



# PRESS RELEASE

## Newport Public Schools

109 Old Fort Road, Newport, RI 02840

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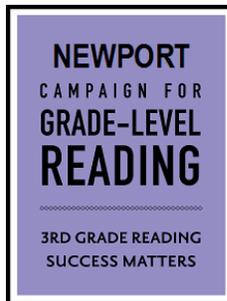
For additional information, contact: Marcin G. Rembisz

Date: Wednesday, August 03, 2016

For Immediate Release

### **NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND JOINS NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING**

#### ***City Leaders, Agencies Commit to Boosting Early Literacy***



Newport, RI (August 2, 2016) – Newport is taking a big step toward improving student success by joining the [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) (GLR), a nationwide movement to increase early reading proficiency.

Colleen Jermain, Superintendent of Newport Public Schools, said, “This campaign is the catalyst to help jump start our new strategic plan initiatives and will help bring attention to the urgency and importance of getting all students reading on grade level by the end of third grade. Investing in this work and plan now will enable our district and schools to repurpose funding in the future to build an innovative, more powerful learning environment for our children which will realize a strong, educated future workforce and college ready graduates for our community.”

Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone toward high school graduation and success later in life because it marks the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” National tests show that two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders (four-fifths of whom are from low-income families) are not reading proficiently. Students who have not mastered reading by third grade are more likely to drop out of high school and struggle throughout their lives.

In 2015, only slightly more than one-third (37%) of Newport third graders met expectations on the new *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment, the same percentage as in the state as a whole. Newport saw large disparities by income, race/ethnicity, and special education status. For example, at Pell Elementary School, Newport’s only elementary school of over 846 students with enrollment climbing, (serving children in grades PK-4), 23% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared with 68% of higher-income third graders. This gap of 45 percentage points is



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substantially higher than the achievement gap at the state level (32 percentage points). This reflects the community population as a whole, unlike other districts with multiple elementary school population comparisons.

### **Third-Graders Meeting Expectations on the PARCC, Pell Elementary School, Newport, 2015**

Low-Income Students	23%
Higher-Income Students	68%
Black	19%
Hispanic	24%
White	55%
Students with IEPs	13%
Students without IEPs	42%
<b>All Students</b>	<b>37%</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *PARCC*, 2015.

In Newport, the Campaign initiated in the Newport Public Schools, works with other partners helping to support these efforts towards the goal of grade level reading. Partners such as the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Prince Charitable Trust, Saving Institute Bank and Trust (formerly Newport Fed), the Herbert E. and Daisy A. Stride Memorial Foundation, the Rhode Island Foundation Newport County Fund, the East Bay Community Action Program, the Newport Community School and Bank Newport all play a role directly and indirectly through collaborative efforts.

City agencies and community groups led by Newport Public Schools, the Newport Partnership for Families, the Boys & Girls Club of Newport, the Newport Housing Authority, the East Bay Community Action Program, Newport Hospital, RI Department of Health, Newport Child and Family Opportunity Zone, Child & Family, Chartwell's Food Service, Dr. Martin



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Luther King Jr. Community Center, Newport Health Equity Zone, RI Kids Count, RI Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Center for Early Learning Professionals are working together using a multi-pronged approach to help all children in literacy.

The plan focuses on addressing the three underlying challenges that can keep young children, especially those from low-income or stressed families, from learning to read proficiently:

- School readiness — too many children are entering kindergarten already behind so the plan addresses the importance of pre-K and 0-3 initiatives
- School attendance — too many young children are missing too many days of school; school attendance impacts ability to read
- Summer learning — too many children are losing ground academically over the summer

Focus on literacy and the implantation of the plan is already underway, with the official launch scheduled for October 4, 2016 to coincide with the RI Kids Count Data In Your Backyard event at Newport Public Library.

“We are thrilled to welcome the newest members of our growing network of communities,” said Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. “Their commitment to this vital mission comes at a critical time when nearly half of the children in the U.S. under the age of five (the years of greatest brain development) live in extreme poverty. Together, we will do what it takes to ensure our nation’s most vulnerable children have the support and opportunities they need to thrive.”

Membership in the GLR Communities Network gives Newport access to experts and policymakers focused on early literacy, assistance in addressing the challenges that keep many children from learning to read, and opportunities to share and learn best practices from communities across the country.

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### **About Newport Public Schools**

Newport Public Schools, a department of the City of Newport, Rhode Island, provides students opportunities and access to the world through quality education. The district includes the Claiborne Pell Elementary School (grades PK – 4), the Frank E. Thompson Middle School (grades 6 – 8), the William S. Rogers High School (grades 9 – 12) and the Newport Area Career & Technical Center (grades 9 – 12) and the P-TECH Pathways in Technology Early College High School specializing in cybersecurity (grades 9 – 14). Newport Public Schools believe that all children should be challenged and supported throughout their educational career one student at a time. Their success is our community's success. To learn more, visit [www.npsri.net/glr](http://www.npsri.net/glr).

### **About the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**

Launched in May 2010, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career and active citizenship. Since its launch, the campaign has grown to include more than 285 communities, representing 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with 2,100 local organizations (including 130 United Ways and 250 state and local funders). To learn more, visit [gradelevelreading.net](http://gradelevelreading.net) and follow the movement on Twitter [@readingby3rd](https://twitter.com/readingby3rd).

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