



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE
MEBANE EARLY LITERACY CENTER



MELC Brief Series Community Inquiry Study

BRIEF II:

**MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO LITERACY:
CBO SERVICES IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY**

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MEBANE EARLY LITERACY CENTER

PREFACE

The purpose of this research brief is to share findings about literacy services provided by community-based organizations (CBOs) located in Mecklenburg County in NC. An overview of the study background and methodology is summarized in the Executive Summary titled Early Literacy Services Provided by Community Based Organizations in Mecklenburg County: An Inquiry Study.

In this report, the term literacy services refers to a wide range of activities and supports for reading that occur within and outside the school day. CBOs may adjust their literacy services from year to year based on the needs in the community. Findings reported here reflect data collected in 2024.



WHAT LITERACY SERVICES DO CBOS PROVIDE IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY?

Two broad categories of literacy services emerged from the analysis, enhancements and extensions. Approximately half of literacy services were categorized as enhancements. Enhancements focused on supporting educators, families, and community members with access to resources, or by strengthening their skills and knowledge. The other half of literacy services were categorized as extensions. Extensions provided consistent, academic-focused learning to children that extended the traditional school curriculum. Table 1 describes literacy enhancements categories (percentages based on survey responses, n = 27), and subcategories (percentages based on interviews and paired interviews, n = 9).

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT OF CBO THAT PROVIDE THE SUBCATEGORY SERVICE
Family engagement (88% ^a)	Family engagement activities	Activities involving family members engaging with the organization to support their child with reading	77.8% ^b
	Active Reading workshops	Training for families on Active Reading (see read-aloud definition below in Table 2 Description of Extensions - General Support)	Books
Resource provision (88% ^a)	Books	Books provided to families (directly or indirectly) with the intent of building home libraries or for personal use 66.7% ^b	66.7% ^b
Adult literacy services (33.3% ^b)	Adult programs and resources	Literacy resources provided to educators with the intent of being used in classrooms during the school day	44.4% ^b
Professional development (76% ^a)	Specific program	Training for tutors and/or educators to (a) use a specific literacy tutoring program, or (b) train others to use that literacy program (train the trainer model)	22.2% ^b
	Literacy knowledge	Training for educators on foundational literacy skills/strategies	11.1% ^b

Notes. *a* Percent of organizations based on analysis of survey responses ($n = 27$)

b Percent of organizations based on analysis of interviews and paired interviews ($n = 9$).
Subcategory emerged from interview analysis and was not included in the survey.

c Percent of organizations include CBOs that provided training to families and supported the development of the Active Reading training.

Extensions were further categorized into two types, General Support Extensions and Reading Intervention Extensions.

General Support Extensions provided students with additional practice and support on a wide range of literacy skills through unstructured or semi-structured literacy programming. General support extensions did not use a structured curriculum and did not follow a prespecified scope and sequence of instruction. General support instruction was provided by teachers, staff, or volunteers and commonly followed a high-dosage model (e.g., minimum of two sessions per week) to the extent possible.

Reading Intervention Extensions provided students with research-based literacy instruction on specific skills through structured programming. Reading Interventions were standards aligned or followed a literacy curriculum or program with a defined scope and sequence, and students were placed within that curriculum based on their specific skills and needs. Instruction was provided by trained teachers, staff or volunteers, closely mirrored school literacy instruction, and to the extent possible, followed a high-dosage model (e.g., minimum of two sessions per week). Table 2 describes the type of extension, categories of literacy services, and descriptions based on interview and paired interview responses ($n = 9$), unless otherwise noted.



Description of Literacy Extensions

EXTENSION TYPE	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT OF CBOs THAT PROVIDE THE LITERACY SERVICE
General Support	Multi-lingual learners support	Activities designed for multilingual learners to develop literacy skills	55.5%
	After-school programs	After-school programs that provide literacy instruction or support.	44.4%
	Assessment administration	Administration of formal literacy assessments/ measures to students (e.g., DIBELS, ORF, PAST)	44.4%
	Read-aloud (e.g., Active Reading, Story Exploring)	Read-alouds are led by an adult or older individual reading a book (picture book, trade book, chapter book) with a child. Active Reading is a type of interactive read-aloud led by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, originally developed by Read Charlotte.	33.3%
General Support and/or Reading Intervention	Literacy Tutoring	One-on-one or small group tutoring in literacy	44.4% ^b 64% ^a
	Summer Camps	Summer programs with a literacy component	44.4%
	Preschool Literacy Experiences	Instruction in phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, concepts of word, literacy centers (e.g., writing, puppets, books), active reading	11.1% ^b

Notes: ^a Percent of organizations based on analysis of survey responses (n = 25), includes tutoring during academic year and out-of-school time (e.g., summer camps, holidays).

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

1

CBOs offer a wide range of literacy services across Mecklenburg County, which are catalogued in the [Mecklenburg County Early Literacy Database](#), located on the Mebane Early Literacy Center's website. The [Interactive Literacy Support Map](#), also located on the website, was created in partnership with the Urban Institute Regional Data Trust at UNC Charlotte, and provides a geographic display of the locations of services listed in the Early Literacy Database.

2

Both enhancements and extensions are integral components of the broader literacy system and support children learning to read. Enhancements offer experiences and resources that may otherwise be unavailable, while general support extensions and reading intervention extensions are designed to mirror school literacy instruction. These multiple pathways for literacy support by CBOs are vital to the success of children in Mecklenburg County. Indeed, Mecklenburg County's children are in a unique position to benefit from community-wide literacy efforts via layered supports, which engage resources across school, home, and community. When local public schools provide high-quality core instruction aligned to the Science of Reading, enhancements (e.g., book provision for home libraries, family literacy engagement), and/or general support extensions (e.g., homework help) can be layered to enrich literacy experiences and provide abundant opportunities for literacy engagement. When needed, reading intervention extensions (e.g., high-dosage tutoring) can be added to further amplify impact on measurable literacy skills. CBOs in Mecklenburg county offer a wide array of literacy services that, when coordinated and layered, have the potential to amplify positive literacy outcomes.

Recommended Citation: Preston, A.I. & Merry, J. (2026). *Multiple Pathways to Literacy: CBO Services in Mecklenburg County (Research Brief)*. Mebane Early Literacy Center.
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