



TURN THE PAGE STL

COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS SUMMARY

WHY THIRD GRADE READING?

“A STUDENT WHO CANT READ ON GRADE LEVEL BY 3RD GRADE IS FOUR TIMES LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE BY AGE 19 THAN A CHILD WHO DOES READ PROFICIENTLY BY THAT TIME. ADD POVERTY TO THE MIX, AND A STUDENT IS 13 TIMES LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE ON TIME THAN HIS OR HER PROFICIENT, WEALTHIER PEER.”
([EDUCATION WEEK, 2017](#))

“ILLITERACY AFFECTS ALL AREAS OF LIFE AND HAS A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ST. LOUIS. THOSE WITH LOW LITERACY SKILLS ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO LIVE IN POVERTY, FACE HEALTH PROBLEMS, AND GROW ISOLATED IN A WORLD INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON COMPUTERS.” *(based on research by [READING WORKS, 2015](#))*

OUR VISION

Turn the Page STL (TTPSTL), a collective impact organization, is a city-county wide literacy initiative dedicated to increasing the number of children that are reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade in the St. Louis community. Foundational to the work of TTPSTL is the understanding that racial inequity in metropolitan St. Louis has contributed to generations of disparities based on race and zip code. Turn the Page STL envisions a future of literacy for all children, regardless of their race, zip code, or school district.

In order to achieve this vision, Turn the Page STL will align and measure the progress of this work, based on the [National Campaign for Grade Level Reading](#), which includes school readiness, school attendance, and summer learning. This work will be viewed through a racial equity lens with the understanding that metropolitan St. Louis’ public education system generations of under literate citizens.

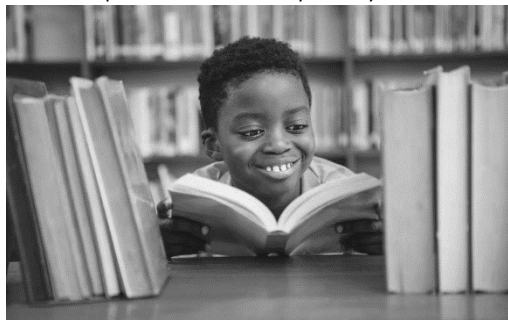
**A ST. LOUIS THAT
READS TOGETHER
SUCCEEDS
TOGETHER**

Turn the Page STL became a chapter of the National Campaign for Grade Level Reading in January of 2020. The Campaign is a call to action, using third grade reading proficiency as a unifying goal to “**promote quality teaching** for every child in every setting every day; support **community solutions to address lack of school readiness, chronic absence, and summer learning loss**; and **help parents succeed** in their critical roles as first teachers and best advocates.” ([National Campaign for Grade Level Reading](#))

In our initial five-year phase, we will be focusing our efforts on services for children birth through third grade who live in the Promise Zone School Districts. The federal government has identified these Districts as high poverty communities. The majority of the population in these Districts are African American.

WHY A RACIAL EQUITY LENS?

“The history of St. Louis is bound up in a tangle of local, state, and federal policies that explicitly and decisively sorted the City’s growing



[Colin Gordon, 2008](#))

population by race. These intense concentrations of African Americans in certain wards or neighborhoods in (North) St. Louis City and County.” ([Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City](#),

As time progressed, systemic racism became embedded in the fabric of the St. Louis community. “The city of St. Louis, Missouri, remains one of the most segregated cities in the US, according to a [study](#) by the Manhattan Institute (BBC News, 2012).” “To me, a lifelong St. Louisan, the racism that I and many other black people in our city face feels normal.” (noted in [Mapping Decline, 2008](#))

This has resulted in high poverty rates for African Americans in St. Louis. “The rates of poverty range from 4 to 6 times higher for African Americans compared with whites in St. Louis.” ([For the Sake of All now Health Equity Works, Washington University, 2015](#))

How does segregation and racism affect education? Property tax. “The problem with a school-funding system that relies so heavily on local property taxes is straightforward: Property values vary a lot from neighborhood to neighborhood, district to district. And with them, tax revenues.” (“[Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem.](#)” [National Public Radio, 2016](#)) To help poorer schools compensate for that local imbalance, some states (including Missouri) have recently stepped in, yet the disparities are still great.

In addition to unequal schools, when looking at third-grade reading proficiency, based on student scores of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test, in St. Louis County and St. Louis City, African American students are reading less proficiently and at much lower rates than their White peers, even in wealthier Districts. (“[White students are more than twice as likely as black students to demonstrate reading proficiency in the third grade.](#)” [Equity Indicators STL, Baseline Report City of St. Louis 2018](#))

Turn the Page Data Collection Process

Over the past six months, Turn the Page STL has collected data from six data sources:

- Promise Zone School Districts
- Charter Schools
- Grade Level Reading Chapters in the country
- Local and national scientific-based research, including key, regional initiatives
- More than twenty-five local nonprofit organizations
- Eight focus groups of educators and families

The results of the data collection are attached (Attachments 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The results of our data collection, as well as a deep dive into the academic literature, and an analysis of the local state testing data have informed the five strategic themes that have emerged. We are viewing all data and engaging in our work through a racial equity lens.

Third Grade Reading Proficiency Data from Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Public School Districts (Promise Zone School Districts)	2019 % of ALL Students Reading Proficiently by the End of Third Grade, based on MAP test scores	% of Black students in the District 2019	2019 % of Black Students Reading Proficiently by the End of Third Grade, based on MAP test scores
University City Public Schools	41.10	80.00	30.50
State of Missouri	48.70	15.70	24.30
St. Louis Public Schools	19.10	79.00	11.90
Riverview Gardens	12.80	99.00	12.60
Normandy Schools Collaborative	16.90	94.70	14.70
Jennings School District	26.00	99.00	22.90
Hazelwood School District	34.90	78.90	31.70
Ferguson Florissant School District	26.90	82.80	24.00

From the data, we observe that the higher the percentage of African American students attending a Promise Zone School District closely correlates with lower performing third grade reading proficiency scores.

In Districts where almost 100% of students are African American, Normandy Schools Collaborative and Riverview Gardens, their reading proficiency scores are the lowest: Normandy 16.9%, Riverview Gardens 12.8%. Jennings School District is an exception; 99% of their students are African American, yet 26% are reading proficiently.

Of the Districts with a smaller percentage of students who are African American, University City Public Schools (80%) and in the Hazelwood School District (82.8%), their reading proficiency test scores are among the highest, 41.1%/34.9%, respectfully. These results are similar in the Ferguson Florissant School District where 82.8% of attending students are African American, but only 26.9% of students reading proficiently.

The major exception is the St. Louis Public Schools. Only 79% of their students are African American, similar racial demography as University City Public Schools and Hazelwood School District, but only 19.1% of their students are reading proficiently, similar results to Normandy Schools Collaborative and Riverview Gardens School District.

In the Promise Zone School Districts, the percentage of African American students reading proficiently is lower than the total percentage in the District.

Charter Schools City of St. Louis	2019 % of ALL Students Reading Proficiently by the End of Third Grade, based on MAP test scores	% of Black students in the Charter Schools 2019	2019 % of Black Students Reading Proficiently by the End of Third Grade, based on MAP test scores
State of Missouri	48.70	15.70	24.30
St. Louis Language Immersion School	38.10	51.80	26.60
Premier Charter School	28.80	26.30	28.60
Northside Community School	48.00	*	50.00
KIPP Inspire	25.70	*	26.10
Gateway Science Academy	55.40	15.50	40.00
EAGLE College Prep	24.70	78.90	19.00
Confluence	11.80	82.80	8.50
City Garden Montessori	75.90	41.90	50.00
Carondelet Leadership Academy	34.60	58.20	24.20

Charter School data compared with Promise Zone School District data looks very similar. The higher the percentage of African American students attending a Charter School (Confluence Academy, EAGLE College Prep, and KIPP Inspire), the lower the percentage of students reading proficiently.

There are two primary exceptions. Northside Community School has a high percentage of African American students, 95%, and a high reading proficiency rate, 48%. On the other side, 26.3% of students at Premier Charter School are African American, yet only 28.8% of the students were reading proficiently.

Three Charter Schools, St. Louis Language Immersion School, City Garden Montessori and Carondelet Leadership Academy, have on average an African American student population of fifty percent. St. Louis Language Immersion School and Carondelet Leadership Academy have a similar percentage of students reading proficiently, 38.1% and 34.6%, respectfully. City Garden Montessori has 75.9% of students reading proficiently, the highest between the Promise Zone School District and Charter Schools.

Again, in all but two Charter Schools, Northside Community School and KIPP Inspire, the percentage of African American students reading proficiently is lower than the total percentage in that Charter School.

Reading Proficiencies in Other (Mostly Higher-Income) St. Louis County School Districts	2019 % of ALL Students Reading Proficiently by the End of Third Grade, based on MAP test scores	% of Black students in the District 2019	2019 % of Black Students Reading Proficiently by the End of Third Grade, based on MAP test scores
Webster Groves	65.60	13.10	29.40
Rockwood	61.10	8.40	20.90
Ritenour	28.70	41.70	23.40
Parkway	66.60	15.80	37.10
Mehlville	51.10	7.80	25.50
Ladue	71.20	14.80	43.50
Kirkwood	70.10	10.20	40.00
Francis Howell	70.00	7.10	47.70
Clayton	76.80	15.30	55.00
Bayless	56.80	12.00	42.80

As noted above, even in wealthier Districts, African American students are reading less proficiently and at much lower rates than their White peers. In Districts with a higher percentage of African American students (Ritenour, 41.7%), only 28.7% of students are reading proficiently.

However, in some wealthier Districts, African American students are performing much higher than their peers in lower performing Districts. The African American students who attend Clayton (55%), Francis Howell (47.7%), Ladue (43.5%), and Bayless (42.8%), are reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

In all of the wealthier Districts noted above, the percentage of African American students reading proficiently compared to their classroom peers is lower. The percentage of African American students reading proficiently in Rockwood (20.9%), Mehlville (25.5%) and Webster Groves (29.4%), is among the lowest, and as low as the scores in the Promise Zone School Districts.




Strategic Themes

Analyzing the data through a racial equity lens, five strategic themes have emerged.

Theme 1: Kindergarten Readiness	
National Research	St. Louis Data Collection
<p>“Research shows that fewer children from low-income families (less than half) are ready for school at kindergarten entry, compared to three-quarters of children from families with moderate or high incomes. For children from low-income families, preschool attendance is one of the strongest factors in school readiness. A follow-up study of the Abecedarian Project found that by entering school ready to learn can improve one’s chances of reaching middle-class status by age 40.” (Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013)</p>	<p>Superintendents, educators and the research (First Step to Equity Report), (Ready by 21 St. Louis), (For the Sake of All), (Ferguson’s Commission Report) point to the importance of students attending quality early childhood programs to be ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers noted that students who attend a quality Pre-K program are much more successful learners in kindergarten. Families warmly discussed how quality early programs have benefitted both their children and their family.</p>
Theme 2: School Attendance	
National Research	St. Louis Data Collection
<p>“A report by Johns Hopkins University researchers suggest that the national rate of chronic absenteeism is 10 to 15 percent. The premise that schools fail to detect high levels of chronic absence because of data issues was confirmed by a study conducted jointly by the Child and Family Policy Center and Attendance Works. Other studies confirmed that chronic absence has a negative effect on students’ academic performance and cognitive development, especially for children from low-income families.” (Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013)</p>	<p>All Districts and early childhood programs are highly focused on issues of attendance, tardiness and mobility, and all have a system in place that is attempting to combat the negative effect. The national research is clear that chronic absence has a negative effect on students’ academic performance and cognitive development, especially for children from low-income families. (American Family Physician, 2018) Teachers are particularly concerned about attendance, and students who are tardy miss language arts instruction, which is typically the first hour of the school day.</p>

Theme 3: Summer Learning	
National Research	St. Louis Data Collection
<p>“Studies of summer learning programs in several different contexts all confirmed that high-quality summer programs can disrupt learning loss. Research on children from low-income families also offered new evidence that having access to books can ameliorate the summer learning slide and significantly improve scores on state reading assessments; the largest effects were for the most economically-disadvantaged children.” (Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013)</p>	<p>School leaders and educators do not have access to their students’ summer learning experiences; and therefore, summer learning was not noted by them. Families, however, strongly desired safe summer learning opportunities for their children. “It’s more than what happens in the classroom that adds up to a student receiving a great education. Fun and diverse learning opportunities ensure that youth and young adults will develop their own creative pursuits, expand their education, and prepare for career success.” (BluePrint 4 Summer STL, 2015)</p>
Theme 4: Family Engagement	
Research	St. Louis Data Collection
<p>“Research published right before this report helped explain how environmental factors like hunger, housing insecurity, parental depression and abuse influence the epigenome (the human “operating system”), making it more likely that specific genes will or will not be expressed. Other new research draws a link between the stress of poverty, hormonal changes and impaired learning ability. However, new research reveals that even after the epigenome has been modified by extreme childhood stress, the damage may be reversed. Furthermore, positive social-emotional experiences for young children, along with supportive family and community environments, reduce the likelihood of negative modifications to the epigenome that might impair learning.” (Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013)</p>	<p>Districts strategically align family engagement in the school community as one of their highest priorities. Teachers noted that families are the first teachers of their children. In addition, teachers believe that better relationships between families and teachers will lead to student success in the classroom. “Research shows that supportive home learning experiences can help close the school readiness gap.” (National Science Foundation, 2011)</p>

Theme 5: High-Quality Teaching in Home, Community And School

National Research	St. Louis Data Collection
<p>“New research underscores the importance of enriched home learning environments and engagement in preparing children from low-income families to succeed in school. A five-year study of more than 1,850 children and their mothers found that children whose learning environments were of consistently low-quality were much more likely to have language and literacy delays before kindergarten, while supportive home learning experiences could help close the school readiness gap. Classroom and community strategies to improve children’s literacy continue to draw attention, which the research base grows to support the “seamless continuum” of education that this Report identified.” (Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013)</p> <p>Based on the scholarly work of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Gloria Swindler-Boutte, Lamar L. Johnson, Janice E. Hale, Jawanza Kunjufu, Lisa Delpit, Zaretta Hammond, we also know that culturally relevant approaches (culturally relevant words, collective values, positive stories) are more effective than traditional approaches, when teaching children of color to read.</p>	<p>Superintendents, Chief Academic Officers, and Directors of Charter Schools stated that most K-3 teachers are not taught how to teach a child to read, based on scientific and culturally competent practices. Teachers are not even sure what is a “good” reading curriculum.</p> 

Action Steps

Our next steps will be to gain your feedback on these themes. We invite you to dream, plan and build with us in the next steps for action and accountability that will ensure that all children in the Promise Zone are on a path of literacy and life success.

Lisa Greening, Project Manager, [Turn the Page STL](#) [#turnthepagestl](#)





ATTACHMENT ONE - RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUPS

With the support of Burnea Lester with UMSL’s Community Innovation and Action Center, Turn the Page STL hosted eight focus groups of educators and parents. We asked them what was working and what was not working in order to ensure that their children/students were reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Groups included early educators, K-3 teachers, families, and administrators.

All three groups implied that “there is a lack of trust and positive relationships between and among families and schools and neighborhoods.” There is too much stress and no “village” and/or support system for families. Families do not have trust in or feel welcome in key neighborhood institutions, such as public libraries. Stress and trauma also have an impact on the ability of parents to provide positive reading support to their children.



Early Educators said...

- We LOVE our children!!!
- We enjoy teaching our children and seeing their faces light up when they understand new skills.
- Young children crave learning.
- We (early educators) do not know the best practices to teach young children.
- There is a lack of culturally relevant children’s resources and books in our classrooms.
- Attendance in early childhood programs including Pre-K is an issue. Many children do not attend early childhood programs, or if they are attending, the children are chronically absent or tardy. Early childhood educators said that low attendance is due to parents not recognizing the value of the programs.
- There are many barriers to parents reading and reading aloud to their children in their homes. Parents need more books, magazines, and newspapers in their homes. Some parents can’t read. Children report that they lose their books at home.
- Children have a very difficult time transitioning from childcare centers to kindergarten for many reasons: the structure of kindergarten, class size, transition to new teachers.

Families said...

- There are phenomenal early childhood programs in our community, including quality private early childhood centers, Head Starts, and public-school Pre-Ks.
- We consider many early educators as part of our families.
- Quality education is critical for our family’s future success.
- Even during difficult times, we try our best to teach our children.
- Summers are unsafe. Families want safe, free places where children and families can meet and play together. Families are concerned about bullies and safety in summer programs, as well. Additionally, families noted that they did not believe there were summer opportunities for their kids in their neighborhoods.

- Families need information. Parents noted that they did not know what to look for when choosing childcare. Families were also particularly concerned about the safety of early childhood centers, citing distrust as a reason not to enroll them.
- Even when families want to engage, they lack access. Transportation was mentioned as a major issue. As one parent said, “I need to spend my money on food – not on a taxi to take us to story time.”

Teachers, K-3 said:

- Almost all teachers discussed how gratifying it is to see their students’ progress throughout the year.
- Teachers said that they appreciate and thrive on support and resources from their teaching colleagues.
- Teachers emphasize that families are key first teachers of their children, and teachers appreciate when they can work together to support a child.
- Kindergarten teachers noted that students who attended a quality Pre-K program are much more successful learners in kindergarten.
- Challenging work conditions led teachers to feel exhausted and traumatized. “I am stressed, ready to quit any day, exhausted. I feel abused by the Administration.”
- Teachers have little ability to tailor learning to an individual child’s needs. As one teacher said, “I have a second-grade student who knows ten letters of the alphabet and three words – and I have 26 other students. We need aides in the classroom.”
- We need more quality, substitute teachers. If a teacher is sick, many times students are just split up and sent to random other classrooms.
- We are not part of the community where we work, and we do not have relationships with families. In addition, because of class size, it is difficult to make the classroom feel like a home.
- We have administrative requirements that interfere with our classroom time. Expectations such as posting daily lesson plans, regular testing requirements, and curriculum compliance challenge teachers’ ability to respond to needs in the classroom.
- There is no agreement on what is a “good” reading curriculum. Across Districts, schools and even within classrooms, there are different reading curriculums, which makes it difficult to know what to do.
- Teachers want quality classroom libraries with culturally relevant books.
- Many schools’ cultures are not centered around reading. School libraries are underutilized, and have outdated, culturally irrelevant materials. Teachers recommended more school-wide reading and writing events. They also recommended older children reading with younger children, and community members reading with children one-on-one to help them practice.
- Teachers are very concerned about attendance and tardiness and cited them as an issue. Many Language Arts classes are taught at the beginning of the school day. SLPS teachers noted that their biggest barrier to teaching reading is that the majority of their students are tardy and most do not arrive at school until 9:30 am, which is after the Language Arts instruction is completed.

ATTACHMENT TWO -SCHOOL DISTRICT AND CHARTER SCHOOL RESULTS

When we asked Superintendents and Chief Academic Officers of School Districts and Directors of Charter Schools why the majority of their students are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade, they noted four major contributors:

- Students who do not attend quality early childhood programs are VERY likely not to be kindergarten ready. They noted that students who attend their District Pre-K programs are well prepared for kindergarten.
- The K-3 teachers were not taught how to teach a child to read, based on scientific and culturally competent practices.
- “Mobility rates are a huge challenge!” Normandy’s mobility rate is as high as 40%. One District leader wrote, “mobility is particularly hard on children in the early grades because they are learning foundational skills. Multiple moves are associated with lower school engagement, poorer grades in reading and math, and a higher risk of dropping out of high school.” Another wrote “I believe high mobility is one of the major factors why these students are poor readers and eventually drop out of school.”
- Improving school attendance is a major priority. Health issues, especially asthma and the flu, are barriers to consistent attendance.

**In all Districts, their priority initiative includes increasing reading proficiency.*

Based on several school district’s strategic plans, their initiatives align with Turn the Page STL, which is located on ***Attachment 3 District Strategic Plan Priority Alignment***

ATTACHMENT THREE - DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITY ALIGNMENT

	Third Grade Reading Proficiency	Equity	Kindergarten Readiness	Quality professional development for teachers	Family Engagement	Attendance/Mobility
<u>Ferguson-Florissant School District</u>	Reading Initiative/Reading Framework	Equity-Based Inclusive Reform		Grow Your Own Teacher Program	Parent University	
<u>Hazelwood Public Schools</u>	Goal #1: Improve student achievement			Objective #2: Staff support services and Objective #5 quality curriculum & instruction, goal #2 Enhance Professional Development	Objective #4 Parent Involvement and Community Partnerships Goal #3 Increase Parent and Community Engagement	
<u>Jennings School District</u> <i>(District Plan not available but priorities are listed)</i>				Quality professional development for teachers		Highest priority
<u>Normandy Schools Collaborative</u>	Goal of increasing reading scores for all students by one grade level by 2020		Increase professional development in early learning education	Provide relevant quality professional development in the area of Early Literacy/Guided Reading		Their Highest Priority!!! 40% mobility rate.
<u>St. Louis Public Schools</u>	#1 Benchmark for SLPS' MSIP Accountability Plan is demonstrated gains in MAP Assessments		Objective #5 Ensure all SLPS preschoolers are kindergarten ready & beyond	Objective #3 Effective & Engaging Instruction	Objective #4 Engage parents as partners	Objective #8 Improve attendance rates
<u>University City Public Schools</u>	Skilled readers	Commitment to Principles of Equity		High priority!	family & community engagement	

ATTACHMENT FOUR – RELEVANT REPORTS AND STUDIES

In the past five years, St. Louis has researched and reported issues around poverty, racism, and educational inequities. These reports highly emphasize that quality early childhood and kindergarten readiness needs to be a focus for our community to thrive, and it is essential for the academic success of our children.

[Ferguson’s Commission Report](#)

An extensive and ever-evolving initiative outlining how we can create a racially equitable St. Louis. From their 2015 report, they called for action around education infrastructure reform, including (1) investing in early childhood education, and (2) supporting education innovation via a Taskforce and the development of an Innovative Education Hub. St. Louis now has a bustling, alive [Innovation Hall!](#)

[For the Sake of All](#)

A 2014 Washington University Study now called Health Equity Works, concluded that the number one recommendation for improving the health and well-being of African Americans in the St. Louis community is “to invest in quality early childhood development for all children.”

[Ready by 21 St. Louis](#)

Ready by 21 St. Louis prioritized five outcomes for initial focus to amplify and accelerate work currently occurring in our community: access to health care, possess social emotional skills, kindergarten readiness, youth involved in community and career-ready youth. According to research from The Brookings Institution’s Social Genome Project, success in these five priority areas are predictive of children achieving middle class by middle age. Ready by 21 St. Louis is powered by the backbone support of the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

[First Step to Equity Report](#)

Led to the creation of the “The First Step to Equity Collaborative,” this Report is an effort to ensure the first steps are taken to establish a sustainable early childhood education system for children ages 0-5 in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County.

[WE Power Playbook](#)

St. Louis’ response to the First Step to Equity Report, which created the Action Plan about what needs to happen to improve early childhood education.

[United Way of Greater St. Louis 2020 Community Needs Assessment](#)

Fostering learning is one of the five pillars of the United Way Greater St. Louis’ 2020 Community Needs Assessment. Their number one “Call to Action” is that because 50% of student in our total region are not proficient in third grade reading, the need for investing in early childhood education, K-12 education, and out-of-school time, must be addressed.