

The NAZA-NPL Partnership

By Rachel Roseberry

The Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) is a coordinated network of 43 afterschool programs for middle-school students created by Nashville's current mayor, Karl Dean, to combat the high dropout rate in Nashville public high schools. NAZA's afterschool programs create engaging, safe spaces where students learn actively and challenge themselves creatively. In July 2014, to ensure the sustainability of the network, NAZA became a part of the Nashville Public Library (NPL). As a result of this unique partnership, the network began to turn its focus to creating a culture of reading and writing in all of its afterschool programs.

Over the 2014-2015 school year, a number of programs, activities, and resources were leveraged to support and encourage NAZA afterschool programs to engage in meaningful reading and writing activities.

Limitless Libraries

The Nashville Public Library created the nationally recognized Limitless Libraries program, which allows teachers and students from the Nashville public schools to request books from the public library that are then delivered, within three days, to their school. This year, all NAZA site coordinators also received these Limitless Library privileges allowing them to easily access engaging books for the middle-school students in their program.



The NAZA program at Apollo Middle School uses Limitless Library books in their book club.

Reading Mentor Program

The Nashville Public Library has a strong system of branch libraries and, in a pilot program this year, eight branch librarians in the children's and teen's departments were paired with eight afterschool sites across the NAZA network. This program encouraged librarians to act as reading mentors to their paired sites. At one site, the librarian helped site staff initiate a book club. Students from that afterschool program then visited the branch library after completing the book to watch the movie version of the book they had read and tour the library.

Writing Contest

The NAZA-NPL partnership also catalyzed the 1st annual network-wide NAZA Writing Contest. The writing contest, held in the spring semester, centered on the theme of friendship and entries were accepted in all genres. More than 1/3 of sites participated in the writing contest, and Mayor Karl Dean honored the winners at the end-of-year NAZA Showcase.



NAZA Writing Contest winners with Mayor Karl Dean at the end-of-year NAZA Showcase

Training and Coaching

NAZA also provided literacy-based professional development training sessions and site-specific coaching to assist site staff in integrating reading and writing into their program. To do this, a half-time Literacy Coach was hired to support sites in all literacy initiatives. For more information, contact rachel.roseberry@nplf.org.