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Newport Convenes for Children: Two-Part Event

- Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Data Presentation, and**
- Launch of the Newport Grade-Level Reading Campaign**

Community event will discuss the well-being of Newport children and families, and celebrate the launch of the Newport Grade-Level Reading Campaign

Newport, RI (October 4, 2016) – At a special two-part event, Newport community members will have the opportunity to learn about the well-being of local children and families through the annual *Data in Your Backyard* presentation, as well as celebrate the launch of the *Newport Grade-Level Reading Campaign*. Newport Partnership for Families is co-sponsoring the event.

- At the *Newport Data in Your Backyard* presentation, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Senior Policy Analyst Stephanie Geller will lead a data-driven community discussion on the well-being of Newport children and families. The presentation's data comes from the [2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook](#), and will include improvements and declines in economic well-being, education, health, child welfare, and safety.
- This year, the annual presentation will conclude with the formal launch of the *Newport Grade-Level Reading Campaign*, a community-wide effort to ensure that all Newport children are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade. Superintendent Colleen Jermain and other community members will discuss the key elements of the Campaign and how to get involved.

The event is brought to the community in collaboration with Newport Partnership for Families and Newport Public Schools and will be held on Tuesday, October 4, 2016, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Newport Public Library, 300 Spring Street, Newport, RI:

- *Data in Your Backyard* presentation 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- *Newport Grade-Level Reading Campaign* launch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Improvements and declines to be discussed at the *Data in Your Backyard* presentation include:

Improvements in infant outcomes

The teen birth rate is on the decline across the nation, in Rhode Island, and Newport. The teen birth rate is measured as the number of births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19. The most recent teen birth rate in Newport was 16.5 births per 1,000 girls, compared to 24.5 per 1,000 girls five years before.

- Newport has also seen a decline in low-birthweight infants, with 6.8% of infants born with a low birthweight from 2010-2014, down from 8.3% five years before.
- Newport has also seen a decline in delayed prenatal care, with 9.3% of women experiencing delayed prenatal care from 2010-2014, down from 10.2% five years before.

BrightStars participation varies by type of location

Research on early care and education reveals a strong relationship between program quality and children's developing skills and well-being. Children who attend high-quality programs score higher on tests of language and cognitive skills and demonstrate stronger social and emotional development than children who attend low-quality programs.

BrightStars is Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs. Launched in 2009, BrightStars conducts program quality assessments using research based standards for licensed centers, family child care homes, and public schools.

- In 2015, all 4 (100%) of the licensed early learning centers in Newport participated in BrightStars, compared to 82% across Rhode Island as a whole.
- In 2015, the only licensed family child care home in Newport did not participate in BrightStars (0%), compared to 87% across Rhode Island as a whole.

Newport has a high percentage of low-income children

Although the most recent data from the U.S. Census show that Newport has a child poverty rate of 16.4%, data from schools indicate that a large proportion of Newport's children are from low-income families (i.e., eligible for free and reduced-price meals at school). As of October 2015, 64% of Newport students were low-income according to that measure. Only Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket have higher percentages of low-income children in their public schools.

Opportunity to connect low-income children with School Breakfast Program

Students who eat breakfast have higher math and reading scores, fewer absences, improved attentiveness, and lower incidences of social and emotional problems. In Newport, only 28% of low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program in October 2015. Universal School Breakfast (free breakfast to all students regardless of income) and breakfast in the classroom are two proven strategies to increase participation.

Improvements for Newport Public Schools

Decline in chronic absence: Regular attendance at school is an essential step for children to succeed academically and do well in life. Students who are frequently absent from school miss critical academic and social learning opportunities and are at risk of disengagement from school, academic failure, and dropping out. Newport has focused on reducing chronic absenteeism over the past few years and has seen declines as a result of this strong effort:

- During the 2014-2015 school year, 11% of Newport students in grades K-3 were chronically absent, an improvement from 16% in 2011.
- Similar trends occurred at the middle school and high school levels. During the 2014-2015 school year, 32% of students at Rogers High School were chronically absent, down from 43% in 2011.

Improvement in high school graduation rate: High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are over four times as likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or more.

- Newport's high school graduation rate has improved, with 79% of students graduating in four years in 2015, compared to 67% in 2013.

- However, Newport continues to have the third lowest high school graduation rate in the state. Only Woonsocket (63%) and Providence (75%) have lower four-year high school graduation rates.

For additional trend data and comparisons to Rhode Island statewide rates, please see Newport's Community Snapshot (attached).

Newport Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Why Third-Grade Reading Matters

Achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone for children. A fundamental shift occurs by the end of third grade: children begin to move from *learning to read*, to *reading to learn*.

Students who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their proficient peers. While interventions implemented before third grade have high rates of success, interventions after third grade are much less effective. Once they fall behind, most children never catch up to their grade-level peers.

- In 2015, 37% of Newport's third graders met expectations on the *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment, and in 2016 this percentage fell to 34%.
- There are also large gaps in reading proficiency by income. In Newport in 2016, 23% of low-income third graders met expectations, compared to 65% of higher-income third graders.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

[The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) (GLR Campaign) is a nationwide movement to increase early reading proficiency. Launched in May 2010, the GLR Campaign is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college and career.

Newport's plan to improve third-grade reading is a comprehensive birth to age eight strategy that includes efforts to improve children's health, access to high-quality early learning, and summer learning, decrease chronic early absence, and improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

"By joining the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Newport is showing our full commitment to our children's future," said Newport Public Schools Superintendent Colleen Jermain. "Improving third-grade reading proficiency is crucial for lifelong success — working with our community partners and families we will reach this goal. Improvements will require all of us working together."

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All data and information presented at Newport Data in Your Backyard is available on Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's website: www.rikidscount.org.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children