

# Ignite!

## Scholar

### Partner Program Overview

The Ignite! Scholar program recruits, trains and mentors undergraduate students by providing experience teaching in out-of-school time (OST) programs in Indiana. Through Ignite! Scholar, students receive valuable early contact with youth and program providers receive trained youth workers for their k-12 students.

Funded by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the STEM Teacher Recruitment Fund Grant Program is delivered in collaboration with organizations across the state. The program's primary goal is to increase the pool of high-quality formal and informal STEM educators in the state of Indiana. To address the STEM teacher shortage in high-need schools the program trains undergraduate students and places them in OST programs to deliver hands-on, research-based STEM content alongside professional teachers and youth workers. Undergraduate students are recruited from 2-year and 4-year campuses and represent a range of majors including teacher education, STEM fields, and other disciplines such as youth and social work. While some Scholars will go on to become teachers, others may become youth workers or serve as mentors when they enter their professions.

Ignite! Scholar matches undergraduate students with experienced teachers and youth workers, provides them with training on educational activities and methods, and places them in OST programs. These OST programs are low-risk environments for early teaching field experiences, allowing novice teachers to hone their lesson planning and management skills.

- Ignite! Scholar prepares pre-service teachers and those not on the education path through teaching engaging, hands-on science curriculum in highly experiential environments.
- Ignite! Scholars reported increased confidence, excitement, and commitment to STEM teaching and learning careers.
- Ignite! Scholar puts in place a model of teacher education whereby afterschool becomes an environment for early field experiences beyond those in traditional education schooling, allowing participants to develop content knowledge and pedagogical skills need to become strong STEM educators.

#### **The program has five main goals:**

1. Increasing the number of quality STEM teachers in high-need K-12 schools and helping to retain them once they enter the classroom.
2. Increasing the number of youth workers competent in STEM education in OST environments.

3. Creating better STEM programs in both formal and informal settings, including linkages between the school day and afterschool.
4. Providing better and more meaningful STEM exposure for K-12 students, yielding workers with better skills upon graduation and increased interest in STEM careers.
5. Providing STEM majors with valuable experience and mentoring skills, regardless of whether they choose a career path in STEM education.

### **Impact on Indiana**

Since starting in 2014, 43 undergraduate students have participated as Ignite! Scholars across Indiana. These 43 students helped to deliver quality STEM programming to over 1800 students in grades K-12. Of these students:

- 54% are planning to be a teacher because of this program
- 46% are more likely to become youth worker
- 31% felt the program made them more interested in teaching
- 75% felt more comfortable teaching STEM content
- 85% felt more comfortable managing classrooms

### **Why Ignite! Scholar is needed in Indiana**

- Special Education, Mathematics, and Science typically have the highest turnover rates of all education fields.
- A pool of qualified educators is needed to improve overall STEM education and literacy in the state, as well as improve deficiencies in college and career readiness.
- Indiana STEM employers estimate that more than 10,000 job openings are unfilled due to a lack of qualified workers (Skills2Compete, 2010.)
- Indiana students in grades 1-4 receive only 2.1 hours/week of science in school on average (Indiana STEM Vital Signs Report, 2012.)
- Only 64% of 6th graders pass the state science test (greatschools.org, 2011.)
- Fewer than half of Indiana's high school graduates are ready for first-year college math and science (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2010.)
- The statistics are even more bleak for low-income and minority youth, who generally have more limited access to STEM enrichment programs.

### **Program Sites**

*Ignite! Scholar* is managed by the Indiana Afterschool Network and WisdomTools. The program has ongoing functional partnerships with Indiana Department of Education's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, several universities, and youth serving organizations across the state. Ignite! Scholar seeks partnerships with all out-of-school time providers across the state, as well as universities and colleges in the state of Indiana.

### **How your partnership with Ignite! Scholar can help**

Ignite! Scholar is ready to scale across the state but needs new partners in higher education to help recruit new undergraduate students and expand the program's reach.

**Individual OST Programs** – Individual programs may request to have one or more Scholar teams (students are generally paired) placed at their site, or to have existing staff (or planned new hires) participate in the program. Many OST programs already employ undergraduate

students and may wish to improve their training and support for STEM program delivery by having them designated as an Ignite! Scholar.

**Quality and Retention** - Partnering with the Ignite! Scholar program not only improves staff retention but also increases the quality of instruction provided to the K-12 students working with the Scholars. All Scholars are given training and guidance in behavior management and cultural competency in addition to STEM content and activities. Though each Scholar will need a supervisor/mentor to assist in honing their skills, they must complete professional development before being placed in afterschool and summer programs.

**Mentoring** - We request that each program site have a "point person" or supervisor/mentor available to oversee the work completed by the Scholars assigned to them. This individual should expect to observe Scholars as they deliver content and to be available to coach Scholars in areas where they may need improvement. WisdomTools staff will be available throughout Scholars' placement periods and can offer additional guidance and supervision as needed.

**Excellence in OST Education** - Partnership with the Ignite! Scholar program not only improves quality and retention at the site level but also shows a dedication to providing only the best instruction to their participants. Association with the Ignite! Scholar provides the immediate recognition that participating programs are connected to a network of quality, research based programming.

#### **Contact Program Staff**

Adrienne Evans Fernandez or Sonny Kirkley

Phone: 812.361-1910

Email: [ignite@wisdomtools.com](mailto:ignite@wisdomtools.com)