

# City tackles literacy with Read On Phoenix program

## Groups team up in community effort

By Tessa Duvall

The Republic | azcentral.com

Officials want Phoenix families to spend more time with a good book or two this summer as a part of a new literacy program.

City and community partners launched Read On Phoenix, an effort to have every child reading proficiently by the third grade, last week at Phoenix's Burton Barr Central Library. The initiative includes a challenge for families to collectively read 100,000 books this summer, and encompasses existing programs such as summer reading programs, family reading events and a 20,000 library-card drive in October.

Mayor Greg Stanton and Phoenix Councilman Daniel Valenzuela said education needs to be a communitywide priority.

"Of all the things we do at the city, if we don't get this right, everything else won't be successful," Stanton said. "I say it without exaggeration that we can't achieve our goals as a city unless we achieve this goal."

Stanton said he doesn't want the city to run schools, but instead partner with schools and ensure that areas of greatest need receive the greatest support.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a national standardized test that measures American students' knowledge in various subjects, 74 percent of Arizona's fourth-graders don't meet grade-level reading proficiency requirements. Beginning this school year, students who test as "far below" on Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards reading assessment can't progress beyond the third grade until they meet standards set by Arizona's Move on When Reading law.

Stanton said the state also needs to help make the requirements set by state



In the effort to have all third-graders proficient in reading, Mayor Greg Stanton says education needs to be a community-wide priority. CHERYL EVANS/THE REPUBLIC

law possible.

"First and foremost, I expect the Legislature to provide the resources so that our schools can get the job done. I don't think we're there yet. I think they need to do more in that regard," he said. "That being said, that doesn't abdicate my role as mayor of the city to do everything I can to be more supportive of our schools, particularly our schools in higher-poverty areas."

The Arizona Diamondbacks also joined the effort to get kids reading. Derrick Hall, president and CEO of the baseball team, announced that the organization will give away about 10,000 tickets as incentives for children who read.

Since joining the summer reading program in 2000, the Diamondbacks have invested more than \$627,000 into libraries and given away more than 86,000 tickets as incentives.

Hall said the decision to support this program was a no-brainer for the Arizona Diamondbacks Foundation.

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Mayor of Phoenix