

POLICY TITLE: COSSA ACADEMY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to detail the relationship between COSSA and the COSSA Academy Community School.

Background

COSSA is a five-district public school cooperative which began in 1969. It serves the rural communities of Canyon and Owyhee Counties in southwest Idaho. Member school districts are: Homedale, Marsing, Notus, Parma, and Wilder. Services provided include: Special Education, Alternative, and Career Technical Education (CTE). Collaboration enables the member school districts to pool resources and provide enhanced programs and services that would not individually be feasible within the individual districts.

In 2019 COSSA Academy was designated a Community School by the United Way of Treasure Valley. This designation was in recognition of the rural nature and extremely high poverty experienced by the students who attend COSSA Academy, and the need for COSSA to help meet the basic needs of our students and their families so students can learn. COSSA Academy students are 60% white, 39% Hispanic, and 1% other minority. COSSA Academy serves grades 7 through 12, so student ages range from 12 to 21. Household sizes vary, but in the 2021 school year, 20 of COSSA Academy's current students were classified homeless by the Idaho State Department of Education, and several of our students were in foster care or were being raised by a non-parent family member.

The COSSA Academy Community School is located in Wilder, Canyon County, Idaho. US Census data for Canyon County include:

1. Population.

- 28% 18 and under
- 14% over 65
- 70% white
- 25.5% Hispanic

2. Households.

- 2.94 person per household
- 20% without Broadband Internet
- Non-high school graduate: 15%

Per capita annual income \$22,232 (significantly lower than Idaho's median)
Families in poverty: 10%+

3. The extreme western end of the Treasure Valley, in Canyon and Owyhee counties, has a high percent of poverty, a high percent of dependence, a high percent of drug/alcohol abuse, and a low percent of high school graduation. COSSA Academy Alternative Jr/Sr High School serves approximately 150 of the most needy students in Canyon and Owyhee counties - those who have been declared "at risk" of graduation by their home school. These students often come from high mobility, low income, socially damaged families (incarceration, drug abuse, parent mental health issues, gang affiliation).

4. The COSSA Academy Community School was established to provide clothing, food, hygiene products, medical and dental screening, mental health counseling, and other essential services to students, their siblings, and family members, so our students can concentrate on education.

5. COSSA Academy serves approximately 150 students per year. All students are 100% free and/or reduced lunch eligible. Almost 20 of our students have been identified as homeless. An average of 12 are English learners. Several students are being raised by non-parent family members, or are in foster care.

6. The COSSA Academy Community School Clothes Closet and Food Pantry both receive donations of food, clothing, and hygiene products from the Wilder Food Pantry, the Parma Food Pantry, and the Parma Senior Center. These donations are routine, but there is no formal agreement in place.

7. Mental health counseling is provided by Lifeways Counseling, a private counseling firm, and there is a formal MOA in place between COSSA and Lifeways.

8. Dental screening is provided by Delta Dental once per year at registration, but there is no formal agreement between COSSA and Delta Dental. Vision screening is provided by a local Lions Club once per year at registration, but there is no formal agreement between COSSA and the Lions.

9. Medical screening is provided monthly by Southwest District Health (SWDH), and Nurse-Family Partners (NFP) from SWDH visit pregnant and parenting COSSA Academy students as needed, but there is no formal agreement. The CEO of COSSA serves on the NFP technical advisory committee for SWDH.

Data Collection

COSSA collects data on the number of students served through all aspects of our Community School, including: number of medical, dental, and vision screenings, number of students receiving mental health counseling, number of students who receive a weekend backpack meal, and number of students receiving clothing from the Clothes

Closet, etc. Surveys for those receiving services, measuring quality and efficacy of service, are administered. Graduation rate and a follow-up "positive placement" rate (survey conducted 9 months after graduation) are routinely collected and are expected to show improvement as more student needs are met, allowing them to remain in school.

The Community School Coordinator will collect data from the above activities so that COSSA can determine effectiveness and fairness of assistance programs, including:

- a. Tracking the number of backpack meals sent home with students.
- b. Tracking the number of food boxes delivered to families from the Food Pantry
- c. Tracking the number of students helped with clothes, shoes, and coats distributed from the Clothes Closet
- d. Tracking the number of hygiene kits sent home with students.
- e. Tracking Lifeways visits
- f. Collecting data for United Way grant indicators, including the number of students participating in: Delta Dental, vision, food, clothing, hygiene, counseling, SWDH visits, etc.

Community School Coordinator

The Community School Coordinator has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the various programs associated with the Community School, many of which require cooperation and coordination with other departments in COSSA, including:

- a. Backpack meals sent home with students, in cooperation with the Food Service Coordinator.
- b. Distribution of donated food from the Food Pantry.
- c. Distribution of clothing from the Clothes Closet, in cooperation with any staff member who helps students (student sign-in sheet).
- d. Distribution of hygiene kits, in cooperation with Counselor and/or Registrar.
- e. Arranging Lifeways counseling visits to students in COSSA Academy, in cooperation with the school's Counselor and/or Registrar.
- f. Arranging for Delta Dental screening visits.
- g. Arranging for vision screening visits.

h. Coordinating student visits to the Southwest District Health nurse, in cooperation with the school's Counselor and/or Registrar.

Donation Process

COSSA Academy's Community School desires to distribute help in an effective and fair manner. In order to ensure the neediest students receive the help they need, anonymous questionnaires will be administered to COSSA Academy students, which will then be used by the Community School Coordinator to determine the extent and frequency of help offered to students.

LEGAL REFERENCE:

IDAPA 08.02.03.110 Alternative Secondary Programs

POLICY HISTORY:

Adopted: August 16, 2021