their children**. Parents also described feeling more empowered to support their children's language and literacy development.

The project generated an unexpected adaptation: families reported that the book-specific bookmarks helped other caregivers, including fathers, know how to engage with the book and child. PoWeR! expanded use of the bookmarks to other programs and made them available to additional Early Head Start counties.

What makes this promising?

→ Little Literacy Learners provides an example of pairing literacy resources with modeling and coaching while using family feedback to refine the tools that support everyday learning.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate • Lead Alongside Families

Implementation: Pair resources with modeling and coaching, then use family feedback to identify adaptations that can strengthen and extend the practice.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Pair literacy materials with explicit modeling of how to use them.
- Connect literacy to everyday activities such as talking, singing, and play.
- Design tools that make it easy for any caregiver to participate.
- Pay attention to unexpected family feedback - it may reveal a useful adaptation.
- Build successful adaptations into other programs and settings.

Putting Families First – Learning How to Love Literacy!

Making literacy instruction visible and actionable for families

East Jordan Public Schools | \$5,500 | Kindergarten families

The Practice

East Jordan Public Schools created a family literacy experience designed to model developmentally appropriate literacy strategies that families could use at home. At a Family Literacy Night, families rotated through hands-on stations focused on letter and sound identification, high-frequency words, vocabulary, reading fluency, and writing. The school extended the learning through monthly Little Literacy Links, providing families with additional literacy activities and instructional resources to use at home.



Why This Practice?

Families learned by doing. Educators modeled literacy strategies while families participated in the activities rather than simply receiving information.

School learning extended into the home. Little Literacy Links gave families continued opportunities to use literacy materials and activities beyond the Family Literacy Night.

Family feedback informed the next cycle. Families identified specific changes that could improve future events, including more time at stations, an earlier start time, and better organization around dinner.

Evidence & Learning

117 participants took part in the Family Literacy Night.

Families reported that the materials were helpful and expressed interest in more Family Literacy Nights. They also indicated they were very likely to participate in future events.

Family feedback provided specific implementation insights for future events, including allowing more time at stations, starting earlier, and improving organization around dinner.

➔ ***What makes this promising?*** East Jordan provides an example of combining hands-on literacy modeling with resources families can use at home, while using family feedback to refine future engagement opportunities.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate

Implementation: Model the practice, provide opportunities to use it, and use family feedback to improve the next cycle.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Model literacy strategies rather than simply explaining them.
- Give families an opportunity to practice during the engagement experience.
- Provide materials that connect directly to what families learned.
- Create follow-up opportunities so engagement extends beyond one event.
- Use family feedback to improve the next implementation cycle.

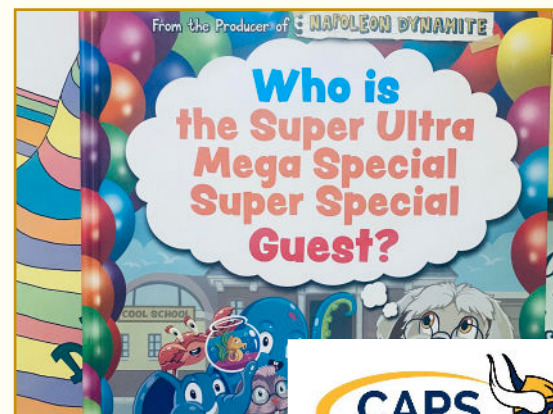
Who Is the Super Ultra Mega Special Super Special Guest?

Using a shared literacy experience to strengthen family-school partnership

Cadillac Area Public Schools | \$8,413 | Incoming kindergarten and first-grade families

The Practice

Cadillac Area Public Schools used Sean Covey's *Who Is the Super Ultra Mega Special Super Special Guest* as a shared entry point for early literacy and family-school partnership. Books were distributed to families through Kindergarten Roundup and to current kindergarten families. Family literacy events then used the book to bring parents and children together for shared reading, conversations about literacy, and practical guidance for supporting learning at home.



Why This Practice?

A shared resource created a common starting point. The book gave teachers and families a shared experience around which to begin conversations about literacy and family involvement.

The practice connected school and home. Families received practical ideas for reading, homework, conferences, field trips, and everyday involvement in their child's education.

Engagement began early. The project introduced family-school partnership during the transition into kindergarten and first grade, creating an early opportunity for families to connect with the school.

Evidence & Learning

440 families were impacted by the project, with **400 books distributed**.

Families were excited to receive the book and read it with their children. Family literacy events were reported as well attended, with positive feedback from families and staff. Most participating families also identified ways they were willing to contribute or volunteer in the coming year.

What makes this promising?

→ The project provides an example of how a shared, accessible literacy resource can create a starting point for conversations, learning, and partnership between families and schools.

Framework Connections

MiFamily: Relationships • Families as partners • Purposeful engagement • Positive learning environments

NAFSCE: Connect • Collaborate

Implementation: Use a shared resource as an entry point, then intentionally build relationships and learning opportunities around it.

Consider This If You Want to Adapt It

- Choose a shared resource that families and educators can experience together.
- Introduce family-school partnership early, particularly during transition points.
- Pair the resource with conversation, modeling, and practical strategies—not simply distribution.
- Create multiple opportunities throughout the year for families to participate and contribute.

Promising Practices & Learning

The Learning Continues

These projects represent the first round of the Region 2 Mini-Grant Program. Learning from Round 1 is informing future grant cycles, regional support, and continued efforts to strengthen family engagement across Region 2.

[See Round 1 grantees in action! Watch the video](#)



Learn more / Connect with Region 2

[Region 2 MiFamily Engagement Center](#)

(or scan QR code)

[State website](#)

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