

## Reading Buddies

- When a third grader doesn't read at grade level, they are 4 times more likely to drop out before graduation. If they also live in poverty, they are 8 times more likely to drop out.
- As a result of the pandemic, 57% of students are behind grade level in English Language Arts and 29% are two grade levels behind.
- Students from low-income communities are three grade levels behind their peers in wealthier communities by the time they reach fourth grade. (US Dept. of Education)
- 81% of South Carolina students are graduating from high school. Of these, 42% are college ready and 73% career ready. (2019-2020)
- In the US, 54% of adults between ages 16-74 read below the 6th grade level and 1 in 5 adults struggle to fill out a form.
- Consequences of illiteracy: unemployment rate is 2-4 times higher; lower income and lower quality jobs; reduced access to lifelong learning; lower self-esteem; adverse impact on health.
- Literacy is the key to solving healthcare, poverty, crime rates, and unemployment. (Barbara Bush Foundation)

## Backpack Buddies

- One in seven children in South Carolina face hunger.
- Children experiencing hunger are more likely to: repeat a grade in elementary school, experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills, have more social and behavioral problems. (Feeding America)



## Teacher Support

- 46% of teachers report high daily stress (tied with nurses for the most stressful occupation in America today).
- 55% of teachers are planning to leave teaching or retire early. This is up 37% since last August (2021).
- By the 5th year, almost half of all new teachers leave the profession.
- In any given year, roughly 6,000-7,000 South Carolina public school teachers leave their position and as many as 1,000 positions remain vacant after the start of the school year.
- A rise in teacher departures and an insufficient number of students pursuing teaching as a career has forced South Carolina into a teacher shortage, well before the pandemic hit.
- Because of teacher shortages, we have over 1100 international teachers. They arrive with 2 suitcases and limited funds to lease and furnish an apartment and arrange transportation. They have needs of friendship and support as they become acclimated to a new culture.