



For over two decades, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities (BGCTC) has worked in partnership with local schools to support student attendance through communications with youth (Club members) and their caregivers. We have found that focusing on the positive outcomes of attending school helps to build trust and strengthen the connection between students, caregivers, and schools.

*A Harvard Family Research Report (2004) stated, <sup>1</sup> “Participation in Out-Of-School (OST) activities is predictive of academic success as measured through test scores, **absenteeism**, school dropout rates, homework completion, school grades, and course enrollment.”*

One of BGCTC’s greatest assets is having a highly qualified, caring, and professional staff team, that builds and maintains long-term connections with a Club member and their family over multiple years. Our program model provides students with positive role models and mentors who can support their academic and personal development, leading to improved school engagement and attendance.

### BGCTC Believes School Attendance Matters

- Student success is directly connected to engagement in school and is strengthened when children and teens attend school regularly.
- We have a responsibility to expect that all Club members must attend school during the day before attending Club after school.
  - School attendance expectations are shared with caregivers at the start of the school year.
  - We provide positive messaging to caregivers and Club kids about the value and importance of school attendance throughout the year.
- We provide supportive services and encouragement to families when attendance challenges are identified, focusing on building an actionable solution.
  - Understanding WHY students are absent is critical to building a plan to support student attendance and academic success in school AND at the Boys & Girls Club.
  - Community connected therapists located within the Club locations work with staff to identify and eliminate barriers associated with absenteeism.
- Our role is to provide a safe and welcoming environment where student learning continues during the afterschool time, on school release days and in the summer.

### Education Program Highlights:

- Literacy is a gateway to upward mobility and is the cornerstone for BGCTC’s Academic Success program continuum.
- Early reading success is a critical first step toward future academic milestones.
- BGCTC’s holistic research-based K-8 literacy education and enrichment program based on the ***Science of Reading*** is designed to move kids to and beyond grade level through hands-on skill building experiences.
- In May 2025, 22 Club staff will complete a two-year Teacher Certification through LETRS.

#### GRADES K-5

##### → Activity Stations

Hands-On, Multi-Sensory Literacy Activity Stations for all K-5 members

##### → Reading Cohorts

Pull-Out Reading Cohorts utilizing the Sonday Reading System for K-5 members assessed as needing focused reading support

#### GRADES 6-8

##### → Activity Stations

Hands-On, Multi-Sensory Literacy Activity Stations for all grades 6-8 youth

##### → Support Resources

Focused literacy support resources include Sonday System 2 or Edmentum Exact Path individualized learning path curricula

<sup>1</sup> Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.  
Simpkins, S. (2003). Does youth participation in out-of-schooltime activities make a difference? *The Evaluation Exchange*, 9(1).

## Seeing the Future of Youth Development: My Visit to Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities

An excerpt from Lorraine Orr, Executive Vice President & COO, Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
(LinkedIn Blog Post - March 21, 2025)



Twice in the last six months, I've had the opportunity to hear author, speaker, and organizational psychology researcher [Eduardo Briceño](#) speak on the applications of growth mindset philosophy as it applies to the work of Boys & Girls Clubs. Eduardo emphasizes the importance of balancing time spent in the "Performance Zone" (executing known tasks efficiently) and the "Learning Zone" (actively seeking improvement and innovation). This past week, I spent two days in St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota deep in the Learning Zone with Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities.

The Twin Cities Clubs, under the leadership of President & CEO [Terry Brumm](#), have set up their entire operational system to institutionalize quality and skill building with consistency across sites, across days, across seasons. From beginning to end, every person knows how the system works, can speak to it fluently, and knows how to implement it. I found this through-and-through approach, with every staff member having a bone-deep knowledge of priorities and processes, innovative in the extreme.

From the moment I stepped into their Clubs, it was clear that this organization is deeply committed to academic success and consistent, high-quality programming. What struck me most was the unified vision shared by the leadership team; they've made a conscious decision to shift their focus towards a comprehensive academic model, and they've aligned every aspect of their work—from fundraising to hiring to program delivery—to support this goal.

One of the most innovative aspects of their programming is their adoption of a Montessori-inspired approach. They've structured their programs to allow kids to seamlessly join sessions at any time, ensuring that learning continues without disruption whether a young person is there every day or drops in a few times a month. This model fosters a smooth, flowing learning environment, which is particularly beneficial for kids with varying schedules.

I was also incredibly impressed by their data-driven approach. They meticulously track every interaction with their Club members and review this data on a monthly basis with every Club director. This allows them to keep each other accountable in a supportive fashion, while tailoring resources and programming to meet the specific needs of each Club member and staff. This focus on data not only ensures program quality but also empowers Club leaders to make impactful changes. Perhaps the most inspiring and gratifying part of my visit was witnessing the passion and dedication of the young people involved in their "Changemaker Challenge" program. From organizing backpack and clothing drives for their communities to actively talking about mental health, these young people are investing in themselves as leaders and in making a real difference in their Twin Cities! It was truly inspiring to see middle schoolers and high schoolers alike speaking passionately about crucial issues and actively working to create positive change. Their voices are powerful, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities are providing them with the platform to be heard.

Another key takeaway was their intentional focus on parent and caregiver engagement. They encourage caregivers to come inside the Club during pickups, connect with staff, and hear about their Club members' day. This simple act fosters a stronger sense of community and ensures that parents and caregivers are not just aware of Club activities, but actively involved through multiple positive interactions.

My visit to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities was a powerful reminder of the transformative impact that Boys & Girls Clubs have on young people, not simply as after school care centers or homework help, but helping young people unlock their innate leadership skills and gifts, helping them decide what they want to use their talents for in their lives. The Twin Cities' commitment to academic success, innovative programming, and community engagement is truly making a difference. I left feeling hopeful and excited about the future of youth development in our country, and eager to see where they grow from here!