



## The Oregonian

### Program gives students a step toward success

With tutoring and recreation, Metropolitan Family Service spreads after-school help to more children

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When the bell rings at the end of the school day, the education doesn't stop for about 140 students at two east county schools.

Harold Oliver Primary and Glenfair Elementary schools recently ramped up their after-school programs, offering tutoring in math and literacy; classes such as nutrition, safety and cooking; and soccer, chess, dance and other recreational activities.

The results? Educators say it's too early to fully assess the impact. But if excitement about school is one measure, they say, the programs already have had a significant influence on the participating students and their families.

"I'm here during the day, and when I walk the halls, to be honest, I feel like a celebrity," said Jackie Jaffe, program coordinator at Harold Oliver Primary, in the Centennial School District. "If a child is having a hard time making friends or displays avoidance behavior -- after a few days or a week in our program, they are coming up to me or their teacher saying, 'I did all my homework today.' They're able to tout their own successes and feeling better about themselves."

There are now 13 SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) Community Schools in the Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, Reynolds and Portland school districts that offer after-school programs. Metropolitan Family Service, a Portland agency that works with low-income children, families and older adults, operates the programs in collaboration with local nonprofit organizations.

Harold Oliver, which began offering a more limited version of the program last fall, and Glenfair launched the current programs with funding from the federal government's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. The funding extends as long as five years.

Harold Oliver and Glenfair, which is in the Reynolds School District, were selected because neither meets requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, they are located in traditionally underserved areas and most students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Far more students wanted to take part in the programs than either school could accommodate. Barbara Hicks, Harold Oliver's principal, credited the program's leadership and strong interest by families, many of whom have single parents with jobs or both parents working outside the home.

"I'm amazed already at how big it has gotten and how much students want to be there," Hicks said. "Usually, it takes a bit of time to grow, but this hasn't. Families really want some extended time for their kids in school."

The after-school programs focus on building literacy. At Harold Oliver, the school's fifth and sixth-grade students, a group from Centennial High School and freshmen from Portland State University serve in

mentorship roles, helping the elementary school students with homework and assisting the program in other ways.

Jaffe said interaction with the older students keeps the younger children engaged.

"The kids are sitting in their seats, attached to the kids they are working with, and they are really motivated and focused," she said.

The 80 students at Harold Oliver and 60 at Glenfair also eat a snack and take part in recreational classes from cooking and karate to crafts and breakdancing.

Alex Donnelly, after-school program coordinator at Glenfair, said the program's importance extends well beyond academics.

"In addition to meeting their academic needs, we are meeting many of their other needs in terms of safety, supervision, nutrition and providing fun things for them to do," she said.

The programs also plan to serve families through adult education classes. Glenfair currently offers parenting and English-as-a-second-language classes. Harold Oliver hopes to provide a parenting class this summer and fall, and aims to offer English language learning classes this fall as well. The schools will continue classes and activities for children during the summer.

Tammy Spencer, marketing and communications manager for Metropolitan Family Service, said the program aims to serve 300 students and their families at the two schools by fall.

"It's really about creating a full package," Jaffe said. "It's not just about after-school programming. It's also about using the school as a public facility where the public in that community gets served.

"And hopefully it helps us really make more connections with the community and helps provide opportunities for community members to connect."

To learn more about the after-school programs or other services provided by Metropolitan Family Service, contact Tricia Harding at 503-232-0007, ext. 150.

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