



The READ Strong Network

Building Thriving Reading Ecosystems to Ensure Maryland Children Achieve Proficiency

At [Maryland READS](#), we are focused on **THREE PROVEN PATHS** to closing the literacy gap: *improving reading instruction* in the classroom; *creating thriving reading ecosystems* throughout our state; and *addressing barriers*, like digital technology overload, that prevent students from becoming proficient readers. [Research](#) substantiates that a strong, interconnected support system that involves families, community and civic organizations, healthcare professionals, businesses, libraries, and other stakeholders is essential to reinforce and sustain reading skills. While reading instruction in the classroom is critical to ending Maryland's reading crisis, a thriving reading ecosystem outside of the classroom is also necessary to ensure every student can read.

What exactly is a Reading Ecosystem?

A reading ecosystem extends beyond the instruction that takes place in the classroom — from exposure to books and parental involvement to after-school care and engagement with local businesses that can support reading initiatives. The Ecosystem is where our children live, learn and play – and we all have a role in ensuring that these Ecosystems are thriving. The more we promote reading as fun and important, and provide opportunities for children and families to engage in reading activities and access supports outside of the classroom, the more we will see children reading and, ultimately, an improvement in reading proficiency scores.

That is why Maryland READS [launched the READ Strong Network](#), a statewide effort that brings together literacy leaders, parents, educators, librarians, childcare professionals, businesses, and faith leaders. Together, we are breaking down the silos and holistically approaching challenges - county by county - that will end our reading crisis. Through our Network, we will connect individuals and organizations already engaged in this work and establish new connections in our communities.





What does the READ Strong Network Do?

The READ Strong Network builds thriving reading ecosystems by focusing on the following three areas:

- ▶ **Mapping Connections:** There are effective programs in every Maryland county/city that address reading. The Network begins by identifying these points of access, understanding the role they play in the Ecosystem, and sharing best practices in reading support across the Network.
- ▶ **Filling the Gap:** The Network can identify weak links in the county ecosystem and work to fill those gaps. This includes advocating for new targeted programs and identifying other ways in which the county can achieve its reading goals.
- ▶ **Creating a Culture:** The Network creates a culture that supports and prioritizes reading, whether working with local businesses that will benefit from students with greater reading comprehension to educating parents of the youngest readers about the negative impacts of digital technology on reading proficiency - the READ Strong Network is building a culture that values and promotes literacy efforts.

Where Does the READ Strong Network Exist?

There are READ Strong Networks forming in **Baltimore City, Montgomery County** and **Queen Anne's County**. They include school district representatives, education and reading advocates, parents, community leaders, policymakers, school board members, and librarians, among others. Maryland READS is actively working to develop new partnerships and intends to announce new chapters in 2025.

To learn more about the READ Strong Network
contact us at info@marylandreads.org.

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