



Gary Krambeck / Staff

Shelly Rumler, a third-grade teacher at Lincoln-Irving Elementary School in Moline, works with after-school student Amy Sanchez as they read a book together.

Grants enable schools to offer special programs after hours

By Dustin Lemmon
Staff writer

The school dismissal bell still rings at 10 minutes 'til three at Lincoln-Irving Elementary School, but that doesn't mark the day's end for many students.

This year, many Quad-Cities schools are holding after-school programs thanks to federal grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

Kids at Lincoln-Irving study reading and writing from 3 to 4 p.m. and participate in cultural and recreational activities from 4 to 5 p.m. The three-year grant also will pay to keep the school's computer lab open after school so students can work on homework and other activities.

It also pays for an evening adult literacy class for Hispanic parents who want to learn English. While the parents are taking the classes every Tuesday and Thursday, babysitting is provided for younger children, while older students can join evening study classes.

The grant also will pay for the elementary school's own summer-school program next year. This year, a districtwide summer school was held at Roosevelt Elementary School.

Principal Dennis Nelson said Lincoln-Irving was fortunate to win the grant. Moline High School and the Moline Alternative High School received similar funding for after-school study programs.

"It was a collective effort, and we were very fortunate," Mr. Nelson said of getting the grants.

While urban schools in the Quad-Cities are benefiting from after-school grants, some rural schools hope they also can win some of the federal and state funds.

Geneseo superintendent Harold Ford said his district doesn't qualify for the grants because the poverty level in the district isn't low enough. He said that is a disadvantage

the district faces in many of its grant applications.

"We don't have a high enough low-income count," Mr. Ford said. "Even if we are eligible, we don't usually get it. Our count is so low, we get very little."

The Riverdale School District has run into a similar problem, according to superintendent David Bills.

The district had a safe-to-learn grant that paid for after-school activities, such as helping with homework and extracurricular activities, but it expired last year.

Mr. Bills said Riverdale would like to win a federal grant to restart similar programs, but, like Geneseo, the district doesn't meet low-income requirements needed to receive most grants.

Riverdale is contacting other area rural districts to see if they can pursue the grants together, giving them a better chance, he said.

"We're looking for a better way to be given consideration," Mr. Bills said. "I think it's a very nice opportunity. It's a great idea. I'm very much for it. I guess it's the same problem as usual. It's going to the schools that show a socioeconomic need."

Aledo superintendent Ira Cunningham said his district doesn't have a chance at winning the grants because it too is smaller and has a hard time competing with large districts.

While the grants aren't there for many rural districts, Moline and other large districts are using them.

The East Moline School District is using its state and federal grants to offer after-school programs for both students and the community. The programs include access to the computer and library in the evenings.

The library and computer labs are open at Hillcrest from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays; at Ridgewood from

5 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays; at Wells from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Thursdays; at Bowlesburg from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and from 4 to 7 p.m. some Sundays, and at Glenview Middle School from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursdays.

Librarians and computer lab advisers are on hand to help the public. Other activities include storytelling, book fairs, arts and crafts classes and help with homework.

In Rock Island, Earl Hanson Elementary School and Edison Junior High School both receive after-school grants for the next three years.

Earl Hanson used the money to pay for an intersession program during its two-week fall break in October. The money paid for students to take field trips to the Quad City Botanical Center and for water exploration. About 80 students signed up for the activities, Rock Island assistant superintendent of curriculum J. Jay Marino said.

The money also helped the school put on a family fun night recently at the Rock Island Fitness Center. Families could use the facility for the night and received a free meal.

The grant also is helping the school keep its computer center open from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, giving families access to the center in the evening. Staff members are present to answer questions.

At Edison Junior High School the grant is paying for before and after-school tutoring and for a weekly guest speaker. In coming months, it will pay for extracurricular clubs in chess, science, choir and drama.

"The district's reason for going after this grant is to help us achieve our vision of excellence everyday," Mr. Marino said, noting each school applies for its own grants. "With the grants, we can go beyond the typical expectations of the school."