



Annual Book Fairs Matching Funds Opportunity December 10, 2025



Agenda for the webinar

1. **Overview of the matching funds opportunity** (Todd Dalrymple, The Duke Endowment)
2. **Annual Book Fairs implementation** (Dr. Natalia Ward, East Tennessee State University, and Dr. Anne McGill-Franzen, University of Tennessee)
3. **Experiences with delivering Annual Book Fairs** (Dr. Tracy McAbee and Misty Mercer)
4. **Q&A** (coordinated by Brontë Forsgren, Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy)

You may ask questions in the chat today, and there will be other ways to follow-up with us after the webinar.

The Annual Book Fairs model

- **Simple:** Students, beginning in 1st or 2nd grade, select 10-14 books among a selection of 400-600 to read over the summer for three consecutive years.
- **High impact:** Found in randomized-controlled trials to increase end-of-grade reading test scores by 35-40% of a grade-level by 4th-5th grade.
- **Cost effective:** \$300-\$400 total per student over three years

North Carolina Annual Book Fairs initiative

- Annual Book Fairs will be conducted in the school building.
- Students will choose their books at the Fair in March or April and receive them on the last day of school.
- Book Fairs will be delivered to all 1st and 2nd graders in the schools in spring 2027, and to the same students when they are in 2nd and 3rd grade in spring 2028, and when they're in 3rd and 4th grade in spring 2029.
- Participating PSUs and schools will work with a team led by Natalia Ward at East Tennessee State University to implement the program.
 - Dr. Ward helped lead the most recent implementation in 43 elementary schools in Tennessee.
 - **Dr. Ward's team will facilitate planning beginning in spring 2026.**

Matched funding opportunity

- The Duke Endowment (TDE) is offering PSUs 1:1 matching funds for the program, up to \$1.95M, to deliver the program in elementary schools.
- PSUs can braid multiple funding sources – not just PRC 0105 funds – to provide their matching dollars.
 - **The PSUs' expected contribution for each participating school of average size (85 students per grade) is approximately \$7,500-\$9,500 per year over 4 years.**
 - In-kind dollars do not count toward the match.
- The timing of TDE's matched funding is flexible within project period as long as the PSU's total funding contribution equals TDE's total funding contribution over the four years.

Selection of schools

- Participating PSUs identify CSI-, TSI-, and/or other elementary schools for potential participation.
- To enable a rigorous evaluation, an independent study team will use a randomized lottery to select half of the schools for participation, while the other half continues with standard programming.
 - Aiming to recruit 100 schools total
- **Seeking to demonstrate effectiveness in North Carolina that supports expansion of Book Fairs beyond the study period.**

How PSUs can sign up to participate

- In early January, DPI will post a **Participation Agreement** Form on its [Comprehensive & Targeted Supports website](#). The form will ask for:
 1. Basic information about the participating school(s)
 2. The PSU's and schools' commitment to engage in planning in 2026, support a faithful delivery of the model in 2027-2029, and participate in the study.
 3. A budget that presents the sources of PSU matching funds
 4. A signature from the PSU superintendent/leader
- PSUs must submit their form to TDE by February 27, 2026 to ensure that PSUs know the outcome(s) of the random assignment in early spring.
 - Lottery to be conducted after 100 schools are put forward by PSUs
 - Schools assigned to the program group will begin planning with the provider.
 - Schools assigned to the control group are not expected to use any of the proposed funding for Annual Book Fairs.

More information on the sign-up process

- DPI will post the Participation Agreement Form on its [Comprehensive & Targeted Supports website](#) in early January with:
 - An FAQ document
 - How to access support
- **Questions?** Use the chat or contact Brontë Forsgren, Director at the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, at bforsgren@evidencebasedpolicy.org or (435) 757-9436.

If you are watching the recording, please register for updates here:



Or,

<https://tinyurl.com/2s44tmex>

Annual Book Fair Principles

- **Access** to books at home is critical for children from low-income families, especially during the summer
- **Choice** of books gives more power to access
 - Lindsay (2013) found that giving students free books improves reading performance over lending books,
 - But allowing students to choose those books doubled the power of free book distribution programs
- Choice encourages children to pursue topics of personal interest and develop knowledge of content and genre (Guthrie, 2004)
- **Frequency of book reading** at early grades predicts reading proficiency at later grades (Torppa, et al., 2020)

**Interesting texts as
scaffolds for reading
development:
What books do
children choose to
read over summer?**

1 st -3 rd Graders Free Book Choices: Urban Minority Communities (2010)		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Superman's First Flight	Britney Spears: The Unauthorized Biography	Hangin' With Lil' Romeo
Arthur's Underwear	Pokemon Pop Quiz	Pop People: Lil' Romeo
NBA Action From A To Z	Powerpuff Girls: Mojo Jojo's Rising	Pop People: Destiny's Child

**1st, 2nd, 3rd Graders Free Book Choices:
Rural Appalachian Communities (2016-2018)**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Out	Minecraft: Essential Handbook	Pokemon Deluxe Essential Handbook
Star Wars Rebels: The Inquisitor's Trap	Pokemon: The Rescue Mission	Adventures of Dog Man: The Unleashed
Now You See It! Watch Pokemon Evolve Right Before Your Eyes: Kalos	Pokemon: Wrath of the Legends	Dog Man
Fly Guy Presents Sharks	LEGO Batman: Robin to the Rescue	Smile
Spiderman: Spidey's New Costume	Happy Birthday, Bad Kitty!	Magic Kitten: Classroom Chaos
Elephants Cannot Dance!	Real Bios: Ariana Grande	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days
Real Bios: Ariana Grande	LEGO Ninjago: Return of the Djinn	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Last Straw

Transcending Demographics: “Kid” Culture in Book Selections

Most Popular Book Selections	Urban Communities	Rural Appalachian Communities
Series	48%	50%
Superhero	26%	40%
Celebrity Bio	26%	10%

Districts and Schools: Roles and Responsibilities

- Identify key contact personnel at each school
 - E.g., principal, reading specialist, librarian
- Meet and maintain communication with the ETSU team
- Provide and update student roster for each class
- Review book fair curated list
- Identify a date for the spring book fair; develop the book fair schedule
- Support the ETSU team:
 - Identify space in the building, meet the ETSU team, assist with setup and breakdown of the book fair, bring students to the book fair, check the roster for accuracy and attendance, help collect order forms
- Distribute books to students during the last week/day of school

ETSU Team: Roles and Responsibilities

- Meet and maintain communication with district and school personnel
- Maintain updated student rosters
- Create yearly book fair curated list; send the book list to schools and districts for review
- Implement annual book fairs:
 - Bring the book set to the school, setup, breakdown, implement the book fair protocol, collect order forms, check rosters for accuracy and attendance
- Place individual student orders in the online system
- Verify the distribution of books to individual students during the last week/day of school

Book Distributor: Roles and Responsibilities

- Ship book sets to the ETSU team
- Set up an online ordering system
 - By district, school, teacher, student
- Process and fulfill book orders
 - Books are shipped directly to the school
 - Books are wrapped for individual students and bundled by teachers
 - Each package is labeled with the student and teacher name for easy distribution

The Day of the Book Fair

- Book Fair Setup
 - Library, cafeteria, etc.
 - Book set of 400-600 books is displayed
 - Various genres
 - Range of text complexity
 - Most popular and exciting titles from different publishers
- Classes come one by one (Year 1: Grades 1 & 2; Year 2: Grades 2 & 3; Year 3: Grades 3 & 4)
 - ETSU team provides instructions to the students and orients them to the kinds of books that are available at the book fair
 - Each student looks through the books and completes their personal paper order form (listing 10-14 books they want to receive)
- ETSU team and the School Contact Personnel make any necessary updates to the rosters, devise a plan for absent children
- Book Fair Breakdown

End of the School Year: Book Distribution

- Books arrive pre-packaged by individual student (with student's name or ID and their teacher's name on the package)
- School contact personnel ensures that the teachers receive the books for their students
- Teachers distribute the book packages to individual children to take home
- School contact personnel communicates with the ETSU team to verify delivery and distribution of books to students; issues are immediately communicated and addressed

Tennessee Leaders Reflecting on Their Annual Book Fair Experience

Misty Mercer, ELA Consultant,
Tennessee Department of
Education

Dr. Tracy McAbee, Director of
Schools, Lewis County, Tennessee



Next steps

- DPI will post the Participation Agreement Form on its [Comprehensive & Targeted Supports website](#) in early January with:
 - An FAQ document
 - How to access support
- **Questions?** Use the chat or contact Brontë Forsgren, Director at the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, at bforsgren@evidencebasedpolicy.org or (435) 757-9436.

If you are watching the recording, please register for updates here:



Or,

<https://tinyurl.com/2s44tmex>

100 *James B. Duke*
YEARS

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

COMMITTED TO THE CAROLINAS
