



## If you really want to help kids ...

With August now arrived, thoughts come of helping children get off to a good start in the school year. But what if, instead of doing another school supply drive, you went a little deeper and identified a school near you - whether it is 5 minutes away or 25 minutes away - that has had difficulty helping children perform at grade level in reading or math?

For decades now we have understood how strong of a predictor reading at grade level is for future success. Third grade is often identified as the key grade, and yet many of our country's third-graders are performing WAY BELOW third-grade level.

A simple internet search will provide you with an abundance of sources on how kids are underperforming - how their schools are underperforming. My guess is that you will be able to find a school close enough to your home where less than half of the kids at any grade level can read or do math at the minimum expected standard. In many places - and you won't have to look far to find one - less than 5% of the kids perform at grade level *year after year*.

## ... find a school near you ...

... and find out what that school needs the most in order to better educate the children there. Is it a technology center? Do they need more after-school programs in the arts or in recreation? Do they have opportunities for you to be a mentor? Do we need to bring in more resources to the community, as a whole?

In other words, let's not continue to just treat the symptoms. Let's get to the causes. This likely requires you to make a commitment rather than a contribution. **And that's the opportunity for you, your company, your faith community, or any group with which you associate.**

## Humanity calls for more than a backpack

More than anything else - more than money, more than donations of backpacks or pens and

pencils - it is your humanity that is most in need. We often use the cliché in this country that “every little bit helps,” but I am not sure it does. It may just lull us into thinking we are helping when, in fact, the lives of the kids who get those backpacks are more unstable than ever. We continue to treat symptoms while the causes of economic hardship overwhelm the kids and their families.

Is “every little bit” all you got? I bet it is not.

Do you really want to help kids? I am betting you do. Follow that instinct. Find a school near you that has reading and math levels in obvious need of improvement. As we shared in our July newsletter, there are [37 different actions](#) in our national plan, alone, that you can take to address educational issues related to poverty.

## And think **Bigger**

I recognize that the search for the ultimate cause of our kids not performing at grade levels may lead to a bigger issue than you feel you can address. Does that mean you should not do anything? Or that you should do a small thing because small things add up? History has proven otherwise when it comes to the conditions that so many children face.

This is not a fundraising newsletter. The call for action here is not to support our work. It is to act in your local community. And if needed, extend the idea of what is local until you find that school or those schools that are not able to educate kids at a level that we have set as the minimum.

If education is the key to future success, as so many of us say and believe, then this is the exact moment of the year to lean into it.

To [commit](#), not just contribute.

### **Know someone who might want to be a Research Assistant?**

We are hiring an intern or part-time staff member for a remote position, approximately 20 hours/week. The individual will work closely with the co-founders to support the organization’s educational and outreach efforts. We are looking for an individual who can bring a critical eye and challenge the status quo assumptions about and approaches to poverty. The successful candidate will also have the skills to develop graphic representation of data, to include bar charts, line graphs, infographics, maps, and more.

Additional information can be found [here](#) or by emailing [mark@sharedhumanityproject.org](mailto:mark@sharedhumanityproject.org).

Sending my best,



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National Plan to  
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