

For Immediate Release

The Campaign for
**GRADE-LEVEL
READING**

3RD GRADE READING
SUCCESS MATTERS

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FOURTEEN COMMUNITIES PLUS WEST VIRGINIA JOIN NATIONWIDE EFFORT TO BOOST EARLY READING

*Grade-Level Reading Communities Network
Now Covers Nearly 25 Percent of America's Population*

WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan. 29, 2015 – Fourteen new communities from Maine to Florida and Mississippi to Oregon – plus the state of West Virginia -- have joined the nationwide [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#), committing to work collaboratively to increase the number of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

The addition of the 15 means community organizations pursuing the goal of reading proficiency for elementary students now are operating in 168 cities, counties and states with a combined population of 74.6 million, or 24 percent of America's population.

Nine states saw the number of their participating communities expand while two states – Montana and West Virginia – added representation for the first time. All told, cities in 41 states across the country – plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands -- now have recognized the problem and resolved to do something about it.

National tests show that two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders, and four-fifths of those from low-income families, are not reading proficiently. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a milestone on a child's path to high school graduation and later success because it marks the transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Students who have not mastered reading by that time are more likely to drop out of school and struggle throughout their lives.

"Our public schools cannot do this on their own," said Ralph Smith, managing director of the GLR Campaign and senior vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "If we're going to increase our graduation rates and close achievement gaps, we need mobilized communities working with schools, city agencies, nonprofits, civic leaders and parents to focus on third grade reading."

The newest members of the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network (GLR Network), in addition to West Virginia, include Avondale and Bullhead City in Arizona; Manatee County, Fla.; Cedar Valley, Iowa; Waterville and Lewiston in Maine; Lafayette County, Miss.; Billings, Mont.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Herkimer/Oneida Counties and Chemung County in New York; Yoncalla and Earl Boyles in Oregon, and Philadelphia, Pa.

In joining the GLR Network, the communities developed formal plans to address three underlying challenges that can keep young children, especially those from low-income families, from learning to read well:

- School readiness — too many children are entering kindergarten already behind.
- School attendance — too many young children are missing too many days of school.
- Summer learning — too many children are losing ground academically over the summer.

The GLR Communities Network is dedicated to narrowing the gap between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, that gap has widened significantly in recent years, with 80 percent of low-income kids failing to read proficiently in 4th grade compared to 49 percent of their more affluent peers.

Membership in the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network gives these local initiatives access to experts and policymakers focused on the issue, assistance in addressing the challenges that keep many children from learning to read and opportunities to share and learn with similar communities. More than 2,100 local organizations now are at work in the 168 communities comprising the GLR Communities Network.

Launched in May 2010, the [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career and active citizenship. For media inquiries, contact Norman Black at norman@thehatchergroup.com or 301-656-0348.

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