



→ → Empowering Parents to Address St. Louis's Literacy Crisis

Last year, Missouri passed Senate Bill 681, requiring all elementary schools to provide regular updates to families about their child's reading level—a crucial step in addressing our city's literacy crisis. But is it working? Are parents feeling more informed and empowered to support their child's reading journey?

This past fall, we surveyed and interviewed hundreds of families.

Here's what we found:



By **November 2024**, **62% of families** reported that they had **not received any update** about their child's reading level.



However, many of these schools **did** send letters—but parents either didn't recognize them, missed them among other communications, or never received them due to address or contact changes.



Among families who **did** receive a letter, **only 25% found it helpful**—many struggled to interpret the data or questioned its accuracy compared to their own observations at home.



The families who **did** find it helpful overwhelmingly credited a conversation with a teacher that provided clarity and guidance.

The Bottom Line

Schools are making efforts to meet the **letter of the law**, but it's not translating into parents understanding whether their child is on track to read at grade level. **In the absence of clear messaging, many assume everything is fine.** Without actionable next steps, families aren't being activated as key partners in closing the literacy gap.

The good news? Parents' feedback gives us a clear path forward. Now, it's time to make these updates **meaningful, accessible, and actionable**—so every family has the tools to support their child's reading success.



What Schools Can Do:

1 Meet families where they are and use different channels:

(send letters, simple text messages) to reach families and store real-time updates where families can readily access it. Put the reading level front and center on report cards, which families already pay attention to.

2 Use clear, actionable language: Avoid jargon and euphemisms. Instead use plain language that tells parents what they need to know and whether there is cause for concern and action.

3 Help Parents Understand the Data: Don't just share numbers—teach parents how to interpret them. Prioritize discussing the data at back-to-school nights, conferences, and expanding “parent university” offerings.

4 Follow Up: Ensure parents receive and understand the information, not just that it's sent. If limited capacity, at least get live confirmation from any parents whose students are more than a year behind.

What Families Can Do:

1 Don't wait: Even if these letters are coming, don't get past October without knowing your kids' reading level. Go ask the teacher!

2 Ask questions: No shame in not understanding the data. You can ask someone at school but also reach out to fellow parents.

3 Use School Resources: Prioritize showing up at teacher conferences, back to school nights.

4 Get extra help! Reach out to fellow parents for support, and tap into your Bridge 2 Hope network.

We're Stronger Together!

Bridge 2 Hope is dedicated to helping schools and families work together to ensure every child has the right to read.

Let's **partner** to strengthen this effort! Whether for the year ahead or as we prepare to make Year 2 of this policy even stronger.

Connect with us to learn more! knowyourlevel.org