



# ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST

## ROANOKE

### Community Snapshot

Roanoke, Va., describes itself as one of the best-kept secrets in the country. It is a small, quaint city with a close-knit community feel while offering the attractive amenities of a larger metropolitan area. Its most visible attraction is its star, a 100-foot-high neon beacon atop Mill Mountain. Erected as the world's largest manmade star about 50 years ago to promote civic pride, it is visible from 60 miles in the sky and serves as a well-loved icon for Roanoke. The star embodies the legacy and spirit of the city and exemplifies the revitalization of the midsize metropolis, especially after the recent economic downturn, and the community's energy for exciting new ideas.

### Community Solutions Action Plan

Roanoke City Public Schools believe that the growing commitment to education locally coupled with the assets now in place in the community have positioned them to pursue a comprehensive and collaborative approach to improving outcomes in grade-level reading based on the following strategies:

- Develop effective and efficient methods for providing information to all parents and promote the use of best practice models and evidence-based family support systems
- Expand summer reading program
- Pursue a coordinated public awareness campaign on the importance of K-3 grade-level reading

### Partnerships

The ambitious plan to ensure that more Roanoke children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade was submitted by Roanoke City Public Schools with help from the city government, United Way of Roanoke Valley, Roanoke Public Libraries, Total Action Against Poverty, Smart Beginnings of Greater Roanoke, Virginia Tech, Blue Ridge Literacy and the City Manager's Office.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

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- 97,032 residents
- 13,094 students
- 33.4 percent of children live in poverty
- 78 percent of students passed third grade Standards of Learning for reading
- 11 percent of K-3 students are English language learners
- 76 percent graduation rate
- 18 percent of students are not ready for kindergarten
- 14 percent of students K-3 are chronically absent
- Summer school and summer reading program available

### GOALS (BY 2020)

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- Increase percentage of students reading at grade level to more than 80 percent
- Reduce chronic absenteeism to 5.4 percent
- Increase number of children attending summer programs by 20 percent

*"It is our vision that every child in Roanoke enters kindergarten ready, attends school regularly and is provided effective summer programs, so that each child attains grade-level reading by third*