

Academic Success  
Mobilization Plan  
Executive Summary

August 2021

United Way  
of Dane County



The Power of Many. Working for All.

**At United Way of Dane County,  
we want students to succeed  
academically and graduate high  
school prepared for higher  
education, career and community.**



## WHY IT MATTERS

When more children get the support they need to keep pace with their classmates, our entire community is smarter and better positioned to succeed across generations. This is The Power of Many. Working for All.

- **The ability to read well by the end of 3rd grade is critical to a child's success in school, future earning potential and ability to contribute to their community.**
- **Mastery of algebra signals the development of abstract problem solving skills necessary for success in college and future careers.**
- **Graduation is a minimum requirement for career success. Too few students meet this minimum.**
- **Racial inequities in economic and health resources and learning opportunities contribute to gaps in academic achievement.**
- **10% of Dane County youth experience trauma and 18% of MMSD youth deal with behavioral health issues. This can often lead to underlying anger, depression, anxiety and other behaviors that stifle effective learning.**
- **Children can lose more than two months of learning each summer because of inability to practice reading. This "catch up mode" leads to a multi-year learning gap by middle school.**



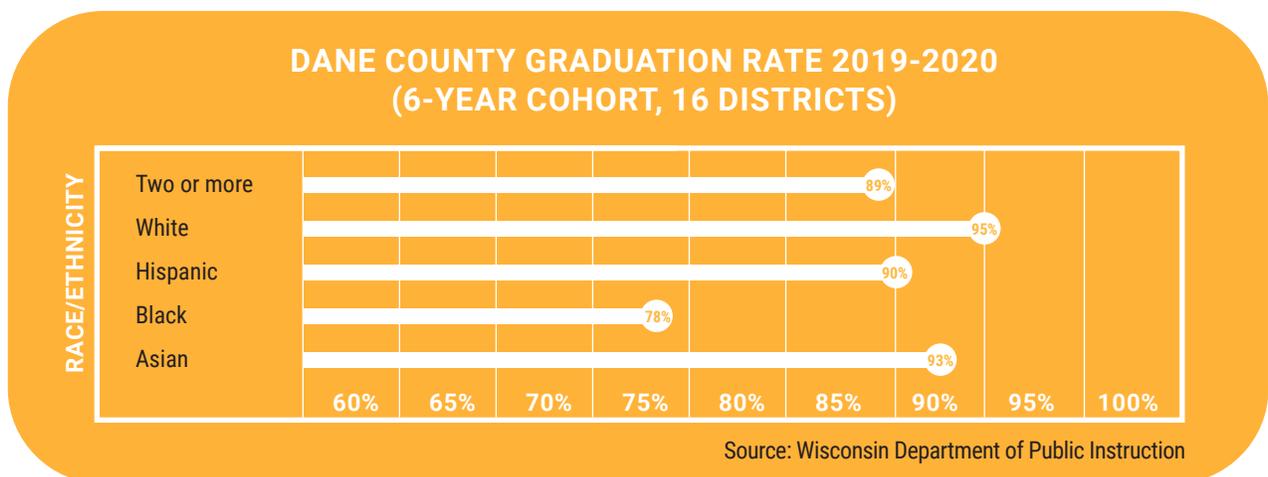
## OUR VISION

By listening to our community stakeholders, reviewing data and recognizing the necessity of preparing students to advance beyond high school, United Way has set the following goal for our education Agenda for Change initiative:



## Students succeed academically and graduate high school prepared for higher education, career and community.

We expect that at least 95% of all students in Dane County graduate high school within 6 years.\* To meet this goal, we aim to produce accelerated outcomes for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian and students of color (BIPOC) as well as for students from low-income families – achieving an interim goal of 90% or higher by 2022.



\* Many youth in Dane County face barriers that do not reflect their ability to graduate, but rather their ability to graduate on time. Jobs that support family obligations, economic hardship, and issues related to immigration status lead many students to slow or temporarily stop, but ultimately continue high school. Six year graduation rates reflect the resiliency of students who experience life's barriers.

# GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

**1. Facilitate access to additional learning opportunities to enhance students’ mastery of academic content.**

Focus on 3rd grade reading, eliminating summer reading loss and completing Algebra by 10th grade.

**2. Build students’ social/emotional and non-cognitive skills.**

Focus on building non-cognitive and behavioral competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

**3. Ensure students’ behavioral health and wellness.**

In 2020, many students and families experienced trauma and were negatively impacted by the pandemic, making mental health and social-emotional learning even more important.

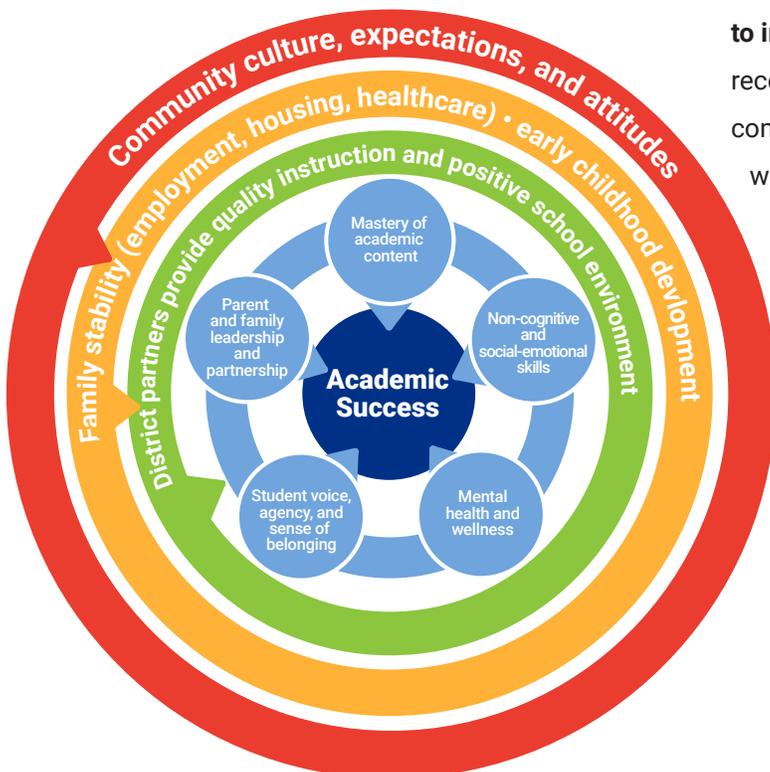


**4. Foster connection, belonging, leadership and academic success with youth at risk of disconnecting.**

Engagement and academic achievement go hand-in-hand. A student’s school experience, including relationships with adults, feelings of safe, supportive environments and connections to peers, coupled with high expectations for learning, all contribute to a sense of belonging at school and in the community.

**5. Recognize family engagement as a key component to improve student success.**

All district partners recognize parent and family engagement as a key component to improving student outcomes. We will give preference to programs that show parent engagement activities and innovation.



*“Students show up with incredible strengths and assets. Kids are capable of much more than we think.”*

*– Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings,  
Co-Chair, United Way of Dane County’s  
Elementary Schools of Hope Delegation*

# REIMAGINING SCHOOLS OF HOPE

The Schools of Hope Project (SOH) began in 1995 as a civic journalism project by the Wisconsin State Journal and WISC-TV that studied how active community engagement could address critical local area needs. Led by United Way in partnership with the Madison and Sun Prairie School Districts, the project focuses on increasing reading achievement for K-5 students.

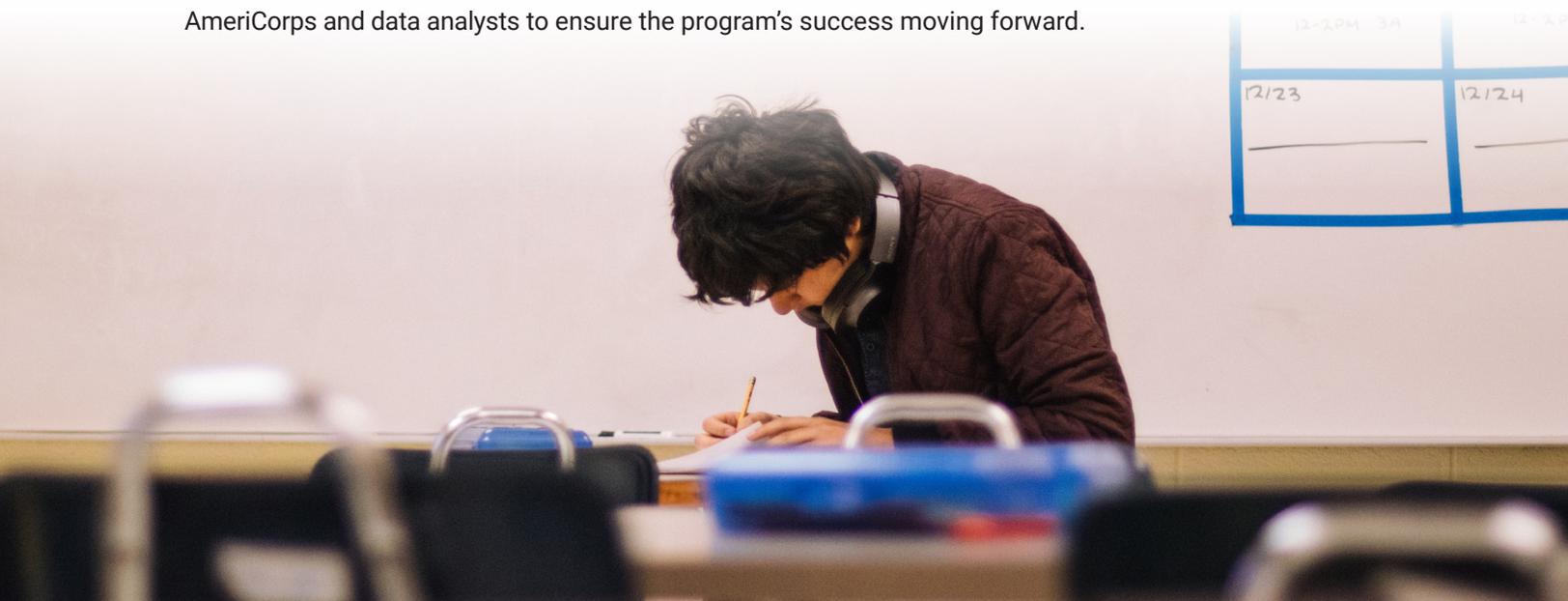
**To date, we've reached 88,064 elementary students, mobilized 13,537 volunteers, 364 AmeriCorps volunteer managers and tutors, and partnered with four local school districts to improve early grade literacy.**

While the SOH Initiative has proven successful over the years, recent standardized test scores show Dane County students falling behind in reading scores – this trend is especially true for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian and students of color.

In response to this data, a Schools of Hope Delegation was formed in 2019. In their 12 months together, the delegation (comprised of education, business and nonprofit leaders and local parents) reviewed our approach to 3rd grade reading and worked to identify a path forward. Through their research, they confirmed the following as critical to early-grade literacy:

- **Center on the science of reading and provide timely, individual support.**
- **Ensure a culturally relevant (racially and linguistically) curriculum and include student and family input.**
- **Ensure AmeriCorps members/community volunteers are trained in social-emotional learning, allowing them to serve as mentors to students and help improve self-esteem and confidence.**

To ensure student success and that these strategies get carried out, an Elementary Schools of Hope Steering Committee has been created. Members of this committee will work with school districts, funders, AmeriCorps and data analysts to ensure the program's success moving forward.



**For more information, please contact Cortney Dunklin at [cortney.dunklin@uwdc.org](mailto:cortney.dunklin@uwdc.org) • (608) 245-8072**

Full mobilization plan is available at [www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/mobilization-plans](http://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/mobilization-plans)