



SMART NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2022



Hello, SMART Reading Community!

It's my honor to greet you as SMART Reading's new Executive Director. When I joined SMART as Communications Director over 11 years ago, I knew right away I'd discovered a magical combination of factors: A mission that is undeniably critical; a hard-working, dedicated staff team; and a cadre

of thousands of wonderful volunteers and supporters who care deeply about setting Oregon kids on the path to literacy and learning success. The opportunity to lead this incredible organization is a true honor.

As you'll read in this newsletter, this year was a momentous one for SMART as we celebrated our 30th anniversary, finalized a merger with The Children's Book Bank, prepared for a leadership transition, and continued to adapt our programming to serve kids and families throughout the pandemic.

Looking ahead to the future, we're planning for a return to significant in-person service while continuing to offer some

of the pandemic-era adaptations that have proven to be valuable complements to classroom curricula. Our focus continues to be on providing the best possible service to students and being a responsive partner to our schools and sites. We're hopeful that this return to in-person SMART will mean more opportunities for volunteers to join us in the critical work of supporting young readers – we've missed you!

With the finalization of our merger with the Book Bank, we're excited for the opportunities for expanded impact across the state! In this next year, we're focused on integrating our teams and beginning to plan for the eventual expansion of the Book Bank, which currently serves Multnomah County, to additional communities. Read on for more information about the Book Bank.

I look forward to working with you all in this exciting next chapter for SMART, and to all of the great work ahead to inspire a love of reading and learning in Oregon's kids!

Jessica Bowersox

A Message from Outgoing Executive Director, Chris Otis



On June 30 I officially retired from my post as Executive Director after 11 ½ years. It has been a true privilege to lead this organization doing such impactful work for the kids of Oregon. As I begin my retirement from my new home in Walla Walla, Wash., I do so feeling tremendous pride in all

that SMART has achieved over this last decade -- especially over the last two years -- and gratitude for the community of people who've made it possible.

Our small and mighty staff team has inspired me with their resiliency, flexibility and unrelenting commitment to our mission as we've developed new innovations and adaptations that, while necessitated by the pandemic, have exciting potential to help us reach more kids in different ways into the future.

In addition to our staff, I am deeply grateful for the thousands of Oregonians -- volunteers, donors, partners, educators, businesses, community leaders -- who've supported this critical work over the last 30 years. Without you, it wouldn't be possible.

Looking ahead, I feel a deep sense of hope for what's to come for this organization. I'm thrilled to have handed over the reins to Jessica Bowersox, who's been part of the organization during my entire 11-year tenure and will lead SMART with capable, steady hands. The recent merger with The Children's Book Bank also begins an exciting new chapter with the potential to reach many more kids and families across Oregon!

As I watch SMART continue to expand its impact into the future, I'll be toasting you from afar with a glass of Walla Walla Syrah.

Chris Otis

Our Next Chapter: The Children's Book Bank + SMART Reading

The Children's Book Bank is an organization that gives new life to community-donated children's books in order to fill homes and lives with engaging, culturally diverse books. SMART Reading and the Book Bank have worked together serving children in Multnomah County with books and reading services for many years. With natural alignment between our respective missions -- and the pandemic presenting an inflection point -- our Boards of Directors moved last year to explore a merger of the two organizations.

After a year of due diligence, our collective leadership voted to move forward with a merger, which was finalized on July 1, grounded in the belief that our collective whole is greater than the sum of our parts. By becoming one organization, we're poised to better serve Oregon kids with reading support and access to books.

In the 2022-23 school year, we plan to implement our programming side-by-side, learning from one another and identifying areas for integration and expansion. In the year ahead, our collective team will engage 8,000 volunteers and serve 20,000 students across Oregon. Over the course of our histories, we've collectively given away over 4 million books and have served 373,000 children, helping to spark a lifelong love of books and reading in our youngest learners.



We look forward to the future of expanded impact and putting more books into kids' hands and homes throughout the state. To learn more about the merger and the work of The Children's Book Bank, visit: www.SMARTReading.org/merger



2022-23 Programming Plans

While we don't know with certainty what the 2022-23 school year will bring, we're hopeful for a widespread return to in-person programming and with it, many more volunteer opportunities! We continue to prioritize providing books to keep in combination with reading engagement opportunities. We're in conversation with our educator partners about how we can best meet the needs of their students, and our current plan is to offer the following:

- **One-to-One SMART:** Our original model, One-to-One SMART pairs a trained community volunteer with a student for weekly individual, in-person reading sessions.
- **Classroom SMART:** This model pairs a trained community volunteer with a classroom for regular group read-alouds either virtually or in-person.

Books to Keep

- 14+ high-interest, culturally diverse books for each student served
- Access to SMART Storytime digital read-aloud library

Developed during the pandemic, it has proven to be a popular and effective tool for building reading engagement and getting kids excited about books.

- **Book Support:** All students served by SMART receive books to keep, which include access to SMART Storytime, our digital library of read-alouds. Book Support is typically paired with Classroom SMART or One-to-One SMART. For sites where that's not possible due to pandemic-related considerations, we'll continue to provide books to students.

In Multnomah County, the Book Bank will continue to offer their robust suite of programs focused on getting books into the hands and homes of kids from birth through eighth-grade. Read more at www.SMARTReading.org/book-bank

Reading Engagement

- Options:
- One-to-One SMART (in-person)
 - Classroom SMART (virtual and in-person)

Celebrating 30 Years of SMART

This year marked three decades of providing reading support and books to Oregon kids -- more than 373,000 in all! In honor of this special milestone, we commissioned murals themed around the joy and power of reading in communities across the state. We also convened two literacy summits, bringing the SMART community together for informative, impactful conversations about the state of literacy in Oregon and the importance of diverse books. And thanks to 147 generous donors, we met our goal of having 100 percent of SMART schools sponsored during our 30th year! To read more about our 30th anniversary celebrations visit:

www.SMARTReading.org/30th-anniversary



Pictured: Murals commissioned by SMART in Portland (top left), McMinnville (top right), and Bend (bottom).

Ways to Support SMART

With nearly 100 percent of our funding contributed from private sources, we rely on the generosity of our community for the vital resources we need to serve Oregon kids. Here are some easy ways you can support SMART financially:

- ▶ Join the **SMART Book Club** by becoming a sustaining monthly donor. Just as our volunteers show up each week for our students, monthly donors provide critical ongoing support by showing up consistently for kids with their contributions. To sign up, visit: www.SMARTReading.org/Donate
- ▶ Set up a **Facebook Fundraiser** and invite your friends to make a gift to SMART. Get started at: www.facebook.com/fund/SMARTReadingOR
- ▶ If you have a **Rite Aid** wellness+rewards account, sign up for KidCents, select SMART Reading as your local charity, and round up your purchases to support SMART. Learn more at: www.foundation.riteaid.com/kidcents
- ▶ In lieu of physical gifts, buy gift cards benefiting charities using **Tis Best**. Your recipient can choose from thousands of nonprofits, including SMART Reading, with their personalized gift card. Learn more at www.tisbest.org.

2021-22 Statewide Impact



255 Sites



750 Volunteers



14,453 Students Served



124,458 Books Given



10,379 Volunteer Hours