



Case For Support 2025

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What is Family Learning Institute?

In 1999, the Family Learning Institute was founded as a volunteer-based nonprofit agency dedicated to closing the achievement gap in Washtenaw County.

Established by Ann Arbor Activists Doris Sperling and Lafiest Galimore, the Family Learning Institute has a staff of professional educators and over 150 volunteers who work with economically challenged elementary school children struggling to attain grade-level proficiency in reading and writing

Mission Statement:

Through collaboration with local schools and community partners, and the implementation of innovative programs, the Family Learning Institute engages children from economically challenged households to support their success in school and beyond. FLI believes that all students, regardless of life circumstances, deserve a chance to forge the skills they need to build the lives they dream.

What is the Family Learning Institute's Impact?

Over the 23 years of its existence, the Family Learning Institute has consistently raised the reading level of 80-85% students by one or more grades in a school year. Students, coaches and parents are committed to the process; they often devote more than one year to achieving proficiency at grade level and beyond.

One of our tutors is especially proud of Manuel, who came to us as a fourth grader barely able to do simple addition and subtraction. "He really took off at FLI, not only quickly achieving grade-level proficiency but also becoming the

best math student in his whole class at school. And he went from hating school to being eager to attend.

I predict a great academic future for Manuel, thanks largely to the personalized tutoring he got from the Family Learning Institute."

The children who come to FLI also gain confidence and self-esteem, benefits that lead to continued learning, increased likelihood of high-school graduation, educational ambitions beyond secondary school, and more fulfilling lives.

"I love watching the light of understanding come into a student's eyes when he finally understands what was once so difficult to comprehend," explains David Morris, a long-time math tutor at FLI. It's my contribution to making society better. I hope to see FLI continue to expand its outreach."



How Can You Help?

Although the Family Learning Institute is proud of the hundreds of students and families it serves annually, your donation can help us reach many more children in Washtenaw County. FLI estimates that thousands 2nd-5th graders in Washtenaw County are eligible for our program.

Each year we must turn away disappointed parents because we do not have sufficient resources to meet the growing need for our services.

Your donation today will allow the Family Learning Institute to hire and retain the high quality professional staff members whose pedagogical expertise is essential to our success.

Please give generously. \$250 is enough to support one child for an entire school year. Of course, the Family Learning Institute can also use your hands-on support. Consider becoming a tutor. It's a rewarding way to make a difference in a child's life.

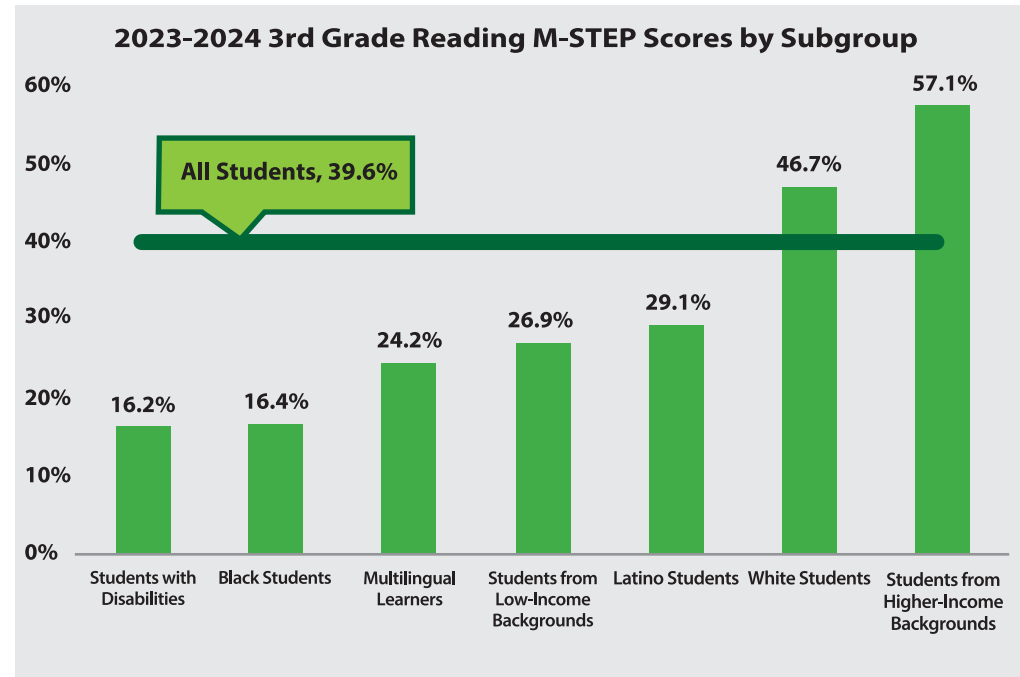
For information on how to give or volunteer, contact:

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Insight into the 2023-2024 M-STEP Reading Scores for 3rd Graders

- Decline from previous years: The 39.6% proficiency rate in 2024 is lower than the 40.9% in 2023, 41.6% in 2022, and 42.8% in 2021, indicating a continued trend of declining reading proficiency among third graders.
- Pre-pandemic comparison: The 2024 scores are significantly below the 2019 pre-pandemic level, where 45% of third graders scored proficient or higher in reading.
- Impact of the pandemic: The pandemic's disruption to education is believed to be a contributing factor to the declining scores, with students facing learning loss and challenges related to remote learning and other pandemic-related disruptions.
- Read by Grade 3 Law: Michigan's Read by Grade 3 Law requires students to be reading at grade level by the end of third grade, and the declining scores raise concerns about students' ability to meet this requirement.
- Disparities in performance: The M-STEP results also highlight disparities in reading proficiency



- based on factors like socioeconomic status, with economically disadvantaged students showing lower proficiency rates than their middle-class peers.
- District-level variations: While statewide scores show a decline, individual school districts have experienced varying levels of performance. For example, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools had a higher percentage of third-grade reading proficiency (55.4%) compared to the statewide average, while Detroit Public Schools Community District had a significantly lower rate (11.7%).



"Whenever we had a student struggling with reading, FLI was one of the first resources we'd recommend to the parents. Over the years I've watched many children vastly improve both their academic abilities and their self-confidence—thanks to FLI's dedicated tutors," says Monica Harrold, a former Ann Arbor Public Schools elementary principal. "Educators recognize that some students, however able, just need the kind of one-on-one instruction that FLI specializes in. Family Learning Institute addresses a real need in Washtenaw County, by giving ALL children the chance to succeed."

How Does the Family Learning Institute Work?

FLI serves roughly 150 students each year with a comparable number of "coaches." The essence of the program is to pair students with one-on-one volunteer math and/or reading coaches with whom they meet on-site once a week. Our professional teaching staff tests the students, devises customized lesson plans, trains the coaches, and leads group writing and discussion sessions. Features that make the Family Learning Institute program a uniquely effective community resource include:

- Rigorous, testing** at admittance and at the end of the school year (using the Qualitative Reading Inventory, resulting in tailored lesson plans that both target each individual student's needs and track progress.
- A long-term, one-on-one relationship** with a caring adult, which imbues our tutoring with continuity, depth, and mentoring.
- A focus on 2nd through 5th graders**--which research has shown to be the critical period for academic intervention before failure becomes ingrained.
- A safe, anonymous, away-from-school** space with private tutoring rooms that eliminates embarrassment and bad associations with school.
- A research-based program design.** Research has shown that extended study time, one-on-one attention, review of fundamentals, help with decoding contextual meanings, trust in educational institutions, and self-confidence are the keys to closing the achievement gap.

The public schools gave up on Lara. "I've done everything I can," her teacher explained to Lara's grandmother. "I just don't know how to help her." The principal recommended that Lara's grandmother contact the Family Learning Institute. Lara worked with FLI tutors for a few years and, by the time she reached middle school, she was reading at grade level and had turned her failing grades to B's. Lara has since graduated from high school and works as a department store manager. "The Family Learning Institute was such a life-saving experience for Lara," says her grandmother. "They did the job! I will forever be grateful for the many ways they helped her."

