



# Empowering Families:

## The Vital Role of Fifth-Day Programs in Idaho



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The steady trend of shifting to a four-day school week has led to the creation of essential fifth-day programs, which provide critical support to students and families. These programs not only offer educational and recreational activities but also address gaps in care that arise from the reduced school week. Members of our Idaho Out-of-School Network recently conducted interviews with fifth-day program employees to dig in and learn more about their work and how they can be supported.



One powerful testament to the significance of these programs comes from Katie Stimpson, Director of the Parma Learning Center (PLC), who shared that a parent recently said, “PLC is the program that’s holding me on to public education,” which underscores the vital role that fifth-day programs play in maintaining engagement with ongoing changes to the public education system at large. By offering a safe and enriching environment on the fifth day, these programs help retain families within the public-school framework, ensuring that students continue to benefit from public education resources and support.

Elsewhere, the dual mission of the 4-H Friday Friends program in Bonners Ferry, is to provide education to youth while catering to families’ needs, as emphasized by Amy Robertson, a 4-H Extension Educator with the University of Idaho Extension. The program operates for 10 hours on Fridays, allowing families the flexibility to drop off and pick up their children at any time during the day. This adaptability is crucial for working parents who need reliable childcare and educational activities for their children. By accommodating diverse family schedules, the program ensures that more children can participate and benefit from the services offered.

The positive impact of the Treasure Valley YMCA’s fifth-day program on students with behavioral issues is significant. Nicole Pratt, Director of Child Development, highlighted how the program provides more one-on-one attention due to lower student-to-staff ratios, helping students navigate their behavioral challenges in more depth than they can during the school week. This individualized attention is often not possible during the regular school week due to larger class sizes and limited resources. The fifth-day program offers a supportive environment where students can receive the help, they need to improve their behavior and overall well-being.

Flexibility is a key feature of these programs, as noted by Pratt. The Treasure Valley YMCA’s program can reach a new audience of students who do not attend traditional afterschool programs but need something extra on Fridays. This flexibility allows the program to cater to a broader range of students, including those who are homeschooled or have other unique educational needs. By offering a structured and engaging environment, the program can ensure that these students also have access to valuable educational and social opportunities.

Through the Idaho Out-of-School Network (ION) staff can access a range of resources to enhance the quality and effectiveness of out-of-school time programs. These include professional development opportunities through workshops and webinars, essential training in behavior management and trauma-informed practices via the Behavioral Management Institute, and guidance on securing funding through various trainings on grant procurement.

Fifth-day programs in Idaho are more than just a stopgap measure for the reduced school week; they are a lifeline for many families and students. These programs help maintain engagement with public education, cater to the diverse needs of families, provide added support for students with behavioral issues, and offer essential services to a wide range of students.

To further enhance the impact, public school staff and administrators are encouraged to reach out to fifth-day programs in their area. By offering support in the form of spaces, transportation, meals, or staff assistance, schools can play a pivotal role in expanding the reach and effectiveness of these initiatives. Collaboration between public schools and fifth-day programs can guarantee that all students have access to the resources they need to thrive, making a significant difference in the lives of families and the broader community.

For more information, visit the Idaho Out-of-School Network website: <https://idahoutofschool.org/>