



# Improving Literacy in Adults with Developmental Disabilities

There are over 50,000 adults with developmental disabilities (DD) in Ohio, most of whom face considerable literacy challenges, limiting their opportunities in life.

ElevateDD, the organization behind Adult Literacy Ohio, is investing substantially to develop a learning model to help adults with DD enhance their literacy skills. Adult Literacy Ohio aims to boost confidence, improve community navigation, enhance quality of life, and support workforce development for people with DD. Our goal is to **serve over 1,000 learners annually within three years**, significantly improving literacy skills within the community.

To gather direct feedback from adults with DD, ElevateDD collaborated with OCALI on a statewide survey to understand literacy-related needs. The survey, which received responses from 669 people across 77 Ohio counties, provides valuable insights into the need for literacy skill development and the factors driving this need. Notably, 94% of the adults with DD who responded expressed a desire to learn to read or improve their reading skills.

## Is the Adult Literacy Ohio Learning Model Effective?

A report by Dr. Chris Lemons, an Associate Professor of Special Education in the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University, validated the efficacy of sustained literacy support. He found that 100% of learners who engaged in more than one 16-week session through Adult Literacy Ohio made “notable progress.” That means that **every single adult** who participated in the program for more than one session has improved literacy. The strongest gains are in phonological awareness, phonics, & word reading.

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*Reading unlocks the door for all future learning and provides a lifetime of opportunities.” \**

—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine

## 2024 Survey Results



respondents from  
77 Ohio counties



of respondents would  
like to improve their  
reading skills



of respondents would  
have liked to learn to  
read better when they  
were in school

\*DeWine, M. [@GovMikeDeWine]. (2023, Jan 31). *Reading unlocks the door for all future learning and provides a lifetime of opportunities. Tragically, 40% of all third graders in Ohio are not proficient in reading. Today, I am calling for a renewed focus on literacy -- and on the way we teach reading in Ohio.* #OhioSOTS23 [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://x.com/GovMikeDeWine/status/1620469801348108290>

## Why is Literacy Important?

### Improved Independence

People with higher literacy skills are less likely to rely on others to navigate daily life tasks like reading a bus schedule, understanding instructions for medications, and shopping at the local grocery store.

### Access to Employment

Literacy skills are often necessary to meet the basic requirements of many jobs, such as reading instructions or safety information, filling out forms or applications, and communicating effectively with colleagues, customers, and supervisors.

### Improved Quality of Life

Building literacy skills promotes a person's growth by increasing access to information, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively with others, and enabling them to better understand and navigate the world around them.

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*The biggest growth from the first session—Justice knew all his letters but not the phonetic sounds of the letters. When we started this session, he only knew 2— r and m. As of this week, he knows ALL except I think y and g. Amazing! And now, he is using these to sound out words. Slow and steady has been his pace and growth, yet so amazing. And his confidence has soared!”*

—Michelle, Justice's Mom

## Top 3 reasons respondents wanted to improve their reading skills:

**48%** To get a job, to get a better job, or to do my job better

**45%** To use text, Facebook or Instagram, to talk with my friends

**45%** To be more independent at home in cooking, taking medications, and other activities



### Our Mission

To increase authentic inclusion for people with developmental disabilities by amplifying voices, supporting families, illuminating opportunities, and launching innovative solutions.