



ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST

SPRINGFIELD

Community Snapshot

The third-largest city in Massachusetts, Springfield is known as the “City of Firsts” because of innovative residents who invented basketball, the first adjustable monkey wrench, the first motorcycle, the first fire engine, and the board game Life. The city played an important role in the Industrial Revolution and had a thriving economy based on precision manufacturing until the late 1960s but the local economy declined as manufacturers departed. In the early 2000s, Springfield’s finances collapsed and the state installed a Finance Control Board, in place until 2009. Several new major construction and transportation projects, along with the stability of major employers such as MassMutual and Baystate Health, may be drivers of an eventual economic turnaround, but Springfield’s most at-risk residents largely lack the education and skills to benefit. A tornado in June 2011 that ravaged housing stock and the local infrastructure and economy led to Springfield being declared a federal disaster area.

Community Solutions Action Plan

To accomplish its ambitious goals, the Reading Success by Fourth Grade Initiative has developed the following strategies:

- Educate parents and guardians about their role in supporting early literacy skills development
- Increase the skills of educators teaching children from pre-K through fourth grade to boost early literacy skills
- Continue to implement the Attendance Improvement Initiative, including the Walking School Bus, which has shown significant results to date
- Update data in regards to summer learning and consider strategies to boost access for at-risk children

Partnerships

The Reading Success by Fourth Grade Initiative leadership includes the Office of the Mayor, City Council and School Committee; Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts; Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation; Department of Early Education and Care: Western Massachusetts Regional Director; Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Office; Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative; Partners for a Healthier Community; Regional Employment Board of Hampden County; Springfield Public Schools Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Data and Technology, and Director of Literacy (pre-K – 12); Parent Academy; Springfield Business Leaders for Education; Springfield City Library; Springfield Housing Authority; Talk/Read/Succeed; Springfield Museums; United Way of the Pioneer Valley; and WGBY public television for western New England.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 153,000 residents
- Approximately 25,000 students
- 82.5 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals
- Approximately 40 percent of third-graders read at grade level (state reading assessment)
- 24.9 percent are English language learners
- 53 percent four-year graduation rate
- At least half of incoming students aren’t ready for kindergarten
- 13 percent of K-5 students are chronically absent
- 25 percent of students in need of enrichment have access to summer programming

GOALS (BY 2020)

- 80 percent of third-grade students reading at grade level by 2016
- Each school is setting its own attendance goals
- Participating in development of a kindergarten entry assessment

• Using demand/supply mapping data to set summer learning goals
“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you’ll go!” – Springfield native Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel)