

DATE: November 10, 2019

1. Need for Program

All Aboard for Kids is a four-week summer enrichment program designed to provide a sense of academic continuity for children with autism spectrum disorder. June and July 2019, the program served 19 students, an increase in number of weeks a student attended and decrease in total number from 23 last year. There are no summer program options in Story County designed specifically for these kids. Some programs reach out to children with disabilities, but not specifically targeting the unique needs of those on the autism spectrum.

All Aboard for Kids meets the following funder priorities for FY20/21:

- United Way: Education- Children reenter school developmentally on track after summer.
- Story County: Services that provide safety and well-being needs for social and educational development and opportunities
- City of Ames: Youth development services and activities - Provide services and activities for skill development and enhancement

2. Program Strengths

All Aboard for Kids utilizes certified lead teachers in autism education along with volunteer staffing and facilitators. Teachers are hand-picked, with a 1:1 staff to student ratio. The program also strives to integrate “typical” students with those on the autism spectrum. Peer to peer learning is enhanced and brings a sense of “normalcy” to the students to work on their goals set with weekly All Aboard themes. This program also benefits the student’s family in summer months. The Board of Directors are active in reaching out to organizations to educate on and grow their services with new students. (i.e.) Ames Schools, Story County Extension, Physician offices, etc.

3. Program Weaknesses

Program development is stable with offerings to meet the student/parent needs per 2018 survey with almost 50% survey response rate of 8-9 out of 19. The challenge is in having enough support staffing and especially in hiring the certified lead teachers for summer months when many teachers may be off. The Board is very appreciative of United Way’s intern support to assist them with data analysis and marketing as they learn more about all the moving parts of growing their services to add students.

4. Financial Outlook

All Aboard for Kids is seeking funding in order to keep tuition costs at a minimum with scholarships provided to students. Many of the families served have financial challenges and cannot afford the tuition – especially with other services in which their children are involved. Resources will need to increase if it is to grow and meet the need in Story County.

5. Internal Management Practices

All Aboard for Kids is run by the founding couple – Michael and Lisa McCarty. They also have a dedicated Board of Directors that are involved in learning, managing and marketing the organization. The Board of Directors are knowledgeable on the student needs and active in reaching out to community organizations. There is a nice new brochure/packet with data that explains their services. The Board shared they are now better at planning for the future, understanding all the needs of a business and have purchased assets (i.e.) Lap tops for STEM.

6. Agency Suggestions/Comments

There is some concern on how best to submit budget stuff to ASSET as fiscal years do not line up. ASSET begins their fiscal year on July 1, which is right in the middle of the programming for All Aboard for Kids. This proposes a timing challenge to receive funds when classes start up in June. The previous ASSET funding was spent this past summer.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

All Aboard for Kids is a fairly new program that filling a void in Story County for kids on the autism spectrum. The McCarty's and Board of Directors are excited about the potential of this program to expand and include more kids. To do this, it will take resources as tuition dollars alone can be an inhibiting force for some.

They have been utilizing the Gilbert Schools for classroom space for their summer programs. However, with the construction at Gilbert, they have also used the Plex in Ames as well. Camp classes were half days from 8:30 – 12:00 for 2 weeks in June and in July. They work to keep same lead teacher with student.

They are working on communication and marketing, making their organization more known on a wider basis in Story County.

Lisa shared this is an inclusive camp and she invites new students to come for one day to see what it is like.

The survey data and graphs showed positive results for their services that All Aboard for Kids should be very proud of:

- Student to staff ratio was rated at 100% satisfactory.
- Response of 71.4% of students will be returning. There were 2 new kids compared to last year.
- 28.6% of students attended for 2 weeks.
- 85.7% said they had a fantastic time and enjoyed their week.