

City pupils good to grow in after-school program

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MAX SCHULTE staff photographer

Second-grader Brian Boose, 7, and third-grader Jeanes Gibson, 9, practice a step routine during the Quad A program at School 16 Thursday.

Educators know that what happens once students leave school affects their academic success as much as what goes on in their classrooms. Giving kids something to do after school also helps deter them from crime and violence.

But in a city with one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, finding affordable after-school programs can be tough, and many students do not have access to them.

Quad A For Kids is seeking to fill that void with a program that offers students academic support and extracurricular activities to keep them occupied after the school day.

“Our goal is to have a favorable impact on these children’s lives, not just now but in the future,” said Kathy Fromel, a volunteer with the organization.

The Quad A program started about a decade ago with the mission of giving city children a place to go after school and offering them productive activities. It now serves about 350 children at three schools,

4, 16 and 34. The program targets high risk youth in first through sixth grades at the three schools, along with some students from School 30.

The program has become more critical in recent years as the city has suffered from the loss of other after-school programs, prompting in some cases more students to linger in the streets or go unsupervised.

When students report to the program, staff members help them with their homework and then lead them in activities that range from art classes to sporting events and dancing. Some of the activities also have an academic connection, including a group in which students come up with entrepreneurial projects and another that teaches them about leading healthy lifestyles.

Educators at participating schools attest to the program's effect on their students in the classroom. Program leaders at School 34 track the performance of students' who participate in the program and report that they outperform their peers in reading and math. They are also absent from school less often.

"We see what it does for our students," said Sylvia Cooksey, principal at School 16. "Their lives are changed by this program."

The program has become so popular that it now has a waiting list of 70 students. Since students do not pay to join, the program is funded — about \$2,000 per student — from grants and private donations.

For some students, that makes the difference between having somewhere to go in the afternoon hours and being left to their own devices.

"It's a very nice program," said 11-year-old Shantaj Porter, who participates. "I learn and have fun at the same time."

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INTERESTED?

For more information about Quad A for Kids, or how to get a child on its waiting list, visit the program's website, www.quadforkids.org. Those interested can also call the office at (585) 341-4300 ext. 4301 or e-mail QuadA@racf.org.

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