



JACKSON CO.
CAMPAIGN FOR
**GRADE-LEVEL
READING**

3RD GRADE READING
SUCCESS MATTERS

Three-Year Anniversary Report

IN 2013, JACKSON COUNTY SCHOOL LEADERS HAD A VISION: LAUNCH A COUNTY-WIDE INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE PREPARED TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE.

That vision became reality in 2014 when the Community Foundations of Jackson County and Greater Dubuque launched the Jackson County Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. For the first time, all Jackson County public and parochial schools were partners in a campaign to boost academic achievement by addressing three focus areas:

- School readiness
- School attendance
- Summer learning

Since then, the Campaign has helped shape educators' approach to learning across the county and made a positive impact in children's lives.

Today, we have stronger coordination among schools, nonprofits and parents around improving literacy. You can read about the Campaign's successes in the pages of this report.

We also know that there is more work to do. Our school leaders continue to work together to refine strategies that increase student attendance, and in the coming year, we will develop a new community solutions action plan.

We need ongoing community support. Anyone is welcome to get involved to build a strong future for our children — and our community.

FUNDING

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading was first piloted in Jackson County with funding from a USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grant that was matched by an anonymous donor. After thoughtful planning, the program took off in 2016. The North Family Foundation and the Community Foundation of Jackson County's advisory board noted its importance and provided additional funding.

"I love that my child is excited to continue reading and working on math skills during June," says Patty Schmidt, a parent and principal of Easton Valley Elementary. "Without the program, students wouldn't be engaged with academics in the summer. As many parents work, children often don't have anyone to create those incentives. The Campaign's Summer Adventure program also provides meals for students, which helps many families tremendously."

"If we want productive citizens, we need kids who can read," says Katie Peterson, youth program specialist at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, a community partner of the Campaign. "With more students proficient in third grade reading, we'll see better outcomes in graduation and readiness for careers and adulthood. In that way, the Campaign has the power to improve our communities."

This work needs the support of donors and partners. To make your contribution to the Campaign or other youth initiatives, visit dbqfoundation.org.



SUMMER LEARNING

Administrators from all Jackson County school districts, public and parochial, meet with community partners to plan Summer Adventure, a free, four-week program that provides transportation, meals and literacy education, as well as enrichment programs to combat summer learning loss. The majority of participants maintain or improve reading scores over summer break.

"The universal commitment from the schools speaks volumes," says Rachel Williams, youth impact coordinator at the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. "This is truly a grassroots movement in support of the

Campaign goal to ensure that all children read proficiently by the end of third grade."

Summer Adventure participants experience music, art, math, science and more from organizations like ISU Extension, Jackson County Conservation and the Maquoketa Area Family YMCA.

"My daughter can get her academic refresher and hone in on skills she lacks," says parent Mindy Williams. "She can have fun, interact with peers and learn more than math and reading."

SCHOOL READINESS

STORYWALKS®

Thanks to a 2017 grant from Jackson County’s youth philanthropy group, Campaign partners began a series of family literacy events called StoryWalks®.

StoryWalks are an interactive way for families to enjoy reading and the outdoors. Laminated pages from a children’s book are installed along an outdoor path, and the story is read by walking from page to page.

Today, Jackson County families can experience a StoryWalk at the Hurstville Interpretive Center. The featured book rotates throughout the year. A second StoryWalk is being created in Preston.

LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES

The Campaign introduced Jackson County to Little Free Libraries, which appear in public spaces as small houses filled with books anyone can borrow. Eight groups built, installed and maintain their own libraries throughout the community.

PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is one of many community partners helping advance early literacy.

The Campaign promotes the program and encourages families to enroll young children to receive free, high-quality books by mail from birth until they begin school, regardless of family income.

Partnerships with schools and agencies have led to family events emphasizing the importance of reading with children every day. These events offer free books, opportunities to share resources, and activities.

“The events throughout Jackson County over the last three years demonstrate dedication to our youth, making sure each child has an equal opportunity to succeed, graduate and be a productive community member,” says Joanne Evans, coordinator for the Campaign in Jackson County.

ATTENDANCE

Children who are chronically absent — at least two days a month — in preschool, kindergarten and first grade are less likely to read at grade-level by third grade.

Furthermore, students who can’t read at grade-level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school; those chronically absent between eighth and twelfth grade are seven times more likely to drop out.

“Attendance is an area we really need to focus on,” says Rachel Williams, the Community Foundation’s youth impact coordinator. The Campaign has initiated ongoing conversations with school counselors about attendance issues, and improving data collection and analysis around chronic absences was identified as a first step. “We want to bring the community together around this issue by understanding why kids aren’t at school and providing families with resources to alleviate chronic absence,” Williams says.



Summer Learning

Goal: Provide learning opportunities to reduce learning loss over the summer.

Students enrolled in Summer Adventure

Summer 2016
160 76% maintained or improved scores

Summer 2017
168 72% maintained or improved scores

Summer 2018
186 69% maintained or improved scores

*Since 2016, Campaign leaders have become better at enrolling students in Summer Adventure who are most at risk for summer learning loss.

School Readiness

Goal: Provide children age 5 and younger access to books so they enter school with strong vocabulary and pre-reading skills.

Children enrolled in Dolly Parton Imagination Library

2014
565 53% of eligible children

2019
668 63% of eligible children

Goal: Install Little Free Libraries throughout Jackson County and ensure that each town has at least one.

Total Little Free Libraries installed in Jackson County

2015
1

2019
8

Attendance

Goal: Ensure regular school attendance to improve academic success.

K-3 students chronically absent county-wide

2015
48

2018
76

Health

Goal: Implement Vision to Learn as a pilot project in Jackson County.

Since 2015-16, Vision to Learn has provided children:

267
Free eye exams

157
Prescription pairs of glasses

K-3 Reading

Goal: Ensure that more Jackson County students in kindergarten through third grade read at grade level.

Students reading at grade level or above
(Community schools only)

2015-16
77.4%

2016-17
76.7%

2017-18
78.9%

The information on this page is based on current available data. Improving data collection is an ongoing priority for the Campaign.