



BookTrust

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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All K-3 students in School District to Receive Free Books Every Month

\$1.3 million grant will expand national book choice and ownership program to every elementary school

Philadelphia – The School District of Philadelphia and Book Trust, a national organization supporting book ownership and early reading in schools, along with the William Penn Foundation, today announced a four-year partnership that will expand Book Trust’s program to reach all of the District’s 150 elementary schools and an estimated 40,000 kindergarten to third-grade students. The partnership is made possible by a \$1.3 million lead grant from the William Penn Foundation, along with local and national supporters, and is an investment in the District’s continued focus on early literacy.

Book Trust engages students to choose, read, and own one to three books every month of the school year, helping them build home libraries and cultivating literacy-rich communities.

During a pilot project, supported by the William Penn Foundation in the 2018-19 school year, Book Trust has provided more than 3,000 kindergarten to third-grade students with 49,554 books in 10 schools. The new investment from the William Penn Foundation will help expand the Book Trust program in Philadelphia schools over the next four years. In the coming year, Book Trust will be in 50 schools, reaching an estimated 13,333 students; and will reach all elementary schools by the fourth year of the partnership. The program will be maintained as part of the District’s early literacy efforts in all schools.

Research indicates that in low-income communities in the United States, there is just one book for every 300 children, compared to middle-income families who, on average, have 13 books for every child. This disparity is a significant factor in the reading gap between children from low-income and middle-income families. Book Trust combats this disparity by providing access to new books that students choose and by offering resources to teachers and families to improve reading proficiency and inspire kids’ passion for reading in the classroom and at home.

Dr. William R. Hite, superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, stated, “We are grateful to the William Penn Foundation for helping to bring Book Trust to our schools. It is a vital component of our work around early literacy and our goal to ensure 100 percent of our eight-year-olds are reading on or above grade level. We know that when students are able to choose the books they want to read, and their families are engaged and invested in their learning, they have the greatest opportunity to succeed. We look forward to this continued partnership that will ultimately reach every elementary school across the District.”

Elliot Weinbaum, Program Director for the education program at the William Penn Foundation, said, “Our children and teachers deserve every support possible as they work hard to make sure that every student reads well by the end of third grade. The William Penn Foundation is fortunate to be able to support students and teachers in a number of ways. This most recent investment is based in the evidence that access to exciting and engaging books is an important element of literacy growth. We invite others to join

the citywide effort to support early learning and literacy as there is so much exciting and important work underway.”

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to expand Book Trust’s evidence-based, teacher-led, and student-driven program throughout Philadelphia schools and be part of this city’s concerted efforts to increase early literacy. Philadelphia is modeling the way for implementing quality, tested programs district-wide. We’re grateful to the William Penn Foundation for launching this campaign effort, along with other national partners like Scholastic Book Clubs, the School District of Philadelphia, and local Philadelphia donors. Together, we’re helping Philadelphia students discover the joy and power of reading, creating limitless possibilities,” said Tiffany Kuehner, Book Trust President & CEO.

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About The School District of Philadelphia

A community of great learners, caring families, committed teachers, principals, and school staff, proven administrators, and compassionate supporters citywide. All dedicated to and inspired by our students’ achievements.

About William Penn Foundation

The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that increase educational opportunities for children from low-income families, ensure a sustainable environment, foster creativity that enhances civic life, and advance philanthropy in the Philadelphia region. The Foundation’s assets exceed \$2.3 billion as of December 31, 2018.

About Book Trust

Book Trust is a national early literacy organization with a vision that every child discovers the joy and power of reading to create limitless possibilities. Book Trust engages every child in book choice and ownership, cultivating literacy-rich communities. Founded in Fort Collins, CO in 2001 by the Schatz Family and supporting one classroom of kids, Book Trust has since grown to 21 states, from Hawaii to New York, and annually supports 57,000 children in choosing and owning more than one million books. Through the organization’s key partnership with Scholastic Book Clubs, Book Trust students can choose from a variety of genres, languages, and reading levels. Learn more at booktrust.org.

Contact:

Megan Lello

mlello@philasd.org

215-400-6887

Rebecca Morley

rmorley@williampennfoundation.org

Kristy Adams

kadams@booktrust.org

720-259-8048