

# Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

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School-Age  
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## PRACTICES TO AVOID IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

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### OVERVIEW

Perhaps one of the fastest ways to improve the quality of out-of-school time programs would be to replace practices that we know do not work with practices that appear to be more effective. In this brief, we highlight lessons from an expanding body of knowledge about specific program practices that should be avoided or minimized in out-of-school time programs to improve their chances of success. In a related brief, we highlight 10 practices to foster.<sup>1</sup>

### PROGRAM PRACTICES TO AVOID OR MINIMIZE

#### 1. Avoid negative approaches based on scaring children.

Some observers have hoped that negative approaches—such as showing young people what it is like to be in jail and enabling them to hear from and speak with prison inmates—can scare them into better behavior.

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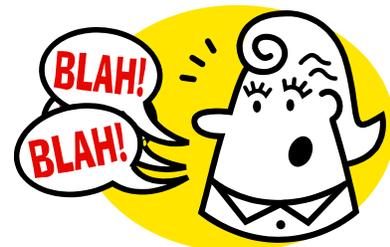
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However, a number of rigorous evaluations have assessed such “scared straight” approaches and found that they fail to deter juvenile crime or promote more positive behaviors.<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7,8</sup> In fact, such approaches have been found to have negative impacts. In some settings, youth’s participation in programs incorporating the “scared straight” approach has resulted in significantly higher recidivism rates.<sup>9,10</sup> Evidence indicates that positive approaches that invest in children’s futures are more often effective.<sup>11, 12,13</sup>

**2. Avoid lecturing.** Students spend a considerable portion of their school day listening to lectures, and they are not eager to sit through lectures during their after-school hours. Moreover, evaluation studies indicate that didactic lectures may increase knowledge, but they do not change behavior.<sup>14</sup> Research indicates that children and youth may benefit from a variety of learning strategies. These strategies can include:

- 1) interactive projects and group work;
- 2) activity options;
- 3) opportunities that enable young people to pace their own activities, and
- 4) experiential learning, in which young people have the opportunity to apply what they learn and then reflect on it. <sup>15,16</sup>

**3. Avoid just focusing on “squelching” bad behaviors.** As important as it is to reduce substance use, violence, teen childbearing, and school dropout, it is not sufficient for programs to concentrate only on problems that may threaten young people’s development. In the words of Karen Pittman, “Problem free is not fully prepared.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, a program that focuses on the negative may be likely to encounter problems with recruitment, attendance, and retention. Children and youth, as well as families and community members, are not looking for an ongoing recitation of their problems and failings. In fact, such a negative focus can contribute to children’s lower self-esteem and poorer school adjustment.<sup>18,19,20</sup> Children and youth seek support, encouragement, praise, and assistance in achieving their positive goals.<sup>21,22,23</sup> Research finds that helping children and youth to develop well and achieve positive personal goals is more likely to reduce negative behaviors than are programs that simply highlight and focus on squelching bad behaviors.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, evaluations are finding that positive youth development approaches can prevent problem behaviors. <sup>25,26</sup>



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**4. Avoid putting children with serious behavioral problems all together.** A review of studies indicates that forming groups of delinquent or problem children is not an effective strategy for changing behavior.<sup>27</sup> Children in such groupings can encourage undesirable behavior among one another through negative peer pressure. <sup>28,29,30,31,32</sup> Additionally, separating children with serious behavioral problems into homogeneous groups can draw attention to their behavior before their peers and trigger the continuance of undesirable behavior by the children with the behavioral problems.<sup>33,34,35,36</sup> Rather than grouping children homogeneously, studies find that heterogeneous groupings can provide models of positive social behaviors for children with serious behavioral problems, resulting in decreases in their behavioral problems and increases in their academic achievement and peer acceptance.<sup>37,38,39</sup>

**5. Avoid ridiculing program participants.** Developing a positive identity is a challenging task for children and adolescents in a competitive and demanding economy and educational system. Whether from their peers or from out-of-school time staff, ridicule, criticism, and demeaning comments or treatment (especially when they occur frequently or in public) can undermine children's sense of self-worth.<sup>40,41,42,43</sup> Negative staff-child interactions can undermine children's

social competency, empathy, and ability to negotiate conflicts and cooperate with others.<sup>44</sup> Providing young people with constructive suggestions and positive reinforcement, on the other hand, has been found to increase positive outcomes <sup>45,46</sup> This is not to say that it is appropriate to gloss over problems or ignore misbehavior, but rather to highlight the value of constructive comments that identify better behaviors, rather than responding with ridicule and criticism. As one provider commented in a Child Trends Roundtable,<sup>47</sup> "Catch them doing good."

**6. Avoid "100 kids, 1 adult, and a basketball" program formats.** These words of a Roundtable participant describe an all-too-common format for after-school programs.<sup>48</sup> In such cases, the number of adults and the resources available clearly are far too low to assure safety and to avoid fights. <sup>49, 50</sup> Beyond these considerations, such programs cannot foster the activities or the positive and ongoing relationships that are essential to positive development for children and adolescents.<sup>51,52</sup> In addition, children who are depressed or who are being bullied may be overlooked in programs when there are few adults.<sup>53</sup> Also, it is unlikely that a sole adult in charge of such a program will stay on the job for very long, given the difficulty of managing a large number of children alone, so staff turnover becomes another issue. <sup>54</sup>

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**7. Avoid implementing a program without a clear theory of change.** It is common for programs to spring up to meet a need and to grow in response to evolving challenges and/or in response to funding opportunities. Reflecting this pattern, many programs lack a clear and coherent mission. Alternatively, they may have a clear goal (for example, preventing school dropout), but they may lack an appropriate set of activities directed at achieving that goal. It can be helpful in numerous ways to invest a few hours in developing a theory of change or logic model that lays out the long-term goals and the inputs, outputs, and the intermediate goals that are expected to lead to the long-term goals.<sup>55,56</sup> For example, taking this step can help to ensure that all staff members know and share a common mission, that promises made to funders are reasonable and achievable, and that the activities and services that are offered are aligned with the goals.

**8. Avoid implementing only part of a program.**

It is common for programs to pluck out one element of an effective program model and implement it. Studies find that the more closely programs adhere to an evidence-based program,<sup>57</sup> curriculum or model, the more effective a program is likely to be in achieving desired outcomes.<sup>58,59,60,61</sup> In difficult economic

times, it is particularly enticing to remove expensive program elements or shorten program duration or frequency. Unfortunately, such dilutions may undermine the effectiveness of the whole program. For example, while the Teen Outreach Program could be implemented without service learning, the use of service learning is a core component that is critical to the success of the program.<sup>62</sup> Program directors should note, however, that some evidence-based programs are designed with stand-alone components that can be used in conjunction with an existing program model.<sup>63,64</sup>



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**9. Avoid or reduce staff turnover.** Given the importance of relationships between staff and children or youth and the cost of recruiting, training, and coaching staff members, high turnover can undermine program effectiveness.<sup>65,66</sup> Steps that may reduce turnover include providing opportunities for staff members to express their views on decisions and directions, giving them chances to grow as individuals, and being generous with praise and positive feedback when warranted.<sup>67</sup>

**10. Avoid assuming that “We know what to do; we just need to do it.”** It is difficult to change behavior, even among children. A lot has been learned about approaches that don’t work (for example, that “scaring kids straight” doesn’t work

and that lectures don’t change behavior), as well as about effective approaches (such as those that build strong, positive relationships).<sup>68,69,70,71,72,73,74</sup> More specifically, we have learned that the critical aspects of continuous program improvement include strengthening program components, enhancing implementation quality, improving staff training, sequencing age-appropriate programs over time, and monitoring outcomes. Moreover, we have learned that being evidence-based and data-driven can help programs become more effective over time. However, impacts are often small and short-lived. There is much still to be learned and partnerships between practitioners and researchers can add to our list of practices to avoid and practices to foster.

## TEN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM PRACTICES TO AVOID

- 1. Avoid negative approaches based on scaring children.**
- 2. Avoid lecturing.**
- 3. Avoid just focusing on “squelching” bad behaviors.**
- 4. Avoid putting children with serious behavioral problems all together.**
- 5. Avoid ridiculing program participants.**
- 6. Avoid “100 kids, 1 adult, and a basketball” program formats.**
- 7. Avoid implementing a program without a clear theory of change.**
- 8. Avoid implementing only part of a program.**
- 9. Avoid staff turnover.**
- 10. Avoid assuming that “We know what to do; we just need to do it.”**

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## CONCLUSION

There is an expanding amount of credible information about both ineffective and effective approaches to promoting positive out-of-school time program outcomes. As program practitioners consider implementing evidence-based practices, program administrators, staff, and other stakeholders must keep in mind that it is difficult to change behavior overnight, even among children.<sup>75,76</sup> Programs should, thus, be prepared to examine their programs and drop negative practices, substituting positive practices instead.<sup>77, 78,79</sup>

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## Quality Out-of-School Time Programs Help Working Families

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According to the Afterschool Alliance's 2009 **Arkansas After 3 PM Survey**, approximately 26% of Arkansas' youth grades k-12 or roughly 125,025 children and youth are on their own afterschool. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of Arkansas' children have parents or caregivers in the workplace. The hours afterschool and the summer break can cause a great deal of anxiety

for parents who do not have adequate care for their children. This presents a unique challenge in a state that has a significant amount of low-wage and hourly wage earners. Often times, if a parent in our state has to leave work early or miss a day from work due to child care issues, this means lost income for the household that cannot be recovered. National data from Brandies University's Community, Families, and Work Program (2004) and Catalyst & Brandies University (2006) indicates that parents who are concerned about their children's afterschool care miss an average of eight days of work per year and that decreased worker productivity related to parents concerns about their children's afterschool and summer care costs up to \$300 billion per year.

Whether children and youth are enrolled in a traditional childcare program or a stand alone youth development program, quality OST programs make a meaningful contribution to our economy by helping parents remain on their jobs and giving children and youth an important safety net. This is particularly important during economic downturns when jobs are scarce. In a 2004 study conducted by Policy Studies and Associates, 60 percent of the parents surveyed said that they missed less work than before because of the afterschool program, 59 percent said it supported them keeping their job, and 54

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percent said it allowed them to work more hours.

Today's workday has grown longer, while the school day has not. This means that the demand for quality programs is growing. About 89 percent of adults surveyed in Arkansas agreed that there should be some type of organized activity everyday that provides opportunities for children and youth to learn, and most adults of children not participating in afterschool or summer programs state that their children would participate if they had access to one. Many cited transportation and cost as the main barriers to participation. Moreover, according to Johns Hopkins University, nearly two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower-income and higher income children and youth can be attributed to unequal access to summer learning opportunities.

Quality OST programs are essential elements to helping families balance their home life and work and they are also an important part of ensuring that children and youth have safe, enriching experiences after school and during the summer months. To meet the growing need and demand for quality programs, a greater understanding and support is needed from the public and private sector is needed to ensure that Arkansas' most valuable resource; its children do not fall between the cracks during these critical times.

For more information on the Arkansas Out of School Network visit [www.aosn.org](http://www.aosn.org) or email Laveta Wills-Hale at [lwillshale@astate.edu](mailto:lwillshale@astate.edu) 501.660.1012

## Additional Information:

For millions of children in America, when schools close for the summer, safe and enriching learning environments are out of reach, replaced by boredom, lost opportunities and risk. New analysis of data from the *America After 3PM* study measures the extent of this problem, concluding that three-quarters of America's school children do not participate in summer learning programs. Yet, fifty-six percent of kids (an estimated 24 million) who are not participating in summer learning programs, would likely enroll in a program, based on parent interest. *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer* offers a snapshot of how children spend their summers and finds that the nation is missing a key opportunity to help millions of children succeed in school.

To view the key findings of this report visit [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM\\_summer.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM_summer.cfm)

## Virtual Field Trips with “Meet Me at the Corner”

Take advantage of the educational opportunities available through the Internet with Meet Me at the Corner ([www.meetmeatthecorner.org/](http://www.meetmeatthecorner.org/)), which offers virtual field trips. Created in 2006 by author and educator Donna W. Guthrie, the site was started as a way to encourage storytelling by children with the use of video. Videos are then sent to Meet Me at the Corner, where they are edited and uploaded to the site. "It's not YouTube," Guthrie said. Videos are required to have a beginning, middle and end, all in the span of about four minutes. Once uploaded, Guthrie and her staff add music and graphics and edit where necessary. New episodes are available every two weeks. The newest episode is a 3½-minute visit with the curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Other episodes are visits to the Palomar Observatory in San Diego, the Mayborn Museum in Waco, Texas, and the Thomas Edison National Historical Museum in West Orange, N.J. Each episode connects back to learning activities and related Web sites are suggested. Consider encouraging the children in your program to submit a video about your "corner." Directions can be found at [www.meetmeatthecorner.org/user](http://www.meetmeatthecorner.org/user). Registration is required but the process is free.

## Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School, and Community Engagement

The U.S. Department of Education and its partners United Way Worldwide, National PTA, SEDL, and Harvard Family Research Project are proud to bring you a free webinar series on family, school and community engagement. The *Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School, and Community Engagement* webinar series is an opportunity for stakeholders representing national, regional, and local organizations to learn about family, school, and community engagement research, best practices from the field, and new innovations that are making a difference in school improvement and student learning. Leading practitioners, researchers, and policymakers will share real-life examples from the field about what it takes to effectively engage family and community with schools. To review past webinars and to view upcoming webinar topics in the series visit [http://www.nationalpirc.org/engagement\\_webinars/about.html](http://www.nationalpirc.org/engagement_webinars/about.html)



[www.roadstosuccess.org](http://www.roadstosuccess.org)

Roads to Success (RTS) is a college and careers program committed to helping young people make the connection between school and their aspirations for adulthood. The RTS program is designed to fit easily into a typical school day or after-school program, and may be adapted to any setting offering youth services. They support the efforts of counselors, educators, and youth workers who seek to inspire young people to succeed in high school and beyond.

RTS offers a research-based grade 7 through 12 guidance curriculum, with student motivation at its core. Road to Success' grade-by-grade lesson plan offers a comprehensive, systematic way to address key issues: study skills, career development, reasons to complete and excel in high school, steps to post secondary education attainment, finding and keeping a job, and financial literacy. The program is designed for delivery in 45-minute, once-weekly sessions executed over 4 to 6 years. Each lesson is interactive, exciting, and fun. **RTS materials are FREE and can be downloaded for non-commercial use.** Resources for each

grade include a facilitator's guide, student handbook, portfolio, Program manual (which includes Family Introductory Letters), Family Newsletters (available in both English and Spanish), and more. If you work with middle and high school aged youth, this is one website you will want to check out!

[www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org)

Do Something believes teenagers and young people everywhere can improve their communities. They leverage communication technologies to enable teens to convert their ideas and energy into action. Their aim is to inspire, empower, and celebrate a generation of doers: young people who recognize the need to do something, believe in their ability to get it done, and then take action.

Their website provide a valuable tool that helps youth take action by assisting them in identifying a cause that is important to them, helping determine who they want to partner with and for how long. Seed and growth grant opportunities are also available as well as information about how to start your own Do Something Club. This website is a great resource to help youth get active in supporting the causes that matter the most to them!

# Professional Development

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Everything needed to complete the training will be provided through ASU's online learning tool, "Blackboard Online," through [www.astate.edu](http://www.astate.edu) at no additional cost.

This training may be taken as an introduction for the provider new to the school-age field, or as a refresher course for those who have been working in the field for some time.

The five modules address the following topics:

- Growth & Development
- Planning a Safe and Healthy Environment
- Activities & Program Planning
- Guiding Children's Behavior
- Building Relationships



Course schedule for Fall 2010/Spring 2011 :

September 1—October 15  
November 1—December 15  
February 1— March 15  
April 1—May 15

For more information about this class contact Woodie Sue Herlein at [wherlein@astate.edu](mailto:wherlein@astate.edu) or 888-429-1585

# Activity Ideas

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## [www.exploratorium.edu/snacks](http://www.exploratorium.edu/snacks)

Not able to fit a field trip to the San Francisco Exploratorium into your summer program budget? No worries! You can bring many of the fun activities that are a part of the museum exhibits to your own program by visiting their website and exploring all the fun activities they have to share. Their website provide mini “snacks” or mini science projects that require common, inexpensive, easily available supplies. Below is a sampling of just one of the many fun activities that you will find on their website.

### **Marshmallow Puff Tube** **If you blow harder, will it go farther?**

#### **Materials Needed:**

- 1 file folder (or other lightweight cardboard)
- scissors
- masking tape or transparent tape
- a few marshmallows (full-size, not miniature)
- a few spoonfuls of flour

#### **Assembly:**

- Cut a rectangle from the file folder about 29.5 cm (the entire width of an unfolded file folder) by about 19 cm (11.5 in. by 7.5 in.).
- Place one of the long edges of the file folder inside the other, and tighten to form a tube (see Figure 1) that fits around the circular shape of a marshmallow - snug enough so that

there's no air space around the marshmallow, but not so tight that the marshmallow won't be able to move. It may be easier to make the tube if you first pull the folder over the edge of a table to establish an initial curvature.

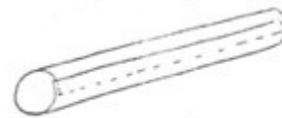


Figure 1

- When the tube is rolled to the appropriate size, tape it so it maintains this size. Then place tape along the entire length of the seam on the tube to seal it.
- Roll the marshmallow in flour, then shake it or tap it to remove any excess. The flour will help prevent any sticky spots on the marshmallow from sticking to the tube.
- Place the marshmallow in the end of the tube. Holding the tube horizontally, put your mouth over the empty end, and blow hard into the tube (see Figure 2). Notice how far the marshmallow goes.

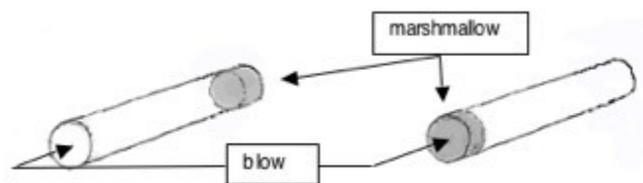


Figure 2

Figure 3

# Activity Ideas

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- Again place the marshmallow in the end of the tube, but this time put your mouth around the end of the tube where the marshmallow is located. Blow hard against the marshmallow itself, so that it has to travel the length of the tube before exiting (see Figure 3). Be sure to keep the tube horizontal, and keep blowing the whole time the marshmallow is in the tube. Did the marshmallow go farther this time? If you blow and the marshmallow won't move, check the diameter of the tube. The tube may either be too tight (in which case friction prevents it from moving) or too loose (in which case air blows right by the marshmallow instead of pushing it).
- end of the tube, the farther it will travel before hitting the ground.
- In the first case, with the marshmallow initially placed at the far end of the tube, the marshmallow falls out the end of the tube almost as soon as you blow on it. So the unbalanced force on it doesn't last very long, and the marshmallow doesn't get going very fast or travel very far.
- In the second case, when you blow the marshmallow the length of the tube, it experiences an unbalanced force for the entire length of the tube. Since the force acts for a longer time, the marshmallow is going faster when it leaves the tube, and it therefore travels farther.

## So What is Going on?

- While the marshmallow is in the tube, your blowing increases the air pressure in the tube, creating a force on the marshmallow. As long as this force is greater than the friction force, there's an unbalanced force on the marshmallow. According to Newton's second law,  $F = ma$ , an unbalanced force accelerates an object. The speed of the marshmallow will keep increasing for as long as the marshmallow experiences an unbalanced force.
- The length of tube that will provide maximum speed is really determined by how long you can keep blowing strongly enough to maintain enough pressure in the tube so that the force produced on the marshmallow is larger than the friction force. If you have really big lungs, you can use a very long tube, and get the marshmallow moving really fast!
- As soon as the marshmallow leaves the tube, your blowing no longer affects it. But the faster the marshmallow is traveling when it leaves the

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## Disney's "Friends for Change"

Disney's Friends for Change grants encourage kids everywhere to take steps together with their friends to help the planet. Youth Service America will award 75 \$500 grants to youth-led service initiatives around the world that demonstrate youth leadership and the commitment to making a positive impact on the environment. Eligible applicants will be asked to implement their projects between September and November and to connect their projects to International Coastal Cleanup Day, National Public Lands Day (both September 25), or other environmentally-focused days of service.. Disney Friends for Change Grants are open to schools, organizations, and individuals planning service projects. Applications submitted by younger children aged 5-14 are especially welcome. The goal of the grant is to inspire children to join their friends and families, schools, and communities to address critical environmental needs as "friends for change" at the local, national, and/or global levels. Grant applications are due Thursday, July 15, 2010. Learn more at: [www.ysa.org/grants/announcements/friendsforchange2010](http://www.ysa.org/grants/announcements/friendsforchange2010)



## CAROL M. WHITE PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Carol M. White Physical Education Program provides grants to LEAs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to initiate, expand, or enhance physical education programs, including after-school programs, for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Grant recipients must implement programs that help students make progress toward meeting state standards. Funds may be used to provide equipment and support to enable students to participate actively in physical education activities. Funds also may support staff and teacher training and education. For more information visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html>

## Assisi Foundation of Memphis

The Assisi Foundation of Memphis, Inc. supports innovative and established programs that address the needs of Mid-South residents in the categories of: Healthcare and Human Services, Education and Literacy, Social Justice/Ethics, Cultural Enrichment and the Arts. Deadline 8/18/10. For more information visit <http://www.assisifoundation.org/generalgrants.html>

# Grant Opportunities

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## Arts In Education Mini Grant Program

The Arkansas Arts Council. K-12 schools for programs during school hours, and/or organizations that provide after school or summer programs, have an opportunity to apply for Arkansas Arts Council funding to: 1) bring quality, professional artists into the classroom or other location to present one- to five-day hands on, curriculum based arts activities; 2) present a teachers' professional development workshop in curriculum based arts activities either in conjunction with, or instead of a residency. Artists must be selected from the Arkansas AIE Artist Roster included as a section in the guidelines. Applicants may receive a maximum of \$1,500 using established AIE program rates for the artist's fees, travel, lodging and supplies. A 1:1 in-kind or cash match is required. Deadline to apply is 8/01/10. For more information visit

<http://www.arkansasarts.org/>

## Best Buy Children's Foundation Education Grants

The Best Buy Children's Foundation supports and strengthens communities by contributing to a variety of organizations and programs that foster engaged, fun learning experiences for children through the use of interactive

technology. The majority of funded proposals are initiated by the Foundation, however, they are interested in learning about existing and emerging national programs that creatively use interactive technology to make learning a fun and engaging experience for children. Deadline to apply is 8/01/10. For more information visit

[http://communications.bestbuy.com/communityrelations/our\\_foundation.asp](http://communications.bestbuy.com/communityrelations/our_foundation.asp).

## The Fender Music Foundation Grants

Qualifying applicants are established, ongoing and sustainable music programs in the United States, which provide music instruction for people of any age who would not otherwise have the opportunity to make music. The intent of the program must be music instruction, not music appreciation or entertainment, and the participants/students cannot be professional or career musicians. Almost all of the selected programs, to which they award grants, fall into the following categories: In-school music classes, in which the students make music; After-school music programs that are not run by the school; Music therapy programs, in which the participants make the music. For more information visit

<http://www.fendermusicfoundation.org/>