

After-School Enrichment Program

*Frederick Law Olmsted School #64/56
Buffalo, New York*

Parents often spend a great deal of time, energy, and money trying to find constructive after-school activities for their children. At Frederick Law Olmsted School, however, that is no longer necessary. The After-School Enrichment Program provides an hour of creative activities and experiences every day, while furthering the school's goals and preparing students for required tests.

During two six-week sessions, about 100 Olmsted students participated in crafts, yoga, and cooking, as well as many other fun and educational activities. Parents and community partners of the two-site elementary-middle school contributed heavily to the successful program:

- The Explore and More Children's Museum conducted hands-on, culture-themed crafts activities.
- The Himalaya Institute provided a yoga instructor.
- The Darlene Ceglia Dance Project taught hip hop dancing, while the Buffalo Inner-City Ballet prepared beginning dancers well enough to perform in *The Nutcracker* at She's Performing Arts Center, downtown Buffalo's largest theater.
- Two professional chefs taught fifth and sixth graders how to read recipes and safely prepare a variety of dishes.

More than 20 parents volunteered their time and talents. One parent who works as an art teacher in another district came in on her day off to teach pop-up bookmaking, another taught knitting—using rhymes to take the

students through the steps. A group of parents brought in board games for students to play with their friends.

Although Olmsted had many reasons to create an after-school enrichment program, two topped the list—reinforcing the skills needed to do well on the ELA and TerraNova assessments and increasing the role of parents and community partners to meet some of the goals of the school's Comprehensive School Education Plan. The activities the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) designed for the enrichment program support the learning skills necessary for improvement on those required tests.

The ATP advertised the after-school program through Olmsted's weekly parent information packet, as well as through phone calls and e-mails. To cover costs, the school charged \$10 per student for each six-week session. The fee was waived for families who could not afford to pay it.

The level of participation and attendance showed that the after-school program met a need and also tapped the significant resources available to the school. The program created a greater sense of community and pride in the school. Olmsted also furthered its mission of fostering higher-level thinking skills, creative problem solving, and habits that support life-long learning through the differentiated learning experiences provided.

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