



# OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

# Don't Miss!



## 50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are **\$1** each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



## SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10:45 a.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.**



## PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7  
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.  
Choptank Ballroom



## KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7  
8:00 – 11:00 p.m.  
Windjammer



# Reading Buddies

An Innovative Approach to  
Addressing the Community's  
Reading Crisis



# Learning Objectives

1. Explain two **Science of Reading strategies** for volunteers to implement with students.
2. Name one strategy or community partner to **identify students** in need of literacy support.
3. Name one strategy or community partner to assist in **recruiting volunteers**.
4. Identify at least one **benefit of Reading Buddies** for the student, the volunteer, and the Library.
5. List the **steps required to implement Reading Buddies** in your community.

Interested in learning more?



# Stay Tuned! Program Pilot Opportunity

Interested in learning more?



# Starting with a Story

“If I only had 30 minutes...”



NEWS

CENTERPIECE FEATURED TOP STORY

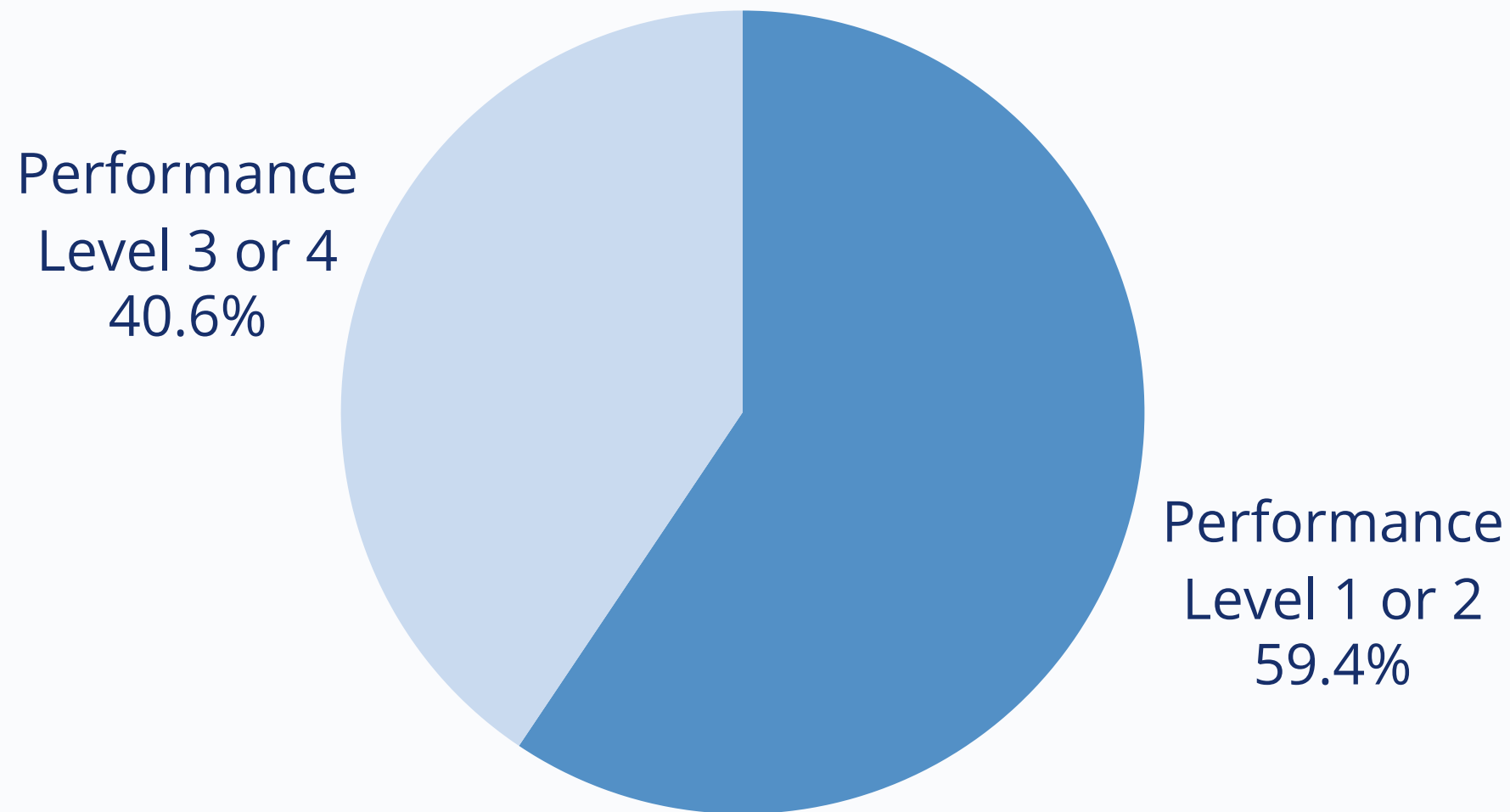
## CCPS teachers face difficulties, stress in face of large class sizes

Matt Hubbard [mhubbard@chespub.com](mailto:mhubbard@chespub.com) Nov 1, 2023

CECIL COUNTY — It would not have been unreasonable to assume recess, rather than class, was taking place in the library at Bayview Elementary ...

# Why Reading Buddies?

The Community Reading Crisis:



2024-2025 MD Report Card: Cecil County  
(MCAP ELA Grades 3-5)

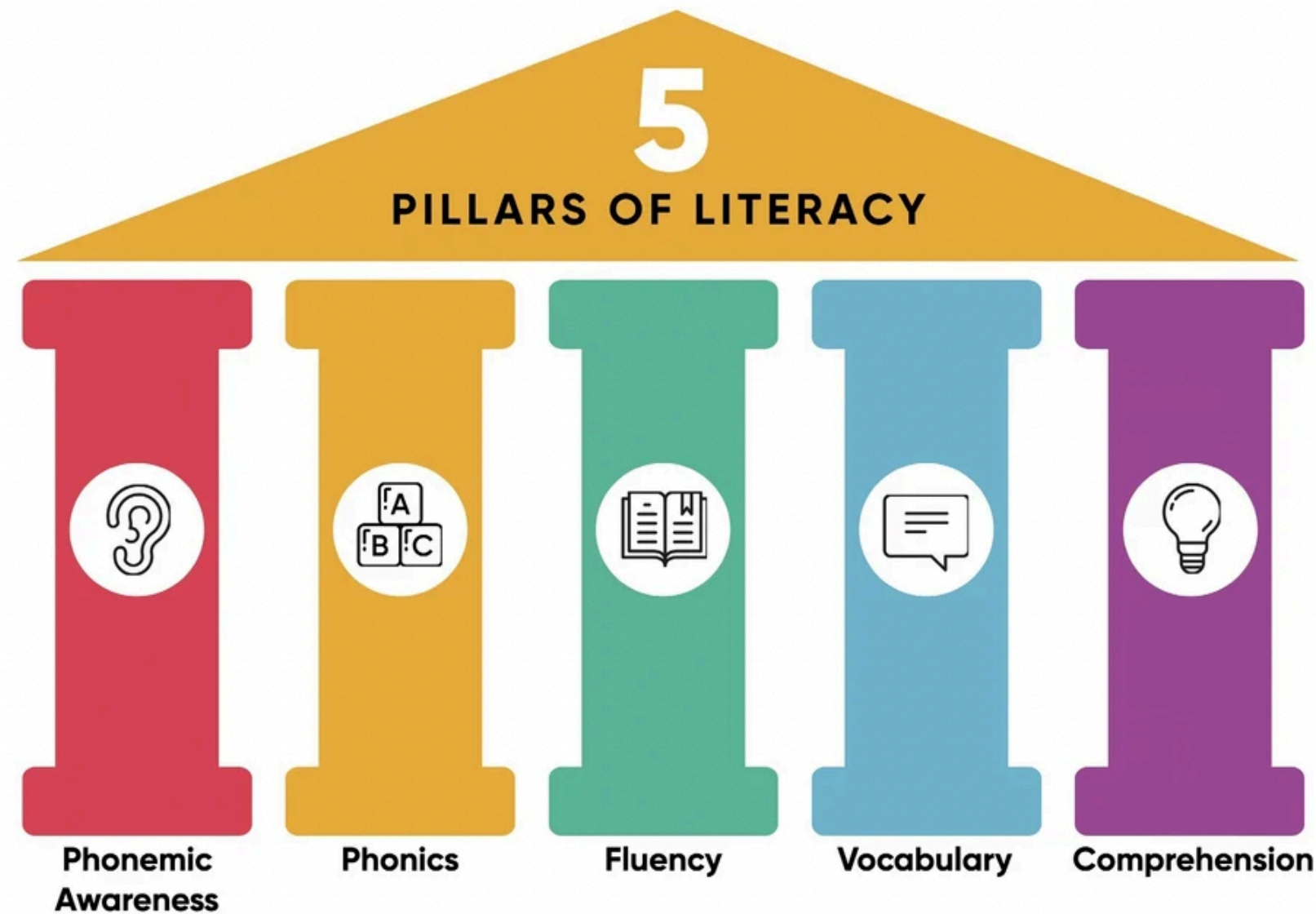
"Average scores for age 9 students in 2022 declined 5 points in reading compared to 2020. *This is the largest average score decline in reading since 1990.*"

- Report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

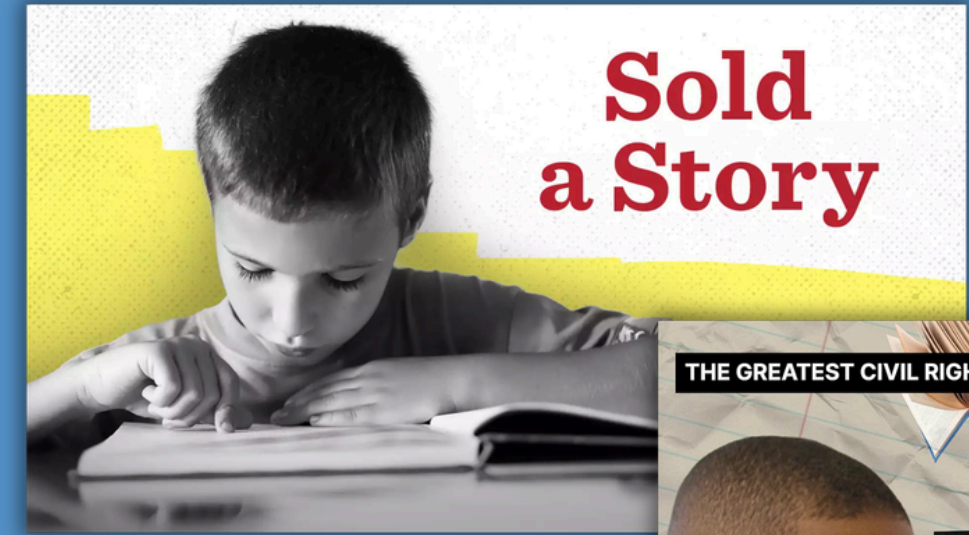
Interested in learning more?



# Why Reading Buddies?



Building blocks of the Science of Reading  
– Developed by the National Reading Panel



Science of Reading  
Training- MD  
Libraries Niche  
Academy.

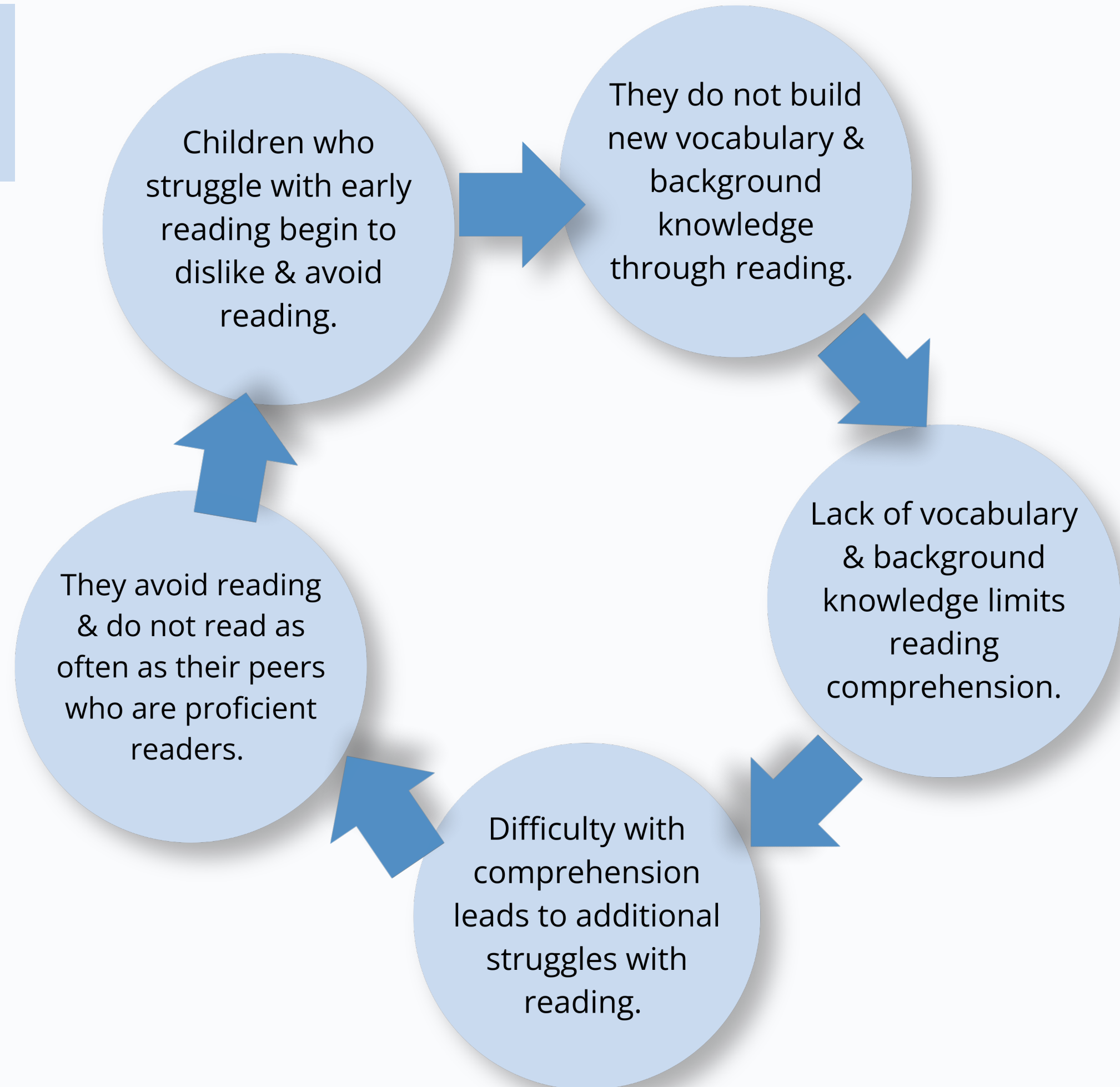
## State Board Calls for the Adoption of Science of Reading Statewide

*All Maryland public schools will use Science of Reading methods starting 2024-25 school year.*

**BALTIMORE (January 23, 2024)** – Today, the Maryland State Board of Education called for the statewide adoption and implementation of literacy instruction based on the Science of Reading starting with the 2024-25 academic year.

# Why Reading Buddies?

The “Matthew Effect”  
Keith Stanovich (1986)



# Why Reading Buddies?

## CCPL Mission:

[Champion Reading](#). Build Knowledge. Inspire Curiosity. Connect Community.

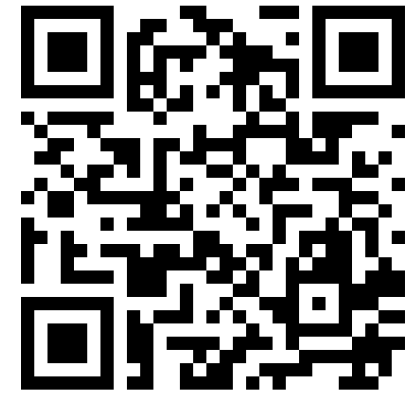
## FY24-FY26 Strategic Plan

Amplify resources and partnerships that [boldly address](#) the community's reading crisis.

Interested in learning more?



# Advocacy: Finding Your Why



<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov>

## Welcome to the Maryland Public Schools Report Card.

Please select which Data you would like to view:

**View our State Data**



**View District Data**

Select a County

Submit

**View Your School Report Card**

Search for School by Name or ID

[View Schools List](#)

# Program Overview

## What it is:

- For elementary students in Kindergarten through 5th grade
- Weekly, one-on-one reading practice with a volunteer mentor
- Instilling confidence and a love of reading through relationship-building and positive reinforcement
- Building skills through repetition, practice, and literacy games

## What it is not:

- Direct reading instruction
- Homework help/tutoring
- Assessment-based
- One-on-one time with a certified reading coach



# Program Overview

## Location

- Library Branch
- Offsite Location- Community Partner

## Schedule

- 10 week session
- 1 hour per week

## Set Up

- Sign-in sheet for volunteers & students
- Tables around the room for each pair
- Curated reading materials
- Literacy games



### Example Hour

**Opening** (5 minutes) Good things- You and the child share some "good things" that are happening in your life or some other get to know each other game.

**Select books** (5 minutes) Have the child pick 3-5 books that they are interested in reading.

#### First book

Do a picture walk (3-5 minutes)

The child flips through the book and tells you what they think is happening in the pictures. Have the child point to words they may not know how to pronounce and tell them the word. Have the child point to words they do not know the meaning of and explain the meaning.

Read the first book together (10 minutes)

Stop and ask questions along the way:

1. Who are the characters in this story?
2. What is the setting (where are they)?
3. What do you predict will happen next? What makes you *think* that?
4. What is their problem?
5. What is the solution?
6. If you could change the ending of this book, what would you change?

After reading- Ask and answer comprehension questions about the book (5 minutes)

**Game** (15 minutes) Pick an early literacy game to play

#### Second book

Do a picture walk (3-5 minutes)

The child flips through the book and tells you what they think is happening in the pictures. Have the child point to words they may not know how to pronounce and tell them the word. Have the child point to words they do not know the meaning of and explain the meaning.

Read the second book together (10 minutes)

Stop and ask questions along the way:

1. Who are the characters in this story?
2. What is the setting (where are they)?
3. What do you predict will happen next? What makes you *think* that?
4. What is their problem?
5. What is the solution?
6. If you could change the ending of this book, what would you change?

After reading- Ask and answer comprehension questions about the book (5 minutes)



# Step 1: Volunteers

## Recruitment Materials:

- Flyer & postcards in branches
- Social media
- Position description
- Webpage-

[cecilcountylibrary.org/about/volunteering](http://cecilcountylibrary.org/about/volunteering)

## Local Partnership:

- AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer Program
- Volunteer Cecil
- DCS Volunteer Fairs

**Cecil County Public LIBRARY**

**Volunteer Position Description  
Reading Buddy**

**Position Summary:** As a Reading Buddy, you will be paired with an elementary-aged student to practice reading and early literacy skills. Through one-on-one reading time and engaging literacy games, you will encourage a shared love of reading and help a young reader gain confidence in their reading abilities. Reading Buddies will be trained to serve as reading mentors and will commit to weekly meetings at the Library with their reader over the course of the year.

**Essential Functions:**  
Reading Buddy Volunteers will:

- Work with their assigned student through one-on-one reading.
- Engage in games and activities to promote reading development.
- Encourage a love of reading and reading comprehension by using various reading strategies.
- Foster reader confidence through positive reinforcement and encouragement of improvement.
- Maintain a positive, calm, and patient attitude.
- Proactively communicate with the Library's Youth Services & Outreach Department.
- Uphold standards of privacy.

**Qualifications:**

- Ability to interact dynamically with children.
- Ability to remain composed and calm.
- Ability to gain working knowledge of the library.
- Ability to act as a representative of the library.

**Preferred Experience:**

- Experience reading with children.

**Location:** Branch Location to Be Determined

**Time Requirements:**

- One hour per week during the following times:
  - Fall: October-December
  - Spring: February-April
  - Summer: June-August
- Training – 2 hour workshop

**VOLUNTEER TO BECOME A  
Reading Buddy**

Applications accepted on a rolling basis. Volunteers interested in the spring session of Reading Buddies (February-April) should apply by Tuesday, December 31

[cecilcountylibrary.org/about/volunteering](http://cecilcountylibrary.org/about/volunteering)

**Would you like to mentor a new reader?**

**Do you have experience reading with children?**

**Can you inspire confidence and a love of reading?**

Reading Buddies meet for weekly, one-on-one sessions with an elementary aged student. Branch locations to be determined based on volunteer interest and availability. Training provided. Must be 18+. Volunteers are required to complete a background check.

**Please note: All volunteers age 55+ are asked to also enroll with our partners at Cecil County Department of Community Services' AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer Program.**  
[tinyurl.com/CecilAmeriCorps](http://tinyurl.com/CecilAmeriCorps)

**Reading Buddies**  
**Cecil County Public LIBRARY**

# Step 1: Volunteers

## Enrollment:

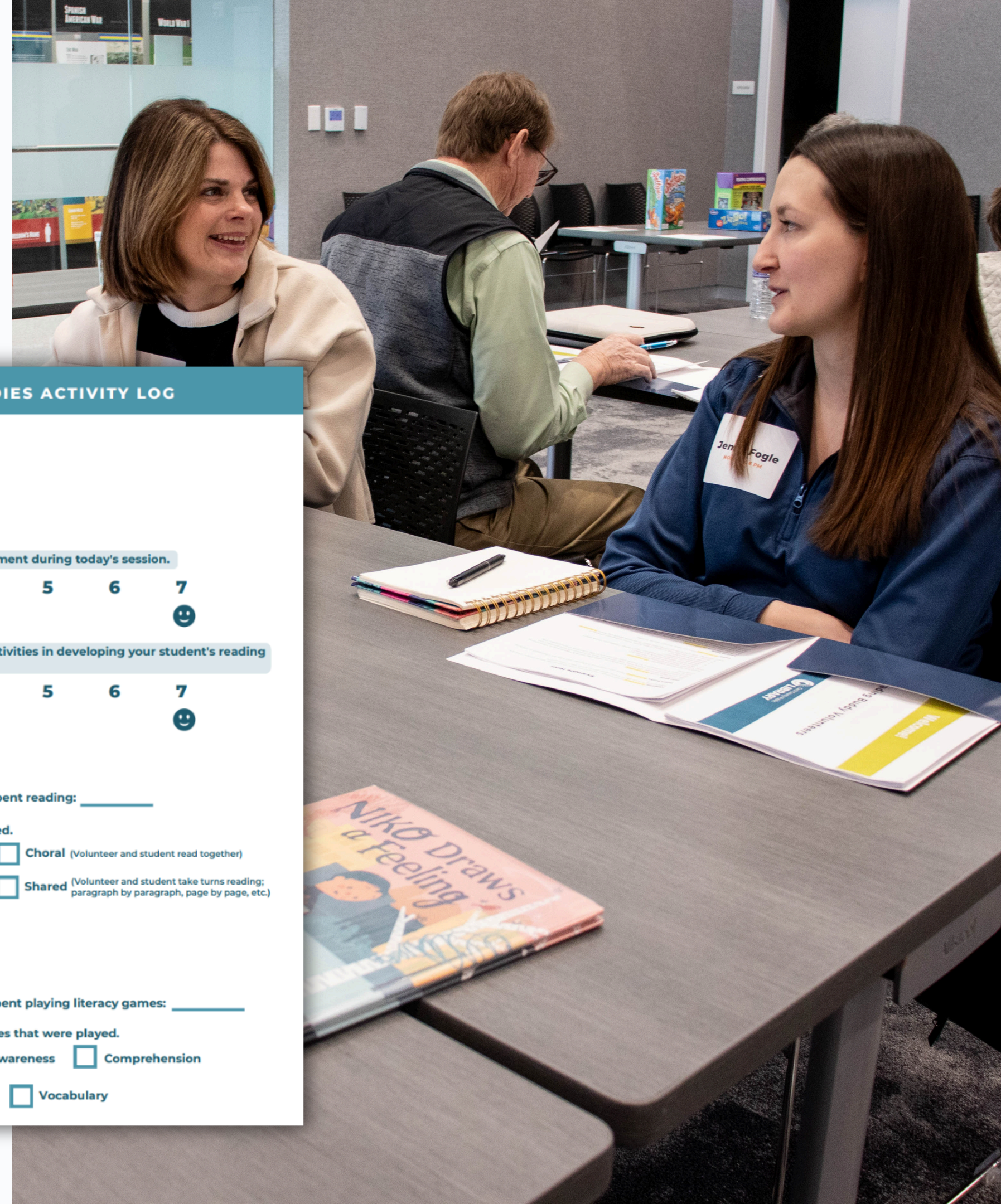
1. Application
2. Interview
3. Background Check



# Step 1: Volunteers

## Orientation

- 2-hour training on Science of Reading basics and literacy fundamentals:
  - Organized by 5 Pillars of Literacy
  - Interactive exercises
  - Example videos
- Introduction of materials
  - Books
  - Games
  - Daily activity log
  - Packet of resources



**READING BUDDIES ACTIVITY LOG**

**Session Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Session Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(CCPL Staff Only) Student ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rate your student's level of engagement during today's session.**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☹️ 😐 😊

**Rate the effectiveness of today's activities in developing your student's reading skills.**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☹️ 😐 😊

**Reading Time**

Estimate how many minutes were spent reading: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check the types of reading completed.**

Read-aloud (Volunteer Led)     Choral (Volunteer and student read together)

Echo (Volunteer reads/student repeats what was read)     Shared (Volunteer and student take turns reading; paragraph by paragraph, page by page, etc.)

Guided (Student reads independently, with support as needed.)

**Game Time**

Estimate how many minutes were spent playing literacy games: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check the skills covered by the games that were played.**

Phonics     Phonemic Awareness     Comprehension

Spelling     Sight Words     Vocabulary

# Step 2: Students

## Recruitment: Our Approach

Direct partnership

- Cecil County Public Schools
- Targeted Outreach Partners- Judy Center, Cecil County LULAC, Multilingual Coordinator

*Padres,*  
**¿SU HIJO NECESITA MÁS APOYO CON LA LECTURA?**

Regístrese ahora en el

Los estudiantes se reunirán cada semana desde el 6 de octubre hasta el 15 de diciembre. El espacio es limitado y se asigna por orden de reserva. Elija una opción.

**Biblioteca Pública de Perryville**  
Lunes a las 4:30pm  
(410) 996- 6070, opción 5

**Biblioteca Pública de Elkton**  
Martes a las 5 y 6:30pm  
(410) 996-5600, opción 5

Para registrarse, llame a la biblioteca

Cecil County Public LIBRARY  
www.cecilcountylibrary.org

*Parents,*  
**DOES YOUR CHILD NEED MORE SUPPORT WITH READING?**

Sign up now for CCPL's Reading Buddy program. Students will be partnered with a trained volunteer to practice reading skills by sharing books and playing educational games.

**A free program for students in K-5th Grade.**

Students will meet once a week with their Reading Buddy for the fall session from October 6 to December 15. Space is limited and timeslots are given on a first come, first served basis. Choose from one of the following options:

**Perryville Branch Library**  
Mondays at 4:30pm  
(410) 996- 6070, option 5

**Elkton Branch Library**  
Tuesdays at 5 and 6:30pm  
(410) 996-5600, option 5

**Rising Sun Branch Library**  
Wednesdays at 3:15 and 4:30pm  
(410) 658-4025

**North East Branch Library**  
Tuesdays at 4:30 and 6pm  
(410) 996-6269, ext. 1556

Call the library to register.

Cecil County Public LIBRARY  
www.cecilcountylibrary.org

# Step 2: Students

## Matching Students with Volunteers

- Pre-survey for parents
- Knowing the volunteers
- Email volunteers to tell them about their student



# Turn & Talk

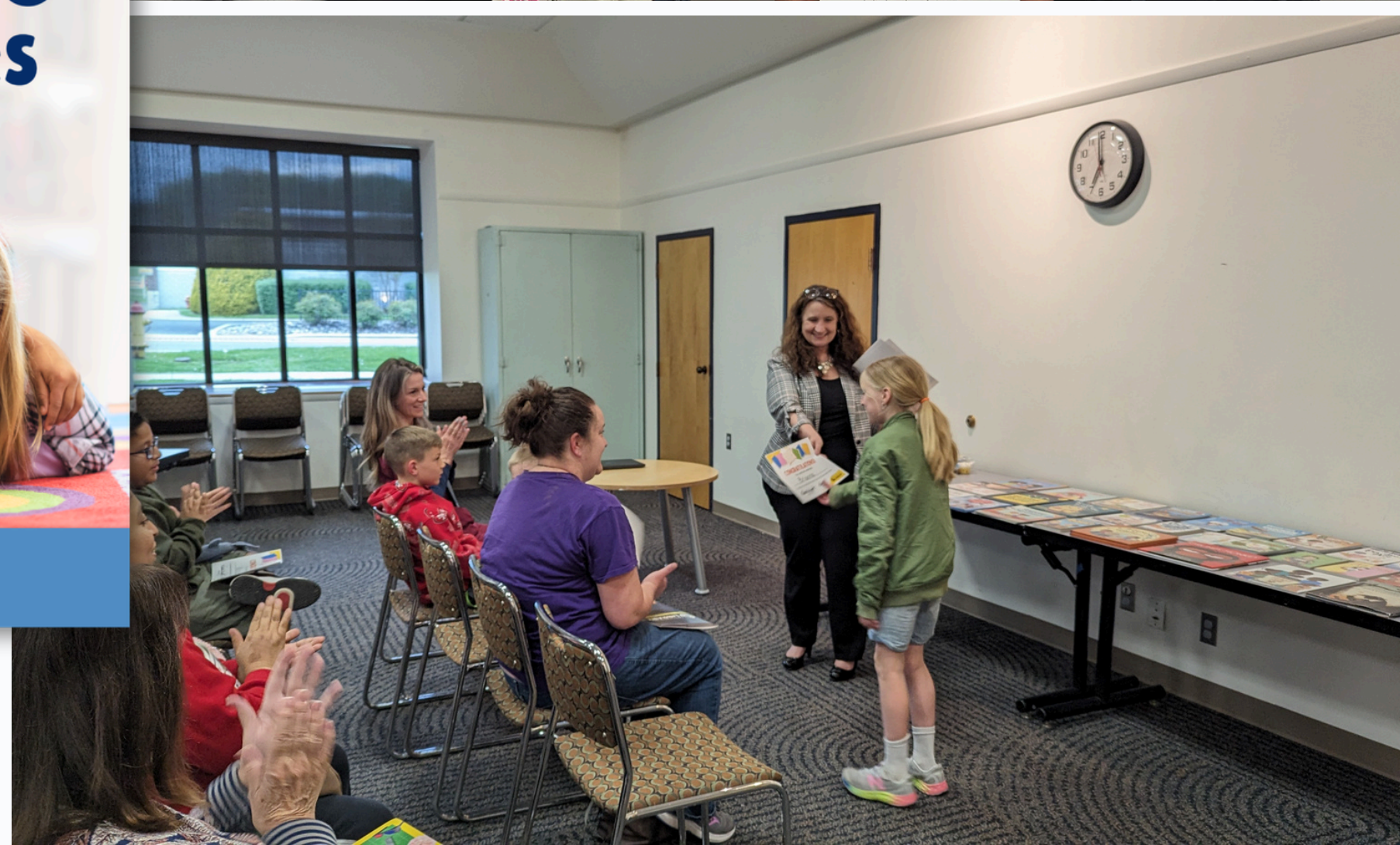
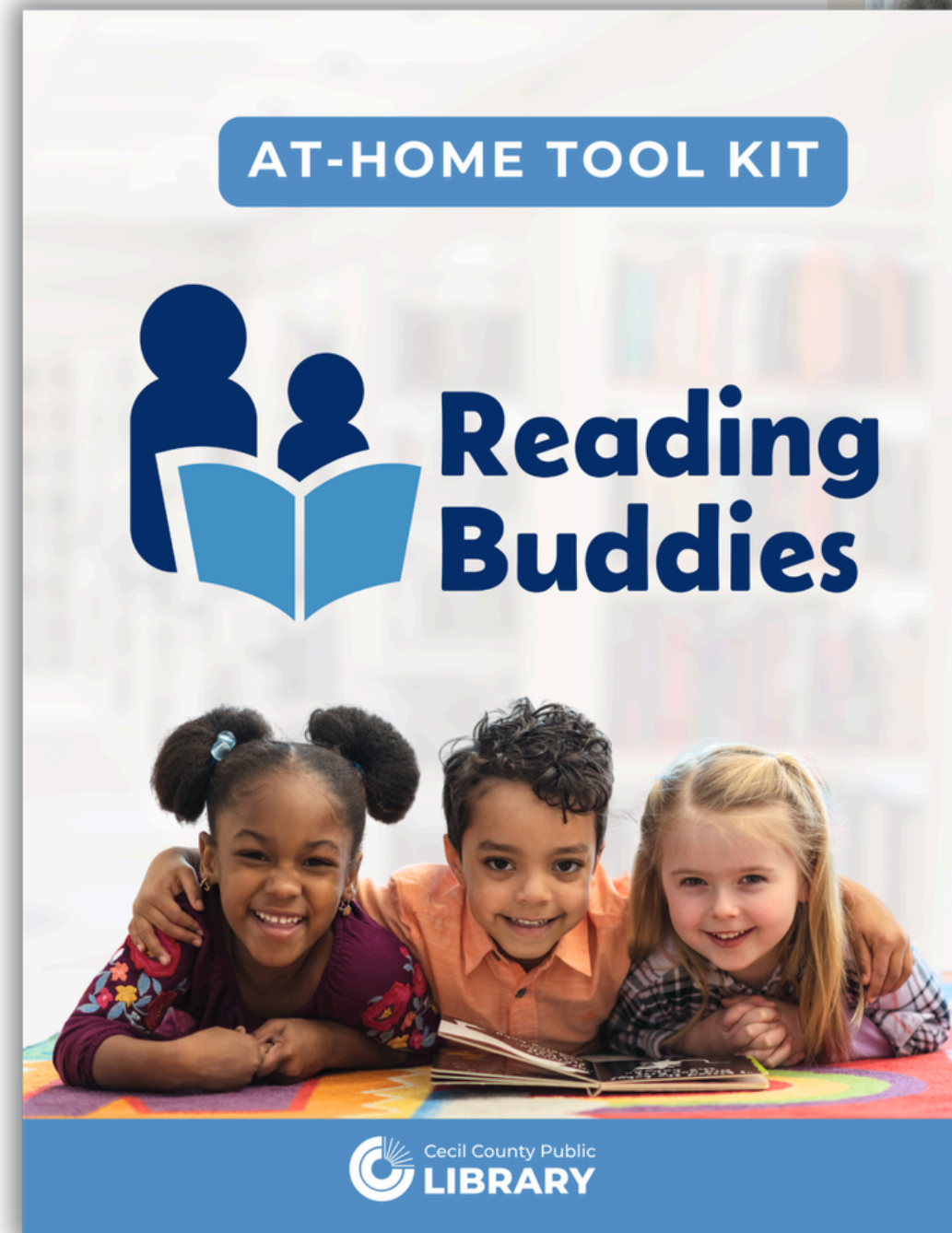
1. Offsite location options
2. Volunteer recruitment strategies & partnerships
3. Student recruitment strategies & partnerships

Interested in learning more?



# Caregivers

- Parent Session
- At-Home Toolkit
- Final Celebration



# Volunteer Appreciation BREAKFAST



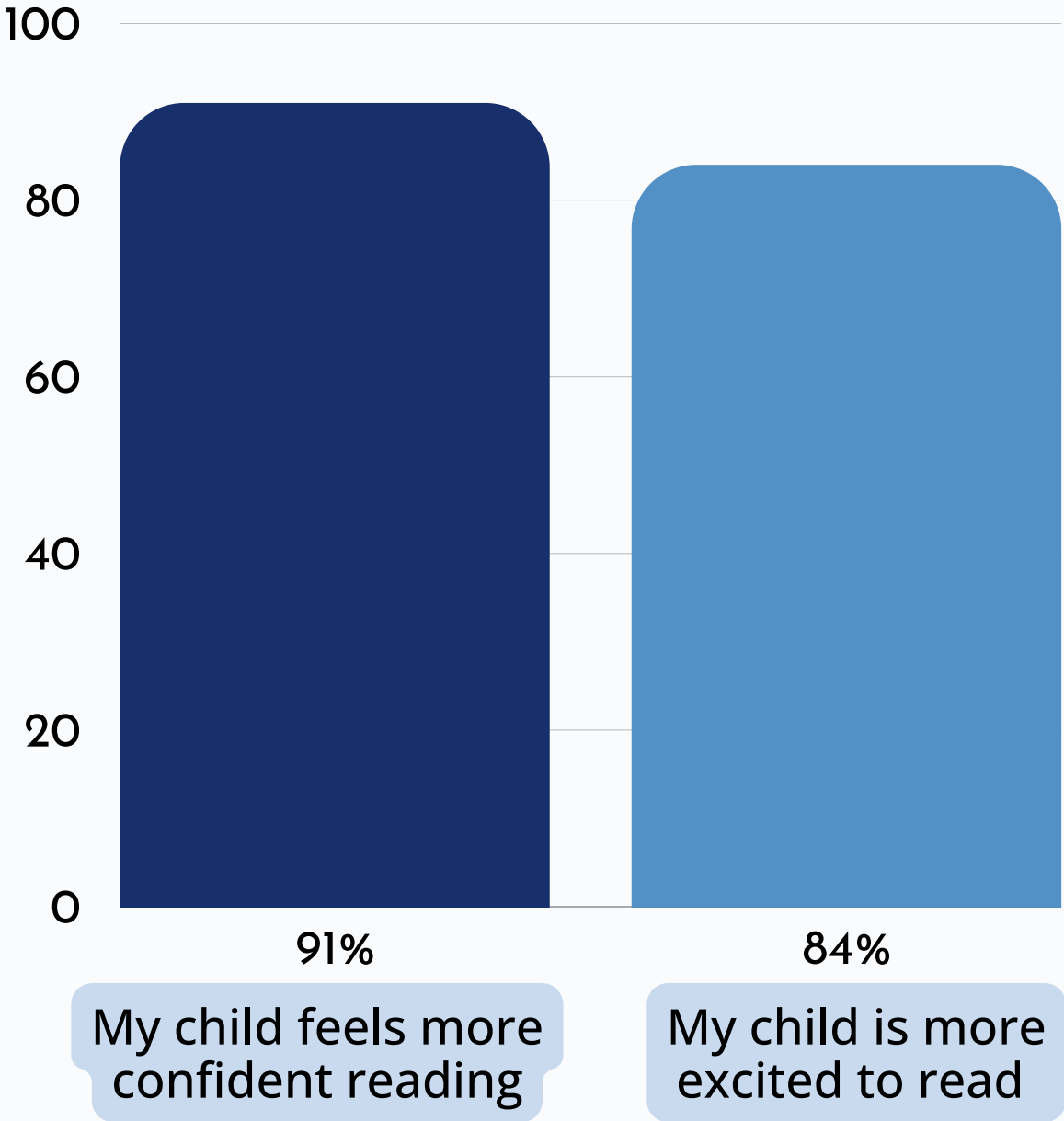
Cecil County Public  
**LIBRARY**



Friends  
**Foundation**  
CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

# Student Outcomes

Caregiver Survey Data



“Azeem loves to read books. He actually will stop watching tv to read a book. He likes to draw the animals he finds in books.”

“I saw improvement in his enjoyment of reading. Miss Marsha made reading fun!”

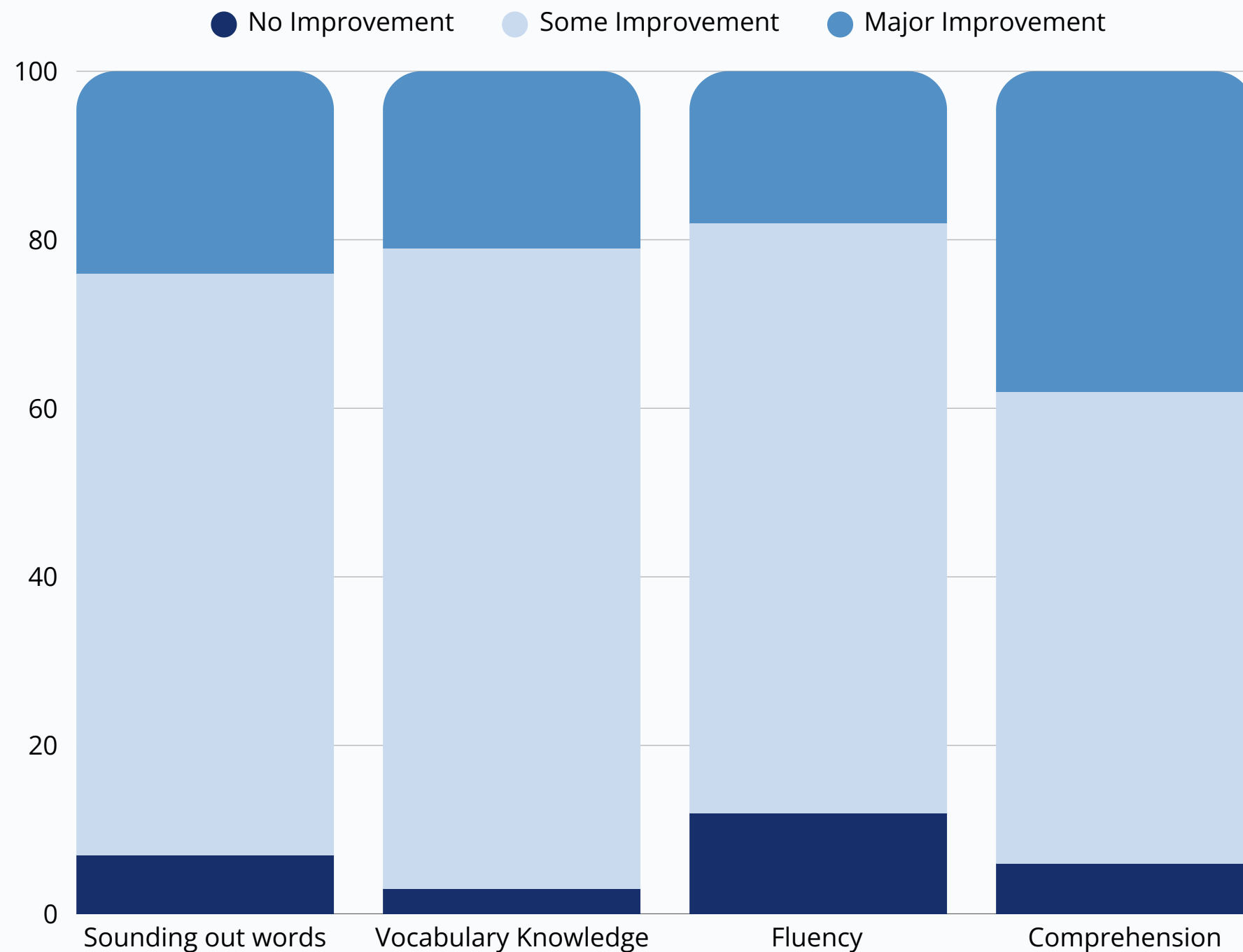
“My children were excited every Tuesday to come to the library to read books. Jennah is improving with blending sounds.”

Interested in learning more?



# Student Outcomes

Volunteer Post Program Survey Data



“Preliminary results show most gains made in grades 2 & 5. Yet all students showed literacy growth across literacy measures. Fluency was a key area of growth for all students (oral work fluency and nonsense words).”



Interested in learning more?



# Volunteer Outcomes

"I enjoyed having conversations with Bryce. I don't get to spend time with children very often!"

"I enjoyed that this volunteering opportunity allowed me to feel like I was directly helping a child in the community."

"As a retired teacher I sometimes miss the student interaction."

"It's a joy to see their eyes light up with self-confidence when their goals have been met."

Interested in learning more?



# Turn & Talk

Discuss potential roadblocks or considerations.

Interested in learning more?



# Considerations

- Spaces
- Transportation
- Attendance
- The “gentle no”



Interested in learning more?



# Pilot Opportunity

## Pilot participants receive:

1. Complete program toolkit-
  - Marketing templates
  - Volunteer orientation & training materials
  - At-Home Toolkit for parents/caregivers
2. Ongoing training & support
3. All program materials (at no cost!)-
  - Set of books for program use
  - Games & literacy aids



### Table of Contents

#### Section 1: Introduction

- I. Letter from the Creators
- II. Attribution/Acknowledgements
- III. Program Overview

#### Section 2: Program at a Glance

#### Section 3: Implementation Guide

- I. Section 3A: Location
  - a. Library Branch Implementation
    - i. Space Considerations
    - ii. Benefits & Challenges
  - b. Off-Site Implementation
    - i. Space Considerations
    - ii. Benefits & Challenges
    - iii. Suggested Partnerships
    - iv. Sample Partner MOU's
- II. Section 3B: Volunteers
  - a. Volunteer Recruitment/Onboarding



Interested in learning more?



# Pilot Opportunity

Our toolkit partners:



Dr. Brigid Cook,  
Dyslexia Specialist & Science of Reading Professor



**Maryland**  
**State Library**  
**Agency**

Interested in learning more?



# Pilot Opportunity

Timeline:

September, 2026- June, 2027

Express interest by  
**June 30, 2026**

## Sept - Jan:

- Review the toolkit
- Receive materials
- Train with CCPL
- Recruit volunteers & students

## Feb - Jun:

- Hold volunteer orientation
- Launch 10-week pilot in at least 1 library branch or off-site location
- Provide CCPL feedback on program toolkit

Interested in learning more?



# Pilot Opportunity

**Interested in learning more?**



# Questions?



Interested in learning more?





# Thank you!

Carly Dabbs- [cdabbs@cecilcountylibrary.org](mailto:cdabbs@cecilcountylibrary.org)

Katelyn McLimans- [kmclimans@cecilcountylibrary.org](mailto:kmclimans@cecilcountylibrary.org)

Jaclyn Cassidy- [jcassidy@cecilcountylibrary.org](mailto:jcassidy@cecilcountylibrary.org)

**Interested in learning more?**



**Please take a moment to  
complete the program survey.**



**SCAN ME!**



# OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026