



Success by Third Grade: A Communitywide Movement to Build a Better Future



Imagine a community where every child begins the school day feeling healthy, happy, well fed, safe and secure, with the resources and opportunities necessary to learn, develop and succeed.

What would that mean for their future?

For the future of central Ohio?

We believe it's time to stop imagining.

To change the current trajectory.

To take action.

Together, we're working to put every child in Franklin County on a pathway to success by the time they leave third grade.

United Way of Central Ohio has proven time and time again that it has the unique ability to bring individuals, nonprofits, corporations and governments together to tackle problems at the source. Because third grade reading improvement isn't just about education, it's about improved overall support.

- Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther

A CENTURY OF IMPACT

Since 1923, United Way of Central Ohio has served as a trusted convener, bringing together people, organizations and systems to solve difficult community issues.

Through strong partnerships, we're bringing millions of dollars back to central Ohio and helping to lift families out of poverty (**Tax Time**). We joined forces with nonprofits to keep thousands of families in their homes so their children won't have to change schools or have their learning disrupted (**Stable Families**). And when COVID-19 first hit, our strong network allowed us to pivot quickly, raising and distributing more than \$3 million to provide relief to local nonprofits and the people they served.

In our nearly 100 years working to mobilize the caring power of the community, we've empowered individuals to succeed at every stage in their lives. And even as we're constantly evolving to meet community needs, our commitment to uniting the community to achieve measurable results that change lives remains steadfastly the same.

United Way's long history of strong partnerships and understanding of our community's issues has led us to the front of the line to focus our expertise on the needs of our students and their families with Success by Third Grade.

Our Community's Children Need Us

In 2018-2019, seven out of 16 Franklin County school districts had third grade proficiency rates under 75%. Scores dropped even lower following the pandemic.

Experts attribute the decline to students experiencing food insecurity and lacking access to safe, stable housing, as well as mental health issues and lacking belief in their own abilities, plus limited access to needed support and services. These are examples of non-academic issues that Success by Third Grade will address and impact by bringing together resources and aligning services to make systemic changes in our community.

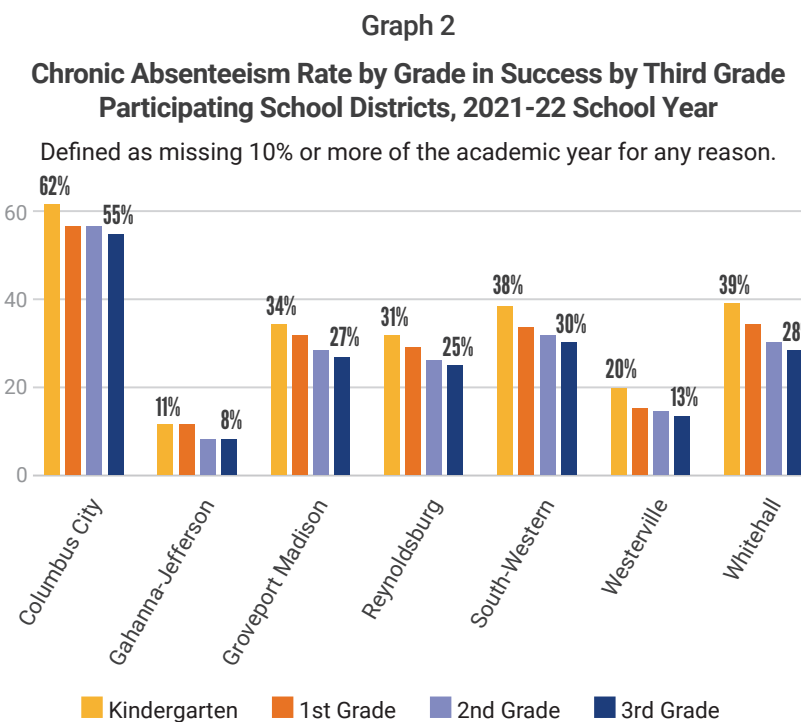
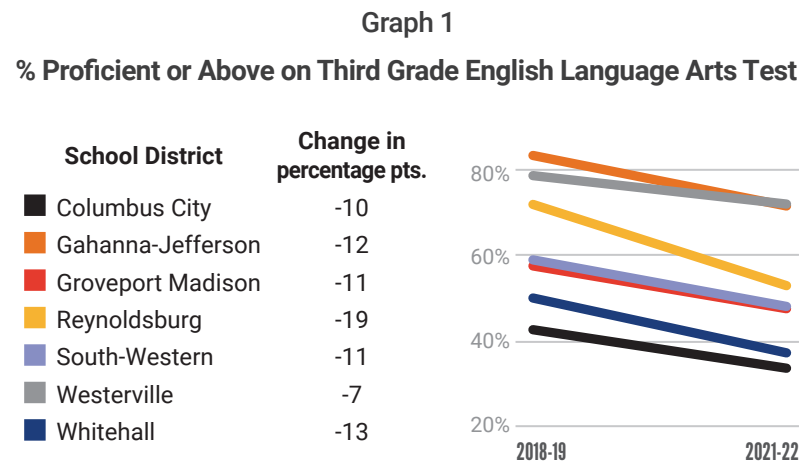
Even before the pandemic, more than half of Franklin County's students lived in low-income households struggling to make ends meet.

The geography of school districts struggling to achieve high levels of academic achievement has expanded as the geography of poverty has expanded.

In fact, half of the children in Franklin County now live in districts where Third Grade English Language Arts (ELA) assessments are well below proficiency standards. (Graph 1)

While non-academic barriers associated with reading proficiency vary between school districts, statistics show that high mobility rates (Graph 2), chronic absenteeism and low percentages of students ready for kindergarten are prevalent in low-income neighborhoods where district reading proficiency rates are low.

Too many children in these districts are unable to be present and learn at school due to these and other barriers outside of the classroom. Students who are not able to read proficiently by fourth grade are more likely to struggle in school and are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of high school.



Why Third Grade?

Up until third grade, a child is learning to read. Upon entering fourth grade, children are reading to learn – or at least should be. If this transition doesn't occur at this stage, a child's future is severely compromised. Children who are not proficient readers by fourth grade are more likely to continue to struggle in school and are less likely to graduate high school on time.

These young learners are tomorrow's leaders and workforce. We know that to build a strong future for our community, our children must have what they need to succeed today.

Organizations and collaborations exist in Franklin County to address infant mortality (CelebrateOne), ensure children are ready for kindergarten (Future Ready), coordinate supports for school-age children during out-of-school time (Partnership4Success), and provide high school graduates with post-high school degrees and credentials (Central Ohio Compact).

However, no systemic-level collaborative effort existed to support children in kindergarten through third grade. Closing this gap with Success by Third Grade and bringing together these collaborative efforts provide a critical link in our local pre-natal to college and career infrastructure pipeline.



88% of students

who failed to graduate high school struggled to achieve third grade reading proficiency.

(The Annie E. Casey Foundation)

As our young learners mature into the next generation workforce, each of us plays a role in helping them be successful. A primary role for schools and community-based organizations is ensuring that literacy and the skills for life-long learning are foundational. For our community to truly prosper, our children need every available resource and support structure we can offer. I encourage everyone focused on building a strong future for central Ohio's children to consider joining the Success by Third Grade movement.

- Dr. Tom Goodney, Superintendent of the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio and Success by Third Grade Advisory Council Member

Building a Movement for Our Future: Success by Third Grade



We know that children’s success in the classroom is impacted by more than just instruction and materials. Students must be supported inside and outside of the classroom.

Success by Third Grade uses a collective impact approach, centered on parents, caregivers and students who are most in need of support. This support comes from a strategic network of partners providing community resources and opportunities that improve family stability and child well-being outside of the classroom.

WHY COLLECTIVE IMPACT?

Collective impact is a proven model that identifies a social issue or challenge and brings stakeholders together to solve for it. Collective impact is used because these social issues cannot be solved by one organization. This model requires community partners and leaders to work together to address a collective challenge using a collective response with collective accountability and results (Figure 1).

Local collective impact examples include the Community Shelter Board to address homelessness and the Weinland Park Collaborative to improve and sustain the quality of life in the neighborhood. Nationally, the model has proven to be successful for United Way of Salt Lake City and other United Ways to address disparities in education and health outcomes, and increase equitable opportunities for youth.



Figure 1

HOW DOES SUCCESS BY THIRD GRADE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

A child on a pathway to success is one who feels included and believes in himself, has a stable home environment, and is present, safe and supported at school. These core indicators of child success are being tracked by United Way on a community dashboard: well-being (mental/behavioral health, social emotional learning); home and family stability (attendance, food instability, housing, etc.); safe and supported at school (kindergarten readiness, academic growth, culture and climate) (Figure 2).



Figure 2

Many organizations do great work on their own, but they are not always aligned or collaborating with other community partners toward a common goal. The Success by Third Grade collective impact model ensures community partners are communicating, convening and sharing information in order to align efforts and make meaningful, sustainable progress.

Success by Third Grade network directors coordinate ground-level strategies by working with school districts and community partners to identify and address barriers to children’s success, such as chronic absenteeism, summer learning loss, housing issues and mobility, and lack of access to quality early education and basic needs.

Network directors then develop community-level action networks made up of government officials, corporate partners, service providers, families and school officials to dive deep into the critical challenges impacting student performance for each district. These networks develop strategies, and a set of initial actions are identified for the school year.

HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

United Way’s data team, along with community stakeholders, have agreed on two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring success:

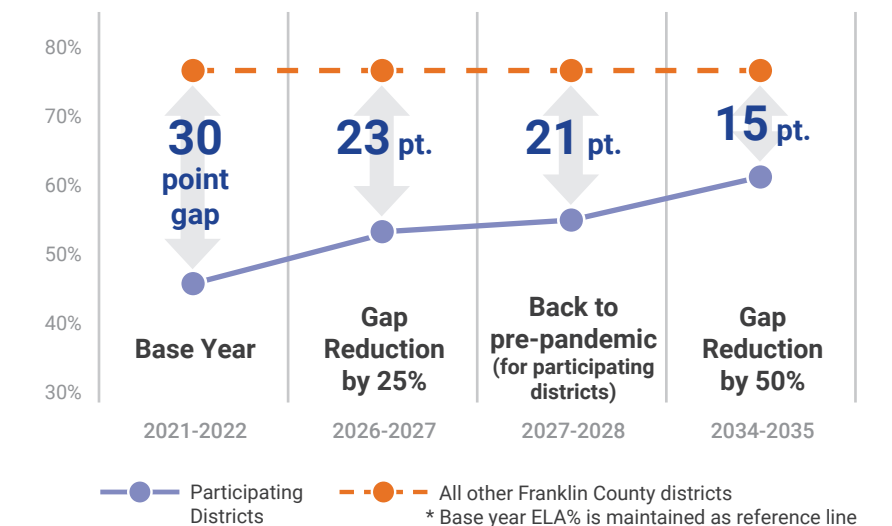
1. Academic Achievement:

Measured by ELA scores, which show third grade reading proficiency, using the Ohio Department of Education and participating school districts as sources.

- In 2022, the seven districts currently participating in Success by Third Grade had 47% of students reading proficiently or higher on ELA, compared to 77% of students in nonparticipating school districts. The target goal is to cut that 30-point ELA proficiency gap in half by 2035. This target goal of a 15-point gap would bring the percentage of students reading proficiently or higher in targeted Success by Third Grade school districts to at least 62%.

Graph 3 shows the desired benchmarks to reach the goal of reducing the gap to 15 points.

Graph 3 Cut the Gap in Half
Projected Third Grade ELA Proficiency Gap Closure Between Success by Third Grade Districts and All Other Franklin County Public Districts



2. Quality of Life:

Measured by basic needs met, home and family stability (e.g., housing cost burden, food security, student mobility), using community partners and Opportunity Index (OI) reports as sources. While Quality of Life is not as straightforward to measure as Academic Achievement, United Way has a long history of working with nonprofit partners to measure impact.

We will:

- Report on alignment from program investments (e.g., How many families with pre-K through third grade children are served by funded partners? What schools are they enrolled in?).
- Advocate for housing and food security policies (e.g., Utilize Seimer/Stable Families to support housing and family stability needs.).
- Measure OI improvement among our targeted districts. The OI is a report that measures outcomes for residents across the state at the census tract level.

If we can help stabilize families and we can connect resources together, we strengthen not only the family, we also strengthen the student. And then we create even more opportunities around what they are able to accomplish.

- Cheryl Wyatt, Vice President of Success by Third Grade

Our Children's Future is in Our Hands

The Movement in Action

May 2022: Success by Third Grade launched.

June 2022 to June 2023: Cheryl Wyatt, who leads the effort as vice president, hired network directors to serve in seven school districts: Columbus City Schools, Gahanna-Jefferson, Whitehall, Reynoldsburg, Groveport Madison, South-Western and Westerville. They are working to build trust within the districts, assess needs, align and bring together community partners and leverage expertise to support families in ways that haven't been possible before.

2022-23 school year: The Success by Third Grade team engaged in 12 elementary schools, and 73% of those schools showed improvement in third grade reading proficiency during the 2022-23 school year.



EXAMPLES OF OUR SUCCESSES INCLUDE:

Establishing community partnership networks

Network directors ensure that partners in networks work together to provide connections to services addressing student and family barriers and disparities that limit a student's ability to achieve successful outcomes.

Example: Success by Third Grade staff ensures that the Whitehall School District and out of school time partners are working together to provide one-on-one student literacy skills through shared curriculum.

Example: The network director for Columbus City Schools (CCS) identified community summer programs available in the Near East and South Side neighborhoods through resource mapping, a process that includes identifying, visually representing and sharing information about external supports and services. This information allowed CCS to work directly with staff from 40 programs on incorporating literacy into their summer curriculum and provide them with books, workbooks, games and other supplies to support and align literacy learning. The CCS Trevitt Elementary School principal also used the information to identify summer programs for 33 children who were at risk of not passing third grade. They were offered spots in nearby programs, and support was secured to pay for their attendance and field trip fees.

Improving kindergarten readiness

The more prepared children are academically and emotionally for kindergarten, the more successful learners they will become. Success by Third Grade is collaborating with partners such as Future Ready Columbus to ensure more children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Example: Last fall, only 12% of children entered kindergarten prepared for school in the Whitehall School District. The network director is regularly bringing together district leaders with Future Ready to identify strategies to increase preschool enrollment and to connect with other key community partners who provide preschool and early literacy programming to increase the number of children prepared for kindergarten, as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA).

“Having United Way and other partners come to the table who are willing to donate not only their time, but their resources, to this effort has been invaluable. We truly believe it takes all of us, and in this case it truly does, because we can't do it alone.”

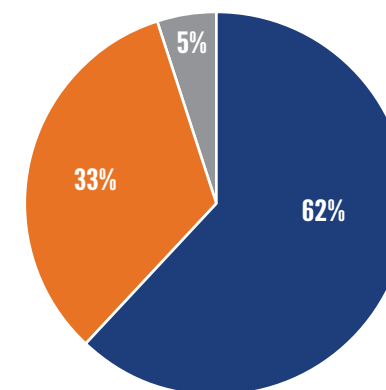
- Sharee Wells, Whitehall City Schools Superintendent and United Way Board Member

Your Investment is Critical to the Success by Third Grade Movement.

Join Us.

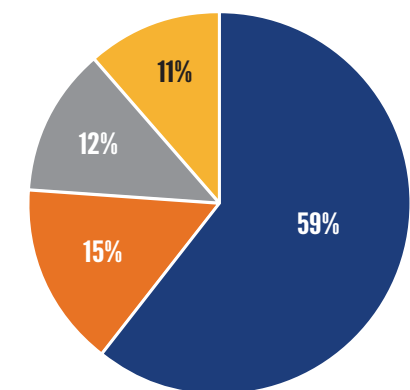
With support from government, corporate and individual contributions, we're committed to raising \$10.7 million to fund Success by Third Grade for the first five years, from 2022 through 2027, to ensure more children are on a pathway to success by the time they leave third grade. We've been asked by community and school district leaders to be the backbone agency to shepherd this effort, which includes the staff responsible for maintaining overall strategic coherence and managing the day-to-day operations and implementation of the work.

Source of Funds
Since Inception through Fiscal Year 2024



- Corporations/foundations
- Government grants
- Individuals

Use of Funds
Fiscal Year 2023-2024



- School and community engagement
- Partnership administration
- Grant writing, marketing and communications
- Research, evaluation and partnership development



We will not give up on
our community's children.

Will you join the movement?

Our community's children are counting on us.

Join us and the many others raising their hands to champion the Success by Third Grade movement. Your support during our 100th year of impact will go toward this critical work that strengthens families and our entire community. UNITED, we can do more than just imagine a stronger, more equitable future for all children and for central Ohio. We can make it happen.

Contact Mary Birchard:

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**SUCCESS BY
THIRD
GRADE**

**FOR OUR CHILDREN.
FOR OUR FUTURE.**

POWERED BY



United Way
of Central Ohio