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## PNC Grant Provides Internships to Strengthen Academic Preparedness for Local Youth

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# PNC Grant Provides Internships to Strengthen Academic Preparedness for Local Youth

January 24, 2022

BLOOMINGTON, ILL. — A grant from PNC Foundation will allow a partnership between Illinois Wesleyan University and Bloomington Public Schools District 87 to foster academic opportunities for students from low-income households in Bloomington.

PNC Foundation has awarded Illinois Wesleyan with \$18,000 to fund summer internships for four undergraduate students from the [IWU Department of Educational Studies](#).

The interns will work in District 87 schools during summer programming and registration events, specifically with students in grades K-5 from low-income households. Interns will assess the students' reading proficiency, provide strategies for boosting their academics and help instill confidence and an interest in reading.

Summer is an ideal and important time to address academic preparedness and equity through the support of reading, according to Dr. Diane Wolf, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning at District 87.



"District 87 and Illinois Wesleyan University share the passion of providing high quality instruction to all students in Bloomington," Wolf said. "We are fortunate to have IWU willing to think outside their own students to those in our community that need some extra assistance. IWU students are great role models for our Bloomington Public School students and we are fortunate to be able to offer this opportunity together."

In addition to supporting reading proficiency for an under-resourced population, this program will address the need for summer volunteers and interns in local schools while creating meaningful connections between Bloomington youth and IWU Titans.

"We strengthen our ties with schools in District 87 through collaboration with in-service teachers and administrators who serve as mentors to our pre-service teachers. Our pre-service teachers apply what they learned from their coursework as they assist in diagnosing K-5 students' reading levels and providing support to improve their reading proficiency," said Leah A. Nillas, Associate Professor and Chair for the Educational Studies Department at IWU. "Most importantly, we participate in serving low-income and ELL (English Language Learners) students who need support in reading and overall academic preparedness through this service learning internship experience."

An estimated 400 District 87 students will be served through this internship program. Through the newly established [Center for Engaged Learning at IWU](#), the University intends to continue the program long term with additional fundraising.

*By Julia Perez*