

United Way is working to advance the common good by providing the building blocks of a good life: Education, Income and Health. Each building block requires multiple approaches, including community change strategies, funding programs at partner agencies as well as other community initiatives. Below, you'll learn about one community change strategy that United Way is implementing to make a difference in the area of Education.



Quality Matters

A Community Change Strategy for Education

Through Quality Matters, UWGKC is championing quality out-of-school time programs because child and youth experiences in non-school hours matter.

Results Target

Children and youth build important social, civic and academic skills in non-school hours – skills that advance the adult thinking capacities critical to today's workforce, such as initiative, reflection and teamwork. Effective programs in non-school hours are also proven to reduce negative behaviors, such as delinquency. Reduced crime and delinquency alone are documented to yield approximately a \$5 return for every \$1 invested in quality out-of-school time programs.

The key demographic target for this initiative is that more of this region's children and youth, especially at-risk, low-income students, are motivated and engaged in learning during non-school hours. Research documents that children and youth in quality out-of-school time programs have better attendance and attitudes towards school and are more likely to graduate on time, a proven milestone on the journey to life success.

Results Achieved to Date

United Way launched Quality Matters in November 2009 by engaging ten agencies and 24 of their sites throughout the five-county region to participate in a pilot project. The pilot used a proven improvement process called the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI), developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality in Ypsilanti, Michigan, a joint project of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment (Washington, DC). Both organizations are nationally recognized for championing research-based approaches for advancing program quality, youth worker professional development, and sustained commitment to improving the odds for today's children and youth.

In the summer of 2010, United Way published a report on the first pilot implementation of this quality improvement process. Exciting findings included:

- 24 sites participated in the quality improvement pilot with external assessments documenting that the majority of sites improved instructional quality.
- Program managers found the process effective and worthwhile, enabling them to identify and address program areas that needed improvement.
- Lives of over 3,000 children and youth grades 5-12 in United Way's five-county region were touched.
- Demonstrating the potential to address the risk factors associated with growing up in poverty/low-income households, the majority of children served qualify for the federal Free and Reduced Price School Lunch Program.
- In particular, youth reported positive experiences, such as engagement, taking initiative to work on projects and goals or leading a group of peers, and these positives were found to be strongly related to program quality.

Our Research and Technical Partners

United Way is pleased to acknowledge the other key partners that are working with us to design and implement this important initiative. These technical assistance, research and system leaders include:

- The Francis Institute for Child and Youth Development of the Metropolitan Community Colleges – Penn Valley Campus, which is providing the coaching and technical assistance to providers.
- The Institute for Human Development at the University of Missouri – Kansas City, which is providing trained external assessors.
- The Department of Psychology and Research in Education within the School of Education at the University of Kansas (KU-ED), which conducted a youth outcome research study for the pilot.
- The Partnership for Children, in collaboration with KU-ED, which is conducting a comprehensive regional landscape study of child and youth development programs.
- COMBAT, the Community Backed Anti-Drug Tax for Jackson County, has joined the effort in 2011 as a key investor in youth development and other out-of-school time programming. COMBAT will be providing scholarships for its sites to participate in the YPQI process.

Our Youth Development Partners

This region's out-of-school time organizations are enthusiastically volunteering to participate in this continuous quality improvement project, demonstrating their commitment to quality programming that makes the maximum difference for today's children and youth. UWGKC is currently working in partnership with 22 out-of-school time organizations at 43 of their sites throughout United Way's five-county region. Sites involved in Quality Matters demonstrate the diversity of out-of-school time programs across our region, from large multi-site afterschool or community-based organizations to small, single-site community or faith-based organizations. Current participating organizations include:

Boys & Girls Club of Greater Kansas City	Kansas City Mo Parks & Recreation Department
Grace United Community Ministries	Local Investment Commission
Boy Scouts, Heart of America Council	Mattie Rhodes Center
Don Bosco Centers	Niles Home for Children
Emmanuel Family & Child Development Center	Operation Breakthrough
Forty Acres and A Mule	Swope Corridor Renaissance
Guadalupe Centers	The Family Conservancy
Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council	Twelfth Street Heritage – Wayne Minor Community Center
Jewish Community Center	W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center
Johnson County Parks & Recreation District	Whatsoever Community Center
Kamen's Angels, Inc.	YMCA of Greater Kansas City

Changing the Odds for This Region's Children and Youth

Getting a good education is universally accepted as the foundation for success as an adult, but children and youth spend only roughly 27% of their time in school. Students motivated and engaged in learning – both in school and in community settings – are more likely to succeed in school and life.

United Way is committed to making Quality Matters a multi-year effort that champions quality out-of-school time experiences and develops strong community leadership on youth development. By working in partnership with diverse stakeholders, United Way expects to build upon the current evidenced-based approaches in place and integrate new strategies that will leverage system-wide changes that achieve even greater results for this region's children and youth into the future.

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