



Read Ourselves GREEN in Cumberland County

While Cumberland County Public Schools have seen a rise in reading scores over the past few years, they could still use a boost. Cumberland County is “orange” (60 to 70%) on the color-coded map of third-grade reading scores in Virginia. We want to be one of the “light green” counties where reading scores are 80 to 90%. Our goal is 85% by the time the current preschoolers reach third grade. Dark green (90% and above) would be even better. There is only one school system (out of 132) in the state, that scores above 90%. More than 58% of their students are disadvantaged. 21% are disabled. Yet, they still score 91%. If they can do, we can do it! We can read ourselves GREEN in Cumberland County!

About 68% of Cumberland third graders read at grade level, with only 61% of disadvantaged kids making the minimum benchmark. About 25% of underperforming third-graders may ultimately go on to drop out of school. Kids who don't read at grade level at the end of kindergarten will likely not read at grade level in the third grade. Early intervention is essential to promote reading skills and academic success, especially for disadvantaged kids. Having age-appropriate books in the home is the critical ingredient in the acquisition of reading skills, fostering a lifelong love of reading and improving academic achievement.

It's a significant socioeconomic issue. Over 86% of students at Cumberland Elementary School qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. More than 19% of county residents live below the poverty level. The median household income in Cumberland is only 64% of the state average. Research shows that in low-income communities there is only one book in the home for every 300 kids. Building home ‘libraries’ for kids can level the playing field.

We can change this situation. We can break the cycle. We can change the trajectory of kids' lives.

- Scholastic Book Club – purchase of Scholastic “bargain books” selected by classroom teachers for all preschoolers and kindergartners at Cumberland Elementary School (estimated cost \$2.00 per book)
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) – enroll at least 60% of kids ages 0 to 4 in DPIL. Kids receive a book mailed directly to them each month until age 5. (cost \$2.10 per kid per month)

We need ongoing funding for these two programs to improve reading skills and academic success of kids in Cumberland County.

- QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia has already funded a Scholastic Book Club grant that purchased eight books each for 70 preschoolers at Cumberland Elementary (budgeted at six books for \$840)
- Funding of \$960 (six books each) is still needed for 80 kindergartners
- Funding is needed for the estimated 274 kids (60% participation based on DPIL data) who will sign up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library over the next five years
 - Year One: \$862 Year Two: \$2,071 Year Three: \$3,453
 - Year Four: \$4,834 Year Five: \$6,216 Year Six and beyond: \$6,912

We need your financial support this year (and in the future) if we are to improve the academic achievement and prospects in life for kids in Cumberland County. Once COVID-19 is behind us, we will need volunteers to read to/with kids in school and at community events.

For questions or to donate, please contact Lisa Davis at the Cumberland County Library (804) 492-5807

Read Ourselves GREEN!!!

March 2021