UNITED for LITERACY
Read to Succeed

75%

of third graders will read at grade level by 2034

CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING · WINNEBAGO COUNTY, IL

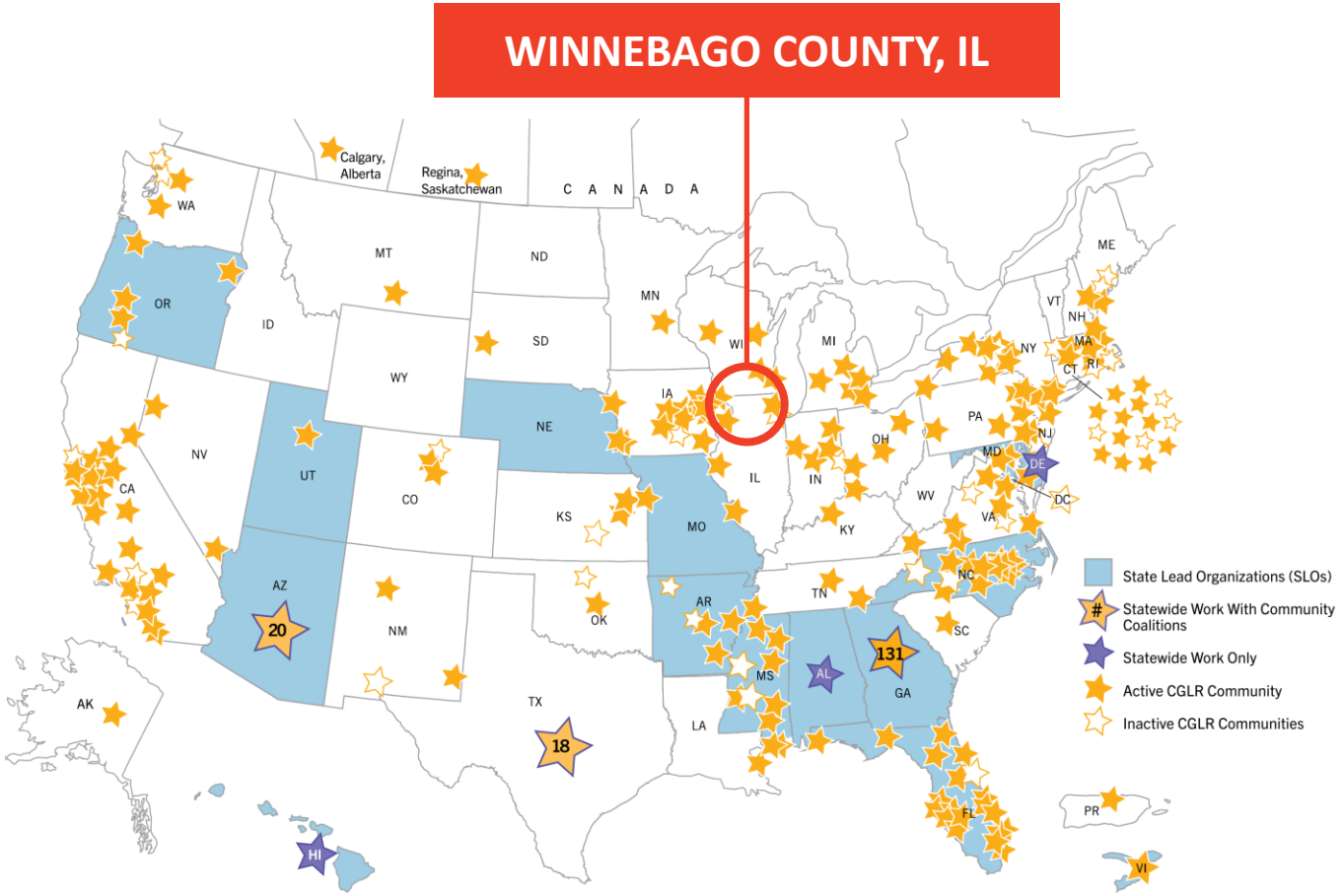
THE NEXT CHAPTER

From Foundational Work to Generational Change

Rockford, Illinois · October 2026

Convened by **United Way of Rock River Valley** · Plan facilitated by **Smarter Learning Group**

JOINING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT



MOMENTUM CONTINUES TO BUILD

300+ communities

44 states

5,000+ local orgs, institutions, and agencies

700+ state, regional, and local funders, including 200 United Ways

100+ national sector-leading organizations & affiliate networks as allies, partners, and champions

gradelevelreading.net

ONLY 1 IN 3 THIRD GRADERS READS ON GRADE LEVEL

TODAY

About 1 in 3

third graders read on grade level



OUR 2034 GOAL

At least 3 in 4

75% reading at or above grade level



K Kindergarten — the year when formal reading instruction begins — has the highest chronic absence of any early grade.

WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE

6,000+

children get a Dolly Parton Imagination Library book every month

~2,000

books a month through Reach Out and Read in 20 clinics

18

agencies and districts funded by United for Literacy countywide

A PLAN BUILT BY THE COMMUNITY, TOGETHER

SPRING

Listening

One-on-one interviews with key leaders and stakeholders

JUNE 9

Kick-off

In-person convening to review data and set direction

JUL–AUG

Work groups

Parent success and volunteer groups shaped draft strategies

AUG 18

School Partnerships

Proof-of-concept school strategy with district leaders

OCTOBER

Next Chapter

Join the Campaign and begin next phase of work

25+
leaders and organizations involved

20+
hours of conversations

540+
pages of transcripts, feedback, and notes

WHO CAME TO THE TABLE

- School districts
- Public library
- Government leaders
- Business
- Nonprofits
- Health care
- Faith community
- Parents

WHAT PARTNERS TOLD US

01 **Keep building the foundation.** Stay strong on prenatal-to-five, book distribution, and community-wide engagement.

02 **Prove it somewhere.** Concentrate on 3–5 K–3 schools to show measurable progress toward 75% proficiency is possible.

03 **Put parents first.** Support the whole family, led by a peer network of parent leaders.

04 **Mobilize volunteers.** Equip churches and businesses as skill-focused reading mentors.

05 **Reduce chronic absence.** Attendance is an early signal of engagement and learning.

PRIORITIES…

Awareness
a visible, county-wide campaign

Alignment
connect and stack programs

Data
how much, how well, who is better off

Concentrate
focus on families farthest from opportunity

The ask
make it clearer and bolder

Trust
keep our promises; show success

ONE BOLD GOAL, FIVE PRIORITY AREAS

75%

of Winnebago County third graders will read at grade level by 2034

10–11 points of growth every three years on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness — up from about 1 in 3 today.

School Readiness

Goal: Raise kindergarten readiness above the state rate by 2034

Proof of Concept Schools

Goal: Show 75% proficiency is possible in 3–5 schools

Parent Leadership

Goal: Paid parent mentors leading volunteer Reading Captains

Community Engagement & Volunteers

Goal: A reading mentor for every 1st grader who needs one

Chronic Absence

Goal: Cut chronic absence in half by 2034

GOING ALL IN AT 3–5 PROOF-OF-CONCEPT SCHOOLS

Instead of spreading effort across 20+ elementary schools, we stack supports in **3–5 schools below 30% proficiency** with engaged principals and strong community ties — and share the results publicly.

Reading mentors

Volunteers: one trained hour a week on one named skill

Paid parent mentors

Plus a Parent Advisory Council with real decision power

Books at home

Distribution designed for repetition and read-alouds

Attendance support

Family-centered work on kindergarten absence

Aligned partners

Health, early childhood, and community services in one plan

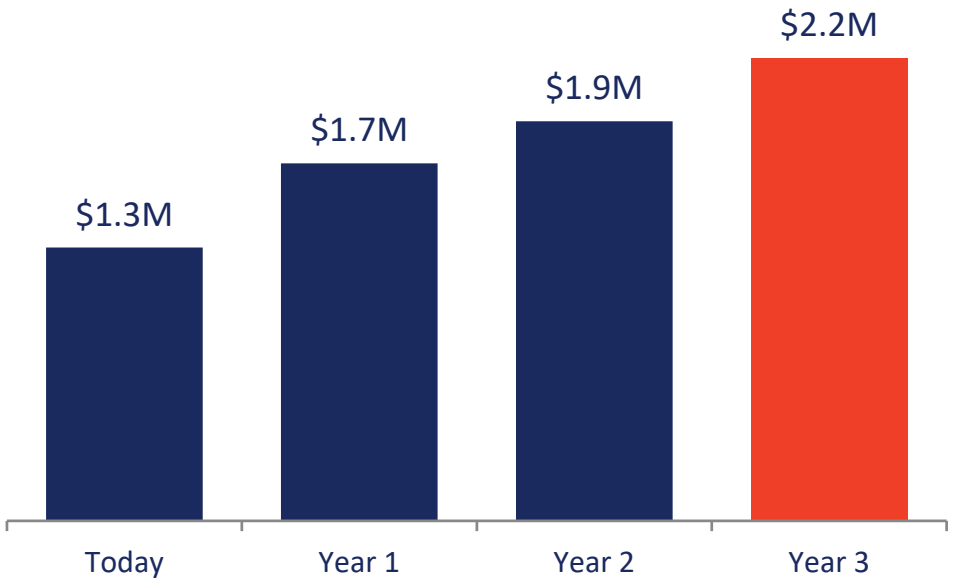
2026–27	FALL 2027	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	YEARS 2–3
Identify schools and build infrastructure	Work begins: baseline data, agreements, mentors placed	Volunteer hours with fidelity; attendance improving	Gains on targeted reading skills; chronic absence down	Proficiency clearly trending toward 75%

Schools provide a staff lead and shared data. Progress is reported every 6–12 months.

JOIN US IN WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER

$1.3M → $2.2M

annual budget over three years — roughly $200K a year as strategies phase in



INVEST

Multi-year support so families get sustained help, not one-time programs.

VOLUNTEER

Help us reach 3,000 volunteers — one hour a week as a trained reading mentor.

CONNECT

Help us reach 3,000 volunteers — one hour a week as a trained reading mentor.

ADOPT A SCHOOL

Congregations, employers, and youth organizations: champion a proof-of-concept school.

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THANK YOU FOR CONTINUING TO:

GIVE, VOLUNTEER, AND CONNECT