



## Marietta City Schools NEWS Release

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### **Literacy and Justice for All Collaborative Grant to Significantly Impact Literacy Efforts in City of Marietta**

*Community-wide commitment to empower every child in Marietta to be proficient readers by third grade*

**Marietta, GA** - [Marietta City Schools \(MCS\)](#) and the city of Marietta will be the focus of a collaborative grant working to create a language-centered ecosystem and learning environment for children from birth to grade three. The goal of the new initiative “Literacy and Justice for All” is to use a community-wide commitment to the science of reading to empower every child in Marietta to be a proficient reader by the end of third grade.

The expectation is for Marietta to be a model that will yield change throughout Atlanta, across Georgia and the southeast region, and ultimately, on a national level. This work is critically important as schools address both the significant learning loss resulting from the pandemic and the gaps in opportunity that often occur around literacy in our communities. According to United Way of Greater Atlanta, children who are not reading by the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school, which may limit their opportunities in school, in work, and in life.

“It is an honor to lead the design and implementation of what we hope will become a national model for literacy,” said Superintendent Dr. Grant Rivera. “Our school community and our city have an unwavering commitment to our children, and we believe MCS can accomplish that which has been elusive for many other school districts regionally and nationally: third grade reading proficiency.”

The first step in “Literacy and Justice for All” is an extensive literacy training by nationally known expert, Dr. Margie Gillis of Literacy How. Gillis will lead key MCS staff through a series of facilitated discussions and exercises that will establish the foundation for the initiative. The training will occur May 6-7, 2021 in Marietta, Ga.

Planning for the grant began in fall 2020 in conjunction with Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School. The \$2.5 million dollar award was confirmed April 26, 2021 and is allocated by United Way with support from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation. MCS—along with United Way, Rollins Center, Learn4Life, Cobb Collaborative, Quality Care for Children, and Kennesaw State University—will support parents, teachers, and other child-facing adults with the knowledge, skills, and agency to implement healthy brain development.

Marietta-based investments from United Way in year one includes teaching resources, trauma-informed training, professional development, social-emotional learning, community programming, early learning opportunities, personnel, and evaluation.

The “Literacy and Justice for All” initiative will allow Marietta City Schools and the city of Marietta to further the dialogue, and the important work, that brings educators and community leaders together to tackle the issue of literacy. The grant will bring the much-needed resources to invest in creative new ideas, to expand proven programs, and to develop evidence-based strategies for our city’s youngest students. Research shows a significant link between reading skills and high school graduation rates, which leads directly to employment opportunities, economic stability, and ultimately, the health of our community.

“The city of Marietta is proud to collaborate with Marietta City Schools and is committed to the success of the “Literacy and Justice for all” initiative. From the foundation of our long-standing successful *Marietta Reads!* program, “Literacy and Justice for All” will bring opportunities for these young minds to reach new levels of education not only with our innovative and creative Marietta City Schools but also with outstanding community support for the lifetime gift of literacy for our students,” said Mayor Steve “Thunder” Tumlin.

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