

RED AHEAD

Read Every Day



United Way
of East Central Iowa

The Case in Support of the Expansion of **RED Ahead**, an Early Literacy Program, to Marion.

Fact: Research has shown that 44 of 50 students who were poor readers at the end of first grade remained poor readers at the end of fourth grade.^[1]



Fact: Low reading grades and high absenteeism by third grade are each strong predictors of high school dropouts.^[2]



“Perhaps the best investment we can make is early childhood education—getting our babies off to a great start and getting them into kindergarten ready to learn and read. Long term, the most important thing we can do is to close achievement gaps.”

Arne Duncan
Former Department of Education Secretary

Based on the facts above, kindergarten readiness is a key predictor of future success. In 2009, a Department of Education study showed that half of low-income five-year-olds in Linn County were not ready for kindergarten.

How Did United Way Address the Achievement Gap in our Community?

In response to the statistics above, the United Way of East Central Iowa convened a group of local early childhood experts to determine what gaps existed in the community that, if filled, could get children back on track.

With professionals from Grant Wood Area Education Agency, the Cedar Rapids Public Library, and licensed childcare providers, this group conducted focus groups with parents, analyzed existing services, and researched evidence-based models of success. Through these efforts, the team adapted successful national interventions to build a program that provides low-income parents with opportunities to learn how their young child is developing and what they can do at home to support their development.

RED Ahead was Born.



RED AHEAD RESULTS FISCAL, YEAR 2015

RED Ahead families made great progress in the last year. Below are highlights of the program and how it impacted families in Linn County:

6,770 BOOKS : 2,867 CHILDREN : 2,024 FAMILIES

475 children screened for developmental progress
1 in 4 of children screened were provided specific activities to increase development

More than 95% of RED Ahead parents maintained or increased their knowledge of their child's development.*

**According to research conducted by Iowa State University*



Reach Out and Read has had more than 15 studies conducted since 1991. Key findings show that parents served in the program are four times more likely to read aloud to their child, teaching the parents is an efficient way to reach the child and children served by Reach Out and Read score higher on vocabulary tests.

Children of low-income families hear as little as one-third the amount of words that children from higher-income families hear.

That equates to a
30 MILLION WORD GAP
by the time the two groups are four years old.

Read Every Day to Get Ahead

RED Ahead models itself after two national programs, “Reach Out and Read” and “Raising a Reader,” as well as the Los Angeles-based “Little By Little.” Based in physician offices, libraries, and WIC clinics, these programs utilize parent education, age-appropriate materials, and regular evaluation to ensure children are on track to start school at age five. Most importantly, evaluations of each of these programs have shown they have significant developmental impact on children.

Since 2011, RED Ahead has incorporated best practices from the programs listed above to reach parents in Linn County. In addition, the development team focused on creating a program that would serve those most in need while also engaging families in a truly meaningful way.

RED Ahead also offers developmental screenings to help parents ensure their children are on track (starting at just six months of age) and model activities to do at home at every visit. The formal Ages & Stage Questionnaire screening allows parents to track their child’s progress on a range of activities and gives them the tools to notice if their child needs additional attention. RED Ahead then helps these parents get the services they need.

Experts Agree: The Gap Starts Early

Research shows that children from economically disadvantaged families can be up to two years behind in language development before they enter school when compared to their higher-income peers.^[3] This is due in part to the fact that children of low-income families hear as little as one-third the amount of words that children from higher-income families hear. That equates to a 30-million word gap by the time the two groups of children are four years old.^[4]

Studies also show that just having books in the home has some effect in a child’s development, but the influence increases greatly when parents also receive guidance on how to read to their child, what to expect when reading, and how reading can have a positive impact in their child’s development. The addition of more books in the home further increases this influence.^[5]

Based on these and other studies with similar results, the American Association of Pediatrics updated its guidelines in June 2014 to recommend children be read to every day, starting at birth.

Parents are a child’s first teacher, but many parents do not know the best ways to support language and literacy development. Through simple advocacy and education on child development to parents, children’s futures can improve dramatically.

**BECAUSE OF EVERYTHING RED
 AHEAD HAS DONE TO HELP HIM,
 “NOW HE WON’T STOP TALKING!”**



Recently, a mom and her four-year-old son visited RED Ahead. As they discussed his language and development, she mentioned that before RED Ahead, her son wouldn’t even speak. She said that because of everything RED Ahead has done to help him, “Now he won’t stop talking!”

What is WIC?

Established in the early 1970s, WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) assists low-income families by providing nutritional support and services for new mothers and children from birth to age five. Families enrolled in WIC have an income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$44,862 for a family of four).

Literacy Support at Two Cedar Rapids Locations

Based in two local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics run by the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) — Urban at 1328 Second Avenue SE and North Town at 2121 North Towne Lane NE — RED Ahead is a voluntary program that meets families where they are.

This means RED Ahead combines with WIC services, eliminating time and transportation barriers for clients who already are struggling. Nearly half of clients served have an annual household income less than \$12,000. In addition:

- ❖ 47% are single-mother households
- ❖ 15% are homeless or living with a friend, family, or neighbor
- ❖ 10% have at least one parent who is under the age of 21

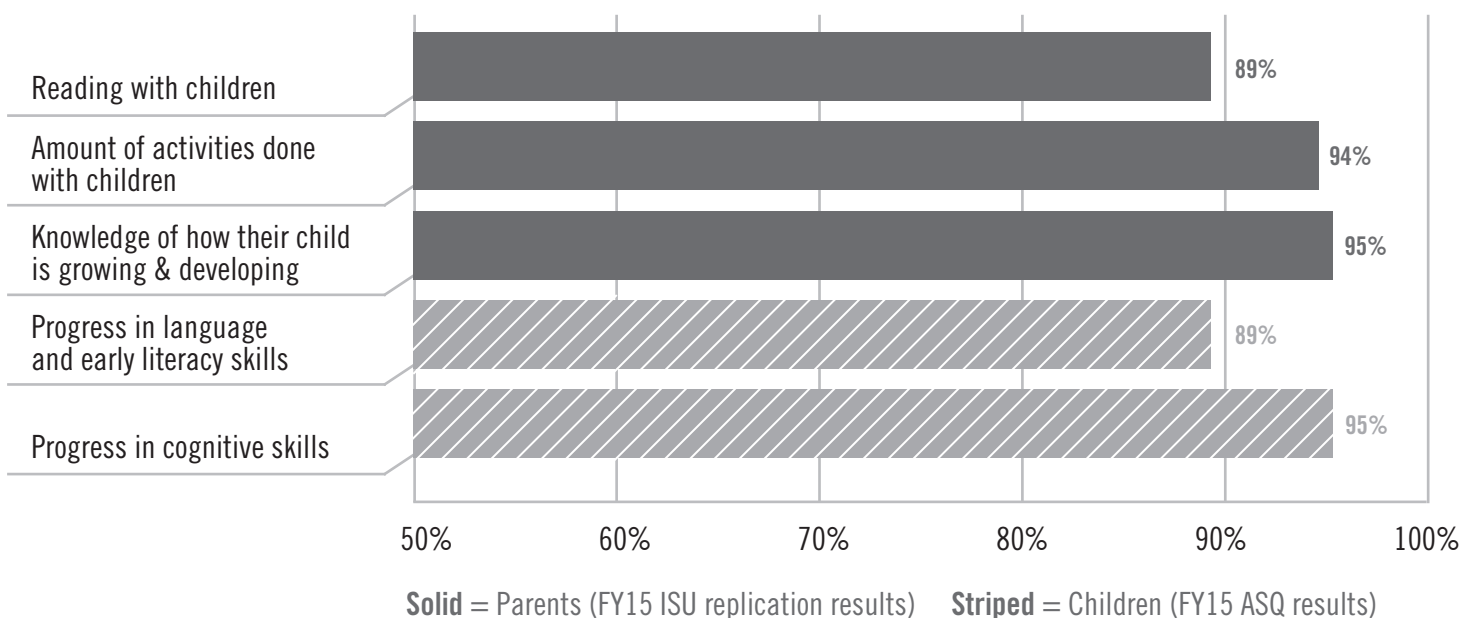
While voluntary, RED Ahead enjoys an enrollment rate of more than 90% of the eligible WIC families. In fiscal year 2015, 2,024 families participated at the two locations.

It's Working!

In 2014, RED Ahead contracted with researchers from Iowa State University to evaluate the program. Evaluators found that RED Ahead positively increases parents' knowledge and behavior in working with their children to develop literacy skills. Iowa State's Robin Galloway, Ph.D., conducted the program evaluation, and 322 parent participants completed the survey in January, February, and March 2014. Her 43-page report is available from United Way of East Central Iowa, and we now administer the same survey.

The chart below shows the percentage of parents and children maintaining or increasing their knowledge, habits, and development through RED Ahead participation. **In each category, RED Ahead is positively influencing more than 85% of parents and children.**

Maintain or Increased Behaviors



Marion Expansion

YEAR ONE
445 Children
expected to be served

YEAR THREE
950 Children
expected to be served

Expansion to Marion

Currently, two of the three WIC clinics in Linn County offer the RED Ahead program. United Way seeks to expand RED Ahead to the WIC Clinic in Marion, where the program would serve 445 children in the first year, growing to 950 by year three. The Marion program would be located in the existing HACAP office at 3405 7th Avenue.

During the first three years of service, the Marion program would require an average of \$112,500 in annual funding. In late 2014, the Marion-based Giacoletto Foundation made a commitment of \$25,000 per year for three years. The clinic will also receive Medicaid reimbursements for the Ages and Stages Questionnaires that it conducts, for an average income of more than \$9,000 per year.

To open the Marion clinic, United Way must secure additional three-year pledges to fund the remaining average annual expense of \$78,000.

Transforming Tomorrow: The Power of Private Support

With private support from visionary contributors, RED Ahead can help the children of Marion and positively impact their future.

We ask that you consider how you or your company might be able to support this effort. Here are the benefits of your support:

Lead Gift

- ❖ Signage at new site
- ❖ Logo recognition on Red Ahead program materials

Supportive Gift

- ❖ Name Recognition on Red Ahead program materials

Thank you for your consideration of funding the expansion of RED Ahead to Marion.

Average Annual Funding:
\$112,500 per year

Giacoletto Foundation Funding:
\$25,000 per year

Medicaid reimbursements:
\$9,000 per year

Remaining funding needed:
\$78,000 per year

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Sources

^[1] Juel, Journal of Educational Psychology 80, no. 4 (1988): 437-447.

^[2] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading. Baltimore, MD: Fiester, Leila.

^[3] Research referenced comes from the following sources:

Zill, Nicholas & West, Jerry, for the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). Entering Kindergarten: A Portrait of American Children When They Begin School: Findings from The Condition of Education 2000. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

^[4] Hart, B., and Risley, T.R. (1995). Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

^[5] Theriot J., Franco S., Sisson B., Metcalf S., Kennedy M., Bada H., (2003). The Impact of Early Learning Guidance on Language Skills of 3-Year-Olds. Clinical Pediatrics 42, p. 165-172



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