

NEWS RELEASE



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EIGHT COMMUNITIES JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING TO BOOST EARLY LITERACY NATIONWIDE

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 18, 2016 – Eight new communities have joined the [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#), a nationwide movement to increase early reading proficiency.

The newest communities to join this collaborative effort include Birmingham, Ala.; Greater Surprise, Ariz.; Tolleson, Ariz.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Grinnell, Iowa; Emporia, Kan.; Gaston County, N.C.; and Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, Va.

“We are thrilled to welcome the newest members of our growing network of communities,” said Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. “Their commitment to this vital mission comes at a critical time when nearly half of the children in the United States under the age of 5 (the years of greatest brain development) live in extreme poverty. Together, we will do what it takes to ensure our nation’s most vulnerable children have the support and opportunities they need to thrive.”

Each of these communities has committed to targeting early literacy as an urgent priority and developed a comprehensive action plan to put its youngest citizens on a path to success. National tests show that two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders (four-fifths of whom are from low-income families) are not reading proficiently. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone toward high school graduation and success later in life 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 high school and struggle throughout their lives. By 2020, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading aims to increase by at least 100 percent the number of children from low-income families reading proficiently at the end of third grade in a dozen or more states.

The communities’ action plans focus on mobilizing local nonprofit organizations, civic and business leaders, and engaged citizens to work in concert with families and schools to address three underlying challenges that can keep young children from learning to read proficiently:

- 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

Membership in the GLR Communities Network gives these local initiatives access to experts and policymakers focused on early literacy, assistance in addressing the challenges that keep many children from learning to read, and opportunities to share and learn best practices from more than 240 communities across the country.

About the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

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. Since its launch, the Campaign has grown to include more than 200 communities, representing 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with 2,100 local organizations and 250 state and local funders, including 130 United Ways. To learn more, visit gradelevelreading.net and follow the movement on Twitter [@readingby3rd](https://twitter.com/readingby3rd).

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