

Reaching Higher



Parent Handbook

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Reaching Higher is a fun and engaging Out of School Time program that reinforces academic learning targeting Math and Reading/ELA while also giving opportunities for tutoring and introducing students to new skills. Coordinated programming reinforces school-day learning by providing intensive hands-on learning with qualified staff through direct instruction. Academics are improved through homework help, tutoring and direct instruction by qualified staff.

To help make the program fun and a place the students want to come, we also provide enrichment activities that teach kids a variety of hobbies and new skills. Staff, community members, and volunteers provide enrichment classes and field trips that expose youth to life-long positive leisure activities to offer a sense of achievement and build positive self-regard. Students will be introduced to cultural factors to broaden their horizons and offer an appreciation for diversity. Youth development activities are designed to teach students' skills that enhance their ability to learn in a classroom setting include teaching peer relations, leadership, anger management, and problem solving.

A 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Grant through the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, administered by the Michigan Department of Education, funds the Reaching Higher program. Highfields, Inc. operates the program in eight schools.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe it is important to develop a program that supports students, families, and Reaching Higher program staff. We believe in treating everyone with respect and that every student and parent/guardian has a right to be heard. We also believe in creating a healthy environment where student growth and well-being can occur. To do so, it is important that students learn to be responsible for their own behavior with the guidance of families and Reaching Higher program staff. The process should consider the rights of all individuals in incidences of unacceptable behavior. Solving problems or conflicts is a lifelong skill; conflicts or problems which involve people should be solved without hurting other individuals. By upholding these beliefs in program, Reaching Higher will provide the foundation that students need to strengthen their personal, physical, social, emotional, and educational abilities.

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

The Reaching Higher Program is nationally accredited through the Council on Accreditation (COA). The COA accreditation process involves a detailed review and analysis of Highfields' Reaching Higher Program administrative functions and service delivery practices. All are measured against international standards of best practice. These standards emphasize services that are accessible, appropriate, based in the community, coordinated, culturally competent, evidence-based, individualized, outcomes-oriented, provided by a skilled and supported workforce, respectful of individual rights, strengths-based, supportive of partnership, child and family focused, treat all people with dignity, involve family and provider collaboration, and address child outcomes. As such, you can have confidence in the credibility, integrity, and achievement of our program.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The school year program is open 2 ½ hours per day after school dismissal, four days a week. During the school year, program must operate for a minimum of 32 weeks. All sites have 6 weeks of summer programming. The sites have a summer academic program, at least 2 ½ hours a day, 4 days a week, designed in conjunction with school staff, Reaching Higher staff, students, and parents to meet the needs of the participating students.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The Reaching Higher Program will operate Monday through Thursday. Program will follow the school calendar, therefore when the school is closed so is the program.

2:35 – 2:50	Supper
2:50 – 3:10	Large Group
3:10 – 4:00	Academics
4:00 – 4:10	Snack
4:10 – 5:00	Enrichments
5:05	Sign Out and Departure

Program begins September 12th

STUDENT SELECTION

Day time school staff and after school program staff will select students to participate in the after school program based on academic, social, and other needs. All students are encouraged to register regardless of their academic, social, and financial needs. If you have a concern or feel that your child should receive special consideration, please contact the site coordinator. **Forty-five** students will be accepted into the program and a waiting list will be created for any additional students.

CLASS SIZE

Students are organized into similar age groups of up to 15 students each. There are a total of 3 groups of up to 15 students for a total of up to 40 or 45 students per day per site depending on the grant for the site. Some enrichment activities, such as jewelry making and dance, may have a smaller student to staff ratio to allow for improved oversight and interaction.

ADMINSSION/WITHDRAWAL

Any student currently enrolled in the school in the grades served by the program is eligible to register for the Reaching Higher program. A registration form must be completed and submitted to the site coordinator before any student will be allowed to attend the program. The site coordinator will contact the parent/guardian to notify them of their student’s acceptance into the program.

A student may be removed upon determination of failure to meet suitability of the program or for behaviors listed in the behavior management policies (see below). If a parent/guardian decides to withdraw a student from the program, a one-week notification, preferably verbal, should be given to the site coordinator directly. Notification from a student will not be accepted.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is essential for students to get the most benefit from the after school program. By enrolling in the program, students are making a commitment to attend regularly. Students are required to attend all scheduled hours and for the entirety of the program day unless arrangements have been made with the site coordinator. Absences need to be in written form and given to site coordinators to be excused. Students who have **three** unexcused absences may be removed from program and replaced with a student from the waiting list. Students may also be removed due to behavioral incidents. See behavior management policy for further information. Other commitments that would prevent your child from attending the program every day will be considered excused if they are communicated to the site coordinator to avoid student removal.

If a student missed school due to illness during the day, for any amount of time, they will not be allowed to attend the after school program that day.

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Whenever a student arrives to program, they must be signed in and the time noted on the appropriate sheet. At the time of their departure, students must be signed out. Students will only be released to individuals listed on registration forms. If an individual picking up a student is not recognized by staff, they may be asked to provide identification. Their name will be checked against those listed in the release of care for that student. Students are not allowed to sign themselves out of program unless parents have given them permission to do so as noted on the student's registration form.

If someone picking up a child seems to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, Reaching Higher staff, being mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, will call Child Protective Services and/or the police to file a report.

TRANSPORTATION

Reaching Higher contracts with each school district to provide transportation using school busses to transport students home. Licensing requires a parent/guardian's signed permission annually.

FIELD TRIPS

To broaden students' horizons, the Reaching Higher program provides field trips. Parents will be notified before each field trip. Most of the time, students will ride school buses for field trips but on occasion public transportation may be used or they may walk to their destination. For field trips requiring bussing, a separate permission slip must be obtained before each field trip.

COMMUNICATION

Reaching Higher strives to keep families up to date with program information. On any given day, we may send home menus, calendars, newsletters and/or field trip or meeting notices. In addition, throughout the year you may be asked to complete a survey or program evaluation. Please feel free to share with program staff any information that you feel would be beneficial to aide us in the care of your student.

FAMILY CONTACT INFORMATION

It is very important that Reaching Higher has current information on every student. In the event of a student's illness or behavior problem, emergency contacts will be notified. Each student is required to have a new registration form completed annually. However, when any information changes please contact the site coordinator.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The Reaching Higher program offers multiple opportunities for family engagement, education, and involvement. There are a combination of parenting workshops, family nights and related educational development activities. Parents/guardians will also be given the opportunity to participate on an advisory committee designed to give input on the program design and improvement. Parenting workshops will be specifically designed around feedback given by participants. Topics may include parenting techniques, preventing drug use, ways to increase children's success in reading and math, budgeting, how to help with homework and studying. Snacks or meals are sometimes provided for these events.

FOOD PROGRAM

Each student will receive a light supper and a snack while attending the program. Menus are posted with substitutions noted. Children with special medical needs will be served meals that comply with their needs.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

CONFIDENTIALITY DISCLOSURE

Highfields offers the Reaching Higher After School Program through a federal grant. The grant requires the program to share student demographic and emergency contact information, grades, and attendance with an evaluator and with Michigan State University. This data is submitted without personal identifiers and is published in aggregate form.

Highfields agrees to not use or further disclose Personal Student Information (PSI) other than as required by the 21st Century Grant or as required by Law. Highfields agrees to use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of PSI other than as provided for by the grant.

Part of the program evaluation may include the completion of consent forms which will be submitted to Michigan State University as part of the evaluation process. Parents/ Guardians have the choice to participate. Agreeing to participate in the evaluation is NOT required in order for a child to participate.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Students in the after school program may use the school's outdoor play equipment and area. The State of Michigan concludes that if children who attend the school during the day use a school playground, then it is reasonable to allow school-age children attending an after school childcare program at the same location to use that same playground. However, because of Rule 400.8170(19), we must make you aware that the school playground is not required to meet the same playground safety regulations that other licensed centers are required to meet. We would like to reassure you that the equipment is inspected by the district's maintenance department and problems are taken care of when found.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA/COMPUTER USAGE

Reaching Higher introduces and encourages a wide variety of activities during the program day. Many of these activities incorporate technology to enhance student learning. All personnel are cognizant of the balance between the importance of limiting screen time with program goals that are dependent upon the use of technology. Electronic devices with a screen, including but not limited to, televisions, computers, tablets, multi-touch screens, mobile devices, cameras, e-book readers, and electronic game consoles, will be used with students as developmentally appropriate. Use of non-interactive media shall not exceed two hours per week unless they are being used for academic or educational purposes.

The host sites use controls that block access to inappropriate content. In addition, students are continuously monitored when they are accessing the internet. Media with violent or adult content are prohibited. The schools' policies and procedures are implemented and followed by personnel during the after school program.

If a student is not being responsible with a personal device and is abusing the program rules, it will be taken from the student and kept in the site coordinator's possession until dismissal. If the device has to be taken away repeatedly then the student may be banned from bringing the device to program.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

To ensure the safety of students and staff, Reaching Higher has a crisis management plan in place that covers an array of events. Drills are practiced regularly so everyone knows what to do in the case of an emergency. If it ever becomes necessary to enact the crisis management plan, parents will be contacted as soon as the children are safe. In case of a shelter in place or lock down event, parents will not have access to enter the building and students will not be allowed to leave until an all clear is given.

In the event of an extended evacuation, parents are notified, and it is expected that they will arrange for students to be picked up immediately. Arrangements have been made with Springport High School to take us into their building and out of the weather and other dangerous elements during the emergency. Students will be released according to our policy outlined above in *Arrivals & Departures*. A separate addendum with specific emergency plans will be created for any child with special needs and/or chronic medical condition.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICIES

A child must feel safe in an environment to maximize their learning. Reaching Higher follows and enforces all school day rules. Parents/Guardians expect the school and Highfields Reaching Higher program to provide a safe environment for their children. We believe it is important to develop a process that supports the children, parents/guardians, and Reaching Higher program staff. Clear expectations of interactions and behaviors are developed with input from enrolled youth and are set, conveyed, and enforced in a fair consistent manner. These are designed to consider the rights of all individuals in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment and support self-expression and learning.

Solving problems or conflict is a lifelong skill. Conflicts or problems which involve people should be solved without hurting another individual. We believe in respect and that every child and parent/guardian has a right to be heard. We also believe a healthy environment can only occur when children, parents/guardians and Reaching Higher program staff place a high priority on children being responsible for their behavior.

There are two components to a quality discipline plan: prevention and intervention. Prevention includes understanding behaviors that are unacceptable, teaching children how to solve problems constructively, providing appropriate supervision and communicating/working with parents/guardians as a team.

Program activities are designed to support and guide positive behavior and promote respectful, cooperative interactions among youth. Large group activities using experiential education are conducted on a regular basis. These activities are aimed at developing positive relationships with youth, practice appropriate social skills, reinforce positive behaviors, and encourage conflict resolution. Character education, anti-bullying and mindfulness activities are also taught with students.

Personnel support and encourage positive student choices and behavior by maintaining high expectations for them. By constantly observing youth, personnel are able to recognize and reinforce positive behavior and provide individualized guidance to encourage engagement and help prevent

problems as they may occur. When concerning behaviors arise, personnel determine when students can be encouraged to resolve the situation on their own or when it is necessary to intervene.

To help students learn to self-regulate their emotions and behaviors and develop empathy, and respect for others, personnel:

- Model healthy strategies for expressing and managing emotions, inclusiveness, and respect for differences and teach these to students.
- Help students learn to recognize and understand emotions.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice handling their emotions in healthy and responsible ways and learn about experiences, feelings, and perspectives of others.
- Offer coaching and guidance to help students appropriately express and manage their emotions as needed.
- Explain that all people are unique individuals.
- Help students learn about diversity and difference, including diversity of perspectives, cultures, temperaments, needs and abilities.

Staff are responsible for addressing inappropriate child behaviors at the Reaching Higher program. The Reaching Higher program staff will determine appropriate consequences when necessary.

In order to prevent future incidents and maintain a positive program climate, appropriate corrective measures include:

- Viewing incidents as learning opportunities that can help improve how students behave and relate to others.
- Helping students reflect upon why the incident occurred, the impact of their actions, what they can do differently next time, and what support is needed to make that change.
- Helping students take responsibility for their actions in ways that are respectful, appropriate to age and developmental level, and related to the behavior in question.
- Helping students build and/or repair their relationships with their peers and the program community.
- Considering and addressing the needs and circumstances of all involved.
- Balancing accountability for actions with and understanding of the factors that may have contributed to those actions, and
- Avoiding the use of exclusionary or overly-punitive consequences, to the extent possible.
- When students have special behavioral needs, personnel provide additional support and individualized interventions, as needed.

All corrective action incidents are unique, based on age, the outcome, and the level of understanding of the child. The Reaching Higher program staff will determine what is most appropriate to change the behavior and be fair to both the disciplined child and the victim(s).

Our activities are designed to provide students with quality experiences that promote academic achievement and positive youth development. Enrollment in our program is limited and students are expected to maintain good behavior. Depending on the incident, corrective action may include a one to multiple day suspension from the program. After suspension, if behaviors continue, it may cause termination from the program. Thank you for your support and cooperation in helping to make Reaching Higher a rewarding experience for all students.

HEALTH CARE PLAN

All programs operate in school buildings that employ janitorial staff. Therefore, all program spaces and restrooms are cleaned daily.

The Reaching Higher program will take the necessary precautions to contain and prevent the spread of contagious illnesses or diseases. However, we cannot guarantee that contagious illnesses or diseases will be completely contained or will not be spread to other children. Parents must recognize that, while in care, it is possible that the child may be exposed to a contagious illness or disease. The issue of dealing with sick children in a group care situation requires care, patience and understanding on the part of the parents and staff. We will minimize the spread of infection by a conscientious use of the hand washing, handling body fluids with universal precautions, and cleaning and sanitizing supplies and equipment.

Medication Policy

Medication will be administered and handled as follows.

- Staff will give or apply medication, prescription, nonprescription and/or topical only with prior written permission from a parent.
- All medication shall be its original container, stored according to instructions, and clearly labeled for the named child.
- Prescription medication shall have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name, instructions, and name and strength of the medication and shall be given according to those instructions.
- Staff will give or apply any prescription, nonprescription and/or topical medication according to the directions on the original container unless authorized by a written order of the child's physician.

Accident/Injury/Incident/Illness Policy

If a child was absent from the school day for any amount of time due to illness, they are not allowed to attend the after school program. Children are observed for health issues during program. If any of the following situations arise, the parents are notified immediately by phone call or text and will be expected to pick up their student as soon as possible.

- The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in the program's activities.
- The child has any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever of 100.5 degrees or higher – student may return when symptom free and free of fever for 12 hours, without the use of any fever reducing medication
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomiting more than once in a 24 hour period
 - Unidentified rash
 - Signs or symptoms of possible severe illness (i.e., uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, lethargy, or crying and complaining for a long time) – generally the child may return when on a prescribed medication as required by a doctor for the length of time to be non-contagious, usually 24 to 48 hours
- The child has any of the following diagnoses from a health provider (if this situation arises, times are noted when child would be allowed to return):

- Infectious conjunctivitis/pink eye – until 24 hours after treatment starts
- Scabies, head lice, or other infestation – until 24 hours after treatment and free of nits
- Impetigo – until 24 hours after treatment starts
- Strep throat, scarlet fever, or other strep infections – until 24 hours after treatments starts and the child is free of fever
- Pertussis (whooping cough) – until 5 days after treatment starts
- Tuberculosis (TB) – until a doctor determines that the disease is not contagious
- Chicken pox – until 6 days after start of rash or all sores have crusted over
- Mumps – until 9 days after start of symptoms (swelling of “cheeks”)
- Hepatitis A – until 7 days after start of symptoms (i.e., jaundice)
- Measles – until 6 days after the start of rash
- Rubella (German measles) – until 6 days after start of rash
- Shingles (if lesions cannot be covered) – until lesions are dry

A child who becomes too ill to remain in the group during program will be isolated in a separate area from the other well children to further prevent spreading of that illness. An isolated child is adequately supervised until discharged to the care of parents or an emergency contact. A child will be sent home if he/she appears contagious or is uncomfortable enough to require constant one-on-one adult attention. The site coordinator will determine whether a child should remain at the program. Items and facilities used by the ill child shall not be used by any other person until thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

It is the policy of the program to notify parents in writing about all child accidents, injuries and incidents that occur during program operation. Staff are certified in basic first aid/CPR. If a child receives a minor injury during program, first aid will be administered, and a written report will be given to the person picking the child up that day. If a serious accident or injury occurs, staff will administer first aid, follow emergency procedures, and notify parents or emergency contacts. The site coordinator will do a follow up the next school day. However, if a parent/guardian sought emergency treatment for the injured child, they must notify the site coordinator so the proper report can be made.

INCIDENT REPORTING

A verbal report to the parent and your licensing consultant is required within 24 hours of the occurrence of any of the following:

- A child is lost or left unsupervised.
- An incident involving an allegation of inappropriate contact.
- The death of a child in care.
- A fire on the premises of the center that requires the use of fire suppression equipment or results in loss of life or property.
- The center is evacuated for any reason.

PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN

Parents will receive advanced notice of pesticide applications should they become necessary. This notification will be made by posting a notice at entrance doors and by a written notice sent home with students.

LICENSING NOTEBOOK & RULES

The program no longer has a licensing notebook containing all the licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans but internet is available onsite. Reports from at least the last three years can be found on the childcare licensing website www.michigan.gov/michildcare. This is also where the licensing rules can be accessed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Site Coordinator – Dan Bright: 517-262-8580

Highfields After School Project Director – Brenda Cotton: 517-740-5788

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