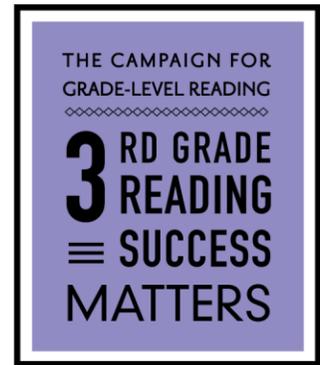


# NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Norman Black  
301-656-0348  
[Norman@thehatchergroup.com](mailto:Norman@thehatchergroup.com)

## **WEST VIRGINIA READING INITIATIVE BRINGS ALL 55 OF ITS COUNTIES TO GLR COMMUNITIES NETWORK**

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 30, 2015 – A concerted effort by the state of West Virginia to boost the reading proficiency of its young children has allowed every one of its 55 counties to join the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network at once.

The announcement, made today by the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading here, reflects a unique commitment by the West Virginia Department of Education, West Virginia Board of Education and elected leaders to appropriate funds to support a statewide grade-level reading initiative. While other state networks now are part of the GLR Communities Network, they formed gradually over time as individual communities signed on to the Campaign.

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 provides local communities 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 232 communities in 42 states comprising the GLR Communities Network.

In West Virginia, alarmed by the low national ranking of its children on reading tests, the Department of Education now requires each county to develop and maintain an early literacy “plan of action” and -- with the support of the governor and state legislature – is sending state funds to each county school system to help sustain the local efforts. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and the state legislature allocated \$5.7 million for the program in the state’s 2016 budget.

That state support jump-started the planning effort in every county, allowing all 55 of West Virginia's county school systems to satisfy a Campaign requirement to develop formal plans to address the 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 55 county school systems in West Virginia now part of the Network 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.

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.

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.

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