

Grant brings new reading program to Clarksdale, Mississippi schools

Funding by Walton Family Foundation and Barksdale Institute makes MRR possible

CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI, UNITED STATES, October 25, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new program is coming which will help Clarksdale students read at grade level, a prospect with life-changing benefits.



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Asst. Supt. Dr. Toya Harrell-Matthews announced that the Clarksdale Municipal School District was awarded a grant for the 2018-2019 school year for four elementary schools in the district to incorporate the [Mississippi Reading Roadmap](#) (MRR). The afterschool program is designed to help children in grades K-3 raise their reading proficiency. Targeting, but not limited to, at-risk readers, the program aligns afterschool instruction with what students are taught during the school day.

Dr. Harrell-Matthews said four magnet schools with a 50 percent or higher free and reduced lunch population would participate: Booker T. Washington, Kirkpatrick,

George H. Oliver, and Heidelberg.

MRR is a partnership between the Clarksdale Municipal School District and the Mississippi Department of Education. Funding for the initiative has been provided by the Walton Family Foundation and the Barksdale Institute.

"We believe providing interventions for our youngest learners is an investment that will pay great dividends," Dr. Harrell-Matthews said. "We are excited for the opportunity to partner with the Walton Family Foundation and the Reading Roadmap to align afterschool tutoring and family supports with our school-day reading instruction and intervention."

The reading initiative builds upon policies established by Governor Phil Bryant to foster early reading achievement, focused on bringing at-risk readers up to grade level.

Dr. Harrell-Matthews said she anticipates about 50 students will participate at each site. One program coordinator will be hired by the district to oversee the program. Dr. Harrell-Matthews will serve as the supervisor of the MRR initiative at Clarksdale.

Using Reading Roadmap curriculums and working with the organization to collect and analyze data, the MRR program at Clarksdale will kick off in early November.

"We are so excited to work with the Clarksdale district," said Andrew Hysell, Executive Director of the Reading Roadmap. "We know that the district has great administration and great teachers, and has a very supportive community. Those are the keys to making the Reading Roadmap successful."

According to national reading measures, nearly two-thirds of America's fourth graders are not

proficient readers. Early reading skills can predict lifelong success. Without early literacy skills, students are four times less likely to graduate high school on time.

One feature of KRR is an eight-session series called Literacy-integrated Family Engagement (LIFE) that brings parents and siblings of students in the program to the school to support children's reading. The participants eat a meal together and engage in relationship-strengthening activities built around literacy. Dr. Harrell-Matthews said the LIFE series will kick off after the new year.

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