

Durham's Campaign for Grade-Level Reading: Community Solutions Action Plan 2017

Executive Summary

Durham, North Carolina has a stunning opportunity born, unfortunately, of a spectacularly inequitable and unacceptable reality. Despite notable growth and development, Durham suffers from many entrenched disparities and systemic challenges.

The children of Durham face profound obstacles to achievement and life-long success. In 2015, 26% of children in the county under age five (16,746 children) lived in poverty, compared to 23.4% statewide. The county's capacity to provide infant and toddler child care and pre-school for children is far below the need; there is child care capacity for only 45% (3,920) of infants and toddlers birth to 3; there is capacity for only 66% of all children 3 to 5 years old in preschool.

When these data are disaggregated according to race, the gaps in resources are stark. The State of Durham County's Young Children 2017 Task Force reports, "Children in Durham's black and Hispanic communities are more likely to live in low-income households (57% and 86%) than white children (14%). These socioeconomic differences lead to very different worlds in which Durham's children grow up." Durham Public Schools Superintendent Bert L'Homme recognizes the profound impact of this difference once children enter school: "We have an achievement gap in our schools that has been stubbornly persistent. Eliminating the gap will require a community-wide effort – our schools can't do it alone..." (*Raleigh News & Observer* (September 1, 2016).

It is time for courageous transformation. With the recent release of the 2017 State of Durham County's Young Children report and Durham's Community Early Education/Preschool Task Force report, it is clear that our community has a moral, economic, social, and cultural mandate to work together to fundamentally reshape the current and future reality for every child in our midst.

Durham County stands at the threshold of systemic change. As we join the Communities Network of the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading, we join a movement informed by the experts on Durham's children -- parents themselves -- and by a collective impact approach to support our children in transforming academic outcomes and creating long-lasting change for current and future generations.

Community Solutions Action Plan Summary

A Steering Committee representing key stakeholders across Durham County has met over the past year and has designed a foundational platform for a Community Solutions Action Plan designed to guide us toward achieving our stated goal: transforming educational outcomes for Durham's children by increasing by 50% the total number of children reading on grade level in third grade, from 45.7% in 2016 to 70% by 2025, and by doubling the percentage of children from low-income homes reading on grade level in third grade, from 33.2% in 2016 to 66% by 2025. We will use what follows as a guiding touchstone to our work to be evaluated and revised annually at a minimum.

- **Action #1: Organizational Development**

OBJECTIVE: To build a sustainable Durham grade-level reading initiative with Book Harvest as its lead that has an asset-based focus and emphasizes wide community engagement especially among parents and students. Central to this objective is establishing a leadership team, a strategic plan, and a funding portfolio to ensure success.

- **Action #2: Parent/Family Leadership, Partnership, and Engagement**

OBJECTIVE: To engage parents and family members in the work to ensure shared decision making and authentic governance.

- **Action # 3: Durham Public Schools Partnership Development**

OBJECTIVE: To establish a robust working partnership with Durham Public Schools to ensure mutually beneficial strategies that support the progress of and positive outcomes for students and families.

- **Action #4: Campaign Implementation**

OBJECTIVE: To identify strengths, opportunities, and needs of services available in Durham County to support key areas of the campaign. Implementation strategies will focus on pillars of the campaign, and activities may include community engagement, school readiness, school attendance, and summer learning.

- **Action #5: Measurement Tools**

OBJECTIVE: To identify specific metrics and establish baseline benchmarks against which all work will be measured over the course of the Durham initiative.

The Core Values That Guide Our Work

- ***We believe that every child in Durham can succeed.***

We are guided by our conviction that, with support, our children can achieve the goal of reading on grade level by third grade.

- ***We are committed to partnering with families.***

We engage families, parents, and caregivers to help guide our work.

- ***We are committed to engaging with the community.***

We engage community members and organizations by relying on their expertise and wealth of resources. We welcome everyone's participation in this work to transform educational outcomes for Durham's children.

- ***We are committed to the success of Durham Public Schools.***

We collaborate with Durham Public Schools, promoting its mission: *"To provide all students with an outstanding education that motivates them to reach their full potential and enables them to discover their interests and talents, pursue their goals and dreams, and succeed in college, in the workforce and as engaged citizens."*

- ***We are committed to working for socioeconomic and racial equity.***

We focus on removing barriers that prevent low-income children, English language learners, and children of color from succeeding. We will use a racial equity lens to analyze how systems prevent children from reaching their full potential and to implement programs that aim to dismantle systemic inequities.

- ***We are committed to sustaining a long-term effort that supports and builds upon the work of many community partners.***

We work closely with current organizations and initiatives that support our work, as part of a greater community effort to transform educational outcomes for Durham's children.

To learn more about the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, visit www.gradelevelreading.net. To learn more about Durham's campaign co-leads Book Harvest and Durham's Partnership for Children, visit www.bookharvestnc.org and www.dpfc.net.