

LifeRead

Volunteer Tutoring Initiative

The Project: Mobilizing an army of volunteers helping Ohio read, tackling Ohio's literacy challenge for students and adults

Tackling Ohio's literacy challenge

Statement of Purpose: To mobilize a network of volunteers, matching them with students and adults to help them improve their reading skills.

The Need: In his state of the state 2023 address, Governor DeWine highlighted the need to focus on Ohio schoolchildren's reading proficiency. Due to the COVID shutdown, Ohio students were at least one grade level behind in their reading proficiency. He stated that 40% of Ohio third grade students were not proficient in reading. He said, "Reading unlocks the door for all future learning and truly provides a lifetime of opportunity."

Ohio's 2023 assessments indicated 38% of students were not proficient in reading. Among economically disadvantaged students, 55% were not proficient in English language arts. Here are some examples from six Ohio school districts: Akron, Barberton, Columbus, Dayton, Dennison (Cleveland City Schools), and Medina.

Proficiency in Third Grade Reading	2023	2024
Akron City Schools	44.60%	50.70%
Barberton City Schools	59.70%	52.40%
Columbus City Schools	35.60%	42.00%
Dayton City Schools	36.40%	40.60%
Denison (Cleveland City) Schools	44.00%	48.10%
Medina City Schools	78.30%	76.10%

Though there has been some improvement in the 2024 report cards, **there is still much work to do.** As the Ohio Department of Education director has stated, "**the situation remains urgent.**"

Adult literacy: According to the National Literacy Institute, 21% of adults in the U.S. are illiterate (2022), 54% of adults have literacy below sixth grade level, 45 million are illiterate and read below the fifth-grade level, and 44% of the American adults do not read a book in a year. Illiteracy affects a person's employment opportunities, their general outlook, and often leads to homelessness. Other findings from literacy data indicate that teacher disposition changes drastically during reading instruction with poor readers, and student disposition changes when they are made to feel inadequate. Struggling readers suffer socially and emotionally.

The key to tutoring success is to give the student small successes along the way that they can build upon that will encourage them in their progress. Our volunteers are encouraging people and look forward to the challenge.

The Mission: To mobilize hundreds of volunteers through the Ohio Christian Alliance network and match them with students, young adults, and adults who desire to improve their reading skills throughout Ohio's 88 counties.

The Ohio Christian Alliance has a wealth of human resource, individuals who are recently retired school administrators, teachers, business men and women, and others who are eager to help tackle Ohio's literacy challenge by giving back to their communities.

LifeRead Volunteer Tutoring Initiative has a built-in advantage of a statewide referral system through the thousands of churches that Ohio Christian Alliance has worked with over the years on public policy.

LifeRead Tutoring Initiative will receive no government funding, but will depend on individual and corporate donations to fund the administrative and material needs that will launch and facilitate the program.

LifeRead will work with Christian schools, charter schools, public schools, community groups, churches, and existing literacy organizations with reciprocal referral services. Like the old evangelist once said, "Find a need and fill it." The challenge is great to tackle Ohio's illiteracy problem, but our plan is to make a major difference.

If you are interested in being a volunteer tutor with LifeRead, visit the website at: www.LifeRead.org to contact us.

If you or someone you know is in need of tutoring services, visit the website at: www.LifeRead.org to contact us.

**The entrance of thy words giveth light; it
giveth understanding unto the simple.**

– Psalm 119:130

**The Mind once stretched by a new idea
never goes back to its original dimension.**

– Oliver Wendell Holmes