

PROJECT IMPACT

A Community Commitment to Closing the Gap
Annual Report 2019-2020



OUR FOCUS

Since 2016, Project Impact has worked to provide critical funding to help close the achievement gap among students in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS). The long-standing problem is disgraceful to many of us and affects everyone in our community, directly or indirectly, whether we are parents or not.

What contributes to the achievement gap? The answer is complicated, yet clear: Children in our community do not have equal access to early learning opportunities. To address the inequities that contribute to the achievement gap, Project Impact has focused our funding efforts in three areas:



The 2019-20 school year marked Project Impact's fourth year of funding these efforts.

OUR MISSION

Project Impact enhances the long-term vibrancy of our community through a six-year public-private partnership to accelerate literacy outcomes for our highest-needs children in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.

52.7%

of WS/FCS third graders read at grade level or above (2019).

Goal: 90% of third graders will be at or above grade level

MOVING FORWARD DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Dear Friends,

Even in the face of months of change, and continued uncertainty, Project Impact's work has continued. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School's Office of Early Childhood Learning, which we support, quickly reacted in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic to move many of its programs online. This helped ensure that children could get the academic support and instruction they needed after schools closed, over the summer and as the 2020-21 school year began.

We also transitioned our financial resources to fund new reading materials that support virtual and in-classroom learning for children in grades K-3. Before and during the pandemic, we've also been working closely with WS/FCS administrators and district staff to develop a systematic approach to reading instruction based on science and research.

Before schools closed, we were able to train 310 people in effective reading strategies, which has proven extremely valuable as instruction moved online. To continue this training, we must raise more funds in the coming year.

We are thankful for the community collaboration that has allowed Project Impact to become the largest private funder of early childhood education for our district. In the coming years, we must continue to prioritize early education. We hope you'll join us in this effort.



JANET WHEELER
Chair of Project Impact
Advisory Board

WORKING TOGETHER TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Long before I decided to seek a seat on the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education, the achievement gap among our students was of great concern to me. Now as board chair, I have pledged to be an advocate and work for equal learning opportunities for all children. I must say, I am thankful our district has Project Impact working as a partner in this important work to close the achievement gap.

Project Impact provides unprecedented support and crucial funding to improve access to early learning opportunities and literacy initiatives for our students. Project Impact has helped fund valuable, creative programs that train our teachers and guide their instruction. Prior to the start of the 2020-21 academic year, Project Impact committed to providing critical funding for new textbooks and instructional materials. These resources would have never happened without our community's unwavering commitment and support.

The efforts of those who've supported and invested in Project Impact should be celebrated and honored. There are few communities, if any, that have this type of allegiance to improving our educational outcomes and in turn making our community a better place to grow and thrive. Thank you, Project Impact, and all those who continue to support this ongoing, critical work. What you are doing for our youngest learners is truly changing their lives.



MALISHAI WOODBURY
Chair, WS/FCS Board of Education



A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT IN 2020

In July 2020, Project Impact approved a grant of \$1.7 million, our largest grant to date, to purchase new English language arts textbooks for 12,000 students in kindergarten through grade 3. These textbooks were made available in both print and digital formats as the school district continued with virtual learning when school resumed in August.

This purchase means that the district has a unified reading curriculum for the first time in almost two decades. This is important for several reasons. The new textbook adoption aligns the district's reading resources with North Carolina standards. It also ensures that schools have the materials they need for students. In the past, schools purchased supplemental materials on their own, leading to inequitable instruction among schools and gaps in learning as students transfer between schools.

The money for this grant became available as we realized that some of the efforts we fund, such as the Pathway to K summer programs, could not go on as planned because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moving summer programs online was disappointing, but it allowed Project Impact to address an unmet need for students in a way that directly supports our organization's mission.

With the start of the 2020-21 school year, all WS/FCS students in kindergarten through grade 3 had access to high-quality reading materials through a Project Impact grant.



GRANT REQUESTS FUNDED BY PROJECT IMPACT

The 2019-2020 school year can be divided into two halves – before the COVID-19 pandemic and after schools closed in March for in-person learning.

Project Impact’s total investment for the 2019-20 school year totaled more than **\$7.7 million**. Key funding initiatives included:

The addition of **three pre-K classrooms**, for a total of **21** pre-K classrooms funded by Project Impact. Project Impact funds pay for the salaries of WS/FCS teachers and teacher assistants or supplies and materials for these classrooms.

Three Additional Early Learning Partners including one transition coordinator, one bilingual liaison and one evaluation specialist.

Two pre-K coaches who provide support for all WS/FCS early childhood teachers.

Ready, Set, K! online resource

Virtual Pathway to 1, a summer program that provided more than 300 students with additional practice to become proficient readers.

Early Learning at Home online resources.

Pre-K licensure support for WS/FCS staff and classrooms.



Since Project Impact’s inception in 2016, our organization has awarded **\$17,357,540.66** in funding for the advancement of early education.

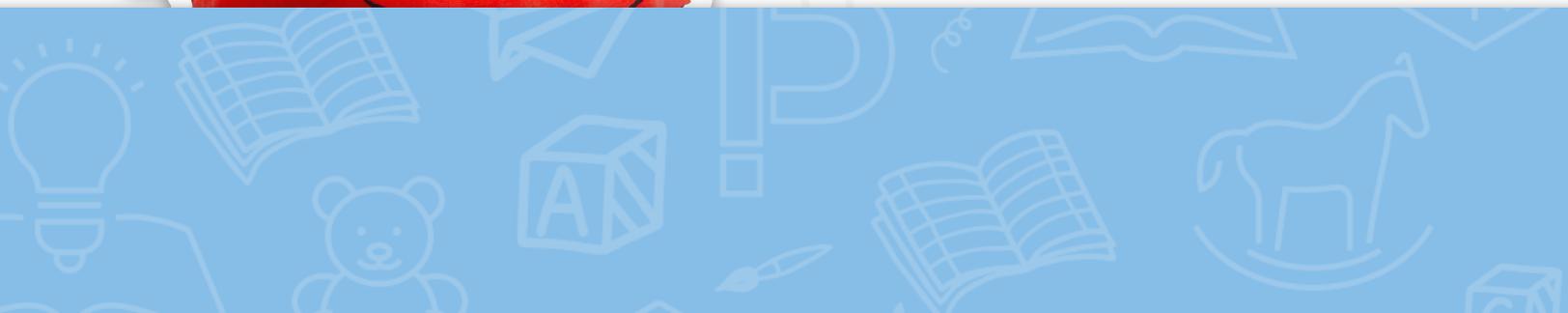
PRE-K EXPERIENCES

One of the major focuses of Project Impact is to increase access to quality pre-K experiences for children in Forsyth County. According to the Pre-K Priority, an effort in which Project Impact is a partner, **“Of the approximately 4,500 four-year-olds in Forsyth County each year, approximately two-thirds are eligible for publicly-funded Pre-K based on family income, yet currently only half of those eligible children are enrolled due to insufficient state and local funding.”**

Quality pre-K experiences have a direct effect on health and educational outcomes once children enter elementary school and for years to come.

Project Impact is the largest private funder of pre-K classrooms in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school district. As of the 2019-20 school year, we have funded 21 pre-K classrooms in the district.

In addition, Project Impact works to improve the quality of pre-K programs outside WS/FCS by supporting their efforts to gain state licensure. This process provides regulation on class sizes, curricula and nutrition, among other things. **Since our founding, Project impact has helped programs receive licensure for 26 pre-K classrooms.**



TRANSITIONS TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

The Project Impact Transitions Coordinator worked diligently to adapt the Pathway to 1 summer program to a virtual platform. This program typically provides in-person instruction for children entering first grade who need more practice to become proficient readers. It also includes math and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) instruction and experiences.

The design of the Virtual Pathway to 1 program included flexible “live” instructional time, research-based interventions to address student needs, and small group and one-on-one instruction. During summer 2020, Virtual Pathway to 1 provided instruction to 321 students.

Project Impact also continued to support the Ready Freddy program for incoming kindergarteners and their families. Most Ready Freddy parent engagement sessions had already been held before schools closed in March. Project Impact also supported pop-up kindergarten enrollment events in neighborhoods where kindergarten enrollment was low.



As the district switched to virtual learning, Project Impact created a Ready, Set, K! webpage to provide parent resources in English and Spanish, and supported marketing efforts to encourage kindergarten enrollment.

In response to the pandemic, Project Impact also created an online collection of Early Learning at Home resources in English and Spanish to support reading, literacy and movement.

EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN LITERACY IN GRADES K-2

Project Impact worked with the school district's Office of Early Learning on three major initiatives in this area.

Reading Research to Classroom Practice

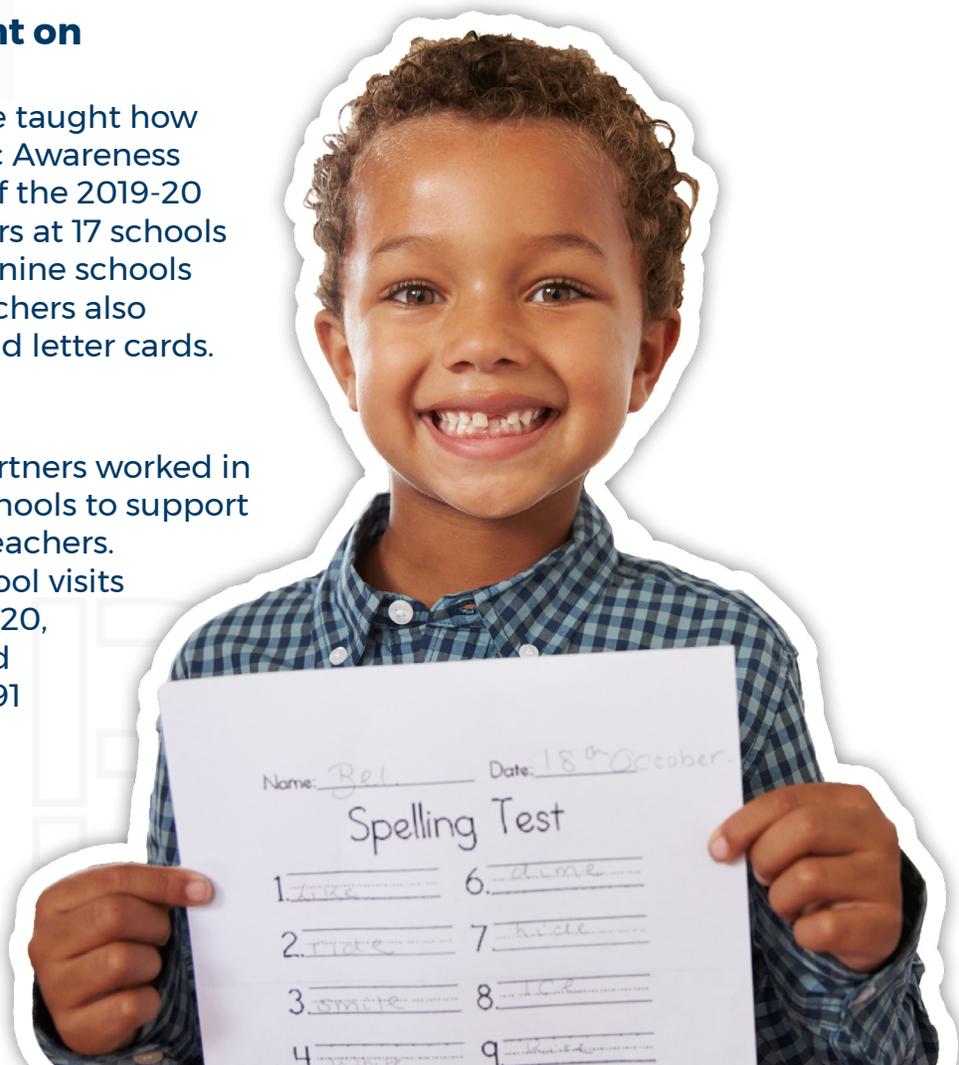
RRtCP focuses on increasing teacher knowledge of the research behind how children learn to read. The 2019-20 school year was the second time this course was offered to kindergarten teachers and instructional facilitators, and the first time it was offered to a group of first grade teachers. On average, people who completed the training increased their scores on the course assessment by 26.6 points, which is evidence that these educators benefitted from completing the course.

Professional Development on Phonological Awareness

All kindergarten teachers were taught how to use the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness curriculum at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year. First grade teachers at 17 schools and second grade teachers at nine schools also received this training. Teachers also received Heggerty manuals and letter cards.

Early Learning Partners

A total of six Early Learning Partners worked in the district's 45 elementary schools to support kindergarten and first grade teachers. They made a total of 1,289 school visits from August 2019 to March 2020, when schools were closed, and participated in or facilitated 491 learning team meetings.



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