



Matched Funding Offer from The Duke Endowment to Support “Annual Book Fairs” – a Summer Reading Program Shown to Boost Achievement in Elementary Schools

The NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is partnering with The Duke Endowment (TDE), a North Carolina-based philanthropic foundation, to deliver an evidence-based Annual Book Fairs program to boost summer reading in Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) designated, Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) designated, and/or Title I elementary schools. This low-cost program has been [found](#) in rigorous randomized trials to increase student reading achievement on state tests by approximately 35-40% of a grade-level by 4th-5th grade. TDE’s Board of Trustees has approved up to \$1.95 million in philanthropic funds to match Public School Unit (PSU) funds dollar-for-dollar to implement this program, with the goal of serving at least 50 schools within the state.

See a brief overview of this initiative below, including what would be involved for participating PSUs:

- **Program.** The Annual Book Fairs program provides elementary school students with books to read over the summer for three consecutive years, starting at the end of first or second grade. In the spring of each school year, students attend the fair, located in their school building, where they can choose from among 400-600 books in a variety of genres (e.g., pop culture, series books, science). At each fair, students pick 10-14 books to keep as their own, which are delivered to them on the final day of school. Annual Book Fairs is a “universal” program – i.e., delivered to all students, not just struggling readers. The program’s total cost is approximately \$300-\$400 per student, depending on available book prices.
- **TDE Matching Fund Offer.** TDE will match PSU funding dollar-for-dollar to deliver the Annual Book Fairs program in elementary schools. Participating PSUs will be asked to commit to work with the selected program provider to deliver the program to a cohort of 1st and 2nd graders beginning in spring 2027, and to the same students when they are in 2nd and 3rd grade in spring 2028, and in 4th and 5th grade in spring 2029, and to engage in a planning period starting in the first half of 2026. PSUs could use federal grant funds for CSI/TSI designated schools or other public funds for their contribution.¹ The timing of TDE’s matched funding is flexible within the project period as long as the PSU’s total funding contribution equals TDE’s total funding contribution over the four years.
- **Selection of schools and evaluation.** PSUs will be asked to identify elementary schools within the PSU for potential participation. To enable a rigorous evaluation, an independent study team will use a randomized lottery to select half of the PSU-identified schools to receive the program, with the other half comprising a control group that continues with standard school programming. Launch of this initiative is contingent on identification of approximately 100 schools for potential participation across all PSUs (50 program schools and 50 control schools).
- **More information.** More information, including a recorded in-depth webinar, is available on NCDPI’s [Comprehensive and Targeted Support Website](#). Interested PSUs will be asked to sign-up by February 27th, 2026.

¹ For TSI designated schools, federal grant funds for the targeted subgroup(s) would need to be braided with other funds to provide the program to all students in the relevant grades.