



The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
3rd GRADE READING SUCCESS MATTERS

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Early Reading Proficiency Among First Priorities of New Technology Nonprofit,
ConvergeUS

Early childhood education will be among the first priorities for a new coalition of technology leaders that seeks to leverage the power of the technology sector to accelerate social innovation, according to *ConvergeUS*, a nonprofit launched yesterday by TechNet's President and CEO Rey Ramsey and Twitter Co-Founder and Creative Director Biz Stone.

ConvergeUS will partner with nonprofit organizations that have a capacity and interest in a problem that can be addressed through technology. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, a coalition of more than 50 foundations working to enhance reading proficiency, is one of its first partners.

The Campaign has committed to working with *ConvergeUS* to increase the use of technology solutions to improve early learning, starting with babies at home and extending into the school years. *ConvergeUS* will also work with the Silicon Valley Education Foundation (SVEF), which focuses on raising student performance in the critical areas of math and science, to support better deployment of technology to improve math and science education.

“The time has come to harness technology to accelerate our efforts to get more children, particularly children from low-income families, reading on grade level by the end of third grade,” said Ralph Smith, Executive Vice President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, speaking on behalf of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. “We are excited to be partnering with leading tech companies through *ConvergeUS*.”

Smith acknowledged the connection between science and math education and critical early literacy skills. “Our students are not going to achieve in science and engineering if they can't read the textbooks,” he said. “Scientific texts are some of the densest materials that students encounter.”

The results of the 2010 NAEP testing show that two-thirds of American fourth graders are not reading proficiently. For low-income students, the proportion is higher than four-

fifths. The Campaign supports a comprehensive approach to early literacy that would ensure that children are born healthy, develop on track, arrive at school ready to learn and benefit from good curriculum and instruction in the classroom.

Technology can enhance this effort with computerized reading programs that offer students practice time and give teachers immediate feedback, gaming applications that build literacy skills and vocabulary, even smart phone applications that allow parents to extend learning simply by passing the phone to their children.

“Technology has transformative capacities and when combined with purposeful aspirations, amazing advances can occur,” said Rey Ramsey, President and CEO of TechNet and Chairman of *ConvergeUS*. “If we converge the skills of the technology sector with key stakeholders engaged in the social sector, we can produce social dividends for this country.”

Ramsey and Stone announced the new venture Feb. 23 at a gathering in Washington, D.C. along with Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski, former White House Deputy CTO Andrew McLaughlin, White House Director of Social Innovation Marta Urquilla, former NASA astronaut Leland Melvin and others.

ConvergeUS will function as a facilitator and convener to bring diverse stakeholders together to create a “Technology Innovation Blueprint” that focuses on applications of technology and social media. In addition to early childhood education, *ConvergeUS* will also focus on science, technology, engineering and math coursework, or STEM..

The board of the new nonprofit includes Ramsey; Stone; Kaboom! CEO Darrell Hammond; Tae Yoo, Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Cisco; technology entrepreneur Kim Polese, and Paul Silverglate, Deloitte Strategic Services Partner.

The Campaign is a collaborative effort by dozens of funders across the nation to: close the gap in reading achievement that separates many low-income students from their peers; raise the bar for reading proficiency so that all students are assessed by world-class standards; and ensure that all children, including and especially children from low-income families, have an equitable opportunity to meet those higher standards. For more information, visit www.gradelevelreading.net.