

CASE STUDY

How Horry County Schools Uses Beanstack to Support Ambitious Literacy Goals

This South Carolina district is working toward an ambitious goal: 95% of students reading at grade level by 2030, supported by daily reading practice alongside science-of-reading-based instruction.

First-Year Impact of Rise with Reading Initiative

15-Point Increase

in ELA state standards

67M+

Pages logged in year one

85%

Student participation



One Ambitious Goal, Multiple Layers of Literacy Support

Reaching 95% reading proficiency takes a layered approach: strong instruction, daily reading practice, and communitywide support.

To achieve this ambitious goal, superintendent Clifford “Cliff” Jones launched Rise with Reading in 2025, a “county-wide movement based on the belief that every child in Horry County deserves the opportunity to be a strong, confident reader.”

At the heart of Rise with Reading is a superintendent-led reading challenge, powered by Beanstack. The challenge encourages students to read independently and helps build a visible culture of reading across classrooms, libraries, homes, and even football stadiums. It complements the district’s broader literacy work, including science-of-reading-based instruction, professional learning, assessment, and access to books.



District at a Glance



56 Schools



47,000 Students



K-12 Grade Levels

Instructional model: Science of Reading + daily independent reading

Strong Reading Instruction Requires Consistent and Frequent Practice

Evidence-based instruction gives students the decoding skills and phonics foundation needed to read. Independent reading gives them the opportunity to apply those skills. With practice, they start to become stronger readers and gain confidence.

As Jones puts it, “Reading needs to become a habit in a student’s routine. Like going to the gym, it’s about the reps you put in that get you in shape.” Regular reading practice helps students build the stamina and confidence to engage with increasingly complex texts.

Why Reading Volume Matters

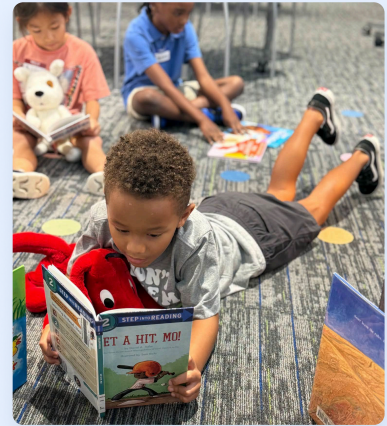
 Fluency	Practice helps students read smoothly and understand what they read.
 Vocabulary	A wider range of texts introduces new words, ideas, and ways of communicating.
 Comprehension	Reading across subjects and formats strengthens understanding and critical thinking.
 Stamina	Regular practice prepares students to engage with longer, more complex texts.
 Motivation	Choice and visible progress help students see themselves as readers.

“We can teach students how to read, but they still have to put in the reps. The more they read, the more stamina and confidence they build. Strong instruction and strong reading habits have to work together.”

Cliff Jones

Superintendent, Horry County Schools

Where Beanstack Fits



Beanstack gives Horry County's independent-reading strategy structure and momentum. Students can choose what to read, track their progress, earn recognition, and contribute to shared goals across the district.

The Call to Action: The Superintendent's Reading Challenge

Jones recognized that reading competes directly with an endless stream of digital entertainment. To reach the district's literacy goal of 95% proficiency, Horry County needed to create an environment that encouraged students to put down their devices and pick up books.

Jones opened the school year with a personal call to action through the superintendent's reading challenge. He launched the challenge through a district video, reinforced expectations with principals, and brought it into every school and board visit. When meeting students, he asks, "What are you reading, and have you logged your pages?"

"When he is living it every day, and talking about it, and promoting it, and talking to kids about reading, everybody's going to do it. It's just an expectation now."

Ann Moore

Coordinator of Library Programs, Horry County Schools

1,000 Pages: One Shared Measure Across K-12

To create a unified goal, Horry County set a target of 1,000 pages per student per quarter, or 4,000 pages per student per school year. The books look different across grade levels, but every reader contributes meaningful practice toward the same districtwide goal.

Elementary

30 picture or early reader books

Middle School

Several middle-grade books

High School

Two to three novels



A Screen That Sends Students Back to Books

Beanstack was chosen for its frictionless setup via Classlink and ease of implementation. Students briefly use Beanstack to log pages, check their progress, or earn a badge. The meaningful activity occurs outside the platform as they read, explore their interests, and build stamina.

In this way, Horry County is intentionally using technology to encourage less screen time and more time spent with books. Beanstack provides the motivation and visibility, but reading remains at the center.

"I want kids to put down the phone and pick up a book. Beanstack helps us use technology in a smart way: not to keep students on a screen, but to motivate them to spend more time reading."

Cliff Jones

Superintendent, Horry County Schools

A District Priority Brought to Life in Every School Building

Horry County's librarians and educators took the districtwide challenge and made it meaningful in their own unique school communities.

With a full-time librarian in every school, the district had trusted champions who could adapt one goal for readers of different ages and interests. Librarians promoted the challenge, monitored participation, connected students to books, and designed celebrations for their buildings:

Visual Milestones: Giant beanstalk displays made reading goals tangible. Some schools even used students' faces as markers, moving them higher as they reached new goals.

Reader Recognition: Digital badges, small prizes, certificates signed by Jones and schoolwide ceremonies made reading progress worth celebrating.

Mid-Year Momentum: Million-page milestones gave readers something big to rally around. When some reached their goals by December, they celebrated, raised the bar, and kept reading.

High School Engagement: Choice-based campaigns made reading more relevant for older students. The approach brought high schoolers back to media centers and increased book circulation.





A Countywide Commitment to Literacy

Reaching Horry County's literacy goal requires support beyond its schools. Local churches, youth groups, businesses, and the Horry County Memorial Library help give students more opportunities, encouragement, and access to books.

Their Literacy Under the Lights brings families into football stadiums to read together, meet local authors, and choose books to take home. During the summer, elementary students join Malcolm Mitchell's READCamp, while middle and high school students continue building stamina through novels, articles, and choice-based reading activities.

Together, these efforts keep students reading beyond the classroom and make literacy something all of Horry County can rally around.

"This can't just be a school initiative. If we want to build a community of readers, our families, teachers, libraries, businesses, and community partners all have a role to play. That's when literacy becomes more than a program. It becomes part of the culture."

Cliff Jones

Superintendent, Horry County Schools

Reading Data That Prompts Better Questions

Beyond helping schools monitor progress toward their goals, Beanstack gives educators another way to understand student reading choices.

Ann Moore, Coordinator of Library Programs, used Lexile information in Beanstack to compare the complexity of books students select with their assessed reading ranges. When the data showed that sixth graders selected more challenging books than eighth graders, it prompted librarians to take a closer look at how they engaged older students and supported book selection.

These insights help educators ask whether students are choosing books that challenge them, which grade levels need more guidance or encouragement, and where a different approach might help grow participation. The data does not replace educator expertise. It helps educators focus on where it matters most.



First-Year Impact Secures Long-Term Support

After a successful first year, Horry County students returned to school in 2026 and Phase II of Rise with Reading, backed by strong endorsement from the school board and community. Standardized testing and district usage data reflect powerful momentum:

15-Point ELA Surge

67%

of 3rd–8th grade students met or exceeded English Language Arts state standards—a 15-point increase compared to 2022 results.

5 Year Growth

48.9% → 67.8%

From 2021 to 2026, the share of students in grades 3–8 performing at or above grade level on SC Ready ELA rose 19 percentage points, from 48.9% to 67.8%.

+2.2-Point Elementary Jump



Third-grade reading proficiency rose by 2.2 percentage points in Year 1 of the challenge.

Secondary Engagement



High school library checkouts and class visits increased significantly.

Massive Scale

85%

of K-12 students participated

67M+

pages logged in Beanstack

**Part of Horry County's broader literacy efforts and not attributed to Beanstack alone.*



A Model for Districtwide Literacy

Horry County's experience offers a clear lesson for other district leaders: Strong literacy instruction and independent reading should not be treated as competing priorities. They are complementary parts of a complete strategy. Students need evidence-based instruction to learn how to read. They also need meaningful opportunities to use those skills, build stamina, and discover reasons to keep reading.

Beanstack gives Horry County the structure to make reading a visible daily practice throughout every student's educational journey, while district leaders, librarians, educators, families, and community partners build momentum in fun, engaging ways. Every page logged is another reading "rep"—and another step toward 95% by 2030.