

Cities In Schools Aurora

Program Narrative

Aurora Summer Programs

2022

**Cities  
In  
Schools  
AURORA**

**AURORA**  
**ILLINOIS**  
CITY OF LIGHTS



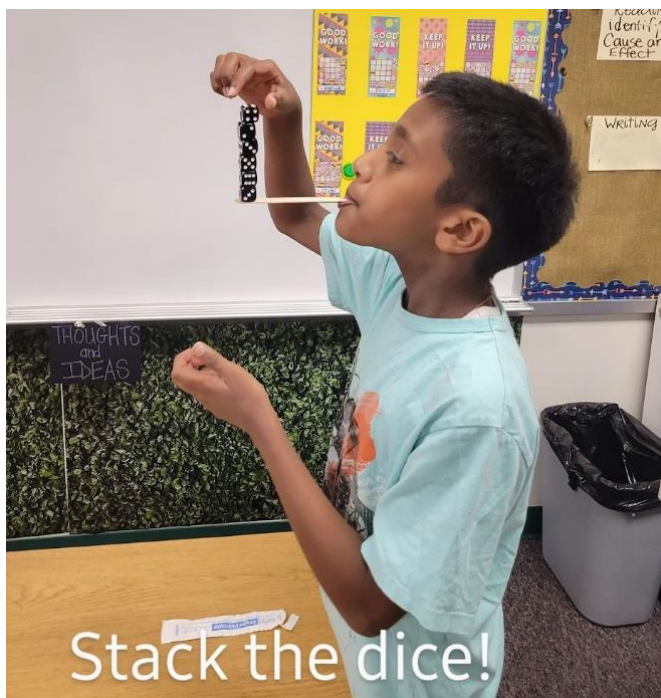
## Introduction

Under the leadership of Mayor Richard Irvin and Aldermen, the City of Aurora has been a vital source of funding for summer programming. As a result, 924 Aurora youth were able to engage in summer learning and expanded learning opportunities in 2022 through various funding resources.

The following report provides information on the 2022 summer camps through funding in partnership with the City of Aurora, East Aurora School District, Fox Valley Park District, Indian Prairie School District, Oswego School District, St. Joseph Parish, West Aurora School District, and Cities In Schools Aurora and community partners.

In particular, it examines program information related to participation, activities, and community partner services, specifically for the four summer enrichment camps and drama camp funded by the City of Aurora. Additionally, it details the results of the surveys for the four summer camps, which were developed by Cities In Schools. Overall, the data collected indicates that students who participated in the summer programs made significant gains in all areas measured by surveys.

Cities In Schools Aurora values the quality of relationships and the impact summer programs have on youth by developing a meaningful, nurturing, and positive relationship between the participants and adult and youth staff during our programming.



## Executive Summary

For many students, the summer is a time for family vacations, new friendships, new adventures in camps and summer learning programs, or taking summer classes to catch up or get ahead in school. For some families, affordable summer programs and camps can be a lifeline, while other families who may not be able to afford summer programs or activities struggle because they lose access to free and reduced-price school meals or because parents are not able to take time off from work to care for their children.

The primary goal of the summer camps is to provide youth in Aurora with a structured, supervised and stable environment during the summer.



Children should look forward to coming each day to a camp environment where they can learn new skills, make new friends, experiment with ideas, and grow in self-esteem. Children had the opportunity to build friendships and explore new interests with other children and each staff member. The importance of cooperation, friendship, teamwork, decision making, responsibility, trust and distinguishing between right and wrong through their experience was emphasized continuously.

The programs also emphasized developing soft skills – strengthening peer relationships and ties with adults and developing persistence – that shape students’ motivation and self-confidence. This summer brought new challenges as we navigated a post-pandemic summer, securing camp locations due to many construction projects within the school districts and the late City Council approval of summer camp funding on April 26.

East Aurora School District 131 had no available schools to host a summer camp. We were able to secure space at St. Joseph Parish on High Street and recruited students attending SD131. We had the same challenges in Indian Prairie School District as all of their elementary schools were not available due to the installation of air-conditioning. We were able to secure space at Our Lady of Mercy Church next to Waubonsie High School on April 25, only to be notified on May 11 that the building would no longer be available due to concerns from the Diocese and other programs within the church.

We then reached out to the SD204 administration and were able to secure McCarty Elementary for a half-day camp on May 17. On May 19, our camp was moved to Gombert per the Superintendent and would remain a half-day camp from 8:30 a.m. – noon, Monday – Thursday through the month of June.

In addition to the challenges of secure camp locations, we struggled to employ adult leaders. We worked with school administrators to assist in the recruitment of school staff. Each school district also struggled to secure adult staff for their summer programming. Since we were limited to the number of adults, we had to limit the number of students we could enroll at each summer camp based on staffing ratios.

Our policy has been only to hire school district staff for the adult positions. We have always tried to hire staff from the summer camp school location as they are familiar with the school procedures, have an established relationship with school custodial staff, and have entry keys to gain entrance to the buildings once school administration is no longer working during the summer.







# WHY IS SUMMER CAMP IMPORTANT?



Summer camp is essential because it offers a structured opportunity for children to grow. Kids go from home to school to extracurricular activities, with each environment contributing to their development. Summer camp, then, is another unique venue for growth, allowing kids to become independent and self-confident while socializing, making new friends, and even learning new skills.





# SUMMER CAMP BENEFITS!

1. Camp helps kids build a unique interest.
  - *Kids are able to try and engage in new activities that they have not been exposed to.*
2. Camp reinvents and eliminates categories.
  - *Students often attend school year after year with the same peers, which can lead to labeling and being 'stuck' with a particular perception.*
3. Camp allows for a deep dive into new skills.
  - *Kids are able to really get out of their comfort zone to take some new risks with their skills, without the looming fear of failure and resulting repercussions.*
4. Camp leads to a new type of friendship building.
  - *Students who interact with like-minded peers are able to easily build friendships (potential lifelong friendships) rooted in similar interest.*
5. Camp helps with mental stimulation and physical activity.
  - *Various activities were offered each day whether logic based learning or physical activities.*
6. Camp reinforces independence and empowerment.
  - *Kids were able to meet new friends; use and develop team building skills and have a choice in activities provided that gave them confidence and leadership opportunities.*
7. Camp allows confidence to be reinforced by success.
  - *Both the adults and youth workers provided positive feedback during activities and socialization time to reinforce the positive skills of the students, which in turn reinforced success.*
8. Camp leads to creativity, free of judgement.
  - *Creativity can't be stifled at camp because students don't have to worry about getting a failing grade.*
9. Camp builds all-around resilience
  - *This is a culmination of many of the above benefits. New friendships, confidence, independence, sense of belonging. All of these things contribute to the development of the child as they make strides from being a kid to a strong, considerate, competent adult.*
10. Camp instills appreciation and gratitude.
  - *Students had the opportunity to experience new surroundings, new friends, new activities and field tips which instills appreciation for learning and experiencing new things and also appreciate the surroundings and friendships they had already established.*
11. Camp is fun and entertaining. <sup>3</sup> [www.idtech.com/blog/benefits-of-summer-camp-infographic](http://www.idtech.com/blog/benefits-of-summer-camp-infographic)



The summer camps continued to engage the city's adolescent and pre-adolescent students in positive activities beyond the school year in academics, fine arts, socialization, leadership, and recreation. In doing so, students had the opportunity to improve academic, artistic, physical, and emotional performance while developing skills, attitudes, and behaviors that translated to both academic success and the development of life skills in a safe and supportive environment.



The success of these programs comes from the many organizations which lend their support.

Cities In Schools was responsible for the fiscal and programmatic coordination and the overall administration of the summer programs funded by the City of Aurora. In addition, CIS has worked at establishing positive relationships with local school districts and community organizations, which contributed to the realization and continued development of the program.

#### **Qualities of Community Youth Programs that Develop Community**

- Increases support and belonging where one develops positive bonds, empathy, respect for others, and an increased ability to communicate and work with a diverse set of people, including those with cultural identities and experiences different than one's own
- Builds contributions by finding opportunities, exchanging ideas, and working together to create something for the community
- Gains recognition, appreciation, and/or acknowledgment for an achievement, service, or ability in the eyes of others/community

Research supports the idea that youth arts organizations such as our Drama Camp can be effective resources for community development. Exploring and being trained in art forms can be a powerful vehicle for learning a broad range of knowledge and transferrable skills. Understanding the link culture and arts programs can have to specific knowledge and skill sets is directly tied to teacher-artist expectations of their students. Researchers and youth development practitioners have found evidence that arts education can contribute significantly to young people's cognitive and social development as they:

- Provide young people with different ways to process cognitive information and express their own knowledge;
- Develop vocabulary, metaphorical language, observation, and critical thinking skills;
- Spur the development of creativity;
- Develop skills necessary for future employment;
- Help youth in their struggle with issues of identity, independence, competence, body image, and social roles;
- Teach the value of discipline and teamwork; and
- Bridge barriers among cultural, racial, and ethnic groups.

Cities In Schools in partnership with the City of Aurora, offered four elementary enrichment summer camps.

- Hill Elementary School in West Aurora School District 129 for four weeks, 16 days (88 hours);
- Gombert Elementary in Indian Prairie School District 204 for four weeks, 16 days (56 hours);
- Homestead Elementary in Oswego School District 308 for four weeks, 15 days (82.5); and
- St. Joseph Parish in East Aurora District 131 for four weeks, 16 days (88 hours).



Breakfast and lunch were provided daily for all students through Illinois Food Bank for students enrolled at St. Joseph and Organic Life for students enrolled at Hill Elementary School. We were unable to secure Illinois Food Bank for students at Homestead and Gombert since, as a whole school, they did not automatically qualify for free meals under the Illinois State Board of Education guidelines for free summer meals.

The following is a recap of the timeframe. Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry provided free snacks to students at Gombert and Homestead throughout the four weeks of camp.

- April 26, Final approval from City Council
- April 27, I met with elementary principals from Homestead, The Wheatlands, and Wolf's Crossing to determine which elementary school could host the summer camp. It was determined we would be at Homestead.
- On April 27, enrollment forms were sent out to school principals to start distribution to families.
- On April 28, the summer food service application was sent to NIFB.
- May 12 – Message from Northern Illinois Food Bank.

I received confirmation from the state about the eligibility for Homestead. However, because the program is not located in an eligible area and schools have not been offering Free/Reduced meals to qualified students, but to all students, we needed to collect Household Eligibility Applications(HEA) for each of the students to determine if 50% of the enrolled children meet the eligibility guidelines.

- May 12 – I contacted Simon regarding the situation with Homestead. Simon reached out to Diane Renner with Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry to possibly supply summer meals.
- Marie Wilkinson is not an approved summer food program facility to make and distribute meals so that they could provide any food through Illinois Food Bank deposits. Through other funding Marie Wilkinson was able to provide daily snacks for both Gombert and Homestead. Students from Homestead brought their own lunch from home daily.

Four fun field trips were provided to the summer enrichment camps.

- Funway Entertainment for two games of bowling;
- Cantigny Park to discover the outdoor gardens, tanks from WW1 to Desert Storm, First Division Museum, and nature walks;
- Drama camp performance of Frozen Jr.,
- Outdoor Fun Day at Phillips Park was provided by the City of Aurora Youth Services Department.
- Transportation was provided by West Aurora School District 129 and Durham Bus Service for all field trips.





Funway Bowling



COA Outdoor Fun Day at Phillips Park



Cantigny Park

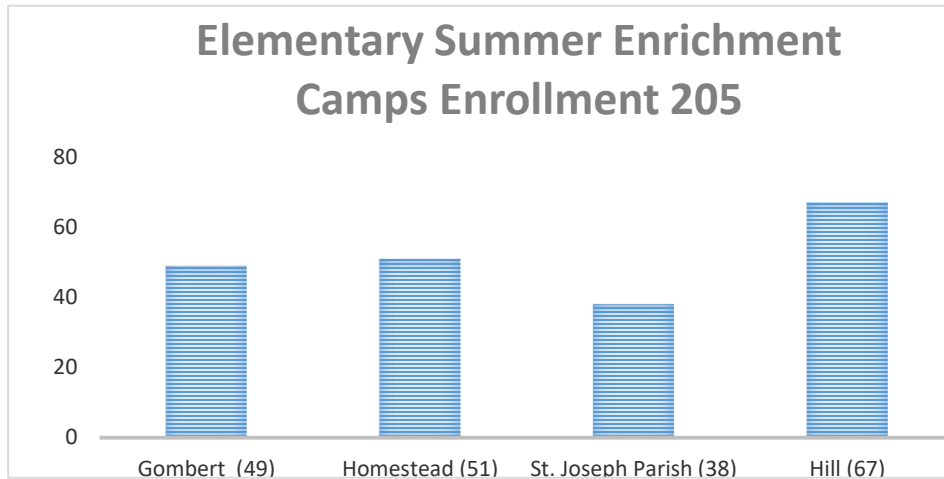


Frozen Jr. Performance by our Drama Camp

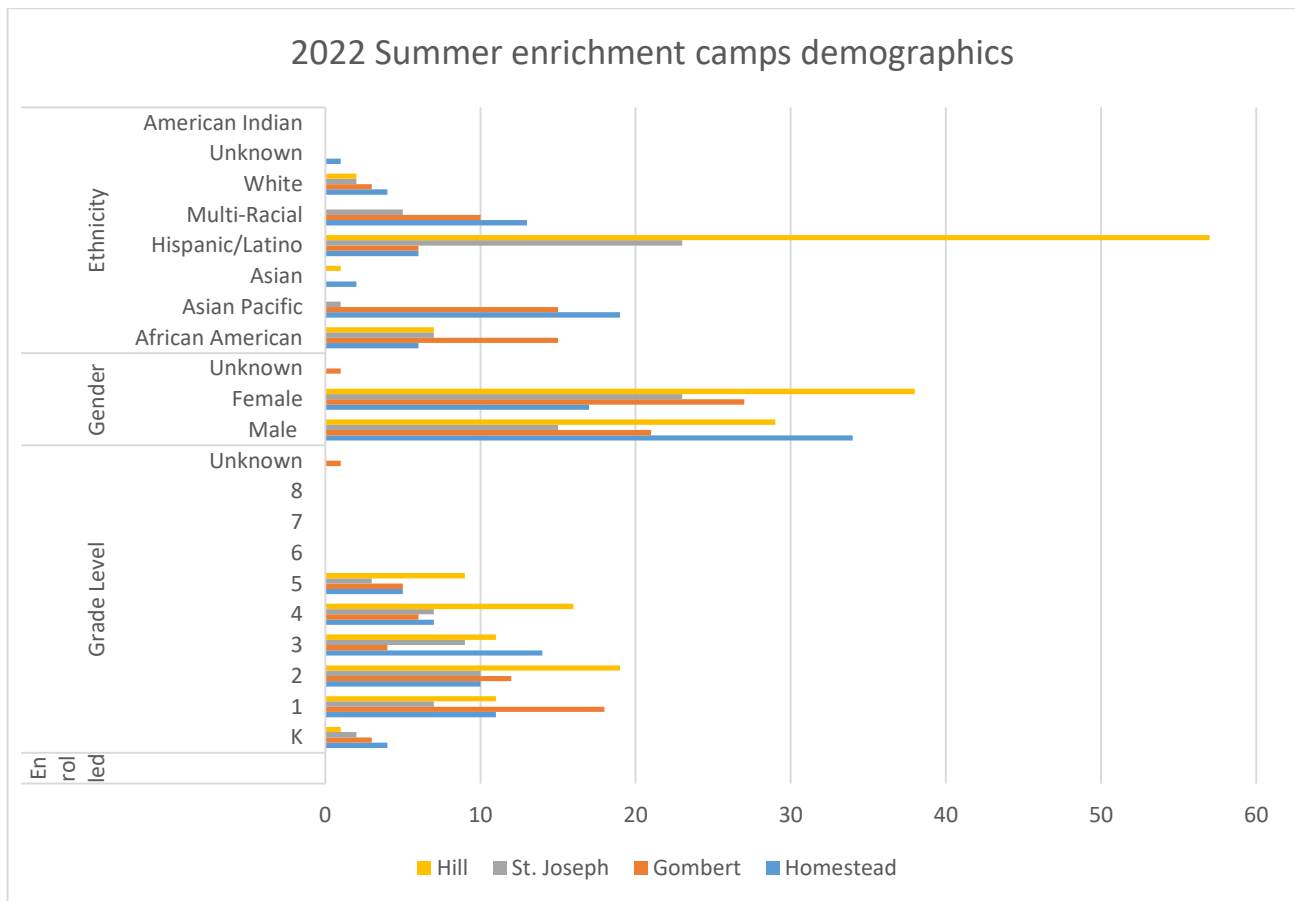


The summer enrichment camps included math, literacy, STEM, fine and cultural arts, recreation, teambuilding and leadership.

Total enrollment was 205 students from grades kindergarten-fifth grade enrolled in the Summer Enrichment Camps.



Demographically speaking, boys and girls were equally represented, females (105) and males (99). Students were from a wide variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. The most prolific backgrounds were Hispanic/Latino (92), African American (35), Caucasian (11) and Multi-Racial (28) which is reflective of the community’s diversity.





High school and college students were employed to work as youth leaders in the summer camp programs. Youth workers gained valuable hands-on experiences that built workforce and career skills. In addition, youth workers benefitted through opportunities provided in their field of study and valuable, meaningful, and trusting relationships with elementary school students and adults in the program.

Their primary responsibility was to assist the site coordinator and adult staff in delivering quality programs to the students. CIS employed 36 summer staff: 17 adults, ten college and nine high school students. CIS partnered with 14 community agencies and partners during the summer to provide hands-on, engaging activities, supplemented activities, or provided resources for the students enrolled in the Aurora summer enrichment camps.



APS Training Academy provided three weeks of robotics for all students in the summer camps. Each student assembled, coded and decorated a color changing lamp with their choice of music and then was able to take their project home.

Fox Valley Park District provide three weeks of programming with a combination of Zumba/Tai Chi along with teambuilding activities and nature programming exploring the world around them.





## 2022 City of Aurora Summer Full and Half Day Enrichment Camp Partner Descriptions

Organization	Involvement	Schools Served
City of Aurora	Provided funding for staff, supplies, and community partner programming.	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
	Provided funding for field trips, including transportation and admission and a final fun day at Phillips Park	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
	Provided funding for staff, supplies, lighting, sound, and costumes.	Drama Camp
City of Aurora Youth Services Department	Provided an Outdoor Fun Day at Phillips Park for all summer camp students and staff including lunch and many fun outdoor activities.	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
APS Training Academy	Provided 3 three weeks of robotics for all students in the summer camps. Each student assembled, coded and decorated a color changing lamp with their choice of music and then was able to take their project home.	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
Aurora Public Library	Provided reading incentives and library books.	St. Joseph, Hill, and Homestead
Cantigny Park	Provided an outdoor experience including nature walks, tanks, museums, plant and flower gardens.	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
Durham Bus Service	Provided transportation for four field trips.	Gombert, Homestead, and St. Joseph
Fox Valley Park District	Provide three weeks of programming with a combination of Zumba/Tai Chi along with teambuilding activities and hands-on fun designed to align to IL educational standards with STEAM themes exploring the world around them.	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
Funway Entertainment Bowling	Students were able to bowl two games at Funway along with learning the rules, scoring and etiquette of bowling.	Gombert, Hill, Homestead, and St. Joseph
Indian Prairie School District 204	Provided classrooms, gym, outdoor space and playgrounds, assistance in recruiting students in the half day summer camp and assistance in hiring staff.	Gombert Elementary
Illinois Food Bank	Provided breakfast and lunch to students through Illinois State Board of Education Summer Food Service Program.	St. Joseph Parish
Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry	Provided daily snacks to students. Students at Homestead brought their lunch each day.	Homestead and Gombert
Organic Life	Provided breakfast and lunch to students through Illinois State Board of Education Summer Food Service Program.	Hill Elementary School

Oswego School District 308	Provided classrooms, gym, outdoor space and playgrounds, cafeteria and refrigeration, assistance in recruiting students in the summer camp and assistance in hiring staff	Homestead Elementary
St. Joseph Parish	Provided classrooms, gym, outdoor space, cafeteria and refrigeration,	St. Joseph Parish primarily students from East Aurora School District 131 boundaries
West Aurora School District 129	Provided classrooms, gym, outdoor space and playgrounds, cafeteria and refrigeration, assistance in recruiting students in the summer camp and assistance in hiring staff.	Hill Elementary
West Aurora School District 129	Provided transportation for four field trips	Hill



## Evaluation Results

Evaluations play an important role in program development for summer camp programs. They were utilized to assess the impact of services as well as ways to improve service delivery mechanisms.

### City of Aurora Elementary Enrichment Camps at Gombert, Hill, Homestead and St. Joseph Parish.

The evaluation questions were formatted to assess summer camp programmatic goals, and the results of 83 student surveys were tabulated and analyzed by the staff at Cities In Schools. Full survey results are available upon request for the following surveys; adult staff, youth staff, and students 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> grade. Surveys of students and staff provided positive results.

One of the programmatic goals of the summer enrichment camp was to help the elementary school students improve their academic experiences and performance. In relation to school and summer camp, successful gains are noted. One of the stronger positive responses in the entire evaluation was to the statement, *"I have fun at summer camp,"* with 96% (99) agreed responses out of 103.



Other positive responses were linked to developing skills, attitudes, and behaviors that transfer to school success. These were evident in responses to statements such as, *“I learned something new at camp this summer,”* with 83% (86) agreed responses out of 103. *“I can always find things that I like to do at camp,”* with 92% (95) agreed responses out of 103

Youth workers completed an evaluation of the program. Of those 16 high school and college workers that responded, 100% responded favorably to *“I enjoy working in the summer camp program.”* The youth workers felt the program facilitated positive behavior among the elementary students with an 88% positive response rate. In response to *“Youth workers have opportunities to lead group activities,”* 100% responded positively.

Adult workers also completed an evaluation of the program. Of those 10 adults that responded, they stated they enjoyed working in the summer camp program with a 100% response rate. Additional questions with a 100% response rate were, *“Participants have freedom in selecting activities,”* *“Children with disabilities are successfully integrated into the program,”* and *“Summer camp staff and youth leaders are committed to their work.”*

### **Drama Camp**

Under the direction Arlene Hawks, the Drama Camp offered students the opportunity to participate and perform for a live audience Frozen Jr. Musical. Student’s experienced acting, dance, and voice where everyone was given a chance to shine on stage. Students from the summer enrichment camps attended an afternoon performance and a community evening performance was also held.

The half day, four-week camp was held at Jefferson Middle School for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. At the Drama Camp (37) students attended. Elementary students 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade attended (22), Middle School students 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> (14), and High School students 9<sup>th</sup> grade (1).



## Benefits of Musical Theater Summer Camp Programs



- Build Confidence: Being on stage encourages self-confidence because we create a positive, comfortable, and supportive atmosphere for your children.
- Encourages Creativity: Musical theater summer camps build creativity through expressing themselves every day.
- Builds life-long memories.
- Positive role models.
- Builds social skills and friendships.

### District 129 Elementary Enrichment Summer Camp Enrollment Numbers

- **282 Total students enrolled**
- FVPD at Hall Elementary School (133)
- D129 at Greenman Elementary School (149)

Fox Valley Park District offered a full day, four-week camp four days a week at Hall and West Aurora School District 129 offered a full day, four-week camp four days a week at Greenman Elementary School in partnership with Cities In Schools through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grants. Middle school students were invited to attend the camp as part of a mentoring summer experience.

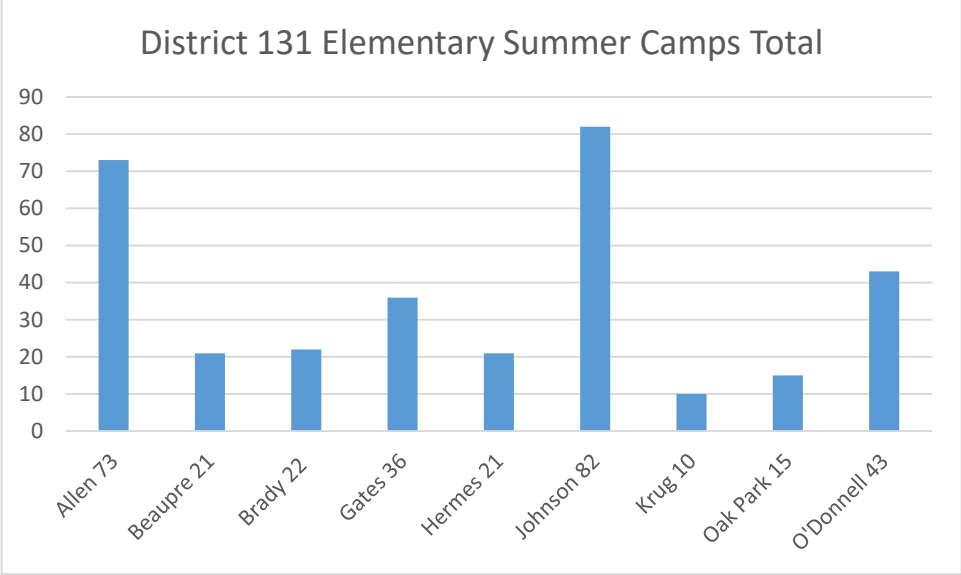
### School District 131 Elementary Enrichment Half Day Summer Camps Enrollment Numbers

- **Total students enrolled 400**
- Students enrolled with District 131 (366)
- Students enrolled with Family Focus from three elementary schools in District 131 (70)

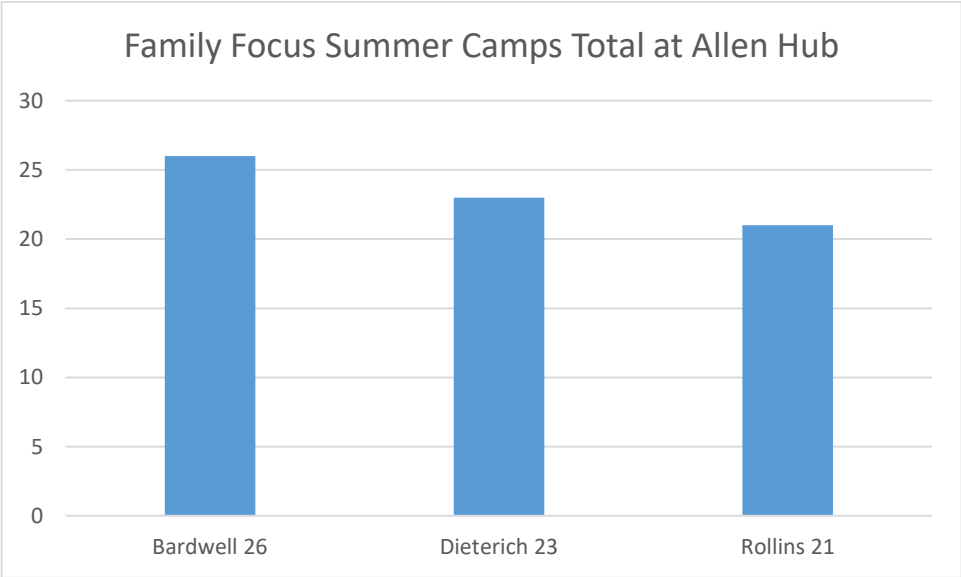
East Aurora School District 131 in partnership through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grants with Cities In Schools, offered ten half-day summer camps for elementary school students to attend at three hub sites including: Allen, Gates and Johnson as hub sites. (**Allen**, Bardwell, Dieterich, Rollins (143), (**Gates**,



Beaupre, Brady, and Krug (89) , and (Johnson, Hermes, Oak Park and O'Donnell (161), with an enrollment number of 393.



Family Focus in partnership with 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and District 131 provided three half-day camps for students from Bardwell, Dieterich, and Rollins with an enrollment number of (70) students also at the hub sites.



The half-day camps included lunch, which was provided by Sodexo, recreation, crafts, board games, field trips, STEM, cooking, teambuilding and socialization.

## Aurora Summer Elementary Enrichment Camp sites 2022

<b>Summer Elementary Camp Objective:</b>			
<p>To provide youth in Aurora a structured, supervised and stable environment during the summer. Children should look forward to coming each day where they can learn new skills, make new friends, experiment with ideas and grow in self-esteem. Children will have the opportunity to build friendships, explore new interests with other children and with each staff member. The importance of cooperation, friendship, teamwork, decision making, responsibility, trust and distinguishing between right and wrong through their experience will be emphasized continuously.</p>			
Inputs	Strategies	Outputs	Short Term Outcomes
<p><b>Locations:</b> West Aurora SD East Aurora SD Indian Prairie SD Oswego SD St. Joseph Parish</p> <p><b>Staffing</b></p> <p><b>COA Enrichment camps</b> 17 Adult Staff 10 College students 9 High School Students</p> <p><b>Drama Camp</b> 3 Adult Staff 4 College student</p> <p><b>Community Partners</b></p> <p><b>School Districts</b></p> <p><b>Field trips</b></p> <p><b>Supplies</b></p>	<p>Group tutoring with math, reading and writing skills</p> <p>Mentoring from adults to youth workers and from adults to students</p> <p>Mentoring from youth workers to students</p> <p>Academic enrichment activities included math, literacy, science, nutrition, health and safety</p> <p>Fine arts included arts and crafts, drama, plays and music</p> <p>Recreation included fitness programs including fitness programs, obstacle courses, playgrounds, hula hoops, soccer, basketball, dodge ball, kick ball, board games and much more</p> <p>Social Emotional activities were built into each day with staff and the community partners as well as promoting positive behavior throughout the day with all students</p>	<p>205 students K-5<sup>th</sup> participated in the full and half day summer enrichment camps provided by City of Aurora</p> <p>282 students K-8<sup>th</sup> participated in the full day summer enrichment camps provided by D129 &amp; FVPD</p> <p>323 students K-5<sup>th</sup> participated in the half day camps provided by D131</p> <p>41 students 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade participated in camps provided by D131.</p> <p>70 students K-5<sup>th</sup> participated in the half day camps provided by Family Focus</p> <p>COA - Full Day Camps were 5.5 hours per day, 4 days a week for four weeks. The half day camp was 3.5 hour per day, 4 days a week for four weeks.</p> <p>D129 &amp; FVPD Full day camp was 5.5 hours per day, four days a week for 4 weeks.</p> <p>D131 Half Day Camps were 3.5 hours per day, 4 days a week for four weeks.</p> <p>Family Focus Half Day Camps were 3.5 hours per day, 4 days a week for four weeks</p> <p>Locations: <b>City of Aurora=383</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D204 Gombert=49</li> <li>• D308 Homestead=51</li> </ul>	<p>Hours youth are in a safe environment during out-of school-time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator: Of the 103 responses from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> graders: <i>“I feel safer during the day at the summer camp program.”</i> 93 students (90%) agreed.</li> </ul> <p>Youth develop positive peer relationships with others in the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator: Of the 103 responses from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> graders: <i>“I learned how to work as part of a team at camp,”</i> 94 students (91%) agreed.</li> <li>• 95 students (92%) agreed when asked <i>“I would ask a friend to join me at camp because I like it.”</i></li> <li>• Of the 103 responses from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> graders; <i>“I like the arts and crafts at camp,”</i> 97 responses (94%) agreed.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D131 St. Joseph Parish=38</li> <li>• D129 Hill =67</li> </ul> <p><b>FVPD &amp; D129=282</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenman=149</li> <li>• Hall=133</li> </ul> <p><b>D131=323</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allen 543</li> <li>• Beaupre 21</li> <li>• Brady 22</li> <li>• Gates 71 36</li> <li>• Hermes 21</li> <li>• Johnson 82</li> <li>• Krug 10</li> <li>• Oak Park 15</li> <li>• O'Donnell 43</li> </ul> <p><b>Family Focus=70</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bardwell=26</li> <li>• Dieterich=23</li> <li>• Rollins=21</li> </ul>	
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*Completed by: Karen Harkness, Director of Programs, August 17, 2022*

