

BOARD MEMO

Date: March 7, 2024

For ACTION

For INFORMATION X

FROM: Marisol Morales, Out of School Time Program Manager
Taneika Taylor Tukan, Executive Director of Community Partnerships & Engagement

THROUGH: Julia Burgos, Chief of School & Community Relations
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Michelle Rief, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: LINK Club - Out of School Time Program Sustainability Planning Update

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

- Goal 1: Systemic Alignment
- Goal 2: Instructional Excellence
- Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support
- Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation
- Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

SY 2023-2024 PRIORITY AREA:

- Academic Achievement
- Tier 1 Instruction: Alignment, Rigor, Engagement
- Student Supports
- Student Connection and Attendance
- Continue Culture Building

FY 2024 BUDGET PRIORITY:

- K-4 Literacy
- Target Chronic Absenteeism
- Increase Support for Social and Emotional Learning

SUMMARY:

The Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement (CPE) is providing the School Board with a sustainability planning update on the comprehensive out of school time (OST) program, LINK Club. This program provides high quality and comprehensive after school services with an emphasis on academic support, enrichment, social-emotional support, health and wellness and family engagement to high-need, economically-disadvantaged students and their families. In school year 2023-24, LINK (Linking Instruction, Nurturing Knowledge) Club is serving over 600 students at 12 school and community sites across Alexandria City. With the sunset of elementary and secondary schools emergency relief (ESSER) funds this year, LINK Club programming is expecting a decrease in the number of students served in 2024-25.

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The current model of providing OST programming through LINK Club is becoming harder to sustainably manage across Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). CPE has applied for and received a series of state and federal grants to fund these programs, including the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) Grant, the ESSER funds, with additional funding support provided by Title I Funds and smaller foundation grants. Each grant has significant administrative requirements, unique data collection and reporting mandates, monitoring visits, and restrictions/limitations on acceptable uses for grant dollars. ACPS is currently in strategy sessions with internal and external stakeholders, including the ACT for Alexandria Youth Support Network, to create the plan for sustainability after the period of 21st (CCLC) Grants and ESSER funding expires. The plan is expected to be available in spring 2024.

DETAILS:

Through collaboration with co-applicants (Homes For America, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Community Lodgings and City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities/DRPCA), a wide variety of ACPS schools and departments, and community partners that contribute in-kind facilities, staffing and other wrap-around services that significantly leverage the grant funds, ACPS LINK Club is a major provider of comprehensive OST programs in Alexandria. Given the impact and substantial need for high quality OST programs in the city, it is the division's responsibility to ensure the continuation and growth of high-quality OST programming to youth.

In December 2023, the ACT for Alexandria's Youth Support Network finalized an out-of-school time landscape study, [Increasing Opportunities for Alexandria Youth: A Community Report](#), to document and map current K-12 out-of-school time programming. This report identifies the hopes, needs and barriers experienced by youth, families and providers related to OST activities, with a focus on middle and high school students. The report found that over 177 programs are offered at 200 locations across the city, with most providers (64%) having enrollment of less than 50 participants. Only 5% of providers had more than 150 participants, ACPS being one of those critical providers in the community. The report also found that only about one-third of youth across all of Alexandria currently participate in organized OST activities, with the primary barriers and challenges to participation including transportation, program cost and not knowing about program offerings. The study recommendations serve as a community-wide call to action about the value and importance of expanded learning programs for our children and youth.

In alignment with the study recommendations, the ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan and the City of Alexandria's Children and Youth Community Plan, ACPS is currently in strategy sessions with internal and external stakeholders, including the ACT for Alexandria Youth Support Network, to create a plan for LINK Club OST programming's sustainability after the period of 21st (CCLC) Grants and ESSER funding expires. An opportunity exists to reimagine how programs, including LINK Club, are delivered in the City by right-sizing and growing offerings so that all ACPS students have equitable access and engagement in meaningful OST programs and community based activities.

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CPE is evaluating different scenarios, including:

- Adjusting the LINK Club model to be adequately staffed and supported
- Establishing consistent division-wide OST programming across all schools and community partner locations
- Exploring a braided funding model
- Redesigning LINK Club to expand access through a fee-for-service model

It is essential that OST programming remains a coordinated effort across the Department of Teaching, Learning and Leadership, Facilities & Operations, school leadership and community partners, with standard staffing and delivery models at each site to ensure high-quality programming for all students.

BACKGROUND:

To address the goals of the City of Alexandria's *Children and Youth Community Plan 2025*, which was unanimously approved in June 2014 by the Alexandria City Council and the Alexandria City School Board and various areas of the *ACPS 2025 Strategic Plan: Equity for All*, the ACPS Office of Community Partnerships and Engagement designed and implemented LINK Club , a high-quality afterschool program with an emphasis on academic achievement support and an opportunity for high-need, low-income students to attend at no cost to families. In 2017, ACPS was awarded its first grant to support LINK Club out of school time programming from the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Center Grant.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this presentation to gain a better understanding of the current programming and potential pathways to move forward with sustainability that will ensure and strengthen comprehensive out of school time opportunities for ACPS students.

IMPACT:

Through current out of school time programming and the opportunity to expand to additional sites, additional identified students in need will have the opportunity to participate in high quality out of school time programming to support their academic, social/emotional and health and wellness success.

ATTACHMENTS:

Presentation: LINK Club - Out of School Time Program Sustainability Planning Update
Children and Youth Master Plan 2025

Increasing Opportunities for Alexandria Youth: A Community Report

Increasing Opportunities for Alexandria City Youth: Four Things Elected and Appointed Officials Should Know

REFERENCES:

[230504 Board Presentation ACPS Out of School Time Update](#)

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