



The Campaign for Grade Level Reading

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida recently hosted a Donors Forum to address a glaring literacy gap in our community. The 2020/2021 Florida State Assessment shows that in 60% of Duval County elementary schools, less than ½ the students were reading at grade level. Tom Caron, The Community Foundation’s Donor Services Director, introduced us to the local effort being made to resolve that troubling statistic.

Our speakers were Rachael Tutwiler Fortune, President, Jacksonville Public Education Fund (JPEF); and Dr. Saralyn Grass, Chief Administrative Officer and Mike Weinstein, CEO from Kids Hope Alliance (KHA). The two organizations are spearheading The Duval County Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading takes a collaborative approach to address the various areas that impact literacy. The two main pillars of the program are **Awareness Raising** and **Systems Building**.

The **Awareness Raising** pillar kicks off March 21-25 during Reading Week. JPEF and KHA will be urging businesses, nonprofits and government agencies to encourage reading with events and incentives. A broad-based awareness campaign will highlight creating a culture of reading in Duval County with the mantra: 20 Minutes A Day Paves The Way!

Creating a Culture of Reading in Duval County



“This is the beginning of a moment—a movement—that everyone can be a part of,” said Fortune. “We will need everyone to make sure the message resonates.”

(over)



The **Systems-Building** pillar centers on creating a literacy-focused community-wide cross sector system, with a goal of every child reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. The Systems-Building effort has four focus areas:

- Strengthen reading and writing engagement opportunities within existing programs
- Coordinate key learning success services
- Improve access to critical and innovative literary supports
- Measure progress

Guiding Questions

Charge: To identify and implement best practices that are needed to achieve a common goal of every child reading on grade level by the end of third grade.



JPEF and KHA believe that Jacksonville is ready for this push:

- There are over 50 literacy-specific programs and resources available in Duval County targeted to youth.
- KHA funds after-school and summer programming in over 110 sites throughout the City of Jacksonville.
- Duval County Public Schools currently have two strategic goals tied to reading proficiency.
- Collaborative focus on literacy with other governmental entities.

Weinstein noted there is \$1 million set aside for this campaign, and if they consolidate some resources, there may be an additional \$1 million.

For every \$1 invested, it's estimated that \$18 is saved. "This is an investment in the future," said Dr. Grass. "It's going to pay off, but it may take a while."



Get Involved

There is a role for everyone who wants to contribute to this effort. To get involved please contact Coretta Hill, Vice President, Jacksonville Public Education Fund, who is leading community mobilization efforts. Email her at Coretta@jaxpef.org.