



**Cornerstone**  
CHARTER SCHOOL

All children have  
**POTENTIAL.**

The question is whether  
their school is designed  
to ***unlock it.***





**Cornerstone Chartered Public School** is a literacy-focused, tuition-free, open-enrollment public charter school serving New Hampshire's Upper Valley region. It is the only charter school of its kind in the area, and one of only two in the state.

## CORNERSTONE'S GROWTH TIMELINE

### FALL 2026

Cornerstone opens for grades K-3

### FALL 2027

Add grade 4

### FALL 2028

Add grade 5

### BY FALL 2031

Serving students in grades K-8

*"America's low literacy crisis is largely ignored, historically underfunded and woefully under-researched, despite being one of the great solvable problems of our time."*

BRITISH A. ROBINSON, President and CEO  
of the Barbara Bush Foundation



# OUR FOUNDING STORY

**Cornerstone Chartered Public School** was co-founded in 2024 by Lynne Howard, Lindsay Wadleigh, Dr. Hollace Bristol, and Adam Bristol—three educators and one business leader from different backgrounds, united by a single purpose: to improve literacy outcomes for all children, enabling them to become lifelong learners and skilled critical thinkers.

**LYNNE HOWARD**, a reading specialist and Orton-Gillingham Clinical Supervisor, has spent decades working with students who struggle to read. Early in her career, she wrestled with the question that would shape her life's work: **"Why do so many bright, capable children struggle to learn to read?"** Through study at the Stern Center's Orton-Gillingham Institute and certification as an Orton-Gillingham Clinical Supervisor, she found not only answers but a lifelong commitment to literacy.

Lynne became a practitioner of the Orton-Gillingham (OG) Approach—a structured, systematic, and multisensory approach to teaching reading that is rooted in science and supported by decades of research across fields such as neuroscience, linguistics, cognitive psychology, and education<sup>2</sup>. Originally developed for students with dyslexia, **research has shown that the OG approach is effective for every learner** because it is aligned with the way the human brain learns to read. For over ten years, Lynne has used this approach to transform literacy outcomes for children. With Cornerstone, she is bringing this proven, student-centered model to scale.

**LINDSAY WADLEIGH**, a parent and an award-winning music educator, saw firsthand how literacy struggles affect every aspect of learning—from

confidence and classroom participation to behavior and creativity. Her experiences fueled her commitment to a school where strong literacy instruction supports the whole child.

**DR. HOLLACE BRISTOL**, an educational leader and mathematics professor, recognized how poor reading skills impede success in every academic subject. Her deep expertise in curriculum and instruction reinforced the importance of strong foundational literacy as a gateway to achievement and opportunity.

**ADAM BRISTOL** is a business leader in the tech sector and a longtime employer in the Upper Valley. He has seen firsthand how gaps in literacy, critical thinking, and communication skills directly impact adult success in both the workplace and civic life. His experience underscores the **urgent need to strengthen public education from the earliest stages of student development**.

**Together, the founders chose to open a public charter school—not a private school—because they believe *every child deserves access to a high-quality education, regardless of their family's circumstances*.**

**The founders are deeply committed to expanding opportunity and improving outcomes for all children through a tuition-free, inclusive, and innovative public school that partners with families and local districts to serve the common good.**



# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Our Board of Trustees brings together a dynamic blend of expertise in education, public policy, business, planning, and community leadership. From award-winning educators and superintendents to entrepreneurs, nonprofit leaders, and municipal planners, our board reflects a deep commitment to equity, innovation, and public service. Their diverse backgrounds ensure strong governance and visionary leadership as Cornerstone opens its doors to students across New Hampshire.



FOUNDING BOARD (*pictured, back row, left to right*)  
Adam Bristol (Chair), Phyl Macomber, Maura Hart, Lynne Howard, Hollace Bristol, and Alex DesRuisseaux. (*Front row, left to right*) Lindsay Wadleigh (Secretary) and Rebecca Owens (Treasurer). (*Not pictured*) Frank Perotti (Vice-Chair) and Paul Benedict

## MISSION

**To empower children in the Upper Valley to become strong readers, thinkers, and leaders with an equitable, free, literacy-first public education.**

## VALUES

### EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Every child deserves the instruction and support to thrive—regardless of background, ability, or circumstance.

### INNOVATION

We combine proven methods with bold, forward-thinking instruction to build strong readers, thinkers, and leaders.

### COLLABORATION

Students succeed when educators, families, and communities work as one.

### GROWTH

We champion continuous learning—for students, teachers, and the entire school community.

## VISION

**To shape a future where *all* children **RISE** with the power of literacy.**

# WHAT ARE CHARTERED SCHOOLS?

Chartered (informally known as “charter”) schools are independent, tuition-free, mission-focused, open-enrollment public schools working alongside traditional public schools to deliver on the promise of a high-quality education for all children. They operate with greater autonomy to innovate in exchange for stronger accountability, allowing them to respond directly to student needs while being

held to high standards for academic outcomes and sound fiscal management.

Charter schools do not pick and choose students. They are **non-discriminatory public schools**, open to all students regardless of background, ability, or need. If applications exceed available seats, students are admitted through a blind lottery process, ensuring fairness and equity in enrollment.

**Nationwide, more than 8,000 charter schools operate across 46 states. In New Hampshire, over 30 charter schools serve more than 6,000 students.**

## WHAT ROLE DO CHARTERED SCHOOLS PLAY IN EDUCATION?

Charter schools provide families with an option when their children are not thriving in traditional public schools, offering specialized, student-centered approaches that address urgent learning challenges. They deliver the kind of personalized education often available only through costly private options, but within the public system, **tuition-free and accessible to all.**



**Charter schools are not one-size-fits-all:**

- ▶ Some focus on re-engaging high school students at risk of dropping out.
- ▶ Some emphasize Montessori<sup>3</sup> or Waldorf philosophies<sup>4</sup> while others focus on science and technology.
- ▶ Cornerstone is designed to give children a strong start in reading and writing using the Orton-Gillingham Approach. But literacy is just the beginning; we also provide a well-rounded education that develops critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving through rich, content-based, and project-driven learning.

Despite their differences, all charter schools share a commitment to equity, innovation, and high-quality instruction.

# DO CHARTERED SCHOOLS COMPETE WITH TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS?

Public charter schools do not compete with traditional public schools nor drain funds from them. Instead, they strengthen public education by piloting new practices, offering more choices to families, and sharing successful models with the wider education community. Charter schools serve as a complement to traditional public schools. While traditional public schools effectively serve many students within a community, charter schools focus on specific approaches to meet particular needs within the public system.

In New Hampshire, traditional public schools are funded through a combination of state adequacy aid, local property taxes, and some federal funding. In contrast, public charter schools receive only per-pupil state adequacy aid and some federal funding. **Local property taxes stay within the traditional public school district. Charter schools receive no local tax money.** As a result, charter schools operate with less overall funding per student than traditional public schools.

FIGURE 1: Comparison of Charter and Traditional Schools<sup>5</sup>

FEATURES OF NH PUBLIC SCHOOL MODELS	Traditional	CHARTER
Tuition-Free for All NH Students	✓	✓
Non-Discriminatory	✓	✓
Regulated & Accountable	✓	✓
Size Limited	✗	✓
School Choice	✗	✓
Open-Enrollment	✗	✓
Mission-Driven	✗	✓
Small, Flexible, Innovative	✗	✓
Funded by Federal and State	✓	✓
Funded with Local Taxes	✓	✗
Supported by Donations	✗	✓
Governance	Elected School Board	Board of Trustees



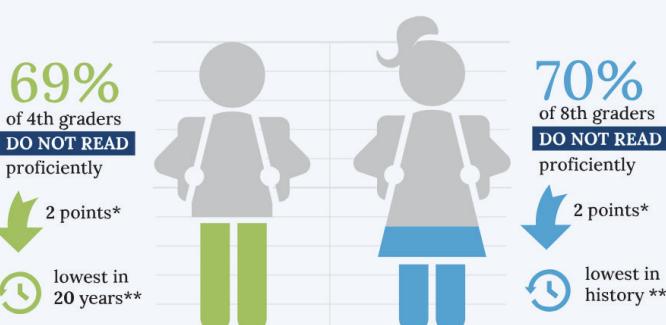
# A NATIONAL READING CRISIS

## THE HARD TRUTH

Across the United States, low literacy remains a pressing and persistent crisis. Despite the best efforts of many educators, most children are not reaching reading proficiency. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—widely known as The Nation's Report Card—measures what students know and can do in key subjects. Nationwide results from the 2024 assessment reveal that **just 31% of fourth graders and 30% of eighth graders scored at or above the proficient level in reading** (see Figure 2). In other words, of the 50 million students in our country, nearly 35 million are not proficient readers! This is a critically alarming reality that highlights deep and widespread weaknesses in how we teach reading.

These outcomes disproportionately impact students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities—widening the opportunity gaps that persist throughout life<sup>7</sup>.

FIGURE 2: 2024 Data from The Nation's Report Card - Graphic from *Reading is Fundamental*<sup>8</sup>



\*average reading score decline since 2022 NAEP results  
\*\*based on percentage of students reading at below basic level

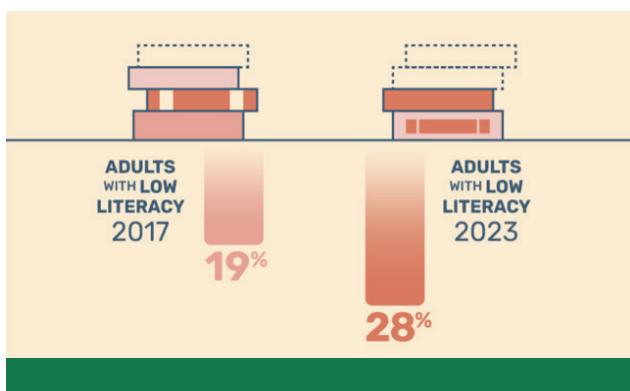
## CAN'T READ, CAN'T RISE

When children struggle to read, they miss more than words on a page. They lose access to the knowledge, vocabulary, and ideas that reading unlocks, leaving them unprepared not only to learn content and master other disciplines, but to think critically and deeply about the world around them. Children who struggle to read are denied the opportunity to reach their full potential—as readers, thinkers, and leaders.

The consequences follow them into adulthood. **Between 2017 and 2023, the percentage of U.S. adults performing at the lowest level of literacy rose from 19% to 28%**, according to the National Center for Education Statistics—an alarming decline in just six years! (see Figure 3) Another 39% of adults read at roughly a middle school level, limiting their ability to master mathematics, science, technology, music, and other disciplines, navigate complex information, engage in civic life, or advance in the workforce<sup>9</sup>. These trends will only worsen without an effective solution.

These statistics reveal a deep and growing concern, one that begins in our classrooms but reverberates throughout every corner of society. Children who don't learn to read proficiently by third grade are far more likely to struggle in school, drop out, and face limited job opportunities as adults. Adults with limited literacy skills face lower earnings, poorer health outcomes, and higher rates of criminal behavior, while struggling to support their own children's education—perpetuating cycles of disadvantage<sup>10</sup>. Families with low-literate parents are more likely to experience financial instability and reduced access to opportunity. On a societal level, the costs are staggering: up to \$2.2 trillion annually in lost productivity and public spending<sup>11</sup>.

FIGURE 3: Comparison of 2017 and 2023  
Adults with Low Literacy<sup>12</sup>



***"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope."*** KOFI ANNAN

*"I could not be more thankful for the kind improvement [Lynne] has given me. So when I sit in a class and I'm asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I smile, knowing that I want to be a Mrs. Howard (Lynne) to another kid out there who just needs to be seen, heard, and helped."* OLIVIA HERRINGTON, 10th grader at Fall Mountain Regional High School, Langdon, NH



## THE CRISIS IS HERE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE!

The Nation's Report Card shows that New Hampshire students are performing slightly better than the national average, with 36% of fourth graders and 34% of eighth graders identified as proficient readers<sup>13</sup>. Still, nearly two out of three students are not proficient readers in New Hampshire.

The New Hampshire Statewide Assessment System (SAS) shows that 53% of students statewide are reading proficiently<sup>14</sup>. In the Lebanon area, performance is stronger—approximately 60% of students reach proficiency. While this may seem encouraging, it still means that **4 in 10 students in our community are not reading at grade level**. In a typical elementary school of 240 students, that translates to nearly 100 children struggling with reading. The students most affected are those who face the greatest barriers: 67% of economically disadvantaged students and an alarming 85% of students with disabilities are reading below proficiency.

In nearby Sullivan County—including the communities of Newport and Claremont—elementary reading proficiency rates are even lower, averaging just 30%. These figures reveal deep disparities in access to effective literacy instruction and reinforce what we already know: we are not meeting the needs of all learners.

**It's not just an academic issue – It's an ongoing educational opportunity gap that hurts families, holds back communities, and ultimately affects everyone's future.**

# Wyatt's Christmas List



Wyatt, a local fifth-grader, made an unusual request last Christmas. Buried among the typical requests for toys and games was one heartbreakingly clear plea:

**"To read!!!"**

Wyatt is a bright, creative, active, and social ten-year-old. Spend five minutes with him and you'd see a typical fifth grader, except for one thing: Wyatt cannot read or write above a first-grade level.

He isn't lazy; he is actually one of the hardest-working students you'll ever meet. Despite his effort, he still cannot do what his classmates do with ease.

What his parents didn't know back in kindergarten was that Wyatt wasn't receiving the kind of instruction he needed—the kind grounded in how children actually learn to read. And **by the time his parents realized something was wrong, Wyatt was already falling through the cracks. They've done everything they can to help him. But the traditional public school system was not working for him.**

**Wyatt is not alone.** There are many children like him across our nation and right here in our neighborhoods! These children are working hard, losing confidence, and yearning for a school that finally gets it right.

***"What stands out is Lynne's unwavering passion for literacy and her belief that every child can learn to read with the right support. I'm so inspired by her vision for Cornerstone Charter School and excited for the many students and families who will benefit from her leadership and heart."***

JESSICA AUSTIN, Wyatt's Mom



# THE INSTRUCTIONAL GAP: THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING TO READ

***"We humans invented literacy, which means it doesn't come for free with our genes like speech and vision. Every brain has to learn it afresh."***

DR. MARYANNE WOLF, *internationally known researcher, teacher, and advocate for children's literacy*

Many children are not learning to read because they are being taught with ineffective methods rooted in a flawed assumption—that reading develops naturally like speech. In reality, the brain must rewire itself to read; it does not come naturally. One widely used but discredited method is the three-cueing model, which encourages guessing words from pictures or context rather than decoding them. Even when phonics is included, it's often delivered inconsistently and without the clear, step-by-step instruction that research shows is essential.

A 2024 national survey by Bellwether Education Partners found that 75% of K-2 teachers still use three-cueing despite it being widely discredited in reading science<sup>15</sup>. This isn't the fault of teachers—most have not been trained in what really works. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, just 25% of teacher training programs address all five components of effective reading instruction, and nearly 40% of reading programs promote practices contrary to research<sup>16</sup>.

***"Typical classroom practices often deviate substantially from what is recommended by our most credible sources."***

LOUISA MOATS, *nationally recognized reading expert*

Louisa Moats, a leading expert in reading science and literacy instruction, emphasizes that nearly all children can be taught to read and describes our current failure to do so as a tragedy<sup>17</sup>.

**We know better; it's time to do better! Cornerstone School is set up to do just that, using the Orton-Gillingham Approach to ensure that all students become strong readers, thinkers, and leaders.**



Cornerstone is one of only two charter schools in New Hampshire that incorporate the OG Approach into their mission. The other is Strong Foundations in Pembroke, which has been in operation for 17 years and serves 340 students in grades K- 8. Their success in Merrimack County is widely recognized, resulting in a significant waiting list.

Beth McClure, Strong Foundations Founder and Leader, throws her wholehearted support behind Cornerstone, saying, *“All children need to understand the structure of the English language, and most children absolutely need it to excel in reading and learn to love it. Orton-Gillingham is an engaging, multisensory approach that does exactly that.”*

**“New Hampshire’s Upper Valley needs to have this option accessible to children. I believe people will be amazed at the difference [Orton-Gillingham] makes in children’s lives. I know it has made a huge impact in our area.”** BETH MCCLURE, Strong Foundations Charter School



Building a charter school from the ground up takes passion, courage, and community. At Cornerstone, we have the vision—and the determination. But we can’t do it alone.



*“Lynne’s training and experience in the fundamentals of teaching students how to read have resulted in impressive student gains, much to the delight of parents, teachers, and students alike.”* DAVID COHN, Principal, Union Street School, Springfield, VT



**To bring this school to life, we need partners who believe in educational equity, literacy, and bold solutions for kids. We’ve identified our most significant challenges. Your help is urgently needed to help us build the kind of school every child deserves.**

# CORNERSTONE'S CHALLENGES

## CHALLENGE #1

### Raise Awareness about how Cornerstone Addresses the Literacy Crisis

One of the most troubling aspects of the literacy crisis is how quietly it begins. Many parents don't realize their child is struggling to learn to read until around third grade, when the signs become impossible to ignore. But by then, critical time has been lost. The early grades are meant for *learning to read*; after third grade, the shift to *reading to learn* makes it especially difficult for students to catch up. **Research shows that remediating a reading difficulty in fourth grade can take four times as long as addressing it in kindergarten**<sup>18</sup>. The longer we wait, the steeper the climb becomes for the child, the family, and the educators trying to help. Most parents want to act, but many don't know what signs to look for or what questions to ask—until it is too late.

Unfortunately, many families have no real alternatives. In most communities, the traditional public school system is the only option, and when a child's needs aren't being met, families without financial means are left without a path forward. Teachers work hard and care deeply, but even with dedicated funding, many schools are burdened by rigid systems, competing mandates, and slow-moving bureaucracies that make meaningful instructional change difficult. Money alone is not the solution if it is not focused on what truly works. In wealthier towns, families can supplement gaps, but in under-resourced communities, children pay the price when school systems fail to adapt. **The result is a system in which a child's zip code can determine their fate, where potential is squandered not by a lack of caring, but by a lack of knowledge, urgency, and alternatives.**

## CHALLENGE #2

### Attract, Train, and Retain High-Quality Educators and School Leaders

Reading failure does not begin with a child; it begins with the system. In far too many schools, students are not being taught to read in a way that aligns with decades of scientific research.<sup>19</sup> But the problem isn't just ineffective methods; it's that the very people responsible for teaching reading often haven't been trained in what works.<sup>20</sup> Without the proper training, even the most dedicated teachers struggle to help all students succeed. And they are doing so under increasingly difficult conditions.

***"The problem isn't that children can't learn to read. The problem is that we haven't been teaching them how."***<sup>21</sup>

EMILY HANFORD, Senior Education Correspondent and Producer at APM Reports

Educators are leaving the profession in record numbers, driven by burnout, lack of support, inadequate compensation, and the overwhelming challenge of meeting student needs without the tools or training they deserve. We cannot solve the literacy crisis without confronting this reality. **High-quality teaching is the most powerful in-school factor influencing student outcomes**,<sup>22</sup> and **classroom instruction must be the primary focus for change**. That means attracting exceptional educators, offering competitive compensation, and investing deeply in professional learning, coaching, and leadership that empowers teachers to grow. If we don't invest in the people doing the work, we will continue to see the same results—students struggling to read and families losing trust.

### CHALLENGE #3

#### Acquire a Permanent School Facility

In New Hampshire, proposed charter schools may be authorized either by a local school district or directly by the State Board of Education. Although the law has permitted both paths since 1995, all existing charter schools have been authorized by the State Board—none by local districts. As a state-authorized public charter school, Cornerstone receives no local tax dollars.

Traditional public schools benefit from access to publicly owned buildings, bond funding, and long-term infrastructure. In contrast, Cornerstone must independently secure, finance, and renovate a code-compliant facility using only grants and private philanthropy. This is one of the most significant barriers to opening a charter school.

**Despite being held to the same high standards as traditional public schools, state-authorized charter schools must operate without foundational local support for facilities.** As a result, new schools are forced to divert essential funds away from instruction to cover the upfront costs of securing and preparing a facility—making it harder to open the doors to students who need them most.

### CHALLENGE #4

#### Sustain School Operations

Running a school takes more than great ideas—it takes consistent, reliable funding. From teacher salaries to a building lease, insurance, technology, and student services, the costs of daily operations add up quickly. **Every light that turns on and every teacher in the classroom is a real and ongoing investment.**

Unlike traditional public schools, Cornerstone receives no local tax revenue. We rely on state per-pupil allocations of \$9,364 per student—less than half of the \$21,000 traditional schools spend. While federal Title grants help a few eligible students, these funds are limited and cannot bridge the 55% funding gap. While districts can rely on local taxes and bonds to fund facilities and operations, charter schools like Cornerstone must stretch every dollar to cover both, working to deliver educational equity within a system that underfunds us.



*"Student engagement and maximizing teacher-student time were always at the heart of Lynne's coaching. She helped me find ways to make every minute count,*

*keeping students actively involved while streamlining instruction for impact. She taught me how to blend content areas seamlessly so I could save myself time and deepen student learning. Win-win!" KATHY FECHTER, 3-5 grade teacher, Bethel Elementary, Bethel, VT*



# SOLUTIONS

## SOLUTION #1

### How To Raise Awareness? A Marketing and Development Plan that Informs and Inspires

Raising awareness isn't just about visibility—it's about understanding and action. At Cornerstone, we have developed a coordinated marketing and development campaign designed to inform families about the reading crisis, effective reading instruction, and our unique approach, inspire supporters to join our mission, and educate the broader public about what high-quality reading instruction looks like, why it matters, how it can transform a child's life, and ultimately uplift society.

We have begun working with a marketing professional to highlight the urgency of the reading crisis and the proven power of our approach. Through our marketing campaign, we will be clear about what sets Cornerstone apart. As a public charter school, we are uniquely positioned to act where traditional systems often struggle. **We are nimble, mission-driven, and free from bureaucratic red tape or the inertia of “we’ve always done it this way.”** Our leadership and instructional teams are empowered to implement research-aligned methods with urgency and integrity.

Our marketing plan includes the following:

**Clear Messaging:** Literacy crisis, research-based instruction, and Cornerstone's unique approach.

**Direct Outreach:** Parent info sessions, community events, and preschool partnerships.

**Digital Campaign:** Website updates, social media posts, and email newsletters.



**Donor Engagement:** Small gatherings and targeted updates to build support.

**Storytelling:** Testimonials and local literacy advocate highlights.

**Community Partnerships:** Libraries, pediatricians, and literacy coalitions.

**Measured Impact:** Tracking sign-ups, reach, and supporter growth to inform next steps.

At the same time, our development efforts will invite supporters to become essential partners in transforming education in the State of New Hampshire. We have been working with a development professional to help us secure funding for our mission to empower children in the Upper Valley to become strong readers, thinkers, and leaders with equitable, free, literacy-first public education and achieve our vision of shaping the future where all children rise with the power of literacy.

## SOLUTION #2

### How to Attract and Retain Excellent Educators and Leaders? Exceptional Training and Support

At Cornerstone, we are building a school where teachers are equipped, valued, and supported from day one because we know that excellent instruction starts with great educators. We prioritize hiring experienced, qualified educators. In addition, every teacher will be trained in the OG approach through The Stern Center Orton-Gillingham Institute and certified in the Orton-Gillingham Approach through the Orton-Gillingham Academy (OGA).<sup>23</sup>

We recognize that foundational literacy is only the beginning. At Cornerstone, we are committed to educating the whole child—intellectually, emotionally, and socially—by using strong reading instruction as the basis for learning across disciplines, including math, science, social studies, music, and art. Our approach cultivates skill development through the use of a collaborative, problem-based learning approach. In cultivating this approach, we support our students to learn and practice skills such as collaboration, decision making, problem solving, leadership, management of time, space, materials, and people, comparative reasoning, and critical thinking. Beyond initial training, we invest in ongoing professional development that is meaningful, relevant, and rooted in real classroom needs. Through embedded coaching, collaborative planning, and a clear instructional vision, we are creating a professional learning culture that prioritizes teacher voice and collaboration, empowering teachers to grow and thrive so they can do the same for their students.

Equally essential are school leaders who understand and champion effective reading instruction. Respect for educators must be reflected in compensation, working conditions, and time for planning and reflection. That's why we are keeping class sizes small, reducing student-to-teacher ratios, and working to offer competitive compensation within our budget. **Our investment in educators and the leaders who guide them is not an add-on; it's the foundation of our model.** Because if we want students to succeed, we must give teachers and leaders the knowledge, tools, and support they need to make it happen.

*“Lynne views each student holistically and knows how to guide teachers to grow in both skill and confidence. I’m thrilled—but not at all surprised—that she is now opening a charter school. She is exactly the kind of literacy leader our field needs.”*

PEGGY PRICE, Director of the Stern Center Orton-Gillingham Institute, Williston, VT



## SOLUTION #3

### How to Secure a Permanent Facility? A Plan for Long-Term Growth, Excellence, and Impact

Our ultimate goal is to secure a permanent school home in Lebanon—one we can grow into over time. We've taken the first step by leasing approximately 12,000 square feet at 325 Mt. Support Road, a centrally located building with potential to expand to 27,000 square feet on 4.33 acres. This allows us to begin serving students without delay while laying the groundwork for long-term growth.

The building is currently configured as office space. Thanks to a federal start-up grant, we can begin critical life, safety, and health upgrades. However, additional funding is needed to complete construction and transform the interior into a vibrant, fully equipped school designed for learning.

**As enrollment grows, the facility will expand to include upper elementary and middle school classrooms, outdoor learning areas, and specialized spaces for science, the arts, and experiential learning.** Shared areas like a multi-purpose room will host assemblies, performances, and service projects, fostering connection and collaboration.

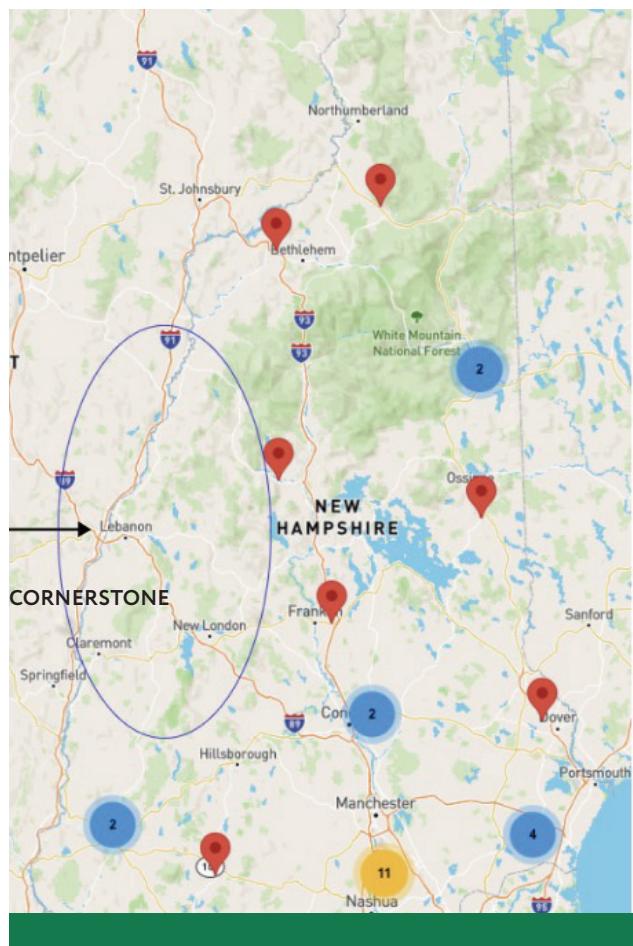
This isn't just about creating a school building—it's about establishing a lasting foundation for equity, access, and opportunity in the Upper Valley.



FIGURE 4:

#### K-8 Charter Schools in New Hampshire

Meeting a need in the Upper Valley. Cornerstone is the only K-8 charter school within 50 miles of Lebanon. Most charter schools are located in southern New Hampshire.



● 11 charter schools each

● 2 charter schools each

● 1 charter school each

**Future Home of Cornerstone Chartered Public School  
325 Mount Support Rd.  
Lebanon, NH**

#### SOLUTION #4

### How to Ensure Long-Term Operational Sustainability? A Plan for Long-Term Financial Health

At Cornerstone Chartered Public School, we are committed to the highest standards of financial transparency, stewardship, and ethical governance. Our Board of Trustees includes individuals with expertise in school finance, nonprofit leadership, and business operations, and we've adopted strong internal controls to safeguard both public and philanthropic funds.

Cornerstone has implemented a multi-year financial plan to ensure long-term sustainability. We are applying for multi-year grants, developing a recurring giving program for families and community members, and building a broad base of annual donors. To control costs, we're adopting lean budgeting practices, exploring shared service models,<sup>25</sup> and setting aside reserves each year. We're also seeking strategic funding partnerships with mission-aligned foundations. These steps are designed to ensure we can retain strong teachers, maintain high-quality programming, and deliver on our promise of a strong education—despite limitations in state funding.



*"I feel much more equipped and confident in my ability to educate using the Orton-Gillingham approach because of Lynne's advice and support."*

ALEXA STAMEY, teacher, Barre Community School, Barre, VT





# TIMELINE

Cornerstone's growth is organized into three strategic phases:

## PHASE A

### Launch and Early Growth (2025–2028)

In this first phase, Cornerstone opens its doors and grows from grades K–3 to K–5. We'll focus on strong systems for governance, finance, curriculum, and data while securing and upgrading a safe, nurturing facility. With clear outreach to families and donors, we'll recruit and train exceptional teachers, implement OG-aligned curriculum and interventions, and create a welcoming school culture with small class sizes and evidence-based instruction.

## PHASE B

### Expansion and Deepening Impact (2029–2030)

Cornerstone expands to a full K–8 school, growing to 144 students and establishing a dedicated middle school campus. This new space will feature a science lab, band room, gymnasium, and outdoor learning areas—all designed to support adolescent learners. We'll continue our commitment to

personalized instruction, small class sizes, and a strong academic foundation to prepare students for high school and beyond.

## PHASE C

### Sustain and Share (2031 and Beyond)

With a strong K–8 model in place, Cornerstone will expand its impact by sharing what works. Our school will become a regional literacy hub, offering OG-aligned training, coaching, and resources for educators and leaders. Through workshops, open classrooms, and community learning events, we'll help bring structured literacy to more schools across New Hampshire and beyond.

Cornerstone's ultimate goal is to become a model school, a living example of what's possible when research is put into practice. We will create a replicable school design, openly shared with other communities seeking to start or strengthen public schools grounded in reading science. This "open-source" approach will allow districts and schools across New England, and eventually nationwide, to adopt Cornerstone's model without licensing fees or proprietary barriers, ensuring that what we've learned can benefit as many children as possible.

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### KEY AREAS OF INVESTMENT

Please see Appendix A or [cornerstone-cs.org/investment](http://cornerstone-cs.org/investment) for more details.

SOLUTIONS	PHASE A 2025-2028	PHASE B 2029-2030	PHASE C 2031-ongoing
#1 Marketing and Development	\$600,000	\$260,000	\$260,000
#2 Investing in Educators and Leaders	\$990,000	\$1,600,000	\$500,000
#3 Facility Acquisition and Growth	\$6,520,000	\$1,700,000	\$1,200,000
#4 Operational Sustainability	\$425,000	\$645,000	\$300,000
TOTAL FOR EACH PHASE	\$8,535,000	\$4,205,000	\$2,260,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$15,000,000		

# CORNERSTONE NEEDS YOU!

## LET'S BUILD TOGETHER

Cornerstone is taking shape now, and we need you! Step in through one or more of the 5 T's - Your Time, Talent, Ties, Testimony, or Treasure can help us open our doors and change lives. Share your Time as a volunteer, your Talent and expertise, your Ties by connecting us with others who care about literacy and opportunity, your Testimony by sharing your story, and your Treasure through financial support.

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### 1. TIME

**Will you give your time to create a warm, welcoming space where children can thrive?** Whether you're lending a hand in a classroom, organizing materials, caring for our spaces, or greeting families at events, your time helps us focus on what matters most: helping every child learn to read and grow with confidence. We can't do it without you!

### 2. TALENT

**How might you use your talents to help us reach our goals?** When you share your unique talents, you help us build a strong foundation for our students. Please consider sharing your expertise in fundraising, marketing, design, finance, teaching, or board service.

### 3. TIES

**Who in your network might support this campaign through their gifts of influence or resources?** When you introduce us to a friend, an organization, or a community partner, you increase our impact. By networking with others who share a heart for education, you can help us access resources, opportunities, and partnerships.

**The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention.** OSCAR WILDE

### 4. TESTIMONY

**Will you share your story?** Would a school like Cornerstone have made a difference in your life or that of your loved ones? Have you had a positive experience with charter schools? Has the Orton-Gillingham Approach changed the trajectory of your education? Your story amplifies our mission, helping us grow a community that cares about literacy and opportunity for all.

Please see Appendix B or visit [www.cornerstone-cs.org/ways-to-help](http://www.cornerstone-cs.org/ways-to-help) to learn more about how you can help by contributing time, talent, ties, and testimony.

### 5. TREASURE

**How might you provide financial support?** Your financial generosity is essential to Cornerstone's success. Whether through a one-time gift, a recurring pledge, or a significant foundational contribution, every dollar builds our mission.

# WAYS TO GIVE

Your generosity builds a future where every child can become a strong reader, thinker, and leader.

Cornerstone gratefully accepts a variety of gifts to support our mission:

## GIFTS OF CASH

One-time or recurring cash gifts – Make an immediate impact through a secure donation online or by check.

## GIFTS OF ASSETS

**Stocks or mutual funds** – Donate appreciated securities to maximize your tax benefit while supporting our school.

**Real estate** - Gifts of real property can provide transformational support and significant tax advantages.

**Tangible personal property** - Artwork, equipment, vehicles, or other assets can be donated to benefit the school.

**Royalties or intellectual property** – Contribute ongoing income streams while advancing our long-term mission.

**Cryptocurrency** – Donate Bitcoin, Ethereum, or other digital assets safely and easily.

For one-time or recurring cash gifts, please visit [www.cornerstone-cs.org/donate](http://www.cornerstone-cs.org/donate).



To learn more about all other gift opportunities, please contact Richard Peck, The Philanthropy Guy, at [thephilanthropyguy@gmail.com](mailto:thephilanthropyguy@gmail.com).

To learn more about Richard, visit [thephilanthropyguy.com/our-team](http://thephilanthropyguy.com/our-team).

## PLANNED GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Leave a lasting legacy by including Cornerstone in your long-term financial and estate plans. These gifts can provide tax advantages while ensuring future generations benefit from a strong, literacy-rich education.

### IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) -

Make a tax-free gift directly from your IRA if you're age 70 1/2 or older.

### Retirement Assets (401(k), IRA Beneficiaries) -

Designate Cornerstone as a beneficiary to reduce taxes and support our mission.

**Life Income Plans and Charitable Trusts** - Create a giving plan that provides income for you or your loved ones while supporting Cornerstone.

**Wills and Bequests** - Include a gift to Cornerstone in your will or trust—an impactful way to ensure your values live on.

## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GIVE

**Donor Advised Funds (DAFs)** - Recommend a grant to Cornerstone from your donor-advised fund. It's a simple and strategic way to make an immediate impact.

**Employer Matching Gifts** - Many companies will match your charitable contribution, doubling or even tripling your gift. Ask your employer if they participate in a matching gift program.



**Cornerstone isn't just a school—it's a promise to every child that their potential matters. With your help, we'll create a place where strong readers, thinkers, and leaders are born. A place where the cycle of struggle ends and a future of opportunity begins.**

**WITH YOUR HELP,** we'll create a place where strong readers, thinkers, and leaders are born. A place where the cycle of struggle ends and a future of opportunity begins.

Now that you know who we are and understand the bold vision we're bringing to life for children and families in our community, *we urge you to join us today.*

Your generous gift will help us open our doors, keep them open, transform lives, and meet this moment.

**The need is real.  
The time is now.  
Your support makes it all possible!**

Cornerstone isn't just a school—it's a promise to every child that their potential matters with the urgency it demands.

## **CONTACT US**

*We would love the opportunity to talk with you about Cornerstone. Please do not hesitate to reach out:*

## **THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US!**

[www.cornerstone-cs.org](http://www.cornerstone-cs.org) • 603-678-4778

Lynne Howard, *Executive Director*  
[director@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:director@cornerstone-cs.org)

Adam Bristol, *Board Chair*  
[adamb@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:adamb@cornerstone-cs.org)

## APPENDICES AND FOOTNOTES



## Key Area of Investment #1: Investing in Marketing and Development

### INVESTMENT TIMELINE BY PHASE

PHASE A Marketing & Development	PHASE B Marketing & Development	PHASE C Marketing & Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Marketing, development, &amp; grant writing consultants</li> <li>▶ Support staff</li> <li>▶ Digital campaign development</li> <li>▶ Ongoing donor and family engagement events</li> <li>▶ Design work and supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ On staff communications and development directors</li> <li>▶ Campaigns and events</li> <li>▶ Advertising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ On staff communications and development directors</li> <li>▶ Campaigns and events</li> <li>▶ Advertising</li> </ul>
\$600,000	\$260,000	\$260,000

## Key Area of Investment #2: Investing in People: Educators and Leaders

### INVESTMENT TIMELINE BY PHASE

PHASE A Invest in Educators & Leaders	PHASE B Invest in Educators & Leaders	PHASE C Invest in Educators & Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Competitive compensation for administrators, K-5 faculty, and staff</li> <li>▶ Add 2 teachers (G4, G5)</li> <li>▶ Add intervention teachers/specialists</li> <li>▶ Add part-time secretary and business manager</li> <li>▶ Add part-time nurse &amp; guidance counselor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Competitive compensation for administrators, K-5 faculty, and staff</li> <li>▶ Add 3 teachers (G6-G8)</li> <li>▶ Add intervention teachers/specialists</li> <li>▶ Add 3 related arts teachers (music, PE, and art)</li> <li>▶ Increase time for secretary, business manager, and nurse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Maintain competitive compensation for all staff</li> <li>▶ Add interventionists</li> <li>▶ Add Curriculum director</li> </ul>
\$990,000	\$1,600,000	\$500,000

## Key Area of Investment #3: Investing in a Facility: Long-term Growth

### INVESTMENT TIMELINE BY PHASE

PHASE A Facility Acquisition & Growth	PHASE B Facility Acquisition & Growth	PHASE C Facility Acquisition & Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Facility lease and purchase</li> <li>▶ Design &amp; permits</li> <li>▶ Renovations</li> <li>▶ Professional services</li> <li>▶ Technology</li> <li>▶ Site work</li> <li>▶ Equipment &amp; supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Middle school classrooms</li> <li>▶ Professional services</li> <li>▶ Science lab</li> <li>▶ Expand technology</li> <li>▶ Furniture &amp; fixtures</li> <li>▶ Gymnasium/performance stage</li> <li>▶ Outdoor space enhancements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Create training institute</li> <li>▶ Coaching and professional development program</li> <li>▶ Events &amp; outreach</li> <li>▶ Communications</li> <li>▶ Digital platform</li> </ul>
\$6,520,000	\$1,700,000	\$1,200,000

## Key Area of Investment #4: Strategic Investment in Long-Term Operational Sustainability

### INVESTMENT TIMELINE BY PHASE

PHASE A Operational Sustainability	PHASE B Operational Sustainability	PHASE C Operational Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Substitute staff</li> <li>▶ Curriculum &amp; licensing</li> <li>▶ Assessment system</li> <li>▶ Mental health supports</li> <li>▶ Utilities/telecommunications</li> <li>▶ Legal, accounting, auditing, insurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Substitute staff</li> <li>▶ Curriculum &amp; licensing</li> <li>▶ Assessment system</li> <li>▶ Mental health supports</li> <li>▶ Utilities/telecommunications</li> <li>▶ Legal, accounting, auditing</li> <li>▶ Transportation (van)</li> <li>▶ Food services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Substitute staff</li> <li>▶ Curriculum &amp; licensing</li> <li>▶ Assessment system</li> <li>▶ Mental health supports</li> <li>▶ Utilities/telecommunications</li> <li>▶ Legal, accounting, auditing</li> <li>▶ Transportation support/service</li> <li>▶ Food services</li> <li>▶ Professional development</li> </ul>
\$990,000	\$1,600,000	\$500,000

## Gifts of Time and Talent

Below is a table of time and talent gifts we anticipate needing, but contributions in these areas are flexible and will evolve as our work grows. We value every gift and welcome your ideas and interests. If you're unsure where to begin, just ask! We're happy to share what's most needed right now.

### GIFTS OF TIME

#### FACILITIES: Contact Adam Bristol, Facilities Chair, [adamb@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:adamb@cornerstone-cs.org)

Jobs	Estimated Time Commitment	Estimated Time Frame
Clean out facility	2 weeks	September - October 2025
Paint mural	flexible	June - July 2026 and beyond
Assemble playground structures	1 week	June - July 2026
Assembling furniture	2 weeks	April 2026
Moving furniture	2 weeks	May - June 2026

#### PROGRAM: Contact Lynne Howard, Executive Director, [director@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:director@cornerstone-cs.org)

Jobs	Estimated Time Commitment	Estimated Time Frame
Organizing books/library materials	2 weeks	July 2026
Classroom volunteer	Monthly - rotating	School year
Classroom reader	Flexible - sign up	School year
Field trip chaperone	As needed basis	April - June 2026

#### OUTREACH: Contact Lindsay Wadleigh, Marketing Chair, [lindsayw@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:lindsayw@cornerstone-cs.org)

Jobs	Estimated Time Commitment	Estimated Time Frame
Help with family events	4 - 6 hours per event	April - June 2026
Create welcome kits for families	4 hours	January - February 2026
Create enrollment packets	4 hours	January 2026

## GIFTS OF TALENT

**GOVERNANCE:** Contact Frank Perotti, Governance Chair, [frankp@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:frankp@cornerstone-cs.org)

Roles	Estimated Time Commitment	Estimated Time Frame
Serve on the Board of Trustees with experience in the following: financial, legal, nonprofit, education, construction, marketing, fundraising, technology, grant writing, and real estate	Monthly board meetings & committee work 4 hours/mth 3 year term	Starting in September 2025
Committee & Advisory Board members	Monthly committee meetings and as needed advisors	Starting in September 2025

**PROGRAM:** Contact Lynne Howard, Executive Director, [director@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:director@cornerstone-cs.org)

Roles	Estimated Time Commitment	Estimated Time Frame
Intern/student teachers	School semester or longer	September - December 2026 January - June 2027
Fundraising/Development	Flexible	Starting September 2025
Event Planning	Flexible	Starting September 2025
Grant Research/Writing	Flexible	Starting September 2025
Graphic Designer	Flexible	Starting September 2025



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Open enrollment means that any student in the state may apply for admission, regardless of town or district of residence. If the number of applicants exceeds available seats, a fair and transparent lottery will be conducted to determine enrollment, as required by law.

<sup>2</sup>Petscher et al., “How the Science of Reading Informs 21st-Century Education,” *Reading Research Quarterly*, 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Montessori education features child-led, hands-on learning in mixed-age classrooms that builds independence and focus.

<sup>4</sup>Waldorf schools provide an arts-rich, nature-centered education that nurtures imagination and whole-child development.

<sup>5</sup>New Hampshire Alliance for Public Charter Schools FAQ’s <https://nhcharterschools.org/charter-schools/>

<sup>6</sup>The Nation’s Report Card [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4\\_8/national-trends](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/national-trends)

<sup>7</sup>Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED518818>

<sup>8</sup>Reading is Fundamental - [rif.org](http://rif.org)

<sup>9</sup>National Center for Education Statistics, 2023

<sup>10</sup>Berkman et al., 2011; NCES, 2003

<sup>11</sup>Gallup & Barbara Bush Foundation, 2020

<sup>12</sup>Graphic from Literacy Buffalo Niagara

<sup>13</sup>U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Reading Assessment.

<sup>14</sup>New Hampshire Department of Education, iAchieve Reports

<sup>15</sup>Bellwether Education Partners (2024). *On the Same Page: A Primer on the Science of Reading and Its Future in Policy*.

<sup>16</sup>Ellis, C., Holston, S., Drake, G., Putman, H., Swisher, A., & Peske, H. (2023). *Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening Elementary Reading Instruction*.

<sup>17</sup>Moats, L. (2020) *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*

<sup>18</sup>Hall, S. (n.d.). Is it a reading disorder or a developmental lag? *Reading Rockets*. Retrieved from <https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/struggling-readers/articles/it-reading-disorder-or-developmental-lag>

<sup>19</sup>Emily Hanford, *Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went So Wrong*, American Public Media (2022)

<sup>20</sup>National Council on Teacher Quality, *Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening Elementary Reading Instruction* (2023)

<sup>21</sup>Emily Hanford, *Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went So Wrong*, Episode 1 (2022)

<sup>22</sup>RAND Corporation. (2012). *Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers’ Impact on Student Achievement*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

<sup>23</sup>The OGA is the accrediting body for the Orton-Gillingham Approach, responsible for setting rigorous training and certification standards for practitioners and educators. It ensures fidelity to the approach through a structured credentialing system and ongoing oversight.

<sup>24</sup><https://edopt.org/provider-map/>

<sup>25</sup>Shared Service Model: A structure where charter schools share core functions—like operations, HR, IT, or compliance—to reduce costs and streamline support.



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**Shaping a future where  
all children rise with the  
power of literacy**

