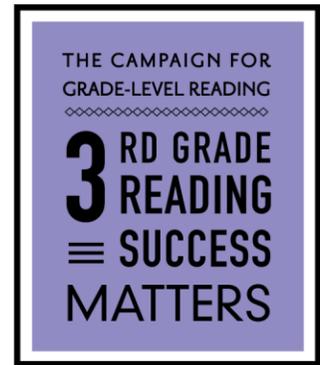


# NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **ELEVEN COMMUNITIES PLUS STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA JOIN EFFORT TO BOOST EARLY READING PROFICIENCY**

*Grade-Level Reading Communities Network  
Now Reflects Concerted Effort in 42 States*

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 30, 2015 – The 55 counties of West Virginia plus another 11 communities spread across the country 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 66 means community organizations pursuing the goal of reading proficiency for elementary students now are operating in 232 cities, counties and states. The addition of a first community in South Dakota means communities in 42 states -- 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.

"These communities all have put a stake in the ground around third-grade reading," said Ralph Smith, the managing director of the GLR Campaign. "Their approaches to the problem will differ, but they share a sense of urgency about the need to ensure these vulnerable children find more hopeful futures."

The newest members of the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network (GLR Network), in addition to West Virginia's 55 counties, include the San Carlos Apache Tribe, Cooper Corridor and Hualapai in Arizona; San Mateo and Stanislaus County in California; Martin County in Florida; Dyersville and Jackson County in Iowa; Flint, Mich.; Franklin County in Ohio, and Rapid City, S.D.

The 55 counties in West Virginia include Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Cabell, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lewis, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Marshall, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasant, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood and Wyoming.

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 232 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](mailto:norman@thehatchergroup.com) or 301-656-0348.

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