



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Academic, Innovation, and Mentoring (AIM) Program

2021

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.215.080](#)

Martin Mueller

**Assistant Superintendent of Student Engagement
and Support**

Prepared by:

- **Cara Patrick**, Program Supervisor
cara.patrick@k12.wa.us | 360-529-7629

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Academic, Innovation, and Mentoring (AIM) program is to support community-based youth development organizations that deliver educational services, mentoring, connection to positive, prosocial leisure, and recreational activities for youth ages 6–18. The AIM program was designed to provide targeted academic and social-emotional development interventions during out-of-school time.

Following a competitive grant process in Spring 2019, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) approved the Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State Association (Boys & Girls Clubs or Clubs) for a two-year AIM grant of \$362,000. This report reflects the second year of that grant.

With the fall 2019 through spring 2021 AIM grant, the Boys & Girls Clubs proposed to implement community specific models in six locations across the state. Each site worked with the local school district to ensure a match with community needs and resources, and developed plans to implement a range of evidence-based programming.

Regularly scheduled mid-year check-ins revealed that the AIM sites were making impressive progress towards grant goals and objectives. All sites collected participant demographics and pre-intervention measurements of academic and social and emotional development, utilizing a variety of approaches. The Clubs all reported on observed progress in in English language arts (ELA) and math that would have been verified through end-of-year assessments. However, the abrupt end of regular programming in March 2020 meant post-test data was unavailable.

With the declaration of the COVID-19 public health emergency in March 2020, all AIM sites transitioned to a variety of programming approaches to align with the local community. Most Clubs were able to offer virtual tutoring, academic check-ins, and other types of online support for program participants. Clubs also offered take-home academic packets and supplies, educational games and activities, and in-person or remote connection with caregivers as appropriate. Providing safe and supportive expanded learning opportunities for the children of essential personnel has been an invaluable service to the community. That support continued where needed during the 2020–21 school year and was adapted in order to best serve the students and community.

BACKGROUND

The Academic, Innovation, and Mentoring (AIM) program was created as a pilot program in the 2015–17 Operating Budget. It was then established as a continuing program in 2017 through Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.215.080.

The purpose of the AIM program is to support community-based youth development organizations that deliver educational services, mentoring, connection to positive, prosocial leisure, and recreational activities for youth ages 6–18. The AIM program was designed to provide targeted academic and social emotional development interventions during out-of-school time.

Throughout the program's history, each of the participating AIM operating sites has implemented a range of evidence-based academic mentoring programs designed to improve performance in core subjects, provided experiential learning opportunities, and promoted deeper engagement of social and emotional components. In addition, AIM participants developed mentoring relationships to further sustain and grow academic and social emotional gains.

UPDATE STATUS

Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State Association continued its implementation of the Academic, Innovation, and Mentoring (AIM) grant in the 2020–21 school year despite many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures and overall learning disruptions. At the end of the previous year (2019–20) the six Clubs in the AIM cohort were serving 272 kids with targeted academic and social and emotional services, and in February 2020 were on track to grow the final number of kids served by 36%.

With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, all Clubs transitioned to full-day virtual learning support, and significantly reduced the number of members attending to comply with social distancing regulations. Attending members continued to receive targeted academic support, including facilitation of remote learning, assistance with asynchronous learning, afterschool homework support, and non-school related academically focused high-yield activities, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics games. Students newly enrolled in the program benefited from smaller stable cohort groups and continued to work on their social and emotional needs.

Despite significant reductions in Club attendance, 196 students graduated from the 2021 AIM program, and 79% of them qualified for the free and reduced-price meals. For those AIM programs that were able to collect baseline metrics, program outcomes reported at the end of the grant cycle showed an 83% improvement in ELA and a 70% improvement in math. As was expected with such a tough school year marked with isolation, too much screen time, and overall stress associated with the impacts of the pandemic, only 50% of children that had a baseline measurement for this program reported better social and emotional skills. Overall, the AIM grant was critical to the ability of participating Clubs in allowing them flexibility on how to support their members' academic needs throughout the most challenging school year.

Table 1: 2020–21 AIM Program Participation by Site

AIM Program Site	Benton and Franklin Counties	Columbia Basin	Skagit County	South Puget Sound	SW Washington	Thurston County	TOTAL
Total #	33	40	36	26	20	41	196
Demographics							Average
White %	5	59	35	53	48	47	41
Students of Color %	95	41	65	47	52	53	59
Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals %	98	65	78	71	88	71	79
Male %	56	46	51	29	42	37	44
Female %	44	54	49	71	58	63	57
Non-binary %				5			

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The AIM 2019–21 grant successfully targeted supports to the individual needs of participants regardless of the challenges presented by the pandemic. For the 2021–23 grant cycle, the Legislature provided \$362,000 per year. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State Association again won the grant to implement at 12 Clubs across nine different affiliate organizations.

All the Clubs have returned to in-person afterschool programming, so AIM programs and services will resemble more traditional implementation model. All of the Clubs in this cohort have reported initial demographic and baseline data for program participants and have action plans in place to monitor participants’ progression in the program and collect year-end data, as well.

The 2021–23 programming will include a particular focus is on social-emotional learning, as most students are struggling with long-term impacts of pandemic isolation, health and social impacts, and learning interruptions impacting their sense of academic proficiency.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: AIM Program Stories

Following is a selection of stories, one from each participating Club:

Melanie is 5th grade club member, and she has been a club member for five years. In the past Melanie has been a very quiet club member who was pretty shut down emotionally and not very social. She had very few friends and struggled with social interactions, often coming off to others as aggressive or mean. The staff have worked with Melanie through the years and have even tried to work with the school staff at her home school but had very little success. This year with the reduced number of participants and the consistent implementation of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program Sanford Harmony, they have seen tremendous growth with Melanie socially. She has opened up to staff during SEL activities, expressing her own personal struggles and has shown vulnerability to staff and other club members. She has also blossomed into a happier and less afraid kid who is more willing to participate in programs and express her feelings to others. Additionally, she has taken on some leadership roles within clubs.

Joshua is a club member who was quick to get upset when things did not go his way and who had difficulty expressing himself. He was also dependent on his older brother to help him through many things. Through learning more about himself in SEL programming he learned how to better express himself and communicate when he is frustrated. This has aided him tremendously at school where he has had a lot of conflicts with other youth. It has helped him to better be able to talk to the teacher when things are going on. He also discovered his love of drawing and journaling and that he can use this as a coping mechanism when he is upset.

A Youth Development Professional utilized the current material for Power Hour Math and made it more entertaining. The staff member noticed that the Club members did not want to engage unless there was movement associated with the project. The staff member created a math game using balls, milk crates, basic math problems, and a small reward. Club members would ask to play the game! All the staff did was modify the existing game.

In addition to successes within the Project Learn and SEL programs, some of the greatest impacts have been with the mentoring of some members. Over the course of the year, they had several members who were having some challenges with successful behavior management in the cohorts and socializing with others. The AIM Coordinator worked with the therapist and parents to put together individualized plans for these members. Some of these plans included charts with incentives, timed and intentional check in with staff, and providing cohort staff with strategies to better work with these Club members. For two of these members in particular, the plans resulted in a significant decrease in behaviors, and reduction in suspensions and calls home to parents.

During the first week back, Club members were surprised with The Historic Trust coming in and having them create their own rockets. Members were able to learn about the history of rockets, pick a bottle and decorate it and then launch it off outside. Participant members worked closely with The Historic Trust staff to learn about how much baking soda it would take to launch their

rockets to a higher distance. Because of our smaller numbers, members were able launch their rockets at least 5 times each. Each time they would go back and fill their rocket with less baking soda because they learned that they would launch further. One member was so excited they told us, "If this is what we're doing at Club every week, I'm going to tell all my friends to sign up for Club!"

One 6th grader had a particularly high missing assignment count, up to 70 assignments. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer this year and was working long hours during the day. Club was a huge support for her as she faced challenges at home. The Teen Director supported the member with mentoring, prompted her to write her mother a letter about her feelings, and helped her create a plan to complete missing assignments. For two months they worked together every day. At first the member needed extra encouragement, learning strategies, and prompters to get started. Eventually she took the lead and went at her own pace. She became more confident and asked for help when needed. She finished the year strong with her assignments completed.

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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Chris Reykdal | State Superintendent
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building | P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200