K-3 Focus Area Strategic Issue

➔ Increase the % of children who finish 3rd grade at College and Career Ready on the state reading assessment from 25% in spring 2022 to 80% by spring 2030.

Third Grade Reading Proficiency

In February 2014, The Belk Foundation convened leaders from local foundations, businesses, the school district, county and the library to discuss a community crisis: only 40% of Charlotte's third graders were reading on grade level. National research indicates third-grade reading is a strong indicator of both high school graduation and college matriculation. Although Charlotte-Mecklenburg was better than the average for large public cities (26%) and the national average (34%), this wasn't good enough for these leaders.

This initial conversation led to a commitment by this group to organize a Third Grade Reading Task Force, which met throughout 2014 to review key research, build on past community efforts and define the goal, scope and pillars of a potential community-wide collective impact effort around early childhood literacy. In early 2015, the Task Force reorganized as the governing board of the newly named **Read Charlotte**. After a national search, Read Charlotte hired Munro Richardson to lead the initiative.

After two years of research and alignment, Read Charlotte moved into implementation in collaboration with an army of dedicated groups and individuals across Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

- Their work is defined by *four major areas of activity*: research and data, improving systems, strategic funding, and building networks.
- To move the needle on literacy, Read Charlotte focuses on *five levers*: Great Teaching, Empowering Families, Building Home Libraries, High-Quality Targeted Tutoring, and Summer Reading.

How the Foundation continues to support its "original" Strategic Issue: Third Grade Reading Proficiency and what became Read Charlotte was the first mission-aligned strategic issue of the Foundation. The Foundation dedicated intentional time and energy beyond grantmaking to build community-level awareness and determination to find solutions. This commitment will continue through Read Charlotte's 2030 goal, aligned to the Read Charlotte strategic plan and primarily in the form of these actions:

Board Service	Lead Funding	Aligned Funding	Strategic Guidance	Sharing Lessons
Executive Director Jevelyn Bonner-Reed serves on the Read Charlotte Board. Foundation Board Member Katie Morris is the founding chairperson of the Read Charlotte Board.	The Foundation is a committed "Lead Funder" of Read Charlotte operations.	Within its K-3 focus area, the Foundation aligns its literacy-related funding to Read Charlotte priorities, particularly the levers of Great Teaching, Tutoring, and Summer Reading.	Both Katie Morris and Jevelyn Bonner-Reed spend additional time serving as thought-partners and collaborators with Read Charlotte staff to fundraise for Read Charlotte identified priorities, advise on strategy, and build connections.	Through relationships at the state level, the Foundation shares lessons learned from Read Charlotte with state level practitioners and policymakers.