

Southwest Tennessee Community College awarded more than \$500,000 to provide tutoring for Shelby County students

MEMPHIS, TN, UNITED STATES, July 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Southwest Tennessee Community College was awarded \$512,915 for the Connected Literacy Partners Grant by the Tennessee Department of Education to provide a tutoring support program for students in Grades 1-3 throughout the Memphis and Shelby County area.

The logo for Southwest Tennessee Community College, featuring the word "SOUTHWEST" in large, bold, blue, sans-serif capital letters, and "TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE" in smaller, bold, red, sans-serif capital letters below it.

In partnership with Libertas School of Memphis, Promise Academy and Capstone Education Group, the program aims to close literacy gaps and increase the reading comprehension of 500 Shelby County students from Fall 2023 thru Spring 2024.

"We believe that education at a young age affects later enrollment in higher education," Southwest Tennessee Community College President Tracy D. Hall said. "Southwest stands ready to foster the crucial literacy skills our youth needs that are vital to their learning and lifelong success. As the community's college, we are ready to lend our full support to these students and their families across Shelby County."

According to Memphis Shelby County Schools, there are approximately 9,000 third graders throughout Shelby County, and each year, more than 6,500 of them move on to fourth grade with reading skills below grade level. Studies have shown that left unchecked or without proper supports, these students are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to experience academic failure, delinquency, violence, crime and incarceration. COVID-19 also had a significant impact on students' learning, as data confirms that the average student lost at least a quarter of a school year or more in reading.

The grant comes at an opportune time for Shelby County students given Tennessee's third grade retention law which states that students who are not proficient on the ELA TN Ready test are at risk of retention.

"This grant will allow us to accelerate literacy development for our first and second graders in anticipation of third grade assessments," said Bob Nardo, executive director of Libertas. "We are

thrilled with this grant opportunity and partnership with Southwest that will enable us to work collaboratively on literacy throughout the 2023 - 2024 school year. Libertas serves students facing educational opportunity gaps, many of whom are low-income and reading below their reading level.”

The Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, a statewide authorizer of public charter schools, endorsed the tutoring program. “As a district, we understand the importance of offering tutoring services outside of third grade alone. Our Shelby County-based schools serve predominantly low-income communities facing educational opportunity gaps and have a higher number of students with academic needs,” said TPCSC Executive Director Tess Stovall and Chairman Tom Griscom in a joint letter. In the 2021-2022 school year, approximately 62% of TPCSC third-graders did not achieve proficiency on third grade ELA TCAP assessment.

The grant earmarks Libertas School of Memphis, Promise Academy and Capstone Education Group schools to receive the on-site tutoring and instruction. Southwest plans to hire at least 25 tutors, a project coordinator and one other position to oversee the tutors. Families of the students can expect high quality tutoring and instruction as the tutors will receive training in the best practices of teaching foundational literacy.

In addition to offering tutoring to students, the grant supports a Family Literacy Council as a way to engage participating families and the community.

For more information about the Connected Literacy Partners Grant, contact Southwest Tennessee Community College Director of Academic Support, Thomas Cole, at tcole18@southwest.tn.edu.

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