EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

2026-2028 GFWC CLUB MANUAL

GFWC est. 1890 GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

2026-2028
EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

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"READING IS THE SOLE MEANS BY WHICH WE SLIP, INVOLUNTARILY, OFTEN HELPLESSLY, INTO ANOTHER'S SKIN, ANOTHER'S VOICE, ANOTHER'S SOUL."— JOYCE CAROL OATES

Equitable, quality education is the key to acquiring the knowledge to succeed in our ever-changing world. Whether learning takes place in a classroom, a library, or online, we gain the knowledge and understanding that shapes our perspective, strengthens our ideas, and forms our opinions. It is essential that society provides access to the highest quality education to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or gender.

A critical part of that foundation begins with reading. Literacy is the gateway skill – opening doors to imagination, vocabulary, empathy, communication, and lifelong learning. When we put books in the hands of children, we give them the power to dream and imagine a brighter future. Reading at home and in the classroom is one of the most influential predictors of academic success and personal development.

Equitable access to affordable, high-quality early learning programs provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children. Early childhood is generally defined as birth through age eight. Five Key Elements are fundamental to achieving high-quality experiences and strong outcomes for preschool children: the learning environment, daily routine, adult-child relationships, teaching practices, and family engagement.

Public libraries play a vital role in advancing literacy and expanding access to books. More than just buildings filled with shelves, libraries are welcoming, safe places to meet, learn, and study for all ages. They offer free access to all people for information through reading materials, digital resources, classes, tutoring, and safe spaces for children and adults to gather and study. In the 1930s, GFWC women's clubs were credited by the American Library Association as having founded over 474 free public libraries and 4,655 traveling libraries. Today, supporting local libraries continues to be a Federation priority. Above all, be supportive of your library and implement a project at your library that makes your club proud.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education further equips students to thrive in careers in the STEM fields. Students learn through interaction, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration. This approach to learning can help meet the challenges of the future and enable them to be successful individuals.

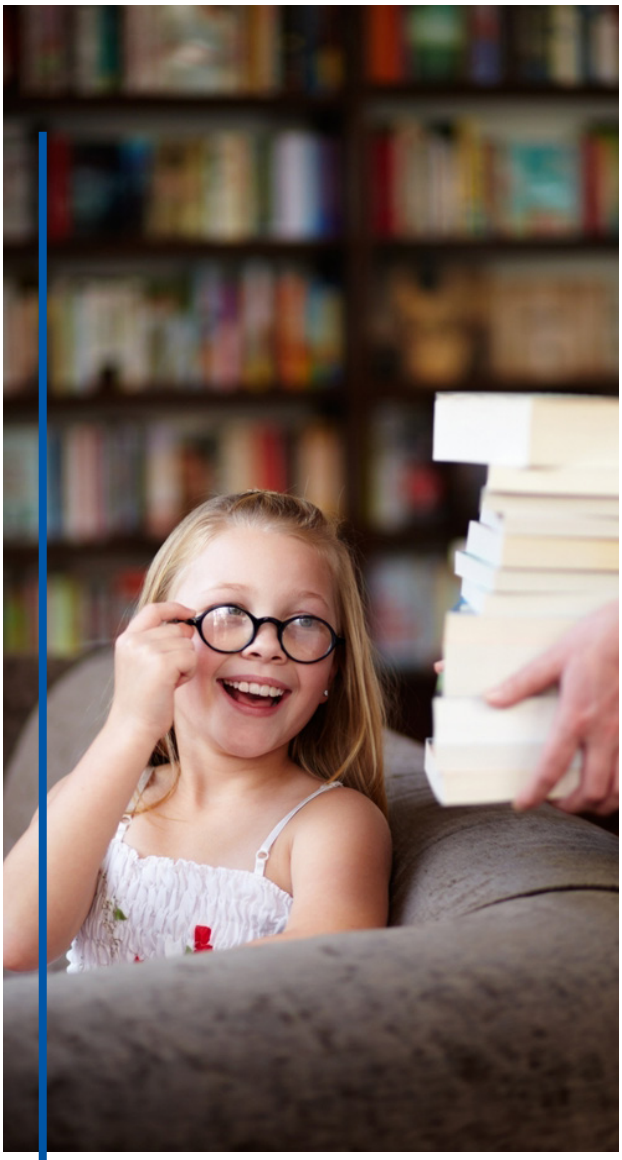
Epsilon Sigma Omicron (ESO) is an honorary educational society open to all per-capita dues paying GFWC members. The purpose of ESO is to provide clubwomen with a structural reading program, which is educational and stimulates a desire for self-improvement. Are you an ESO member?

As GFWC members, we believe that access to books and education is fundamental for both children and adults. Through projects in the Education and Libraries Community Service Program, GFWC members champion literacy, support schools and educational institutions, strengthen libraries, and promote reading for children and adults alike.

Direct any questions regarding projects that do not involve GFWC Affiliate Organizations to the Education and Libraries Community Service Program Chairman or GFWC Programs Department at Programs@GFWC.org.

2026-2028 UNITY PROJECT

UNITY THROUGH READING: EVERY STORY MATTERS



PROVIDING BOOKS AND RESOURCES ABOUT INFLUENTIAL WOMEN TO SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

GFWC's Unity Project is dedicated to strengthening communities through the shared power of literacy and representation. Reading is more than a skill – it is a bridge. Through books, families learn, children grow, cultures are honored, and communities thrive. This initiative emphasizes providing books and educational resources about influential women to schools and public libraries so that every reader can see themselves reflected in the stories they discover. Inspired by a young girl who searched her library for a woman to feature in a school report and was instead directed to read about Jesse James, this project reminds us why representation matters. When women's stories are missing from our shelves, voices are silenced and possibilities are limited – but when those stories are present, confidence, curiosity, and connection grow.

The goal of Unity Through Reading is to unite communities by increasing book access, supporting inclusive learning environments, and celebrating the stories and traditions that make every community unique. GFWC clubs are encouraged to collaborate with schools, libraries, cultural organizations, and community advocates to promote reading for all ages. Programs may support early readers, English-language learners, multigenerational storytelling, and individuals facing barriers to literacy and education, while also ensuring that women's contributions and leadership are fully represented in the stories available to all.

When clubs put books into hands, bring stories to life, and engage with families in meaningful ways, they open doors to knowledge, understanding, and shared experience. Every book shared, every child supported, and every story celebrated strengthens the bonds within our communities. Unity Through Reading affirms that every story matters – and every reader deserves encouragement, representation, and the chance to thrive.

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FEATURED PROJECTS

EVERY HOME NEEDS A LIBRARY

GFWC Glendale Woman's Club (AZ) contracted with the corporate office of Habitat for Humanity-Central Arizona to provide libraries for every home they deliver in Maricopa County. The committee works with Habitat to get a survey completed before each delivery, listing family members' ages and book interests. Once a home is ready, the club purchases and assembles a bookcase and invites members to attend the home dedications. Every bookcase includes at least 25 books, a family-friendly board game or puzzles, soft furry toys for the little ones, and GFWC club brochures. Club members arrive early to set up and stock the bookcase before the celebration, then stay to meet the new homeowners and join in the day's festivities.

STORY TIME

Gallipolis Junior Women's Club (OH) began its 25 days of reading project in December. Starting December 1st, they share a nightly video on their Facebook page featuring a community volunteer reading a holiday book. Families are invited to watch story-time videos and then comment on the post, which enters them into a drawing to receive a free holiday book of their own. Books were given out each evening, in all, over 100 books were given away encouraging literacy at a young age as well as creating opportunities for families to bond. Over 80 different families received a free book, with over 1,500 viewers each night enjoying the stories.

BOOK PARADE

GFWC-MFWC Decatur Progressive Woman's Club (MS) hosted a "Book Parade." It began at the local library and proceeded through the downtown area. Its goal was to encourage reading and to spread the fun of the local library. Children made signs, and club members dressed as book characters. The parade returned to the library and a Choctaw Native American Princess read to the participants.

FOOD BANK BOOK CART

GFWC Boise Columbian Club (ID) members started the St. Vincent de Paul Book Cart Project. They collected approximately 400 adult and children's books. A member found the plastic-wheeled cart at a thrift store, cleaned it up, and brought it to a club meeting where members all gathered with the books they found to fill it. The book cart is well-received at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank. Members park the cart in the lot with a sign on it that invites them to take and keep up to five books.

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PROJECT IDEAS

- Create reading stations in community spaces such as laundromats, clinics, barbershops, and cultural centers.
- Host multicultural and multilingual story times with community guest readers.
- Donate diverse and inclusive children's books to schools, shelters, youth organizations, and family resource agencies.
- Support local libraries through book drives, volunteer service, and outreach activities.
- Organize intergenerational storytelling projects connecting youth with seniors to share life stories and cultural heritage.
- Distribute literacy kits for early learners, ESL families, and emerging readers.
- Provide children's books and comforting items to family shelters, crisis centers, and foster programs.
- Partner with therapy-animal programs or local shelters for read-aloud sessions that build confidence.
- Set up temporary reading spaces in parks with free book giveaways and family activities.
- One Community, One Book Month: select a book celebrating unity and host community discussions, guest speakers, and shared reading events.
- Host a Scholastic Book Fair, handling all the logistics of organizing the program.
- Celebrate the Week of the Young Child, held each April, and Advocates for Children Week in October.

EDUCATION

- Establish a scholarship for a local student using these steps:
  - Determine the purpose of the scholarship (reason for awarding it and the target audience, for example – the scholarship could be in honor or memory of a club or community leader, or it might help a student with a special need). Consider a scholarship for a trade school.
  - Set a timeline including development, fundraising, advertising, application evaluation, award presentation, etc.
  - Create the application; incorporating components that fit the purpose of the scholarship, such as essay, resume, transcripts, financial need information, letters of recommendation, etc.
  - Determine the duration of the award (one or multiple years).
  - Determine the funding source.
  - Select the recipient and plan the award presentation.
- Advocate for and assist children and adults with special needs by:
  - Researching learning disabilities on the website of the Learning Disabilities Association of America (ldaamerica.org). Subscribe to their newsletter or follow them on X for news on advocacy efforts and how you can help.
  - Volunteering in the Special Education Department of a local school.
  - Sponsoring events for children with special needs such as holiday parties, proms, or athletic events.
  - Adopting a special needs teacher for the school year, providing class incentives, teaching or craft materials, and other needed support.

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    - Initiating a reading program or book club for children and adults with special needs, and/or donating books to special needs groups.
- Support schools, educators, and students with donations:
    - Obtain a supply list from a local school and organize a club or community drive to supply book bags, notebooks, binders, and other recommended items to underserved students.
    - Provide local teachers with supplies for their classrooms, including "treasure chest" stickers or small items that can be used as incentives for positive behavior.
    - Partner with a local early learning program to provide supplies that some children cannot afford to bring but are required.
    - Contact a local early learning program and offer to come and read with the children at various times of the day.
    - Provide healthy snack bags to be taken home for the weekend for children who may have food insecurity and won't get a nutritious meal until they return to school the following week.
    - Replace or add to playground equipment, including a buddy bench.
    - Provide reading software, other materials, or funds for after-school enrichment programs.
    - Fund field trips for underserved students.
- Support STEM programs in schools and the community.
    - Advocate for and support local schools STEM for Her, an organization that encourages girls to pursue STEM-related careers. Visit the website stemforher.org to learn more about STEM for Her programs.
    - Support and volunteer with STEM Scouts, helping girls and boys learn about science, technology, engineering, and math through creative, hands-on activities and field trips with interaction with STEM professionals.
- Support first-year teachers by providing welcome messages and snacks for their teacher orientation.
- Consider providing books for classroom libraries or supplies such as Band-Aids, tissues, a sewing kit, small hand lotions, and other useful items.
- Host a special event on Teacher Appreciation Day (the first Tuesday in May), such as a celebratory breakfast or lunch, or provide thank you cards or other expressions of gratitude.
- Organize a group of members to work together to support a local school by volunteering to help a teacher or several teachers set up their classrooms at the beginning of the year. Stay connected by volunteering in the classroom(s) and providing assistance as needed.
- Become a partner in education with a Title 1 school by volunteering one-on-one time with students, providing take-home snacks for weekends, supplying toiletries that can be distributed as needed, and assisting or donating to special programs so children can flourish, such as music, art, and athletics.
- Sponsor recognitions, such as student of the month. Provide goody bags, ice cream tokens, or books.
- Partner with the local PTA/PTO on an important issue, such as raising awareness about internet safety.
- Work with school counselors to support an anti-bullying campaign in October, during National Bully Prevention Month. PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center offers free classroom resources. www.pacer.org/bullying
- Assist GED candidates by tutoring or establishing a fund to pay for tests and/or babysitting.
- Promote summer reading by providing books to be given to children at the close of the school

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year along with a flyer or calendar of summer reading events scheduled at local libraries.

- Organize a Read Across America event in March during National Reading Month. Consult the Read Across America website (www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america) for suggested books, event ideas, and promotional materials.
- Create nooks for reading at welfare offices, health departments, doctor clinics, shelters, children's hospitals, laundromats, and other places children might visit, and stock them with a variety of books. Add a club sticker with the message, "If you read a story while you wait, the less time it will take."
- Celebrate Children's Book Day/Día de los Ninos on April 30. Donate books in English and Spanish to local Head Start programs.
- Promote DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Day by posting photos on social media of community leaders, such as the mayor, police chief, and your club president with their nose in a book. DEAR Day, celebrated on April 12, reminds families to make reading a priority in their lives by setting aside at least 30 minutes that day to enjoy books together.
- Plan a pajama and book drive for Beyond Bedtime (beyondbedtime.org), an organization that promotes and supports a comforting bedtime routine for all children to help them thrive. Visit theBeyond Bedtime website for information on contributing pajamas and/or books, fundraising, and volunteering.
- Support local English as a Second Language (ESL) programs by tutoring students and/or funding their classes or materials.
- Plan or sponsor a "Books Alive" program for your community by bringing a favorite children's book to life as a play or puppet show.
- Learn more about established reading programs such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Reach Out and Read, Reading is Fundamental, Reading Rockets, Room to Read, and 1000 Books Before Kindergarten, and see if your club can get involved in, donate to, or sponsor an event in your community.
- Celebrate World Read Aloud Day, a program sponsored by LitWorld, on February 5. Celebrate at schools, work, and a club meeting. Create and wear reading crowns that illustrate what you are thinking as you read.
- Visit the LitWorld website to register, gather ideas for community engagement, and find other resources.

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LIBRARIES

- Support your local public library (or school library, if appropriate). Club projects could include:
  - Donating books, books on tape, movies, music, and other resources.
  - Providing exploratory tours for children that enable them to navigate the facility and use its electronic search tools.
  - Sponsoring materials and programs for the underserved, disabled, and/or non-native speakers.
  - Funding online education classes.
  - Promoting library history, events, and services on social media or through alternate means.
  - Encouraging the selection of a mascot and then helping develop a publicity/public relations plan.
  - Making and wearing promotional buttons or pins for the library.
- Establish a group of club members who would like to offer volunteer assistance at the library, such as:
  - Assisting library patrons.
  - Assisting with library programs, such as children's story hours and craft projects.
  - Shelving books or tidying library shelves.
  - Creating a bulletin board or other educational displays.
  - Decorating for various holidays.
  - Repairing and cleaning books.
  - Sorting book donations.
  - Providing clerical services or helping with newsletters.
  - Maintaining outdoor displays and/or beautifying flower beds.
  - Assisting at fundraisers and book sales.
- Organize and/or sponsor public service or community enrichment programs at your public library (or school library, if appropriate). Programs could include:
  - Tutoring and/or homework assistance for students.
  - Supporting summer reading events and classes for students.
  - Hosting children's events such as a Book Character Parade or Literary-themed poster contest.
  - Assisting with ESL classes.
  - Presenting creative endeavors such as book readings, film screenings, or art displays.
  - Promoting classes in art or art history, creative writing, gardening, and other creative pursuits.
  - Hosting a murder mystery event.
  - Offering "Library Lunches" that examine and/or problem-solve local issues.
- Celebrate National Library Week and National Library Workers Day in April by saying #ThankYouLibraries on social media with photos and stories about the library. Or organize a special event for library patrons and staff, such as a book reading by an author.
- Establish a Little Free Library in your community, choosing an area where books are scarce. Find free plans plus tips on stewardship and other helpful information on the Little Free Library

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website. Consider partnering with a local scout troop or carpentry class to build the library.

- Organize a mobile book program to serve rural or underserved areas of your community.
- Encourage club and community members to become a member of Friends of the Library (or organize a group if none exists), serve as a Library Trustee, and advocate for library funding and other important library concerns. Find more information on these initiatives and others on the I Love Libraries website. ilovelibraries.org
- Establish or support an existing service to deliver books to homebound library patrons.
- Celebrate Library Card Sign-up Month in September with an event such as a Fall for Books Funfest for children with games, face painting, prizes, and a library card sign-up table.
- Organize a display for Banned Book Week, held the last week in September, which highlights the value of free and open access to information. For other event ideas and a list of restricted books, visit the Banned Book Week website.
- Work with the library to establish a teen advisory board to form a teen book review, develop teen services, and recommend additional library resources for teens.
- Sponsor a photography contest for teens that features the library, with winners receiving gift certificates or cash awards. Use the winning photos as screensavers on library computers and display them on club and library social media.
- Work with the library to organize a homework helpline or a term paper clinic.
- Collaborate with other groups, such as the local Chamber of Commerce, to develop small business services at the library, such as information centers that include a video conference room, staff training workshops, and other resources.
- Consider supporting a library in another part of the world. Check the websites of The Library Project (rural Asia) and the African Library Project. Or donate books to Books for International Goodwill.

EPSILON SIGMA OMICRON (ESO)

Epsilon Sigma Omicron is an honorary educational society open to all GFWC members. ESO provides clubwomen with a structured reading program that is both educational and stimulates a desire for self-improvement. ESO materials are available on the GFWC website. Support ESO in your state with these activities.

- Verify the charter of an ESO Chapter in your State or District of Columbia Federation by contacting the State or District of Columbia Federation President or GFWC Education and Libraries Chairman. If none currently exists, work with your State/DC Federation President and the State Education and Libraries Chairman to establish a Federation ESO Chapter.
- Refer to the ESO Reading List in the Digital Library on the Member Portal, and then select one or two books from the reading list to discuss at a meeting and/or highlight through your club newsletter. Any books not listed may be deemed eligible by the State or District of Columbia Federation ESO Chapter.
- Establish an ESO reading group for study and discussion.
- Maintain a reading log, which is provided to the State or District of Columbia Federation ESO Chairman to achieve ESO levels.
- Participate in the online GFWC ESO reading book club. Search for the Facebook page: GFWC ESO Book Club.

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CONNECT WITH GFWC AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

CANINE COMPANIONS

- Assist with outreach to veteran's organizations, including presentations, outreach booth staffing, literature, as well as poster and video distribution.
- Arrange for a Canine Companions team to speak at your club meeting to learn more about assistance dogs and Canine Companions.

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

- Encourage the educational resources that Heifer offers to schools at the elementary and secondary levels. www.heifer.org/what-you-can-do/get-involved/schools/home-school-activities.html
- Publicize the books and reading resources as well as the virtual field trips for children who are homeschooled. www.heifer.org/what-you-can-do/get-involved/schools/home-school-activities.html
- Read to Feed www.heifer.org/take-action/get-involved/schools/read-to-feed

OPERATION SMILE

- Organize a community event to bring awareness to the work of Operation Smile.

UNICEF USA

- "Shop for a Cause" to provide educational materials for children around the world. Prepare educational items for display and donate them to a local school (www.market.unicefusa.org/inspired-gifts).

GFWC RESOURCES

Before Kindergarten www.1000booksbeforekindergarten.org

American Library Association www.ala.org

African Library Project www.africanlibraryproject.org

Banned Books Week www.bannedbooksweek.org

Books Alive www.books-alive.org

DEAR www.readingrockets.org/calendar/dear

ESO www.gfwc.org/education-libraries

Global Partnership for Education www.globalpartnership.org

I Love Libraries www.ilovelibraries.org

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library www.imaginationlibrary.com

Learning Disabilities Association of America www.ldaamerica.org

Little Free Library www.littlefreelibrary.org

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LitWorld www.litworld.org
For information on Read Aloud Day, go to www.litworld.org/world-read-aloud-day

National Education Association www.nea.org

PACER Center—Champions for Children with Disabilities www.pacer.org
For information on the National Bullying Prevention Center, go to www.pacer.org/bullying

Beyond Bedtime beyondbedtime.org

PTA www.pta.org
For information on Safer Internet Day, go www.pta.org/home/events/safer-internet-day

PTO www.pto.org

Reach Out and Read www.reachoutandread.org

Read Across America www.readacrossamerica.org

Reading is Fundamental www.rif.org

Reading Rockets www.readingrockets.org

Room to Read www.roomtoread.org

STEM for Her www.stemforher.org

The Library Project www.library-project.org

GFWC LIBRARY REPLENISHMENT FUND

To assist GFWC communities affected by manmade and/or natural disasters, GFWC established the GFWC Library Replenishment Fund. Tying together members' generous financial gifts and passion for literacy with our mission of community improvement through volunteer service, this fund provides monetary assistance in restocking the collections of public libraries and public school libraries that have been affected by either natural or manmade disasters. Donations to the fund may be made through the Annual Giving Program Donation Form or online at memberportal.gfwc.org/supportus.

Clubs, State and District of Columbia Federations may apply for funding on behalf of, and in consultation with, the affected library by completing the GFWC Library Replenishment Fund application located in the Digital Library on the Member Portal. Once complete, the application is returned to the WHRC Librarian at GFWC Headquarters for consideration. Please contact the Librarian for more information on applying for Library Replenishment Funds at WHRC@GFWC.org or 202-683-2028.

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AWARDS

GFWC recognizes State/District of Columbia Federations for outstanding projects and clubs for creative projects in implementing effective Education and Libraries Community Service Program projects and Affiliate Organization projects as follows:

- **Certificate to one State/District of Columbia Federations in each membership category**
- **$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity**
- **Certificate to one State/District of Columbia Federation in each membership category for ESO**
- **$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity for ESO**

Award winners will be determined by entries submitted for the Award Program.Each State/District of Columbia Federations may submit one State/District of Columbia Federation Award Entry and one Club Creativity Award Entry for the Education and Libraries Community Service Program projects. **Entries should be submitted to the State/District of Columbia Federation Education and Libraries Chairman.** Forms are accessible to the State/District of Columbia Federation Presidents in the Member Portal.

Note: Clubs do not submit entries directly to GFWC or GFWC Chairmen.

Refer to the Deadlines for GFWC Awards and Contests sections of the Club Manual for more information.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions adopted by GFWC are the foundation of our organization. They guide our call to action and are the basis of all programming and advocacy. Current Resolutions for the **Education and Libraries Community Service Program** are listed here by number and title. Refer to the complete text in the GFWC Resolutions document, filed under "Governance" in the Digital Library on the Member Portal. Resolutions are an important and integral part of GFWC Programs.

150-010 Community Colleges and Vocational/Technical Education Institutions

150-020 Digital Media in Education

150-030 Education

150-040 Education of Children Raised in Foster Care

150-045 Educational Professional Support and Appreciation

150-050 English Language in the United States

150-060 Libraries

150-070 Lifelong Learning

150-080 Literacy

150-090 Sex and Gender Equity in Education

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