Learn for Life is a United Way of Portage County internal program that partners with Portage County school districts to provide second and third grade students with tutors on a regular basis to increase reading achievement. Reading proficiency is a critical marker in a child’s future success. From Kindergarten through third grade, children learn to read and from fourth grade and on, children are reading to learn. If a child is having difficulties reading by the end of third grade, they will have a harder time learning to extract and analyze new information and expand their vocabulary in fourth grade. During the 2018-19 school year, Learn for Life’s ninth year of programming, trained volunteer reading tutors worked with second and third grade students at 13 schools throughout Portage County: Almond-Bancroft Elementary, Rosholt Elementary, St. Bronislava Elementary, Tomorrow River Elementary, as well as all nine Stevens Point public elementary schools. The dedication of the teachers and tutors takes us a step closer to improving reading proficiency among second and third grade students and promoting a lifelong love of reading.

According to the Kids Count Profile through The Annie E. Casey Foundation, in 2017 65% of Wisconsin fourth graders were not proficient in reading.

Learn for Life was piloted at Rosholt Elementary School during the 2010-11 school year with two classrooms, 11 students, and six tutors. During the 2018-19 school year, Learn for Life was in 56 classrooms, served 213 students, and had 112 substitute and once-a-week tutors. Once-a-week tutors work one-on-one with their students for a total of one hour a week from October to May. Substitute tutors fill in when the once-a-week tutors are unable to make their scheduled time.

- The Learn for Life tutor retention rate for year nine was 75%. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, Wisconsin volunteer retention rate is 68.7%.
- Majority of year nine Learn for Life tutors are retired. 21% of the Learn for Life tutors are employed by companies throughout the community.

“Each of my students look forward to meeting with their tutor and have developed a wonderful relationship with them. I applaud my tutors and their efforts in helping to develop a love of reading and building up their reading skills, which has made them more confident readers. Thank you for all you do to help our students!”

~ Teacher at Plover-Whiting Elementary
Program Outcomes

Learn for Life is truly a collaborative effort between dedicated teachers and tutors who together build a foundation for each student to grow and succeed.

Outcome One: Second Grade

Outcome one is that second grade students in the Learn for Life program who take the DRA Assessment will reach spring level benchmark (grade level proficiency) of 28 and/or increase at least 4 DRA levels. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading. Some students may not reach a score of 28 by the end of the school year because they started at a much lower level. However, many students increase 4 or more DRA levels which shows they are moving towards proficiency even though they did not reach a score of 28.

Our goal is that 80% of year nine students will reach their spring level benchmark of 28 and/or increase at least 4 DRA levels.

89.7% of year nine students reached their spring level benchmark score of 28 and/or increased at least 4 DRA levels.

Outcome Two: Third Grade

Outcome two is that third grade students in the Learn for Life program who take MAP Assessments will meet their projected growth and/or increase at least 12 RIT points. MAP, or the Measure of Academic Progress, is a computerized adaptive test constructed to measure student achievement and support direct measurement of academic growth and change. MAP scores are reported on a RIT scale with a range from 100 to 350. Projected growth is individualized and dependent on what level the students start the school year at. When scores are collected at the end of the year, school administrators let us know which students met their projected growth and which ones did not. Some students may not reach their project growth, however they may increase at least 12 RIT points which shows they are moving towards proficiency.

Our goal is that 50% of the third grade students will meet their projected growth and/or increase at least 12 RIT points.

68% of year nine students met their projected growth and/or increased at least 12 RIT points.
Grow Your Library Award

As a way to acknowledge their time, talent, and dedication to their students, Learn for Life presents teachers involved in the program with the Grow Your Library Award. During year nine, Julie Zimmerman was awarded $250 to spend on books to grow her classroom library. Teachers are nominated by tutors and selected at random. This year, the award was sponsored by CoVantage Credit Union.

Tutor Recognition

To recognize and celebrate the dedication of the tutors and success of the 2018-19 program year, Learn for Life held the annual Tutor Recognition Luncheon in June. Tutors and teachers shared highlights of the program year and participated in Learn for Life Bingo, while enjoying lunch and door prizes.

“It was delightful getting to know my students and working with them each week. I think the consistent encouragement of a tutor who cared about them and a kind, firm and supportive teacher helped my students strengthen their ability to stay on task. They really enjoyed the one-on-one attention and continued to be enthusiastic about reading.

~ 2018-19 Tutor

Read Across America Week

To promote a love of reading and to celebrate Read Across America/Dr. Seuss’ Birthday Week, Learn for Life hosted guest readers at various schools throughout Portage County. Guest readers read a Dr. Seuss book to kindergarten, first, and second grade students.
Summer Sizzle

For the fifth summer, as a way to promote literacy to youth in Portage County during the summer months, Learn for Life held five Summer Sizzle Reading Events. New this year, events were held at Boys and Girls Club of Portage County sites for club members. Each event was sponsored by an area business or community member who selected a representative to read a book aloud. Children received a free book to help grow their at-home library and participated in literacy related activities. Summer Sizzle sponsors included: AIG, CoVantage Credit Union, Marten Machining, Skyward and JR & Heather Wynne.

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- BECOME A GROW YOUR LIBRARY AWARD SPONSOR
- BECOME A SUMMER SIZZLE SPONSOR
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