The Library Backpack Program is a program currently run at the Joy School in Syracuse, New York, USA. The goal of the program is to provide literacy materials for ELs and their families. Materials within the backpack help to develop English language literacy skills for both school-aged children and their parents and other family members. Each backpack is filled with four to six books. The materials include:

- Bilingual early readers
- English early readers
- Adult EL learning resources
- Language learning CDs

### Replication of Program

The steps outlined here will help you successfully replicate this program.

1. Determine a location for backpacks.
2. Purchase or solicit donations of new or gently worn backpacks.
3. Purchase or solicit donations of new or gently used books and learning materials.
   
   *Note:* Advocate for an internal grant within your school district. Several school districts offer teacher grants; though they are typically small amounts, they are an effective way to begin building a library of resources.
4. Develop a check out/check in system (see “Check In/Check Out for Library Backpack”).
5. Assess effectiveness of backpacks (see “Backpack Evaluation”).

*Consider having this translated, and available in all native languages.*

### Materials Needed

- Backpacks
- Books, CDs, and other learning tools (see “Learning Materials for Literacy Backpacks”)*
Resources to Assist With Costs and Materials

• Donations from families, libraries, vendors (See “Example Poster”)

• Potential grant opportunities:

  – “From Failure to Promise” grants

    K–12 educators can apply for US$500 mini-grants for creative ideas for adopting and using “From Failure to Promise” in their curriculum. The grants are designed to move students to reach their full potential in literacy, science, technology, or mathematics subjects. (www.fromfailuretopromise.com/educators)

  – Association of American Educators (AAE) Foundation grant

    Classroom grants are available to all full-time educators who have not received a scholarship or grant from AAE in the previous three grant cycles (or 18 months). Awards are competitive. AAE members receive additional weight in the scoring rubric. Classroom grants can be used for a variety of projects and materials, including but not limited to books, software, calculators, math manipulatives, art supplies, audiovisual equipment, and lab materials. (www.aaeteachers.org/index.php/classroom-grant-application)

  – Post on donorschoose.org

  – Dollar General Literacy Foundation Youth Literacy Grants

    These grants provide funding to schools, public libraries, and nonprofit organizations to help students who are below grade level or experiencing difficulty reading. Grant funding is provided to assist in implementing new or expanding existing literacy programs; purchasing new technology or equipment to support literacy initiatives; and/or purchasing books, materials, or software for literacy programs. The maximum award is US$4,000. (www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant_programs.aspx)

  – NEA.org has a list of grant opportunities. (www.nea.org/grants/grantsawardsandmore.html)

  – First Book offers free and reduced prices on books to disadvantaged schools. (www.firstbook.org)
Learning Materials for Literacy Backpacks

Literacy backpacks should include the following:

- Books for young children, bilingual and early readers
- Books for young adults, bilingual and English
- Books for adults, bilingual and English
- Other learning materials, such as flashcards and DVDs

Recommended Books

Books for Children: www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-kids
Books for Young Adults/Adults: www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-young-adults

The following list is from “Children’s Literature for Adult ESL Literacy” (Ansin Smallwood, 1992)

BEGINNERS

INTERMEDIATE

ADVANCED

References
CHECK IN/CHECK OUT FOR LIBRARY BACKPACK

Backpack #: ______________________

Student's name: _________________________________________________________________

Grade: ________________   Teacher : ________________________________________________

Date checked out: ______________________      Date checked in: __________________________

Backpack #: ______________________

Student's name: _________________________________________________________________

Grade: ________________   Teacher : ________________________________________________

Date checked out: ______________________      Date checked in: __________________________

Backpack #: ______________________

Student's name: _________________________________________________________________

Grade: ________________   Teacher : ________________________________________________

Date checked out: ______________________      Date checked in: __________________________

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We are familiar with the school's backpack program:  ○ Yes  ○ No

We have used the backpack program:  ○ Yes  ○ No

If yes, the materials were helpful for our child/children:  ○ Yes  ○ No

The materials were helpful for other family members:  ○ Yes  ○ No

We enjoyed the materials:  ○ Yes  ○ No

We would use the materials again:  ○ Yes  ○ No

We would like to see other resources in the backpacks:  ○ Yes  ○ No

Suggestions:  ___________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
We Need You!
School Literacy Backpack Program

School Literacy Backpack Program
We are currently seeking donations for our School Literacy Backpack Program to aid English Learning (EL) students and their families. We are collecting books, learning aids, and financial donations. Please consider giving and assisting families within our school and community.