


**2018 WEBINAR SERIES**

**Overcoming the Challenge of Poverty:**  
Helping Low-Income Students Move Toward Reading Success

**Dr. Diane Vautrot**  
Support Services Coordinator, Gilmer County Charter Schools, GA



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- We will save 5–10 minutes at the end the presentation for Q&A with our presenter. Please share your questions via the 'Question Box' at the right of your screen during today's presentation.
- Following the webinar, all registrants will receive an email including a link to the recording of today's webinar. Those attending the live presentation also will receive a certificate stating they attended a one-hour webinar with Voyager Sopris Learning®.

### Professional Interests



**Dr. Diane Vautrot**

- Career as special educator/reading interventionist
- Professional experiences with children from cultures of poverty
  - Rural Louisiana
  - Inner City–New Orleans
  - Suburbs of Atlanta
  - Southern Appalachia
- Diversity of experiences led to an interest in studying cultures and impact of culture on students, particularly in the field of reading

## The Impact of Poverty on Reading

### **1. Children from homes of poverty do not have as much exposure to language. Begin school with a 32-million word gap, Hart & Risley (1995)**

- Lack of print materials in home
- Lack of exposure to vocabulary

### **2. Differences in early brain development**

- Differences in the frontal lobe, affecting cognitive control and self control
- Difference in the occipital lobe (spatial skills)
- Differences in working memory
- Higher probability of having learning disabilities

## The Impact of Poverty on Reading

### **3. Experience high levels of chronic, toxic stress**

- Impacts brain development
- Neural pathways responding to fear and anxiety may overdevelop while pathways for executive functions such as reasoning, planning and learning may under develop
- Physical and mental health is poorer in general; impacts alertness and overall physical well being

—Scientific Learning Corporation, 2018

## The Impact of Poverty on Reading

### 4. Feelings of Alienation and Embarrassment

- Often have feelings of despair
- School culture much different than their home life
- Often give up by **third grade**—Critical marker for predicting high school dropout rate and future prison population
- Have experienced being passed on to the next grade regardless of standardized test scores—Have no expectations that will change

## Pathways by Which Poverty Impacts Children

- Health and nutrition
- Home environment
- Parental interactions with children
- Parental mental health, and
- Neighborhood conditions (feelings of safety, impact of crime)

How many of these can we control in schools?

## Do We Fix This?

Research:

### **Provide Social Supports at Schools**

- Homeless—Network supports—McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- More resources for afterschool and summer programs
- Better school-based health services
- Focus on improving family and community engagement
- Increase mental health services



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## Wrap Around Social Services are the Groundwork

**Children who are hungry, tired, sick, scared, and stressed can't learn.**

**Gilmer County Charter Schools does a great job of addressing all of these areas.**

- Strong community-based resources through church organizations, charity organizations, inter-agency collaboration—food banks, clothing, free medical, telemedicine in schools, mental health providers in schools
- We are the Village that it Takes to Raise A Child!

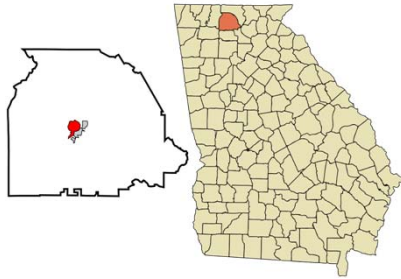
*Let Me Show You Around*



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## Gilmer County

### The Apple Capital of Georgia



## Gilmer County

### Pretty, huh?



## Gilmer County

### Falling for Gilmer County yet?



## Gilmer County

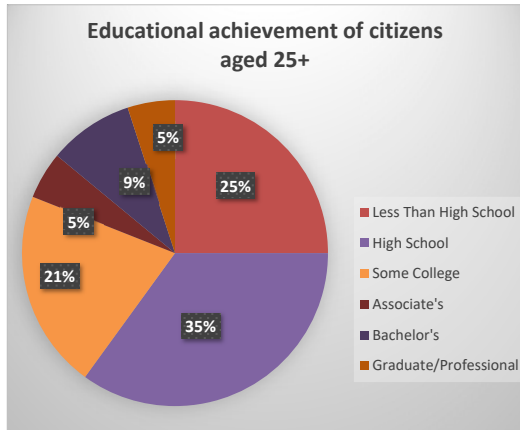
### A little bit about us

- **Rural county in North Georgia mountains**  
County Population: 30,000
- **School System**  
Population: 4,441  
Schools: 1 Primary (preK-1)  
1 Elementary (2-4)  
1 Elementary (K-4)  
1 Middle (5-6)  
1 Middle (7-8)  
1 High School (9-12)  
Mountain Innovation Program (6-12)—  
Alternate educational setting  
**Economically Disadvantaged: 3,128 (70%)**

## Gilmer County

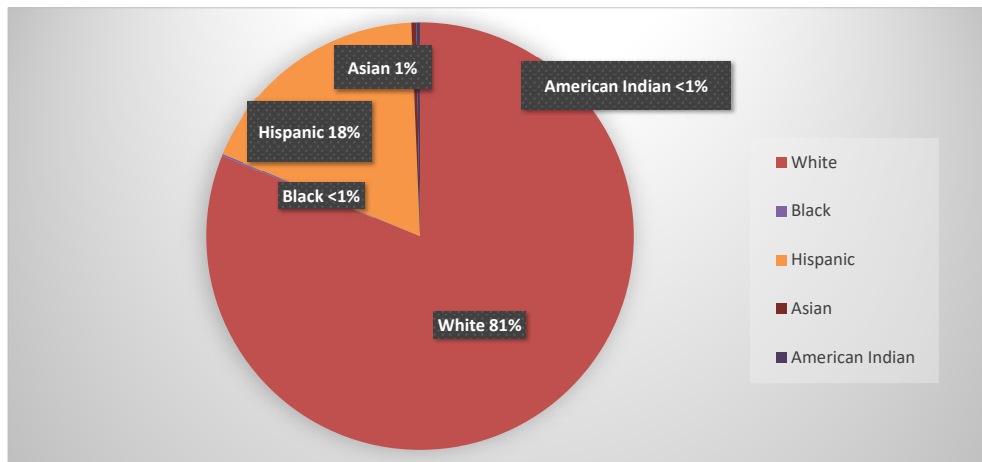
### Educational Achievement of Citizens Aged 25+

Less than High School: 25%  
High School: 35%  
Some College: 21%  
Associate's degree: 5%  
Bachelor's degree: 9%  
Graduate/Professional degrees: 5%



## Gilmer County

### Demographics





## Gilmer County

### What poverty looks like to us



## Gilmer County

### What poverty looks like to us



## Gilmer 2010: The Year of Reckoning

- Economy is based on tourism and building
- 65 and older school tax exemption approved by voters
- Tax revenues fell drastically
- Funding from state was based on two years prior when economy was booming
- End result: **70%** cut in school system budget

### **We're not proud of this**

We had students entering ninth grade reading at PP—second grade levels

Let me rephrase that: We had students who had been in special education for nine years who made virtually no progress in reading!

What's that mean? Doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results is the definition of \_\_\_\_\_.

## Reading Initiative and Turning Point in Our Progress

- Principal identified an area of concern as the number of students entering Gilmer High School in ninth grade were reading below level
- Collaborated with the director of our district Learning Resource Center, who took a leap of faith and invested precious dollars and resources into our district
- She hired a reading consultant to begin a reading initiative at the high school —starting with special education

## Reading Initiative and Turning Point in Our Progress

### The initiative involved:

- Evidence-based strategies
- Commitment to long-term intervention
- Establishing strong relationships with children
  - Cultures of poverty have strong emphasis on relationships
  - Commitment to family and social group above all else
- Instill in students a desire to read some kind of print
  - Fishing magazines, action readers, school newspaper, “appropriate” teen magazines

## Reading Initiative and Turning Point in Our Progress

### Year One

- **Data driven: First year majority of students with disabilities were reading at second- to fourth-grade level—Several were at a primer level, and a few were nonreaders**
  
- **Two goals for the project**
  - Improve reading competency levels of students with disabilities
  - Enhance teacher knowledge of effective instructional strategies for struggling readers

### Cornerstone of initiative: *REWARDS*

Instructional reading program designed for struggling readers; developed by Dr. Anita Archer

Are you thinking this is a program just for students with disabilities?

*Wait for it ...*

## REWARDS

- Intense intervention program for students in grades 4–12 who have mastered decoding skills between K–2 level but have difficulty decoding long words and/or read slowly
- Used as 40 lessons in 20-minute groups
- Lessons are explicit, yet flexible, with a high level of repetition and teacher/student interaction and engagement
- Easy to implement and can be used by teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers
- Reasonable cost

## REWARDS

### Two Reading Books

- Science
- Social Studies
- (Teaches Reading/content vocabulary/state standards)
- Writing—ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and SWD (Students with Disabilities) teachers love word lists (Provides lists of alternate words)

## Results

### After Year One

- **70%** increase in comprehension retell quality
- **58%** increase in multisyllabic word part recognition
- **52%** increase in multisyllabic word recognition
- **27%** average increase for independent reading levels
- **22%** average increase for instructional reading levels

## Results

### Clear Creek Middle School 2016–2017

Student	San Diego Pretest	San Diego Posttest
A	2	5
B	3	5
C	5	9
D	2	3
E	2	5
F	4	8
G	3	7
H	5	9
I	3	5
J	5	8
K	3	6
L	5	8
M	4	5
N	2	5

*Average growth of 2.93 grades*

## Expansion

- In 2016–17, piloted Science book in seventh grade inclusion
- Science teachers loved the level engagement and science vocabulary/aligned with Georgia Science Standards
- Science teachers asked to implement first Reading book, then move into Science book for ALL seventh graders reading below level on standardized tests
- Fifth grade Connections teachers are implementing for all fifth graders reading below level

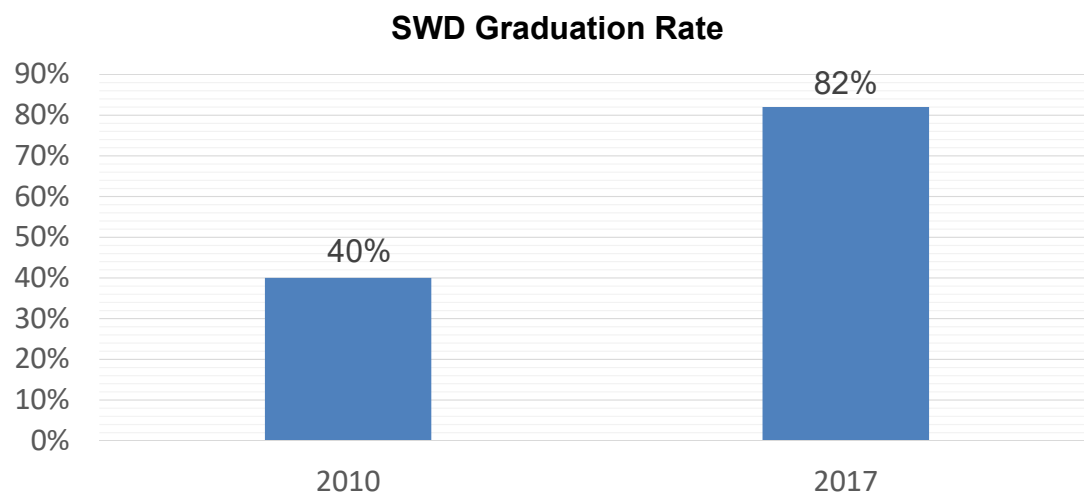
### Clear Creek Middle School—General education seventh grade—Science

Student	San Diego Pretest	San Diego Posttest
A	2	3
B	3	5
C	3	5
D	4	6
E	4	6
F	4	7
G	5	6
H	5	6
I	5	8
J	5	8
K	5	6
L	6	8
M	7	9

## Next Steps

- Continue to implement with fifth and seventh grade students scoring below grade level on MAP data
- Continue to implement to students with disabilities reading below grade level—grades 5–12
- Continue to implement *RAVE-O*® for elementary students reading below level

## The Proof





## It's not about money—It's about commitment to the journey

### People in our culture

- Value relationships
- Have strong work ethics
- Want their children to break the cycle of generational illiteracy

**Teachers responded by working hard to instill hope and trust in students.  
They know we are in it with them for the long haul.**

## Contact information




Feel free to contact me if you would like more information

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# Q & A



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Monday, April 23 | 3:00 p.m. ET  
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Who is Confident Teaching Reading and Spelling?**  
Presented by Dr. Louisa Moats  
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today's  
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