
ACTION—A COMING TOGETHER IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Allen School

Canton, Ohio

Two years ago, a neighborhood volunteer approached Allen School's community worker about establishing a summer enrichment program for neighborhood youth in pre-k through seventh grade. A successful community partnership formed between Allen School and St. Anthony Parish.

The team developed a parent survey to assess the community's needs. Based on the data, the team created ACTION—A Coming Together In Our Neighborhood. The program offered summer afternoon activities taught by Allen School staff that included dance, drama, music (band), vocals (choir), and the American Red Cross Camp Safe Crossing Program. Students attending the morning program at the Southeast Community Center could receive lunch and participate in ACTION's afternoon activities, free of charge.

Each spring, the team creates a brochure listing the activity choices and their dates, and distributes it to Allen School students. Parents register their children for dance, drama, band, or choir. Children share what they have learned in performances scheduled for the Allen Back to School Picnic and the Neighborhood Block Party at St. Anthony's Church. Attendance at the afternoon activities and end-of-summer community events is near 100%. Parents and neighbors volunteer to help with the activities once they see their value and how much the children enjoy them.

The greatest challenges are finding funds, space, and a fiscal agent. Fortunately, the Stark County Foundation funded the program after the team wrote a grant application, the Allen School provided a safe environment for the children to learn, and Saint Anthony's agreed to be the fiscal agent. Based on ACTION's first year success, the Stark Foundation has funded the project for a second summer. This partnership between school and community results in enriching summer activities for elementary school students.

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