



# ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST

## COUNCIL BLUFFS

### Community Snapshot

Council Bluffs, Iowa, sits on the Missouri River, just across from Omaha, Nebraska. It was a historic gateway to the West for explorers, fur traders, military figures, engineers and great Indian nations. President Abraham Lincoln designated Council Bluffs the most eastern terminus of the nation's first transcontinental railroad, and during the late 19th century the town was the mail handling terminal for the American West. Today, the Council Bluffs metropolitan area is a transportation hub, serving national and international businesses. Multiple major floods have devastated the area, mostly recently in the summer of 2011. The cost of that flood, estimated between \$25 million and \$35 million, diverted attention and resources from other needs.

### Community Solutions Action Plan

The Grade-Level Reading initiative offers an opportunity to dramatically change the trajectory for Council Bluffs students, using the following strategies:

- Review the strengths and needs of the current preschool program and determine how to ensure that the program continues and strengthens
- Develop plans for a multi-year community campaign focused on the importance of attending school and its effect on learning
- Ensure the continuation and expansion of the current summer learning program
- Augment successful school-based interventions by drawing attention to the importance of early and frequent reading as a strategy to increase the likelihood of grade-level reading proficiency

### Partnerships

Partners include the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce; Council Bluffs Community School District; Iowa West Foundation; Community Education Foundation; Promise Partners; Pottawattamie County's Alliance for Youth; Iowa Department of Education; Green Hills Area Education Agency; Promise Partners; Head Start; Child Care Resource Referral; FAMILY, Inc.; Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families; Council Bluffs Library; American Red Cross; Boys & Girls Clubs; Lutheran Family Services; Council Bluffs Police Department; the Pottawattamie County Attorney; University of Arkansas; University of Northern Iowa; arts and cultural organizations; and other partners.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

---

- 62,230 residents
- Approximately 9,000 students
- Up to 90 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals at some elementary schools
- Approximately 78 percent of fourth-graders read at grade level (state reading assessment)
- 7 percent are English language learners
- 79 percent graduation rate
- 58 percent are ready for kindergarten
- 26 percent of K-3 students miss 9–17 days of school; 5.6 percent are chronically absent
- 49 percent of students in need of enrichment get summer programming

### GOALS (BY 2020)

---

- 95 percent of third-grade students reading at grade level
- 90 percent of pre-K-3 students absent less than 5 percent of the school year
- 100 percent of students prepared for school
- 80 percent of students in need of enrichment get summer programming

*"We invite you to help us...by encouraging your children, grandchildren and neighbors to be in school every day and to read every chance they get."*