



# MEDIA RELEASE

OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

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## Mayor Jacobs Thanks Schools and Community for Focusing on Literacy

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs issues the following statement on Knox County literacy rates:

*“Knox County is seeing important academic gains this year. Countywide, third grade English language arts proficiency **increased 11 percent**, meaning 42.9% of students - **more than the state average** - met or exceeded the state literacy standard. Factor in students who retested and those exempt from interventions, and the number of third graders **meeting the advancement criteria goes up to 70%**.*

*Of course, the goal is for every third grader to meet and/or exceed the expectations to move onto fourth grade, so we still have a long way to go, but it is exciting to see things moving in the right direction.*

*These third graders were first graders during the pandemic, so a lot of what they need to be successful readers like phonics and speech-language was taught through a computer screen or a mask.*

*Our teachers—with the support of school administration, Superintendent Jon Rysewyk, and the community—have worked diligently to improve important foundational skills and early literacy instruction. Clearly, that work is paying off and we should celebrate their victory.*

*It’s important to remember that the responsibility to teach kids doesn’t belong to schools alone; it belongs to everyone. That’s why I’m grateful to our public libraries and the community for jumping whole-heartedly into the Read City USA programs and accepting the challenge to become the best-read community in America.*

*It’s easy to get lost in percentages when we talk about growth in education, but the fact is that improving literacy is good for Knox County. Strong readers become successful students who are more likely to graduate high school. High school graduates are more likely to seek continuing education, get good jobs, and start their lives here—in the community that raised them.”*

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According to [Scholastic](#) and other research, kids lose significant knowledge in reading and math over summer break. In fact, third, fourth, and fifth graders lose, on average, about 20 percent and 27 percent of their school year gains in reading and math, respectively, equivalent to about two months’ worth of learning. Younger students and children from low-income families seem to be disproportionately affected.

This loss can easily be avoided by engaging kids in basic reading and math throughout the summer. Suggestions include attending summer camps/programs; playing physical and online educational games; using practice workbooks; participating in imaginative play; and completing reading challenges.

Read City USA is designed to engage and empower our community to ensure that all children develop a love of learning and reading. If you aren't participating and want to learn how to get involved, contact your local library, or visit their [website](#).