



Our future depends on it.

FACT SHEET

The Issue

Mecklenburg County has a serious reading crisis. More than half of all 3rd graders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) are not reading at grade level. And while there's a concentration in lower-income areas, these children come from every single school, neighborhood and income level in this county.

If children can't read, they lose confidence, fail in school and struggle in life – all at a cost our community and their families can't afford.

The Solution

Reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation, career and life success.

Read Charlotte is a collaborative, community-wide movement to double the percentage of 3rd grade students reading at grade level – from 40% now to 80% in 2025 – by starting at birth, working together and investing only in programs that work.

Measurement

Read Charlotte will use the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other indicators to measure progress against the goal. NAEP is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what American students know and can do in core subjects. Its results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts.

Features

Strong unified voice for early reading development, beginning at birth

Influential leadership for the long run

More informed funding decisions based on data and evidence across the community

Alignment of services / focus on the “hand-off” from early learning to CMS

Community education on what matters for reading

Public-private partnership: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, County, City, corporations, foundations and service providers aligned together

Four working groups define the scope along the birth through 3rd grade continuum:

- *Talk with Me, Baby* (promoting early language development)
- *Ready for School* (expanding quality early childcare and Pre-K)
- *Schoolhouse* (supporting teachers and classrooms)
- *Summer Learning* (keeping kids reading during the summer)

Structure

The governing board of *Read Charlotte* comprises lead funders, the superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and representatives from UNC Charlotte College of Education, Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte and the community. The governing board will set vision, develop strategy and oversee funding.

A lean central staff of three, led by an executive director, will facilitate and administer activities, share data, build public support, advance policy and mobilize funding. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library will provide office space for the executive director and staff.

Four working groups of experts and community members will plan, prioritize and inform the governing board by being aligned around four critical times in a child's life that can affect reading proficiency. Nomination forms to serve on one of the working groups can be found at www.ReadCharlotte.org.

Foundation For The Carolinas will be the fiscal agent for *Read Charlotte*, and will manage the operating budget for the initiative, along with a Transformation Fund that will help existing organizations be more innovative, collaborative and data-driven, and will seed new programs that meet unmet needs.

Targeted co-funding will have the greatest potential to make the largest impact because *Read Charlotte's* research will influence how many corporations, foundations, local government and other funders invest millions of dollars in grants focused on childhood literacy.

Financial Support

Read Charlotte's five-year funding goal is \$5.5 million, with a first-year budget of \$1.1 million. To date, \$4.6 million has been raised.

Lead funders are: Bank of America, The Belk Foundation, CD Spangler Foundation, The Duke Endowment, Duke Energy, Foundation For The Carolinas, PNC Foundation, PwC Charitable Foundation and Wells Fargo.

In-Kind Support

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and UNC Charlotte College of Education.

Governing Board

Weston Andress, *PNC*; Rachel Banks, MD, *CMC-NorthPark Family Medicine*; Charles Bowman, *Bank of America*; Rev. Jerry Cannon, *CN Jenkins Memorial Presbyterian Church*; Ron Carlee and Holly Eskridge, *City of Charlotte*; Ann Clark, *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*; Dena Diorio, *Mecklenburg County*; Jay Everette, *Wells Fargo*; Patrick Graham, *Urban League of Central Carolinas*; Rhett Mabry, *The Duke Endowment*; Michael Marsicano and Brian Collier, *Foundation For The Carolinas*; Ellen McIntyre, *UNC Charlotte*; Rosie Molinary, *professor and author*; Katie B. Morris, *The Belk Foundation*; Anna Nelson, *CD Spangler Foundation*; Crawford Pounds, *PwC*; and Stick Williams, *Duke Energy*.

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