

## Reading into Success

### Community Solutions Action Plan

Metropolitan Area of Linn County, Iowa

Fall 2015

By 2020, increase the number of proficient 3rd graders to 95%, with a focus on closing the opportunity gap.

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## Part One: Cover Page

**Name:** Reading into Success

**Geographic Area:** Linn County metropolitan area covered by four school districts

**Community Size:** 100k-200k

**School Districts:** Cedar Rapids Community, College Community, Linn-Mar Community, and Marion Independent School Districts

**Number of students (K-12):**

- Cedar Rapids—16,682
- College Community—5,100
- Linn-Mar—7,088
- Marion—2,063
- Total K-12 Enrollment—30,933

**Free and Reduced Lunch Enrollment:**

- Cedar Rapids—8,341 (50%)
- College Community—1,550 (30.4%)
- Linn-Mar—1,276 (18%)
- Marion—590 (28.6%)
- Total FRL—11,757 (38%)

**Sponsoring Coalition:** Education Advisory Team (see attachment for member information)

**Funders:** United Way of East Central Iowa and the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation allocate significant in-kind time to Reading into Success and plan to continue this commitment. A donation secured from NCS Pearson for the March 12, 2015 kickoff event was matched by a grant from the Iowa Council of Foundations. Team members are in communication with several potential funders in the community and will continue to foster these relationships as specific funding needs are identified.

## Part Two: COMMUNITY OVERVIEW (Maximum 2 pages)

Founded in the late 1840s, the cities of Cedar Rapids and Marion, Iowa were two distinct communities several miles apart. While they maintained their distinctiveness, the two eventually grew together to become one larger community and were joined by the city of Hiawatha in the 1950s. Today, the three form a greater metropolitan area of approximately 180,000 people served by four school districts. These districts also encompass several rural communities, lending two of the four districts a feeling of being both urban and rural.

With the development of railroad connections during the mid-1800s, the Cedar Rapids area became a major industrial center in the Midwest. Present day manufacturers such as Quaker Oats/PepsiCo, General Mills, Penford, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), and Clipper Wind Power help the community maintain that industrial designation today. Additional employers of note in the community are Rockwell Collins, Transamerica, GE Capital, Go Daddy, and U.S. Cellular.

Four school districts serve the Linn County metropolitan community: Cedar Rapids Community, College Community, Linn-Mar Community, and Marion Independent. These districts and the families they serve are uniting to form Reading into Success: Campaign for Grade Level Reading (RiS).

The Reading into Success community serves 43,831 young people under the age of 18, including 14,335 (33%) under the age of five<sup>1</sup>. Based on the research conducted by Cochran, Stuefen, and Sandberg, we know 85 percent of brain development takes place between birth and age three, making the first three years of life particularly critical. This has profound implications for parents and childcare providers alike.<sup>2</sup> This impact can be seen in kindergarten readiness scores; in the RiS community, 1,078 kindergarteners were not sufficiently prepared to start school as measured by the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) in the fall of 2014.

Of the 2,313 third grade students assessed in 2015, 25.6 percent (591) were not proficient in reading.<sup>3</sup> Based on numerous studies, such as the Annie E. Casey report *Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*, third grade reading is a critical predictor of students' future success.

In recent years, schools in the RiS community have seen a steady change in the demographic of students. Since the 2008-09 school year, the number of students enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program has grown from 34.3 to 41.1 percent, an increase of 19.8 percent. Individual school buildings experienced an increase as much as 70 percent or more in the last seven years. This is happening as overall enrollment in three of the four districts is declining, resulting in students needing more supports as less funding is available to the districts. Even as the districts are changing in similar

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<sup>1</sup> U.S Census

<sup>2</sup> Cochran, C., Stuefen, R., and Sandberg, K. (2004). *The Economic Impact of the Child Care Industry in South Dakota*; Funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation

<sup>3</sup> Iowa Department of Education; EdInsight, Preliminary data

ways, they each retain a unique reflection of the population they serve. The chart below provides an overview of the demographic differences between the four districts, ranging from more than 16,000 students with 30percent students of color in the Cedar Rapids district to more than 2,000 students with 13 percent students of color in Marion. Each district faces unique challenges due to the size and makeup of their populations.

	Cedar Rapids Community Schools	College Community Schools	Linn-Mar Community Schools	Marion Independent Schools
Enrollment	16,682	5,100	7,088	2,063
K-3 Enrollment	4,894	1,600	2,281	651
Free/Reduced Lunch	50%	30.4%	18%	28.6%
Number of Languages Spoken	31	20	29	NA*
Non-Caucasian Students	29.86%	17.89%	17.79%	12.59%
Limited English Proficiency	3.8%	1.9%	2.1%	1.0%

\*Number of languages in the Marion District not available at time of submission

Founded in 1855, the Cedar Rapids Community School District strives to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century learners and productive, responsible citizens. Offering project and community-based learning opportunities starting as early as eighth grade and the Iowa BIG program in high school, the district prides itself on continually leading the way in innovative teaching.

Serving students from Cedar Rapids as well as several rural communities, College Community School District sits on a 500-acre campus at the southern edge of the metro area. Established in 1954, the district’s motto is, “To Ensure Quality Learning Today for Tomorrow.” One way they strive to meet this mission is through a one-to-one ratio of computers to students for grades 6-12.

Linn-Mar Community School District works to, “Inspire Learning, Unlock Potential and Empower Achievement” in every student it serves. Established in 1949, the district now serves students from the north side of Marion along with those from several surrounding communities.

The mission of the Marion Independent School District is to prepare all students with the skills required to enter future adult roles and become effective citizens, productive workers, informed consumers, and responsible family members.

In July 2015, three of the above mentioned school districts experienced changes in leadership as their superintendents retired and new members to the community stepped into the roles. These new superintendents bring fresh perspectives and support to Reading into Success along with ideas from their successful work in other communities.

## Part Three: THE CSAP

### Assurance #1 (The problem)

Data gathered from the 2014-15 school year show a significant lack of reading proficiency, school readiness, and attendance for elementary students in our community.

- 26 percent of third graders were not proficient in reading (591 out of 2,313).
  - 41 percent of low-income students were not proficient (394 out of 962)
  - 52 percent of African American students were not proficient (119 out of 228)
  - 35 percent of Hispanic students were not proficient (48 out of 137)
- 45 percent of students entering kindergarten scored as not proficient in school readiness, as measured by the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) (1,078 out of 2,391).
  - 64.4 percent of African American, Hispanic and Mixed Race students were not proficient (317 out of 492)
  - 60.6 percent of all students of color were not proficient (352 out of 581)
  - 40.2 percent of white students were not proficient (709 out of 1764)
- Of 7,821 students in kindergarten through third grade, 7.79 percent (609 students) were chronically absent (Note: this data is from the Cedar Rapids Community School District only).

At this time, lack of a common measurement prohibits an analysis of summer learning loss. Moving forward, RiS plans to utilize a comparison between students' spring and fall FAST scores to measure the effectiveness of summer programs.

Reading into Success formed in response to concerns for the future of young people who are not performing well in their early years of school; this is a well-known indicator for success in later years of school, college, and their careers. In addition, as Iowa school districts face the 2017 implementation of legislation mandating summer school and/or retention for third graders not reaching proficiency, community organizations identified joining the Campaign for Grade Level Reading as a timely opportunity to increase support of students and schools. Reading into Success kicked off with a community event in March 2015 that included more than 100 community members coming together to identify what is working well and opportunities for improvement.

Committees formed to address each of the Campaign's focus areas of School Readiness, Attendance, and Summer Learning, as well as two local topics the RiS community identified as significant in influencing third grade reading proficiency. The first is Hope and Well-being. Knowing students struggle to perform well in school when facing adversity outside the classroom, this team concentrates on building the resiliency of children who experience negative life circumstances. The second is the Every Day Reading team which is committed to ensuring the RiS community is infused with literacy. There are many opportunities for children and adults to engage with reading, but first they need to understand what opportunities are available to them and why literacy is such a valuable skill and enjoyable pastime.

The five subcommittees began by exploring the data available and identifying existing resources, and then moved on to identifying gaps that remain in addressing issues related to the committee’s topic area.

## School Readiness

### The Data

While preschool is a known stepping stone to success for children, preschool access remains a struggle for many children in the Reading into Success community. In 2012, Iowa Kids Count reported only 55 percent of 6,018 three- and four-year-olds attended preschool.

Data gathered through the Iowa Tier system, the statewide assessment and reporting tool, reveals a significant range in the number of children ready for kindergarten across the RiS districts. With an overall proficiency of 55 percent and a range from 49 percent to 61 percent ready, there is clearly much work to be done to prepare children for their first school experience. The table below shows the fall 2014 and spring 2015 Kindergarten Readiness scores for all four districts with their names removed for anonymity's sake.

	Fall	Spring
District A	49%	76%
District B	58%	75%
District C	61%	79%
District D	59%	65%

### What is Happening

There are great programs in our community addressing the challenges faced by children. In early childhood, there are many programs supporting parents and children as they make the journey from the child’s birth to age five and the start of kindergarten. Below are just a few profiles of the many programs engaged in Reading into Success.

Young Parents Network (YPN) supports parents with children under age five with a range of programs and services. Building Bright Futures is a weekly series of ten sessions held four times per year. Transportation, dinner, and childcare are provided for families. After dinner, parents attend sessions focusing on a variety of topics from job skills, to child development, or managing co-parenting. Utilizing the Parents as Teachers curriculum, a home visiting program focuses on families most in need. Need is demonstrated through criteria such as age of the parents, lack of housing, or a traumatic life event. A third offering from YPN is the Ready to Read Program. Providing families a free meal, four educational stations to visit, and four new books every quarter, the program provides parents with the knowledge, skills, and tools to support their young child’s development at home. Additional services from YPN include quarterly activity nights, an incentive program culminating in points to shop at the We Care Shop -- a shop where parents can spend points for basic parenting items, Lunch and Literacy Summer Programming, and a youth development program.

A second program preparing low-income children for school, RED Ahead (Read Every Day to Get Ahead) provides parents with knowledge, activities, and materials regarding the importance of early language and literacy in a child's life. Encouraging parents to interact with their child in meaningful ways strengthens the child's development as well as their relationship with the parents. This program employs the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to help parents monitor their child's developmental progress and provide referrals for children needing additional screening and support. Based in Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Clinics (WIC), RED Ahead operates as a partnership between United Way of East Central Iowa and Hawkeye Area Community Action Program.

Additional programs supporting Reading into Success and serving our youngest children include Head Start Early Head Start, Early Childhood Iowa, PACES to Quality, Waypoint, First Five, and Family Connections Library.

#### The Contributing Factors/Gaps:

- School districts do not currently have the ability to provide free preschool to all children in their districts (due to funding and/or space) and some families are unable to afford private preschool for their children or do not see value in their child attending preschool.
- Agencies and programs are working in silos; information about what works is not easily shared.
- Some parents are not familiar with best practices regarding what they can do to support their child's development.
- What works for some does not work for everyone (need multiple methods of communication and types of activities).
- Policy makers outside of early education do not know what works and are not funding it.
- School districts do not have connections with non-district preschools which could provide them with useful information on students entering district classrooms.

## **Attendance**

### The Data

In the Cedar Rapids Community School District, 7.8 percent (609 students) of elementary students were chronically absent, missing 10 percent or more of the school year, in the 2014-15 school year. While this number may seem low, some schools saw rates as high as 13-16 percent of their students missing 18 or more days of school. As studies predict, locally this trend continues to grow in middle and high school: 12.6 percent of middle school students and 19.6 percent of high school students were chronically absent last year.

College Community School District has determined the rate of chronic absence in elementary schools to be 5 percent. At the time of writing this CSAP, they were working to identify a realistic goal and the strategies they would implement to address chronic absence.

### What is Happening

Currently, each school creates its own attendance strategy with the support of a district policy to address corrective action. During the next year, RiS will work to identify the preventative strategies that schools find successful, spread the word to other schools, and pilot new strategies that have proven successful elsewhere.

### The Contributing Factors/Gaps

Elementary students face a variety of challenges related to consistent attendance. As they reach higher grades, students may become more responsible for getting to school, but often still rely upon their parents for assistance. Challenges facing students and their families may be:

- Student does not want to go to school and parents may not force attendance (schools may not be engaging).
- Parents may be unaware of the negative effect of repeated absences on academic achievement.
- Families face issues in getting students to school on time or at all due to work schedules, transportation, or other family specific obstacles.
- Schools do not consistently follow the district policy for multiple absences, creating confusion and frustration for parents trying to understand policy and importance of attendance.
- Families with chronically absent children do not know what steps to take to ensure their child continues to receive educational support.

### **Summer Learning**

As mentioned above, assessments that would allow effective and consistent measuring of summer learning loss began with the 2014-15 school year. As a result, the first baseline for what happens to students' learning over the summer will not be available until the 2015-16 fall assessments are complete.

### What is Happening

While measurements for the academic impact of summer programming have not been in place over the past years, the community recognizes there is tremendous work being done by many agencies and programs throughout the community to support the safety and enrichment of children during the summer months.

One such organization is Kids on Course. For six weeks during the summer, Kids on Course University (KCU) provides academic support and enrichment to students showing significant deficiency in math, reading or writing per their school year assessments. In addition to transportation and two free meals, KCU provides targeted support led by a licensed teacher in math, reading, and writing for three days each week, followed by hands-on activities and field trips after lessons and on a fourth program day weekly. Utilizing assistance from para-educators and Youth Achievement AmeriCorps members, the program is able to provide a one to five adult to student ratio for the 115 students enrolled. During the summer of 2015, 47 percent (54 students) increased or maintained their knowledge from the spring

assessment. At the time the time of writing this CSAP, comparison data for students not enrolled in KCU was still being analyzed.

### The Contributing Factors/Gaps

Many factors contribute to the gaps in summer learning services.

- In general, it is not the mission of summer programs to address literacy and summer slide.
- Children who are more likely to experience summer slide are not participating in summer programming or quality literacy activities.
- Summer programs need to address language and cultural differences.
- Inadequate resources – not enough summer staff or funding to provide quality summer programming to all children who need it.
- Programs interested in addressing summer learning cite the inability to afford trained staff and knowing what resources to use as the largest challenges.
- Insufficient coordination among key stakeholders and actors along with lack of parental knowledge, skills, and involvement related to summer slide.

## Hope & Well-being

### Data

Every other year, students across Iowa participate in the Iowa Youth Survey. Administered by the state, the survey gathers data on a wide range of topics such as access to and use of drugs, feelings of safety in school, community engagement, and bullying from students in sixth, eighth, and eleventh grade. In 2014, 40 percent of students in Linn County reported they do not feel their community is supportive. This data point is comprised from responses to questions such as:

- If someone in my neighborhood or community saw me do something wrong, they would tell one of my parents
- Adults in my community care about people my age
- My neighbors get along well with each other
- Adults in my neighborhood or community help me when I need help
- Adults in my neighborhood or community spend time talking to me

During alternate years, RiS districts administer the Gallup Student Poll, a measurement of hope, engagement, entrepreneurial aspiration, and financial/career literacy to students in grades 5-12. Districts may choose which grades to administer the survey to. In 2013, the districts gathered data as a community through the Forum for Youth Investment. A few key findings for Hope & Well-being include:

- 15 percent of fifth graders responded neutral or disagree to: I energetically pursue my goals
- 30 percent of fifth graders responded neutral or disagree to: I can find many ways around a problem
- 23 percent of fifth graders responded neutral or disagree to: I received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork (in the last seven days)

- 16 percent of fifth graders responded neutral or disagree to: At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day
- 12 percent of fifth graders responded neutral or disagree to: My school is committed to building the strengths of each student

### What is Happening

During the past two years, research regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Gallup’s Hope, Engagement and Well-being have been a focus for the RiS community. Through the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research, we know that trauma and toxic stress can severely alter the biological development of a child. When a child experiences a consistently traumatic world including situations of abuse, neglect, witnessing violence, or general maltreatment, the brain adapts to these situations by elevating stress hormones (known as cortisol). Over time, these stress hormones can alter many parts of the brain that are tied to things such as emotion regulation, visual and special memory, language and math proficiency, and other important parts of the brain.<sup>4</sup> These biological changes can cause profound problems to a child’s health throughout her or his life. Numerous studies have found relationships between these adverse childhood experiences and medical disorders (including skeletal fractures, heart disease, and cancer) and other health issues (including smoking, suicide, depression, obesity, drug use, alcoholism, teen pregnancy, sexual risk behaviors, and others).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this information on childhood trauma, research from Gallup on older children has found that a student’s measures of Hope, the ideas and energy we have for the future, and Engagement, the involvement in and enthusiasm for school, have profound positive impacts on student achievement. Studies have shown that hope is a better predictor of college success than high school GPA, SAT, or ACT scores – traditional academic benchmarks that have been commonly used to determine college academic preparedness.<sup>6</sup> Hope has also been found to predict academic achievement above intelligence, personality, and previous class test scores,<sup>7</sup> and has been positively correlated to reduced anxiety both in general and in test-taking situations.<sup>8</sup> It has also been found to predict overall GPA for college freshmen better than traditional entrance examinations.<sup>9</sup>

Closely tied to Hope, students who are engaged come to their work ready and eager to learn and are likely to encourage their peers to learn as well. This engagement also ties to academic improvement, as a one-percentage-point increase in a school’s student engagement, as measured by Gallup, was

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<sup>4</sup>Teicher, M et al. Neurobiological & Behavioral Consequences of Exposure to Childhood Traumatic Stress, *Stress in Health and Disease*, BB Arnetz & R Ekman (eds). 2006.

<sup>5</sup>Flaherty EG, Thompson R, Litrownik AJ, et al. Effect of Early Childhood Adversity on Child Health. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2006;160(12):1232-1238.

<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup>Day, L, Hanson, K, Maltby, J, Proctor, C, & Wood, A. (2010). Hope uniquely predicts objective academic achievement above intelligence, personality, and previous academic achievement, *journal of research in personality*, 44, 550-553.

<sup>8</sup>C. R. SNYDER (1999) Hope, goal-blocking thoughts, and test-related anxieties. *Psychological Reports*: 84, 206-208.

<sup>9</sup>Snyder, C. R., Shorey, J. C., Pulvers, K. M., Adams, V. H., & Wiklund, C. (2002) Hope and Academic Success in College. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94(4) 820-826

associated with a six-point increase in reading achievement and an eight-point increase in math achievement scores.<sup>10</sup> Reading into Success leaders believe focusing on hope and well-being for young children starting at birth will help prepare them for academic learning by building resiliency and creating a network of support around even the youngest children.

Locally, various entities in the community have rallied around building resilience and reducing ACEs within the past few years. The primary researcher from the Center for Disease Control, Dr. Robert Anda, has been brought in multiple times to speak to this issue, and from this, community groups have gathered to work with nonprofits and parents to build various trauma-informed and resilient practices throughout the community. Schools are also using Gallup Student Poll information to create more hopeful schools and to engage students more fully in the work that they do.

### Contributing Factors/Gaps

- Too little awareness throughout the community regarding the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences and their impact on children’s development.
- Lack of attention often results in a child not receiving support until their behavior escalates to a level requiring intervention.
- Too few caregivers understand how to build resilience in children.

### **Every Day Reading**

Reading into Success believes children learn from others in their community. The Every Day Reading team will help spread the word about RiS to encourage people of all ages to engage the children in their lives in reading and learning activities.

### What is Happening

Throughout the year, the Library provides story times, both at the Library and throughout the community; Pied Piper Concerts; book, Scrabble and chess clubs; theater performances; and hosts author events along with many other programs.

In the summer of 2015, the Cedar Rapids Public Library turned their summer reading program into a multi-generational activity that broadened its focus beyond reading for prizes. This year, participants of all ages were encouraged to read a minimum of 300 minutes and complete eight “dares.” Dares ranged from jumping rope to visiting a museum or attending a specified community event. Each dare was focused on encouraging participants to be active, engaged, and learning throughout the summer. For the more competitive, there was a double dare and even a triple dare (reading 900+ minutes). In addition to expanding the program beyond reading books, the Library also extended the program to encompass the entire summer break for students, a month longer than in the past.

Additional resources in the community to encourage reading include Free Little Libraries, participation in America Reads every October, free books available in strategic locations from Friends of the Library and Quota International, and various events at the local Barnes and Noble.

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<sup>10</sup>Gallup (2014) State of America’s schools: the path to winning again in Education, Gallup Inc.p16

### Contributing Factors/Gaps

The lack of community awareness around literacy and learning to read can be attributed to many factors.

- Little attention is dedicated to the encouragement of reading across broad sectors of the community. Books and messages about reading are seen in the expected places: schools, libraries and book stores, but not often spotted outside these venues.
- While access to free books and programs exists in the community, some do not get much use. Perception is that they are not effectively located, but many also wonder if the community is aware of the opportunities.
- Many organizations in the community are focused on early grade reading and encouraging children to read, but very few are working on this together.

## **Assurance #2 (Destination)**

Reading into Success' purpose is: "Ensure that students read proficiently by the end of third grade to create a foundation for success, improve high school graduation rates and lead to engaged and successful adults." The goal for the community is: "By 2020, increase the number of proficient third graders to 95%, with a focus on closing the opportunity gap."

As seen by the third grade reading scores, a gap exists for low-income, African American, and Hispanic children that needs to be addressed. In developing this goal, the Advisory Team acknowledged the community's dedication to helping every child succeed, but also wanted to ensure strategies would be focused on those most in need of support.

As each subcommittee has met to analyze data and identify gaps, they also discuss what changes they want to see in the community. The information below outlines each team's goals for the next five years that, together, will contribute to the achievement of the community goal, followed by a table with intermediate outcomes designed to monitor progress along the way.

### **School Readiness**

Increase the percentage of kindergarteners who score as proficient on the Fall FAST to 75 percent by 2020.

### **Attendance**

Reduce the percentage of elementary students who are chronically absent in the Cedar Rapids Community School District to 5 percent by the year 2020.

### **Summer Learning**

By 2020, increase the number of students whose FAST scores increase or stay the same between the spring and fall. To set the percentage of increase for this goal, the team will be working with the schools in 2016 to determine the best measurement tool and set a baseline.

## Hope & Well-being

Assist our community in becoming increasingly informed and responsive to children under age 8 who have suffered adverse experiences or negative life circumstances to help these children improve/increase resilience.

## Every Day Reading

“Create a culture of literacy within the Reading into Success community” is the goal for this team. Their intent is to spread the word about the importance of reading with children and to encourage all members of the community to engage with literacy.

	<b>School Readiness</b>	<b>Attendance*</b>	<b>Summer Learning</b>	<b>Hope &amp; Well-being</b>	<b>Every Day Reading</b>
<b>2016</b>	Planning and development	52 students, 7.33% chronic absence	Determine baseline of summer loss and set goals for 2020	Determine baseline of agencies that are trauma-informed and number of people they reach	Build community awareness and attention to RiS
<b>2017</b>	106 students impacted, 59% proficiency	99 students, 6.81 chronic absence	Increase 5% from baseline	Increase 5% from baseline	Provide communication for RiS strategies
<b>2018</b>	221 students impacted, 64% proficiency	142 students, 6.27% chronic absence	Increase 10% from baseline	Increase 10% from baseline	Provide communication for RiS strategies
<b>2019</b>	345 students impacted, 69% proficiency	182 students, 5.66% chronic absence	Increase 15% from baseline	Increase 15% from baseline	Provide communication for RiS strategies
<b>2020</b>	480 students, 75% of kindergarteners are proficient on FAST assessment	217 student, 5 % of Cedar Rapids elementary students are chronically absent	Increase 20% from baseline	Increase 20% from baseline. Use Gallup fifth grade surveys to determine long-term impact	Provide communication for RiS strategies

\*Attendance goal built around Cedar Rapids Community School District as the only district who has established a baseline at the time of submission.

## Assurance #3 (Strategy: Integrated & Intertwined)

As the committees worked to formulate their strategies for impact, the Advisory Team identified important components that each strategy must incorporate to be truly effective. These include cultural inclusion, parent input and when applicable, parent engagement.

To ensure Reading into Success retains a strong dedication to these components, the Advisory Team identified key questions to be addressed during the creation of all strategies. These questions are:

1. *Where does the data show the most need?* More than one data point should be used in making decisions. Many times programs are placed in what may at first glance appear to be a school or neighborhood with high need, but upon further analysis of data, already has supports making a positive impact. An example would be a school with a high number of students receiving free/reduced lunch, but also has a high percentage of students who are academically proficient.
2. *What can we do to reach and engage all members of our targeted audience?* For example, if a neighborhood has a high population of African refugees or Hispanic immigrants, materials for programs or community activities may need to be available in their dominant languages. Also, programs should continuously talk to their community members to ensure they feel they are being appropriately engaged and that their voices are truly being heard.
3. *Are community members aware of the programs that exist? If so, why are they not utilizing them?* Such questions will determine if current programs need more exposure, what enhancements would attract more participants, or if a new program is in fact needed.
4. *What components would a program need to be most effective for the families it aims to serve?* Asking parents questions such as, “What times of day would be most convenient for your child to attend?,” “Are there younger children at home that would need care if older children attended programming?,” “What aspects of your culture can we include in our program?,” and even “What should we know about your culture when interacting with your children?” ensure that programming reflects and respects the needs of those for who it is intended.
5. *How can we engage parents in what we are doing?* After gathering parent input, strategies need to consider ways to engage parents. This may range from parents being present at programming, family nights, or consistent communication with the parents.

As the committees worked to identify their strategies, they also began forming timelines for the creation and implementation of their plans. Below is a brief description of each committee’s strategies. Detailed timelines for completion of tasks can be found in the appendix.

### School Readiness

Understanding that learning starts at birth, strategies for early childhood must focus not only on educating parents and caregivers on how to help children learn but also ensure the education and skills are put into practice in order to be effective.

- By 2017, pilot a pre-kindergarten program to prepare kids who have not attended preschool for kindergarten.
- Identify critical early childhood (birth – age five) information being given to parents at this time by various organizations and programs. Use this to create an agreed upon source of consistent information to be utilized by interested programs.
- Explore creating early childhood training in conjunction with First Five and Reach Out and Read to share in the community on the importance and key messages.
- Partner with the Every Day Reading committee to create and distribute messaging through multiple media channels.

## Attendance

Attendance is a multi-faceted issue. In the early years, children may not have much control over whether they make it to school, or if they are on time. At the same time, student's lack of desire to attend may influence parents to let them stay home. The Cedar Rapids District will be implementing the following strategies to improve attendance, addressing both parents and students:

- Making the environment more welcoming
- Providing social comparison data on attendance that come with report cards

An initial pilot is taking place at a local elementary, a school with 12.8 percent chronic absenteeism in the 2015 school year. Strategies employed are:

- For students arriving late to school, assure positivity upon arrival
  - Child is warmly welcomed at the office
  - Traditional "tardy" slips have changed to "glad you're here" slips to encourage students as they enter school
  - Offer a granola bar in case the student did not have breakfast or is still hungry
  - Teachers plan purposefully to positively welcome late students and minimize disruption of class
- Distribute tools to help families manage their mornings and plan for barriers
  - Create a visual morning routine for families
    - Time sequences to help keep on track
  - Use Success Plan from Attendance Works at parent nights to help parents understand the importance of attendance and plan ahead to get their student to school
    - Plan what to do if the bus is missed or parent is sick
- The elementary school has a monthly school night with a fast food restaurant that has agreed to replace their regular tray liners and table tents with ones promoting school attendance
- Utilize GIS Mapping to identify neighborhoods with high concentrations of chronically absent students allowing for targeted efforts regarding attendance awareness and interventions in the neighborhood
- Create an attendance team to monitor and address concerns before a student becomes chronically absent and to ensure consistent action is taken for all students

## Summer Learning

Knowing that measurement of success will be possible in coming years, the team is focusing on building strategies that create a stronger network of programs available to and engaging for children. These actions will be achieved through the following strategies:

- Create a menu of summer programs for parents that identifies opportunities for their children and the level of academic support provided
- Engage more summer providers in fighting summer slide to provide support for students effectively
- Increase the number of children engaged in summer enrichment
- Identify and assess the magnitude of the funding gap to determine what steps need to be taken to allow programs to afford highly trained staff and to reach more children

## Hope & Well-being

Adults can be more effective in influencing a child's ability to adapt to stress and adversity when the adults understand the effects of stress and consistently interact with the child using similar language and actions. To achieve this consistency, a series of trainings will be held in the coming year to educate those who interact either directly with children from birth to age eight or with other adults who do interact with the children directly. Utilizing the "train the trainer" method, initial trainings will be held by ACEs Master Trainers who will educate community advocates in ways to present information regarding ACEs and resilience. These Master Trainers are community members who have participated in multi-day trainings taught by Dr. Robert Anda, the original researcher of the ACE study at the Center for Disease Control, and Laura Porter, the leader of resiliency work that took place in Washington State.

The Hope & Well-being team has also agreed to act as a sounding board for Iowa BIG students who are developing an application called HelpWe. This application will provide opportunities for community members to meet the specific needs of others in the community. Service providers such as police officers, DHS workers, teachers, or counselors will be able to post a need on the application. Community members will then be able to anonymously fulfill the need. Needs may range from money for a doctor's visit, to groceries, to cleats for a child to participate in sports. The Hope & Well-being team will provide feedback and suggestions for the development team regarding how the application can serve young children to increase their well-being. By ensuring key service providers have access to the application and helping spread the word to community members who have a passion for and could help fulfill the needs of young children, the partnership can spread the impact of this potentially community-changing application.

## Every Day Reading

As this team has explored the needs of Reading into Success (RiS) and the community, a set of strategies developed to spread the word about the importance of reading at an early age, support the work of the other RiS teams, and break down barriers preventing all members of the community from accessing free materials.

- Create a Reading into Success marketing campaign to provide information regarding the importance of reading and the work of Reading into Success through multiple communication channels.
- Determine all places in the community where books are available to residents analyze effectiveness and market their locations.
- Conduct listening sessions to find out why families do not or are unable to access current resources and use this information to create new places for families to find books.

## Assurance #4 (Connecting for Synergy)

Reading into Success was born through the collaboration of community partners participating in the Education Advisory Team including: four school districts, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, the Public Library, the Gazette Company, Rockwell Collins, the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, and United Way of East Central Iowa. Beyond this collaboration, there are many organizations working together to bring quality programming and support to the community. A few examples of these are:

- Family Connection Library is a collaboration of 18 organizations dedicated to the support of families with young children, providing learning opportunities, information and referrals to services. A few of the organizations in the partnership are Head Start/Early Head Start, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, Early Childhood Iowa, PACES to Quality, Linn County Public Health, Parent Education Consortium, First Five, Family Health Alliance, and United Way of East Central Iowa.
- YouthPort is a collaborative partnership between the Boys & Girls Clubs of Cedar Rapids, Tanager Place and Young Parents Network. The goal of YouthPort is to maximize the strengths and resources of these organizations, empowering them to meet the needs of children and families in targeted neighborhoods throughout Cedar Rapids.
- United Way of East Central Iowa partners with many organizations such as
  - Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) to run the RED Ahead program which provides early learning supports to parents enrolled in WIC.
  - Youth Achievement AmeriCorps, a United Way program, places AmeriCorps members in Cedar Rapids elementary and middle schools, Kids on Course and RED Ahead to support the learning of children from birth through middle school.
  - The Cedar Rapids Pi Beta Phi Alumnae Club contacted United Way in the spring and fall of 2015, offering to donate 500 books from First Books, 1,000 total. Reading into Success utilized these books as handouts at the kick-off event and a Trunk-or-Treat event for a low income apartment complex on Cedar Rapids' southwest side.
- Kids on Course is working within schools during the school day, after school, and throughout the summer to provide tutoring, support attendance, and offer enrichment activities to grow

hope and confidence in young children, starting in first grade. In addition to the Cedar Rapids Community School District, Kids on Course partners with Youth Achievement AmeriCorps, Kirkwood Community College, Rockwell Collins, and many others to offer students academic support and opportunities to explore careers in the community.

The organizations listed above have joined the Reading into Success community, along with many others such as Linn County Early Childhood Iowa, Cedar Rapids Police Department, and Mount Mercy University. Since the kickoff of the Reading into Success, not only are these partnerships strengthening, but new ones are forming as organizations are learning more about what each does and identify ways they may be able to work together. Very preliminary conversations are happening regarding organizations co-hosting training sessions to be more cost effective, a possible summer practicum opportunity for local college students and other cost and resource sharing opportunities.

The formation of the Advisory Team ensures RiS will have long term guidance from a broad cross sector of the community. Included within this group are the facilitators for each of the five subcommittees along with representation from non-profit agencies, all four school districts, and potential funders. This team meets monthly to strategize and ensure Reading into Success stays on track to meet its goals.

## **Assurance #5 (Data)**

Each of the school districts partnering with Reading into Success has consented to sharing aggregated data, allowing the collaboration to monitor success. Each district identified a contact person to work with Reading into Success to gather baseline data and participate in a long term data planning team.

A team of five organizations formed to create a deeper system of data sharing. During the coming year, the team hopes to build a mutually beneficial evaluation and measurement system in the community that provides participating partners with insight into the scope of their impact on the students they support. Such a system would strengthen the impact of all partners as they are able to identify areas for improvement and share the strategies that are most impactful for children.

## **Assurance #6 (Success and Sustainability)**

Reading into Success (RiS) started through the dedication of 10 organizations, a number that has grown tremendously since the kick-off event in March. With more than 23 partner organizations and programs represented on eight committees, RiS continues to invite new partners from throughout the community to the table.

The Education Advisory Committee was the founding committee for RiS and will continue to act as the highest level of guidance for the Campaign. After the community kick-off event held on March 12, five subcommittees formed to develop the community solution action plan and to plan and implement

strategies in each of the five local focus areas. In addition to the Education Advisory Committee providing high-level guidance, the RiS Advisory Team will provide more direct guidance closely related to strategies and to ensure the subcommittees continue working in collaboration to provide the best possible outcomes for the community.

United Way of East Central Iowa has committed to being the backbone organization for RiS. Utilizing the Collective Impact model outlined by FSG<sup>11</sup>, the Advisory Team and United Way encourage all organizations in RiS to participate in:

1. Decision making to identify problems and determine action steps
2. The use of data to make informed and strategic decisions
3. Participate in coordinated actions that allow each organization to focus on their area of expertise but work together to create a greater level of change than any one organization can achieve alone.
4. Share measurements to determine the outcomes achieved through actions

Reading into Success exists in a generous community, known for its support of young children. Potential funding partners have been identified and will be engaged as the strategies develop. The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation is interested in the implementation of a data system that can help partner organizations learn the ways in which their work is most impactful. They have invited further conversation about funding possibilities for this project. United Way of East Central Iowa has committed to continued support of RiS through staff time to support the continued growth, consistent alignment of goals, and common measurement and evaluation of RiS strategies.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fsg.org/approach-areas/collective-impact>

## Part Four: Development of the CSAP

The process of joining the Campaign for Grade Level Reading began in the fall of 2014 when the Education Advisory Team agreed to bring the Campaign to the Cedar Rapids metro area. Recognizing the need to have an inclusive name, a team of marketing and communications experts came up with the name Reading into Success. To ensure the project truly started and remains community focused, an event held on March 12, 2015 introduced the Campaign to community members and gathered feedback on where there were gaps for supporting early grade reading. From the event, five subcommittees were formed, soon followed by an advisory team.

Subcommittee meetings kicked off in April, with facilitators from various organizations leading the teams. A United Way of East Central Iowa team member and one of two Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation team members attend all subcommittee meetings to provide consistency and share information across the teams.

Each team began the process of working through identifying the Problem, Destination, and Strategies for their respective focus areas. It quickly became evident that many participants wanted to move directly to the strategies. After initial discussions about goals, various members of the teams from United Way and Community Foundation met with the facilitators of each team to develop goals to present to the teams for their approval. This allowed the teams to fine tune the goals and move to on to strategies and planning more quickly. Through this process, a matrix and diagram were created to help the teams understand the necessity of working through the CSAP in order. The RiS leadership teams are dedicated to making sure that impactful strategies are employed through the project's work, and will continue to collaborate so that Reading into Success achieves its goal of ensuring children have the skills they need to succeed.

## Appendix

### Strategy Timelines

<b>School Readiness</b>			
		<b>Create a pre-kindergarten program for children who have not attended preschool</b>	<b>Identify critical early childhood information being given to parents, create an agreed upon source of consistent information</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Q1</b>	1. Research programs in other communities to identify best practices, challenges and resources needed	1. Identify all places parents potentially receive information about early childhood development and what, if any, information these places are sharing with parents 2. Determine which organizations are interested in working together to provide parents with a consistent message
	<b>Q2</b>	2. Engage parents to assist in design of program to best serve the needs of their family 3. Engage school districts and teachers to determine the skills most needed by children entering kindergarten, utilize assessments and teacher observation	3. Through consensus of interested organizations, identify source of messaging 4. Work with Every Day Reading team to create a marketing calendar to deliver information through multiple media channels
	<b>Q3</b>	4. Identify curriculum and measurement tools 5. Identify site and control group for pilot in summer of 2017	5. Create a training with First Five and Reach Out and Read to equip early childhood providers with best practices for spreading the agreed upon message
	<b>Q4</b>	6. Gather resources for implementation including: funding, volunteers, curriculum	
<b>2017</b>	<b>Q1</b>	7. Begin recruitment during kindergarten registration	
	<b>Q2</b>	8. Implement pilot project in July	
	<b>Q3-4</b>	9. Gather and analyze outcome data from pilot and control groups during fall	
<b>2018</b>	10. Identify areas for improvement 11. Expand to a second, and potentially a third, site		
<b>2019</b>	12. Continue improvement planning and expanding as funding allows		
<b>2020</b>			

<b>Attendance**</b>				
		<b>Pilot attendance strategies at an elementary school</b>	<b>Present parents with social comparison data along with report cards</b>	<b>Increase access to instruction for students with chronic illness</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Q1</b>	1. Continue processes put in place at the beginning of the school year 2. Talk with parents to determine awareness of increased focus on attendance, ask which strategies were noticed/most impactful	1. Provide parents with their child's attendance information in regards to other students in their class 2. Use comparison information to have a meaningful conversation that sets clear expectations in a non-confrontational and non-punitive manner	1. Develop guide to educate parents how they can advocate for their child's education
	<b>Q2</b>	3. Begin analysis of pilot strategies 4. Identify elementary schools to implement strategies in next school year 5. Create a "package" of strategies for elementary schools 6. Identify strategies for community wide implementation during Attendance Awareness Month		2. Create process to identify children who are chronically ill 3. Share guide with school staffs to assist them in engagement of parents of chronically ill children
	<b>Q3</b>	7. Implement Attendance Awareness strategies in Sept. 8. Assist selected elementary schools with implementation of new strategies		
	<b>Q4</b>			
<b>2017</b>		9. Continue analysis of strategies, expansion to all elementary schools		
<b>2018</b>		10. In-depth analysis of progress, success of individual strategies		
<b>2019</b>		11. Continued analysis and modification of strategies		
<b>2020</b>		12. Continued analysis and modification of strategies		

\*\*These strategies were created by and for the Cedar Rapids Community School District. Strategies for additional districts will be discussed as they are able to set baselines and develop goals.

<b>Summer Learning</b>					
		<b>Increase awareness of and engage more providers in fighting summer slide</b>	<b>Increase the capacity of current summer providers addressing summer slide</b>	<b>Increase the number of students engaged in summer enrichment</b>	<b>Research and implement cultural components to increase programs' successes</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Q1</b>		1. Convene local literacy experts to identify best-practice summer learning programs, both in our community and others	1. Create a menu of summer programs by documenting what exists and their ability to address summer slide. 2. Engage parents to determine what factors are important for them when choosing a summer program for their child(ren).	1. Research and document how cultural components impact the success of programs
	<b>Q2</b>		2. Assess the capacity of existing programs* 3. Begin conversations with local colleges to create opportunities for education majors to gain experience working with students through internships or summer volunteer opportunities for college credits	3. Assess the capacity of existing programs*	2. Identify organizations and programs interested in adding or enhancing their cultural components
	<b>Q3</b>	1. Reconvene local literacy experts to recommend ways to incorporate language and reading into non-academic programs 2. Identify programs who do not have a literacy aspect in programming and provide education about summer slide		4. Determine method for identifying students who do not currently engage in summer programs and determine reasons for not doing so	
	<b>Q4</b>	3. Provide information to interested programs regarding how they can help combat summer slide within their current programming	4. Engage summer providers to determine what changes they would like to implement within their programs and what resources, beyond staffing, would be necessary to do so	5. Begin work to create a summer enrichment resource for parents whose children are at home with them during the summer	
<b>2017</b>	<b>Q1</b>			6. Partner with the Every Day Reading team to create a marketing plan to share resource availability with parents and caregivers	

<b>Hope &amp; Well-being</b>			
<b>2016</b>	<b>Q1</b>	1. Analyze what's being done in terms of agencies assessing resilience and presentations being made 1a. Discern what can be done moving forward to track resilience assessments and presentations. 2. Set baselines for organizations trained in resilience efforts 3. Determine number of people currently informed in resilience	1. Follow up with BIG school students in their ACE-related projects
	<b>Q2</b>	4. Examine research on resilience models and resilience measurements, especially for younger ages. 4a. Ensure resilience models follow asset-based strategies and build growth mindsets, always empowering others. 5. Train a cohort of individuals in ACEs and resilience information	2. Be available as needed.
	<b>Q3</b>	6. Determine groups to target interventions 7. Discuss opportunities for agencies to continue resilience work after training 8. Begin presenting trained ACEs information to groups	
	<b>Q4</b>	9. Continue ACE presentations on resilience	
<b>2017</b>		10. Re-evaluate entities trained in resilience work. Provide additional training to those who need assistance. 11. Assess intermediate measures of resilience in the community	
<b>2018</b>		12. Re-evaluate resilience process, expand trainings to other groups that serve children 0-8	

<b>Every Day Reading</b>			
		<b>Reading into Success Marketing Campaign</b>	<b>Identify existing and create new locations providing free books to the community</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>Q1</b>	1. Create "brand" message 2. Create a calendar for delivery of messaging, engaging other subcommittees to determine when they will need specific messaging throughout the year	1. Create a detailed list of locations throughout the community where free books are available to all members of the community and frequency with which they are accessed
	<b>Q2</b>	3. Work with School Readiness team to create school readiness messaging and delivery plan	2. Conduct listening sessions in neighborhoods where books are available. Determine if the community members use these resources and if not, why
	<b>Q3</b>		3. Utilize information gathered to increase awareness of locations for free books and create new locations in strategically identified areas
	<b>Q4</b>		
<b>2017</b>	<b>Q1</b>	4. Partner with the Summer Learning team to create a marketing plan to share summer resource availability with parents and caregivers	

## Reading into Success Committees

### Reading into Success Committees

	Education Advisory	Advisory Team	Data Team	School Readiness	Attendance	Summer Learning	Hope & Well-being	Every Day Reading
Cedar Rapids Comm. School District	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Cedar Rapids Police Department						X		
Cedar Rapids Public Library	X	X				X		X
College Comm. School District	X	X	X		X			
Family Connections Library				X				
Four Oaks							X	
Gazette Companies	X						X	
Grant Wood Area Education Agency	X	X	X	X				
Greater Cedar Rapids Comm. Foundation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
HACAP-First Five				X			X	
HACAP-PACES to Quality				X				
HACAP-RED Ahead				X				X
Jane Boyd		X						
Kids on Course						X		
Linn-Mar Comm. School District	X		X					
Marion Independent School District	X							
Mount Mercy University						X		
Rockwell Collins	X							
Tanager Place							X	
United Way of East Central Iowa	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Xavier High School	X							
Young Parents Network		X		X		X		
YouthPort						X	X	

## Sponsoring Coalition

### Grade-Level Reading Community Coalition Members - Reading into Success (Metropolitan Area of Linn County, IA)

Title	First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Email	Phone #	Organization	Business Street	Business City	State	Zip Code	Notes / Role
	Brad	Buck	Superintendent	bbuck@cr.k12.ia.us		Cedar Rapids Community School District	2500 Edgewood Rd. NW	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	52405	
	John	Speer	Superintendent	jspeer@prairiepride.org		College Community School District	401 76th Ave SW	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	52404	
	Quinton	Shepherd	Superintendent	qshepherd@linnmar.k12.ia.us		Linn-Mar Community School District	2999 N. Tenth St	Marion	Iowa	52302	
	Joe	Dyer	Superintendent	<a href="mailto:jdyer@marion-isd.org">jdyer@marion-isd.org</a>		Marion Independent School District	777 S. 15th St	Marion	Iowa	52302	
	Joe	Crozier	Chief Administrator	<a href="mailto:jcrozier@gwaea.org">jcrozier@gwaea.org</a>		Grant Wood Area Education Agency	4401 6th St SW	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	52404	
	Leslie	Wright	Vice President-Community Building	<a href="mailto:Leslie.Wright@uweci.org">Leslie.Wright@uweci.org</a>	319-398-5372	United Way of East Central Iowa	317 7th Ave SE	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	52401	
	Les	Garner	President	<a href="mailto:les.garner@gcrcef.org">les.garner@gcrcef.org</a>		Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation	324 3rd St SE	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	52401	
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	Chuck	Peters	President/CEO	<a href="mailto:chuck.peters@thegazettecompany.com">chuck.peters@thegazettecompany.com</a>	319-270-5220	The Gazette Company	501 2nd Ave SE	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	52401	