

GEORGIA COUNCIL on LITERACY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2024

Latisha Gray
Georgia Municipal Association
404-809-9457
lgray@gacities.com

Irene Munn
Georgia Reads Campaign
404-561-5940
irene.munn@gosa.ga.gov

Georgia Reads Campaign Launched to Boost Literacy and Recognize Communities Across the State

Savannah, GA - Today, the Georgia Council on Literacy announced “The Georgia Reads Campaign” during the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Annual Conference. The Georgia Reads Campaign aims to raise awareness about the need to improve reading skills in all age groups, encourage activities to increase literacy rates and recognize community partnerships that are actively contributing to a more literate Georgia.

GMA and its nonprofit, Georgia City Solutions, and the [Share the Magic Foundation](#) are partners in the initiative.

The announcement featured an inspiring message from Malcolm Mitchell, CEO & Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, who will serve as the Georgia Reads Coach. Mitchell is a Super Bowl champion, author, speaker, and visionary for youth literacy. Additionally, Mitchell facilitated a discussion on literacy with a panel of distinguished leaders, including Honorable Jon Burns, Speaker of Georgia’s House of Representatives, and Mrs. Dayle Burns; Senator Billy Hickman, District 4 Statesboro; Scott Johnson, Chairman, Georgia Council on Literacy; and Larry Hanson, CEO and Executive Director, GMA. Each of these leaders expressed their commitment to improving literacy in Georgia.

“The Georgia House has long been a champion for initiatives aimed at improving literacy outcomes for our students and supporting our teachers who work tirelessly to

educate Georgia's children," said House Speaker Jon Burns. "We know that a child's ability to read greatly impacts his/her future success, and every Georgian has a responsibility to instill the importance of reading in our future generations. Dayle and I are thrilled to join alongside the Georgia Council on Literacy, the Georgia Municipal Association, and the Share the Magic Foundation to encourage community involvement in the achievement of students in every corner of our great state."

"It was an honor to champion [Senate Bill 211](#) which established the Georgia Council on Literacy," said Senator Billy Hickman. "This campaign is a significant step forward to support those community partnerships that have been committed to improving literacy outcomes for students."

With a strong focus on improving literacy and reducing intergenerational poverty, Georgia City Solutions, a nonprofit of GMA, has been actively implementing literacy programs around the state.

"Partnering with the Georgia Reads Campaign underscores our commitment to addressing literacy as a fundamental issue that impacts education, the economy, workforce development, and quality of life in Georgia's cities," said GMA CEO & Executive Director Larry Hanson. "The Georgia Reads Campaign will recognize those communities that are ensuring every Georgian has the opportunity to read, learn, and succeed. We are proud to be a part of this transformative effort."

Key elements of the campaign are publicly acknowledging community partners who are making a difference in literacy skills and investing to sustain literacy improvements.

"Supporting literacy initiatives at the community level is essential for fostering a culture of learning and success across our state," said Scott Johnson, Chairman of Georgia Council on Literacy. "The Georgia Reads Campaign provides vital resources and recognition to those individuals and communities that are changing the trajectory of literacy."

The campaign will include several events and initiatives: Georgia Reads Community Awards, READBowl, and Georgia Reads Day at the Capitol in February 2025.

- The Georgia Reads Community Awards will recognize up to ten community partnerships that have made notable progress in literacy over the past three to five years. Each winning community will receive up to \$25,000 to continue their literacy improvement efforts and a visit from Mitchell and the Share the Magic Foundation.
- READBowl is a statewide reading challenge that will be hosted by Georgia Reads and the Share the Magic Foundation. The Georgia elementary, middle school and high school classrooms/teams with the highest average reading minutes will win state recognition, a visit to the state Capitol, and the READBowl state championship trophy.

- Georgia Reads Day at the Capitol is scheduled for February 2025, when the Georgians can unite to acknowledge the importance of literacy.

"As the Georgia Reads Coach, I am proud to support this vital initiative to promote literacy across Georgia," said Mitchell. "Growing up in Valdosta, I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of reading. The Georgia Reads Campaign, in collaboration with the Georgia Municipal Association, Georgia City Solutions, and the Share the Magic Foundation, will recognize and support the community partnerships driving real progress. Together, we can inspire every child to discover the joy of reading and achieve their full potential."

The Georgia Reads Community Award application opens on Sept. 30 and closes Nov. 26, 2024. For more information about the Georgia Council on Literacy and the Georgia Reads Campaign, visit, <https://gosa.georgia.gov/georgia-council-literacy>.

XXX

About the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA): Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to all of Georgia's 536 cities. GMA anticipates and influences the forces shaping Georgia's cities and to provide leadership, tools and services that assist municipal governments in becoming more innovative, effective and responsive. Created in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association is the only state organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. For more information, visit www.gacities.com.

About Georgia City Solutions

Georgia City Solutions, Inc. (GCS) is a 501(c)(3) organization created in 2018 by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) to help cities address the challenges of intergenerational poverty. The mission of GCS is to establish and support innovative programs, solutions and research aimed at building vibrant, economically prosperous, and well-managed cities, and improving the quality of life of municipal residents. Learn more about GCS at www.gacitysolutions.org.

About the Georgia Council on Literacy

In 2023, the Georgia General Assembly passed, and Governor Brian Kemp signed into law, two significant bills that address the state's literacy rates: House Bill 538 and Senate Bill 211. HB 538 requires kindergarten through third grade reading instruction to be based on science of reading. The bill specifies five requirements including teacher training, universal screening of students, high quality instructional materials based on the science of reading, tiered student interventions, and new teacher instruction through the public schools of education. SB 211 created the **Georgia Council on Literacy**, a 30-member council appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House. The Council is primarily responsible for monitoring the implementation of HB 538's requirements. Additionally, the Council is tasked with involving communities in efforts to enhance literacy skills in every area in the state.

About Share the Magic Foundation

Author and Super Bowl Champion Malcolm Mitchell considers a love of reading to be his greatest achievement. In 2016, he founded Share the Magic Foundation with a sole purpose: to transform children's lives through literacy. The Foundation's mission is to inspire young people to read by bringing book ownership and innovative programming to students in Title I schools and under-resourced communities. Whether a student is a striving reader or learns differently, Read with Malcolm literacy programs provide both inspiration and motivation, and carry the message that reading is the key to achieving one's goals. To learn more about Malcolm's vision to inspire young and striving readers, please visit www.readwithmalcolm.com.

GEORGIA COUNCIL on LITERACY



MEDIA ADVISORY

Georgia Reads Hosts Statewide Reading Rally on Georgia Reads Day at The College Football Hall of Fame

Statewide Literacy Campaign Event Acknowledges the Importance of Improving Literacy

WHAT: Georgia Reads will host Georgia Reads Day, which will include a press conference and a Reading Rally with more than 300 Atlanta Public School students to bring awareness of the need to improve Georgia's childhood and adult literacy rates. The event will also be live broadcast on Georgia Public Broadcasting at this [link](#) and watched by students in classrooms across the state.

Georgia Reads, an initiative of the Georgia Council on Literacy aimed at raising awareness about the need to improve reading skills in all age groups, is partnering with the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and its nonprofit, Georgia City Solutions, along with the [Share the Magic Foundation](#) for the event.

Malcolm Mitchell, CEO & Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, who also serves as the Georgia Reads Coach for Georgia Reads, will lead the Reading Rally. As a Super Bowl Champion and former University of Georgia football star, he considers discovering his love for reading his greatest accomplishment.

WHY: Georgia Reads publicly recognizes that literacy is the foundation of a community's strength, influencing all aspects of life in Georgia. Strong literacy skills drive economic prosperity and benefit individuals, families, communities, employers, and our state. Enhancing literacy among Georgia's citizens will foster opportunity and interconnected prosperity for all.

Nationally, Georgia ranks 37th in overall child well-being, 32nd in child poverty, 28th in 4th-grade reading achievement (NAEP), and 21st in 8th-grade reading achievement (NAEP).

WHERE: College Football Hall of Fame (250 Marietta St NW, Atlanta, Ga 30313)

WHEN: Georgia Reads Day takes place on Monday, September 30, 2024. The press conference will take place in the Quad underneath the Helmet Wall at 9:15 a.m. The Reading Rally will take place on the Playing Field at 10 a.m.

WHO:
Georgia State Governor Brian Kemp
Georgia State Representative Chris Erwin
Georgia State Senator Billy Hickman
Georgia Council on Literacy Chairman Scott Johnson
Malcolm Mitchell, CEO & Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, Georgia Reads Coach, Super Bowl Champion, Author, Speaker, and Visionary
Sarah Richards, Georgia Literacy Coach, Georgia Council on Literacy

###

About the Georgia Reads Campaign

Georgia Reads aims to address the national issue of low literacy by demonstrating the impact of a unified approach. The Campaign's mission is to unify and empower the fragmented literacy ecosystem, guiding it toward a new era of understanding. From Savannah to Columbus, Rome to Augusta, Valdosta to Athens, and every community in between, the Georgia Reads Campaign aims to be the guiding star in transforming the societal impact of low literacy. Join the Georgia Reads Campaign and help make your community a shining example of literacy improvement. It's a new dawn—let's turn the page to a brighter future.

MEDIA CONTACT

Jason Gilbreth

jgilbreth@trevelinokeller.com

847-894-8112

Georgia Reads Day Raises Awareness for Literacy Improvements

Super Bowl Champion and Literacy Advocate Malcolm Mitchell Holds Statewide Reading Rally at the College Football Hall of Fame

ATLANTA (Sept. 30, 2024) – This year, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed a proclamation declaring September 30, 2024, as Georgia Reads Day. The purpose is to raise public awareness around low state literacy rates and bring attention to the Georgia Reads movement, a statewide initiative headed by the Georgia Council on Literacy that aims to improve reading skills for Georgians of all ages through a unified, community-centric approach.

Like many states, Georgia struggles with reading proficiency, especially at the end of third grade. Georgia's state ranking on the NAEP is 28th in fourth grade reading achievement and the 40th percentile of working-age individuals without a High School Equivalency. Georgia Reads recognizes that literacy improvement does not rest on a single entity but is a collective responsibility of the community. By unifying fragmented and unaligned efforts, Georgia Reads aims to guide our state to improved literacy rates one community at a time. By aligning efforts and including every Georgian in this work, the state aspires to rank number one in the nation in reading in the next five years.

The Georgia Council on Literacy hosted a press conference and Reading Rally at the College Football Hall of Fame to celebrate the occasion. Over 300 Atlanta Public School students participated in the rally that GPTV broadcast live for students around the state to tune in. Malcolm Mitchell, former University of Georgia football star and Super Bowl LI champion, led the Rally. Mitchell, a Georgia native, is the CEO and Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, a partner of Georgia Reads, and considers discovering his love for reading his greatest accomplishment.

"As a child who struggled with reading, literacy is a topic that I am very passionate about. Since 2016, my foundation has transformed children's lives through reading," stated Malcolm Mitchell. "We've seen incredible transformations - children who once shied away from books now eagerly embracing stories, and families coming together over shared reading experiences. Our work has shown us that literacy is not just about decoding words; it is about opening doors to imagination, knowledge, and self-confidence. We are honored to partner with Georgia Reads to spread the magic of literacy to children and adults across the state."

"We know the power of reading is crucial to unlocking opportunities throughout every student's life," said Governor Brian Kemp. "Alongside the Council and our partners in the legislature, we'll keep working to promote literacy in all four corners of the state and prepare our next generation for a lifetime of success."

"I want to commend and thank the Georgia Council on Literacy, Malcolm Mitchell and all of the partners involved in launching and making Georgia Reads Day and Georgia Reads a success," said Lt. Governor Burt Jones. "Events and initiatives like this, including our recent book drive where we collected over 4,700 books to the Georgia Council on Literacy, will further encourage

community engagement in our goal to improve literacy outcomes for all of Georgia's students. Literacy is a critical skill for the future success of our children, our state's workforce, and Georgia's status as the best place to live, work and raise a family. I look forward to continuing to support these efforts."

"Reading is a fundamental life skill that impacts social and economic outcomes as well as academic ones," said Speaker of the House Jon Burns. "When we improve literacy rates, we're not just raising test scores – we're opening doors to better job opportunities, enhancing critical thinking skills, and fostering civic participation. Literacy is the foundation upon which we build not only educated students but also empowered adults, stronger families, and more vibrant communities. By investing in literacy, we're investing in the overall well-being and future prosperity of Georgia."

About Georgia Reads

Georgia Reads aims to address the national issue of low literacy by demonstrating the impact of a unified approach. The mission is to unify and empower the fragmented literacy ecosystem, guiding it toward a new era of understanding. From Savannah to Columbus, Rome to Augusta, Valdosta to Athens, and every community in between, the Georgia Reads aims to be the guiding star in transforming the societal impact of low literacy.

MEDIA CONTACT

Jason Gilbreth

jgilbreth@trevelinokeller.com

847-894-8112

GEORGIA COUNCIL on LITERACY



MEDIA ADVISORY

Georgia Reads Coach Shares Special Message for Schools Impacted by Hurricane Helene
Superbowl Champion and Georgia Reads Coach Malcolm Mitchell Invites Schools Unable to Participate in Georgia Reads Day to Tune in for a Special Message

WHAT: On September 30, 2024, Georgia Reads hosted Georgia Reads Day, a live broadcast Reading Rally that reached 112,000 students. Due to the devastating impacts of Hurricane Helene, many students were unable to participate. To ensure all students have the opportunity to tune in, east Georgia students are invited to watch a recording of the rally along with a special message from Georgia Reads Coach Malcolm Mitchell. The recording can be found on the Georgia Reads website using this [link](#).

Georgia Reads, an initiative of the Georgia Council on Literacy aimed at raising awareness about the need to improve reading skills in all age groups, is partnering with Augusta, Candler, Chatham, Effingham and Evans Counties to bring Georgia Reads Day to those students who were unable to participate due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene. Malcolm Mitchell, CEO & Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, who also serves as the Georgia Reads Coach for Georgia Reads, shares a special literacy message to counties that were impacted. As a Super Bowl champion and former University of Georgia football star, he considers discovering his love for reading his greatest accomplishment.

WHY: Georgia Reads publicly recognizes that literacy is the foundation of a community's strength, influencing all aspects of life in Georgia. Strong literacy skills drive economic prosperity and benefit individuals, families, communities, employers, and our state. Enhancing literacy among Georgia's citizens will foster opportunity and interconnected prosperity for all.

Nationally, Georgia ranks 37th in overall child well-being, 32nd in child poverty, 28th in 4th-grade reading achievement (NAEP), and 21st in 8th-grade reaching achievement (NAEP).

WHEN: Georgia Reads Day messages are available on the Georgia Reads website. A full recording of the Reading Rally from September 30 is also available.

WHO: Malcolm Mitchell, CEO & Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, Georgia Reads Coach, Super Bowl champion, author, speaker, and visionary

###

About the Georgia Reads Movement

Georgia Reads aims to address the national issue of low literacy by demonstrating the impact of a unified approach. Georgia Reads' mission is to unify and empower the fragmented literacy ecosystem, guiding it toward a new era of understanding. From Savannah to Columbus, Rome to Augusta, Valdosta to Athens, and every community in between, the Georgia Reads Campaign aims to be the guiding star in transforming the societal impact of low literacy. Join the Georgia Reads movement and help make your community a shining example of literacy improvement. It's a new dawn—let's turn the page to a brighter future!

MEDIA CONTACT

Haley Meyer

hmeyer@trevelinokeller.com

404-214-0722 x129



It is that time of the year! READBowl sign up in Georgia begins Nov. 4! **Our 2025 Goal – 250,000 students!**

READBowl 2025 is Share the Magic Foundation's eighth annual national reading competition and will be held from January 13 (the week before the CFP National Championship) through February 7. Sign-ups begin November 4. Malcolm Mitchell, CEO & Founder of the Share the Magic Foundation, who also serves as the Georgia Reads Coach, will crown the "World Champions of Reading" on Super Bowl Sunday, February 9.

Additionally, the Georgia READBowl Champions in elementary* middle and high school will be recognized at the Georgia State Capitol. The Georgia Council on Literacy and Georgia Reads along with Coach Malcolm, Governor Kemp and Legislative Leaders will recognize our reading champions – Feb. 25, 2025.

"What I love about the READBowl is it instills a love of reading across all age groups from small towns to big cities. We encourage students to read every single day, and the READBowl accomplishes that task in a fun, competitive and engaging way," said Sarah Richards, the Georgia Literacy Coach for Georgia Reads. "When it comes to rising to meet a challenge, Georgia students are never ones to shy away. Georgia Reads hopes to have 250,000 students from all corners of the state participate in this year's competition."

"I have played in some games before," shares Mitchell. "But none bigger than READBowl 2025. I was born and raised in Georgia, and I know Georgia suits up, shows up and will not settle for second place. There is no more worthwhile challenge, with more on the line than improving Georgia's literacy rates. As someone who struggled with reading as a child, this cause is near and dear to my heart, and I look forward to helping Georgia Reads cross the goal line of having 250,000 students participate in READBowl."

During the 2024 READBowl, April LaHayne's class at Demorest Elementary in Demorest, Georgia, came within minutes of a National Championship and captured the Georgia State Elementary Conference Championship.

"READBowl is an amazing opportunity for our students to improve their literacy skills. It provides constant encouragement from a Super Bowl champion and other role models our students look up to and aspire to be. I personally saw students more excited about reading than I ever thought possible, even choosing reading over playing video games and watching movies. My students are eager to defend the title in 2025," said Ms. LaHayne.

Educators may register students for the READBowl at <https://www.readwithmalcolm.com/readbowl/>. For more information or specific questions regarding the READBowl, contact readbowl@readwithmalcolm.com.

*Elementary schools will have two champions (one in grades PreK through 3rd and one in 4th/5th grades.

####

Share the Magic Foundation
1776 Peachtree St NW, Suite 420N Atlanta, GA 30309
www.readwithmalcolm.com