



About the United Way of Central Iowa Out-of-School Time Initiative

April 2015

According to the Children's Reading Foundation, up to half of printed fourth grade school curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below that grade level. In other words, beginning in fourth grade, children are *reading to learn*, using their skills to read math and science, to solve problems, to acquire knowledge based on their interests, and to critically think what they are learning (Leila Fiester et al 2010, p. 9). This, of course, is the desired state for all children. In reality, not all children read or perform at grade level. Researchers at John Hopkins University identified that not performing at grade level can build up the pressure on the child to the extent that they lose interest and motivation to stay in school, thus eventually dropping out. This is an unacceptable trajectory.

It is critical that communities, alongside schools, support our students' success both in and out of the classroom.

United Way of Central Iowa recognizes that out-of-school time presents an opportunity to support a students' school day learning through hands-on, engaging programming and that participation in high quality OST can improve student behavior, proficiency, and interest. To more directly influence student success in their service area, United Way of Central Iowa is investing in a special initiative of its Education Early and Middle Grade Success Strategies to infuse more high-quality enrichment activities into existing OST programs in their service area of Dallas, Polk, and Warren Counties.

The core work of the Initiative is to coordinate and share best practices throughout the region through the following strategies:

1. *Pairing expert enrichment coaches with OST programs* seeking support to strengthen the quality of the programming they offer to children and youth before school, after school, and during the summer;
2. *Providing intensive, on-site, one-on-one technical assistance* throughout the year and over the summer to these select programs and engaging them within a small learning community;
3. *Identifying and/or developing resources* for use by OST programs to strengthen practice;
4. *Developing frontline staff competency* through the Frontline Leaders Training Series in addition to the coaches intensive TA on site; and
5. *Convening a broader group of OST providers and partners* as the Central Iowa OST Network to share best practices and professionally network to expand the reach of coaches' TA throughout the region.

Instruction and Learning

Learning occurs throughout the day and over our lifetimes. Schools provide critical, foundational instruction on concepts – from reading and writing to science and art – that build a foundation of knowledge.

The chance to apply that knowledge within real world contexts builds critical thinking and problem solving/ finding skills through chances to “make meaning” in hands-on, minds-on learning.

OST programs provide children and youth the opportunities to explore instructional concepts with more varied contexts than are available in the limited time of the school day.

Together, schools and OST can complement and reinforce the other to ensure each student, no matter their background, a full day of learning experiences for their ultimate success in school, work, and life.

Through the one-on-one support of an enrichment coach and information sharing through a network of grantees, each program participating in the OST Initiative identifies, is supported in planning for, and is trained on strategies that they can use long-term to promote higher engagement of the students attending their programs.

The goals of the OST Initiative ultimately seek to improve student achievement through high-quality enrichment by increasing or improving:

- ✓ The frequency of high-quality activities happening on a daily basis
- ✓ The quality of program resources available to support high-quality activities, including but not limited to technology, books, and curricula
- ✓ Staff competency to provide high-quality activities
- ✓ OST program and stakeholder collaboration
- ✓ Use of student-level and other data to inform quality activities and evaluate impact

What are the characteristics of high quality learning activities in out-of-school time (OST)?

To be most effective at improving outcomes for child and youth, OST programs must provide learning opportunities that:

Are Planned – forethought is put into the activities so they are intentional learning opportunities: activities have a purpose or goal and lesson planning occurs

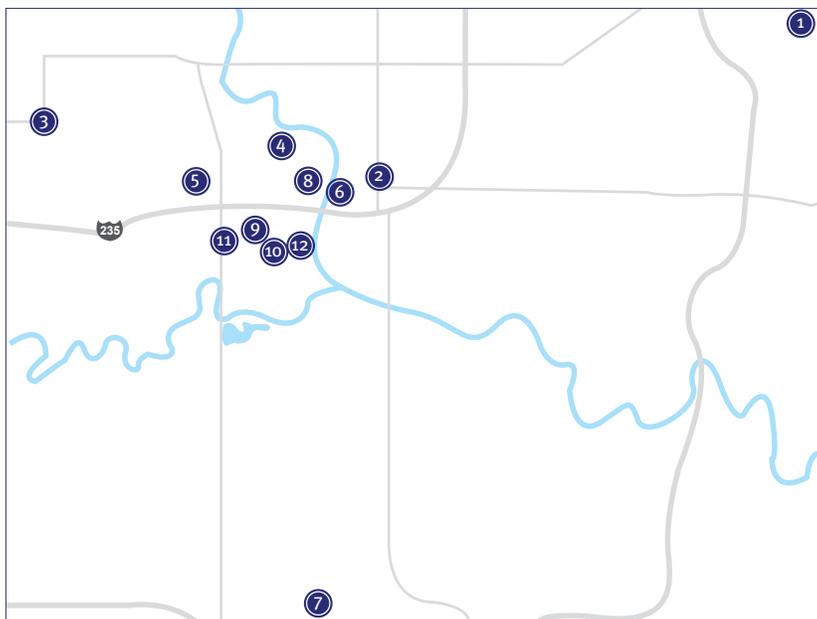
Include Literacy – domains of language are present in most activities: there are opportunities for youth to listen, speak, read, write, and practice vocabulary

Are Engaging – children and youth are on task and activities are interesting to them

Are Scheduled – regular time is set aside for activities across the day, week, and year

Occur Frequently – quality learning activities happen often

OST Initiative Partners – 2014/2015



- 1 Altoona Kids Klub
- 2 Baker Boys and Girls Club (Hiatt Middle School)
- 3 Camp Fire
- 4 CFUM
- 5 First Christian Boys and Girls Club
- 6 Levitt Boys and Girls Club (Carver Elementary)
- 7 McCombs Middle School Boys and Girls Club
- 8 Metro Kids
- 9 Oakridge Neighborhood Services
- 10 Pace Juvenile Center
- 11 Willkie House Inc
- 12 Young Women's Resource Center

Contact:

State Public Policy Group (www.sppg.com) provides day-to-day support to the OST Initiative under contract with United Way of Central Iowa. SPPG also provides staff support to the Iowa Afterschool Alliance (www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org), a critical resource to this project and others statewide that seek to expand access to high quality afterschool programming.

Visit the OST Wiki Page for more information and resources at <http://ostinitiative.wikispaces.com>

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