

# ODYSSEY

The ODYSSEY is a student-produced newsmagazine, published with the intent to inform, entertain and give voice to the Clarke Central High School community, as well as to educate student journalists. Established in 2003, the ODYSSEY is published multiple times a year, and each issue is an open public forum for student expression under the guidance of a faculty adviser.

Student journalists are provided with opportunities to investigate, inform, interpret and to evaluate: all traditionally accepted functions of the press in America. Published opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of anyone other than the staff.

The ODYSSEY staff is committed to reflect the mission statement set forth by Clarke Central High School. The goals of the staff are to provide fair, accurate news and commentaries, as well as to serve the interests of the school and Athens' community.

Advertising must conform to the guidelines set forth for editorials. Publication of advertisements does not indicate an endorsement by CCHS or the ODYSSEY staff.

Students pictured in advertisements are not given monetary compensation. All advertising rates are available upon request from any ODYSSEY staff member.

The ODYSSEY is a member of the Quill and Scroll Honor Society, Georgia Scholastic Press Association, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, National Scholastic Press Association and Southern Interscholastic Press Association.

Corrections of errors and omissions will appear in the next issue.

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ODYSSEY NEWSMAGAZINE

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## OUR TAKE

As the Clarke County School District website acknowledges in relation to pre-K and early education, "parents are the child's first and most important teachers."

According to Dr. Marianella Casasola, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development at Cornell University, babies pick up on body language, speech patterns and facial expressions. They recognize words before they can verbalize them and learn what language sounds like before they understand it.

Research consistently proves this again and again: literacy begins at birth.

Directives like those outlined in Clarke Central's own Striving Readers Grant must become a blueprint for reading initiatives across the CCSD.

"Children who start school with a poor vocabulary rarely catch up," Dr. Jorge E. Gonzalez of Texas A&M University, a U.S. Department of Education-funded researcher who studies oral language and literacy development, said for a 2012 feature by the American Psychological Association. "The bottom line is there is not a lot of room for error on this issue."

Basically, some of the most formative years for children are before pre-school. Children whose parents read to them at home and eventually go to pre-school have a head start that is likely to continue throughout their education.

As one in every three CCSD students lives below the poverty line, according to a 2015 district report for the federal Head Start program, early reading is probably not a main priority for many of these families.

"Family can have a lot to do with how you view education and what it's for," English department teacher Christian Barner said. "If the majority of your time is spent not (reading and writing) and there's no value in that, or you come from a home where these things aren't important, it's hard to do."

The weight of delayed literacy growth therein lies with kindergarten teachers and continues on through to high school. Our teachers need more support in this continued bout with illiteracy and generational poverty.

Early childhood literacy efforts, which primarily come from venues like the Athens-Clarke County Public Library, must be intensified. Directives like those outlined in Clarke Central's own Striving Readers Grant, awarded in 2015, must become a blueprint for reading initiatives across the CCSD.

We can win this battle, but only if we first recognize how rampant illiteracy has become. Only then can we commit to helping our peers break free from the severe obstacles they face.



**Featured:** TIED DOWN: With one in three Clarke County School District students living below the poverty line and 60 percent of CCSD high schoolers reading below their grade level, many students are perpetually constricted academically.

Illustration by Phineas Alexander.

