

Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading

Children's Policy Council Pilot Project
Macon County Prioritization Guide



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
Early Childhood
Education



Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading

The ability to read on grade level sets Alabama's children on the path to success. One of the most important predictors of a child's academic and future success is the ability to read by the end of the third grade. School success depends upon being a strong reader.

The Alabama Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (ACGLR) developed recommendations for local approaches to support improvement in grade level reading. The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE) leads the statewide network for Children's Policy Councils (CPC) and has created a grant opportunity for county CPCs to pilot strategies aligned with local needs and priorities in their overall efforts to improve grade level reading. This report is to inform and support the work of each county CPC awarded as a pilot CPC site.

Using this Prioritization Guide

The ACGLR Recommendations to Governor Kay Ivey developed the Measures of Success Framework, which includes the following focus areas:

1. High quality birth to age eight systems
2. Family engagement
3. Health and well-being
4. Learning outside the classroom
5. Children with special needs (special education, English Language Learners, and struggling readers)

Where available, data from the 2019 Kids Count County Reports and the county CPC 2020 needs assessment were aligned for each area of focus area to assist the county CPC in better understanding strengths and opportunities to support the selection of strategies to improve grade level reading. For focus areas without county level data, questions are presented to guide the county CPC in thinking about the scope of the issues and resources available. After reading through each of the focus areas, CPC teams are encouraged to use the final page to guide the selection of three of the above focus areas that could be addressed using the ADECE grant funds.

1. Birth to Age Eight Systems

Alabama First Class Pre-K

Ensure all families in the state have an opportunity to voluntarily enroll their four-year-old in a First Class Pre-K classroom in a setting preferred by the parent.¹

- *Children Participating in First Class Pre-K.* During the 2019-2020 school year, there were 5 First Class Pre-K classrooms in Macon County. In Macon County, **52.0%** of pre-Kindergarten aged children participated in First Class Pre-K during the past school year. Statewide, **36.7%** of pre-Kindergarten aged children participated in First Class Pre-K during the past school year. **A higher percentage of four-year-old children in Macon County participated in First Class Pre-K than in the state as a whole.**^{4, 5}

Early Head Start/Head Start & Affordable High-Quality Child Care

Identify ways to help families receive high-quality, affordable childcare in their communities.¹

- *Child Care Facilities.* As of April 2019, there were 13 child care facilities in Macon County.⁵

	Macon
Total All Child Care Facilities	13
Total All Licensed	11
Center Based Licensed	9
Center Based Exempt	2

High-Quality Literacy Instruction and Evidence-Based Professional Learning

Widen access to evidence-based professional development for early care and education professionals on the science of reading and language.¹

- What trainings and professional development opportunities are available to early care and education professionals in Macon County?

ADECE Resources

Office of Early Childhood Development

Challenging Behavior Project:

- 6 months of coaching to address challenging behaviors and adult resilience
- Materials purchased for classroom to build social emotional learning (SEL) materials with a focus on books related to SEL model- age appropriate

Family Engagement Project:

- 6-month coaching cycle to build family engagement in childcares and family childcares
- Funds given to centers to build family resource libraries and lending libraries

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership

- Childcares and Family childcares partner with local Head Start Programs through grantee DHR
- Read Right From the Start- coaches are trained in the model and embed literacy goals into teacher goals- focus on language nutrition model in the classroom and using each moment to build language
- Lending libraries to be established after COVID fears subside

The **Preschool to 3rd Grade Initiative** is providing school leaders from the 5 target counties the following:

- NAESP Pre-K – 3rd Grade Leadership Academy provided through CLAS
- P3 Grants
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Training
- Resources and materials for school leaders who want to learn more about Developmentally Appropriate Practices and developing an early learning continuum in Kindergarten through 3rd grade

First Teacher Home Visiting

- Home Visiting using the HIPPY model is available in Macon and Monroe counties for families with children ages 2 to 5.
- Home Visiting using the Parents as Teachers model is available in all 5 counties for families prenatally to Kindergarten entry.

Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)

- All 5 counties have access to IECMHC through a partnership with ADECE and the Alabama Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Children in First Class Pre-K classrooms can be referred for services by their Region Director
- All licensed early care centers have access to IECMHC through the First 5 Consultation Project. Referrals can be made through Help Me Grow or by calling the Alabama Partnership for Children directly.

Birth to 5 (B5) – Macon County

- Project Hope Initiatives (Not PDG B5)
- United Christian Preschool, Demonstration Site, receiving coaching support, and all teachers have completed Cox Campus (Read Right from the Start) Modules

- What topics, if any, are missing from this list? Are these resources adequate to meet professional learning needs?
- Does your CPC have a relationship with early care and education professionals such as preschool special education, child care management agency, early intervention, First Class Pre-K or home visiting?
- Do you have an early care and education focus within your CPC?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

2. Family & Student Engagement

First Teacher Home Visiting

Increase access to high-quality home-visiting programs to model best practices for families.¹

- *Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), and Parents as Teachers (PAT).* HIPPY, NFP, and PAT are evidence-based home visiting models available in Macon County. According to the 2020 Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) needs assessment, while the programs delivering HIPPY, NFP, and PAT in Macon County have the capacity to serve **131** families, it is estimated that there are **303** families potentially in need of home visiting.² **The need for home visiting exceeds the capacity in Macon County.**
- Does the CPC have a relationship with the agencies that provide HIPPY, NFP, and PAT in Macon County?
- Do the number of programs and the capacity they offer meet the needs in your county?
- Do you have an early care and education focus within your CPC?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort

Adult Education and Literacy Programs

Coordinate Alabama’s adult education and family literacy programs with youth literacy programs to cultivate a two-generation approach to family literacy to support children and parents together.¹

- *Births to Females with Less Than 12 Years of Education.* In Macon County, there was a decline in the number of births to females with less than 12 years of education between 2007 and 2017. In 2007, **22.4%** of births were to females with less than 12 years of education. This percentage fell to **19.2%** in 2017. There was also a significant decline in this measure in the state. In 2007, **22.7%** of births were to females with less than 12 years of education. In 2017, this percentage fell to **14.7%**. **Both Macon County and the state have demonstrated a reduction in the percentage of births to females with less than 12 years of education.**^{4,5}

	Macon County	Alabama
Births to Females with Less Than 12 Years of Education	Trending better	Trending better

- What programs are available in your county to support adults in obtaining a GED? Do the number of programs and the capacity they offer meet the needs in your county?
- What programs are available in your county to support adult literacy or strengthen reading skills of adults? Do the number of programs and the capacity they offer meet the needs in your county?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Parent Liaisons

Establish a cohort of specially trained parent liaisons to assist families in navigating resources and services available to them to facilitate with their social and economic needs.¹

- *2020 CPC Needs Assessment:* Parental involvement and family engagement were identified as the second highest needs in the 2020 Macon County Needs Assessment.³
- How are parents/caregivers made aware of the resources and services available to their children?
- How are parents/caregivers engaged as leaders within the school community?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

3. Health & Well-Being

Prenatal Care & Childhood Wellness

Increase access to prenatal care for expecting and new mothers and child wellness visits.¹

- Females Receiving Adequate or Adequate-Plus Prenatal Care.* Adequate prenatal care is defined as “prenatal care begun by the fourth month and 80-109 percent of the recommended visits were made”. Adequate-plus prenatal care is defined as “prenatal care begun by the fourth month and 110 percent or more of the recommended visits were made”. Since 2007, there has been a decrease in the number of women in Macon County who have received adequate or adequate-plus prenatal care. In 2017, **64.4%** of pregnant women received adequate or adequate plus prenatal care compared to **72.5%** in 2007. Alabama provided adequate or adequate plus prenatal care to almost **74.6%** of pregnant women in 2007 but fell to **74.3%** in 2017. **Both Macon County and the state have demonstrated decreased access to prenatal care over time.**^{4,5}

	Macon County	Alabama
Females Receiving Adequate or Adequate Plus Prenatal Care	Trending worse	Trending worse

- Infant Mortality Rate.* The infant mortality rate in Macon County decreased between 2007 and 2017, from **23.2** infant deaths per 1000 live births to **5.5**. In Alabama, there was a decrease in the infant mortality rate between 2007 and 2017, from **10.0** infant deaths per 1,000 live births to **7.4**.^{4,5} In 2020, the Macon County CPC “collaborated with the Gift of Life Foundation, Inc.’s infant mortality prevention initiative.”³
- Children without Health Insurance.* In Macon County, **1.7%** of children do not have health insurance. In Alabama, **3.5%** of children do not have health insurance. **A lower percentage of children are uninsured in Macon County compared to the state.**^{4,5}

Mental Health Awareness

Require trauma-informed training as part of ongoing teacher preparation.¹

- 2020 CPC Needs Assessment:* Mental health was ranked as the highest need in the 2020 Macon County Needs Assessment. The county does not have any in-patient beds available for children or adults.³ In 2020, the Macon County Juvenile Court partnered with TAG Counseling and Consulting Services, LLC “to provide support and counseling to children in need of supervision.”³
- Do teachers in Macon County receive trauma-informed training as part of their professional development?
- What mental health trainings are available to teachers?
- Do you have mental health experts within your CPC membership?

- Does your local school system have a school mental health focus such as Mental Health First Aid, school based mental health counselors, or other system-wide efforts?
- Does your school system have a mental health coordinator? Are you working with your school nurses within your system to address student mental health needs and teacher training?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

School Attendance

Develop community-based initiatives to address chronic absenteeism. ¹

- *Chronic Absenteeism.* During the 2017-2018 school year, **28.7%** of students in Macon County were absent for 10-17 school days. Almost **5.3%** of students in Macon County were absent for 18 days or more. In the state, **24.2%** of students were absent for 10-17 school days and **12.7%** were absent for 18 days or more. **A higher percentage of students were absent 10-17 school days in Macon County when compared to the state. However, a much lower percentage of students were absent 18 or more days in Macon County when compared to the state.**^{4,5}
- *2020 CPC Needs Assessment.* In 2020, the Macon County Juvenile Court and the Macon County Board of Education were awarded a grant “to intervene and prevent children from entering the juvenile court system for school related issues,” including truancy.³
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Physical Education

Ensure local education agencies are in full compliance with the state’s daily physical education requirement. ¹

- What is happening in your schools to meet physical education minimum requirements?
- Do you have initiatives in your schools focused on physical activity and nutrition?
- What does access to outdoor play and sports look like in your county?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

4. Learning Outside the Classroom

Collaborative Partnerships & Funding

Leverage community-based before and after school and summer learning programs to offer additional learning opportunities for struggling readers.¹

- What community-based organizations provide before and after school and summer learning programs that include support for struggling readers? Do the number of programs and the capacity they offer meet the needs in your county?
- Do Macon County schools partner with these community organizations to link students to additional resources?
- Are there school or community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Before & After School Programs

Adhere to proven research-based markers of quality.¹

- How is student learning supported outside of the school day *during* the school year?
- Are there school or community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Summer Learning

Adhere to proven research-based markers of quality.¹

- How is student learning supported during the summer months?
- Are there school or community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

5. Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers

Early Intervention

Expand early intervention efforts to identify learning deficits at the earliest stages.¹

- *Aged 0-3 Receiving Early Intervention Services.* Between 2008 and 2018, there was a slight decrease in the number of children receiving early intervention services, from **11** to **10** children. Comparing the same years, there was an overall increase in the number of children in Alabama receiving early intervention services, from **5,519** to **7,359**. **Since denominators (total numbers of children ages 0-3 with a developmental delay and/or who may be eligible for early intervention services) were not provided for the county or the state, trends in the percentages served cannot be determined.**^{4, 5}
- Are there school or community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Adaptive & Supportive Technology for Students with Special Needs

Equip more communities with the adaptive and supportive technology needed to address special needs.¹

- What adaptive and supportive technologies are available in the county? Is what is available adequate to meet needs?
- Are there school or community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Specialized Training

Establish a cohort of regional, special education and ELL coaches to provide additional classroom support for teachers serving students in these populations who experience reading challenges.¹

- *English Language Learners.* Between 2014-2015 and 2017-2018, there was a decrease in the percentage of students classified as English Language Learners, from **0.3%** and **0.1%**. There was an increase in the percentage of students classified as English language learners in Alabama during the same period, from **1.8%** to **3.5%**. **Macon County experienced a decrease in the percentage of students who were English language learners between the 2014-2015 and 2017-2018 school years while the state experienced an increase.**^{4, 5}
- Do teachers in Macon County have access to Science of Reading or other comprehensive reading education strategies professional learning opportunities (examples, LETRS)? Are they supported to participate in these trainings? Is training adequate to meet professional learning needs?
- Do any schools in your county have access to a Reading Specialist through the Alabama Reading Initiative?
- Are there community-based organizations who could join CPC for this effort?

Prioritization Tool

Reflecting on the data and questions presented for each focus area, use the following questions to help you prioritize **three** focus areas to include on your application for funding.

Birth to Age Eight Systems

- What programs/initiatives **are working** to support Birth to Age Eight Systems in Macon County? What does Macon County just **need more of** to continue success?
- What programs/initiatives **are not working** to support Birth to Age Eight Systems in Macon County? What needs to change to **improve** these programs/initiatives?
- What level of **quality** are the resources that support Birth to Age Eight Systems in Macon County?
- What programs/initiatives are **missing** in the effort to support Birth to Age Eight Systems in Macon County?
- Is there interest/buy-in to support Birth to Age Eight Systems in Macon County?
- Are there existing partnerships that can be expanded or opportunities to connect with community organizations to support Birth to Age Eight Systems in Macon County?

Family & Student Engagement

- What programs/initiatives **are working** to support Family & Student Engagement in Macon County? What does Macon County just **need more of** to continue success?
- What programs/initiatives **are not working** to support Family & Student Engagement in Macon County? What needs to change to **improve** these programs/initiatives?
- What level of **quality** are the resources that support Family & Student Engagement in Macon County?

- What programs/initiatives are **missing** in the effort to support Family & Student Engagement in Macon County?
- Is there interest/buy-in to support Family & Student Engagement in Macon County?
- Are there existing partnerships that can be expanded or opportunities to connect with community organizations to support Family & Student Engagement in Macon County?

Health & Well-Being

- What programs/initiatives **are working** to support Health & Well-Being in Macon County? What does Macon County just **need more of** to continue success?
- What programs/initiatives **are not working** to support Health & Well-Being in Macon County? What needs to change to **improve** these programs/initiatives?
- What level of **quality** are the resources that support Health & Well-Being in Macon County?
- What programs/initiatives are **missing** in the effort to support Health & Well-Being in Macon County?
- Is there interest/buy-in to support Health & Well-Being in Macon County?
- Are there existing partnerships that can be expanded or opportunities to connect with community organizations to support Health & Well-Being in Macon County?

Learning Outside the Classroom

- What programs/initiatives **are working** to support Learning Outside the Classroom in Macon County? What does Macon County just **need more of** to continue success?
- What programs/initiatives **are not working** to support Learning Outside the Classroom in Macon County? What needs to change to **improve** these programs/initiatives?

- What level of **quality** are the resources that support Learning Outside the Classroom in Macon County?
- What programs/initiatives are **missing** in the effort to support Learning Outside the Classroom in Macon County?
- Is there interest/buy-in to support Learning Outside the Classroom in Macon County?
- Are there existing partnerships that can be expanded or opportunities to connect with community organizations to support Learning Outside the Classroom in Macon County?

Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers

- What programs/initiatives **are working** to support Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers in Macon County? What does Macon County just **need more of** to continue success?
- What programs/initiatives **are not working** to support Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers in Macon County? What needs to change to **improve** these programs/initiatives?
- What level of quality are the resources that support Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers in Macon County?
- What programs/initiatives are **missing** in the effort to support Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers in Macon County?
- Is there interest/buy-in to support Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers in Macon County?
- Are there existing partnerships that can be expanded or opportunities to connect with community organizations to support Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) & Struggling Readers in Macon County?

Final Step

Considering the data, discussion, and overall reflections on your systems that support grade level reading, which **three** focus areas offer the greatest opportunity for you to make progress in your county? Check the **three** that you selected.

- High quality birth to age eight systems
- Family engagement
- Health and well-being
- Learning outside the classroom
- Children with special needs (special education, English Language Learners, and struggling readers)

References

1. Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading. (2020). (rep.). *Recommendations to Governor Kay Ivey*. Montgomery, AL.
2. Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. (2020). (rep.). *Alabama Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program 2020 Needs Assessment*. Montgomery, AL.
3. Children's Policy Councils of Alabama. (2020). (rep.). *Macon County Children's Policy Council Needs Assessment 2020*. Montgomery, AL.
4. VOICES for Alabama's Children. (2019). (rep.). *Alabama's Kids Count Data Book*. Montgomery, AL.
5. VOICES for Alabama's Children. (2019). (rep.). *2019 County Data Profiles - Macon*. Montgomery, AL.

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