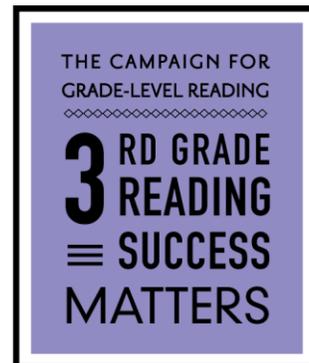


NEWS RELEASE



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STATEMENT FROM THE CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING MANAGING DIRECTOR RALPH SMITH ON THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS 2013-14 CIVIL RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION

Washington, D.C. – June 07, 2016 – Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, issued the following statement on the release of the [First Look report on the 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection \(CRDC\)](#):

Today, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) affirms what we already knew to be true -- far too many of our nation's children are missing too many days of school.

This is the first time OCR has collected data from all public schools and school districts in the U.S. on the number of students who are chronically absent (missing 15 or more days in a school year), and they found that more than 6.5 million students fit that description. Of those students, more than half are in elementary school.

We applaud OCR for providing this unprecedented look at the issue of chronic absenteeism and for encouraging states and local school districts to prioritize school attendance. A focus on this issue is absolutely essential to ensuring that children are reading on grade-level and ultimately achieving their full potential.

Reading proficiently by the end of third-grade is an important predictor of school success and high school graduation. Yet, 80 percent of low-income children miss this critical milestone. That number is even higher for low-income children of color, and the disparity in academic achievement between their more affluent peer groups continues to widen. Starting in kindergarten, students who are chronically absent are less likely to read on grade level by the end of third grade. Chronic absence is also an early warning sign of students failing courses in middle school and having a greater chance of dropping out of high school.

The report findings underscore that schools across the country are facing a chronic absenteeism crisis. There are real opportunities for stakeholders at all levels — from policy makers to parents — to turn these statistics around and to prepare all students for success. We must act with a sense of urgency to provide opportunities that connect families to the resources and supports they need to ensure that students,

starting in the early grades through high school, attend school every day and show up prepared to learn, including:

- systems of care with the capacity to provide 24/7/365 two-generation services and family supports;
- data-rich, technology-enhanced early warning and response systems to sound the alarm when a child heads off track; and
- attention to two key determinants of early school success -- [ensuring healthy on-track child development](#) and [supporting parent success](#).

For children in low-income families, the stakes are even higher and the challenges much greater. To move the needle, we must double down on solutions that are working and find the resources to scale those solutions to achieve bigger outcomes and more hopeful futures for all children.

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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 more than 240 communities, representing 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with 2,100 local organizations (including 130 United Ways and 250 state and local funders). To learn more, visit gradelevelreading.net and follow us on Twitter [@readingby3rd](https://twitter.com/readingby3rd).