



ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA

Community Snapshot

In 1851, nine years after the Sac and Fox tribes signed a treaty with the U.S. government opening up the rich soil of what is now Marshall County, Henry Anson decided to build a town on the divide between Linn Creek and the Iowa River. Anson described the place as “the prettiest place in Iowa” and called the town Marshall. In 1862, the name was changed to Marshalltown, and by the dawn of the 20th century, Marshalltown was an established city of more than 10,000 residents and the home to many industries. Marshalltown today is a “tweener” community, neither rural nor urban and not suburban. And like many manufacturing-based communities, Marshalltown has been plagued by economic challenges. However, even faced with hardships, Marshalltown has an enduring spirit of progress and future focus and an enthusiasm to face these challenges head on.

Community Solutions Action Plan

Community leaders created the Spread the Words: Read by 3rd! initiative (RB3!) and developed a comprehensive strategy based on the following focus areas:

- RB3! will focus its readiness efforts on three primary groups: parents, child development providers and the community at large and will equip each to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood experiences
- RB3! will work through existing community systems as well as developing a new plan to communicate the importance of attendance for a child’s future success. RB3! will also replicate and adopt the “Perfectly Punctual” model from Baltimore
- RB3! will integrate summer learning practices into current offerings, mirror the Rogers University concept in other elementary neighborhoods and increase access to library programs

Partnerships

The plan to ensure that more Marshalltown children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade was put together by the Martha-Ellen Tye Foundation and Mid-Iowa Community Action. A steering committee includes city officials, school district leaders, human service professionals, elected officials, educators, parents, philanthropic organizations and business leaders.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 27,552 residents
- Over 5,000 students
- 73 percent of students live in poverty
- 65.8 percent of students read at grade level (state test)
- 31 percent of students are English language learners
- 74.8 percent graduation rate
- 42 percent are considered ready for kindergarten
- 95 percent attendance rate
- Summer learning programs available

GOALS

- Increase percentage of third graders reading at grade level to 90 percent
- Maintain daily average attendance at or above 95 percent
- Increase school preparedness to 85 percent
- Increase the number of summer learning opportunities to serve 50 percent of students

“Marshalltown is determined that its future will be made brighter through the fact that its children will be readers -- Spread the words!” – Read by 3rd!