

## **Building a Literacy Program at a Local School**

“Reading is the foundation upon which all other essential skills are built” (TEDx Talks, 2017). John Brown, in this TED Talk, discussed how illiteracy affects over a billion people worldwide. Literacy is essential to decreasing poverty and crime rates and can help with building critical thinking skills, strong self-perception and self-confidence, and curiosity and creativity. Teaching literacy is centered on the ability to read and write, but this process should move beyond reading words on a page. Green (2016) made a case for authentic literacy, claiming that students should be taught higher-order literacy skills, or the ability to critically read a text, understand opposing viewpoints, and ask thought-out questions. These skills must be imbued in the curriculum.

Merrill Sheils (2018) lamented the struggles of literacy in her 2018 Newsweek article, “Why Johnny Can’t Write.” She argued: “If [students] are in high school and planning to attend college, the chances are less than ever that they will be able to write English at the minimal college level when they get there” (Sheils, 2018). These complaints of students’ low literacy levels have not changed much since decades ago.

Some might think helping with the literacy issue at LPA starts with understanding the Missouri educational system. Authentic engagement is often defined with the state education board in mind. Delaney and Griffin (2017) discussed the reform school bills that did not “get through the 2017 Missouri legislature.” In this article, Brent Ghan, School Boards Association spokesman, mentioned the following: “Our local school boards are in the best positions to understand local circumstances, that attempts to develop a one-size-fits-all policy.” Building capacity for a successful literacy program involves determining changes to the current curriculum, thinking about programs that could encourage literacy, and frequently assessing literacy practices. Only then can a successful literacy program be developed.