



Contact:

Lisa Finaldi, NCECF, 919.895-3290, lfinaldi@buildthefoundation.org

Terry Atkinson, ECU/READ ENC, 252.916-9851, info@readenc.org

**PITT COUNTY JOINS NATIONWIDE
CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING**

Community Leaders, Agencies Commit to Boosting Early Literacy

Greenville, NC (April 10, 2019) – Pitt County is taking a big step toward improving student success by joining the national [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) (GLR Campaign), a collaborative effort to improve reading proficiency, early learning and early school success for children from low-income families.

Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone toward high school graduation and career success because it marks the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Students who have not mastered reading by that time are more likely to drop out of high school and struggle throughout their lives. Only 39 percent of North Carolina fourth graders and 24 percent of students from economically disadvantaged families scored at or above reading proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2017.

“Sixty-seven percent of jobs by 2020 will require some post-secondary education, yet today only about 45 percent of the workforce possess that level of education. Early reading proficiency is critical to our children’s academic and career success. Communities investing in early learning are investing in their communities’ economic future,” said Lisa Finaldi, Community Engagement Leader for the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation.

In Pitt County, [READ ENC](#) Community Literacy Coalition is supported by the United Way of Pitt County; Smith Family Foundation; Vidant Health; East Carolina University; Sheppard Memorial Library; Publix; Pizza Hut; Southern Bank, Barnes & Noble of Greenville, and many additional community partners.

The community’s action plan addresses three underlying challenges that can keep young children, especially those from low-income families, from learning to read proficiently — school readiness, school attendance and summer learning.

“Fostering school success across Pitt County in a way that truly moves the needle on third-grade reading takes place when multiple partners join hands in a community-wide effort, rather than through unconnected singular initiatives,” said Terry Atkinson, READ ENC’s Executive Director. While Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library implementation was READ ENC’s first cross-community school readiness effort, multiple initiatives have since been launched and are now in progress. Visit READ ENC’s website, readenc.org, to learn more about their work and how community members can join in to assure school success for all of Pitt County’s children.

Membership in the national network gives Pitt County access to: experts and policymakers focused on early literacy; assistance in addressing the challenges that keep many children from learning to read; and access to the new Learning for Impact and Improvement Learning System, a tool that is designed to enhance collective efforts to tap the vast reservoir of experiences and perspectives of the more than 300 communities engaged in the GLR Network.

About the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in NC

In [North Carolina](#), in addition to Pitt County, there are 13 more communities that are part of the NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in the Campaign from the following counties: Chatham, Durham, Gaston, Johnston, Mecklenburg, Moore, Nash/Edgecombe, Orange, Richmond, Rowan, Wake and Wayne.

About NCECF

NCECF builds public will by advancing understanding of birth-through-eight child development and promotes practice and policy solutions that drive aligned action to support each child being on a pathway to grade-level reading. Learn more at <http://www.buildthefoundation.org>.

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