

# IOWA'S CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

## NETWORK MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



### AMES READS

**Our community common agenda** is ensuring all children read and comprehend at or above grade level through the collective impact of community, school and families working together.

#### OUR COMMON GOALS AND MEASURES:

1. Ensure all children enter kindergarten demonstrating a proficient level of early literacy skills by 2020 as measured by the Phonological Awareness Test (PAT) or other valid and reliable assessments.

Baseline: Fall 2011 – 74% of entering kindergartners were proficient on PAT

Fall 2013: 80% proficient, Fall 2015: 86% proficient, Fall 2017: 92% proficient, Fall 2020: 100% proficient

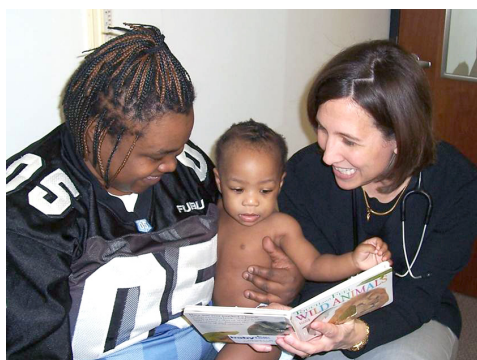
2. All children read and comprehend at or above grade level by the end of third grade by 2020 as measured by the Spring Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA; Bates) or other valid and reliable assessments.

Baseline: 2010-11 – 83% of third graders were proficient on the Spring DRA

2012-13: 87% proficient, 2014-15: 94% proficient, 2016-20 100% proficient

#### ONGOING AMES COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

1. **Reach Out and Read in Story County:** Reach Out and Read is a national, evidence-based model that promotes early literacy and school readiness by giving new books to children at well-child checkups from six months to five years. Doctors also give advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud daily at home. Raising Readers of Story County (Raising Readers) provides about 10,000 new books annually for about 9,000 children.
2. **Reading Corners:** Raising Readers has created Reading Corners in 21 public waiting rooms in healthcare, human services, and education sites throughout Story County. Each reading corner has a bookcase with a collection of approximately 40 high quality books as well as framed literacy posters and a rocking chair where space allows. Raising Readers volunteers read to children in some sites. A Raising Readers tool kit describes how to create a reading corner in agencies, businesses, and homes.



3. **Gift Books:** The Raising Readers Gift Book Program puts books into the hands of children who live in families with low incomes or other risk factors. Gift books are distributed in collaboration with other Story County agencies serving families in need, including the following:
  - » Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics - serves all of Story County
  - » Story County Dental Clinic (MICA)
  - » Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)
  - » Low-income neighborhoods: Eastwood of Ames, Windsor Pointe, and LaVerne Apartments
  - » United Way of Story County Backpack Buddies food program
  - » Early Head Start and Head Start in Story County
  - » Youth and Shelter Services home visits
  - » People Place, a family resource center of Lutheran Services in Iowa
  - » Heartland Area Education Agency, Region 11, home visits
  - » Department of Human Services, Story County, home visits
  - » Bethesda Food Pantry and Clothing Room and food pantries throughout Story County
  - » Habitat for Humanity
  - » Story County Empowerment foster care
  - » Ames Community School District Northwood Preschool Center
4. **Welcome Baby:** Raising Readers volunteers visit new parents at Mary Greeley Medical Center to admire their baby, introduce them to Raising Readers, and deliver a gift packet from Ames Public Library.

## RECENT AND EVOLVING AMES COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

1. **Thrive by Five in Story County** is a reading and school readiness program for families with children from birth to age five.
  - » Thrive by Five offers an innovative adult education program to help families prepare their children for school and reading. It offers (1) reliable information about the growth of babies, toddlers and preschoolers and school expectations, (2) children's book suggestions, and (3) fun activities to enjoy at home. Current curriculum units include (1) Language and Literacy Skills, (2) Early Math Concepts, (3) Wellness and Motor Development, and (4) Social and Emotional Development. Families can participate in small group classes or download the lessons from the Raising Readers website.
  - » Thrive by Five also gives families the opportunity to create a personalized early literacy and learning plan for each child. Families can use free screening tools to identify their child's strengths and follow their progress through typical milestones. This child development data will also help identify potential problems early in order to offer timely support.
2. **Community Housing Initiatives (CHI)** manages Eastwood Apartment, a subsidized HUD project for families with children. CHI is collaborating with Raising Readers to work with resident children in low-income neighborhoods to (1) prepare them to enter school ready to read, (2) develop literacy skills of school-age students, and (3) maintain or increase literacy skills in summer months. Engaging parents will be a key strategy for changing family behaviors and creating long-term impact. Supporting children's development from birth, through school, and to high school graduation is a way to interrupt the cycle of poverty and lead to more opportunities in life.
3. **Story Times in Low-Income Neighborhoods:** Raising Readers has developed a weekly story time at Eastwood Apartments for children ages 4-10 and their families. A year's worth of lesson plans featuring stories, poems, songs, and movement are being written to share with others involved with low-income neighborhoods.

4. **FUNtastic Family Fairs** featuring physical fitness, healthy snacks and good books were first held in four low-income neighborhoods last summer. The Fairs were an excellent way to begin building relationships between young families and community members.
5. **Summer literacy activities** were added by one community childcare center to their typical days' schedule in a pilot project to reduce summer learning loss.
6. **Ames Reading Tutors:** A pilot program was developed by combining the expertise of Iowa State University School of Education faculty, the leadership of Ames Community School District staff, the community outreach of Raising Readers and Ames Reads, and funding from Story County Community Foundation. Thirty community volunteers had initial training from Dr. Donald Bear, a renowned expert in helping struggling readers. Currently, twenty reading tutors are meeting with twenty K-3 students twice a week after school.

## ON THE HORIZON:

1. Provide extra learning opportunities for 4-year-olds who are behind.
2. Provide reading tutors for K-3 students during the summer and after school during the year in all buildings.
3. Raise community awareness about our agenda and opportunities to get involved. A team of MBA students from the Iowa State Business College will help develop relationships with area businesses.
4. Address "Transitions" from early learning to school expectations. Increase communication and common understandings among preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, families, and the community.
5. Involve a few organizations in determining how the Thrive by Five database can best be used and assist in registering families.
6. Increase summer learning with academic and enrichment activities targeting students behind grade level.
7. Expand activities by caregivers and preschool providers to promote literacy and reduce summer learning loss.
8. Track attendance at preschools.
9. Serve as a pilot site (Sawyer Elementary School) to replicate the Minnesota Reading Corps program through a state-wide initiative with United Ways of Iowa.

## LOCAL COLLABORATORS

Ames Chamber of Commerce	Families with children	Service groups and social groups
Ames Community School District	Food pantries in Story County	Story County Community Foundation
Ames Convention & Visitors Bureau	Habitat for Humanity	Story County Libraries
Ames Public Library	Heartland Area Education Agency	United Way of Story County
Businesses	Human Service Agencies	Volunteer Center of Story County
City of Ames	Iowa State University	
Community Housing Initiatives	Low-income neighborhoods in Ames	
Early care and education providers	Media	
Faith community	Nonprofit organizations	

# EARLY SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

## EARLY SUCCESSES

1. Thrive by Five parent education
2. Thrive by Five database
3. After school reading tutors with ISU School of Education
4. Partner with low-income neighborhood leaders

## EARLY CHALLENGES

1. Shared measurement system of programs and outcomes to monitor collective impact
2. Selection and cost of early assessments
3. Capacity and funding to manage our growing network
4. Continuous communication locally and in Iowa

## ADVOCACY IDEAS

1. Keep incentives for charitable donations: Endow Iowa.
2. Fund early childhood assessments.
3. Support 0-5 databases and arrange for longitudinal connection to PK-12 databases.
4. Adopt Reach out and Read state-wide with matches for local funding.
5. Support a state-wide structure for early learning and grade level reading to foster collective impact.
6. Provide a clearinghouse to share best practices for grade level reading (readiness, out of school learning, attendance, grade level reading).
7. Provide an Iowa clearinghouse for research and best practices for grade level reading (readiness, out of school learning, attendance, grade level reading).

## CONTACT

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