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Effective after school programs provide a variety of positive youth development opportunities that set after school programs apart from traditional childcare and the traditional school setting. Positive youth development encompasses competence in academic, social, and vocational areas; confidence and positive identity; connection, or healthy relations to community, family and peers; character, or positive values; caring and compassion. To that end, Red Springs Middle after school provides homework help with targeted instruction to build skills in reading and math using the Common Core and Essential Standards as curriculum to complement classroom work. In addition to providing students with more one-on-one instruction than a traditional classroom, we work to contact teachers on a regular basis to ensure that homework is being turned in and to find out where an individual student is struggling. This is included in the student individual service plan.

“Pizza for Success” provides an incentive as we work to promote better school attendance, improving grades and behavior. Providing enrichment activities have been proven to improve academic performance. Students from a very rural environment often do not have the opportunity to experience a visit to the movie theater, skating rink or bowling alley. Over the course of the year we provide an opportunity for our students to experience these activities which build appropriate social skills and provide opportunities to improve peer relationships. We usually schedule one at the end of the nine week grading period.

Providing youth with a variety of recreational activities contributes to the healthy development of the whole youth and gives the young person opportunities to develop important skills that are not always taught during the school day. We offer a variety these activities, including board games, team building games and sports. Participation in organized activities and games help youth develop social skills and values, such as teamwork, good sportsmanship, coping strategies and problem solving skills. Student volunteers from UNC-P most often participate with our students in these activities. In addition, we are able to provide skill building and healthy life styles as our students visit the local fitness facility twice a month. They are led in activities by a qualified fitness staff person and have a chance to learn how to swim. Another critical role that

after school programs plays in helping youth to develop a healthy sense of self is to provide them with cultural opportunities and a chance to explore their talents. To this end we strive to bring in a variety of teaching artists who work with the students in a particular art form. This allows them tangible experience with communication, cooperation and skill engagement as they are led in art instruction. A parent event per semester includes a light supper with a prevention program targeted to provide healthy family interaction.