3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

Why reading proficiency by third grade?

Reading proficiency by third grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success. Yet, the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading reports that 67% of children nationwide and more than 80% of those from low-income families are not proficient readers by the end of third grade. This has significant and long-term consequences not only for the children, but also for their families and communities. The next generation will not be prepared to succeed in a global economy, participate in higher education, or enter military and civilian service.

The Reading Foundation states:

“Reading is the most crucial academic skill because it is the foundation for learning. Through third grade, children are learning to read; after third grade, students read to learn.”
3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

How did we develop our strategy?

**Benchmarking research**

to identify national program initiatives designed to advance third grade reading proficiency.

**Community engagement**

through interviews with 22 educators, community leaders, public officials, and foundation leaders. Two focus groups of 34 parents/caregivers from Pittsburgh Weil K-5 and Pittsburgh Miller K-5 in the Hill District.

**Programmatic research through a grant to Trying Together**

- Collected baseline data on Hill District children.
- Identified current investments in literacy, education, and/or parent engagement in the Hill District.
- Convened a literacy coalition to build relationships, outline shared goals, and align literacy initiatives. Stakeholders included community-based organizations such as out-of-school programs, the Hill District Education Council, and Hill District Ministers Alliance; advocacy organizations such as A+Schools; providers of literacy resources such as the Carnegie Library and Reading is FUNdamental; early child-care providers; Pittsburgh Public Schools; the office of Mayor Bill Peduto; and national resources, including the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and the National League of Cities’ Early Learning Technical Assistance Team.
Our Plan

**Goal**

Improve the reading proficiency of the approximate 750 birth to age 8 children who reside in the Hill District neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

**Approach**

A collaborative effort of families, early childhood providers, schools, and community partners to equip young children/students with the foundational literacy skills required for future learning and success.

**Strategy**

§ Establish a **formal coalition of early literacy service** providers to develop provider knowledge and skills; maximize existing programming; identify expanded programming as needed; and refer families to family support centers to address social and economic needs.

§ Implement a **comprehensive family engagement strategy**, including outreach ambassadors, establishment of a network of Little Free Libraries, and encouragement to utilize the neighborhood library and its resources. Programming would include support for parents to strengthen their own literacy skills.

§ Support the **development of quality early learning programs**. Support would ensure community-based child care providers have a clear understanding of kindergarten expectations and if needed, align curricula between community-based early learning programs and the public schools to ensure a smooth transition. Providers will be trained to use *Message from Me*, a platform to strengthen the relationship between families and child care centers by using digital photos and recorded audio messages to spark conversations.

§ Coordinate a **public-facing print, online, and social media campaign**.

*Reading for Fun can have unexpected outcomes.*
**Our Literacy Partners**

**Macedonia Family and Community Enrichment (FACE)** will coordinate the initiative, providing program management experience, an understanding of family partnerships and children's support programming, and knowledge of the Hill District.

**Trying Together** will support the development of quality early learning programs in the Hill District.

**Reading is FUNdamental** will implement its full suite of literacy programs, serving 18 sites through the Storymobile; Book Babies, reaching new and expecting families; Books for Keeps, helping families build their home libraries; and Everybody Wins!, matching reading mentors with first, second, or third grade students.

**Pittsburgh’s Dolly Parton Imagination Library** will deliver 12 books per year to children, ages 0-5.

**The Grable Foundation** and **Heinz Endowments** have agreed to support this initiative through grants to Macedonia FACE, Trying Together, and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

**Appendix**

In addition, **The Grable Foundation** and **Heinz Endowments** have agreed to support this initiative through grants to Macedonia FACE, Trying Together, and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.
Our Investment

$750,000 over five years ($150,000/year) to Macedonia FACE

$300,000 over three years ($100,000/year) to Reading is FUNdamental Pittsburgh

$82,000 over five years ($16,400/year) to the United Way for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library