



Kiwanians Helping Local Kids Develop a Love for Reading

As featured in [The Winchester Star](#)

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, as the name suggests, is designed to make sure that all area school children are reading at grade level or higher by the time they're in third grade. One way to do that is to have adults read to children one-on-one, so 10 members of the Winchester Kiwanis volunteered to do just that at the local Kids Clubs this summer.

"When we started the campaign, it was programs like this, made possible by community connections, that we hoped would be formed and make a difference," said Andy Gail, executive director of Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area and an administrator of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading program that launched in late 2021. "I had a mom tell me that her son was not a fan of reading, then after one session with his reading buddy, he asked to read and got a book instead of a device."

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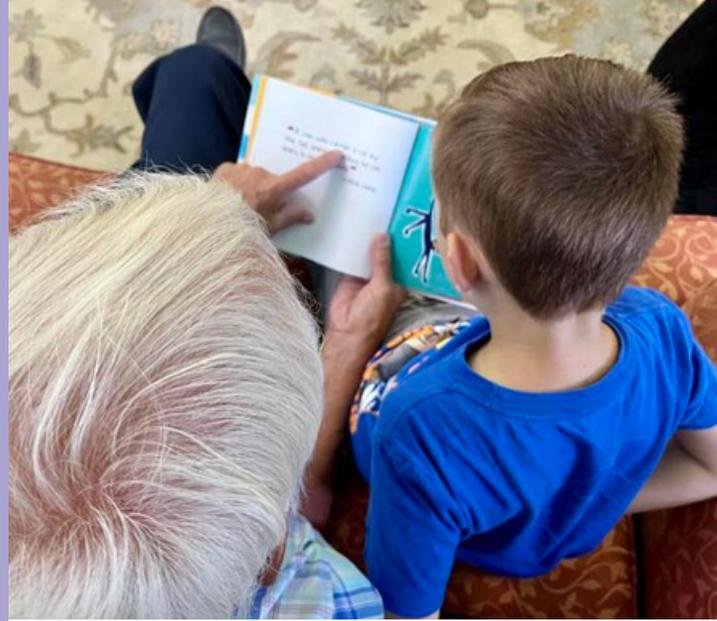
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The Kids Clubs of Northern Shenandoah Valley is perhaps best known for providing academic and enrichment programs for area elementary, middle and high school students during the school year, but it also offers a summer camp where participants learn, play and enjoy nutritious meals while their parents are at work. Fees are kept as low as possible because about 75% of the children served by the nonprofit are at or below the poverty level.

Heather Forman, executive director of Kids Clubs, said Winchester Kiwanian Susan Corrigan, who also serves on the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's board of directors, arranged to have members of the Winchester Kiwanis visit Kids Clubs several times a week throughout the summer to bolster young children's interest in reading.

"The kids are thrilled. They love having someone just for themselves to read with," Forman said. "The mentors are enjoying it, too. I had one mentor tell me he could not wait to find out what happened to the alien zombies that he had been reading about the previous week."



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Students Thrive in Local Summer Programming

Over the last several months, Campaign partners welcomed hundreds of local students to summer camp programs in Winchester. Since the start of the Campaign in October of 2021, the number of students participating in summer programming has almost doubled!

- Winchester Parks and Recreation's HIVE summer program, which includes activities such as swimming, field trips, and outdoor fun, hosted approximately 115 students per week from June to early August.
- The Kids Club of Northern Shenandoah Valley, which focuses on keeping kids engaged and active during the summer months, saw 113 participants this summer. Thanks to STARBASE Academy and the Kiwanis Club of Winchester for supporting The Kids Club this summer!



Our Mission and Goals

Grade-Level Proficiency

Winchester's overarching vision is to increase the percentage of 3rd graders reading at or above the proficient level **to at least 75%** by 2032 based on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) ELA assessment. We will achieve this mission by setting goals focusing on:

- **School Readiness**

- Increase the number of children ready for kindergarten **to at least 80%** based on their performance on the PALS-K. Focus will be on further developing high-quality preschool and daycare programs and offering families out-of-school options to further learning and growth.

- **School Attendance**

- Reduce chronic absenteeism **to rates at or below 10%** among K-4th graders at all four elementary schools by 2025.

- **Summer and Afterschool Learning**

- **Increase by 100%** the number of K-4th grade students who have access to summer and afterschool opportunities that focus on literacy-related learning and enrichment.

New Parent Literacy Classes Offered This Fall



In partnership with Healthy Families NSV and Laurel Ridge Community College, new parent literacy classes will be offered this fall! Parents and caregivers will have the opportunity to learn how to use everyday interactions with their children to support their reading and writing skills. These classes are about building confidence and excitement in the process of learning to read and write!

Spotlight On:



WPS Partners with Right at School

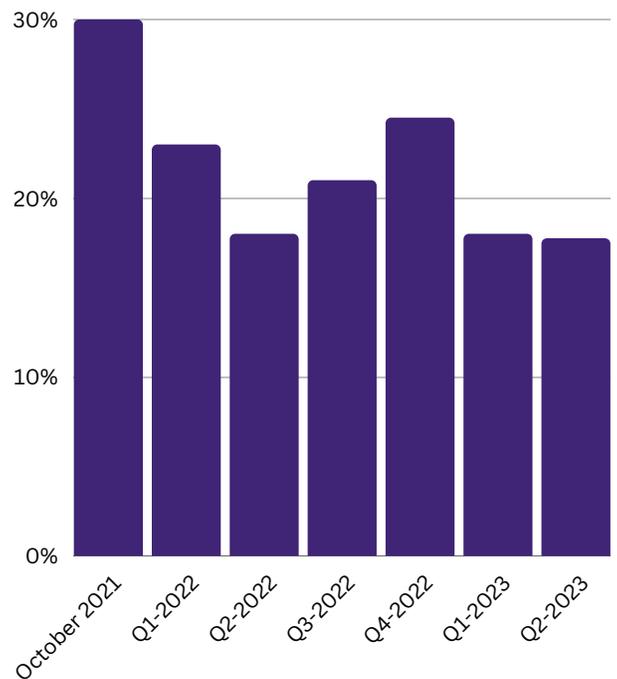
Winchester Public Schools is partnering with [Right at School](#), a nationally recognized school enrichment provider, for after school care at WPS elementary schools. Starting in the fall of 2023, Right at School will operate programs at Garland R. Quarles, John Kerr, and Virginia Avenue Charlotte DeHart Elementary Schools for students in kindergarten through 4th grade. Students at Frederick Douglass Elementary School will have the opportunity to attend the after school program at Quarles with transportation provided by WPS. With this new program, students will have childcare “right at school” with trained staff. Learn more about the program at the [WPS website](#).

Celebrating Student Success

On August 10th, Winchester City students headed back to school for the 2023-2024 school year. While Campaign partners are actively planning ways to encourage and support students and teachers this year, we also want to celebrate last year's success! Third grade reading SOL benchmarks climbed to 54% in Q2 of 2023, which brings grade-level proficiency back to pre-Covid levels.

In addition, the four elementary schools in Winchester saw a decrease in chronic absenteeism rates from 30% in October 2021 to 17.75% in the second quarter of 2023.

For all current data, [visit the CGLR website](#).



**Elementary School Attendance:
Chronic Absenteeism Rates**

Our Needs Looking Ahead

Can you help? The Campaign is seeking monthly business sponsors to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program.

- **What We Need:** Monthly sponsorship of \$2,500 provides one month of funding for over 2,000 children to receive a free, age-appropriate book in the mail from birth to five years of age.

If you would like to support this CGLR project, contact Andy Gail at agail@lvwa.org for more information.



Thoughts from the Field



Allie Mondell, Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area

I joined Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area this summer as Winchester's Campaign for Grade Level Reading (CGLR) Campaign Coordinator. As I've immersed myself in the national and local CGLR data, met with representatives from the local coalition, and chatted with parents and teachers about the challenges our city's children face, I'm convinced: Winchester needs this Campaign.

But I don't just see the need as an outside observer. Most of all, I see the need for the Campaign as a mother of three children aged three to eight. My twin eight-year-olds are now entering third grade, the critical juncture for literacy skills. Statistics show reading proficiency in third grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success. Children who are reading on grade level by the end of third grade can shift from learning to read to reading to learn as they continue in their education.

This year's third graders entered kindergarten during the Covid-19 pandemic. I experienced first-hand the struggles of supporting my children through virtual school while working from home and caring for a six-month-old infant. Schools' efforts during this time are nothing short of heroic, but there is no doubt the pandemic impacted children's learning experience.

That's why the second quarter 2023 third-grade SOL benchmark results for the city of Winchester are worth celebrating – 54% of students are on grade-level, which is back to pre-Covid numbers. We've also seen a dramatic decrease in chronic absenteeism rates since the start of the Campaign – from 30% in October 2021 to 17.75% in the second quarter of 2023.

The overarching vision of Winchester's CGLR is to increase the percentage of third graders reading at or above the proficient level to at least 75% in the next 10 years. To achieve this, the Campaign is focusing on three areas of growth: school readiness, chronic absenteeism, and summer and afterschool learning opportunities.

Schools can't achieve this alone – it takes a community dedicated to removing barriers and creating opportunities for our youth as well as engaged and equipped parents. Over thirty organizations have pledged their support, and Campaign partners have launched a variety of resources for parents, including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), Ready Rosie, and Ready4K.

My three-year-old squeals with delight when he receives a new book in the mail each month through DPIL. With Ready Rosie, I receive weekly two-minute videos demonstrating an easy, quick activity I can do with my children. One of my favorites is "Stomp the Letter," a game I play with my preschooler by asking him to jump on letters I've written in chalk on the sidewalk. I also receive three text messages per week through Ready4K, a program developed to provide busy parents on-the-go facts and tips they can incorporate into their daily routines.

The collaboration between schools, parents, businesses, foundations, nonprofits, and civic leaders makes Winchester's Campaign for Grade-Level Reading goal a very realistic possibility. As a community member, working professional, and parent, I invite you to join the Campaign and serve as partners in our children's success. For more information about CGLR, visit [Winchester Campaign for Grade-Level Reading – LVWA](#).

Coalition Partners

- The Baby Buzz
- Bright Futures
- Community Foundation of Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Handley Regional Library System
- Healthy Families of the Northern Shenandoah Valley
- H. N. Funkhouser
- Infant Toddler Connection
- Jay Foreman
- John & Janice Wyatt Foundation
- Laurel Ridge Community College
- Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area
- Moms in Motion
- Museum of the Shenandoah Valley
- Opportunity Scholars
- Pediatric Associates of Winchester
- Peter Bullough Foundation
- Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum
- STARBASE Academy
- Summit Events Co.
- The Kids Club of Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Top of Virginia Regional Chamber
- United Way of the Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Valley Health
- Winchester Book Gallery
- Winchester Department of Social Services
- Winchester Education Foundation
- Winchester Parks and Recreation
- Winchester Public Schools
- Worlds Away Escape
- Youth Development Center



Upcoming CGLR Events

SEPTEMBER



THE BIG BUZZ PARENTING EVENT

THE DOUGLAS SCHOOL, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
AGES: CAREGIVERS WITH 3 AND UNDER

OCTOBER



COMMUNITY EDUCATION LITERACY PROGRAM

HANDLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY, 10:15 AM - 12:45 PM
FOR TEACHERS IN THE COMMUNITY

OCTOBER



PARENT LITERACY WORKSHOP

HANDLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY, 1:00 - 2:30 PM
FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS