



In 2013, the West Virginia Governor's Office, the West Virginia Legislature, the West Virginia Board of Education and the West Virginia Department of Education came together to launch the West Virginia Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade-Level Reading to accelerate efforts to close the third-grade literacy achievement gap in West Virginia through a transformative system of support for early learning.

West Virginia serves as a model for states in terms of the strategic, collaborative effort of each branch of government and was the first state to unanimously pass legislation and policy to support a statewide Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. With a history of strong early education programs, it was a natural progression for West Virginia to implement a comprehensive approach to closing the third-grade literacy achievement gap.

In a bold, unprecedented move that demonstrated its determination to achieve bigger outcomes by going to scale, in 2015 West Virginia provided support for all of its 55 counties to join the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network at the same time, with state funding to each county school system to help sustain the local efforts. The components of the West Virginia Campaign are school attendance, extended-day and extended-year learning, school readiness and high-quality instruction.

The following recent developments of the West Virginia effort are positioning the state for timely and sustainable impact:

- Passage of WVBE Policy 2512: Transformative System of Support for Early Literacy focuses on implementation of a county-level framework to ensure children become proficient readers by third grade and are on track for high school graduation and college/career readiness;
- 40 counties use Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to ensure 27,268 children birth–5 receive a new children's book monthly through their 5th birthday;
- A school readiness approach that includes families, schools and communities;

... All 55 counties include school attendance in their Grade-Level Reading Action Plans, and West Virginia is one of 36 states that included chronic absence as a measure in its ESSA State Plan.

- County Collaborative Early Childhood Teams that emphasize the importance of high-quality early literacy practices;
- West Virginia's Universal Pre-K program has continued to grow in participation, quality and collaboration and was the original catalyst that led to a statewide, comprehensive approach to early learning;
- West Virginia is one of five states in the nation to meet all 10 NIEER quality pre-K benchmarks;
- All 55 counties include school attendance in their Grade-Level Reading Action Plans, and West Virginia is one of 36 states that included chronic absence as a measure in its ESSA State Plan; and
- A strong focus on extended-day/extended-year learning and high-quality instruction.

West Virginia's continued leadership and collaboration across all branches of government, together with its ambitious, ongoing effort to engage and assist all 55 counties in closing the literacy achievement gap in West Virginia by the end of third grade constitute a powerful statewide effort that is well-positioned to move the needle on reading proficiency to ensure early school success.

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