



Background and Forecast of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's 2023–2025 Priorities

I.

As the nation enters what could be regarded as the “exit stage” of the pandemic, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) affirms its mission to disrupt generational poverty, acknowledges kindergarten as a significant inflection point and doubles down on its commitment to support the local coalitions working to promote early school success — the precursor to later school success, high school graduation and the “success sequence” that offers a pathway away from poverty.

This “doubling down” on the work with local coalitions is driven by our belief that real, meaningful and durable change starts with local stakeholders who bring their relationships, energy, values, attitudes and beliefs as well as their interests.

Even so, these community coalitions will succeed if, and only if, their efforts are undergirded by quality teaching in every setting for every child every day and if children from economically challenged families have access to “surround sound” systems of services, supports and care that are 24/7/365 and multigenerational. (Thus, our continuing engagement around the “science” of reading, teaching and learning; our prioritized attention to families served by public housing; and our persistence around the “must dos” for early school success — school readiness, everyday attendance, summer learning, parent-teacher partnerships and healthy child development.)

II.

CGLR's pandemic pivot has meant mobilizing its networks to take up the challenge of accelerating equitable academic recovery. This mobilization effort has focused on building awareness, broad support and a sense of urgency around:

- encouraging schools and school districts to make “smart” decisions on some “big bets” (technology in education, teacher development — especially coaching — and relational supports such as high-dosage tutoring);
- advocating around digital connectivity to assure access to the internet for all students;
- embracing the “learning happens everywhere” approach that makes learning-rich environments community-wide and ubiquitous; and

- endorsing the U.S. Department of Education’s call for a collective effort to build the kindergarten year into “a more sturdy bridge” between the early years and the early grades.

III.

The “learning happens everywhere” track has allowed us launch our own Everyday Places and Spaces Initiative, serve as the backbone support organization for the Learning Happens Everywhere Coalition, and lead the effort to construct an ecosystem for out-of-school learning that is (1) parent-centered; (2) builds upon the work and lessons of afterschool programs and public libraries; (3) helps parents create learning-rich environments at home; (4) transforms the everyday places and spaces where parents and young children gather into learning-rich environments; and (5) makes community assets, amenities and institutions more accessible, available, affordable and welcoming to all families and children especially those who are economically challenged, fragile and otherwise marginalized.

IV.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading affirms its mission to disrupt generational poverty. We advance that mission by mobilizing at key inflection points along the pathway to generational poverty.

The initial inflection point of reading proficiency by the end of third grade, identified at the outset of CGLR, continues to be a widely recognized metric for the early school success that predicts later school success and high graduation.

A decade of working with hundreds of communities has confirmed that grade-level reading proficiency remains the critical predictor of success. That decade of work also has revealed on-track learning and development at the end of kindergarten as an even earlier inflection point. Ongoing research confirms what local data signaled several years before the pandemic: The gaps at the end of kindergarten persist through the early grades and predict which students will meet or miss the third-grade reading proficiency milestone. Given this confirmation, CGLR’s mobilization efforts have expanded to include endorsing the call to build the kindergarten year into “a more sturdy bridge” between the early years and the early grades.

Looking forward.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ralph Smith'.

Ralph Smith
Managing Director
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