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### **Project Impact Raises \$22 Million to Assist Local Schools**

*Seeks to Improve Third-Grade Reading/Math Proficiency and Close Literacy Gaps*

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (MAY 4, 2016) – Project Impact, a community initiative to provide additional operating funds to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools to address critical student achievement gaps, was announced at The Winston-Salem Foundation’s annual Community Luncheon today. Although still in the early stages of soliciting support, the initiative already has commitments of approximately \$22 million toward its \$45 million goal.

Initial components of the project will be introduced during the 2016-2017 school year, including some Kindercamps in summer 2016 and early program launches at some schools for the 2016-2017 school year. Project Impact has two overarching goals:

- Improve third-grade reading and math proficiency beginning with pre-kindergarten programs
- Close literacy gaps within Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools as compared to other North Carolina urban school districts

“Along with various community groups, the school system shares a sense of urgency regarding the critical need to respond to the needs of high-poverty schools and students with a proficiency gap,” Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Superintendent Dr. Beverly Emory said. “I deeply appreciate the vision of local business leaders and individuals for creating Project Impact as a catalyst for meaningful change, enabling our schools to implement programs and measure their effectiveness in reaching critical educational goals.”

A focus of Project Impact is intensive early intervention that targets proficiency gaps among lower-performing schools. Project Impact will fund programs to be evaluated over six years, beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Using strategies proven successful in other school districts, the initiative includes pre-kindergarten expansion, extended learning options, and expanded staff development and instructional support.

“Bold action on the issues that will be tackled by Project Impact are critical for the future of our community, including our families, local businesses, and employees,” Dr. Emory added. “I cannot overstate how important quality public school education is for preparing students for college and careers and for creating a favorable local environment for economic development as well as talent recruiting and retention.”

It is estimated that there are approximately 1,200 financially disadvantaged children in Forsyth County who are pre-K eligible but not currently served. Project Impact would help narrow that gap. Project Impact goes beyond expansion of pre-K programs. It would provide funding for other school system needs, including extended learning options (maximizing the number of students served by summer and extended day or year programs) and instructional support (including a Leadership Academy for prospective and current administrators, as well as coaches and expanded reading support for high-poverty schools).

“Project Impact is designed to serve as a catalyst. The intent is to first create awareness of the issues, then demonstrate that we can significantly impact key metrics in an efficient way and – if successful – move to a more sustainable and supportable funding mechanism over time,” Winston-Salem Foundation president Scott Wierman said. “The project also was carefully created to provide additional resources that will complement other community initiatives, including the United Way, the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust’s Great Expectations project, The Forsyth Promise, and our Foundation’s Peer Project.”

“The leadership of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools will provide recommendations on detailed use of funds per the plan and its objectives, and an Advisory Board will approve fund grants aligned with those goals, and monitor and evaluate success metrics,” Wierman said.

Project Impact is a collaborative effort among many stakeholders, evolving from discussions over time among community and business leaders who have a keen interest in this issue. The \$22 million committed to Project Impact includes commitments by local employers and their foundations, including Flow Companies, BB&T, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, Novant Health, Reynolds American Foundation and The Winston-Salem Foundation, as well as pledges by individuals.

A significant portion of money raised to date is on a match basis. Project Impact’s leadership is urging businesses, individuals, foundations and other groups to make pledges of support and take advantage of an additional \$12.5 million that is still available on a 50 percent match basis.

The Project Impact Fund is a component fund of The Winston-Salem Foundation. Project Impact’s Advisory Board consists of eight community leaders and two non-voting, non-local members who are experts in the early-childhood education field. The Advisory Board will serve as stewards of the Project Impact funds. Members are:

- Matthew Cullinan: Community Leader
- Mona Lovett: President and CEO – Crosby Scholars Community Partnership
- Jose Rodriguez: Senior Partner – KPMG
- Will Sutton: Executive Vice President and Director – The BB&T Leadership Institute
- Dr. Corey Walker: Dean – Winston-Salem State University
- Janet Wheeler: Community Leader and Retired Vice President of R.J. Reynolds
- Paul Wiles: Former Novant Health CEO; BEST NC board member
- A parent representative from a school to be served by Project Impact

For more information about Project Impact or to make a contribution, please visit [www.ProjectImpact.WS](http://www.ProjectImpact.WS).

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