Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

July / August 2009

ASU Childhood Services

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School-Age "LINKS" was compiled and formatted by ASU Childhood Services

Planning Environments and Activities That Help Children and Youth with ADD Have Successful After-School Experiences

by Roberta L. Newman

(Fourth in a series of articles focusing on serving children and youth with ADD in after-school programs. Adapted and excerpted from R. Newman, *Helping Children and Youth with ADD Succeed in After-School Programs*)

Creating Program "Response-Ability"

Previous articles in this series focused on building an understanding of some of the important issues related to serving children with ADD in after-school programs. They explored some of the important factors that influence how children with ADD experience school-age programs:

- typical characteristics of children and youth with ADD
- how each child's personal uniqueness interacts with and influences the way the child experiences ADD
- typical characteristics of quality school-age programs, their expectations of children, and the potential for mismatch between programs and children with ADD.

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Funded by Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education through the Child Care Development Funds

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Planning Environments and Activities

This article builds on the information and ideas presented in previous articles and focuses on *how* to serve these children effectively. It provides "hands-on" practical strategies for making adjustments that can result in a more harmonious match between children's capabilities and program expectations. The strategies and techniques presented are intended to help practitioners keep the basic ingredients of quality programs (e.g. freedom of movement, diverse activities, attractive environments, flexibility, choices, independence, social interaction, etc.), but at the same time provide support and help for children with ADD who have difficulty managing their behavior responsibly in informal settings. By tuning in to special needs and using creativity to provide appropriate help and support, programs can increase their ability to respond effectively to individual needs in a group setting. That is, they can increase their program *"response-ability."*

Ideas for Structuring and Adapting Elements of the Program Environment

It is well established that physical surroundings have a strong impact on how children and youth behave. How environments look, sound, and feel to children helps determine if and how they connect with program activities and experiences. What follows are a variety of suggestions, strategies and techniques for structuring and making adjustments to the environment that can make the environment more "user friendly" for children and youth with ADD.

Lighting

Vary lighting in the program space. For example, if fluorescent lights are present, supplement the lighting with table or floor lamps. This helps reduce the effects of glare and hum of the fluorescent lights.

Visual Distractions

Reduce distractions in some work and play areas:

- Set up dividers or compartments on the floor in some areas. Use commercial products or create your own with heavy cardboard or PVC tubing draped with fabric or see-through shower curtains. Involve children in making and placing the dividers.
- Set-up table-top screens, using heavy cardboard. These can be used to help children focus in on homework or to reduce distractions for any tabletop activity requiring focus and concentration (e.g. creative writing, arts and crafts projects, puzzles, manipulatives).

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Auditory Distractions

Take steps to reduce auditory distractions:

- Experiment with using tapes featuring sounds of nature, "new-age" music, or "white noise" to mask distracting sounds in the environment so that children can focus more easily. (Perhaps surprisingly, research has found these types of sounds often help children with ADD focus on the task at hand! See **Homework** section for more information.)
- Provide headphones for music to avoid adding more sound to the environment as a whole.

Structure and Schedule

Help children stay tuned-in to the program schedule and routines:

- Post visual reminders of the schedule around the program (not just in one place). Involve children in creating signs and posters illustrating the schedule.
- Create attractive posters with reminder questions to encourage a healthy daily routine. Place the posters strategically around the environment AND create a master list of them for display in an area which gets heavy traffic during the day. Involve children in making and decorating posters.

Feature questions such as:

- Have you had your snack today?
- Have you had some exercise today?
- Have you had some time to yourself today?
- Have you talked with a friend today?

Privacy and Quiet

Create a Respite Retreat (several if your program is large). Respite Retreats are small areas where individual children can go to have quiet, private time to regain focus and composure:

- Use soft items, attractive colors, portable room dividers (commercial or homemade) to define the area(s).
- Incorporate the use of reminding posters which display positive phrases that help children focus on regaining control ("Stay cool." "Relax." "Take a break." "Think before you act." This provides multi-sensory learning that is helpful to children with ADD, many of whom respond better to visual cues than to auditory, spoken reminders.).
- Provide a basket or shelf of quiet games, puzzles, and other soothing materials for use by one (e.g. mini cans of play dough, other tactile objects to manipulate).
- Talk with children about the purpose of the area and involve them in helping to create it.

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Independent Activity

Create Independent Activity Centers where children with ADD can retreat from the group and work on their own from time to time:

- Select themes and topics based on the demonstrated interest of children in the program and create Independent Activity Centers related to these themes and topics.
- Stock the Independent Activity Centers with materials and activity directions related to the selected topics or themes.
- Display step-by-step directions and visual illustrations of how to do the independent activities.
- Provide fresh projects, topics, and materials periodically to keep children stimulated and engaged.

Homework

Create attractive, comfortable homework centers. Provide materials to encourage children with ADD to focus and sustain attention:

- Create table-top or floor-based privacy carrels to minimize visual distractions.
- Provide both desks and floor space for doing homework to accommodate different learning styles.
- Provide brightly colored mats for children to work on in order to help them stay focused on their work.
- Provide brightly colored pens and pencils and brightly colored file folders and/or binders for homework assignments.
- Provide brightly colored files to store completed homework and/or homework in progress from one day to the next (long term projects, book reports, etc.).
- Provide some type of background music (rock music, white noise, sounds from nature) for children with ADD, preferably on headphones so as not to distract others. Research has found that music can mask other distractions, reduce tensions, and is also stimulating; it helps children with ADD stay alert and aroused. While rock music may be distracting for most children, it can be therapeutic for children with ADD.
- Provide access to computers if possible. Children with ADD often do well on computers. The computer program prompts help them focus and sustain attention and break tasks into parts.
- Post homework questions, reminders, and suggestions for organizing and checking work.

- Provide timers and/or a stopwatch in the homework area and use them as tools to help children stay on task. Work with children to set realistic goals for how long different assignments are likely to take. Make a game of timing homework tasks from time to time.
- Set up the homework space in the same space every day to provide consistency and encourage the homework habit.

Observe your program and develop ideas for structuring, adapting, and enhancing elements of the environment, incorporating the suggestions provided in this article as well as your own ideas.

Ideas for Designing and Implementing Successful Activities

One of the important characteristics of quality after-school programs is that they work hard to tune in to children's interests and develop program experiences based on their interests and developmental needs. This is especially important when working with children with ADD. They can benefit greatly from activities and projects that help them develop concentration, fine motor coordination, systematic work habits, and competencies and skills in various areas. They respond well to activities and games that have rules and guidelines. They are often more successful with activities that can be learned and experienced one step at a time.

Many board games and manipulatives can be used to help children with ADD develop thinking capacities, monitor their actions, learn planning and organizational skills, practice thinking before acting, learn and practice communication and social skills, and cope with frustration. This section provides an overview of sample experiences and activities that can be a good match for children with ADD.

Whatever the experience or activity, it is important to remember that children with ADD usually need the help, support, and guidance of a facilitator to focus in and maintain positive involvement.

Hobbies

Many hobbies teach good work habits and can help children with ADD develop skills and competencies that can help them feel good about themselves. Hobbies can be an appropriate focus for Independent Activity Centers that allow children to work and play on their own with adult guidance. Hobbies can also be the focus of club activities where children work in small groups on activities of mutual interest. Hobby club activities can help children with ADD learn and practice social skills, planning and organizational skills, and skills related to the hobby itself.

Board and Table Games

Board and table games and manipulative activities offer children with ADD multiple benefits and opportunities to develop competencies. Here are some examples:

- Checkers. This traditional game is especially suitable for children with ADD. It involves clear cut rules and procedures and teaches children to think and plan before acting. When mistakes are made, they are evident right away, providing children with useful feedback to use as the game continues. Staff overseeing the game can take advantage of "teachable moments" and help children learn to manage impulsivity by encouraging children to ask "What if?" questions before they make a move (e.g. "What will happen if I make this move?"). Checkers also provides opportunities for children to use courtesy, tact, and other social graces as they observe and talk about successful and unsuccessful moves.

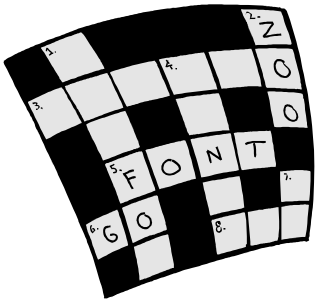
- Legos, K'Nex, Lincoln Logs, Unit Blocks and Other Manipulatives and Building Activities. These activities help children with ADD work on fine motor coordination, explore visual spatial relationships, and learn and practice organizational and planning skills. Children with extreme temperamental characteristics such as low persistence, negative mood, high sensitivity, and high intensity can learn to manage frustration if adults provide support, encouragement, and suggestions when children have difficulties carrying out their ideas or finding the pieces they need. Children who stay on task until they complete building or construction project develop a sense of accomplishment and competence. Staff can reinforce feelings of competence by giving sincere praise and by taking pictures of the completed project to keep before the project is dismantled. While children can work on these activities on their own, they can also learn and practice social skills by working on projects in a small group or sharing space and materials with other children who are also working on independent projects.

Computers

Children with ADD often enjoy computer games. As noted earlier, the prompts and interactive devices used in computer games as well as educational programs provide helpful support and structure to children with ADD. The immediate feedback built into computer games is also appealing to these children.

Enrichment Games

Many enrichment games can be used to supplement and enhance homework and school activities. Games and activities such as riddles and guessing games, crossword puzzles, word games, and mazes all offer children with ADD opportunities to focus and sustain attention and stay on task in enjoyable, entertaining activities. These activities help children learn to plan ahead, control impulsive behavior, and experience success when they are completed. Many of these games can be provided in the homework area.



Role Playing and Drama Games

Structured role playing and drama games can be very helpful to children with ADD. These activities help children anticipate the consequences of their actions, learn and practice communication and social skills, learn and practice thinking before acting, develop self-monitoring and self-control skills, and learn and practice step-by-step problem solving skills. (NOTE: In his *ADD/ADHD Behavior -Change Resource Kit,* Grad L. Flick recommends games that focus on self-control. He suggests the following resource by Dr. Lawrence Shapiro as a source for these types of games: *In Control: A Book of Games to Teach Children Self-Control Skills*. This book is available through catalogues published by the ADD Warehouse and the Center for Applied Psychology. These catalogues include a number of books and resources containing role playing activities and drama games that are especially suited for use with children with ADD.)

Sports and Physical Activities and Games

Children with ADD often enjoy participating in sports and active physical games, especially physical activities they can pursue individually. They also experience success in group sports that have clear cut rules and a structured format. Grad L. Flick offers these observations and recommendations for providing recreational sports and physical activities for children with ADD:

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"Many children with ADD/ADHD look forward to school's letting out. They rush home and can't wait to engage in some favorite activity in which they can excel. This may be riding a bike, or playing Nintendo, perhaps engaging in some formal sport like football or basketball. Fine-motor coordination for these ADD/ADHD kids may be somewhat compromised, but many excel at sports that require good gross-motor coordination. However, some of these children have problems in social relationships and may prefer noncompetitive activities that allow for intermittent interaction with other children. In sports, this may be running track or swimming. A more casual activity might be bike riding. With optional social interaction, the ADD/ADHD child is free to make contact periodically and then move out on his own again. Being in charge of interactions allows the child to avoid undue social pressure and stress...

The best recommendation for recreational activity for the child with ADD/ADHD is **swimming**. It is excellent exercise, a good outlet to dissipate energy, and an activity where the child mostly competes with himself or herself. While some of the initial training may be considered distasteful or even boring, it is probably the only thing that does turn them off to this activity. Even when they don't complete swimming lessons, many of these children may simply enjoy floating or splashing around in the water. *(Author's Note: It is worth mentioning that 2008 Olympic Champion Swimmer Michael Phelps was diagnosed with ADD at about age 9. How fortunate for him and all of us that someone helped him pursue swimming in his out-of -school time!)*

Fishing is an activity that has a calming effect on many children, but especially on the child with ADD/ADHD. It is an activity in which attention to a bobbing cork can be maintained for hours. **Football** is another good sport for the ADD/ADHD child. Some of the training may be difficult, as there is a need to be still when the team is 'set' prior to running a play, and there is a need for some coordinated movement (though minimally so for linemen). Attention training is inherent in the overall skill development, as the player must know when to start the play (e.g., listen for a specific cue in the quarterback's count). It requires a good deal of attention training and concentration for the child to perform adequately.

While children with ADD/ADHD may have some problems with safety, **bike riding** is good exercise, (and can provide) socialization, and stress belief. Many of these children may also learn firsthand about mechanical work as they take apart, analyze, and put back together their bikes (often when nothing's broken).

The **martial arts** also provide some excellent experiences for the ADD/ADHD child. Besides being good exercise, this type of highly structured activity develops and reinforces attentional skills, coordination, self-control, and sequencing of movement. Initially, some children may be attracted to martial arts because of movies or TV, and the "aura" of participation in this activity may be sufficient to maintain their interest and discipline."

As noted by Dr. Flick, children with ADD often have difficulty participating in group games and competitive sports because of their poor social skills. When these children also have extreme temperamental characteristics such as high intensity, low persistence, and negativity, competitive games can be even more stressful for them and others. On the other hand, regular participation in cooperative games can provide these children with opportunities to learn and practice self-monitoring, self-control, communication, cooperation, and team work.

Sports Clinics and Clubs

Another strategy for helping children with ADD improve their self-control and practice the social skills needed in group sports is to organize sports clinics and clubs. Clinics and clubs give children the opportunity to work together in small groups as they learn new physical skills in an atmosphere of cooperation and team work. Clubs and clinics can be organized around individual activities such as jogging, gymnastics, martial arts, and biking. They can also be focused on skills and drills associated with group sports such as football, soccer, basketball, and hockey. When organizing sports clinics to teach specific skills, it can be helpful to set up movement stations that help children work through a routine of tasks and drills aimed at improving certain skills (e.g. for basketball, this might involve passing, dribbling, and free throw drills).

Cooking, Gardening and Other Life Skill Activities

Children with ADD can benefit greatly from participation in activities that involve the development of life skills. For example, cooking requires self-monitoring and self-control as children plan, read recipes, gather ingredients and utensils, measure, move through a sequence of steps, mix, time, and finish their culinary creations. Gardening helps children plan, use and develop both gross motor and fine motor skills, and work through sequenced tasks over time as the garden grows (tilling, planting, weeding, harvesting). In both cases, children develop a sense of accomplishment and competence when the projects are completed and ready to enjoy and share.

Cooking and gardening are examples of life skills that children can do on their own or in cooperation with others, depending on their interests, needs, and personal style. These activities can easily become the focal point of clubs that meet regularly and help children work together on a common interest as they develop their skills and talents.

A Final Word about Program "Response-Ability"

The suggestions in this article offer examples of how to create program "response-ability." They are not intended to represent all possible strategies and techniques for planning and implementing effective environments and activities that are responsive to the needs of children and youth with ADD. Staff are encouraged to use their own experience to develop additional strategies and techniques to create program "response-ability." For additional ideas, consult Section II and the Resource List in my book *Helping Children and Youth with ADD Succeed in After-School Programs,* available at Newroads-Consulting.com.

(The final article in this series will provide practical strategies, tools, and tips for guiding the behavior of children and youth with ADD in after-school programs.)

Footnotes

1. Flick, Grad L., Ph.D. *ADD/ADHD Behavior-Change Resource Kit: Ready-to-Use Strategies & Activities for Helping Children with Attention Deficit Disorder.* West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1998, p. 81.

2. For additional information on setting up homework centers, creating homework checklists, and providing homework support for children with ADD, see Flick, Grad L., Ph.D. *ADD/ADHD Behavior-Change Resource Kit: Ready to Use Strategies & Activities for Helping Children with Attention Deficit Disorder.* West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1998, Chapter 6, Homework Issues for Parents. (Also see additional resources listed at the end of this manual.)

3. Flick, Grad L., Ph.D. *ADD/ADHD Behavior-Change Resource Kit: Ready-to-Use Strategies & Activities for Helping Children with Attention Deficit Disorder.* West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1998, p. 303

4. Ibid. pp. 292-294.

The Arkansas Out of School Network is pleased to be able to offer ongoing technical assistance calls that address afterschool related topics that are important to after school stakeholders like YOU! Participation in these calls is free and all that is needed is a phone. So mark your calendar now for your chance to participate in these calls! To register, contact Woodie Sue Herlein at wherlein@astate,edu or at (870) 972-3589.

July 24th 1:00-2:00 p.m.	Staffing and your Afterschool Program
August 14th 1:00-2:00 p.m.	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
September 18th 1:00-2:00 p.m.	Lights on AfterSchool

Dropout Prevention Database

Helping Students Reach Graduation

With funding from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, the Criminal Justice Institute's Safe School Initiative Division has established the **Dropout Prevention Database and Toolkit Project,** a resource designed to assist Arkansas schools and community groups in finding programs and strategies to assist in preventing students from dropping out of school. The project's slogan is *Staying Power – Helping Students Reach Graduation.*

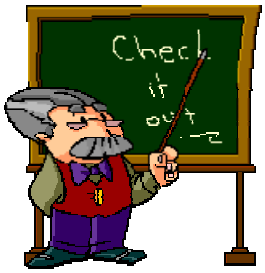
This web-based resource features a database of more than 80 evidence-based model prevention and intervention programs from across the nation. The database contains comprehensive information about each program, including program descriptions, key outcomes, key strategies, risk factors, targeted grades, resources needed, time required, current contact information and cost. The programs selected for the database offer many strategies for dropout prevention, such as mentoring/tutoring, creating a safe learning environment, providing after-school activities, systemic renewal, and family engagement. The target age groups range from preschool to high school.

Also included in this web-base resource is a toolkit which contains easy-to-read fact sheets addressing the awareness, impact, and solutions of dropout issues. The Dropout Prevention Resource Database and Toolkit can be accessed through the safe school website, www.arsafeschools.com , by clicking on the Dropout Prevention Resources icon to the left of the page.

The Safe School Initiative Division is a program of the Criminal Justice Institute (CJI), a non-profit educational entity of the University of Arkansas System that provides programs and services designed to enhance the performance of Arkansas law enforcement professionals. CJI's Safe School Initiative Division provides programs and resources that assist in reducing violence and violence-related behaviors in Arkansas schools. Formerly known as the School Violence Resource Center, this Division continues to take a pro-active approach to responding to crime and violence, both on the school campus and within the community..

To access the Dropout Prevention Database and Toolkit Project, visit www.arsafeschools.com. For more information, contact Don Bebee at djbebee@cji.edu.

Are you looking for dropout prevention literature and how you can learn more about related organizations whose work may enrich efforts that help youth reach graduation?



Visit www.arsafeschools.com and check out the "Tool Kit" tab and the "Resources" section for more information.

Summer Learning Day on July 9 is almost upon us, and it's a great opportunity to showcase your program and get the word out about the importance of summer learning. Host an event during the week of July 6, to help focus attention on how summer programs:

- Send young people back to school ready to learn.
- Support working families.
- Help to keep children safe and healthy.

To learn more about Summer Learning Day and access valuable resources visit www.summerlearning.org.

SAVE THE DATE: 10th Annual Lights On Afterschool October 22, 2009

It's never to early to start getting ready for the next *Lights On Afterschool*!

Join the Afterschool Alliance and afterschool programs across the country in rallying for afterschool programs. October 22nd marks the 10th annual Lights on Afterschool where more than 7,500 communities and 1 million Americans, will gather together to demonstrate how afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning. An Arkansas School-Age LINKS Lights on Afterschool Special Edition Planning Guide" will be mailed out in the upcoming weeks so be on the look out for your copy. A downloadable version will be available in April at the following websites: Arkansas Out of School Network, ASU Childhood Services, and the Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

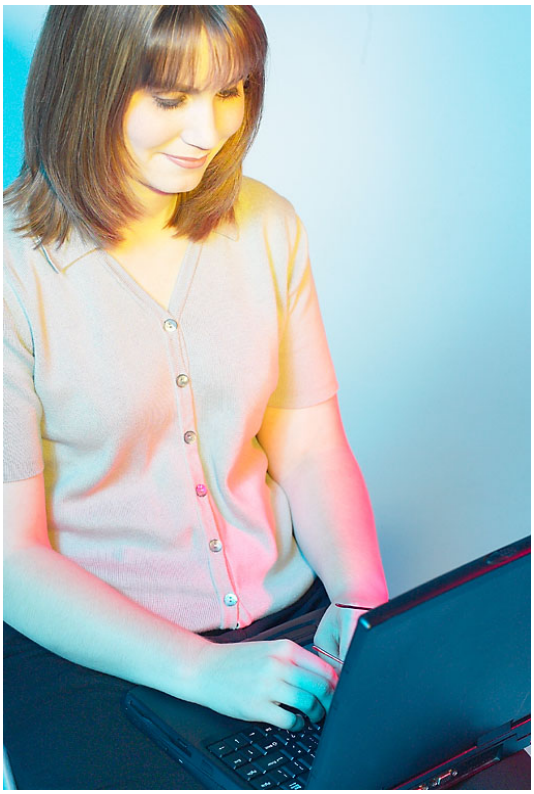
We hope you can join your fellow Arkansans and over 7,500 programs and 1 million Americans across the nation in celebrating afterschool!

Everything needed to complete the training will be provided through ASU's online learning tool, "Blackboard Online," through www.astate.edu at no additional cost.

This training may be taken as an introduction for the provider new to the school-age field, or as a refresher course for those who have been working in the field for some time.

The five modules address :

- Growth & Development
- Planning a Safe and Healthy Environment
- Activities & Program Planning
- Guiding Children's Behavior
- Building Relationships



Course schedule for Fall 2009 semester:

August 1 - September 15
October 1 - November 15

For more information about this class contact Woodie Sue Herlein at wherlein@astate.edu or 888-429-1585

SAVE THE DATE!!!
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

Featured author Roberta Newman will be in Arkansas the week of September 14, 2009, conducting regional workshops throughout the state that will address how to help children and youth with ADD succeed in afterschool programs.

Monday, September 14, 2009	6:30—9:30 p.m.	Beebe	Early Childhood Building Beebe Public Schools Holly Street
Tuesday, September 15, 2009	6:30—9:30 p.m.	Jonesboro	ASU Childhood Services 615 University Loop East
Wednesday, September 16, 2009	6:30—9:30 p.m.	Little Rock	First United Methodist Church 324 West 8th
Thursday, September 17, 2009	6:30—9:30 p.m.	Ft. Smith	Ft. Smith Public Schools Bonneville Elementary 2500 South Waldron Road
Friday, September 18, 2009	6:30—9:30 p.m.	Benton-ville	Bentonville Public Schools Early Childhood Center 1110 Bella Vista Drive

To register, go online to http://professionalregistry.astate.edu and click on "Training Opportunities" or call 1-888-429-1585.

Register early for this FREE training opportunity while space is still available!

arkansas out of school network
creating safe, healthy and enriching experiences for arkansas youth

Save the Date!!! Mark Your Calendar!!!

Arkansas Out of School Network Statewide Afterschool Conference

Saturday, September 19, 2009, 9:00-2:00 p.m.

Bentonville Public Schools, Early Childhood Center, 1110 Bella Vista Drive

For information email Woodie Sue Herlein, wherlein@astate.edu or call (870) 972-3589

School-Age Essentials Training

"Essentials" training offers the opportunity to learn more about school-age children and their care. You will also acquire the tools and techniques for developing an age appropriate classroom, creating school-age activities, and understanding and learning what constitutes quality. This school-age training module was developed for part-time staff members or employees new to school-age care.

For more information contact Woodie Sue Herlein at wherlein@astate.edu or call 1-888-429-1585

Arkansas School Age Credential

As a foundation for helping school-age professionals develop fundamental knowledge and skills related to school age children and youth, ASU Childhood Services School Age Quality Initiative Project was developed to provide a series of training modules leading to a School Age Specialist Certificate for individuals and a self-study training guide to help programs achieve the standards of the School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale.

As the next step toward building a competent, professional workforce for Arkansas school age programs, ASU Childhood Services has been in the process of developing the Arkansas State School Age Credential. This credential is based on a set of Eight Competency Goals that can be used to evaluate knowledge and performance of individual staff that work in school age programs in Arkansas. Roberta Newman, New Roads Consulting, is the author of the current content.

Arkansas is moving forward in providing this professional development opportunity for school age providers to enhance their skills for the benefit of school age children, youth, families, and communities in Arkansas. We are staged to pilot the credential this fall in the central part of the State. If interested please visit the following organization websites to complete the School Age Credential Survey: AOSN, ASU Childhood Services, Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education.

Exciting Professional Development Opportunities Await Afterschool Professionals in Arkansas

The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education discern that professional development plays a vital role in supporting quality afterschool programs. Providers who have participated in education and training opportunities are more likely to deliver quality programs that contribute to positive youth outcomes.[1] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides a unique opportunity for afterschool professionals to take part in some exciting professional development opportunities that have come about due to enhanced funding of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administered by the Department of Human Services. ASU Childhood Services along with partners of the Arkansas Out of School Network are excited to be partnering together to deliver the following face-to-face trainings that address a wide range of topics important to afterschool professionals.

- **An Introduction to the 40 Developmental Assets** - Grounded in extensive research in youth development, resiliency, and prevention, the 40 Developmental Assets represent the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and to thrive. Because of its basis in research and its proven effectiveness, the Developmental Assets framework has become the single most widely used approach to positive youth development in the United States. On-site training will be delivered in a two hour format and will outline what the developmental assets are, what they look like in action, and how to create an intentionally rich asset based afterschool program.

- **Creating Culturally Competent Afterschool Programs -** This training will introduce the core elements of creating a culturally competent afterschool program. These core elements will provide some foundational knowledge that can be applied to how afterschool programs create their program environment, how they build relationships with families, connect families to community resources, and create meaningful and relevant family/child activities.

- **Adventures in Peacemaking: Conflict Resolution Activities for School-Age Programs** - This full day training will be targeted at helping afterschool and summer program staff with methods of teambuilding and conflict reduction that they can use with the children in their programs.

- **Arkansas 4H Afterschool Essentials Training** - An introductory level training experience for the basic and intermediate level afterschool provider and will focus on three components: the essential elements of positive youth development, an introduction to Experiential Learning, and a hands-on learning experience focusing on content delivery using the experiential learning model.

- **Arkansas 4H Out of School Time Trainings** targeting afterschool leaders that address the following core areas: Experiential Learning, Day Camps, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education, and the ExCel Leadership Challenge Course.

- **Save the Children Literacy Training**- Content will address the strategies, tools, and hands-on practice needed to implement three key components of the Save the Children model literacy program: read-aloud, fluency building, and reading together activities for emergent readers.

In addition to the above face-to-face trainings that will be offered, the Arkansas Out of School Network will be working with the Colorado Afterschool Network to develop three online trainings that will address the 40 Developmental Assets. One will serve as an introduction to the 40 assets and the other two online trainings will address a different facet of the assets to be determined at a later date.

Stay tuned for more information about when one of these professional development opportunities might be coming to a community near you by checking the TAPP Registry at http://professionalregistry.astate.edu. Trainings are anticipated to begin in fall 2009. For questions regarding these exciting professional development opportunities contact Jennifer Harris at jenharris@astate.edu . Thank you to the Division of Child Care and Early Education for their continual commitment to supporting the professional development needs of afterschool educators in Arkansas!

1. Beth M Miller, Pathways to Success for Youth: What Counts in After School: Massachusetts After -School Research Study Report (Boston, Mass.: United Way of Massachusetts Bay, 2005), at: http://supportunitedway.org/files/MARS-Report 0.pdf; and Susan Bodilly and Megan Beckett, Making Out-Of-School Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2005).

Pennies for the Planet

Pennies for the Planet is a nationwide campaign that taps into the amazing power of kids to help critical conservation projects. For the last several years, kids have been collecting pennies (and nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars, too!) to help save wild places and wildlife in the United States and around the world. Working in classrooms, clubs, Scout troops, other groups, and on their own, kids just like you have turned pennies into an absolute gold mine for projects dedicated to protecting wild spaces and wild species. To learn more about how you can incorporate Pennies for the Planet into your afterschool program and access educational kits and fun activity ideas visit **http://www.togethergreen.org/p4p/**

Audubon Adventures After School

Audubon Adventures After School is a way to engage your community's youngsters in a healthy, esteem-building, social, fun, experience with peers that has positive outcomes for the environment. *Audubon Adventures* is one of the most respected and widely used environmental education programs in the country, serving 7 million youngsters over the past 22 years. With a focus on grades three through six, Audubon Adventures engages teachers and students in the study and conservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats.

The Audubon Adventures After School Syllabus and Activity Guide contain 31 different activities in a 14-week syllabus for exploring conservation themes and implementing a conservation project with tweens and young teens. The activities align to Audubon's five educational principles. To learn more about Audubon Adventures After School and how you might be able to get a Syllabus and Activity Guide for free visit **http://www.audubon.org/educate/aa/**.

Bossy Ball

from www.familyfun.com

Materials Needed:

- Masking Tape
- Playground Ball
- Permanent Marker

How to Play:

First, randomly stick 7 to 12 strips of masking tape on a playground ball. On each strip, use a permanent marker to write a different rule for throwing and catching the ball: "Overhead and backward," "Underhand between the legs," "Sitting down," "Standing on one leg," "Eyes closed," "In mid-jump," "While singing," and any others you can think of. Be creative and have fun!

2. The game is played like regular catch, but once the first player grabs the ball, she must look at the words under or closest to the palm of her right hand. She has to throw the ball as directed by these words -- and the second player has to try to catch it in the same manner. The second player then looks at the words under his right hand, and play continues. To make the game more challenging, see how many successful catches you can make, then try to beat your record.

Lincoln Introduces Legislation to Improve Rural After-School Programs

Washington – U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) today introduced legislation that will enhance after-school programs in rural communities across the United States. Senator Mark Begich (D-Alaska) is a co-sponsor of the legislation.

"After-school programs play a critical role in the lives of Arkansas's children, families and communities. Unfortunately, many children in Arkansas and other rural areas across the country face a number of barriers to quality after-school programs: high poverty and food insecurity rates, transportation challenges due to geographic isolation, a shortage of financial resources and private partners, and difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. With this legislation, high-quality, affordable rural after-school programs will be available to more children who desperately need them," said Lincoln.

According to experts, after-school programs improve student grades and behavior in school, enhance peer relations and emotional adjustment, and lower incidences of drug-use, violence, and pregnancy.

Lincoln's legislation—the "Investment in After-School Programs Act"—establishes or improves rural after-school programs through grant funding. Programs that successfully apply and meet requirements will receive a grant of $25,000 or more to make investments in projects or activities such as transportation, professional development, training, planning or increased access to technology, which are needed to create or strengthen rural after-school programs.

"As a former president of the Bryant Boys and Girls Club board and member of the Governor's Task Force on After-School and Summer Programs, I have seen firsthand the importance after-school activities can play in a child's life," said Arkansas State Senator Shane Broadway of Bryant. "By making a greater investment in after-school programs and providing them with the resources they need to overcome barriers to service, the more children in rural Arkansas we can reach and the greater impact we can have on them and their families."

"After-school programs are vital in the overall strategy of improving test scores in Arkansas," said Arkansas State Senator Jimmy Jeffress, Chair of the Arkansas State Senate Committee on Education. "Such settings provide tutoring, mentoring, and other instructional services for children who do not have the type of home life where these things are normally available. They add enrichment, broaden learning opportunities, and reinforce learning from the classroom for untold numbers of children who need these activities in their daily lives."

Lincoln said she has heard from many Arkansas parents about the difficulties they face finding after-school care for their children, particularly for older children and teens. Older youth are most at risk for teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol experimentation, juvenile crime, and auto accidents.

"Senator Lincoln's proposed legislation will help keep Arkansas children safe during times when youthful risk-taking behaviors are most likely to occur—after school. With a structured, positive learning environment during out-of-school times, students can improve their academic performance during school. This is especially important in rural Arkansas, where resources are limited and where working parents often travel

long distances to work. More than 233,000 children live in the rural areas of Arkansas and many would benefit from this legislation," said Rich Huddleston, Executive Director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

Lincoln's legislation has been endorsed by the National Afterschool Alliance, Save the Children, the National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition, and the American Association of School Administrators.

Arkansas Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs RELEASED!

In the fall of 2005 and early 2006, the Arkansas Out of School Network began the process of reviewing and compiling best practice research in the field of Out of School Time (OST) program quality. In the fall of 2006 the first draft of the AOSN Quality Standards was presented to stakeholders and program leaders for their review and input. After a series of committee meetings and successive meetings with program leaders, a set of comprehensive standards was distributed for additional comments. In August 2008, the Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Program issued a final report titled *"Enriching Arkansas Children's Lives Through High-Quality Out-Of-School Activities"* that identified the key elements for after-school and summer programs that must be addressed in any effort to improve quality. Upon the issuance of this report, the AOSN Quality Standards were aligned with the quality framework issued by the Task Force. The result of this due diligence was a set of comprehensive standards that could be used as a framework to assess the level of quality of the myriad of Arkansas's OST programs.

The Arkansas Out of School Network recognizes that each afterschool program is unique with varying missions, philosophies, serving wide and diverse populations, age ranges, interests and values. The standards are intended to be flexible enough to apply to a wide variety of program types but concrete enough to offer some elements that, while adaptable, must be addressed by any program, regardless of the ages served, program type, or overall goal. The standards are intended to suggest and offer a strong foundation for quality programming that embraces the belief that quality should be the standard, for all ages, all communities, and all programs.

To download your copy of the Arkansas Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs visit www.aosn.org

The Arkansas Arts Council

The Arkansas Arts Council will award AIE After-School/Summer Residency (AS/SR) grants of up to $10,000 to sponsor artist residencies that provide positive alternatives for children and youth during non-school hours. AIE After-School/ Summer Residency grant awards are made for projects, programs and activities occurring between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011. Grant award payments are scheduled to accommodate the grantee's program requirements to the extent possible. For more information about this grant opportunity contact Cynthia Haas at 501-324-9769 or Cynthia@arkansasheritage.org.

Grant: Great American Bake Sale - To increase participation in after-school and summer nutrition programs.

Funder: Share Our Strength

Eligibility: Nonprofits, schools and local governments

Deadline: Sept. 30

Amount: $1,000 to $10,000

To learn more visit: http://gabs.strength.org/site/DocServer/2009_Request_for_Proposals_-_GABS.pdf?docID=3542

Grant: STEMester of Service - To engage middle school youth in science and technology-focused service-learning projects that address community problems.

Funder: Youth Service America (YSA).

Eligibility: Teachers, administrators and service-learning coordinators in middle schools and staff and service-learning coordinators in after-school programs. Schools and after-school programs must be located in Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina and Washington.

Deadline: July 15.

Amount: $5,000 grant for teachers or service-learning coordinators with $1,000 applied for professional development. Another $500 is provided as a stipend for an "ally" located in each school who will support the grantee.

Contact: http://ysa.org/MyYSA/YSAContent/YSANews/tabid/219/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/150/STEMesterofServiceGrants.aspx

Grant: Wal-Mart state giving program - For projects in education, health and wellness, job training and the environment.

Funder: Wal-Mart

Eligibility: Nonprofits

Deadline: Sept. 18

Amount: Minimum grants are $25,000

Contact: http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/8168.aspx?p=8979.

Grant: ING Unsung Heroes for 2010 - For innovative classroom projects.

Funder: ING

Eligibility: Full-time educators, teachers, principals, paraprofessionals or classified staff with effective projects that improve student learning.

Deadline: April 30, 2010

Amount: 100 finalists will receive an award of $2,000. From that group, three winners will receive $25,000, $10,000 and $5,000.

Contact: www.ing-usa.com/us/aboutING/CorporateCitizenship/Education/INGUnsungHeroes/index.htm.

Grant: Striving Readers - To raise the literacy levels of adolescent students in Title I-eligible schools.

Funder: U.S. Department of Education.

Eligibility: State educational agencies apply on behalf of themselves and one or more local education agency, including charter schools.

Deadline: Aug. 10

Amount:$7.2 million for seven awards

Contact: http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-13755.pdf.

Grant: CVS/Caremark - For programs that include helping children with disabilities by encouraging public school to promote inclusion in student activities and for extracurricular programs and initiatives that give students greater access to physical movement and play.

Funder: CVS/Caremark

Eligibility: Nonprofits

Deadline: Oct. 31

Amount: Up to $5,000

Contact: www.cvscaremark.com/community/our-impact/community-grants.

Training Out of School Time Staff

Part 2 in a Series on Implementing Evidence-Based Practices in Out-of-School Time Programs: The Role of Frontline Staff

Allison J. R. Metz, Ph.D., Mary Burkhauser, M.A., and Lillian Bowie, M.A.

Background

A skilled and sustainable workforce is one of the most important markers of high-quality out-of-school time programs.[1] Given the links between skilled staff, high-quality programs, and better youth outcomes, staff training has become an essential part of program implementation. To expand what is known about staff training, Child Trends recently conducted a literature review and collected data on this topic as part of a study on the role of frontline staff in the effective implementation of out-of-school time programs. This brief presents findings from that study and the literature review, as well as from other research about staff training, and links these findings to effective strategies for training frontline staff. The brief also describes these strategies.

What is Staff Training?

Staff training in the context of out-of-school time programs is one aspect of professional development (sometimes referred to as staff development), which includes a variety of education, training, and development activities with the common goal of increasing staff knowledge and skills to improve youth outcomes.[2] Staff training can help practitioners learn to plan enriching activities, involve families and communities, and interact positively with child and youth participants.[3]

Staff training includes activities related to providing specialized information, instruction, or skill development in an organized way to practitioners and other key staff members within the program.

Staff training has been identified as one of six core implementation components—*or Implementation drivers*—necessary for helping practitioners implement evidence-based and innovative services effectively.[4,5] These core components include:

- **Staff selection and recruitment**
- **Pre-service and in-service training**
- **Coaching, mentoring, and supervision**
- **Facilitative administration**
- **System-level partnerships**
- **Decision-support data systems**

This brief focuses on the second driver: *staff training*.

Why is Staff Training Important for Out-of-School Programs?

As out-of-school time programs move towards the implementation of evidence-based practices, more programs are offering professional development opportunities to increase their staff's ability to implement new and innovative services effectively. However, a large number of staff members who work directly with youth have not had any pre-service training and lack specific credentials or degrees related to youth development, education, or out-of-school time programming.[6] Therefore, it is vital to identify successful strategies for effectively training out-of-school time staff responsible for delivering services. [ii] Program directors from effective out-of-school time programs identified four ways that staff training can enhance out-of-school time programs.[7] Such training can:

- **Prepare newly hired staff to work with program participants.** Changing the behavior of frontline staff members is important because they are the ones who actually carry out the interventions in out-of-school time programs. Although it can be tempting to throw newly hired staff members into frontline work immediately and expect them to learn as they go, program directors agreed that investing in pre-service training (that is, training prior to working with children and youth) pays off in the end.
- **Help frontline staff members to better understand their roles.** It is important for frontline staff to connect with program participants. It is equally important, however, that staff members understand the boundaries of these relationships (for example, the difference between friendship and mentorship). Staff training can clarify staff roles as well as help staff members learn to work effectively within their roles to promote the well-being of all program participants.
- **Teach teachers how to be better youth workers.** Out-of-school time programs often rely on classroom teachers to provide frontline services. Although working with teachers has many benefits (such as, extensive content knowledge, experience working with youth in formal settings), classroom teachers may have less experience working with youth in informal settings or with young people who are disaffected from school. In these situations, staff training is key.
- **Contribute to a more positive work culture.** Program directors reported that tailoring training sessions to meet the professional needs of staff made staff members feel valued by the program and, consequently, increased their commitment to it. Additionally, one program director noted that the positive work culture that such attention to staff needs created has helped his program recruit additional staff.

What Steps Can Programs Take to Train Frontline Staff Effectively?

Staff training, including the *content* of the training and how and when it is delivered to program staff, will vary according to program characteristics, such as a program's staffing model (for example, does the program use volunteers or paid full-time staff?), management structure, operating budget, program setting, program mission and priorities, service delivery model, and target population. However, research has found that effective training *methods* show fewer variations. This finding indicates that there are key elements of staff training that facilitate program implementation, regardless of the specific services provided by different programs serving children and youth. Below we present five steps for effective staff training. These strategies are based on an analysis of research studies on staff training conducted in the field of human services, along with findings from Child Trends' literature review on staff training in out-of-school time programs and its exploratory study on the role of frontline staff in the implementation of effective programs. The five steps include:

- Presenting background information, theory, philosophy, and values of the new program or practice to staff;
- Introducing and demonstrating important aspects of the new practice or skills;
- Providing staff with opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback in a safe training environment;[8]
- Providing staff with ongoing support and follow-up training;[9] and
- Allowing sufficient time for training.

Effective staff training is a back-and-forth, iterative process of defining and describing basic components of the new program or practice, teaching those components through live or video modeling, coaching staff members as they try to use the new skill and evaluate their successes and challenges, and providing ongoing support and booster training sessions. Implementing only one of these components will not result in effective training outcomes (that is, changes in staff behavior and practice).

Step 1: Present Information

Training workshops focused on imparting knowledge to staff are a key element of most staff training. These workshops present staff members with foundational information on the new program or practice. While it is common to share this type of background information with staff, programs may fall short of making this aspect of training meaningful to staff if they focus only on the "what" (i.e., description of new program or practice) and do not include the "why" (that is, underlying assumptions or theory as to why the new practice will make a positive difference with children and youth). Research indicates that staff members are more likely to buy into a new program or practice at this stage of the training if they get a clear rationale for these changes.10 For example, when training staff on basic aspects of daily programming—such as how to design and organize group activities or arrange a space to enhance positive peer interactions—it is important to share with staff why these practices are being suggested. Staff members may be accustomed to designing group activities a particular way, and if they are now told to try a new technique with program participants, they will want to understand the theory behind these suggestions. When program theory is left out of staff training, staff members report that they know more about program practices, but they do not report that they are committed to using these new practices in the field.[11]

Step 2: Demonstrate New Practices

Another key aspect of training involves the demonstration of important skills and abilities related to carrying out the new program or practice. Practices can be demonstrated either "live" or via video (Demonstrations of new skills are typically followed by a period in which staff can practice these skills). The content of a demonstration is a critical aspect of this part of training. Staff members need to feel that the content of what they are learning is useful and will eventually benefit children and youth participating in their programs. It is recommended that practice demonstrations represent real interactions and situations as much as possible. Toward this end, several program directors suggested involving program participants in staff training.[12]

Step 3: Offer Opportunities for Practice and Feedback

Evidence from the out-of-school time field suggests that the most effective training sessions contain both interactive and introspective components. This combination allows practitioners to have the opportunity to practice newly learned skills in a safe environment and to reflect on how new practices differ from their past or current way of interacting with the youth that they serve.[13] For example, the staff training of one effective out-of-school time program involved workshops during which staff *practiced* skills. Practice can take the form of role playing (pretending you are someone else, such as a youth participant) or behavior rehearsal (responding to a hypothetical situation or challenge that you might confront in your own position).[14] The staff training offered by that effective out-of-school time program also required staff members to *reflect* on their own experiences as youth and compare their experiences to their interactions with the young people that they serve. The purpose of this exercise, which took the form of keeping a journal, was to help program staff members relate to the experiences of the youth participating in their program.[15]

In Child Trends' recent study on program implementation, directors of successful out-of-school time programs reported that effective training sessions were highly interactive and provided opportunities for frontline staff to:

1) develop and implement activities based on the programs' curricula, and
2) engage in role-playing activities.[16]

Practicing skills and receiving feedback were deemed important for the following reasons:

- *Practice sessions* provide staff with opportunities to learn how best to implement the program curriculum as planned and intended;
- *Constructive feedback* and guidance show staff members how to improve their practice; and
- *Opportunities for reflection* help staff members become aware of how their personal apprehensions may hinder the successful implementation of the program model and help them develop strategies for overcoming these issues.

Working with staff members to process their training in a real setting allows them the opportunity to integrate new ideas and skills into their work over time, increasing the chances that these changes will be sustained. Ongoing supervisor support and coaching seem particularly critical.

Step 4: Provide Ongoing Support and Follow-Up Training

Providing ongoing training and technical assistance is invaluable to frontline program staff members as they try to incorporate newly learned skills into their everyday practice with the children and youth who they serve. Evidence supports the idea that including supervisors in training offered to frontline staff increases the likelihood that frontline staff members will incorporate new skills in their practice. Supervisors who have been exposed to the same training as their staff are better able to reinforce and support frontline staff in implementing new program practices.[17]

Follow-up training and technical assistance also can have a positive impact on changing staff behavior. Learning is most clearly integrated into practice when practitioners have regular opportunities to try out new skills while receiving real-time constructive feedback and tools for improving these skills.[18] For example, evidence from the field of education suggests that very few teachers demonstrate actual changes in classroom practice as a result of training only, but when a coaching component is added to the training, almost all newly trained teachers show measurable changes in classroom practice.[19] These results indicate that coaching newly trained frontline staff in the field is critical to the successful implementation of new practices and programs.

Additionally, program directors recommended tailoring ongoing staff training to meet staff needs. For example, one program using volunteer mentors hosted a series of 15-minute mini-courses throughout the year based on needs identified by staff. Another program found that frontline staff members were more likely to go to training sessions if they knew the training would be on a relevant topic [iii] and presented in an interesting way.[20]

Step 5: Allow Sufficient Time for Training

In interviews, program directors of evidence-based out-of-school time programs underscored the importance of the length of training, emphasizing that one-day training sessions are typically insufficient and do not provide enough time to review the program thoroughly and practice newly learned skills. Although the length of training sessions varied across programs, directors of many out-of-school time programs reported that the first day of training covered foundational issues, such as the program mission, while subsequent days provided opportunities to learn and practice new skills.

Evidence also indicates the importance of when and how often training is provided for the successful implementation of new programs and practices. Directors of effective out-of-school time programs reported timing the delivery of staff training in the following ways:

- Staff members receive formal, *pre-service training before interacting with program participants.*
- Staff members are offered or required to participate in *mid-year in-service training.*
- Staff members are provided with *ongoing technical assistance year-round.* Program directors agreed that all staff need ongoing training and support, but the nature of the ongoing training sessions was dependent on the specific and emergent needs of program staff.
- Staff members are given opportunities to attend training sessions that they feel will contribute to their professional development.

Conclusion

Despite the need for additional research to determine the best practices for training program staff, a growing consensus is emerging about effective strategies for increasing the knowledge and skills of frontline staff needed to implement practices effectively and achieve positive outcomes. On the basis of the current evidence available, Child Trends offers the following recommendations and action steps to support the use of effective staff training strategies in the box below.

i. For this study, Child Trends conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine program directors of evidence-based out-of-school time programs (i.e., programs that have been experimentally evaluated and demonstrated positive outcomes). Child Trends also held a Roundtable with program staff from nine additional evidence-based out-of-school time programs. The purpose of the interviews and Roundtable was to gather information to better understand how the selection, recruitment, training, and coaching of frontline staff can facilitate the successful implementation of evidence-based, promising, and innovative program models in the out-of-school time field.

ii. The information provided in this brief focuses on the training of frontline staff—those staff members who work directly with children and youth and who make choices every day about the services that they deliver in their out-of-school time programs. It is important to remember, though, that staff at all levels, including supervisory and administrative staff, requires training when a new practice or program is implemented.

iii. Program directors working with effective out-of-school time programs brought up the following topics when discussing what their ideal staff training would cover: program mission, value, and culture; curriculum content; youth development; team building; time management; crisis management; sensitivity and diversity training; data/evaluation training; boundaries with youth; pedagogy; lesson planning; "what works" for middle school students; and action research.

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