

Vern Reed



Vern Reed spent much of his early career in education as a teacher/coach at West Burlington High School in West Burlington, Iowa. But, at some point in his journey, students once classified as “at risk” began finding their way to him and his wife, Cindee. Eventually, he began to understand that his life had to be more than coaching basketball. Somehow, some way, he had to find a way to help students write their own future story, not just accept a story that was being written for them.

Fifteen years ago, he lobbied to become the official “at risk” point person at West Burlington High School. Since that time, the “Success Center”—essentially a place no student ever wanted to go—became “The Corners.” Today, The Corners serves more than 120 junior high and high school students, and it has become the place that not only under-resourced students want to be a part of but that almost every student in the school makes use of on a regular basis.

His school brought Bridges Out of Poverty to Southeast Iowa. Since December 2015, the partnership has grown to include local businesses, churches, the local community college, Great River Health Systems, and many more key partners. He consults and trains on the topics of addressing poverty and emotional poverty. Bridges and its impact on The Corners at West Burlington High school led to an opportunity to try to implement these same ideas in a big school setting. In 2019, he was brought to Ottumwa, Iowa, as the under-resourced student programming coordinator. In this position, and with a great team, Ottumwa has added multiple programs focused on moving at-risk students to graduation and beyond. This included opening a new learning center for under-resourced students in fall 2022 with the ability to serve 200 high school students.

Selected workshops presented by Vern Reed

- ♦ A Framework for Understanding Poverty
- ♦ Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities
- ♦ Emotional Poverty
- ♦ College Achievement Alliance

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aha! Process, Inc. Local: +1 (281) 426-5300
P.O. Box 727 Toll-Free: +1 (800) 424-9484
Highlands, Texas 77562 Fax: +1 (281) 426-8598

www.ahaprocess.com