



## Energizing Education in Jackson: The potential for real progress is huge

By [MLive-Jackson Citizen Patriot Editorial Board](#) on November 07, 2013

Across the nation and in Jackson County, statistics on educational achievement are so often discouraging that it is easy to forget one crucial point. We, as a whole community working together, can make things better. That's the point. Proof is displayed by the Energizing Education program in Jackson County, which has already succeeded fabulously in energizing people who care about education.

We've never seen anything quite like it, and the potential is enormous.

Energizing Education launched one year ago with a \$125,000 grant from the Consumers Energy Foundation, the charitable arm of Jackson's largest corporate citizen. The goal is to help children read proficiently, an essential skill for learning any subject in school. Without literacy, success in life is difficult at best.

Energizing Education started in a "literacy lounge" at Frost Elementary School in Jackson, where volunteer reading mentors work one-on-one with selected children during the school day. An after-school program and activities with families are also part of the strategy to help children learn to read by reading. Enough progress has been detected with reading scores to build momentum for spreading Energizing Education into new schools and new towns.

Retired Jackson industrialist Bernard Levy and his company, Industrial Steel Treating, combined to donate \$50,000 to Energizing Education in October. Other companies and service clubs have made financial donations. Energizing Education will soon expand into the Michigan Center, Northwest and Grass Lake school districts. Ultimately, the goal is to reach every school district in the county. Jackson County has never seen a clearer example of broad community collaboration.

Business leaders are involved. Not-for-profit groups, including United Way, the Jackson Community Foundation and the Cradle to Career collaborative, are involved. Schools are involved. Most importantly, ordinary people are involved. They are the crucial volunteers who read with children. Working together as a whole community is the best way to make sure more students learn, succeed and achieve. That makes a better future for everyone.