The Links, Incorporated

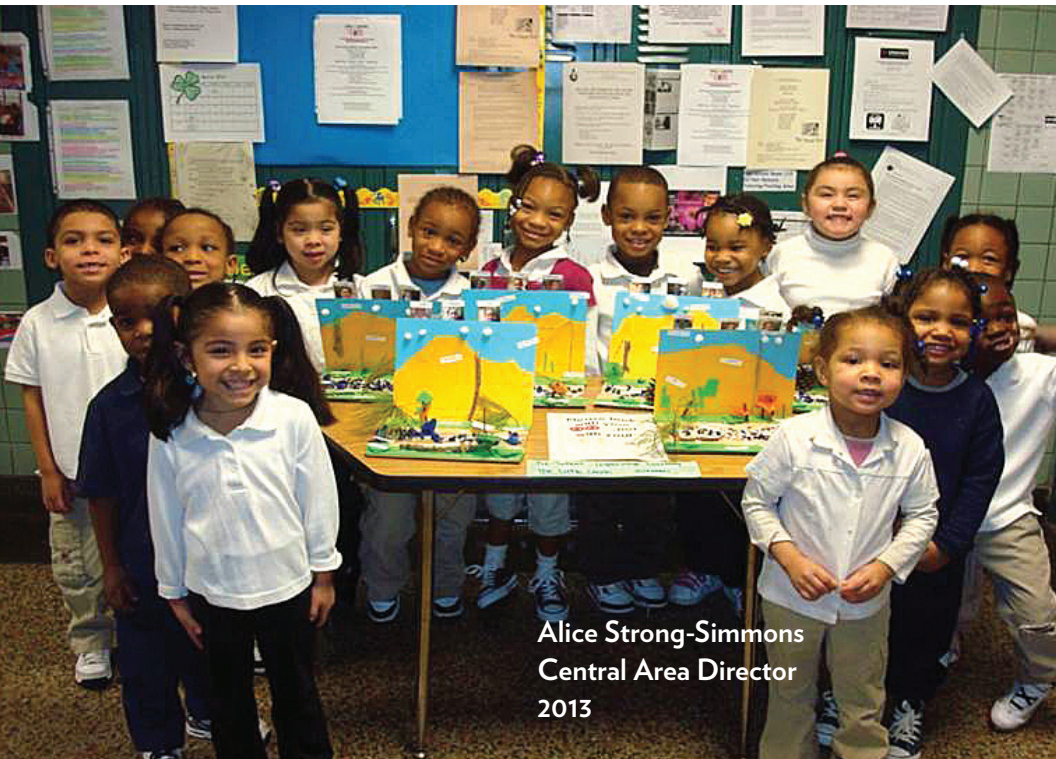
Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service

CENTRAL AREA

Closing the Achievement Gap

Literacy & Math Initiative

Education and Resource Manual



Alice Strong-Simmons
Central Area Director
2013

The Links, Incorporated™

Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service

November 2, 2013
Closing The Achievement Gap
Literacy and Math Initiative

My Dear Link Sisters,

Thank you for agreeing to take the first step towards finding ways to help our children to read at the 3rd grade proficiency level or beyond, and helping them to prepare for the future through success in math. There isn't a parent or caregiver who will not be grateful for your involvement in improving their child's reading and math skills.

No single method exists to address the many reasons our children cannot read or understand and solve math problems. But we can begin to explore the possibilities for improvement through community conversations. The outcomes of this will be some solutions and a review of our current programming to see what opportunities exist in our chapters to help. I know we can engage our current or a new population of students in some type of reading and or math program. We can influence behaviors that will impact change.

We are embarking on a current, 21st century issue for the African American community. I am so proud of you for your desire to be a part of what I believe will be one of the most important topics that The Links, Incorporated in the Central Area will begin to discuss and act upon. I truly am excited about the possibilities.

With Warm Regards as Your Sister in Linkdom,

Alice Strong Simmons

Alice Strong-Simmons
Central Area Director

cover photo: Learning Through Art, Inc. © 2010
Pre-K Students display diorama creeks from Books Alive! For Kids® The Little Creek Book Box at Academy of Multicultural Immersion Studies, Cincinnati OH

Overview

The Central Area of The Links, Incorporated engaged the Kettering Foundation (referred to as "Foundation") in a partnership to pilot a program that addresses "Closing the Achievement Gap." The Foundation has a model of conducting public forums that has proven to be appropriate for addressing various topics that may impact a community. The forums' intent is to create an environment in which people who have an interest in ensuring the stability of the community, will speak frankly about their position on a topic, what they might want to do about it and increase their desire to take on a specific task to make a difference.

The topic of interest to the Central Area of The Links is improving the ability of children from Pre-K to 3rd grade to read at or above state proficiency level, and to be able to demonstrate grade appropriate math skills. With the support and training of the Foundation, several chapters were introduced, trained and conducted community or public forums to discuss the issue of educating our children for the future. Those chapters are at different levels in the process, but all have identified a high interest level from the public about this topic as well as an interest in understanding and receiving guidance on next steps.

The following is our approach to this call to action to the 69 chapters in the Central Area...

As of this school year (2013 – 2014) at least fourteen states have instituted a policy called "3rd Grade Guarantee," that gives the school and the educator the authority to retain a child if s/he does not pass the 3rd grade reading proficiency exam. Laws differ across the country, but all have the option of retention or intervention, with some having requirements of the parents, or the child will be retained. The law suggests in some states, a child can be retained up to 3 times for failing the test, before s/he is promoted.

The Central Area of The Links, Incorporated is concerned about this issue and the current and future generational impacts it will have on society and especially people of color. Our mission is to strategically approach this topic, encouraging the participation of more chapters to begin community conversations, using the "public forum model," with the objective of modifying current programming to include a reading and or math component, utilize The Links Signature Programs to organize and implement specific and consistent focus on improving or, have chapters "start" reading and math programs focused on children in Pre-K through 3rd grade.

Our strategic initiatives over the next two years:

1. **Increase Central Area chapters' understanding of the challenges our children face in the areas of literacy and math**
2. **Introduce 69 chapters to Closing the Achievement Gap through the Literacy and Math Initiative**

3. **Partnering with the Kettering Foundation, engage chapters in facilitating public forums in their communities throughout the Central Area to have conversations with the community and learn ways the community will partner and address the literacy and math challenges of children of color**

4. **Increase chapter involvement in literacy and math processes, and integrate into current or new programming**

5. **Track activities with the projected outcome of specific improvement determined by each chapter**

6. **Celebrate success**

The following is our approach to this call to action to the 69 chapters in the Central Area, how we will participate, guide, train, and support chapters in organizing to address this major challenge to African Americans in the states where Links chapters are represented, and how we will monitor our progress to successfully begin to shift the current direction of the reading skills of a specific audience of children.

Understanding the Problem and Possible Solutions

What Is Closing The Achievement Gap?
The achievement gap is defined as the persistent disparity of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity and gender (Education Week). The term closing the achievement gap is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic white peers, and the similar disparity between students from low-income families and those who are better off.

Why the Literacy Focus?
The ability to read has a profound impact on an individual's personal and professional success. The Central Area's goal #1 is to engage chapters in programming that has the potential to improve grade-appropriate reading skills of African American students in the Pre-K and 3rd grade levels.

Why the Mathematics Focus?
With the world moving toward globalization, the country is growing in needs that require education and experience in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (S.T.E.M.). The Central Area is interested in providing a foundation for children of color to goal # 2, be exposed to S.T.E.M. to be positioned to survive, engage and add value to a changing world.

What Is The Third Grade Proficiency?
In 2012, 14 states passed legislation geared toward improving 3rd-grade literacy through identification, intervention, and/or retention initiatives. Today, a total of 32 states and the District of Columbia have policies in statute aimed at improving 3rd-grade reading proficiency. The majority of these states require early assessment and intervention, often as early as kindergarten. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia require retention of students on the basis of reading proficiency, most which require assessment and remediation for students in all K-3 grades.

The law gives states latitude to retain or provide intervention for students who fail the 3rd grade-reading exam. Beginning with the school year 2013-14, some states estimate 10s of thousands of 3rd graders will be affected by this law.

Sample Statutory Language from some of the more established/comprehensive 3rd-grade reading policies:

Arizona – §15-701 "The state board of education shall ... provide for universal screening of pupils in preschool programs, kindergarten programs and grades one through three that is designed to identify pupils who have reading deficiencies."

Intervention
Oklahoma – H.B. 2516 (2012) "Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, each school district shall establish a Reading Enhancement and Acceleration

Development (READ) Initiative. The focus of the READ Initiative shall be to prevent the retention of third-grade students by offering intensive accelerated reading instruction to third-grade students who failed to meet standards for

Retention
Georgia – §20-2-283 "No student shall be promoted, except as provided in this section, to:
The fourth grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if the student does not achieve grade level as defined by the Office of Student Achievement ... on the third grade criterion-referenced reading assessment ... and meet the promotional standards and

Exemptions from Retention
Florida – §1008.25 "The district school board may only exempt students from mandatory retention ... for good cause.

For more detailed information about the laws in your state, contact: Education Commission of the States, 700 Broadway, Suite 810, Denver, CO 80203-3442, 303.299.3600, www.ecs.org Page 14 criteria established by the State Board of Education and by the local school board for the school that the student attends."

Our Partner: The Kettering Foundation

What is the Kettering Foundation?

The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Kettering's primary research question is, what does it take to make democracy work, as it should? Kettering's research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. The foundation seeks to identify and address the challenges that make democracy work, as it should, through interrelated program areas that focus on citizens, communities, and institutions.

As the foundation's learning progresses, Kettering shares its research findings through books, research reports, occasional papers, videos, and its website. The foundation also disseminates its research in three periodicals: Connections, the Higher Education Exchange, and the Kettering Review.

Information extracted from the Kettering Foundation website at http://www.kettering.org

Tools for Success

READING

In addition to programs that chapters may currently be using, the Central Area has developed a partnership with Books Alive for Kids, Read, Baby, Read! and Freedom Schools. Materials from these three resources can be obtained utilizing the contact information included in this document. A brief description is provided for each program along with contact information to facilitate further discussion.

Learning Through Art, Inc.

Program Purpose and Description

Learning Through Art, Inc. (LTA), a performing arts educational non-profit celebrating 21 years of building community through art, is dedicated to providing quality performing arts programs in support of arts education, community development and engagement encouraging multi-cultural awareness and understanding.

Books Alive! For Kids® is a four-time EMMY nominated, national award winning performing arts literacy program targeting students from pre-school through third grade, with an emphasis on urban inner city and rural schools. The program makes 'books come alive' through sight, sound and touch in highly interactive sessions with educational materials aligned to the Common Core.

Books Alive! For Kids® enhances childhood development in the areas of creative thinking, writing, reading, art and music as well as engage participants from an early age in the learning process.

Books Alive! For Kids® enriches each participant's ability to listen, interpret, retain, reproduce and modify the lessons, skills and values presented during each presentation.

Books Presented

LTA's Books Alive! For Kids® program has presented 43 books in 15 years in 18 states including more than 80 Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky schools, early childcare centers and after-school programs serving over 50,000 students since 1998. Books Alive! For Kids® is the literacy partner with the Services To Youth Signature Program, Links To Success: Children Achieving Excellence.

For more information, visit the website: learningthroughart.com

READ, BABY, READ! Book Club

Program Purpose and Description

A CULTURAL EXCHANGE is a literacy-based non-profit multicultural arts organization for children. Read, Baby, Read! was developed by the organization in 1997 to support third

graders and has been expanded to serve preschool through high school students. The award-winning curriculum incorporates the arts, offering children another vehicle to extend their reading. Materials are critically selected and designed to actively engage students in an introspective literary exploration of their culture and the culture of others.

Recognized as a U.S. Department of Education "Best Practice," and aligned with Common Core and National ELA Standards, Read, Baby, Read! Book club members receive 10-13 brand-new multicultural books to include in their home libraries. Each book comes with parent engagement and art components. Reader Leaders receive professional development and training with a curriculum focusing on anti-bullying, leadership, self-esteem and culturally relevant themes.

Other offerings include "The Busy Bookmobile Programs," and "A Book Club for Young Achievers."

For more information visit the website: www.aculturalexchange.org

CDF Freedom Schools® Program

Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools

The CDF Freedom Schools® program provides summer and after-school enrichment through a research based and multicultural curriculum that support children and families around five essential components: high quality academic enrichment, parent and family involvement, civic engagement and social action, intergenerational leadership development, and nutrition, health and mental health. In partnership with community based organizations, faith institutions, schools, colleges and universities, the CDF Freedom Schools program boosts student motivation to read, generates positive attitudes towards learning, and connects the needs of children and families to the resources of their communities. The CDF Freedom Schools model incorporates the totality of CDF's mission by fostering environments that support children and young adults to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves and in their families, schools, communities, country, and world. Since 1995, more than 113,000 K-12 children have experienced CDF Freedom Schools and more than 14,000 college students and young adult staff have been trained to deliver this empowering model.

Freedom School Sites in the Central Area are:

West Helena, Arkansas
Elaine, Arkansas
Chicago, Illinois
Ford Heights, Illinois
Springfield, Illinois
Topeka, Kansas
Kansas City, Kansas
Covert, Michigan
Battle Creek, Michigan
Detroit, Michigan
Cincinnati, Ohio
Columbus, Ohio
Dayton, Ohio
Cleveland, Ohio
Johnstown, Ohio
East Cleveland, Ohio
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Memphis, Tennessee
Antioch, Tennessee

Kalamazoo, Michigan
Lansing, Michigan
St. Paul, Minnesota
St. Louis, Missouri
Knoxville, Tennessee
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Kansas City, Kansas

The HELPS Education Fund

Founded and directed by Dr. John Begeny (developer of the HELPS Programs), the purpose of The Helps Education Fund non-profit organization is to improve educational outcomes for children—nationally and internationally—through research, service, and collaborative partnerships among universities, K-12 schools, community agencies, and/or community members (e.g., parents of K-12 children). In particular, the mission of this organization is supported by (a) developing and/or disseminating effective educational practices and resources that will improve learning outcomes for children, (b) helping to merge research and educational practice, and (c) promoting educational equity.

MATHEMATICS

NASA Science Engineering Mathematics and Aerospace Academy

The NASA Science Engineering Mathematics and Aerospace Academy, or SEMAA, is a national, innovative project designed to increase participation and retention of historically underrepresented K-12 youth in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM. SEMAA has emerged as a nationally renowned leader in the efforts to increase the participation of historically underserved K-12 youth in the areas of STEM.

Sample Programs:

Hands-on, Inquiry-Based K-12 STEM Curriculum Enhancement Activities or CEA

The NASA SEMAA project uses a series of unique hands-on, inquiry-based classroom curriculum enhancement activities. In addition to being aligned with national math, science and technology standards, these activities encompass the research and technology of each of NASA's four mission directorates (Aeronautics Research, Exploration Systems, Science and Space Operations). On average, NASA SEMAA students participate for a total of 36 hours each year, 21 hours during the academic year and 15 hours during the summer. NASA SEMAA graduates who have participated in the entire K-12 program will have completed 441 hours of advanced studies in STEM prior to their enrollment in a post-secondary institution.

Aerospace Education Laboratory
Developed by NASA and equipped with 10 workstations, the Aerospace Education Laboratory, or AEL, is an electronically enhanced, computerized classroom that puts cutting-edge technology at the fingertips of NASA SEMAA middle- and high school-aged students. Each computerized research station provides students with real world challenges relative to both an aeronautics and microgravity scenario. Examples of the real aerospace hardware and software contained in the AEL include an Advanced Flight Simulator; a laboratory-grade, research wind tunnel; and a working, short-wave receiver and hand-held Global Positioning System for aviation. In addition to being an extraordinary tool for educating middle and high school students, the AEL serves as an excellent training facility for pre-service teachers on the NASA SEMAA curriculum.

SEMAA Locations and Directors in Central Area

- Cuyahoga Community College Ms. Lori Scott 2900 Community College Avenue Cleveland, OH 44115 Phone: 216-987-6301 E-mail: SEMAA@tri-c.edu
- Martin University Dr. Mamta Singh 2171 Avondale Indianapolis, IN 46218 Phone: 317-822-3489 E-mail: MSingh@Martin.edu
- SECME/Tennessee State University John Barfield Tennessee State University - Center of Excellence 3500 John Merritt Blvd. P.O. Box 9501 Nashville, TN 37209 Phone: 615-963-2291 Fax: 615-963-5068 E-mail: jbarfield@tnstate.edu
- Wayne State University Mr. William Moore 4841 Cass Avenue 1147 Old Main Building Detroit, MI 48201 Phone: 313-577-3209 E-mail: wmkmoore@wayne.edu

Organizations Providing STEM Education Resources or Services

Center for the Advancement of STEM Education (CASE) – http://www.caseforlearning.com
CASE provides instruction on 21st-century learning tools and strategies for teachers and scientists and engineers so that the two can work collaboratively within school systems located in proximity to Department of Defense labs.

Center for Innovation in Engineering and Science Education (CIESE) – http://www.k12science.org
CIESE collaborates with K-12 and university educators, researchers, policymakers and educational organizations to develop curriculum materials, conduct professional development programs, and research new methodologies to strengthen STEM education.

Center for STEM Education – http://www.stem.neu.edu
Operated at Northeastern University, the Center for STEM Education seeks to impact STEM teaching and learning at all levels, both locally and nationally.

CompTIA – http://www.comptia.org
The Computing Technology Industry Association provides educational assessments and certifications in information technology fields.

Challenger Center – http://www.challenger.org
Commemorating the crew of the Challenger Space Shuttle, the Challenger Center's mission is to create a scientifically literate population that can thrive in a world increasingly driven by information and technology.

First Robotics – http://www.usfirst.org
An organization founded by inventor and entrepreneur, Dean Kaman, sponsors competitions for students in which they design and construct robots.

HHMI Science Education Alliance – http://www.hhmi.org/grants/sea
A division of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Science Education Alliance creates the opportunity to bring leading scientists and educators together to develop, implement, and/or disseminate vetted and novel methods, technologies, and practices that can broaden scientific understanding and participation.

Health Occupations Student Organization (HOSA) – http://www.hosa.org
HOSA is a national career technical student organization endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education with a goal of providing students in health science programs with leadership development, motivation, and recognition.

Journal of STEM Education – http://ojs.jstem.org
This publication promotes high-quality undergraduate education in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology through peer reviewed articles.

National Science Digital Library – http://www.nsdl.org
This website is a collection is comprised of web portals, web sites, and individual digital resources identified by National Science Digital Library staff as appropriate for inclusion in the Library.

National Science Education Leadership Association – http://www.nsela.org
An organization dedicated to developing science education leadership for K - 16 school systems. NSELA members have a strong interest in advances in a broad array of topics including student learning, safety, curriculum, technology, professional development, assessment, inquiry, and science education reform.

National Science Foundation (NSF) – http://www.nsfresources.org
This site contains an initial sampling of resources and findings from NSF-funded projects related to STEM education.

Ohio STEM Learning Network – http://www.osln.org
The Ohio STEM Learning Network is an initiative that connects and unites the STEM education assets in the state and provides a forum to share the work.

PBS STEM Education Resource Center – http://www.pbs.org/teachers/stem
Operated by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), this database contains nearly 4,000 science, technology, engineering and math resources for teachers in grades pre-K through 12.

Project Lead the Way – http://www.pltw.org
Project Lead the Way provides an engaging, hands-on K-12 curriculum in many STEM education fields, such as engineering and biotechnology.

School of One – http://www.schoolofone.org
School of One was created to generate bold, effective and transformative changes in the classroom to better meet the individual needs of today's students.

SkillsUSA – http://www.skillsusa.org
This is a national career technical education student organization conducting student competitions in a myriad of science and math subjects. SkillsUSA also conducts technical skills assessments on a variety of career technical education subjects.

STEM Fuse - http://stemfuse.com/
STEM Fuse develops STEM focused middle school and high school curriculum. They currently offer 3 courses at the high school level and 1 middle school level course.

Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM Education (TIES) – http://www.tiesteach.org
This organization seeks to innovate the teaching of STEM education by providing STEM School design, STEM curriculum, and STEM instructional support to schools, districts, states and the federal government.

Wolfram Research STEM Initiative – http://www.wolfram.com/solutions/stem

Incorporating the Literacy and Math Initiative

The following are just a few suggestions as to how a chapter might integrate this initiative into a current program or start a program with this focus:

Begin with participation in the public forum process with the Kettering Foundation; complete the training, and begin engaging the entire community in improving the reading and math levels of our children in Pre-K through 3rd grade.

Possible ways/research to demonstrate to the community how The Links, Incorporated will support literacy and math improvement

1. Add a reading component to any of your facets, by setting a goal for increasing "new words" your audience learns with each chapter/member interaction
2. Develop a "Book Club" with books focused on a particular facet (Arts, International Trends and Services, National Trends and Services, Health and Human Services and or Services to Youth) among your targeted audience of students, with a recognition component of completing the book, learning new words, participation, etc.
3. Working with your partner school, identify the vocabulary needed for children to be grade-appropriate literate and add those words into your programs
4. Institute a "Word Exchange Program," in which your targeted audience is recognized for coming up with a new word each week and exchanging that with another student in the same audience
5. Through National Services to Youth, connect with The Links Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and engage students in the United Nations Program, learning new words or reading about how the United Nations works.
6. Contact NASA and find out about a partnership to expose your target audience to S.T.E.M.
7. Review other resources/organizations that engage in activities to improve performance of children in the areas of S.T.E.M.

Here to Help

The Central Area CAG Team is available to support your participation and work. The following provides team members' contact information and their areas of expertise. Contact these Links members based on your needs, after meeting with Central Area Director, Alice Strong-Simmons.

Helen Jones-Kelley, Dayton (OH) Chapter, hljk@aol.com

- Assist chapters in scheduling training with Kettering Foundation
- Assist chapters who have had at least one public forum in developing next steps

Everyln Williams, Greater Kansas City (MS) Chapter, w.everlyn@sbcglobal.net

- Assist chapters in planning public forums
- Ensure training information is received
- Manage timeline and Central Area calendar for CAG presentations, education

Sadie Winlock, Cleveland (OH) Chapter, lock1259@gmail.com

- Support Jones-Kelley and Williams in their focus areas
- Support Central Area measuring and tracking outputs and outcomes
- Develop quarterly report to Central Area on activities
- Act as liaison with Kettering Foundation

The information contained in this manual is available on the Central Area website under the title "CAG – Literacy and Math Initiative."

www.centralarealinks.org.

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