

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 2022-23

SPARKING EARLY LITERACY GROWTH IN WEST VIRGINIA:
SCHOOL READINESS, HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION &
EXTENDED LEARNING



West Virginia Public Education Collaborative
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Full Proposal Deadline: June 15, 2022



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Grant Snapshot

Grant Title: Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia: School Readiness, High Quality Instruction & Extended Learning

Summary: This Request for Proposals (RFP) aims to solicit innovative and transformational ideas, initiatives, and interventions to support the early literacy growth of West Virginia children from birth to Age 8 in high-need schools and student populations. Public and private schools, early care and early childhood centers, after-school and summer learning programs, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities and other literacy-focused stakeholders including community and public organizations are encouraged to apply.

Targeted Learners: Birth to Age 8

Funding Cycle: September 2022 - September 2023

Grant Focus: Funded projects will focus on one of the following: school readiness, high quality instruction, or extended learning.

Grant Priorities: High-need student populations/communities and other educational support systems/organizations in high-need low-performing schools

Grant Funder: Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Pittsburgh, PA
Grant Administrator: West Virginia Public Education Collaborative, Morgantown, WV

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Section 1: Focus and Priorities

The Benedum Foundation's mission is "to encourage human development in West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania through strategically placed charitable resources." The purpose of this RFP, disseminated on behalf of the [Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation](#) by the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative (WVPEC), is to solicit and fund innovative and transformational ideas, initiatives, and interventions to high-need schools and student populations to support the early literacy growth of West Virginia children birth to Age 8.

This grant program's primary focus and associated significant priorities align to the [West Virginia Transformative System of Support for Early Literacy](#), a legislative mandate supporting schools' strategies to close the 3rd grade reading achievement gap. This grant program's focus and significant priorities supports the Benedum Foundation's strategic initiative to achieve grade-level reading proficiency for all West Virginians.

The West Virginia statewide average for third grade reading proficiency in the school year 2021 was 33%, down 11 percentage points from school year 2019. Furthermore, we recognize the inevitable loss of literacy skills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This grant funding focus aligns with the work of the WVPEC, which supports public schools through outreach and innovation to foster productive dialogue and respond rapidly to emerging P-20 issues in West Virginia. At the end of the funding cycle of this grant, WVPEC will consider the outcomes of each funded project in collaboration with the West Virginia Board of Education and West Virginia Department of Education to make recommendations to the West Virginia State Legislature for scaled adaptation.

Proposals describing projects that address the grant's significant priorities in novel ways will receive the highest consideration for funding. These priorities are critical in addressing children's early literacy development, historically and in response to learning loss attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public and private schools, early care and early childhood programs, after-school and summer learning programs, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, and other literacy-focused stakeholders/communities/public organizations in West Virginia are encouraged to apply.

Grant Focus

Projects must align with at least one of the following foci: school readiness, high quality instruction, or extended learning. The West Virginia Department of Education's WV Leaders of Literacy Campaign for Grade-Level Reading website uses the following descriptions to unpack these terms:

- **School Readiness.** In West Virginia, school readiness refers to the process of ensuring children have access to the best available resources before entering first grade. Available resources support children and their families and focus on maximizing children's holistic development from birth. Research shows that learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten. Infants and Toddlers soak up words, rhymes, songs, and images. Most language acquisition occurs prior to children entering school, so it is important to provide a language-rich environment to ensure robust vocabulary development.
- **High Quality Instruction.** In West Virginia, high quality instruction must be implemented, and student learning must be monitored from pre-k through 3rd grade. High-quality English language arts instruction during the early learning years involves immersion in a literacy-rich environment to develop awareness and understanding of spoken and written language. Through active participation and developmentally appropriate and engaging learning experiences, students develop competencies in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and media literacy. To support the development of lifelong learning and global awareness, students are given regular opportunities through developmentally appropriate contexts to participate in language experiences, utilize 21st-century skills, and equally employ literary and informational texts of appropriate complexity.
- **Extended Learning.** In West Virginia, extended learning is a critical component of the comprehensive approach to reading success by the end of third grade. Research indicates that, on average, literacy skills decline over the summer. However, not all students experience "average" losses, and the summer learning slide disproportionately affects low-income students. Low-income students lose substantial ground in reading during the summer, while their higher income peers often gain. The decline of knowledge and educational skills during the summer months is cumulative throughout a student's career and further widens the achievement gap between low- and upper-income students. Afterschool programs operate at the nexus of schools, families, and communities to expand learning opportunities for all youth. Programs provide more time for deeper learning and creative spaces for exploration. Quality afterschool engages students in enriching opportunities to help close academic and opportunity gaps among students most in need. These programs support students' learning by providing transformative learning experiences in unique settings.

Grant Priorities

Projects must target high-need populations of literacy learners. Target high-need populations include, but are not limited to: children and communities in poverty, children in foster care, children in the custody/care of grandparents or other extended family members, special education, children identified as homeless, children experiencing trauma and behavioral challenges, children who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and children who are reading and writing below grade level.

The table below provides a snapshot of the West Virginia public school students in grades Pre-K through 3 during the 2021-2022 school year. In addition, students were enrolled in private schools and Pre-K programs.

WEST VIRGINIA PRE K – 3 STUDENT DATA SNAPSHOT	
Total Students	81,273
Enrolled in Pre K	13,027
Low SES	44,483
Enrolled in Special Education	13, 923
English Language Learners	802
In Foster Care	1,524*
Homeless Students	3,043*
*Data collected at the end of the school year. These numbers reflect SY20-21.	

Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Students Pre K - 3



- White (72,317)
- Black or African American (3,117)
- Multi-Racial (3,744)
- Hispanic or Latino/a (1,539)
- Asian (479)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (43)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (34)

Data Source: WVDE, SY 2021-2022

Section 2: Guidelines and Preferences

All proposed projects must take place in West Virginia and focus on children in West Virginia, birth to Age 8 (typically 3rd grade). The proposal must explicitly describe the project's targeted learner (e.g., special education, low SES). Proposals may focus on a specific age or grade range within birth to Age 8 (e.g., first-grade students, toddlers); individual projects do not need to span the entire birth to Age 8 range. Projects may involve teachers, children, families, and/or communities, and must address at least one of the three grant focus areas:

- o school readiness
- o high quality instruction
- o extended learning

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- o West Virginia public and private school administrators and teachers
- o Early care and early childhood education program/center administrators and teachers
- o After school and summer learning program administrators and teachers
- o West Virginia universities and colleges (four-year, two-year, and community)
- o Other literacy focused stakeholders including community and public organizations, which include but are not limited to libraries, family healthcare providers, parent associations (PTA), and WV legal aid.

There are no limits on the number of proposals a school/organization/stakeholder group can submit. There is a limit of one submission per project director. Projects are not limited to the county where the grant seeker's organization or school is located. Projects can be implemented in and among any of West Virginia's 55 counties. Applicants are encouraged to consult the metrics of student performance from the 2019 and 2021 West Virginia Summative Assessment* and the socioeconomic status information included in the Appendix to provide a rationale for the target population and location. *Note: West Virginia Summative Assessment was not administered in Spring 2020.

Partnerships

Collaborative educational and community partnerships are required for funding consideration. We define collaboration as "two or more entities working together toward a shared goal" (Frey et al., 2006). We believe collaboration between educational and community partners across public, private, and nonprofits can leverage resources toward improving early literacy. Additionally, meaningful partnerships may also positively contribute to a project's sustainability beyond the grant's funding cycle.

To receive a grant award and funding, all early literacy grant proposals must include at least one collaborative educational/community partner (i.e., agency, school, after-school program); some projects may include more than one partner. Those seeking funding should consider the list of eligible grantees as partners including public and private schools, early care and early childhood programs, after-school and summer learning programs, nonprofit organizations, colleges, universities, and other literacy-focused stakeholders/communities/public organizations. Proposals may also consider local businesses, individuals, professional literacy organizations, or other educational stakeholders as a partner.

Given the multifaceted nature of the early literacy projects, this RFP does not require one specific model or type of partnership. Grant partners may contribute to the project's outcomes in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to planning, engaging in problem-solving and decision making, supporting evaluation efforts, consulting, providing resources (e.g., books, space), serving as thought partners, leading professional learning efforts for teachers/classroom aides/parents, developing curriculum materials, facilitating access to birth-8 student populations, assisting project implementation, providing in-kind personnel support, conducting student assessments, and/or supporting/contributing to project's overall budget, etc.

Grant seekers must outline each partner's detailed roles and responsibilities in the grant proposal narrative. Each partnership may vary in intensity and contribution; minimal expectations include clearly defined roles of each partner, ongoing and consistent communication, and engaged focus on the grant project's implementation and outcomes throughout the grant's funding cycle (i.e., 1 year). Each partner, including the submitting school/agency/group, must complete and sign an acknowledgment/agreement form.

Outcomes and Student Assessment

Projects must identify, in detail, at least two measurable project outcomes. Project outcomes should align with impacts on learners, school, parents, or community. Proposals must specifically identify how the outcomes will directly influence improved literacy skills in the target population (children birth - Age 8).

- One of the two outcomes must measure student change/growth/improvement using a pre-post assessment tool (selected by the project director/organization). Assessment plans may consist of data collected from the organization's existing assessment strategy or include assessment protocols specific to the project. Grant seekers should consult the *Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia: School Readiness, High Quality Instruction & Extended Learning Resource Guide* for additional information on assessment measures.
- Outcome 2 and any other outcomes may include growth measures or change with other participants (teachers, families, community members, etc.) or grant components (e.g., family engagement with school's website, improved literacy environment, teacher perception)

Budget

The maximum dollar amount for each funded project is \$50,000.

- Each proposal must include a detailed budget and a narrative that includes the justification of expenditures.
- Funds may be used for personnel, stipends/incentives, equipment and materials, training costs, supplies, travel, and other necessary materials. Indirect costs (e.g., organization's facilities and administrative expenses or overhead) line items are not allowed.
- Matching funds are strongly encouraged but not required. To clarify, matching funds, often referred to as cost-sharing, represent an institutional commitment to a project. These matching funds may include in-kind contributions such as reallocating organization resources or staff or inclusion of other outside funding contributions. Matching funds, in-kind, or additional/external funding should be included in the overall budget and explained in the budget narrative. **Note: The Benedum Foundation does not allow indirect/facilities and administrative costs on these grant awards.**

Grant Proposal Timeline

Date	Action Item
February 24, 2022	Request for Proposals (RFP) released
March 8, 2022 10:00am-11:15am	Grant informational session #1 *Register at https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/earlyliteracy
March 30, 2022 4:00pm - 5:15pm	Grant informational session #2 *Register at https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/earlyliteracy
March 31, 2022 - June 1, 2022	Technical Assistance via 1-1 consulting by request *Register at https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/earlyliteracy
June 15, 2022	Electronic proposals due; must be received by 11:59 p.m. EST
September 2022	Formal notification of awards
September 2022 - September 2023	Funding period

Section 3: Pre-Proposal Support

Grant funds will be distributed in September 2022. WVPEC is responsible for the grant funding selection, oversight, and management, and all inquiries around the RFP should be directed to WVPEC. Funding decisions will be determined through a competitive proposal review of qualities aligned with the guidelines outlined in this RFP and will be managed by WVPEC. The review committee will include experienced literacy educators from across the state of West Virginia.

WVPEC will host two informational sessions to assist grant seekers and provide technical assistance via 1-1 consulting upon request. Engaging in these opportunities is strongly recommended.

- WVPEC will host two informational sessions to review grant guidelines and criteria and answer questions. The informative sessions, scheduled for March 8th and March 30th will be virtual, using the Zoom meeting platform. Please refer to the timeline for dates and registration details for these sessions.
- WVPEC will provide support to schools, organizations, and groups seeking funding. Upon request, members affiliated with WVPEC representing Marshall University, West Virginia University, and the West Virginia Department of Education are available to consult with prospective grant seekers to provide feedback, particularly grounded in a proposal's early literacy components. These conversations should occur during the initial project planning phase of the proposal development. Participation in technical assistance via 1-1 consulting does not guarantee funding or provide any explicit or implied advantage during the proposal review phase. Sign up at <https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/earlyliteracy>

Section 4: Proposal Submission Process Guidelines, Selection, and Notification

Grant seekers must complete an electronic submission of all proposal components. The grant application portal can be accessed on the WVPEC website at <https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/earlyliteracy>. Each proposal will consist of a three-part electronic submission: a Cover Sheet, Narrative, and Budget (see Appendix A)

A panel of literacy professionals representing PreK-12 personnel, higher education faculty, and community organizations will review proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation. If a member of the review panel provides 1-1 consulting to a specific grant seeker, that reviewer will not participate in that project's evaluative review.

WVPEC will notify project directors of grant award status in September 2022. If funded, the project director must submit a final report to WVPEC within sixty days of funding period.

Summary of Required and Recommended Components

<p>Required Components</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Must align with at least one of the following foci: school readiness, high quality instruction, or extended learning. ● Must take place in West Virginia and explicitly focus on West Virginia children, birth to Age 8. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must identify and prioritize low-performing learners birth to Age 8 in schools, classrooms, populations, and communities. ○ Must identify the targeted student population (e.g., special education, low SES) and grade level (e.g., first-grade students, toddlers) that will be impacted most by the project. Must provide relevant supporting statistics/information demonstrating need for the targeted population. ● Project proposals must include at least <u>one</u> collaborative educational and community partnership with other schools, educational groups/organizations, or WV public and community organization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must complete and upload a WVPEC partnership acknowledgment/signature form signed by representatives from both partnering organizations (e.g., superintendent, principal, director). ● Must identify, in detail, at least two measurable project outcomes including a measure of participant (ie., student and/or teacher, or parent/family member/guardian) change/growth/improvement using a pre-post assessment tool [selected by project director/organization]. Projects should measure the impact on risk factors that affect target populations. ● Must submit by June 15, 2022 at 11:59p.m. EST.
<p>Strongly Recommended</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning opportunities in early literacy for teachers and other stakeholders working directly with children (e.g., parents, aides, instructional assistants and other providers.) ● Matching funds/in-kind/cost-share. ● Attend a virtual informational session. ● Request WVPEC technical assistance via 1-1 consulting.

Appendix A: Proposal Submission Guidelines

The proposal consists of three parts (cover sheet, narrative, budget), all submitted electronically. Below is a list of all information grant seekers should have prepared to complete a proposal submission.

Part 1: Cover Sheet

Project title

Proposing school/organization(s)

Collaborative educational/community partner

Project focus (click all that apply): High Quality Instruction, School Readiness, Extended Learning

Project abstract (250-word limit)

Age/grade level (select all that apply)

Target population (e.g. ELL, low-SES, special education)

Counties served

Proposed overall budget

Total amount requested

Project director information (Name/Title, address, phone, email)

Part 2: Narrative Prompts

1. Provide a statement of need. Describe precisely the specific needs of the school and/or community targeted in this project and how the project aligns with the grant's focus around school readiness, high quality instruction, and/or extended learning.
2. Describe the student population targeted in this project. Include the number of students, age/grade, and target population (e.g. ELL, low-SES, special education, etc.). Use available school/district data to demonstrate need and provide a rationale.
3. How will the project engage classroom teachers/school professionals, families and community members, or any other participating population?
4. Describe how this project will support your organization's efforts addressing student learning loss due to the pandemic.
5. Identify at least two project outcomes. For each outcome, how will success be measured? Please refer to the Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia Resource Guide for early literacy assessment examples.
 - a. Required: Student Growth Outcome 1 and how you will measure success.
 - b. Required: Outcome 2 and how you will measure success.
 - c. Optional: Outcome 3 and how you will measure success.
6. Implementation. Create the implementation plan, including a month-by-month timeline.
7. Sustainability. Describe how you will sustain the project at the end date of its funding.
8. Project Personnel. Identify the project's key personnel. Include position, email addresses, expertise area, previous grant experience, and contributions to the project.
9. Describe the educational and/or community partnership and briefly outline each partner's role in the grant project.

Part 3: Project Budget

Complete the budget template and budget justification for each expenditure line.

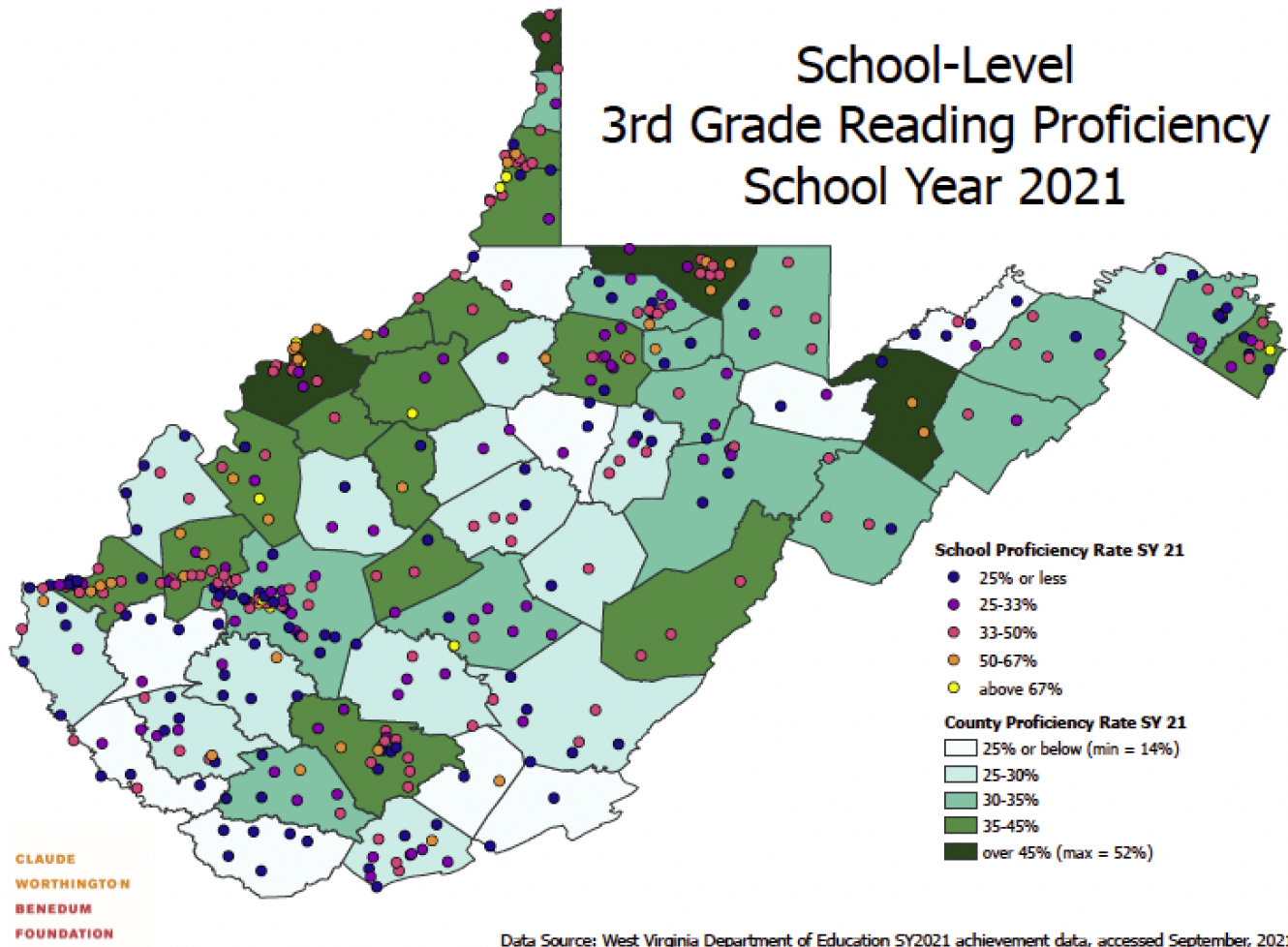
All project expenses			Expenses allocated to grant	Costs allocated to other sources		Total
				Cash	In-Kind	
	Project Director					
	Consultants					
	Participants/Incentive					
	Equipment					
	Materials					
	Training Costs					
	Supplies					
	Travel					
	Other (list)					
Total			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Budget Justification Example Statement. Funding is being requested to purchase the following equipment: \$_____ for a _____, \$_____ for a _____, and \$_____ for a _____. Describe how this equipment will be used to meet the project’s outcomes.

Appendix B: West Virginia Student Achievement Data

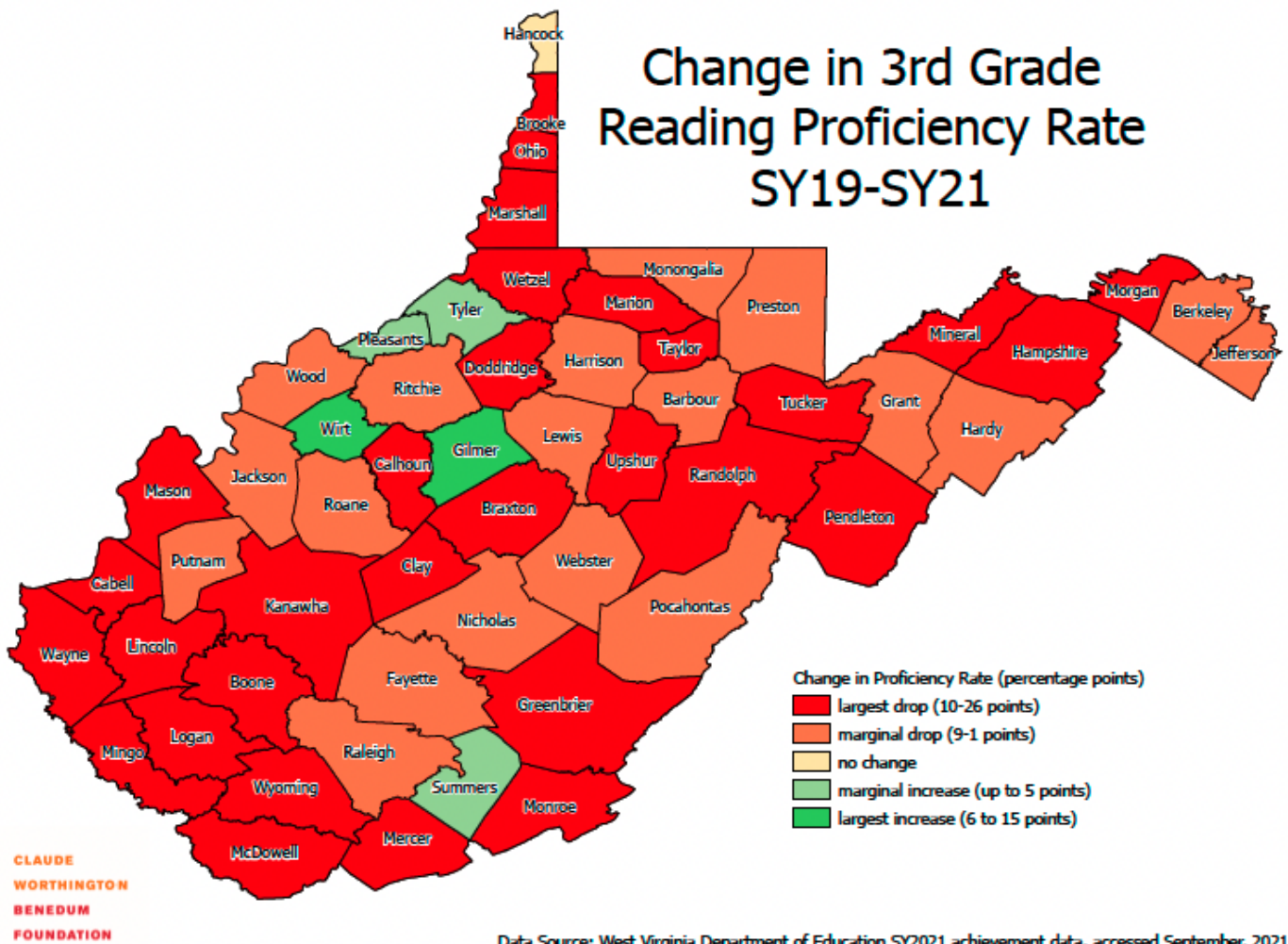
This section provides an overview of West Virginia’s student achievement data based on the 3rd Grade West Virginia Summative Assessment administered in 2021 and published by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE).

Figure 1: School-Level 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency School Year 2021



The statewide proficiency rate for the 202-2021 school year was 33.58%. District-wide proficiency rates ranged from 14% to 52%. Lower-performing counties appear to be more concentrated in the central and southern parts of the state. School-level data on proficiency rates show that even greater variation exists between schools than between districts. Kanawha County, for example, has a school in both the top ten highest and lowest proficiency rates in the state. Across all elementary schools in the state, school-wide proficiency rates range from 5.56% to 90.91%. This map highlights the importance of looking beyond the district-level in trying to identify and understand where the need for intervention is the greatest.

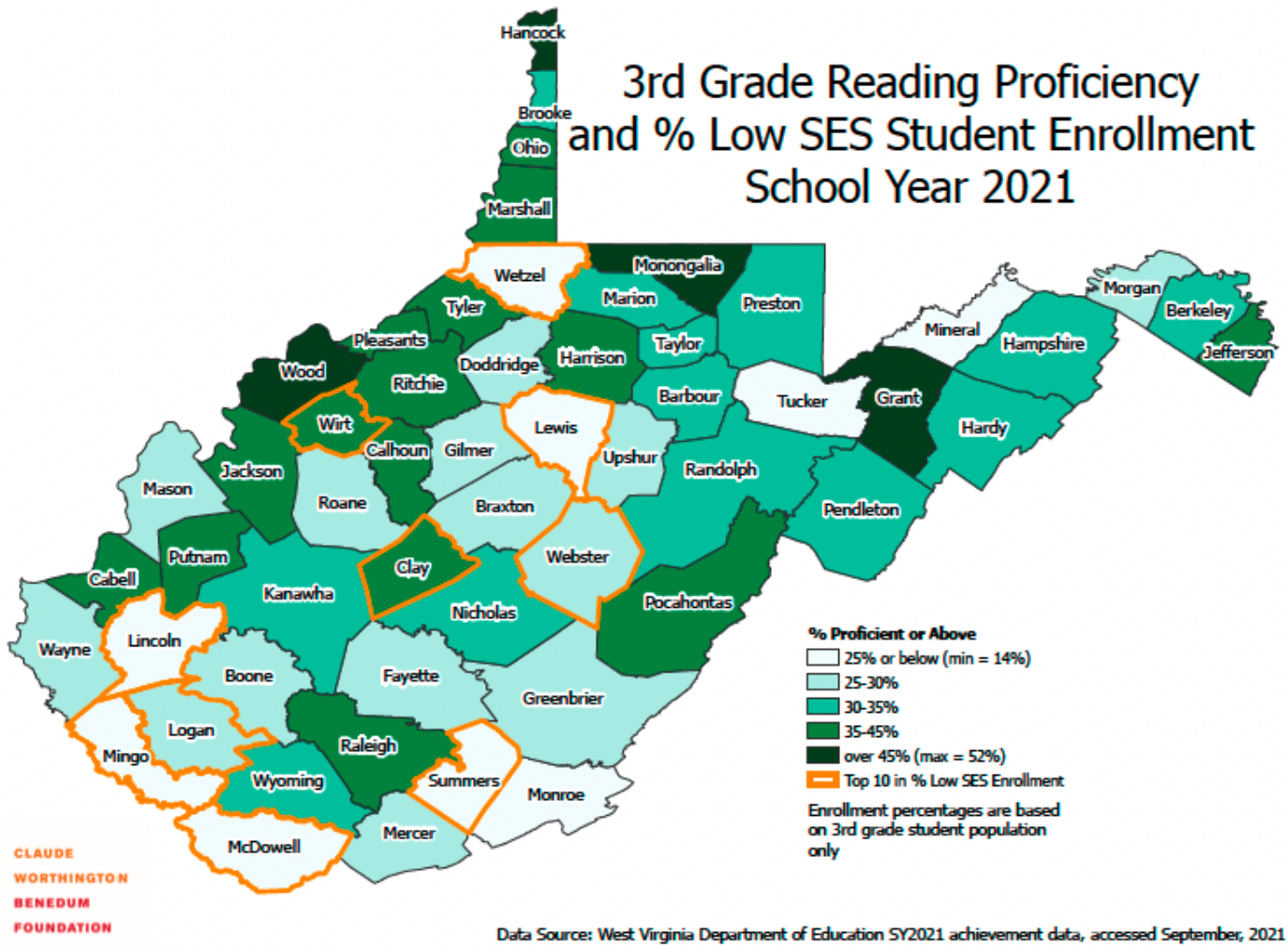
Figure 2: Change in 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency Rate SY19-SY21



The statewide proficiency rate for SY 2019 was 44%. In SY 2021, the rate dropped by over ten percentage points, to 34%. McDowell experienced the largest drop, from 36% in SY 2019 to 14% in SY 2021, and individual schools in the county all reported 3rd grade reading proficiency rates under 25% in SY 2021.

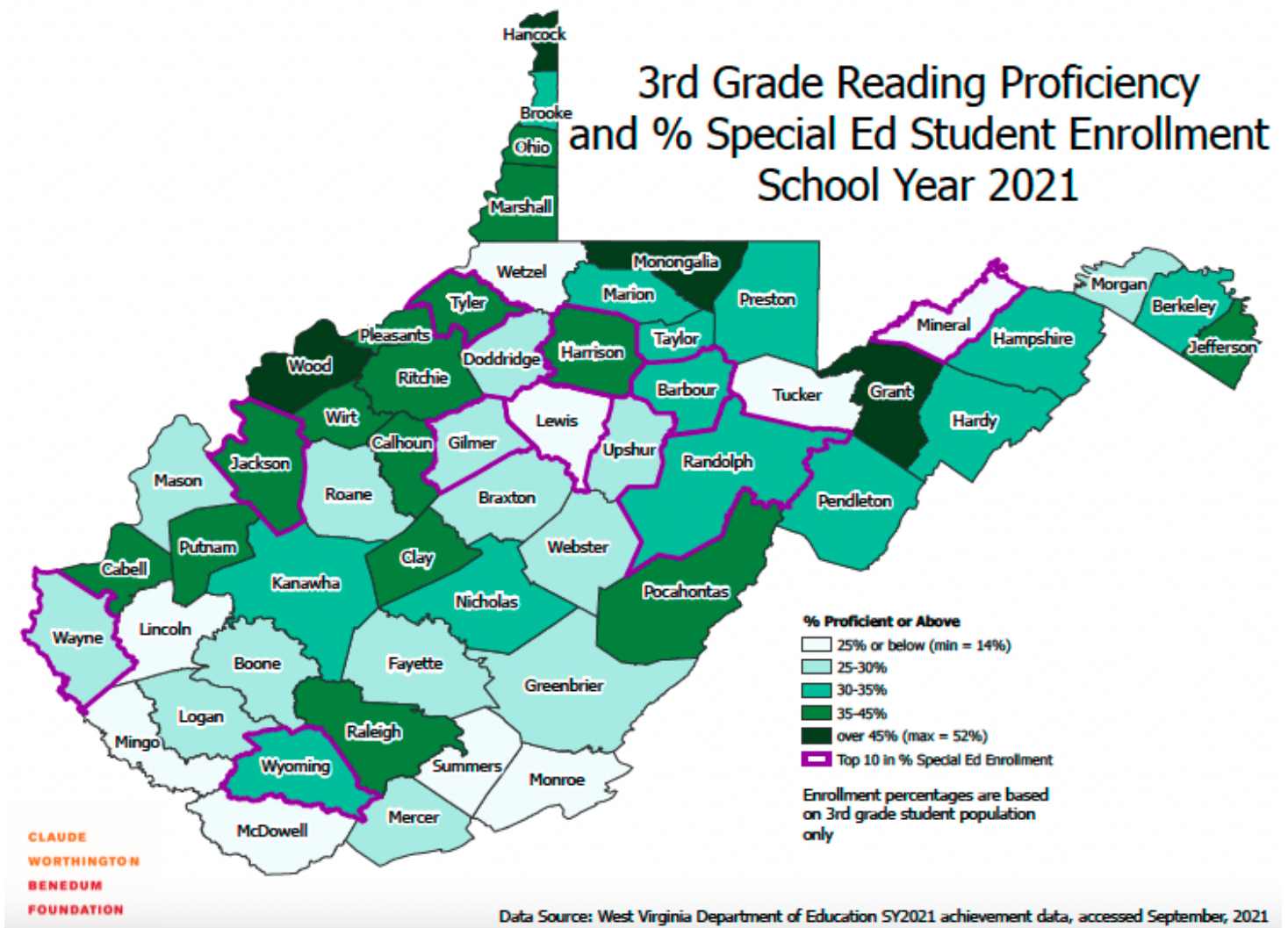
Five counties increased proficiency rates: Gilmer, Wirt, Summers, Tyler, and Pleasants. For Summers, Tyler, and Pleasants, this increase was relatively small – 1-5 percentage points. For Gilmer and Wirt, the increase was more significant; however, both counties were at the low end of the spectrum in SY 2019 (with proficiency rates of 19% and 21% respectively) and remained below 40% proficiency for SY 2021 (28% and 36%). When examining this map, it is necessary to consider the probable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this data.

Figure 3: 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency and % Low SES Student Enrollment School Year 2021



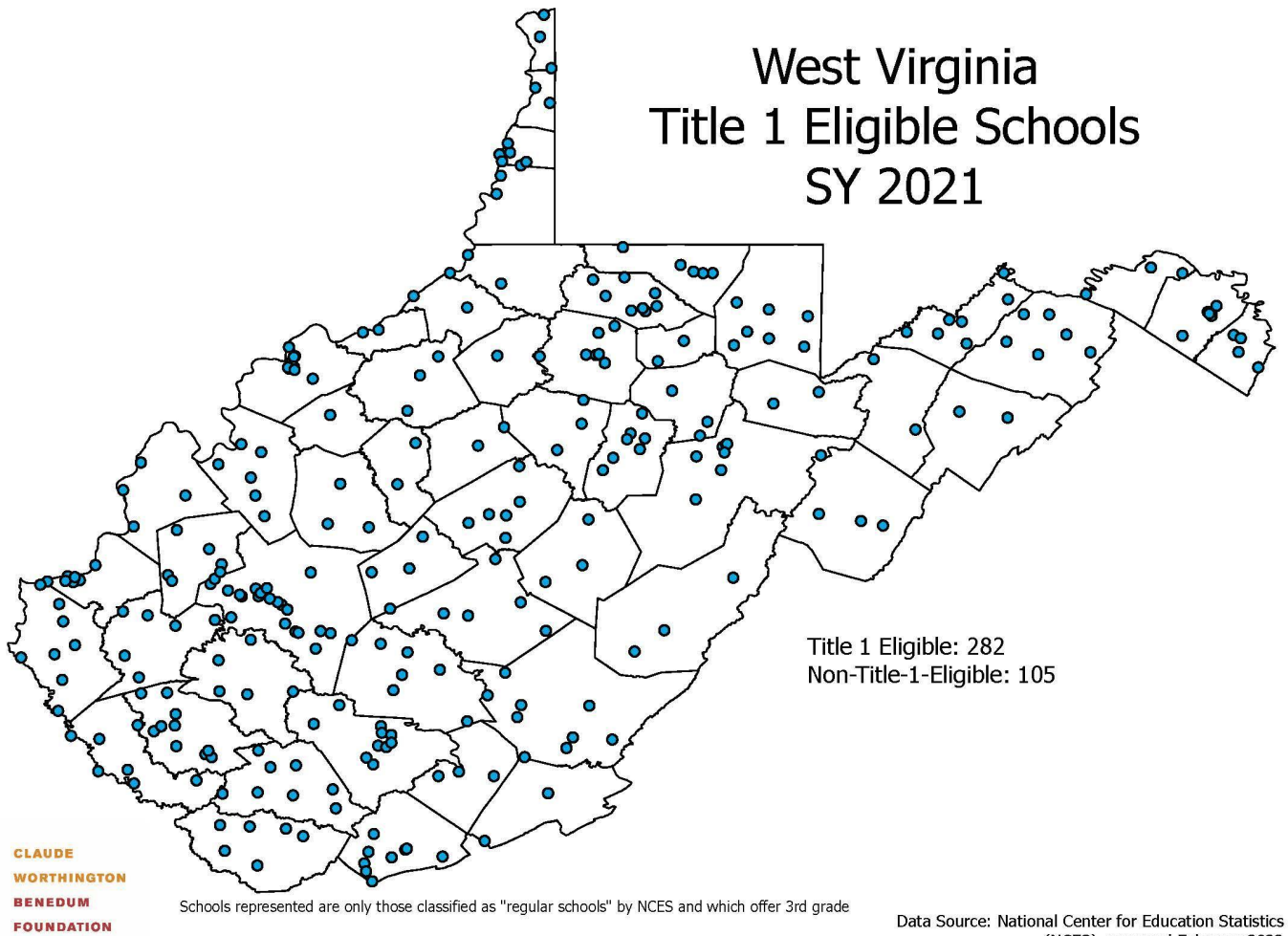
Third grade achievement data suggest that students classified as “low socio-economic status (SES)” tend to perform lower than the overall average on state assessments for reading (WVDE, 2021). Counties with the highest third grade enrollment numbers of low SES students are also counties with the highest enrollment overall. Therefore, this map shows the top ten counties in the state with the highest percentage of low SES students. Except for Wirt and Clay Counties, these counties are below the average state proficiency rates. This map points to areas where there is opportunity to target schools and districts with high percentages of low SES students and low proficiency rates.

Figure 4: 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency and % Special Ed Student Enrollment School Year 2021



Third grade achievement data suggest that students classified as “Special Education” tend to perform lower than the overall average on state assessments for reading (WVDE, 2021). Counties with the highest enrollment numbers of third grade Special Education students are also counties with the highest enrollment overall. Therefore, this map shows the top ten counties in the state with the highest percentage of third grade special education students. In terms of reading proficiency rates, these counties vary. Three counties (Harrison, Jackson, and Tyler) exceed the statewide average. Three counties (Barbour, Randolph, Wyoming) sit near the state average and four counties (Gilmer, Lewis, Mineral, Upshur) are below the statewide average. This map shows the areas where there is opportunity to target high proportions of special education students.

Figure 5: West Virginia Title 1 Eligible Schools SY 2021



As of the 2020 school year, 282 of 387 elementary schools (73%) in West Virginia were eligible for Title I funding. Title I provides financial assistance to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (WVDE, 2019). LEAs target Title I funds to schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. Unless a participating school is operating a schoolwide program, the school must focus Title I services on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state academic standards. Schools in which low SES children make up at least 40% of enrollments are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs to serve all children in the school. Additionally, LEAs utilize Title I funds to provide academic enrichment services to eligible children enrolled in private schools.

Appendix C:

West Virginia Public Schools PreK – 3 Low SES Data by County

WV PUBLIC SCHOOL PREK – 3 STUDENT LOW SES DATA			
	TOTAL STUDENTS	NUMBER OF LOW SES STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF LOW SES STUDENTS
STATE OF WV	81,273	44,483	54.7%
COUNTY			
Barbour	712	391	54.9%
Berkeley	6,424	3,185	49.6%
Boone	934	613	65.6%
Braxton	550	340	61.8%
Brooke	725	385	53.1%
Cabell	3,874	2,135	55.1%
Calhoun	268	157	58.6%
Clay	463	321	69.3%
Doddridge	356	192	53.9%
Fayette	1,718	1,026	59.7%
Gilmer	226	91	40.3%
Grant	574	306	53.3%
Greenbrier	1,498	845	56.4%
Hampshire	943	516	54.7%
Hancock	1,132	567	50.1%
Hardy	691	390	56.4%
Harrison	3,170	1,519	47.9%
Jackson	1,330	686	51.6%
Jefferson	2,528	998	39.5%
Kanawha	7,700	4,725	61.4%
Lewis	817	519	63.5%
Lincoln	999	621	62.2%
Logan	1,594	1,021	64.1%
Marion	2,376	1,195	50.3%
Marshall	1,381	669	48.4%
Mason	1,306	750	57.4%
Mercer	2,918	1,873	64.2%
Mineral	1,304	592	45.4%
Mingo	1,273	919	72.2%
Monongalia	3,799	1,401	36.9%
Monroe	518	307	59.3%
Morgan	684	337	49.3%
McDowell	817	619	75.8%

Nicholas	1,082	703	65.0%
Ohio	1,651	892	54.0%
Pendleton	280	140	50.0%
Pleasants	367	183	49.9%
Pocahontas	309	174	56.3%
Preston	1,447	683	47.2%
Putnam	2,907	1,137	39.1%
Raleigh	3,492	2,203	63.1%
Randolph	1,214	732	60.3%
Ritchie	416	262	63.0%
Roane	569	319	56.1%
Summers	412	301	73.1%
Taylor	759	338	44.5%
Tucker	333	141	42.3%
Tyler	422	240	56.9%
Upshur	1,340	772	57.6%
Wayne	2,108	1,237	58.7%
Webster	370	256	69.2%
Wetzel	768	480	62.5%
Wirt	279	152	54.5%
Wood	3,957	2,259	57.1%
Wyoming	1,189	668	56.2%
	712	391	54.9%

Data Source: WVDE, SY 2021-2022