Every Child/Every Promise (ECEP) is a cradle-to-career initiative that convenes partners from philanthropy, business, government and youth-serving agencies with the goal of ensuring every child in Dubuque receives every opportunity to succeed. ECEP, in strategic alliance with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (CFGD), engages our community to promote collaboration among youth-serving agencies, eliminate duplication of services, gather effective data, and create a more efficient system to deliver the Five Promises to youth: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education and opportunities to serve.

ECEP is committed to helping community members work together to create positive outcomes for children, youth and families. By studying national models of successful youth programs and combining those best practices with our own local data, our community can create exceptional initiatives to help deliver the Five Promises to our youth.
Every Child/Every Promise (ECEP) celebrates 10 years of supporting young people in 2015. ECEP started in 2006 as an initiative designed to engage the community in the needs of young people. The ECEP initiative was facilitated by a group of volunteers working together to promote the Five Promises under the name Mississippi Valley Promise.

Since then, a dedicated board of directors and dozens of committed organizations have worked together to ensure success for young people through partnerships that share data and information, coordinate efforts, and use best practice to improve outcomes. We are grateful for their leadership and commitment.

Keeping the promise of caring adults, safe places, an effective education, opportunities to serve others, and a healthy start for every child is still our mission today.

Eric Dregne
Executive Director
Every Child/Every Promise
LEAP

LEAP (Leadership Enrichment After-School Programs) has been facilitated by the Dubuque Community School District since the program began in 2011. ECEP was a partner in the development of the program, which is funded by a 21st Century Learning Grant. LEAP is also supported by dozens of youth-serving organizations that provide programs.

“I think it’s important for girls to learn building and design skills because it’s something that is really fun. Some girls may think it’s just boy stuff but it is actually really fun to do and it shows that girls can do things that boys can do.”

—LEAP Participant
LEAP is now in its fourth year at Thomas Jefferson and George Washington middle schools. The program provides after-school programming to students who can choose from engaging learning experiences in a broad range of subjects including science, literature, technology, drama, fine arts, environmental issues, community service, physical activity and social programming to name a few. Homework assistance is also offered to each student daily.

Both middle schools experienced an increase in the number of students who attended 30 or more sessions through the past two years, with Thomas Jefferson Middle School experiencing a 50% increase from 2013 to 2014.

“I have noticed incredible growth from my kids. I have watched them improve their speaking skills, and have also watched them discover their own unique creative abilities. They've built up their own self-confidence and have started to build each other up. My students come from all different backgrounds, some not so favorable. I believe they have learned to rise above their environment, develop the skills they lack, and start to cultivate their identities in the direction of who they want to be.”

–LEAP Instructor

“The creative arts class has helped me progress as an artist. I went from drawing hearts and stars to 3D cities with textures. The teacher makes us better artists by encouraging, challenging, and pushing us to be the best we can possibly be.”

–LEAP Participant

**Project Partners**
Carnegie-Stout Public Library
DBQ Area Labor Management Council
Dream Center
Dubuque Community YMCA
Dubuque County Conservation Board
Dubuque Humane Society
Girl Scouts of America
Hillcrest Family Services
Leisure Services
Matter Creative Center
Mines of Spain
Multicultural Family Center
National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
ECEP launched the Dubuque Campaign for Grade-Level reading (GLR) in 2012 in an effort to ensure that all children succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. ECEP facilitated the effort and took on the responsibility as the backbone support organization for the initiative. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation: grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

The network of GLR partners helped to develop a Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP) to address the three underlying challenges that can keep young children, especially those from low-income families, from reading well including:

- **SCHOOL READINESS**
  All young people will be school ready through high quality early education in combination with additional supports for higher achievement rates.

- **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**
  No students will miss more than 10% of school each year.

- **SUMMER LEARNING**
  Change summertime focus from “keeping kids busy” to purposeful activities that foster skills, including reading, math and science growth.

In the next three pages you will read stories about the work the GLR partners are carrying out in our community to make strides in each of these three focus areas.

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**GLR Expands to Rural Communities**

In fall 2014, ECEP helped to support an application for a $180,000 grant that the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque received from an anonymous donor to expand the Campaign to two rural communities: Dyersville and Jackson County. In January 2015, stakeholders in Dyersville and Jackson County convened to learn more and commit to becoming a Campaign community. Thanks to the anonymous donor grant, each community was able to hire a part-time coordinator who is working with partners to develop a Community Solutions Action Plan.
Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) and the Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) developed a partnership to address a shortage of qualified teachers for preschool and childcare centers in our community. This partnership has helped to make tremendous strides in building a strong program for early childhood students in the Dubuque area.

NICC and the DCSD, both Grade-Level Reading partners, developed a program that gives students from four area high schools (Dubuque Senior, Hempstead, New Hampton and Elkader) the opportunity to complete four early childhood classes for dual credit, meaning they earn both high school and college credit. Julee Albers, Early Childhood Education faculty at NICC, worked closely with the four high schools to implement best-practice teaching methods to ensure a smooth transition if students chose to continue at NICC and complete the early childhood program.

Albers also created articulation agreements, which allow students with an associate degree to transfer easily to local institutions to earn four-year degrees. NICC’s early childhood program has grown in size with this partnership’s efforts.

“Our community has seen an increase in employment opportunities in child development centers, para positions and elementary teaching positions,” said Albers. “I feel it’s important to best educate our students so they in turn can provide the knowledge and resources to best educate the children in their classroom.”
2014 was an exciting year for Dubuque’s Campaign for Grade-Level Reading as it was recognized as a Pacesetter community by the national Campaign for making measurable progress on student attendance outcomes. Dubuque was one of just 30 communities awarded this honor.

Dubuque made this progress in the area of chronic absence, a measure of students who miss 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason. Starting in the early grades, students who are chronically absent are missing the critical time they need to develop literacy skills.

In the 2012-2013 school year, Dubuque’s Campaign for Grade-Level Reading assisted in writing a grant with the Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) to help fund the implementation of a pilot program to reduce chronic absence at one of its Title I schools, Fulton Elementary. The DCSD implemented strategies that helped parents, teachers and students understand their role in reducing chronic absence.

“Some students and parents were surprised to learn that so much learning was missed at the primary grades and that the impact was cumulative,” said Shirley Horstman, director of student services at DCSD. “Many did not realize that early attendance patterns affected graduation rates later.”

During Fulton’s pilot program, chronic absence dropped from 7% to 2% and the district shared successful strategies learned in the pilot with other elementary school principals in Dubuque to implement in their schools. In addition, the DCSD started tracking chronic absenteeism at a district level in the 2013-2014 school year and was able to establish baseline data to measure progress in the future.

“Monitoring chronic absence allows us to further break down the absentee issues to begin to understand chronic absenteeism in our community and come up with a more detailed plan of how to deal with it,” said Horstman.
The Dubuque Campaign for Grade-Level Reading’s vision for summer learning is to change summertime focus from “keeping kids busy” to purposeful activities that foster skills, including reading, math and science growth, and to instill a love for life-long learning, healthy living and connection to school.

The first annual Summer Academy took place in 2013 and continued in 2014 through a partnership with the Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) and St. Mark Youth Enrichment. The partnership created an innovative summer learning environment, ensuring that students continued to learn and experience new activities in our community’s rich array of summer programs. In 2014, 180 kindergarten and first grade students attended the summer literacy program offered by the DCSD.

In summer 2015, the Dubuque Community YMCA/YWCA, in partnership with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the DCSD, will be offering another Summer Academy. The academy is available to students who have completed kindergarten, first and second grades, and who participate in the DCSD’s morning summer reading program.

25% Dubuque K-1 students who qualified for summer reading support in the 2013-2014 school year

427 students were behind and needed the help of a summer reading program to get them back on track.

180 students actually attended summer reading programs.

SUMMER LEARNING

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Tracking Progress

ECEP has made data collection and sharing a priority since 2008 with the creation of the Youth Indicator Report, which showed where Dubuque County stood on issues ranging from quality of childcare to homeless youth. This led to the 2009 Youth Master Plan, a multi-sector collaboration that led to the development of the LEAP after-school program, increased access to free public transportation for kids and increased support for mentoring.

ECEP continues to focus on data through the implementation of the Results Scorecard and the Promise Report:

- **The Results Scorecard** is a place to track and share data for partners of the Dubuque Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The scorecard tracks progress in the three focus areas of summer learning, school readiness and attendance.

- **The Promise Report** tracks various indicators in each of the five promises to monitor progress in each area.

Data continues to drive the decision-making process for ECEP and it is used regularly to inform our work. To explore the promise report visit www.dubuquespromise.org, and to explore the results scorecard visit www.readdbq.org.

“The Campaign Scorecard will improve collection, consistency, and sharing of community data and will be a benefit when coordinating key programs that support efforts on behalf of children, youth and families.”

– Sherri Edwards, Dubuque County Early Childhood and Grade-Level Reading partner
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