



ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY, TEXAS

Community Snapshot

The Tri-County Community is not a city or town but three beautiful, hurricane-prone, contiguous rural counties (Colorado, Wharton and Matagorda) in southeast Texas. They stretch over coastal wetlands and flat prairies from the Gulf of Mexico along the Rio Colorado rural corridor to the foothills of the Texas Hill Country. The three counties have a rich cultural heritage and a history that includes the Karankawa Indians, pirates, buried treasure, shipwrecks, colonial expansion, slavery and Texas independence. The area's traditional economic base of agriculture is being challenged by increased energy development. Shrimp fishermen are affected by falling prices and international competition. Large agricultural operations have caused the loss of family cotton and rice farms, eroding the local agricultural economy. The challenge to replace agricultural jobs has increased the need to improve education.

Community Solutions Action Plan

To have all children reading at grade level by the end of third grade, the Tri-County Community has formulated the following strategies:

- Use N2Reading Program to replicate successful programs such as Parents as Teachers, Early Childhood Head Start and First Book to help stay-at-home moms and day care programs prepare students for kindergarten
- Educate parents about the importance of attendance and the long-term effects of missing school
- Use Summer Advantage, a successful summer learning program from Indiana, to prevent or lessen summer learning loss and support existing summer programs
- Make the Tri-County's website into an easily accessible wealth of resources for parents and students

Partnerships

Tri-County's plan to ensure that more children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade was submitted by the Tri-County Coalition for Literacy & Community Services. The coalition comprises adult and children's services organizations, the Tri-County Regional Chamber of Commerce, county offices, crisis centers, drug counseling and rehab programs, faith-based organizations, food pantries, health providers, independent school districts, libraries, municipalities, parks, public transit and the Matagorda County United Way.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- **99,000 residents**
- **25,500 students**
- **25 percent of students live in poverty**
- **86 percent of students read at grade level (state test)**
- **Hispanic and African-American children are less likely to read at grade level**
- **15 percent of students drop out**
- **70 percent of kindergarteners require in-class intervention**
- **96 percent of students have satisfactory attendance**
- **Summer programs serve 10 percent of students**

GOALS

- **By 2017, 85 percent of students will be ready for kindergarten**
- **Maintain current attendance rates and increase rates for satisfactory attendance**
- **Increase number of students passing the state reading exam each year**
- **Increase reading and math levels of summer learning participants by one month per summer**

"People in this rural area have the same hopes and aspirations as those in big cities and deserve access to the resources to meet their needs and realize their dreams."