



WE ALL BELONG spotlight

September/October 2026

WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING BRIO LIVING SERVICES A
WELCOMING PLACE FOR ALL TO LIVE AND WORK

TEAM MEMBER
TESTIMONIAL

The Importance of Literacy by Karen Owen



Karen Owen is the Senior Director of Foundation Operations for the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation. She recently served a term on the Chelsea Education Foundation board and has this to share about their work in literacy:

The Chelsea Education Foundation (CEF) supports literacy by funding teacher-led grants and learning opportunities that may not otherwise fit within the school district's budget. Strong literacy skills help students succeed in every subject, not just reading and writing. They build confidence, help students ask questions and share their ideas, and give them the tools to better understand the world around them. Supporting literacy removes barriers and creates a stronger foundation for success in school and beyond.

During my time on the CEF board, I saw how much of a difference community support can make. It gives teachers more tools to meet students where they are and create opportunities that help them learn and grow. I was proud to be part of an organization that turns community support into meaningful opportunities for our students and educators.



READING

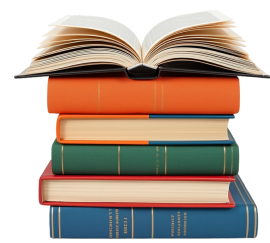
September 8th is: INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY



This year, **International Literacy Day (ILD)** marks its 60th anniversary. It was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1966 during the 14th session of the General Conference. Celebrated under the theme "Literacy for people, the planet and prosperity," ILD 2026 provides an opportunity to take stock of progress, deepen understanding of persistent and emerging challenges, and shape future literacy agendas in a rapidly changing world.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/days/literacy>

- On average, 79% of US adults nationwide are literate in 2024.
- 46% of adults have literacy above a 6th-grade level.
- Low levels of literacy costs the US up to \$2.2 trillion per year.
- 34% of adults lacking literacy proficiency were born outside the US.
- Massachusetts was the state with the highest rate of child literacy.
- New Mexico was the state with the lowest child literacy rate.
- New Hampshire was the state with the highest percentage of adults considered literate.
- The state with the lowest adult literacy rate was California.





RESOURCES

Literacy Center of West Michigan

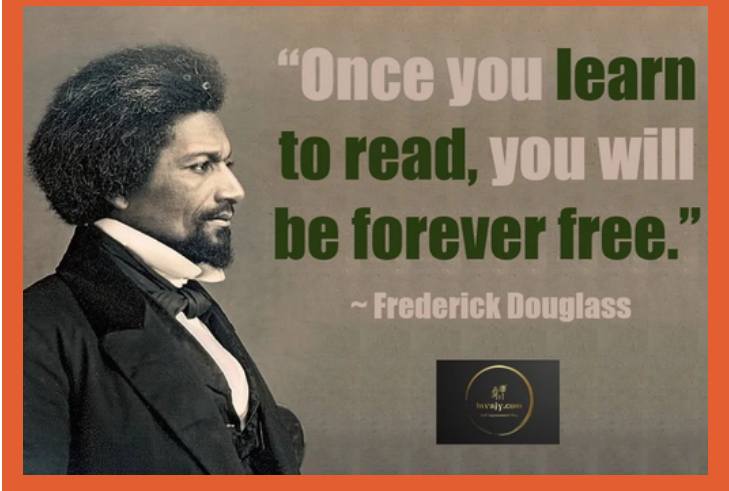
The Literacy Center of West Michigan works alongside immigrants, refugees, and native speakers of English to provide literacy instruction tailored to meet learner needs and priorities. All their programming is offered at no cost to the learner.
<https://literacycenterwm.org/>

Chelsea District Library

Chelsea District Library hosts an annual Midwest Literacy Walk. Lit Walk is intended to be a celebration of literature, reading, and the Chelsea community; removing barriers between everyday people and fantastic literature and the arts.
<https://www.chelseadistrictlibrary.org/midwest-literary-walk/>

INVOLVING OLDER ADULTS IN THE SOLUTION

AARP Foundation Experience Corps is a volunteer program that trains people over 50 to tutor students to become better readers by the end of third grade. Not only is the program shown to improve students’ reading skills, but it also builds critical social and emotional skills they need for successful learning—now and later in life. Currently, the Experience Corps program operates in 18 communities across the United States.
<https://www.aarp.org/experience-corps/>



Where does the US rank in literacy?

The US ranks 36th in literacy.

<https://www.thenationalliteracyinstitute.com/2024-2025-literacy-statistics>