



Making Every Minute Count Learning Outside of School



Youth spend nearly 80 percent of their time outside of school, and these hours can be a game changer, especially for low-income students.

How kids spend time outside the classroom has been the focus of the Indiana After-School Network (IAN), launched in 2007 by the Indiana Association of United Ways with support from Lilly Endowment, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education and the Indiana Department of Education.

In Indiana, up to 30 percent of school-age children, including kindergartners, are left unsupervised in the afternoons—peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex, according to the advocacy group Afterschool Alliance.

Yet evidence suggests that high-quality after-school and summer learning programs can make a positive difference in terms of student engagement during school, and these programs can have a lasting impact on their lives.

“Kids who are engaged in after-school programs are less likely to get into trouble with crime, drugs or pregnancy,”

says Debbie Zipes, executive director of IAN. “It’s really important that we’re intentional in maximizing the use of that time, especially in under-resourced areas.”

David Harris, the founder and CEO of The Mind Trust, an Indianapolis-based organization nationally acclaimed for its innovative education reform programs, agrees with Zipes that the ways students spend their



Moriah Jackson, a CLD participant since age 11, takes notes during a session of CLD’s Business Orientation Project at the Kelley School of Business on the IUPUI campus. Youth learn about business and entrepreneurship from talented professionals who serve as role models.

hours outside the traditional classroom are critical. “Having access to appealing and effective community-based programs is critical to their success in school and in life. This is especially true for children and youth from low-income families,” says Harris.

“IAN has created after-school standards to assess programs and guide the creation of new programs. IAN hosts regional networking meetings, collaborating with providers and stakeholders to share best practices and professional development,” Zipes says.

“With partnerships across the state and better information and communication, after-school programs can expand what they are good at: creating learning opportunities in an environment that is often more social, more creative and more experiential than classroom learning,” Zipes adds.

Focusing on education

“It used to be if you kept kids off the street, that was enough,” says Rick Whitten, executive director of Boys & Girls Clubs of Indianapolis. “That’s not enough anymore.”

Boys & Girls Clubs provide more than 8,000 Indianapolis youth, ages 5-18, places to play at locations in economically disadvantaged areas of the city. In recent years, staff have increasingly targeted educational gaps.

According to a 2011 U.S. Department of Education Guidance School survey, over-stretched school guidance counselors are only providing an average of 38 minutes of college admissions advice per American high school student.

That’s a troubling statistic to Whitten, who notes that 77 percent of Boys & Girls Clubs clientele qualify for free and reduced lunches, and most attend high schools with a high dropout rate. “Our kids are so vulnerable,” Whitten says.

To help combat this, POWER Hour provides homework help and tutoring with incentives and prizes—including trips and iPads—for participation.



Instructor Lonzo Buggs leads a discussion with teenagers participating in CLD’s 13-week Self-Discovery/Career Exploration Project. Students identify college and career options and learn to recognize and overcome barriers to success.



Pre- and post-testing shows that POWER Hour participants increase their math skills and reading fluency by up to two years, results that at first stunned staff. That success prompted Boys & Girls Clubs to expand their educational focus with Goals for Graduation, an initiative funded with support from Endowment grants in 2010 and 2011.

In addition to POWER Hour, Goals for Graduation tackles computer skills with the Skill Tech program and ScholarShop, an activity-based curriculum designed to motivate and prepare students in grades 4-12 to achieve their potential as postsecondary students. The clubs organize college tours and provide one-on-one coaching, beginning in eighth grade, to keep students on track toward graduation.

The funding of Goals for Graduation has enabled Boys & Girls Clubs staff to be better trained to make each encounter an educational one, and it also has provided new technology to track participation and outcomes more effectively. Whitten says the clubs already see progress among youth who come at least once per week. “Our goal is to get them to come more often and stay longer,” he says.

Removing barriers to success

Concord Neighborhood Center, the city’s longest-running neighborhood center, provides Near-Southside Indianapolis families and individuals of all ages a one-stop source for social services, daycare, summer day camps and educational opportunities. Children come to play before and after school, but it’s also likely they will encounter math during a game of dodge ball or use the gym floor for an active game of “word scrabble” to increase vocabulary, according to Niki Girls, Concord’s director.

“Our casual environment allows us to present material and interact with kids in the way that schools can’t,” Girls says.

With Endowment support, Concord is tackling another problem schools struggle with: teen pregnancy. Now for the Future (NFTF) is a comprehensive youth-development program adapted from the national teen pregnancy-prevention model developed by Michael

Carrera and the Children’s Aid Society in New York and replicated in more than 40 cities.

“In the community Concord serves, 29 percent of families with children under the age of 18 live in poverty and are at risk because of the limited opportunities they see around them,” Girls says. NFTF and a related program for young males help youth postpone sexual involvement by engaging them in education, career development, recreation and sexuality education.

The program has served more than 300 youth since 1993, and no more than 3 percent of them have become pregnant or caused pregnancies. The program also seems to have had an impact on participants’ graduation rates. While a nearby high school had a graduation rate of less than 50 percent, NFTF participants had a graduation rate of 74 percent in 2010.

“The program has its challenges,” Girls says. “It’s tough to keep parents and youth involved in a multi-year program—even a successful one—that requires a long-term commitment. NFTF works with students beginning in fourth grade, before other distractions lure them away.”

Filling the critical space

On a Saturday afternoon in December, the Center for Leadership Development (CLD) was buzzing with youthful energy. High school students were giving their career presentations for the final session of a Self-Discovery/Career Exploration program, one of a dozen youth-development programs CLD offers to as many as 2,600 youth each year at its new Achievement Center on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

CLD fosters the advancement of minority youth in Central Indiana as future professional, business and community leaders by providing experiences that encourage personal development and educational attainment. Since Henry Bundles founded the program more than 30 years ago with support from the Endowment, CLD has engaged some 22,000 Central Indiana youth. The Endowment has consistently supported it from the beginning.

CLD participants include sophomore Moriah Jackson, who has attended CLD programs since she was

11 years old, taking college preparatory classes and going on field trips and college visits. She can easily recite the CLD “principles for success” mantra: “My goal is character development. My goal is educational excellence. My goal is leadership effectiveness. My goal is community service. My goal is career achievement.”

CLD has inspired her to pursue college and a career in business, and she hopes someday to become a chief executive officer. “They have time for me here,” Jackson says. “I like that. If you need help, they will sit down with you and find whatever you need.”

CLD occupies a critical space in the lives of Indianapolis minority youth by showing them the connection between their education and their potential, explains CLD President Dennis Bland. Young people are often resistant to give up time outside of school to participate in CLD programs, but once they come, students like Jackson are often hooked.

“They see their development and the reality of their potential,” Bland says. “They also see gaps between where they are and where they say they want to be.”

Derica Rice, Eli Lilly and Company’s chief financial officer and CLD board member agrees. “CLD gives the youth it serves hope and vision for their future and helps them build the skills and abilities to achieve their dreams. It’s important to Eli Lilly and Company that all youth in our community have access to high-quality schools and community programs that enhance their prospects for success in life. That’s why the Company has found it so compelling to support CLD over the years,” says Rice.

While CLD collaborates and partners with local schools, it also aims to provide a learning environment that is separate and different from school because “frankly, in some schools, the walls reek of failure,” Bland says.

More than 70 percent of CLD participants pursue higher education which, according to Bland, is a much higher percentage than their peers who do not participate in CLD. Moreover, in 2012, 21 Indiana colleges and community partners presented 36 CLD graduates with scholarships totaling more than \$2 million, up from \$1 million in 2010. “That success is a key to transforming the culture to one that values education,” Bland says. “Each college graduate from the community has a ‘multiplier effect,’ touching lives of families and neighbors who see what change is possible,” he adds.

“We want young people to know they will learn a lot here, but it will not be the things they learn in school,” Bland says. “We want to create the kind of space that equips and motivates them to go back to school with a different demeanor, a different attitude and different mindset and see education through a different prism.”



With several CLD training programs to her credit, sophomore Moriah Jackson (shown here with colleague Joseph Jones) looks forward to college, followed by a career in business.