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**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: Washington AIM Program

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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, and connection to positive out-of-school time 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 2021, 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 \$724,000. The Boys & Girls Clubs proposed to put community specific models into place in 12 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.

At the end of the 2022 school year, the combined total of students served reached 531 students, with 67% retained to year end. Some Clubs continue to struggle with program retention due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, and some students experiencing significant learning and attendance interruptions due to COVID diagnosis or confirmed exposure. All sites have collected participant demographics and pre-intervention measurements of academic improvement and demonstration of social and emotional skills.

Clubs selected different methods to demonstrate improved academic outcomes, but all of them are seeing success with improving math and English language arts (ELA) for students needing additional support.

- For Clubs using “State Assessment Results” as an indicator:
  - 65% of AIM participants improved their results from year-to-year in ELA
  - 64% improved year-to-year results in math
- For Clubs using “Grades” an indicator:
  - 91% of AIM participants had an improvement in ELA
  - 87% of AIM participants had an improvement in math
- For Clubs using “At or Above Grade Level at Year End” as an indicator:
  - 58% of AIM participants met this metric in ELA
  - 62% of AIM participants met this metric in math

# INTRODUCTION

The AIM program launched in 2015 as a pilot program designed to deliver educational services, mentoring, and connection to positive out-of-school time activities for youth ages 6–18. In 2017, the Legislature established the AIM program in state law to continue supporting community-based youth development organizations providing targeted academic and social emotional development interventions during out-of-school time to improve the academic and life outcomes of students.

The AIM program focuses on students with identified barriers to academic achievement—for example, free and reduced-price lunch eligibility—and provides a minimum of 30 academic tutoring sessions. These incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) principles, either as an integrated mentoring/tutoring approach or as a stand-alone program.

# UPDATE STATUS

During the first year of the 2021–23 AIM grant, the Boys & Girls Clubs were able to double the number of sites offering AIM programming compared to prior years. The increase in AIM grant funding from \$181,000 per year for 2019–21 to \$362,000 per year for the 2021–23 grant period also allowed the Clubs to serve nearly twice as many students.

## 2021–22 AIM Program Participation

Clubs participating in the AIM program projected that they would serve approximately 395 students, ages 6–18, across twelve sites. Table 1 below demonstrates that Clubs exceeded initial targets for year one of this two-year grant.

**Table 1: Total Students in Each AIM-Implementing Organization**

AIM Implementing Organization	Total Students
Benton & Franklin Counties	53
Bellevue (2 sites)	40
Skagit County	38
South Puget Sound	74
Southwest Washington	59
Thurston County (2 sites)	65
Olympic Peninsula	114
Snohomish County	49
King County (Two sites)	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>531</b>

Source: AIM Year-End Progress Report, October 2022.

Table 2 summarizes student demographics in AIM-implementing organizations, including students identified as Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC) and students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL).

**Table 2: Student Demographic in every AIM-Implementing Organization**

AIM Implementing Organization	Percent White	Percent BIPOC	Percent FRPL	Percent Male	Percent Female	Percent Non-Binary
Benton & Franklin Counties	2%	98%	100%	25%	75%	0%
Bellevue (2 sites)	24%	76%	98%	65%	35%	0%
Skagit County	47%	53%	83%	53%	47%	0%
South Puget Sound	9%	91%	91%	45%	55%	0%
Southwest Washington	55%	45%	85%	43%	57%	0%
Thurston County (2 sites)	35%	65%	68%	55%	45%	0%
Olympic Peninsula	74%	26%	76%	53%	46%	1%
Snohomish County	70%	30%	73%	57%	43%	0%
King County (Two sites)	20%	80%	70%	25%	75%	0%
Average	36%	64%	83%	49%	51%	0%

**Source:** AIM Year-End Progress Report, October 2022.

Academic support and mentoring activities continue to be central to the AIM program and were implemented with a variety of approaches across the 12 AIM sites. All Clubs worked closely with their partnering school district, connecting with teachers, counselors, and principals to ensure that students enrolled in AIM programs received targeted support in both academic and social-emotional skills and competencies.

Overall, Clubs utilized several strategies to measure participant academic progress. Of those using "State Assessment Results," Clubs reported that 65% of AIM participants improved their results from year-to-year in English language arts (ELA), and 64% improved year-to-year results in math. Of those using "Grades" as a measure of improvement, Clubs reported that 91% of AIM participants had an improvement in ELA, and 87% of AIM participants had an improvement in math. Finally, some Clubs utilized "At or Above Grade Level at Year End" as a measure of progress.

Clubs in this category reported 58% of AIM participants met this metric in ELA, and 62% participants met it in math.

Mental health challenges that were caused or increased by the pandemic were particularly evident during this school year. In response, the Clubs doubled down on their efforts to introduce a strong social-emotional component into AIM programming. These supports provided AIM participants with additional tools for academic success and perseverance, as well as recognition of emotions associated with both academic difficulties and successes. Similar to academic measurement, Clubs utilized a variety of approaches to track social-emotional progress of AIM participants as a cohort, including increase/decrease of behavioral referrals, observable social-emotional learning indicators, and youth surveys with CASEL-approved tools. Across all methods of measurement, an average of 77% of AIM participants demonstrated social-emotional learning skills and competencies.

## **CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS**

The AIM program continues to deliver targeted support to students identified as needing additional help. In this post-pandemic time that additional support has been more critical than ever. With more school and communities returning to a more typical situation following the shutdowns and changes due to the pandemic, year two of the 2021–23 grant will build on the successes of year one. The December 2023 update for the AIM program will include data on the second year.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: 2021–22 AIM Program Examples

The following are site-by-site descriptions of programming and individual stories of success.

### Bellevue (Spiritwood Manor and Crossroads Clubhouses)

**Academic focus:** Students were provided with one-on-one literacy tutoring by the AmeriCorps Representative that consisted of engaging in reading age-appropriate lessons. This included but is not limited to letter recognition, sight word recognition, phonetics, and sentence construction. Students also participated in consistent trivia style activities that built off each other in every lesson, promoting participation, while implementing incentive programs to engage students.

**Social-emotional learning (SEL) focus:** Students participated in consistent programs focused on Social Emotion Learning. Using social stories, staff showed examples of appropriate versus inappropriate interactions between students and facilitated age-appropriate conversations within groups of students. Staff also created activities where students had to work together to create and implement new games to share with other students. For example, students in 3rd grade created relay races for students in kindergarten and 1st grade and showed examples of positive peer interactions before beginning. When older students regularly gave examples of positive peer interactions for younger students, staff and students noticed an increase of positive behavior.

**Success story:** One student was regularly participating in club activities, including AmeriCorps reading assessments, and it was recognized that she needed consistent literacy support. Staff were able to connect with the school to understand academic supports needed, as well as observing social-emotional connections at the Club. At the end of the school year, staff assisted the student in memorizing her “World Leaders” presentation, where she chose Steve Jobs and gave a biographical presentation of his life. Staff supported her in memorizing her presentation, and she practiced her presentation in front of her peers at the Club. Staff also attended “World Leaders Day” at the school to cheer her on during her presentation.

### Benton and Franklin Counties (Pasco Clubhouse)

**Academic focus:** Project Learn homework assistance program was supplemented with many extracurricular activities. One activity was “Adopt a Cow” program that the kids participated in through a partnership with the Dairy Farmers of Washington. This was a very interactive way for youth to learn about dairy farms and cows. It was made personal, as they adopted a cow named Autumn that they got pictures of. The club members learned about the anatomy of cows, how to care for them, how much milk they produce and more. As staff work to provide a variety of different experiences for club members, this was something unique and fun to connect the youth with learning. Another way that staff kept club members engaged and focused on learning was through Power Hour charts. Club members were able to earn stickers for completing homework or math & writing worksheets specific to their learning level to earn stickers.

**SEL focus:** SEL programming has been a large focus for us at Pasco Clubhouse and throughout our organization. Sanford Harmony has been a wonderful program for implementation, including many hands-on activities that help guide members' social emotional learning. A great example is "The Coping Skills Game". Club members use dice to go through different activities and the colors on the dice coordinate with different areas: sharing personal stories to connect with others, positive self-talk activities, ways to physically calm oneself, true & false questions around emotional safety, and questions about emotions.

**Success story:** A second-grade student has attended Club for three years. When he started in the program, he could not read or do simple math. He was frustrated and did not want to engage in the learning process. Pasco Club staff continued to work with him both in small group and one-on-one, and one day it just started to click. It took a lot of time and reassurance that he could learn and that he was capable. Club staff anticipate a lot of progress in the coming year now that some of his barriers to learning seem to have come down.

## **King County (Northgate and Lowell Elementary School Sites)**

**Academic focus:** In addition to the daily Power Hour program, this program emphasizes experiential education to get students excited about learning. Experiential education programs included:

- Coding and Robotics, where students learned to code robot rocket launchers and robot musical instruments
- Environmental Education, where students practiced composting and read books about recycling, composting, and the problem with plastics
- Math Games that incorporated math problems into fun activities, such as NBA Math Hoops

**SEL focus:** Partner organization Space Between visited the Club to deliver mindfulness sessions for the Northgate Elementary Club students this winter. Activities during the workshops included intentional movements and mindfulness practices, such as practicing breathing with an expandable breathing ball. Yoga movements were also incorporated throughout. Activities focused on helping kids build skills and gain knowledge on how to understand and manage their emotions and treat one another with empathy. Space Between teachers encouraged students lead some of the exercises that helped demonstrate the students' confidence and calm energy leading the group.

**Success story:** Clubs had a focus on environmental science this year and incorporated it into the program in a variety of ways with students reading about recycling and composting, then actually getting to practice creating compost. Staff noticed the students become so much more aware of the environment and how they were impacting it as they progressed throughout the year—being thoughtful about how they could change their own actions to make a difference.



## Olympic Peninsula (Port Angeles Clubhouse)

**Academic focus:** Activities and educational games were based on the interests of the children, promoted curiosity and conversations with members and staff, engaged children in a variety of educational domains. These included:

- Library Read Aloud: Staff choose books with children to read aloud to smaller groups of children weekly.
- Reading Club: Children choose a book to read together weekly and meet to discuss the books, characters, setting, plot, and story lines.
- Worksheets and Printables: Children were able to choose from age-appropriate worksheets and printables that included facts and concepts to learn about a variety of subjects and helped to engage the children in logic building exercises. This also improved writing skills, memory and knowledge retention, and independent practice.
- Trivia: Children were in groups and collectively answered trivia questions via online "Jeopardy" and learned a variety of information and facts from different topics.
- Reading Buddies Program: Promoted academic success, social connection with Club volunteers, and provided a well-rounded experience to enjoy our local library and learn about resources available to all Club members.

**SEL focus:** Working with youth on teaching different emotions and techniques such as breathing exercises, play breaks, writing in a journal, and utilizing the Mood Meter. The goal was to teach members to be aware of their own emotions and how they affect not only themselves, but others around them. Staff aimed for them to learn tools for self-regulation and emotional control, especially as they learn about their triggers or labeling their emotions. Staff completed role playing activities that taught the members how to read facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Children collaborated in helping one another achieve their homework completion and goals to be able to have a Power Hour Party each month.

**Success story:** We had a member who would get upset or angry very quickly and be quick to react. Most of the time it would be a physical reaction resulting in someone getting hurt. This member was very engaged in activities and lessons specifically about emotions and how to self-calm using new techniques like taking a physical play break, running energy laps, or breathing exercises. There have been multiple times the member utilized some of these new emotional regulation tools to help calm himself before reacting physically and has tremendously improved his negative behaviors.

**Academic focus:** One member came to the Club this last year from doing only online learning for the last two years to a fully in-person model for school. He has really excelled in math and writing in school and has offered to help other children in the learning center complete their homework, tutor them, and engage with other children like he has been unable to do in an online learning model. He has also helped start the Rubik's Cube Club at the Clubhouse, where a variety of all members come together to learn how to solve a Rubik's Cube and other types of math problems.

## **Southwest Washington (Washington Elementary in Vancouver)**

**Academic focus:** This school year Washington Elementary Club partnered with the school for their Power Hour program. Monday–Thursday after snack Club members were able to check out their iPad from school and spend a dedicated 45 minutes working on iReady. Club members could earn up to 3 points during this time—1 point for attendance, 1 point for staying on track and 1 point for completing their lessons. At the end of the month the Academic Success Coordinator would host a Power Hour party and members with 25 points or more would be able to attend. During program time, staff created some popular programs throughout the school year. Lego Masters/Lego Masters 2.0 allowed members to create different types of structures including Four Seasons—having members use a baseplate to create a scene from their favorite season. Another popular program was Jr. Engineers, where each week members used recycled materials to build towers, bridges, catapults and more.

**SEL focus:** Peace Out is an ongoing program that is run every Friday. Staff are assigned a specific grade matching up with their members they work one on one or in small groups with. Peace Out is designed for members to learn about themselves, each other and build community. Every Peace Out program starts with a community builder. Community builders range from using a talking stick with a specific prompt or question to playing a game of Duck, Duck, Goose. Members also participate in activities revolving around communication, life skills, feelings, goals, and mental health. A few themes for Peace Out this year were Kindness, Self-Regulation, and Gratitude. Members are a part of their Peace Out groups with their staff for a whole year. This provides consistency for our members and allows them to have at least one trusted staff at Club as well as develop strong relationships with their peers.

**Success story:** Mr. Myers, the Principal at Washington Elementary, shared that a student that had been attending Washington for the last four years went up two reading levels during the 2021–2022 school year. Mr. Myers was concerned about this student’s scores without focused time from teachers to focus with him. He thanked Maria and the team at Washington Elementary Club for spending focused and group time to help support him. Maria, the Club Director at this Club, also expressed that this student has started attending Power Hour and focusing on his work more often. She said he is excited about learning and created great relationships with the staff this year. He often wants staff to reassure him that he's doing things correctly; it's important to him and he gets excited when everything is done right.

## **Thurston County (Lacey and RMAC Clubs)**

**Academic focus:** Youth in this program participated in a locally developed enhancement of Project Learn, called Get Good Grades. Members attended focused tutoring sessions with mentors closely tracking their progress for three hours each week. Adult mentors helped members with homework, learning skills, and communication with caregivers and teachers to provide wraparound support. Activities in the tutoring session were individually tailored for each child's needs.

**SEL focus:** Members were able to meet one-on-one with a certified counselor on-site for help with behavioral, social, and emotional skill-building. The Mental Health Skills Coach carries a caseload of those who can most benefit from extra support. She works with members on setting their own

goals, creating strategies to achieve them, and celebrating milestones. The Mental Health Coach provided training to program mentors to incorporate SEL methods and tools throughout the Club.

**Success story:** One current fifth grader started to attend during remote learning at the Club in 2020–21, and he struggled to stay engaged. The branch director was on the phone with the student’s principal and teacher frequently, as he was not logging on to class. Since beginning to participate in the in-person AIM support program, this student has excelled in the Club and has definitely shown maturity and growth. Now when he finishes his homework, he asks for books to read quietly and can focus. He uses his time well in the tutoring room and takes advantage of the chance to learn. His branch director says he has "done a 180" this year, and that he is now self-motivated. His mentor in the AIM program helped him build confidence by embracing mistakes and challenges as ways to learn. His teacher writes that he is now functioning at a fifth-grade level and is better socially prepared for middle school.

## **South Puget Sound (Lakewood Clubhouse)**

**Academic focus:** LEAP consists of 45 minutes a day of Power Hour and Project Learn. Activities include learning prompts around math and literacy and HYLE programs, including consistent mentoring, tutoring, and homework help. Every Monday there is a STEM component. Members are able to build things with raw materials, practice coding or engage on MyFuture.net. Throughout the year, staff noticed that the younger age group really struggled in academics. There were members who didn’t know how to spell their name, had reading levels below proficiency and struggled to write in complete sentences. By the end of the school year, staff saw a significant improvement in these critical skills. Club members could write full sentences, started to read consistently without help from staff, and were able to spell their names. In addition to these academic improvements, we saw a 6% reduction in school days missed from the previous school year.

**SEL focus:** Intentional SEL structured activities take place every Wednesday. SMART Moves, Positive Action, and Youth for Unity are the specific programs dedicated to increasing members’ understanding of how to practice SEL in their daily lives. Lakewood Branch has its own wellness room that members can access when they feel overwhelmed or need a break to reset and self-regulate before joining their group activities again. Every program space also has a dedicated calming corner, and before each activity begins, staff ask Club members to share their feelings with a zone check. Over the course of the past year, Club members have learned to recognize when they needed to step away from the activity to reset and are able to vocalize when they are ready to rejoin the group activities.

**Success story:** An elementary-age participant started the year not being able to spell his name or any words correctly; he couldn’t say the alphabet or read at grade level. He is a member who consistently attended Club and engaged in Power Hour activities daily. This allowed him to have fun and disguise what he was actually learning. By the end of the year, he was saying and using the alphabet, he could spell his name, write different words, and write in sentences. He improved tremendously in his reading skills.

## **Snohomish County (Snohomish Clubhouse)**

**Academic focus:** The Club found new and innovative ways to support the academic success of Club kids beyond the traditional homework help activities which kids took part in each day, for 45–60 minutes. Moby Max was one method used to make learning fun and drive our academic success outcomes. Each Monday was Moby Max Monday and from 4:30pm–5:15pm kids logged in and took part in grade level learning. During this time, the difficulty level of the curriculum adjusted automatically depending upon the success of the kids. By the end of the year, all the Club kids were performing well at the appropriate grade level activities. The other innovative way to support learning was to invite Glacier Peak High School, which specializes in hands-on STEM curriculum and preparing students for careers in STEM and advanced manufacturing. Students from Glacier Peak came to the Club once per week for the entire school year to implement fun STEM activities for the kids and teach various grade level lessons and concepts that our AIM participants encounter in school. These topics and concepts were vetted with Snohomish school district contacts.

**SEL focus:** Positive Action Curriculum was utilized to promote SEL at the Snohomish Clubhouse. Staff were diligent to ensure that they had an “emotional check-in” with each child during the week. This was done in a one-on-one manner in a quiet, confidential setting to give the kids the opportunity to express themselves, discuss challenges that were giving them difficulty in any way, work through any emotional lows and highs and simply provide them with a comfortable moment away from others to be heard. Happiness and displaying positive attitudes towards others were rewarded to encourage and support a positive approach to day-to-day activities. To have a bit more fun with that concept, the child who received the award or incentive (usually an extra snack or grab bag item) was then tasked for the next day or two to recommend the next winner. This not only extended the honor but supported additional goodwill and friendship by choosing the next honoree.

**Success story:** One elementary-age participant has had a particularly difficult time over the last two years. Since English is not her primary language, compounded with not keeping up consistently with grade level work during school building closures, she began last year behind many of her peers. She would get discouraged, have emotional reactions, and simply would not want to do her schoolwork. Staff supported her in any way possible and she truly persevered as the year progressed. She became happier, improved her reading dramatically, and began to really form an attachment to the whole school/learning process. When she began the year, her Moby Max curriculum was two grade levels behind in math and ELA. As we finished out this summer, she was back on grade level work and feeling so much happier and confident.

## **Skagit County (Mount Vernon Clubhouse)**

**Academic focus:** The Site’s AIM Coordinator developed monthly themes for members to participate in high-yield activities. Some of these monthly Project Learn units included Black History and Women’s History Month, Ancient Civilizations and Animal Showcase. During Animal Showcase members learned about the different levels of the ocean floor and what kind of ocean animals can survive at each level. Students got to cut out animals and place them in the correct level of the ocean. For ancient civilizations, during the lesson on Ancient Greece, Club members built their own

Trojan Horses. Site staff found that infusing hands-on activities, along with some short videos, allowed the kids to stay engaged in the lessons.

**SEL focus:** Sanford Harmony was utilized to support SEL learning. The staff worked to expand and engage members through the Sanford Harmony lessons by providing additional hands-on activities, conversation starters, and questions along specific topics. During sessions on friendship, members were able to make friendship bracelets and share them with another member or friend from school.

**Success story:** One elementary-age participant was not very interested in learning or doing his homework, but really enjoyed art. Staff provided the student with extra art supplies if he spent time reading or doing Lexia, and he has enthusiastically changed his mind about spending some time in the day to read. Because of this, his Lexia scores have increased, and he spends more time in the learning center reading. He is quick to ask for new books to read or a timer to track his reading time. His enthusiasm for reading is wonderful to see. He has improved emotionally as well as academically. His emotional responses have grown more rational throughout the year, and he can now express his frustration in a much more constructive way. He understands it is okay to be upset but also understands how to appropriately express it.

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