LJ&SLJ **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Children's Services: Building Foundational Literacy

Live Sessions Tuesdays, September 30-October 14, 2025

(Discussions and archives accessible until April 2026)

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FOR EARLY LITERACY

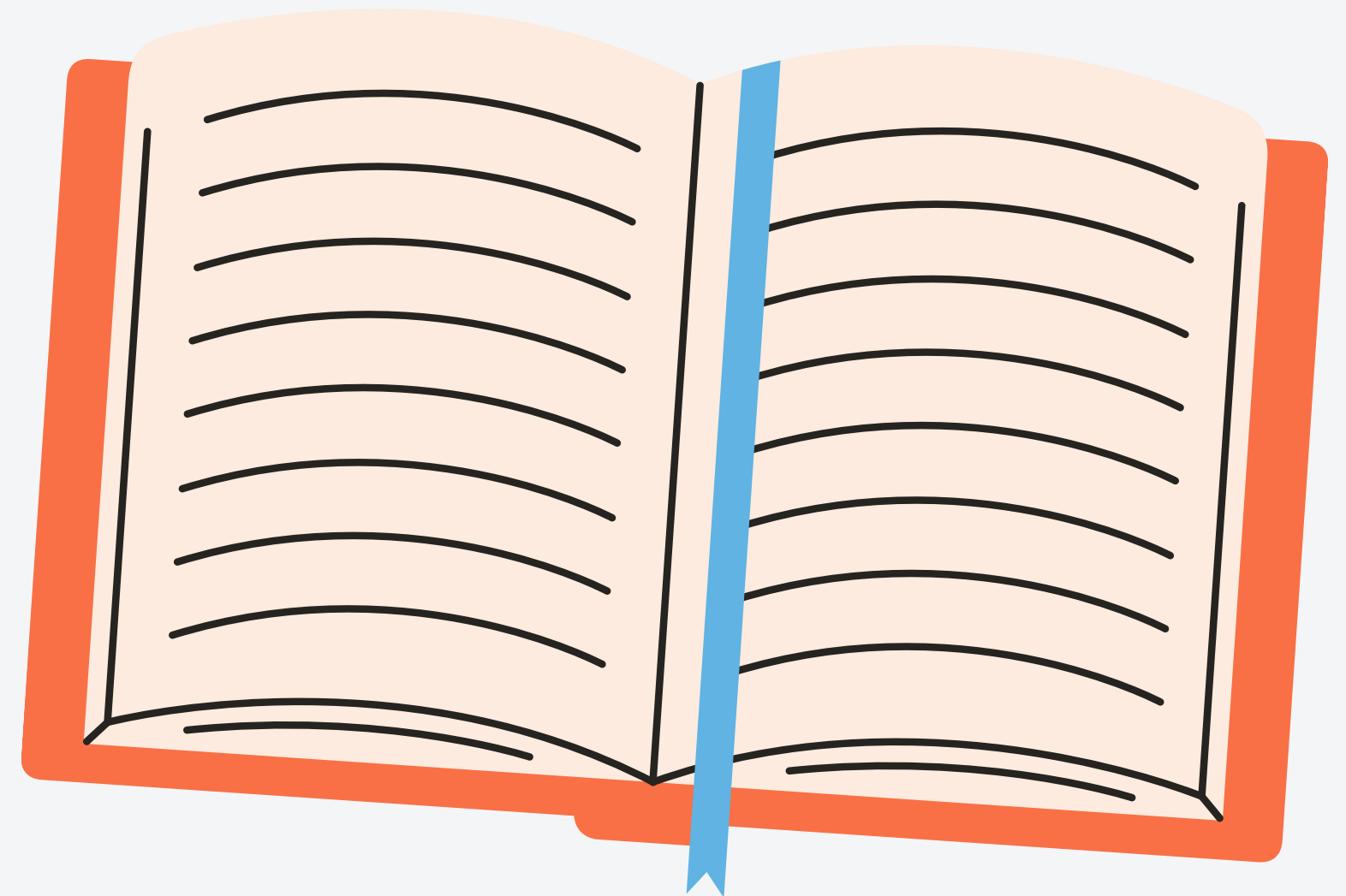Ellen Williams MSLS (she/they)

Early Literacy

Why Partner?

BRIDGE Framework

Case Study Examples

Equity-Centered Partnering

Takeaways

AGENDA

EARLY LITERACY SKILLS + PRACTICES

PRINT AWARENESS
LETTER KNOWLEDGE
PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
VOCABULARY
NARRATIVE SKILLS
PRINT MOTIVATION

TALK
SING
READ
WRITE
PLAY

In partnerships, we model these practices for teachers/caregivers, then transfer them into daily routines at school, home, and community sites.

POLL TIME

What is the biggest barrier that you have identified in partnering with groups/organizations in your community?

Time
Finding a contact
Transportation
Language access
Evaluation
Other:

WHY PARTNER?

Meet families where they are

Reduce barriers

Blend strengths

Turn one-off events into sustained programs

Preschools, laundromats, food pantries, community gardens, museums, dance studios, housing authorities, clinics, community centers, parks, zoos, social service organizations, religious institutions, neighborhood associations, media organizations, banks

SERViCE POPULATiON

Emotional Drivers

How does this make me feel?

- Belonging or inclusion
- Pride or recognition
- Inspiration or motivation

Functional Drivers

What does this do for me?

- Saving time or money
- Offering resources or services that solve a problem
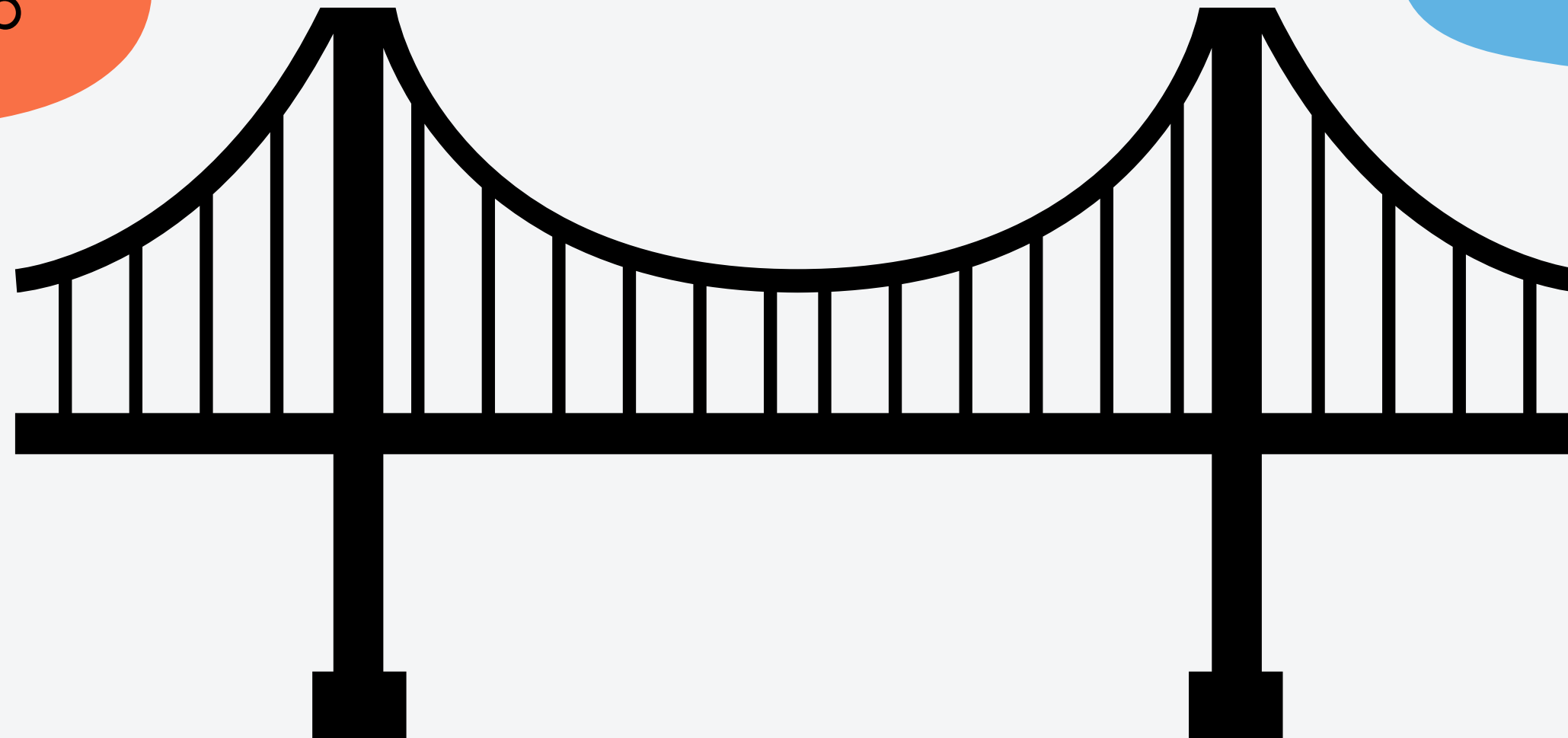- Helping someone advance their goals

BUILDING A BRIDGE

Relate + Map

Invite + Codesign

Do Small First

Gather outcomes

Benchmark Needs

Extend + Sustain

B/R/I/D/G/E

B – Benchmark needs

Identify who's not being reached, what barriers exist, and what families/educators say they need.

R – Relate + Map

Find natural partners: schools, childcare centers, clinics, faith groups, parks; identify champions.

I – Invite + Co-design

Host short listening sessions; co-plan a small pilot that meets both partners' goals.

D – Do Small First

Pilot something manageable (1 event, 1 month, 1 location). Keep it simple.

G – Gather Outcomes

Track 1-2 counts (attendance/sign-ups) and 1 pulse (Knowledge / Confidence / Application / Awareness)

E – Extend + Sustain

Debrief quickly, adjust, and scale. Formalize roles with a micro-MOU or recurring calendar.

POLL TIME

Do you attend any meetings or convenings of community groups?

Yes
No
Sometimes
What meetings?

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Goal: Access, family engagement, partnership building, equity & inclusion.

Moves: Lot clean up and garden transformation; seed library and gardening kits; nutrition workshops; gardening classes

Measures: Counts: 1,200+ seed packets, 60+ starter kits, 16 garden events (266), 11 youth nutrition sessions (166), 9 beds in use

Why it works: Asset-based, co-led, place-based; small pilots → recurring cadence.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Talk- Story walks, identifying vegetables, recipe steps

Sing- Songs about gardening

Read- Story walks, seed packets, recipes

Write- Recipe cards

Play- Market pretend play

SENSORY STORYTIMES

Goal: Reach non-library families; embed early literacy skills and practices with school partners; promote library services.

Moves: On-site sensory storytime series; Teacher co-planning; Modeling early literacy practices for teachers and aids; Take-home visual supports.

Measures: Attendance; teacher pulse (Knowledge / Confidence / Application / Awareness); anecdotal quotes.

Why it works: Reduces transport barriers; models ECRR strategies for teachers.

SENSORY STORYTIMES

Talk– Dialogic reading, choice board

Sing– Songs and books

Read– Predictable texts

Write– Trace Cards

Play– Bubbles & Puppets

EQUITY-CENTERED PARTNERING

Culture Shifts

- Slow down urgency
- Shift away from perfectionism
- Embrace both/and thinking
- Co-create goals
- Compensate partners
- See communities as assets

Facilitation Tips

- Begin with check-ins
- Invite community connectors
- Group norms
- Role rotation
- Transparency
- Feedback channels
- Move forward/move back
- Celebrate small wins

POLL TIME

Which culture trait shows up most often in your org?

Urgency
Perfectionism
Either/or thinking
Defensiveness

TAKE AWAYS

- Always be advocating.
- Passion attracts passion.
- If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
- Momentum is easily lost. It takes consistent, active involvement to keep partners motivated and involved.
- Failure happens.
- As projects evolve, so do the roles of its partners.

Initiative Plan Template

Library Name:

Initiative Name:

What:

What are the key activities of this program/service?

What are you offering your patrons that they value?

Who and How

Who is this program/service for?

How will you meet your target's needs?

Key Partners and Their Role:

Which community orgs could you partner with?

What role will they play?

What will they provide? (Staff, $, other)

Location:

At the library?

Off site at partner property?

Schedule:

On-going or one time?

Resources Required:

Supplies, etc.

Possible Funding Sources:

Library, grants, sponsors, other.

RESOURCES

Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR): A library-developed framework that centers families, but thrives when extended into schools and community organizations

Project Outcome: Free PLA toolkit to measure impact. (Now Outcome Measurement)

Zero to Three: Uses childhood development research to create meaningful resources for families, professionals, and policymakers.

LECTIO Approach: Mobilizes leaders to strengthen and accelerate their strategic route from inspiration to outcome.

Head Start PFCE: A research-based guide to build strong relationships with families and community partners.

THANK YOU

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Given what you have learned today, how confident that you could be starting a small pilot program in the next month or two?

1 not confident at all
5 very confident

ELEMENTS USED