

### Competency 3: Community Relations

- **3.1 Related Task:** Ability to utilize staff and community involvement in developing goals and objectives for a school or school system.
- **3.1.3 Specific Task:**
  - o Outline a plan for involving community and staff in the development of a proposed curriculum program.
- **Narrative Description of Task:**
  - o Survey community, staff and parents regarding after school program needs and interests. Use survey results to help inform administrative decisions. Implement an after school program designed to attract students based on their own self interests. Staff, parent and community volunteers can instruct classes to small student groups via 3 to 4 week sessions. Take an active role of gaining and utilizing volunteers, creating surveys and flyers, registering students for classes during each session and maintain student and volunteer safety each week. Evaluate the effectiveness of the program and make marks for improvement for future sessions. Interchange classes each session based on the effectiveness of each class and the wants of the community and student participants.

**Smart Goal:** By April of 2016, implement a community and staff based after school program that is free to the students and permits higher engagement in other areas outside of the school day.

Specific:	Start a one day a week after school program that utilizes staff, parent and community volunteers and is free to students. Students can select clubs based on their own self-interest.
Measurable:	Registration numbers should be tracked and surveys will be collected to help decide which clubs to offer during each session.
Attainable:	Student and community engagement is key to running a successful building.
Relevant:	After school programs offer additional opportunities for student engagement and community involvement which in return allow for high rates of student achievement in select areas.
Timely:	By April 2016 I will implement a community and staff based after school program.

#### **Description and Rationale of Project:**

Over the last 5 years, at least three of the five elementary schools in the Swartz Creek Community School District have implemented some type of after school program periodically. Gaines Elementary has been the odd school out when it comes to community involvement after school.

Gaines Elementary students were, of course, never opposed to such an idea of having after school clubs. In fact, many of the students would always ask if any teachers would ever

offer some type of after school activities in areas of their interest. It was very evident from not only the students but by the parents and other community members, that they all wondered why Gaines never offered after school clubs. The issue was never with the students, parents, or community members, but with having enough staff or school personnel willing to step up and facilitate such a program.

Most of the teachers and staff at Gaines Elementary are more focused on the academics and during school hour's activities. The idea of having after school clubs never crossed some of their minds and the will was definitely never present. The main issue was the feeling of being overwhelmed by the increased workload that an idea like this would cause. However, knowing the interest of families, students, and other community members was at a high level and understanding the importance of creating a connection between the community and the school, with major help from a recently retired staff member and a handful of others at Gaines, we decided to start such a program.

Last school year, we tried to run a similar after school activity. Number wise, it was a complete success. We had almost 90 students enrolled which was almost half of our student population. However, we had many complaints from parents and students for various reasons. Many students did not like that the after school activities were very limited, lack of staff they actually knew, and they were forced on where to go. At each of the activity areas, students were met with community members who maybe did not know them personally and the relationships were not there like they are in the classroom with staff members. The community members became frustrated because they expected more support from the staff members but as noted above, the staff members were already exhausted and more academically focused during the school day. Eventually, the idea burned itself out, and Gaines let go of the after school program attempt.

In mid-September, I met with Lynn Atherton who was now a retired kindergarten teacher from our building and is familiar with the community of Gaines. She acknowledged the community members were frustrated with last year's attempt but that there may be a chance to run such a program again if some changes were made. From September through November, we met periodically and formalized a plan on how to run an after school program again. By December we had a set plan and we were ready to communicate it to staff, community members, parents, and students as we wanted to run our first after school session in January after the holiday break.

The set plan was to create an after school program with the goal of having students learn a task or skill by the end of the session. Thus, we wanted to offer after school clubs where students could sign up for clubs of their interest and pursue a skill or task that they wanted to better themselves in, or perhaps, learn something completely new over the course of a few weeks at a time. The issue, however, was deciding what clubs to offer and who were the necessary helping hands going to be.

Just before the holiday break, a survey was created to send home to parents. This survey was to gain input on what clubs students, parents, and community members would like to see offered and if any of them would be willing to assist these clubs or possibly lead one of their

own. The response was outstanding considering the circumstances and mood from last year. We received responses from around 20 different people. Some of the people were community members, others were parents, and a few were staff members.

Using the survey information, a program was created known as the Gaines After-School Program (GASP). We ended up with being able to offer six totally different clubs to the student population on Thursdays after school from 3:45 PM to 4:45 PM. Those clubs consisted of Arts and Crafts, Painting, Technology, Math, Sports, and Chess. All six clubs had their own specifications based on what each group leader felt comfortable with and the goal of the club. Once the six clubs were decided, a registration sheet was created and sent home to all students. Students were instructed to mark their top two choices just in case they did not receive their first choice. A rule was also created stating that each club needed a minimum of four students in order for it to run. Also on the sheet, parents were to fill out emergency medical information and inform us of their child's method of transportation home afterwards.

The registration form that went home immediately after break on January 8<sup>th</sup> was due back January 19<sup>th</sup> with the intention to begin the first session of GASP on January 21<sup>st</sup> and continuing for the next 3 Thursdays on January 28<sup>th</sup>, February 4<sup>th</sup> and February 11<sup>th</sup>. An email communication was sent out then to set up an initial meeting to discuss expectations, procedures, and routines for the program. Just before the meeting, it was pointed out that the February 11<sup>th</sup> date, which was to be the last day of the first session, had a scheduling conflict since that day was on parent-teacher conference night. That being said, we decided quickly that the February 11<sup>th</sup> date would just be removed rather than rescheduled to save on energy and complications with future session plans.

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, exactly one week before the first week of GASP, we held the initial planning meeting at Gaines Elementary. All of the volunteers came to ask questions, seek the expectations and routines, and make a final claim of all of the necessary materials they may still need for their club. Any volunteers who elected to not lead a club were then assigned to the other club leaders in an effort to provide extra hands. We had six club leaders and were ultimately able to provide a minimum of two assistants to each club.

By January 19<sup>th</sup>, all of the student registration forms were in. We had 57 students sign up which was very pleasing, and all of the clubs had a minimum of four students as stated as the main requirement. In fact, the numbers worked out so well that each child also got their first choice in clubs. The numbers broke down as follows:

- Arts and Crafts (K-5) = 11
- Painting (K-5) = 16
- Sports (3-5) = 14
- Chess (K-5) = 6
- Math (K-5) = 6
- Technology (3-5) = 4

The day before the first day of session one, we had to create sign in and out sheets for each club leader, as well as provide each club leader with how each child was being transported

home afterwards. Snacks were also purchased which was being reimbursed by the Barons Motorcycle Club, a local group that resides in Gaines. The Barons ultimately donated \$300 to cover supply and food costs to run the program. Thus, when everything was purchased, receipts just had to be turned in and we were reimbursed for all out of pocket costs.

The clubs began on January 21st and students were individually named and instructed over the announcements at the end of the day to head to the cafeteria where they would sign in and receive a snack if they chose to have one. They would essentially wait for the club leaders to be ready and each club leader would come to the cafeteria to pick up their group of students as well as their own sign in and out clipboard. Each club leader then would check in their students and would report anyone who was missing. The office would then confirm if they were absent or had a last minute change of plans. Once all students were accounted for, club leaders would lead each club into the learning task they had at hand. The first week, we had a few students end up in the wrong groups or unsure of where they were headed. However, by week three we had all 57 students accounted for and where they needed to be within five minutes.

At the close of the last week, there was nothing but positive vibes, comments, and reviews from students, parents, staff, and community members regarding how much they had enjoyed GASP. Thus, we knew we had to continue for not only another session, but we mapped out the rest of the year to allow for two more additional sessions where students could sign up for clubs of interest.

### **Project Outcomes:**

A quality institution is one that is led by an administrator who is able to efficiently connect the community to the school through various means. The Gaines After School Program did that and did it well. With about half of the student population registering for the after school clubs, the clubs were a great success that helped to enrich students in areas outside of the classroom. The community and school formed a special bond that was missing during the after school hours and that bond will look to continue for many years to come through the development of this program.

### **Reflection:**

Much of the feedback about Gaines Elementary and its first ever after school clubs were positive. However, many lessons were learned throughout the process. Written and verbal communication are definitely crucial and were definitely the focus here. Of course, as an administrator, communication is vital when it comes to best administrative practices.

In regards to written communication, I would have done a better job establishing the due date a little sooner for the registration forms. Essentially, the due date of January 19th was only two days before the first day of the clubs. This gave us only 48 hours to create sign in and out sheets, mark medical needs, and double check on transportation needs. Essentially, the due date for the forms should have been sooner to allow for more time to establish the above mentioned items. Next session, I intend to have all registration forms due back at least a week before the first day of after school clubs. To better communicate this, I will bold a due date on the

registration form and provide a notice to families that there will be no late exceptions. This adjustment will provide clear expectations for when the forms are due and provide us with enough time to create all of the necessary roster materials.

Another change I would make would be in the area of verbal communication. Essentially, one of the toughest tasks of an administrator, is to make sure everyone is on the same page. This does not just include those who specifically volunteered for the program but also the building employees such as the teachers, the custodians, the building secretary and the principal. Although we had 57 students sign up and we did our best to announce all of the names over the PA, our building secretary missed a few of the names of students who were supposed to be enrolled in the program. Thus, this caused some of the students to ride the bus home when in fact they were supposed to be in attendance. Another issue was some of the rooms in which the clubs were going to be were not properly set up as custodians were not properly informed of this upcoming program. Had it been better communicated the needs of our program to all staff members, our custodians would have had the rooms set up and ready to go and the building secretary would have never missed a few of the student names.

Each of these lessons will be incredibly valuable as a future administrator. A highly efficient institution is one that is run through excellent communication. An administrator should aim to speak clearly, address all loose ends, and be sure to include everyone as they are all part of their team.