

Connecticut *After School* Network

Great Ideas in After School 2009



Connecticut After School Network

The Connecticut After School Network visited many program sites in the past year as part of our quality advising service to after school programs across the state. We were often impressed by what we saw – by the commitment and caring of the staff and the creative curriculum ideas. Out of those visits came the impetus to highlight these after school ideas and to describe some of those that exemplified what a high-quality program should strive to achieve with creative ideas and solutions.

The ideas featured in this booklet include some of the best run, exciting and innovative programs in the state. We hope these ideas spur creative thinking and build connections between after school professionals. Please consider sending us **your** great ideas in the coming year for inclusion in our 2010 Great Ideas!

A big thanks goes out to all of the program and site directors who took time out of their very busy schedules to provide us with the information necessary to produce this booklet.

The Connecticut After School Network's vision is for every Connecticut child and youth to have the opportunity to participate in high-quality, affordable after school programs. Our mission is to lead, educate and advocate for excellence in the after school field by building professionalism, strengthening program quality and increasing availability and affordability. Programs like the ones featured in this booklet are what make our vision a reality.

For more information on the Connecticut After School Network, visit our Web site at **www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org**. There you will find all the information you need on professional development opportunities, advocacy, the latest research and all the happenings pertaining to after school both statewide and nationally.

Program: CLASP
Site: Wooster Middle School
City: Stratford
Contact: Chris Koch
Contact phone: (203) 385-4279
Contact email: koche@stratfordk12.org
of students served: 185
Grades of students served: 7th & 8th Grade

Initially, C.L.A.S.P. (Creative Learning After School Program) began as an idea between a few key members of Wooster Middle School and the community at large. The scope of the program includes 4 days of on-site activities (for roughly 75 students per 2 days or 150 total) divided between two time blocks and beginning first with a free, healthy snack for all participants.

Originally, as the program began, it utilized an academic block to reinforce skills in Reading, Mathematics and Writing followed by an activity block consisting of athletic, artistic and musical enrichment activities. As the program evolved, it moved toward offering a greater number of enrichment activities (in theory) with CMT and academic skills embedded within the curriculum.

Examples of this effort include the extensive research, interviewing, writing and revising involved in its paper, *The C.L.A.S.P.* The majority of the program's activities now follow this model and it goes a long way toward increasing student participation and motivation. The program also runs many Homework Help sections and conduct Science classes encouraging skills in both math and science, however, the evolution to a more engaging model has served both students and staff well.

This is also a way that the program has made connections between the school day and the after school program, to enlist the staff in activities where they can drive the planning, instruction and implementation. Along with this model, program staff set aside time to talk with students and parents to reach a conclusion on the types of activities that the students would be best suited for based upon their academic, social and even physical needs.

Another key piece of the grant is the family involvement component. When the grant was originally written, the plan was to include an enriching activity for families each week. While planning so many events beyond the daily program is certainly daunting at times, program staff do a wonderful job in reaching out to the students, families, staff and the community. Each has

played a significant role in the process of planning events and trips for the families of C.L.A.S.P. participants. At C.L.A.S.P., staff have always been fortunate to work closely with a community partner, Stratford Community Services, and they have been vital toward successful outreach to families and the community at large. Together, they've planned many exciting, enriching activities and experiences over the past few years some of which are listed below:

- **Multicultural Drum Circle**
- **Family Math Night**
- **Horseback Riding**
- **Mountain Lakes Camp**
- **Family Movie Nights**
- **“Mock ER” at St. Vincent’s**
- **Environmental Clean Ups**
- **Holiday Tree Lighting**
- **Community Book Drive**
- **“Literacy Luau”**

The program has always believed in the importance of getting as much input as possible when planning and organizing these activities because as they've found the input from prospective participants can lead to better attendance and a more enriching experience.

This year the program hosted its Second Annual *COPS (Stratford PD) vs. C.L.A.S.P. Basketball Challenge*. A few months ago, the program held a basketball game in its gym and invited the Stratford Police Department to play the C.L.A.S.P. basketball team in a rematch of last year's inaugural game. This year the program anticipated a great turnout and were not disappointed. Roughly 110 people participated in this terrific event. The Stratford team was coached by the Chief of Police and the game was well-played and a lot of fun. Clearly, the best part of the evening was witnessing the wonderful bond between the students and the police. Following the game, the officers mingled with students, staff and families over pizza and drinks and the sharing continued when the police handed out awards and game balls they provided. It is this type of outreach between families and the community that C.L.A.S.P. has made possible and hopefully will continue for many years. What an evening!

Program: FLASH
Site: Flood Middle School
City: Stratford
Contact: Susan Schultz
Contact phone: 203-385-4280
Contact email: schultzs@stratfordk12.org
of students served: 157
Grades of students served: 7th & 8th Grade

A typical afternoon at the FLASH program has students gather in the cafeteria for a healthy snack. At 2:45, students participate in one session that is academic in nature. Then, at 4:05, the recreational activities begin. At 5:20, a late bus transports participating students to the elementary school closest to their homes. The program operates Tuesday through Friday with additional scheduled activities planned for weeknights and weekends.

When students join F.L.A.S.H., they are given the opportunity to choose from a long list of available classes. While they are encouraged to sign up for classes where they may have an academic weakness, they are also encouraged to sign up for classes in which they excel.

Some of the academic classes that were offered in the math area this year were; *Scholastic Magazine Math*, *F.L.A.S.H. Fantasy Football Math*, *FLASH Fantasy Basketball Math*, *Quilting*, *Life Skills Math*, cooking, basket making and math tutoring. Students did a little extra reading in the *Girl's Book Club*, *Advanced Book Club*, *Twilight Book Club*, *Harry Potter Book Club*, *Boy in the Striped Pajamas Book Club*, *FEVER*, *Reading Through The News* and *Read and Relax*. To improve writing skills, students could choose from journaling, scrap booking and being reporters for the FLASH Newspaper. Science club is always filled to capacity. The gardening club is also very popular. Jazz band, karaoke, rock band and the musical production of "Bugsy Malone" round out the musical portion of our program. In the area of Social and Health Awareness, students can choose *Reach Out Club*, *Rumors for Girls*, *Girl Power*, *O'Brien's Organics* or *Walk It Out*. Students can register for Spanish tutoring and homework help in the school's media center, where certified teachers were available to assist with homework questions and where computers were available for each student's use.

After making their academic selections students choose their recreational activities for the second session. Their choices include: soccer, sports activities, fitness training, *Live To Excel*, hip hop, *Zumba*, art, photography, ceramics, set design, karate, swimming, *Bunnell Dance Team*, walking club, basketball, and *WII Fit*.

F.L.A.S.H provides students and their parents with many fun activities after school hours. Students usually pay a nominal fee, but parents are always invited to join free of charge. Some of the events scheduled this year were: *Growing Up Online*, *Dadd's Xtreme Indoor Sports*, bowling nights, *Sound Tigers*, *Drum 'N Dance*, *Bounce U*, *F.L.A.S.H Family Movie Nights*, a tour of Nature's Way and Whole Foods, "Seussical the Musical" and Jazz Band Day.

Another vital component of the F.L.A.S.H. program is its partnership with Stratford Community Services. Together they were able to offer students extra opportunities with two babysitting certification classes and the *Inside Out Program*. Sixth grade students and their parents are invited to *Movin' On Up Night* held at Flood Middle School. This program gives students and their parents a chance to meet with Stratford Community Services Personnel and the F.L.A.S.H. staff. The meeting provides both the parents and their children the opportunity for a Q & A about their upcoming middle school experience. Project Green Sweep was a town wide clean up and beautification project in which Stratford Community Services, F.L.A.S.H. staff, F.L.A.S.H. students and their parents participated.

Highlights of the Year

- Watching parents, teachers and students having fun at a F.L.A.S.H. night out.
- Observing students grow as leaders who will positively influence their peers.
- Seeing two students who would otherwise never be friends become "best buds" regardless of differences.
- Watching kids take an idea from conception to realization and then see their pride of ownership.
- Observing a "super shy" kid interact with her peers, laughing and talking.
- Seeing two kids who were lifelong enemies talk and work out their problems.
- Hearing that unexpected thank you from a grateful parent.
- Watching a student who before was totally non-invested or a negative participant actually become involved and engaged with an activity and with his peers.
- Having our F.L.A.S.H. Leadership Council collect over 1500 books for their book drive.

Program: Danbury Public Schools/Escape to the Arts

Site: Rodgers Park & Broadview

City: Danbury

Contact: Marlene Ho-Yen

Contact phone: 203-731-8225

Contact email: ho-yenm@danbury.k12.ct.us

of students served:

Grades of students served: 7th & 8th Grade

The partnership between Danbury Public Schools and ESCAPE to the Arts allows all participating students the opportunity to learn, grow and acquire the tools necessary for a successful life. Students have the option to join the after school program at the school and/or go to ESCAPE to the Arts to continue their learning experiences.

All students participate in a structured out-of-school time program that exposes them to the visual and performing arts, provides academic enrichment and promotes physical fitness. The school-based program curriculum includes: *Lego Robotics, Cooking with Math, Soccer Fun, Homework Help, ESL for New Students, Fun with Music, Computer Graphics, Power Math, Dance for Fun, Monthly After School Newsletter, GALS Club (Girls leadership group) and Math Tutoring.*

The curriculum at ESCAPE to the Arts includes visual and/or performing arts (examples of classes include: painting, drawing, cartooning, graphic design, photography, sculpture, dance and theater. Academically-enriched class offerings include: *Power Hour, Roots & Shoots, Women's Leaders Rising, Sparks, Youth & Government and Peer Mediation.* ESCAPE to the Arts (which is affiliated with the Regional YMCA of Western CT) provides organized physical activity promoting health and fitness at the Boughton Street YMCA's pool and/or gym. The variety of curricular offerings helps provide participating students with a well-rounded educational experience that touches on multiple learning disciplines.

During the past school year the after school program has developed strong partnerships with other community agencies. For example, Danbury Youth Services provided one-to-one math tutoring by partnering high school students with middle school students. This approach to working individually with our students helps increase math scores and gives them the tools for higher academic achievement.

Community involvement is a very important component of the program because it allows students the opportunity to give back and get involved in the community. Students work with

their peers to create a variety of community projects. For example, students will collect food and toiletries for a local service agency in need. Another project encourages environmental awareness among the youth who can then teach their families how to “go green.” Students and volunteers also participate in a neighborhood cleanup. Students who attend at ESCAPE to the Arts offer face painting at local events. Students are given many opportunities to exhibit their artwork in the community. Other students complete projects that examine their role in their family, research their heritage and engage in a meaningful dialog with members of their family. In addition, all parents are invited to Open House / Parent’s Nights and encouraged to practice in an “open door policy” to observe their child’s class or visit with teachers.

The after school programs in both Rogers Park and Broadview Middle Schools secure certified teachers and other qualified staff to work with the students during the after school hours. When students take classes at ESCAPE to the Arts they are given an opportunity to work with professional artists working in a variety of arts disciplines. Engaging professionals with these qualifications creates a high quality extended learning opportunity for the youth of Danbury. This exposes students to additional educational experiences they might not otherwise be able to have. An ongoing dialog exists between ESCAPE’s teen program director and the middle school guidance counselors, social workers and after-school coordinators. This relationship allows the program to better monitor individual students and the challenges they face personally and academically.

This year, ESCAPE to the Arts hosted a spring parent’s night that showcased the talents of the middle school students through an art show, and theater and dance performances. Awards were presented to students, volunteers and parents. The parents of an 8th grader were given an award for their exemplary efforts in collecting food and toiletries for a drive created in their daughter’s *Women’s Leaders Rising* class. A 6th grader was presented with the YMCA Award for demonstrating important qualities such as honesty, caring, respect and responsibility. During the year she has also excelled in a variety of visual arts offerings and has been eager to learn more.

The peer mediation class offered at ESCAPE to the Arts graduated four peer mediators who have been recommended to serve as mediators at Rogers Park Middle School Mediation Program.

Program: The Zone
Site: Ellington Middle School
City: Ellington
Contact: Debra Slattery
Contact phone: 203-731-8225
Contact email: dslattery@ellingtonschools.net
of students served: 111
Grades of students served: 7th & 8th Grade

Curriculum components of “The Zone” (Ellington Middle School’s After School Program) include academic, enrichment and wellness activities. The objectives of “The Zone” are:

- To extend student learning opportunities by providing engaging academic and personal enrichment activities.
- To increase academic achievement of middle school students.
- To promote wellness by increasing skills for lifetime fitness and healthy nutrition habits.
- To increase positive in-school behavior.
- To maintain high levels of school attendance.
- To support positive alternative choices for the prevention of drug and alcohol use and teen pregnancy.
- To increase the support network for students through the use of community mentors and high school role models.
- To increase parents’ involvement and the capacity to support student achievement.

The Zone reaches out to the community and to parents to help provide new and fresh ideas for programs as well as to be instructors or helpers for these programs. Parent and community involvement steadily increased throughout the five sessions that were offered in the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 school years. The program also utilizes high school students as activity assistants to provide positive role models to the middle school students involved in the program.

Since the program is housed right in the middle school facility, the connection is seamless. Students report right after school to the school’s cafeteria where attendance is taken and a snack and drink is provided to each student. The students are then dismissed to their activity or to a bus for off site activities.

A major highlight of the program was the ability to send over fifty student athletes to the state middle school track meet in May of 2008 and 2009. The Zone has also been recognized as one of the premiere programs in the state.

Program: Educational Resources for Children, Inc. (ERfC)

Site: JFK Middle School

City: Enfield

Contact: Claire Hall

Contact phone: 860-253-9935

Contact email: cchall@erfc.us

of students served: 186

Grades of students served: 7 & 8

The Educational Resources for Children, Inc. (ERfC) JFK After School program includes several remediation and homework components with certified teachers and tutors to help students in all subject areas. Other curricular components include literacy, math, science, technology, arts, service learning and entrepreneurship. All curricular components complement the school day, align with the school improvement plan and increase students' academic skills, especially language, literacy and critical thinking skills. Most activities are designed to overlap curricular components.

The literacy activities include a Newspaper Club where students interview, write and design a publication to keep their peers informed on what's happening in their school and after school. Students also develop and write their own books to share with kids around the world. Using different types of poetry, students share their finished poetry journals with others.

Students develop math skills through participation in a version of *Fantasy Sports*. They track weekly stats and calculate differences in positions while using basic math equations.

Students also participate in many science and technology activities. Studio Dynamix, a student built and operated TV Station at JFK After School is part of ERfC's unique *Making of Technology* program that teaches students to creatively utilize technology. In Studio Dynamix, students create commercials for local businesses using sound effects and TV studio hardware. They experience working with sound mixers, audio controls, video production and graphics—all equipment used in recording studios.

As part of the *Making of Technology* program, students produce a 30 minute made for TV sitcom. They learn what it takes to become a producer, cameramen, actor, scriptwriter, director and make-up artist. Students use their creativity and imagination to create real sets that are designed and constructed backdrops and props to support the script. They also produce music videos and learn to use smoke machines, strobes, sound and other special effects.

Graphic Arts Activities also offer students opportunities to communicate ideas visually using symbols, words and images. They create calendars, brochures and posters used by the school. They also create their own comic books. In addition, students learn to design and create jewelry—including earrings, bracelets and necklaces.

Other curricular components include a student leadership board, service learning activities and entrepreneurship activities.

Parental involvement is an important part of the program. Family Night activities are planned throughout the school year and always include dinner. Members of the community and families are invited to join JFK After School in recreational and educational activities. In addition, they are invited to a special end-of-the-year event that showcases students' special projects. Parents and community members participate on our JFK After School Advisory Board. The program also provides parenting workshops and family and community education programs that include skill-building workshops.

The program also has a strong relationship with the JFK middle school, and many teachers at JFK volunteer to lead after school activities. Teachers also work closely with the site administrator to discuss incomplete homework, project deadlines and upcoming tests. They provide materials and guides to after school staff as needed. The school administration and teachers meet regularly with the after school staff and also participate on the JFK After School Advisory Board. The program also connects regularly with school counselors and department chairs to discuss recruitment incentives and academic and social needs of the students.

Program: Farmington Extended Care and Learning (EXCL)

Site: Multiple

City: Farmington

Contact: Vincent LaFontan

Contact phone: 860-404-0112

Contact email: lafontanv@fpsct.org

of students served: 400+

Grades of students served: K—6

Farmington Extended Care & Learning (EXCL) provides a wide variety of academic and childcare services. During the school year, EXCL operates an extended kindergarten and before and after school programs at Noah Wallace, West District, Union and East Farms Elementary Schools, as well as a before and after school program at West Woods Upper Elementary School (5th and 6th grade). Throughout the school year each site also offers extended learning and enrichment opportunities in languages, arts and sciences. Known as “Extra Special Activities,” these programs are offered to students who participate in our regular programming as well as those who do not. In addition, EXCL runs a full-day summer camp at West Woods Upper Elementary School, which hosts a Counselor-in-Training program for Farmington High School students. Each year the EXCL Director and Site Supervisors design, plan and execute district-wide events as a fun way to highlight our students’ talents and our programs’ strong connection with the Farmington school district’s mission and goals.

Two major events were run this year. A dodge ball tournament, held on Veteran’s Day, gave EXCL students the opportunity to showcase their physical abilities as well as teamwork. Students from Union, West District, East Farms and Noah Wallace Elementary Schools competed for a trophy at an event run and hosted by the students at West Woods Upper Elementary School. The Invention Convention and Art Show, held in April, provided students with a chance to explore their scientific curiosities as well as their creative interests. The show included science and art projects created by students participating in our regular programming.

Due to the great efforts of the EXCL administration and staff and the support of principals, teachers and parents the event, held at Farmington High School was a huge success. Original inventions, science projects and art work were displayed at the reception for a crowd of nearly 400 parents and students. The program’s “Great Idea in After School” had become a reality.

When planning and preparing for this event at Union School the standards outlined in both the district’s curriculum, as well as those set forth by the state of Connecticut, were carefully reviewed to assure that the content and ideas were developmentally appropriate for the students. Students selected their experiments based on specific themes. The students started each experiment off with a “big idea” or “essential question” and used these concepts as guides to shape their projects. Measurable objectives were established. The Invention Convention and Art Show were a great success and clearly demonstrated EXCL’s mission to “promote a seamless continuum of educational experiences for children.”

Program: IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services)

Site: East Rock Global Magnet School

City: New Haven

Contact: William Ruffleth

Contact phone: 203-562-2095

Contact email: wruffleth@irisct.org

of students served: 40

Grades of students served: K—8

The IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services) After-School Program at East Rock Global Magnet School in New Haven serves a very special population of 40 immigrant students, mostly refugees, in grades K through 8 during the school year. Six part-time tutors and a full-time program coordinator administer four classes in the academic-based program consisting of homework assistance, lessons, snack, cultural orientation and post-traumatic stress syndrome programming. The students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Iraq, Afghanistan, India, China, Vietnam, Congo, Guinea, Togo, Liberia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Morocco and Mexico.

Homework assistance is a key component of the program, as the students' parents are often unable to assist them due to lack of English and/or formal education. Most of the students are extremely conscientious about completing their homework assignments successfully and sometimes resist moving on to other program components until they are finished. Foreign-born students often have excellent arithmetic skills; however, their relative lack of English can hinder their ability to solve math problems involving words. The tutors take the time to ensure that they understand the problems and work through to the solutions.

The tutors work closely with the students to identify gaps in their learning and fill in their American cultural deficits. They often create a lesson around some facet of American culture or history that is general knowledge for children born in the U.S. but unknown to immigrants. These lessons can also become cultural orientation sessions; for example: a primer in baseball or U.S. government. The tutors often use disguised learning in the form of vocabulary or numbers games, puzzles, maps, magic and other devices to assist in the learning process.

IRIS works closely with community partners to leverage additional services for students in the After-School Program. The Post Traumatic Stress Center, a local neighborhood agency, provides weekly sessions with the students, using non-threatening activities to encourage the students to bring out repressed feelings from the sometimes tragic situations they have lived through and left behind. Children can find the transition to life in the U.S. as disturbing as the experiences they had in the countries from which they escaped, and the PTSC staff allow for

such transition issues.

Another community partner, the Neighborhood Music School, provided two Hugo Kauder Scholarships to after-school participants this year. In season, the program also sponsors a team in the New Haven Youth Soccer Program. IRIS students receive scholarships, allowing them to register and participate. Practice sessions are incorporated into the school day to make soccer participation more manageable for parents. During 2008, the team was undefeated and won the city-wide youth soccer league championship. In 2009, the team has yet to experience a loss. This has been a terrific morale-booster for the players.

The IRIS after-school program meets four times weekly, Monday through Thursday, from 2:15 pm until approximately 4:30 pm, from October through June. In addition to the program venue, bus transportation home is generously provided by the New Haven Public Schools. The tutors, all college graduates, are a mix of retired certified teachers and recent graduates, with extensive experience in serving youth.

A summer school program is offered during the month of July, Monday through Thursday, from 9:00 am through 1:00 pm. The summer school program features a staged dramatic presentation that fosters self-confidence and boosts English language retention through repetition and music.

The program coordinator stays in contact with the students' classroom teachers and the ESOL staff to ensure that none of the students is left behind. The teachers advise the program coordinator regarding specific problems the children are experiencing or gaps in their learning. The program coordinator then addresses these concerns directly with the tutors.

The program coordinator also works closely with the families, many of whom were resettled in New Haven by IRIS, to encourage them to become part of their children's educational experience. Most immigrant parents are keenly interested in their children's education, correctly recognizing it as a key to success in the U.S. However, many foreign-born parents are hesitant to exercise their rights with the school system, often unable or afraid to ask questions of or respond to teachers and school administrators. Part of the program coordinator's job is to ensure that the parents become involved and remain connected, by accompanying them to report card distribution and parent/teacher conferences. Funding for the program comes from a state-funded after-school program grant from the Connecticut Department of Education and a smaller grant from the Greater New Haven Community Foundation.

Program: Guilford Before & After Program

City: Guilford

Contact: Rose Ann Kelley

Contact phone: 203-453-0045

Contact email: kelleyroseann@yahoo.com

of students served: 430

Grades of students served: K—6

The mission of the Guilford Before & After Program is to provide a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for young children who need out-of-home care during the day. The programs operate from 7 am – 6 pm, Monday through Friday. Although they follow the public school calendar, they do provide care during two school recess weeks. This has proven to further assist families with their child care needs.

Children in their care are provided with a variety of activities designed to stimulate growth in all areas of development. The curricular components include: arts, crafts, science, music and cooking. Recreation activities such as board games, floor games and teacher made versions of TV game shows are a part of daily activities and allow many opportunities for developing social skills. The program promotes a daily routine of physical activities both in the gym and outdoors. These include soccer, basketball, baseball, golf, kickball bowling and dancing. The indoor and outdoor recreation activities are changed daily in order to keep all children focused on the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

During before and after school time children are encouraged to complete homework assignments. The staff assists children with homework tasks and provides all the tools necessary for completion. In addition to the daily calendar—which is planned monthly—the program includes special events. The offerings include basketball clinics, music programs and visits from the Eli Whitney Museum projects, *Bubblemania*, *Yo-Yo People*, *Juggle and Joy Circus Workshops*, and *Magic Shows*.

Parents and members of the community are involved in the special events that are planned for the children. The program has one or two parent appreciation days, and also holds single parent workshops on site in the evening where with supper and child care provided. At the “Lights on Afterschool” celebrations over the past five years, parents, community leaders, school principals and other faculty members have participated. Parents are asked to complete a survey/questionnaire entitled “What After School Care Means to Me/My Family.” Finally, parents and school faculty members always support the annual cookie dough fundraiser.

The after school/school day connection is ongoing each and every day. The program serves kindergarten children AM and PM to enhance their time spent in the classroom. Guilford Public Schools does not offer all day kindergarten. By connecting with the school social workers, psychologists, speech therapists as well as the school principals and classroom teachers the program can provide support to children in various aspects such as speech therapy, where the child can be removed from the kindergarten class, have the service and not have an interruption of his or her regular school day. There is also a strong connection to the classroom teachers with regard to homework, after school projects, reading and math. Classroom teachers communicate with program staff and request particular assignments to be worked on and completed during after school time. The school principals inform parents about the programs and support program staff during the school day as well as before & after school.

The program's staff is comprised of individuals coming from various levels of education and experience. The program not only adheres to the continuing education requirements of the Department of Public Health, but it is committed to giving its staff additional opportunities for professional development. The CT After School Network's Training & Consultation Services have given staff more opportunities for professional development.

Some highlights of this 08/09 school year include specific themes for after school activities. Each month a different theme was presented and all activities, projects and games focused on the themes. This is the second year that the kindergarten children at two sites participated in the MDA Hop-a-thon raising nearly \$1,000. The children learned about disabilities and that "everybody is different, nobody is perfect, but all of us are special." The outstanding highlight this school year was the participation in the CT After School Network's Art and Essay contest. At the August staff meeting participants brainstormed for the upcoming school year in order to plan more and more exciting, fun and diverse activities. It was suggested that the staff encourage our after school children to participate in the art and essay contest. The results were incredible with 20 finalists and a winner. Parents and children attended the awards ceremony which was a completion of the children's hard work and effort. It really was a success for all children, families and staff.

Program: OPMAD
Site: Multiple
City: Hartford
Contact: Sharon Tripp
Contact phone: 860-548-0301 ext. 101
Contact email: sharon.tripp@opmad.org
of students served:
Grades of students served: Pre K—8

OPMAD, Inc. is a non-profit, parent-run organization that provides after-school programs in the Hartford public schools serving Pre K – 8th grade.

OPMAD has served Hartford public school children and their parents through after-school enrichment programs since 1992. The Board of Directors includes parents from the schools served. Children are offered cultural arts, academics, recreation and life skills classes. Each school has a “parent teacher steering committee” (meetings are held bi-monthly) which addresses each site’s specific needs and tailors the programs to best serve their respective communities. OPMAD’s capacity building model insures community participation and ownership through volunteerism.

The staff uses a character education curriculum from Wise Skills. The curriculum works on different character traits from positive attitude to respect and responsibility. The curriculum is incorporated into academic activities as well as recreation. Students learn and apply important character skills which build their self-esteem and lead to greater success in and out of school. Each component of the curriculum features a variety of historical figures from diverse cultural backgrounds. Activities include discussion topics, class activities, journal writing ideas and suggested role-playing. Students experience a safe and healthy classroom environment that promotes positive choice.

OPMAD works to improve academic success in literacy, math and science. It provides a variety of age appropriate level classes in literacy, math and science that are linked to the school curriculum. All classes are designed to build vocabulary and contain integrated reading and writing components. Additionally, every fall, parents are offered ESL and GED classes at our sites through CREC. OPMAD provides care for their children while they take the classes. OPMAD strives to improve behavior, build social and life skills and increase strategies that can be applied to real life situations through adult supervision and instruction that reinforces good behavior and creates an environment of respect and trust. Children are rewarded and recognized through “Wow! Notes” notes sent home to parents, certificates and extra privileges that create a desire to be recognized for positive behavior.

Hartford Public Schools do not offer the CT Invention Convention curriculum, so three years ago OPMAD agreed to hire two teachers at one school to offer CIC in the after school hours. Since then we've trained instructors at two other schools and now offer the program at three schools. The program sent 12 students, a few from each school, to UCONN in May to enter the state wide competition. Two of the students were awarded \$100 savings bonds for their inventions. OPMAD also offered busses to take all 12 families to UCONN for the day.

In February OPMAD held its first volunteer recognition night and honored the parents that showed exceptional volunteerism in our program while their own children looked on. The goal was to have their children see the importance of volunteering. There was a short ceremony where 32 parents were honored at a celebration dinner. Later, families danced the night away together to a DJ. OPMAD bused all the family members from their neighborhood schools to the event.

Activities and Collaborating Agencies

OPMAD works with local businesses, Universities, community agencies, arts groups and community volunteers to provide a wide range of professional services to children, parents and OPMAD staff.

The University of Hartford and Avery Heights for "Life Long Fitness" swimming lessons

Hartford Children's Theatre for drama

CT Invention Convention

The New Britain Museum of American Art for art

The Connecticut Landmarks Society for history, social studies and art

New England Cognitive Center for the provision unique classes in study skills, reading and math

Karate for self-discipline

The Humane Society for pet care classes

The 4-H Farm for nutrition and environmental science

Jahwuks Kids, music, singing and dance

TrinfoCafe for computer and web design classes

The Hartford Public Library for reading and cultural programs

Program: West Haven Community House
Site: Carrigan Middle School
City: West Haven
Contact: Elsa Francis
Contact phone: 203-934-5221
Contact email: elsafrancis@whcommunityhouse.net
of students served: 75
Grades of students served: 6—8

Since March 2008, the West Haven Community House, a private, non-profit social service agency, has operated the Carrigan After School Program for students of Carrigan Middle School in West Haven. One hundred youth attend twice-weekly from school dismissal until 5 pm. Program components include: theme exploration, tutoring, recreation and life skills education. The program has been a great success, in large part due to the cooperative relationship with the Carrigan Middle School community.

The Carrigan After School Program is held directly at Carrigan Middle School. This co-location has innumerable benefits. It helps build connections between community providers, parents and school. It reinforces to youth the connections between school and out-of-school-time. It provides after school program staff with access to information about students, school curricula, school activities, school culture, and resources for providing individual care. At the same time, it provides school staff with additional opportunities to interact with youth. For example, youth in the after school program are permitted to attend teacher “office hours” if they need additional help, attend play or sport tryouts, etc.

The Carrigan After School program is permitted to use whatever space needed at no cost, provided the space isn't being utilized for another activity. We hold our Life Skills sessions in five adjacent classrooms. We hold our Theme and Recreation activities in the cafeteria, gymnasium, library, classrooms, auditorium, special classrooms (woodshop, computer lab, etc.) and swimming pool. In addition, program staff has daily use of a conference room, in which they are able to meet, store files and supplies, make copies and phone calls, etc. Furthermore, we are permitted to maintain four large storage cupboards in the classroom and one in the gym. The kitchen staff even allows us to store our food and drink for snacks in their walk-in refrigerator!

A major means of connecting the school day with the after school is through the employment of Carrigan Middle School staff in the program. The Project Site Director is a teacher at the school, providing our staff with a direct link to the school administration, faculty, custodians,

etc., as well as an understanding of school culture and school happenings. This is helpful in comforting youth who have had difficult days at school or are experiencing conflicts with other students and in maintaining positive behavior.

The tutoring instructors are all teachers from Carrigan's Math and English departments. To prepare their tutoring sessions, they check in with all Math and English teachers on each team to find out where their classes are in the curricula. Through the teachers, we have access to listings of missing homework assignments and interim grades. A portion of our theme instructors are also Carrigan teachers, including woodshop, computer, drama, sports, cooking and Spanish culture.

During each enrollment period, teachers, guidance staff and principals make referrals to the after school program. In addition, program staff are given the opportunity to: speak and host a table at school orientation night; post information in the school parent newsletter, on the web, and via posters in cafeteria; and make presentations to a special all school assembly about the after school program.

During the program's operation, the school Principal and Assistant Principal are always available to assist in any way. They do not view it as "my students" and "your students" but rather "our students." This is particularly helpful in instilling in the youth the understanding that the rules of the school day apply during the after school hours and that the same behavior expected during the regular day is expected after school.

The school secretarial staff is extremely cooperative and helpful. During the enrollment period, they collect interest forms and enrollment packets from the students to pass on to after school staff. They also assist with the collection of required demographic information such as student identification number, limited English proficiency, and special education status, plus any missing information on free/reduced price lunch status.

After school program staff are aware that the warm reception we have received is a tremendous benefit, and we take advantage of every opportunity we can to acknowledge and thank the Carrigan Middle School community. The respect, open communication, and desired interest in the well-being of the youth, have enabled the Carrigan After School Program and the Carrigan Middle School to reinforce each others efforts and work together as a unified team.

Program: McGivney Center
Site: McGivney
City: Bridgeport
Contact: Karen McIntosh
Contact phone: 203-333-2789
Contact email: kmcintosh@mcgivney.org
of students served: 300 +
Grades of students served: (ages 6—22)

McGivney provides comprehensive afterschool, evening and summer camp programming to over 300 6-22 year olds each year. Their goal is to continue to offer quality, affordable after school programming to the many families on the East Side of Bridgeport struggling to keep their households operating at a comfortable level.

The afterschool program is comprised of 45 minutes each day dedicated to homework assistance. They utilize homework logs daily to track member's assignments and send home quarterly progress notes to parents. In the event that the member has no homework for the day, they are given approved learning center activities including academic worksheets, flashcards, journaling, and themed Jeopardy games, Brain Teasers/Boosters, Scrabble, Spelling Bees, Math Bees and Science Bees. While education is the top priority here, the program is also interested in developing the whole child. Each day, members can choose an extra-curricular activity in which to participate including gym, computers, arts and crafts or board games. All activities encourage cooperative play and good sportsmanship.

The program encourages families to learn and play together. Its design includes a series of events that promote quality family time. The series includes Family Feud Night, Family Math Bingo Night and Family Literacy Night. Each year we host a community Haunted House, Halloween Party and Christmas Store events to provide community residents a safe environment to celebrate the holidays.

Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University offer a key collaboration to the program's success. McGivney members work with students from these colleges in the homework room, and are given a chance to visit each university's campus. Community presentations on Friday afternoons provide a forum for members to hear about careers in areas such as real estate, taxes and the medical field. In addition, the program provides an average of \$35,000 in academic scholarships to elementary, middle and high school students, and also provides 4-year college scholarships. All of the program's scholarship students graduate from high school despite coming from a district with a 30% high school dropout rate.

McGivney strives to assist members in their educational pursuits. Approximately 90% of its members receive 'Excellent' to 'Good' on their homework grades. Program personnel collect report cards quarterly and reward members with perfect attendance certificates, honor roll and student of the month.

Additionally, they refer members who receive a 'C' or lower in any subject to its evening tutorial services program for individualized assistance. Tutors review each member's report card and their homework log. This helps to reinforce themes and lessons that are being taught in school. The program also collects feedback on each student's performance through teacher surveys that are given as a pre and post evaluation.

This year the program focused some of its programming on civic engagement. The Youth Council held presidential debates, campaigning, speeches and "Election Day." It also celebrated *Government Awareness Day* to teach all members about the role of government and the election process.

There was a "Leaders Come Hand In Hand" youth forum for middle school aged youth where participants came from other non-profit organizations from Bridgeport, Stamford, New Haven and Norwalk. The theme was spreading the message of underage drinking.

The Summer Sparks program is open exclusively to summer leadership program participants. Twenty-six 7th and 8th graders traveled to Stockbridge, Springfield, Boston and New Bedford, Massachusetts as well as Rhode Island. During the 4 weeks prior to the trip, participants learned about all the places they would visit, how to be good travel mates and travel safely. Upon completion of the travel portion of the program, Sparks' participants were eager to compile a community presentation for their families, fellow campers and community residents. This year, the Sparks participants will be traveling to California!

Program: Lights On Afterschool Program
Site: Nathan Hale School
City: New Haven
Contact: Phyllis Voira
Contact phone: 203-946-8669
Contact email: phyllis.voira@new-haven.k12.ct.us
of students served: 75
Grades of students served: K—8

Nathan Hale School's Lights on Afterschool Program is an organized extension of the academic school day for students in grades one through eight. The program is designed to engage and challenge students at all levels. The broad range of activities includes science, math, literacy, health, exercise and the arts. One major goal is to increase academic performance on the CMT through hands-on learning, authentic learning and integration of the arts and media.

The programs offered help to reinforce and incorporate student learning from the school day into the extended day. Staff members who want to run an activity choose a curriculum that is of particular passion to him/herself and or a subject that students don't get enough exposure to during the school day. For example, our "Adventures in Science" program is run by a fifth grade teacher for the upper elementary grades. At this grade level, students begin to complete individual science fair projects. The amount of guidance and support they need for completing this task is not readily available during the regular school day. This program enabled the teacher to give the students the one-on-one support they needed to be successful in meeting the Science Fair goals. Several students in this program won first place in the School Wide Science Fair and honorable mentions in the District Wide Science Fair. A second program, "School Tutorial" is run by a teacher who has a passion for helping every child to be successful. Students in this program are given individualized tutorial plans from their classroom teacher based on their academic needs during the school day. A folder of work and activities is updated each week by the classroom teacher and sent to the teacher at the afterschool program. Each student has an assigned 7th or 8th grade tutor that helps them each week. All of the afterschool programs provide homework time. The after school program teachers are able to work one-on-one with students who need guidance or an extra challenge. They also check completed work to ensure students have been successful.

This after school program runs smoothly and successfully because of the close collaboration between the staff members, the community and parents. Parents are an integral part of the program. Their suggestions and input are incorporated into the program's design and implementation. Parents are also informed of their child's learning through monthly PTO meetings and monthly morning coffee sessions at Café Hale.

The school staff, parents and school community have all worked to plan and implement the Lights on Afterschool Program. They have incorporated the state standards as well as the individual needs of students into the programs.

Program: City of Bridgeport Lighthouse Program
Site: Beardsley School
City: Bridgeport
Contact: Tammy Papa
Contact phone: 203-576-7252
Contact email: tammy.papa@bridgeportct.gov
of students served: 100 - 125
Grades of students served: K-6

The Beardsley Lighthouse After School program offers a number of curricular activities. In addition to the standard homework help that happens daily from 3:30 to 4:15, Beardsley School offers a Math Club for struggling 2nd through 5th grade students. In lieu of homework, they go to their assigned math club classroom for 45 minutes of intense activity focused on areas where they need support. During the 45 minutes, students receive a general warm-up activity. They circulate for approximately 15 minutes each into two separate activities that might include direct instruction with the teacher, computer games aligned to the day's lesson, a pre or post test, independent skill pack work or math games with a partner. In addition to math club, students participating in Lighthouse may also be eligible to receive supplemental tutoring services using a reading and math curriculum that is tied to state standards. When students complete their daily homework assignments, they are asked to select a book to read for the balance of the session. Older students are encouraged to read and write using the Connecticut Post or a book of their choice.

The *Mathletics Program* is a huge success for Beardsley's 2nd through 5th grade students. Approximately 60 students participate in 45 minutes of math daily. According to the Site Coordinator, "*participating students have become better students because they enjoyed school much more since they were able to get the help that was needed to succeed in math and in school. Self Esteem has increased and behavior problems have decreased.*" CMT results last year for 9 of the 11 participating 3rd graders showed them at proficiency or above. These same students were failing math at the beginning of the 3rd grade.

The Beardsley Program is one of 14 Lighthouse sites that focus one night per month specifically on parents and their children. Through a partnership with the Bridgeport Board of Education Parent Center, students and their families have the opportunity to gather at the school for a family literacy event. Well over 70 families participate on any given night. Speakers and presenters for the evening cover a wide range of topics that relate to helping parents support their children's growth and development. In addition to these nights, Beardsley's after school staff has a great working relationship with parents. Since the program charges a nominal fee on a

sliding scale, parents who are not able to pay anything help out as volunteers. Parents are surveyed a minimum of one time per year regarding their thoughts and suggestions for program improvements and a direct connection with the home school coordinator allows for additional information to flow to them.

The greater Beardsley Community is also present within the school building. Many of the after school activities are offered for free or at reduced cost thanks in part to funds contributed by local businesses. Trips to the local zoo at no cost to the program provide a valuable learning experience. Pizza provided by the local pizza parlor allows children to enjoy a party or celebration. The Beardsley program has also participated in community events held off site and has provided information regarding programs when asked.

The Beardsley Lighthouse program is fortunate to have a principal who is extremely dedicated and involved in every aspect of the program. She has a wonderful working relationship with Laurie Giff who is the site coordinator for the program and a certified teacher at Beardsley during the school day. Through this relationship, the principal is privy to every aspect of the program. The Coordinator has an excellent working relationship with all teachers at the school. Together they share student success stories and challenges that need to be addressed. In addition to the coordinator, many of the after school staff are also day time staff. Classrooms, computers and the entire facility are made available for after school use, thus strengthening program components. Finally, special after school trips or activities at Beardsley often focus on particular age groups and tend to center around something that would provide an “a ha” moment in their minds as they connect it to what they are learning during the day.

One of Beardsley’s highlights is the KEYS program. Approximately 20 afterschool students receive lessons on keyboards one day per week. On May 31st, the KEYS program held a recital and invited the students and parents. Everyone was so impressed with the performances that the instructors decided to continue the program through the summer! A drum program is now being considered for the fall as an addition to the KEYS program.

Beardsley’s partner agency is the YMCA. One of their swim instructors was able to obtain a grant from the Stew Leonard Foundation to give students weekly swimming lessons.

Beardsley will be implementing the LEGO building program with a different theme every week. Students will help design a building around the week’s theme, spend Monday through Thursday building it, and then showcase it at the end of each week. Awards will be given in various categories so that every group wins something.

Connecticut After School Network

If you would like to see your program highlighted in our

“Great Ideas in After School 2010”

Please provide a two page narrative answering the following:

What are your program curricular components?

How do you incorporate community and parent involvement?

What is your after school/school day connection?

Please include some highlights of the year!

Fill out the form below and return with your submission by May 1, 2010.

If you have any questions please call (203) 483-9757 or email

Marla Berrios at mberrios@ctafterschoolnetwork.org.

“Great Ideas in After School” Submission Form

Contact Information

Name (or Group Contact): _____

Program Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work #: _____ Email: _____

Program Information

Name of Site(s): _____

of Students Served: _____

Grade levels: _____

**Submit to: Connecticut After School Network 12 Melrose Avenue, Branford CT 06405
(203) 483-9757 (203) 481-7160 fax**