

DATE: August 7, 2024  
TO: Ripon School Board Members  
Dr. Mary Whitrock  
Jonah Adams  
FROM: Nancy Bouwkamp, BRAVE Project Director  
Eliza Stephenson, Camp Brave Coordinator  
Halle Hadel, Barlow Park Elementary BRAVE Coordinator  
Jessica Huser, Murray Park/Quest BRAVE Coordinator  
  
RE: 2023-2024 BRAVE Annual Report

The BRAVE program has evolved and morphed multiple times over the past several years in an attempt to better support working families while remaining true to a program that appeals to, and supports all students and families. BRAVE's main focus has always been providing quality tutoring and academic reinforcement, as well as diverse enrichment opportunities for students in grades 4K through fifth grade. Unique programming is tailored to the students and families of each school site. We have worked hard to balance the needs of working families while maintaining programming for all Ripon Area School District families. This remains our main focus, even as programming changes.

BRAVE continued with expanded programming for our elementary families during the 2023-2024 school year. When the school day for 4K went to full day, we added 4K to our afternoon programming. Most expansion options were implemented during the 2017-2018 school year and remained relatively consistent. This programming included before school care (Morning Enrichment) and additional weeks of after school enrichment programming.

## **Attendance Numbers**

BRAVE provided 412 students with programming throughout the 2023-2024 school year. To obtain an accurate participation number, each student was counted only once, even though they may have attended BRAVE on more than one occasion. The increase in participation is due in part to the Camp BRAVE program designed to provide care and enrichment on teacher professional development days.

The program as a whole had 22,887 days of student duplicated attendance (this number reflects every time a student attended a program).

Staffing continues to be a challenge for BRAVE, even as the program increases wages. Coordinators actively recruit students from Ripon High School and Ripon College and will continue to do so in the coming years.

With the award of the Nita Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center grant through DPI for the Barlow Park/ Journey Elementary School BRAVE program, we had completely FREE

programming for Barlow Park and Journey families starting in the fall of 2019. Specific information regarding the grant is included in Appendix E. We submitted a grant proposal for another five year Nita Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center grant and are pleased to report that we have been awarded this grant.

**BRAVE CLC Unduplicated Participants** (Students are counted once)

SCHOOL SITE	2018-2019	2019-2020*	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
BP/J	114	134	163	200	205	209
MP/Q	125	129	97	121	117	95
Family Outreach	200	520	Virtual attendance	147	135	108
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>412</b>

\*These numbers are reflective of no formal programming after March 13, 2020 due to COVID-19 closures.

**BRAVE CLC Duplicated Participants** (Students are counted every time they attend)

SCHOOL SITE	2018-19 Enrichment /Interim	2019-20*	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-2024
Program Days	Enrichment: 99 Interim: 44	125	156	179	172 Camp BRAVE: 7	172 Camp BRAVE: 7
BP/J	5934	6989	9081	10968	10,309	15,993
MP/Q	5767	4576	4024	5707	5,836	6,894
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14476</b>	<b>12650</b>	<b>14193</b>	<b>17639</b>	<b>16,145</b>	<b>22,887</b>

\*These numbers are reflective of no formal programming after March 13, 2020 due to COVID-19 closures.

**Attendance Percentage per School (Based on each sites overall student numbers, not including Odyssey)**

SCHOOL SITE	2018-2019	2019-2020*	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
BP/J	36%	39%	29%	54%	56%	56%
MP/Q	42%	40%	24%	39%	30%	40%

\*These numbers are reflective of no formal programming after March 13, 2020 due to COVID-19 closures.

**School Site Programs (See Appendix A)**

Attached you will find a listing of the classes and programs that were offered through the BRAVE CLC (**Appendix A**). Each site is unique and offers classes and homework help that is age appropriate and interesting to the grade levels it serves.

**Barlow Park/Journey: 56% of total school population participated in BRAVE**

Unduplicated attendance numbers and the percentage of students utilizing BRAVE programming for Barlow Park/Journey have shown fluctuation over the past five years but have remained relatively consistent. Duplicated numbers have shown a marked increase over a five year period and have been consistent over the last several years in large part due the Nita Lowey CCLC grant and the new Camp BRAVE program. Attendance usually consists of first and second graders with more K4 and kindergartners joining as the year progresses and they become acclimated to their new school. This year saw typical K4 and kindergarten attendance increasing as the year went on.

Barlow Park/Journey offers homework help and tutoring focused on the reinforcement of the learning and social skills being taught in the classroom. Specialized tutoring opportunities were given to our struggling students where certified staff reinforced the curriculum in small groups. Students with little or no homework were given learning opportunities in math, reading and social skills. Kindergarten students whose homework load is low worked with staff on building skills related to the school day.

Students needing a higher level of support were placed in small groups or one-on-one, whenever possible. We were able to offer special needs students higher levels of support each afternoon, creating an environment conducive to success. United Way and Webster Foundation funding from Fund 21 was utilized to provide students with a higher level of support.

Barlow Park/Journey offered several enrichment classes this school year (**Appendix A**). Three to four different enrichment options were available each afternoon, covering a wide range of topics and interests. Old favorites and popular classes are offered more than one night or several times throughout the year to provide an opportunity for more students to attend.

## **Murray Park/Quest Elementary Schools: 40% of total school population participated in BRAVE**

The Murray Park/Quest BRAVE program continued to offer students new, fun and educational opportunities. Active/sports classes, science and technology classes were true favorites this year and will be offered as much as possible during the 2023-2024 school year. Communication with students has ensured that the classes offered are tailored to their interests.

Murray Park/Quest BRAVE's homework help give students an opportunity to get their assignments completed and receive support when needed. All of the tutoring and homework help programs are free to families and students do not need to be enrolled in an enrichment class to receive these services. We continue to see a rise in teachers recommending students for homework help only and or intervention tutoring. Communication between BRAVE, students, teachers and families about homework and tutoring needs continue to be a priority.

In 2022/23 we decided to reduce the cost to families for enrichment classes. The BRAVE coordinators feel that this will allow more students the opportunity to participate and ease the transition from a completely free program at Barlow Park. This continued through the 2023/24 school year.

## **Family Outreach Programming**

During the 2023-2024 school year, there were four family events. BRAVE staff worked with Ripon Public Library to host a family reading night. Librarians gave tours of the children's area and read a story. We hosted a Lego night in December. Families were encouraged to use prompts to build with Lego blocks. Lotus Root Yoga taught a yoga class in February. In conjunction with the lifeguarding staff, we hosted a water safety night in May. Lifeguards gave a brief water safety presentation to families and children were encouraged to participate in open swim.

## **Budget Overview (See Appendix B)**

With the implementation of the Nita Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, all programming was free at Barlow Park/ Journey and morning care and Friday afterschool was provided at no charge to Murray Park/ Quest students. Fees collected from Enrichment, and Interim totaled \$20,027.75 (100.14% of the budgeted amount). Tax levy dollars totaled \$100,000.

The BRAVE program continues to work with DPI to qualify for and receive snack reimbursement based on the district free/reduced student population.

Expenses were at 114% of the budget. The bulk of expenses are in labor and benefits. A strong focus on staffing is intentional, as BRAVE remains dedicated to offering free tutoring and academic assistance programs. The smaller the ratio of students to staff, the better able the program is to meet the needs of the students. Fees collected have historically funded enrichment staff and supplies. Tax levy dollars fund snacks, supervision/staffing and homework help. The additional revenue from the Nita Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center assisted in avoiding the use of fund balance for Camp BRAVE programming, while maintaining the high level of services BRAVE is recognized for.

### Budget Usage

Budget	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
All Sites	96%	79%*	51%	65%	112%	112%

\*COVID-19 closures after March 13, 2020

\*\* Middle School BRAVE dissolved in Spring 2022

Due to rising scholarship needs, BRAVE continues to work with the Students Needs Fund to meet the needs of as many students and families as possible. While all BRAVE tutoring is free to families, scholarships covered the cost of enrichment fees. Thanks to the generosity of the Special Needs Fund, we were able to provide programming for many more families than was possible in the past. As we recognize that this fund cannot be relied on to offer this level of financial support in the future, the program has looked to generous local organizations to close this gap.

Through the communication, creativity and diligence of our volunteers, staff, and Site Coordinators, the program continues to flourish within the constraints of our budget. Their consistent efforts are what create a thriving program.

### STEP Program

The STEP (Senior Tax Exchange Program) provided our students and staff with 5 volunteers during the 2023-2024 school year. The STEP volunteer cycle runs from November to November. Tax credit checks were issued to individuals in December 2023 for \$1,706.25. The response to this program has been very positive by both the volunteers and the teaching staff who have the volunteers in their classrooms.

### Camp BRAVE

In 2023-2024 we offered seven Camp BRAVE programs. With support from Dr. Mary Whitrock and Jonah Adams, we were able to offer free enrichment programming to families in our district.

Camp BRAVE was originally created to alleviate the burden on families to find reliable childcare for the increased number of teacher in-service days in the 2021-2022 academic year. The district's highly qualified classified staff led lessons and activities and supervised students throughout the program. We offered programming on each of the seven staff professional development days in 2023-2024. Students registered for Camp BRAVE also had the opportunity to participate in Morning Enrichment (6:45a.m. - 7:45a.m.) and Evening BRAVE (3:30p.m - 5:00p.m.)

Due to staffing restrictions, we capped registration at approximately 115 students for each program.

We utilized SignUp Genius for registration this year. This allowed families to more easily register for only the programs their child wanted to attend. Historical attendance is listed in the chart below, but see **Appendix D** for complete attendance information for the 2023-2024 programs.

### Historical Camp BRAVE Attendance

	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023
<b>Total Students Registered</b>	137	127	112	118
<b>Average Registration</b>	92	89	106	107
<b>Average Attendance</b>	59	60	87	71

The 2023-2024 Camp BRAVE program provided several opportunities for free off-site field trips. District classified staff supervised children on the trips. We also welcomed several parent chaperones and siblings. Please see **Appendix C** for programming highlights.

### Conclusion

Although we have some dedicated staff returning next year, we have lost many staff members this year. BRAVE will be actively hiring qualified individuals to keep our staff to student ratio low. They are the foundation of our program and are eagerly looking forward to helping students achieve academic and personal success. The program as a whole, as well as the expansion services provided this year, have been beneficial, quality enhancements due to the dedication of all BRAVE program staff.

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks go out to our Ripon School Board and school administrators who continue to recognize the importance of our unique programs in students' lives. The program continues to grow and flourish due in large part to this continued recognition and support.