



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: EARLY LITERACY MANAGER

12/5/2018

POSITION SUMMARY

Read Charlotte is a community initiative that unites families, educators and community partners to improve children's literacy from birth to third grade. Housed under the Foundation For The Carolinas, Read Charlotte coordinates and aligns people, resources and data to support proven practices and programs to reach our goal of doubling the percentage of third grade students reading at grade level in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) from 39% in 2015 to 80% by 2025.

Read Charlotte is hiring an **Early Literacy Manager** to oversee activities and alignment of the Birth-K component of Read Charlotte's birth through third grade literacy initiative. This is a new position. A member of a dynamic 11-person team, the Early Literacy Manager will work closely with team members who lead research, data, communications and community engagement functions. This position will coordinate information, activities and data across multiple stakeholders to support strategic priorities to move more children along the Reading Success Pathway. This position combines a traditional birth-to-five early childhood focus with the transition to the first year of elementary school (Kindergarten) focused on early literacy. The Early Literacy Manager will lead project implementation, development and improvement of various activities and coordinate with other Read Charlotte team members as appropriate.

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Early Literacy Manager will be part of a small team responsible for driving Read Charlotte's work forward. This is a full-time, exempt position.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Early Literacy Manager will provide day-to-day leadership of Read Charlotte's Birth-to-Kindergarten activities. Specifically, the individual will coordinate, integrate and align a set of evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies for children birth-6 years old in Mecklenburg County. The Early Literacy Manager will support the Read Charlotte strategic roadmap to target supports to improve K-3 outcomes in approximately 60 targeted elementary schools. Key responsibilities include:

Strategic Execution

- Deepen and expand high quality implementation and improvement of Read Charlotte's portfolio of supported evidence-based or evidence-informed Birth-Kindergarten program activities: Reach Out and Read, Active Reading, Ready4K, Home Reading Helper, and Ready To Read.

- Collaborate with key stakeholders to develop a vision, strategy, and execution of the delivery of services in Mecklenburg County to improve the systematic transition between Birth-5 and K-3.

Systems Improvement

- Work tirelessly to improve the Birth-Kindergarten system that influences a child's chances to being on track with early language and literacy skills by the end of Kindergarten.
- Examine best practices to inform policy decision-making as it relates to Birth-Kindergarten integration by completing data gathering and analysis as necessary.
- Initiate related research projects and prepare results for presentation as needed.
- Conduct analysis that supports the development, adoption, and implementation of systems and program solutions to meet the needs of the community and align with local, state and federal policies and priorities.
- Maintain an understanding of current implementation challenges and develop comprehensive solutions to address them.
- Work in partnership with the Executive Director and Deputy Director, to support partner organizations to align their work (e.g., identifying opportunities for program- and systems-level work to support specific goals).
- Work in partnership with the Executive Director and Deputy Director, to act as a neutral arbiter and help resolve disputes or disagreements in direction among partner organizations.

Strategic coherence:

- Coordinate, integrate and align core Read Charlotte-supported programs with other organizations and programs that serve children and families from Birth-Kindergarten.
- Look for opportunities to partner (e.g. cross-promotion, systems alignment, where feasible with other programs that closely align with our core strategies, such as Dolly Parton Imagination Library (managed by Smart Start of Mecklenburg County).
- Integrate detailed project plans and schedules into a master action plan to define workstreams, responsibilities, and milestones, in order to coordinate work across stakeholders and monitor progress.
- Conduct research and prepare written analyses and reports of assigned project activities, including writing educational, financial, and other quantitative analysis related to coordination, integration and alignment of Birth-K early literacy activities.

Strategic Communications:

- Provide counsel, support, and recommendations on strategic engagement with a variety of audiences.
- Design and implement tailored, creative, and innovative solutions to complex challenges.
- Anticipate strategic challenges to resolve with key stakeholders and partner with team and key partners to resolve.

- Work closely with other members of the team to align messages and content to share with key stakeholders.
- Represent Read Charlotte at community meetings and events as needed.
- Help to create and deliver PowerPoint presentations that effectively communicate key findings and recommendations to various audiences, including Read Charlotte board, funders, partner agencies, and external stakeholders.
- Identify and disseminate key lessons within and outside the Read Charlotte team.
- Assist in the compilation and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information to evaluate and communicate the impact of our work.

Other:

- Assume other responsibilities as assigned by the Executive Director.

HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT:

Every member of our team takes seriously our goal of getting 80% of third graders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools reading proficiently by 2025. We hear the ticking clock every day. The presence of this goal and deadline requires us to work differently than other early childhood initiatives you might be familiar with. As a result, you will find that while there is some overlap between Read Charlotte and other early childhood/literacy initiatives, there are some important differences.

Read Charlotte focuses on early language and literacy development. This is a subset of early childhood development, which comprises 5-7 domains depending upon who you follow. We recognize there are multiple factors that influence a child's odds of reading proficiently by 2025. We are sober about what we can do (in a very evidence-based way) to move the needle by 2025. We focus primarily on the most proximal indicators of the chances of third grade reading proficiency—the skills and competences embedded in the Reading Success Pathway. How do we increase the chances that at a population-level more children successfully move along the Pathway? We focus on both programs *and* systems. We believe that the evidence-based/informed strategies we have identified give us the greatest chances of moving the needle on these indicators in the absence of influencing other factors. If you examine closely, you'll find that our Birth-Kindergarten strategies overwhelmingly focus on families. We think a lot about how to activate literacy-promoting behaviors at home that are proven to increase the odds of children moving along the Pathway.

If you are looking to work in an organization that focuses on the “whole child” or that takes a “two-generation” approach to improving literacy (in a traditional sense), Read Charlotte is probably not the right fit for you. If you want to dive deeply into interconnected areas such as health, housing, or food security, Read Charlotte is probably not right for you. If you are uncomfortable thinking about data, “effect sizes”, “implementation drivers” or “improvement science,” Read Charlotte is probably not the right fit for you. But if you are interested in taking evidence seriously, questioning what we think we know (including what everyone “knows” to be true about early literacy), continuously improving to drive results, and building a

national model of a strong Birth-Kindergarten early literacy system, then please keep reading.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

The right fit is an imperative for a lean organization like Read Charlotte. Below is a list of qualities that we are looking for in the person who takes on this critical role of the Early Literacy Manager. If these ring true for you, then we hope you'll apply for this position.

Approach to Work

- Collaborative spirit and desire to partner closely with other Read Charlotte team members.
- Exceptionally high personal and professional integrity.
- Maintain confidentiality of all internal materials and information.
- Flexible, creative, and have the ability to work independently or collaboratively as the situation demands. Have no problem taking direction.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and love it when you get to figure things out.
- Reflective and proactively work to grow and improve; a strong "learner" orientation.
- Great at connecting and building deep relationships, especially across lines of difference.
- Deeply understand the need to focus on programs *and* systems.
- Entrepreneurial spirit and "trail blazer" mindset.
- Able to hear the "song beneath the words" and get at what people are really thinking and feeling.
- Can see the forest *and* the trees.
- Do not confuse activity with accomplishment.
- Have an experimental mindset, able to improvise as you go while holding on to a core set of beliefs and principles.
- Incredibly flexible, adaptable and ready to make adjustments given new learning.
- When things are very busy, make smart choices about what to prioritize and what matters most.
- Act with urgency to achieve outcomes for children.
- Ability to explore multiple interpretations of a situation and evaluate alternative potential interventions.
- Highly interested in people and institutions and how things work.
- Understand when and how to use tact and diplomacy, but also able to deliver direct feedback and have tough conversations when necessary.

Demonstrated experience and skills

- Minimum Bachelor's degree and at least 5 to 10 years of relevant work experience with progressively more responsible positions.
- Strong ability to set vision and direction, rally others around a vision, and execute towards ambitious results without a lot of direction.

- Ability to create, plan and manage multiple projects with multiple stakeholders.
- Strong strategic thinking skills and ability to use data and prior experiences to adjust the course of a project and determine future actions.
- Sophisticated ability to build relationships and positively influence others to achieve outcomes.
- Exceptional listener, communicator who can effectively convey information verbally and in writing.
- Comfortable dealing with issues of linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity.
- Past success in continuous improvement.
- Results-oriented and fiercely committed to achieving Read Charlotte's mission.
- Have experience working in a fast-paced, constantly evolving environment.

Preferred experience and skills

- Work-related experience with early language and literacy development.
- Prior experience laterally managing peers.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:

Read Charlotte offers a competitive compensation package commensurate with anticipated duties and responsibilities, including comprehensive health benefits.

TO APPLY:

Interested applicants should apply online at www.fftc.org/careers and submit a resume and cover letter to Munro Richardson, executive director of Read Charlotte. No phone calls or faxes accepted. In your cover letter please include your salary requirements and address the following topics:

- Why do you think that experimental evaluations of home visiting programs consistently fail to find significant impact on early language and literacy development of young children?
- Please complete the following: In this position I'd really like to get better at _____ . (Please provide details to explain your answer.)
- What do you think are the essential ingredients for effective transition to Kindergarten? Are these the same for different populations? If so, why? If not, why not?

Applications for this position will be accepted until 5 p.m. January 11, 2019.

Read Charlotte is an Equal Opportunity Employer, welcoming people to flourish in an open and inclusive work environment. A diverse pool of candidates is welcomed and encouraged.

ABOUT READ CHARLOTTE:

Read Charlotte is a collaborative, community-wide movement to double the percentage of third grade students reading at grade level in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Today over half of third graders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are **not** reading at grade level. They come from every single school, neighborhood, and income level in the county. If children can't read, they lose confidence, fail in school, and struggle in life. Housed under the Foundation For The Carolinas, Read Charlotte intends to double the percentage of third grade students reading at grade level from 39% in 2015 to 80% by 2025, by starting at birth, working collaboratively, and investing only in programs that work.

Read Charlotte is organized as a backbone organization leading a collective impact focused on third grade reading. Read Charlotte plays a leadership and coordinating role around the important goal of third grade reading, but does not directly operate programs. Read Charlotte's activities can be summed up in four primary areas: research and data, improving systems, strategic funding, and building networks for improvement. The Transformation Fund promotes innovation, capacity building, collaboration, and seeds new programs addressing unmet early literacy needs in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. In addition, Read Charlotte advises area funders on strategic co-funding opportunities. From 2016 to present, Read Charlotte has helped to coordinate \$5.5 million in targeted co-funding for identified strategic investments.

Read Charlotte has a lean staff comprised of 11 positions: Executive Director, Deputy Director, Data Manager, Administrative Assistant, Communications Manager, Early Literacy Manager and two Project Coordinators. The Read Charlotte staff provides leadership for the Initiative through research, coordination, communications and outreach activities. Read Charlotte's Executive Director reports both to the Foundation For The Carolinas and to a 21-member Governing Board comprised of thirteen major funders and eight community leaders in Charlotte.

Financial and in-kind supporters include The Albemarle Foundation, The Belk Foundation, The Duke Endowment, Duke Energy, CD Spangler Foundation, Foundation For The Carolinas, PNC, Bank of America, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Wells Fargo, Skeebo Foundation, Leon Levine Foundation, UNC Charlotte College of Education, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, City of Charlotte, and Mecklenburg County. To date, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community has committed over \$7 million to support Read Charlotte through the first five (2015-2019) years of the initiative. We are currently fundraising our second five years (2020-2024) and feel very positive about our fundraising prospects.