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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BELK FOUNDATION, 2022 RECIPIENT OF THE ECS CORPORATE AWARD!

Education Commission of the States is pleased to honor The Belk Foundation with the 2022 Corporate Award, in recognition of its years-long and multi-pronged contributions to early literacy instruction and educator training in the state of North Carolina.

ECS Corporate Award



The foundation, which supports K-3 achievement, began its focus on third-grade reading proficiency in 2013. Third grade literacy is an important foundational milestone in a child's development and educational trajectory, and a major predictor of future academic success. With that in mind, the foundation partnered with the University of North Carolina System to evaluate how teacher preparation programs address reading instruction and early literacy. That evaluation, *Leading on Literacy*, sparked much of the work that continues today, including North Carolina's Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative that targets not only proficiency

rates, but also whole-child supports, including nutrition and health. Leaders at the foundation also contributed to public education about the importance of literacy leading up to the revision of North Carolina's Read to Achieve legislation in 2021, which aligns the P-12 system, standards and colleges of education to the science of reading.

The foundation's influence stretches beyond North Carolina: It is a key player in The Path Forward for Teacher Preparation and Licensure in Early Literacy, an initiative that aims to embed the science of reading in pre-service teacher preparation programs across six states (Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio). Led by the Barksdale Reading Institute and the Hunt Institute, the initiative brings together state teams to share strategies for ensuring teacher preparation and licensure policies align with evidence-based literacy instruction.

"The Belk Foundation serves as a model for how philanthropy can galvanize partners at the state and local level around critical education issues that otherwise become mired in politics or bureaucratic silos," a nomination letter read.



Education Commission of the States will present leaders from The Belk Foundation with the Corporate Award at the 2022 National Forum on Education Policy, taking place July 13-15 in Washington, D.C.

The Corporate Award is one of three awards that Education Commission of the States gives each year to celebrate outstanding commitment to public education. The others are the James Bryant Conant Award, which recognizes individual achievement, and the Frank Newman Award for State Innovation, which recognizes states or territories.

For more information about The Belk Foundation, contact Lauren Fowler, at lauren@belkfoundation.org.

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