



LEARNING BY LISTENING



The Campaign for
GRADE-LEVEL
READING



CGLR LISTENING TOUR 2017–2018

69 events in

49 communities in

25 states, D.C. and
Saskatchewan, Canada

27 Pacesetter communities

5 Pacesetter states

16 All-America City Award
winners and 2 finalists

8,300+ leaders, local funders and stakeholders
(reached via small-group briefings, consultative
conversations and networking events)

INVESTMENT-WORTHY AND INVESTMENT-READY

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading seeks to disrupt generational poverty by mobilizing communities to find solutions for one of the major obstacles in the pathway out of poverty — failure to read proficiently by the end of third grade. We inspire and motivate communities to do three things:

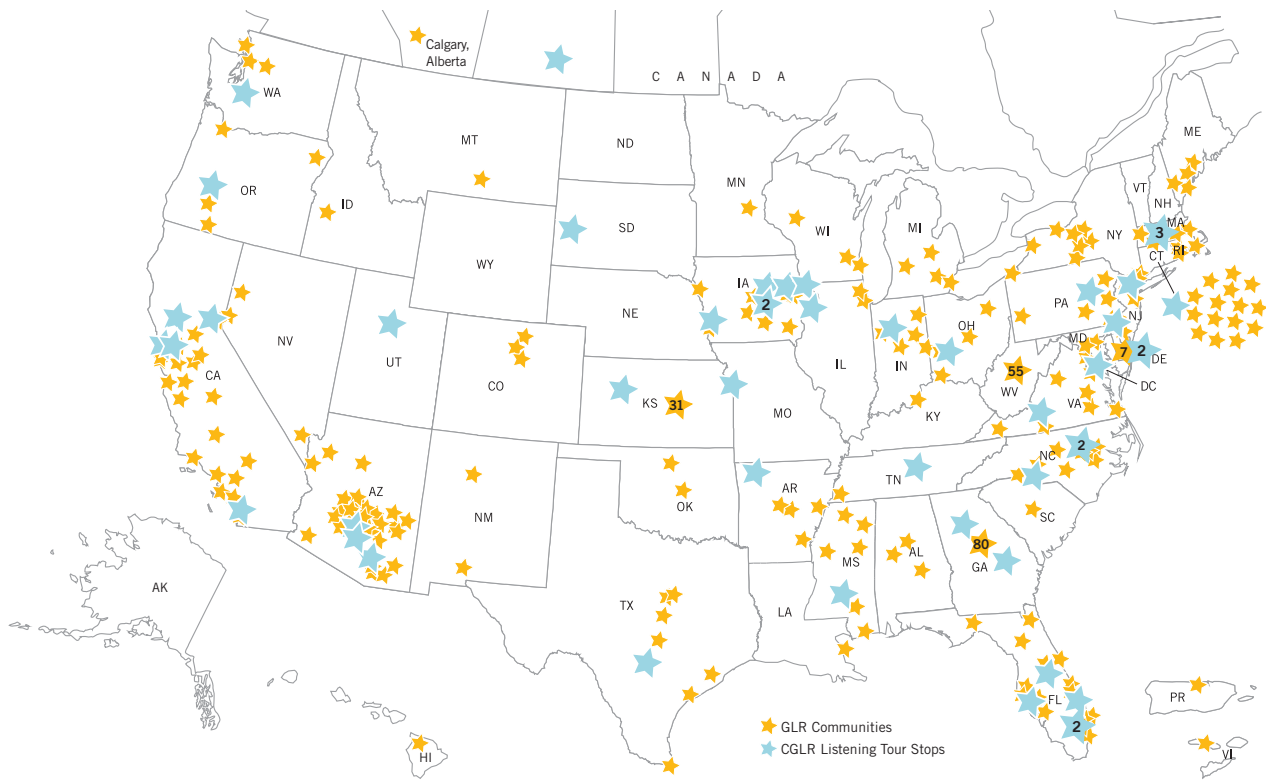
- 1) Put a stake in the ground around a third-grade reading goal that is ambitious, achievable and actionable.
- 2) Develop a plan to solve the major drivers of the third-grade reading proficiency gap — too few young children ready for school, too many students missing too many days of school and too many children experiencing summer learning loss.
- 3) Mobilize the critical constituencies needed to implement that plan, most notably data holders, providers of services and supports to families and young children, and — most importantly — parents and caregivers.

The GLR Support Center serves as a hub for network learning and peer coaching, a broker for needed information and tools, an accelerator of progress by lifting up Bright Spots and recognizing Pacesetters, and a distribution channel for innovative proven and promising models, programs, ideas and messages.

ENSURING EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

What Mobilized Communities Must Do

<p>Stop playing catch-up</p> <p>Ensure that fewer children start school so far behind.</p>	<p>End chronic absence</p> <p>Don't let students fall further behind during the school year.</p>	<p>Reverse the summer slide</p> <p>Enable striving and struggling readers to make progress instead of losing ground.</p>	<p>Address health-related challenges</p> <p>Healthy development is key to early academic success.</p>	<p>Equip parents to succeed</p> <p>Parents are brain builders, first teachers and tutors, strongest advocates and best coaches.</p>
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Listening is a cornerstone of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR), which was launched in 2010–12 following a “Listening Tour” in 2009. As the CGLR leadership team looked toward the second half of the decade, we felt the need to assess whether, and to what extent, the observations and experiences of state and local leaders and stakeholders in GLR communities aligned with what we believed we were observing and concluding about the work being done in communities and by CGLR itself. With that as impetus, we escalated our ongoing crowdsourcing efforts into a 16-month (August 2017 to November 2018) second Listening Tour that touched down in 49 communities.

“Steeped in a culture that honors constructive dissatisfaction as the fuel for continuous improvement, CGLR’s senior leaders have spent more time interrogating our apparent successes than celebrating them.” This Listening Tour was a remarkable experience and opportunity to connect with a broad swath of the civic and community leaders, funders and stakeholders in the local campaigns. We heard a lot, saw a lot and most importantly, we learned a lot. The five actionable “Takeaways” in this summary seek to distill that learning into guidance that will illuminate CGLR’s path forward and, hopefully, contribute to the field as a whole.



TAKEAWAY #1: STAY THE COURSE.

The feedback provides strong affirmation of continuing congruence and alignment between the local stakeholders and CGLR's framing, concepts and assurances. Specifically, we heard from community stakeholders that:

- CGLR's concepts, assurances, community solutions and strategic priorities are still relevant and provide a framework that is ambitious, achievable and most importantly attainable for local communities;
- Evolving the message to emphasize “early school success” works to bridge STEM and literacy, reading and math and to recognize the importance of executive function skills and social-emotional learning; and
- The technical assistance, strategic support and problem solving provided by CGLR and its GLR Support Center are value-add contributions to local work.



TAKEAWAY #2: SUCCESS HAS A RECIPE.

With one *consensus* addition, the “success factors” set out in *Midpoint Snapshots* were confirmed as reflecting the aspirations of all GLR communities as well as the experience of those recognized as Pacesetters and All-America Cities:

- Shared ownership of the result/joint accountability for its attainment;
- Demonstrated commitment to reaching the more vulnerable children;
- Local solutions to the data challenges of sharing, disaggregation and integration;
- Resources (energy, dollars, attention) tilting toward what's working;
- *Investing the time, patience and energy to nurture trusting relationships;* and
- Local funders leading, practicing “more than money philanthropy” and ensuring continuity by taking up the stewardship obligation.



TAKEAWAY #3: BEWARE THE MOMENTUM BRAKERS.

A set of well-recognized conditions operate as “brakes” on progress even in communities implementing strong plans. Among them are four that are pervasive, related and especially problematic:

- Fragmented funding streams, proliferation of silos, uneven systemic coordination and chaotic delivery of services and supports with too little regard for gaps and overlaps.
- Relevant data trapped behind walls that prevent timely access for setting baselines and targets, tracking progress and informing decisions.
- Limited visibility on what is working where, why and how well.
- Misaligned philanthropic resources that fail to connect local knowledge and earned credibility with the bigger dollars, networks and research.

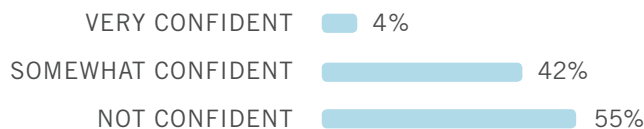
At present, double-digit gaps persist and co-exist with good progress in every state and almost every GLR community.



TAKEAWAY #4: CONFIDENCE MATTERS.

The pervasiveness and persistence of the “momentum brakere” saps the confidence of even the most engaged stakeholders. The results of straw polls on the “confidence question” in dozens of communities were consistent with the e-polling of 200+ attendees at CGLR’s 2018 Funder Huddle:

How confident are you that low-income children in your community have real access to the services and supports for which they are eligible and need, and are provided in a manner that is properly sequenced and at the appropriate dosage and duration?





TAKEAWAY #5: GET BETTER AT GETTING BETTER. MAKE THE NETWORK WORK.

Stay the course **and** double down. Prioritize developing the GLR Network into an even more effective vehicle for learning for impact and improvement.

- Enlist technology to assure more timely knowledge of what's working where and how.
- Facilitate more opportunities for local funders and like-minded national counterparts to share knowledge, collaborate and co-invest.
- Equip GLR communities with more of the tools, templates and technical supports that are contributing to success in other communities.
- Accelerate progress from outcomes to impact to scale by engaging additional partners, champions and allies.
- With respect to all of the above, build more capacity and accord more attention to the challenges and opportunities facing rural communities.

What do YOU think?

Over the next 18 months, we will encourage CGLR's partners, allies and champions as well as other community change initiatives to join us in whatever ways they deem appropriate in a broad-based effort to do the following:

- ⇒ Validate the strength, relevance and ubiquity of the Success Factors as well as the Momentum Brakers.
- ⇒ Ascertain the enabling conditions and levers as well as the capacities needed to foster the Success Factors and fix the Momentum Brakers.
- ⇒ Develop and deploy the appropriate tools and metrics to promote, advance and monitor progress.
- ⇒ Formulate and explore other preliminary hypotheses and conjectures that are emerging as either Success Factors or Momentum Brakers.

Please feel free to contact us with your thoughts and comments. Examples, stories and counterfactuals are all welcome! Email Ralph Smith at ralphs@glrcenter.org.