

# The "E"

## "ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES" AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM



**T**he Emerald Community Campus "Access to Opportunities" After-School Program was developed to benefit the growing number of students in the Manheim Township School District that are facing diverse challenges and obstacles. This program is based on the tenets of the whole child which focuses on being healthy, safe, supported, engaged, challenged, and sustained.



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### Community Need

In recent years, Manheim Township School District (MTSD) recognized a significant increase in students qualifying for free and reduced priced lunches. This population has grown from 10% to 30% of about 5,000 students over the last 10 years alone. In reviewing these statistics, MTSD noticed they did not provide any free or reduced cost programs geared toward students of lower income families. Due to the vast increase in students facing diverse challenges, MTSD recognized the need to accommodate this growing student body.

#### *But why is having free or reduced cost programming so important?*

Research clearly delineates that low-income students face several challenges that impact their ability to thrive. Poverty creates many gaps, academic lapses and the wherewithal to learn, as well as access to opportunities that enrich lives and contribute to a more complete person. Emphasis has increasingly been placed on the need for children of all income levels to receive equal access to opportunities. In identifying the need for a free or reduced cost program, MTSD reached out to the Emerald Community Campus for assistance in creating such a program that addresses the needs of the whole child. Thus, the “Access to Opportunities” After-School Program was developed to address these needs. This is FREE and intentional programming to benefit students lacking the access to opportunities their higher-income peers have.

### Our Program: “Access to Opportunities”

The “Access to Opportunities” After-School Program works to foster a comprehensive and sustainable environment for students facing adversity to gain life experiences they would not otherwise have. Specifically, the program focuses on getting children involved in extracurricular activities, improving students’ literacy skills, increasing cultural awareness, building non-cognitive skills, and feeding students on a consistent basis.

Students receive programming through a partnership with Millersville University which uses best practice literacy assessment tools and strategic, systemic one-on-one interventions. On a periodic basis, Millersville University students will provide cultural awareness learning experiences exposing students to different cultures around the world. Both components provided by Millersville University are age-appropriate and engaging. Additionally, students are engaged in practices that build non-cognitive skills such as team-building, self-awareness, mindfulness, behavioral regulation, and decision-making through many of the partnerships created with local non-profit organizations. Students are also fed on a daily basis with an emphasis on nutritional education and building a foundation for sound eating habits.



### Partnerships

The following is a list of organizations/agencies who collaborate with the “Access to Opportunities” After-School Program to engage the whole child. Each organization provides opportunities and learning experiences that are typically out of reach for lower income families. Thanks to the partnerships created, opportunities for personal growth and development of other non-cognitive skills, which are not typically taught in a school setting, are reinforced through our program.

- *Manheim Township School District: identification of students needing additional access and providing transportation to the Emerald Community Campus*
- *Millersville University: literacy support and multicultural experiences*
- *KPETS: reading aloud to therapy animals to promote word articulation and increase fluency with literacy*
- *Caron Treatment Center: lifelong decision-making skills and emotional awareness/regulation*
- *Yoga/mindful movement instruction with Hilary Reichler: personal development and a holistic approach to wellness*
- *Tennis Central: team-building exercises through Academic Creative Engagement (ACE) curriculum*
- *Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts: 8 week STEM program (Girl Scouts) and character-building*
- *Giant Foods: nutritional education and hands-on instruction on preparing basic food items*
- *Central Pennsylvania Food Bank: healthy, nutritionally balanced meals provided on a consistent basis*



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