

OPINION

Book smart

You can help ensure a child's academic success

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The details imparted in "Tests show state 3rd graders below normal reading levels (Aug. 10)" are alarming for our community. When the 2020-21 test re-



Melinda Haines is chief executive officer of The Literacy Alliance.

Project Reads is an afterschool program that matches trained volunteers with students who have been identified by the school as being below grade-level reading. It was founded in 1991 by a group of Fort Wayne business leaders to promote a literate and skilled citizenry and to support the area's public schools in their efforts to bring students to grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

In 2021, Project Reads was acquired by The Literacy Alliance. We are proud to continue providing this impactful program free of charge to our county's schools and students.

Project Reads

K-3 Reading Program
of The Literacy Alliance

sults came out last year showing precipitous pandemic-related drops for Allen County, staff at The Literacy Alliance was already prepared to address this issue through Project Reads.

During the last program year, Project Reads served 58 students at nine sites throughout Allen County, with 100% showing progress toward their goals. Eighty-eight percent improved by four or more reading levels.

The success of the program hinges on the volunteers, who deliver the program through weekly afterschool meetings with the same child throughout the school year.

Since returning to in-person service delivery last school year, we have seen an increasing need for our program as a way to assist young learners who can use even more assistance than what is provided to them during the school day. In fact, the number of schools requesting assistance for the 2022-23 has doubled from the previous year, from nine to 18.

We would like to fully staff all 18 schools, which are located in all four community school systems. To do this, we need to more than double our volunteer

base so we can provide a tutor for each child who would benefit from the program.

The time commitment is one hour a week throughout the school year, and we have sites available throughout the county, with most at Fort Wayne Community Schools.

If you would like to volunteer, please visit our website (literacyalliance.org/volunteer) to fill out an application or contact The Literacy Alliance volunteer coordinator, Nicole Phillippe, at 260-423-0008 or Nicole@fwliteracyalliance.org.

Volunteers do not need any special experience and will be fully trained in advance of their match.

Volunteering for Project Reads is a wonderful way to help a child succeed academically and build a life-changing relationship at the same time.

As a nonprofit serving our community since 1972, we look forward to continuing to address and conquer literacy challenges.