

Read Ourselves GREEN in Nelson County



Reading scores in Nelson County Public Schools could use a boost. Nelson County is “red” (0 to 60%) 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 (out of 132) school system in the entire 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!

About 59% of Nelson County third graders read at grade level, with even fewer disadvantaged kids making the minimum benchmark. About 25% of underperforming third-graders 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. About 62% of students at the two elementary schools qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. More than 12% of county residents live below the poverty level. Black residents experience a 20% poverty rate. 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 Rockfish River and Tye River Elementary Schools (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 Nelson County.

- QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia has already funded Scholastic Book Club grants for 120 preschoolers and kindergartners at both elementary schools this school year. Annual funding will be needed to continue providing books and FUN giveaways to the kids at those schools.
 - Each year: \$1,700 (assuming 120 kids)
- Funding is needed for the estimated 400 kids (assumed 60% participation based on DPIL data) who will sign up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library over the next five years
 - Year One: \$1,248 Year Two: \$3,002 Year Three: \$5,003
 - Year Four: \$7,004 Year Five: \$9,005 Year Six and beyond: \$10,008

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 Nelson 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 Susan Huffman at the Nelson County Library 434.263.5904

Read Ourselves GREEN!!!