107 Students Join the ISU 4U Promise

On June 1, 2015, 107 Des Moines fifth graders walked across the stage to mark their promotions to middle school. This wasn't your average elementary school promotion, though. These students, from King Elementary School and Moulton Extended Learning Center, are now eligible for tuition awards at Iowa State University.

Dr. Marlene Strathe, Director of the School of Education, urged students to take advantage of this new opportunity.

As the partnership between Des Moines Public Schools and Iowa State University was officially signed into agreement in January 2015, this group of students is the first to celebrate its enrollment in this program intended to enhance college access and affordability.

In addition to Des Moines Public Schools, ISU 4U Promise works collaboratively with community organizations and the Financial Aid, Extension and Outreach, and School of Education units on the ISU campus.

ISU President Leath first made the announcement of his intention to begin this partnership at his Installation Ceremony in January 2012. It is part of his broader economic development initiative.

This first group of ISU 4U Promise students includes 92% who indicate an underrepresented racial/ethnic background and 50% for whom English is not the sole language spoken at home.

King and Moulton students express a variety of learning interests including how helicopters work, how to cure people of diseases and even how to unlock the padlocks on their new middle school lockers!

*Dr. Strathe’s remarks are available at isu4u.org.

Design Dialogues Kicks Off

A project between faculty and staff of Iowa State University’s School of Education, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, the College of Design, and Extension and Outreach is bringing Latin@ and African American students and their parents together to discuss their schools and neighborhood and dreams for the future.

A pilot of the Design Dialogues sessions was held this summer with official project work beginning in Fall 2015.

ISU 4U Grows

Dr. Carly A. McNelly and Kayla Hamilton join the ISU 4U Promise!

On July 1, 2015, Carla McNelly joined the ISU 4U team as a postdoctoral research associate. McNelly comes from Eugene, Oregon, with a background in Critical and Socio-Cultural Communication. Some of Dr. McNelly’s current research interests include cross-cultural communication and family engagement in schooling.

On June 1, 2015, Kayla Hamilton joined the ISU 4U Promise team as the project’s first Program Assistant. A graduate of Simpson College in Indianola, Kayla returned to Iowa from Kansas City, Missouri, where she taught for two years in an urban elementary school.
School of Education faculty members Gail Seiler and Mollie Appelgate attended a professional development session hosted by Des Moines Public Schools this summer. The familiarity they gained with the DMPS instructional frameworks will enable them to better collaborate with King and Moulton pre- and in-service teachers to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

ISU Spotlight: Dr. Gale Seiler
Gale Seiler, Associate Professor of Education, serves as the practica coordinator for the ISU 4U Promise. Over the past year, she has created meaningful practica experiences for students placed at King and Moulton schools. This includes neighborhood walks, visits to community organizations, work with students in out-of-school settings, and regular debriefing sessions.

School Spotlight: Principal Peter LeBlanc
Peter LeBlanc, principal at King Elementary School, helps ISU 4U Promise through his collaboration and support. LeBlanc grew up in the community of Acres Homes in Houston, Texas. After graduating high school at Dwight D. Eisenhower High School in the Aldine Independent School District, he earned a full scholarship to play football at the University of Maine. After receiving his undergraduate degree in elementary education from the University of Maine, he began teaching 4th grade Math and Science in the Aldine Independent School District in Houston, Texas. During this time he received his master in educational administration from the University of Houston. LeBlanc has been the principal at King for four years. About his role in the ISU 4U Promise, he says, “It has been truly exciting to be a part of this program from its infancy. It is amazing to see how far we have come from the initial conversations three years ago. The people I am happiest for is our students. This opens doors for them that might not have been there for them. I am looking forward to continuing this partnership and being a part of it becoming a model of school and university partnerships.”

Community Spotlight: Ako Abdul-Samad
Ako Abdul-Samad, Founder and CEO of Creative Visions, first envisioned this partnership between Iowa State University and the schools in his community. As a representative in the Iowa Legislature, Founder and CEO of Creative Visions, providing supports to the King neighborhood, and a life-long Des Moines resident, he had the conversation with ISU President Leath that led to the ISU 4U Promise.

ISU 4U Director Speaks at Cambio de Colores
Dr. Katherine Richardson Bruna, Founding Director of the ISU 4U Promise, gave opening plenary remarks at the 2015 Cambio de Colores Conference held at University of Missouri—Kansas City in June. Her address, entitled “Harvesting The Heartland’s Promise: Latina/o Learning Catalyzing School and Community Change,” focused on how lessons from the demographic transition in the Midwest can promote transformative approaches to enhancing college access for all students.

Summer Events
On July 10 and 17, elementary students from King and Moulton are invited for a fun, engaging day at Iowa State. They’ll be visiting the Insect Zoo and completing a campus scavenger hunt as well as other fun activities.

A huge thanks to John-Paul Chaisson-Cardenas and Jay Staker of ISU Extension and Outreach for providing instrumental support to ISU 4U.

Stop and say hello in our new office!