

Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

March/April 2009

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was compiled
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ASU Childhood
Services

Typical Characteristics of After-School Programs:

The Potential for a Mismatch between Program Expectations and the Capabilities of Children and Youth with ADD

by Roberta L. Newman

(Third 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*)

A Look at the Development of Quality Standards in the After-School Field

For over thirty-five years, child and youth professionals in the after-school field have been working together to build consensus around what constitutes quality programming. Defining after-school quality is a challenging task. Many different groups and organizations are involved in the development and operation of after-school and school-age child care programs. Depending on the philosophy and purpose of the sponsoring agency, programs may emphasize sports and outdoor recreation, arts and crafts, enrichment activities, special clubs and hobby groups, homework and tutorial help, field trips and special visitors, community

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involvement, or some combination of all of these.

Even though the after-school field is characterized by programmatic diversity, a number of standards and tools have been developed in recent years to identify and measure components of quality in a variety of different settings. In 1991, Project Home Safe of the American Home Economics Association published *Quality Criteria for School-Age Child Care Programs*. A joint project between child and youth development specialists in the United States and Canada resulted in publication of *The School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale* in 1995. And in 1998, the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA - now the National AfterSchool Association - NAA) published *The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care* through a collaboration with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST). Once adopted, these standards functioned as the foundation for the NSACA/NAA program accreditation system. Currently, these standards are undergoing further review and refinement through a collaboration between NAA and the Council on Accreditation (COA). As in the past, a major goal is to develop accreditation standards that can be implemented by a diverse range of program sizes and types.

Generally, standards that have been developed to date are based on the characteristic developmental needs of children and youth. The

standards assume that most children will thrive in informal environments that provide varied activities, choices, opportunities to take initiative, and opportunities to interact in positive ways with others as they grow towards independence. They encourage programs to provide flexible schedules and stimulating environments that encourage children to be independent and creative. The standards also stress the importance of providing well-supervised environments that keep children safe, healthy, and secure.

Implications of Quality Standards for Children and Youth with ADD

Even when programs comply with supervisory and safety standards intended to support individual needs, it can be very challenging for children with ADD to be successful in programs characterized by freedom, flexibility, variety, and stimulation. While these characteristics are viewed as attributes that support development in most children, they are often overwhelming and frustrating for children with ADD. There is a strong potential for a mismatch between characteristics of quality programs and the capabilities of children with ADD.

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The next section of this article identifies some of the assumptions behind the expectations of quality after-school programs and explores the potential for mismatch between these expectations and the capabilities of children with ADD. It does not provide solutions. Rather, the purpose of this article is to foster understanding of how expectations of quality after-school program can often be challenging, and sometimes overwhelming, for children and youth with ADD. The final two articles in this series will focus on solutions. They will explore strategies, tools, and ideas for adapting after-school environments and activities and guiding the experiences of children and youth with ADD to help them succeed in after-school environments.

Exploration of Characteristics of Quality School-Age Programs and the Potential for Mismatch with the Capabilities of Children with ADD

CHARACTERISTIC:

Wide Variety of Activity Offerings and Opportunities to Make Choices and Decisions

Providing children and youth with a variety of activities and choices assumes that they can use their thinking skills to do the following tasks:

- *Sort out the activity options available*
- *Set priorities*
- *Match the options to their own interests*

- *Focus attention on the activity they select*
- *Sustain involvement in the activity in a productive way.*

These are reasonable expectations for most children and youth as they move towards independence. In fact, many children and youth can manage these tasks with ease. However, the very nature of ADD makes it very challenging, if not impossible, for children with attention problems to manage these tasks. When attention problems are combined with extreme temperamental traits and other factors explored in previous articles, there is a great potential for mismatch.

CHARACTERISTIC:

Freedom of Movement within the Program and in the Community

Providing children with freedom of movement within the program and opportunities to explore the greater community makes the following assumptions about children's abilities:

- *They know how to take responsibility for their actions when they are on their own*
- *They are resourceful and reliable and are capable of self-direction*
- *They can move about with confidence and ease*

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School-age children and youth have varying capabilities for handling freedom of movement. However, most children can move purposefully and responsibly about after-school program environments that are well organized and supervised by supportive adults who facilitate their activities as needed. Children with ADD often have great difficulty managing their behavior in an informal atmosphere which allows them to move about freely. They have more difficulty tuning in to the underlying structure in the environment that could help them become productively involved in program activities. Instead, they are easily distracted on their way from one activity to the next.

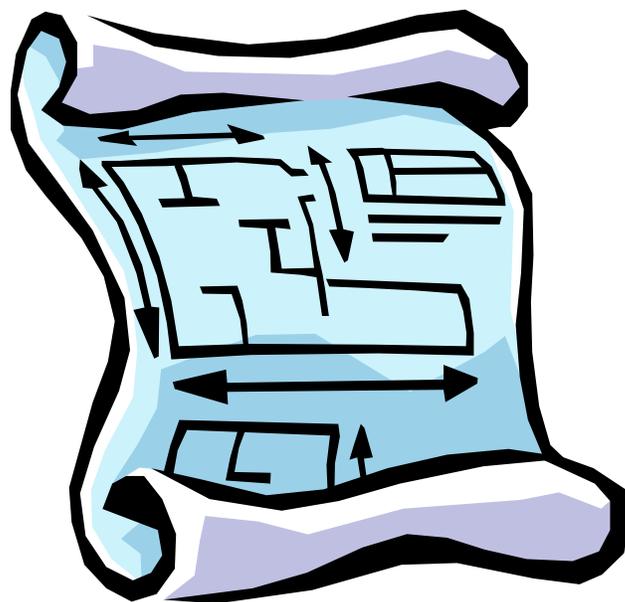
CHARACTERISTIC:

An Environment That Provides Visual and Auditory Stimulation

Providing a stimulating environment assumes the following things:

- *An environment with bright colors, visual complexity, and multiple sounds will attract children's interest and involvement*
- *Children are capable of filtering out competing sights and sounds from multiple activities in the environment*

Stimulating environments can be very appealing to most children. Bright colors, complex visual textures, interesting sounds, and multiple activities can definitely attract and invite children to get involved. Productive involvement for all children is more likely to occur when space and activity areas are organized so that sights and sounds are not in direct conflict. This means that quiet areas are separated from noisy areas and active areas are separated from areas where more passive activities take place. Staff in quality programs place a great deal of emphasis on creating environments which are interesting and inviting, without being chaotic and frenetic. Creating a balanced environment demands imagination and artistry.



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For children and youth with ADD and those with extreme temperaments, however, even a well designed stimulating environment can be overwhelming. They often find themselves simultaneously attracted by sights and sounds in different areas of the environment, causing them to flit from area to area without becoming engaged in any activity for a significant period of time. Example: Children with ADD and temperaments characterized by high activity, high sensitivity, negative mood, and high intensity often exhibit behavior that spirals out of control in a complex environment filled with exciting, attractive sights and sounds.

It is important to acknowledge an apparent paradox. One of the important characteristics of ADD is low arousal. In view of this, bright, stimulating colors can actually help children with ADD to focus and sustain their attention. Therefore, stimulation itself is not the problem as much as multiple, complex, competing sources of stimulation. With this in mind, completely depriving children with ADD of stimulating sights and sounds is not the answer. Coming articles provide suggestions for using stimulating sights and sounds as tools for helping children and youth with ADD connect and stick with program experiences that can benefit them.

CHARACTERISTIC:

Flexible, “Go With the Flow” Scheduling

Flexible scheduling is another feature of quality school-age programs. Flexible schedules are most effective when there are predictable daily routines and events that provide a backdrop of stability and focus for the flexibility. Programs with flexible schedules have made the following assumptions about the children and youth they serve:

- *They are able to tune in to and manage their physical and personal needs on their own*
- *They can monitor their involvement in program activities*
- *They can balance the amount of time they spend on different activities and pace themselves effectively*

Because of their impulsivity and distractibility, children with ADD often have difficulty managing long blocks of unscheduled time. Their inability to focus attention may make it difficult for them to tune in to the program's underlying structure of daily routines. This, combined with their poor self-monitoring skills, can make it very difficult for them to manage their physical and personal needs on their own, monitor their involvement in activities, or pace themselves effectively.

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CHARACTERISTIC:

Many Opportunities for Independent Activity

Quality programs provide children with many opportunities to function independently alone and in groups throughout program hours. By providing opportunities to work and play independently, programs have made the following assumptions about children and youth:

- *They are capable of self-control, self-direction, and self-monitoring*
- *They can take responsibility for their own actions*
- *They can act resourcefully*
- *They are reliable*

Given their impulsivity, distractibility, and poor self-monitoring skills, children with ADD often have great difficulty working and playing productively on their own. When these children also have extreme temperaments characterized by high activity, high sensitivity, intensity, negative mood, low or high approach, low adaptability, and/or low persistence, they find it even more challenging to function independently.



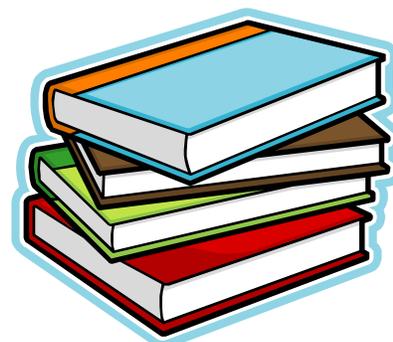
CHARACTERISTIC:

Informal Opportunities to Do Homework

Programs across the country are grappling with how to provide homework support and help effectively. Some programs require all children to do homework for a certain period of time every day. Other programs take the approach of requiring all children to spend quiet time every day that may or may not include homework. Many quality after-school programs provide supervised time and space for children to do homework during program hours, but do not require children to do homework.

These programs often make the following assumptions:

- *Children know they have homework, how to organize it, and how to do it*
- *Children can assume responsibility for getting their homework done*
- *Programs can provide the opportunity for children to do homework, but are not responsible for seeing to it that children complete their homework*



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When doing homework is totally optional, children with ADD find it difficult to initiate and work on homework where lots of other activities are competing for their time and attention. Even when they do choose to do homework, they often need help organizing, setting priorities, and monitoring and checking the quality of their work. Failing to do their homework during program hours often means that it does not get done at all. This often happens because by the time they get home, children with ADD have difficulty remembering what it was they were supposed to do.

CHARACTERISTIC:

Opportunities for Informal Social Interaction - One-on-one, in Small Groups, and Large Groups

Providing children and youth with opportunities for informal social interaction carries with it the expectation that children can conduct themselves appropriately. It assumes the following things:

- *They have the social skills they need to function well while working and playing on their own with others*
- *They have learned social graces which make it possible for them to interact effectively with others*

Children and youth with ADD often have great difficulty interacting with others in informal social situations. They often have not developed the social skills and social graces which make it possible to communicate, cooperate, negotiate, or solve problems and conflicts. When these youth also have extreme temperamental characteristics such as low or high approach, negative mood, sensitivity, and/or high intensity, informal social situations are even more challenging for them.

CHARACTERISTIC:

Opportunities for Children to Participate in Planning and Operating the Program

Quality after-school programs strive to provide increasing opportunities for children and youth to help shape the program. Initiatives to provide more ownership of the program are based on the following assumptions about the capabilities of children and youth:

- *They are aware of what interests them and can make choices about which interests to pursue*
- *They can focus their attention and use their thinking skills to solve problems, plan and organize projects*
- *They can sustain and direct their attention to follow-through on their plans*

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- *They can function independently and provide leadership for program activities*
- *They have the social skills required to work as a team to implement their ideas*

It can be difficult for children with ADD to organize plans for activities, work cooperatively with others to develop plans, and follow-through on their plans independently. However, they are often able to generate many spontaneous, creative ideas. Whether their ideas fizzle or flourish usually depends on the level of guidance, support, and encouragement they receive from adults and peers.

Key Points to Remember

The after-school field has developed quality standards that are based on the characteristic developmental needs of school-age children during out-of-school hours. These standards encourage programs to provide environments that provide varied activities, choices, opportunities to take initiative, and opportunities to work and play cooperatively with others. While these characteristics are viewed as attributes that support development in most children, they are often overwhelming and frustrating for children with ADD. This means there is a strong potential for a mismatch between characteristics of quality programs and the capabilities of children with ADD.

The following program characteristics may be problematic for children and youth with ADD:

- Wide Variety of Activity Offerings and Opportunities to Make Choices and Decisions
- Freedom of Movement within the Program and in the Community
- An Environment That Provides Visual and Auditory Stimulation
- Flexible, "Go with the Flow" Scheduling
- Many Opportunities for Independent Activity
- Informal Opportunities to Do Homework
- Opportunities for Informal Social Interaction

Before developing new strategies for meeting the needs of children and youth with ADD in your program, set aside some time to reflect on how your program currently operates. Conduct an observation to identify the major characteristics of your program environment, the expectations your environment has of children who attend, and the implications of these expectations for children and youth with ADD.

The final articles in this series will provide practical strategies, tools, and tips for helping children and youth with ADD overcome challenges and have successful experiences in after-school programs

Arkansas Quality Counts Initiative

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During the fall 2008, the Arkansas Out-of-School Network and Arkansas State University Childhood Services partnered with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality to provide training and technical assistance related to quality assessment and improvement planning in select after-school programs across the state to support the Arkansas Youth Program Quality Assessment Pilot Project. Staff affiliated with various out of school time programs in Arkansas were selected to participate in these efforts.

Staff participated in the following activities as part of the Pilot Project :

- Quality Matters Presentation-August 21, 2008
- Youth Program Quality Assessment Basics Training-September 18, 2008
- External Assessment received using the YPQA
- Conducting self-assessment using the YPQA
- Online Scores Reporter using external and self assessment data
- Planning with Data Training-November 17, 2008
- Developing a quality improvement plan using YPQA data

The benefits of being a pilot site in this exciting initiative were to connect staff with a statewide professional learning community, provide them with an in-depth review of the Youth Program Quality Assessment, and present different ways the data can be collected and used to develop quality improvement plans. The Youth Program Quality Assessment is a research validated tool designed for youth development practitioners and administrators working in youth settings. Developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, the YPQA is based on 40 years of research and practice in the participatory learning approach.

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Thank you to the following programs for their commitment to partnering with the Arkansas Out of School Network and ASU Childhood Services by participating in the Quality Counts Initiative in promoting quality after school programming in their community and in this state:

School of the 21 st Century	Paragould
The New School	Fayetteville
Tender Loving Care-21CCLC	Searcy
Little Rock Boys & Girls Club- Mitchell Unit,21 CCLC	Little Rock
Black Community Developers-New Futures for Youth	Little Rock
Positive Atmosphere Reaches Youth (P.A.R.K.)	Little Rock
The High Five Zone, Piney Grove UMC	Hot Springs
Cabe Middle School-21 CCLC	Gurdon
Gurdon High School-21CCLC	Gurdon
Donald Reynolds Boys & Girls Club	Fayetteville
Trumann High School-21CCLC	Trumann
Adventure Club, Primary & Middle School	Bentonville
First United Methodist Church Child Development Center	Little Rock
Step Up Support Center	Little Rock
St. John's Unto Others, Inc.	Little Rock
Whetstone Boys & Girls Club	Little Rock
Thrasher Boys & Girls Club	Little Rock
Greater Second Care, Inc.	Little Rock
Hunter United Methodist Church	Little Rock
Promiseland Ministries	Little Rock
Boys & Girls Club of Mississippi County	Blytheville
Boys & Girls Club of Saline County (Angie Grant)	Benton
Henderson Middle School	Little Rock
Hall High (Junior Achievement)	Little Rock
Hamburg	Hamburg
Lavacca High School	Lavacca
Monticello Middle School	Monticello
RAP-Elmwood Middle School	Rogers
Springdale High School	Springdale

Food for Summer Youth Programs

DoSomething.org is offering free resources to help you promote and implement the federal Summer Food Program. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) has several online materials that can help you recruit additional sponsors and partners, work with state officials administering the summer food program and publicize this opportunity in your local community. Details:

www.frac.org/afterschool/summer_toolkit.htm

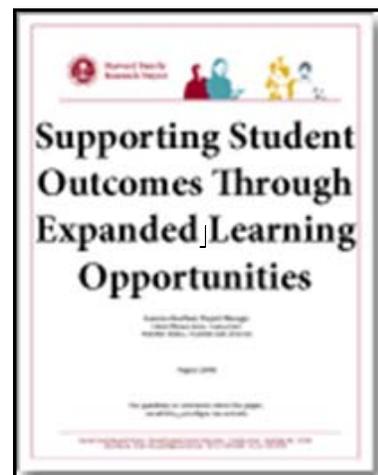
To bring these findings to life, Wallace and the report's research team also created an online "OST cost calculator" on Wallace's website to help users calculate the costs of various options for high-quality OST programs. To explore the site – which includes the cost calculator, examples of program costs and options, quality strategies and other resources, visit www.wallacefoundation.org

Supporting Student Outcomes Through Expanded Learning Opportunities

This new paper looks at the role of after school and summer learning programs in supporting student success. The paper explores how to bridge the divide between out-of-school time programs and schools by offering research-derived principles for effective expanded learning partnerships. It was commissioned by Learning Point Associates and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS) as part of a report on school reform and expanded learning

The Cost of Quality Out-of-School-Time Programs

Out-of-school time (OST) programs are increasingly expected to be of high enough quality to produce real benefits for children, but until now there has been little information on what such quality programming costs. This groundbreaking report fills that gap, providing a data-filled examination of the costs of 111 diverse, quality OST programs in six cities. The report finds that costs vary widely depending on a range of factors from program goals to times of operation and the ages of the children served. The report is also distinctive because it looks at the full costs of programming, including non-cash contributions OST operators often depend on such as free-of-charge space for programming.



Lights on Afterschool 2009

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



**It's never too 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!**

Calling All Afterschool Artists!

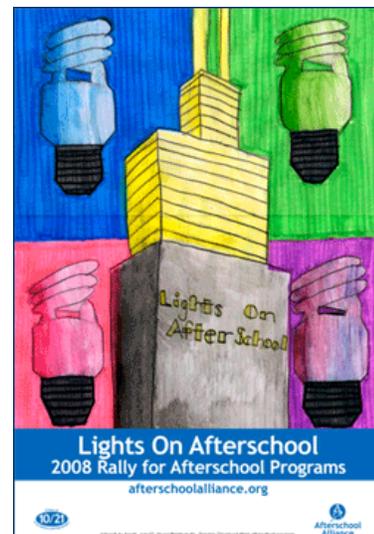
The Afterschool Alliance is seeking artwork for their 2009 *Lights On Afterschool* poster. The winning student's image will be printed on 50,000 posters and sent to afterschool programs from coast to coast for their *Lights On Afterschool* celebrations this October 22, and will be featured all year at www.afterschoolalliance.org. The name of the winning student's afterschool program will be featured on the poster (student's privacy will be protected). See Rules and last year's winning entry at:

**[http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/
loa2009SubmitArtPoster](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa2009SubmitArtPoster)**

Submissions are due by **April 20, 2009**.

Questions?

Email lightson@afterschoolalliance.org or call Susan Rohwer at 646 943 8663.



Professional Development

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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 the following topics:

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

Course schedule for Spring & Fall 2009 :

March 15 - May 15, 2009

June 1 - July 15

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

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**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 Bonnevile 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!**



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

Featuring Guest Presenter, Roberta Newman, New Roads Consulting

For information email Woodie Sue Herlein, wherlein@astate.edu or
call toll free 1-888-429-1585

Coming to a community near you this spring!

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 two communities.

To learn more email Woodie Sue Herlein, at wherlein@astate.edu or call 1-888-429-1585.



AOSN Team Members Attend National Network Meeting in Tampa, Florida

Teams from C.S. Mott Foundation-funded statewide afterschool networks met in Tampa, Florida, January 26-29, 2009 to share their successes and challenges in furthering afterschool statewide policies and practices in each of their respective states. Particular emphasis was placed on the challenges as well as potential opportunities available for afterschool programs as it related to the proposed economic stimulus package. Participating Arkansas State Team Members pictured above include (front row- left to right– Ivan Hudson, Amy Gunnett, Woodie Sue Herlein, Lynn Carver; back row/left to right– Paul Kelly, Jennifer Harris, and Dee Cox).

Activity Ideas

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Improving Financial Literacy

During these rocky financial times, there is no better than the present to help the youth of your program strengthen their financial literacy. Middle school youth and older teens will enjoy the Money Talks Web site (www.moneytalks.ucr.edu) where they can play interactive games, read newsletters and watch videos to help them improve their financial literacy. This website is available in both Spanish and English and was created by The University of California Cooperative Extension Service.

Videos address topics such as saving money and building credit. Interactive games allow youth to measure their financial I.Q. and learn about consumer savvy shopping, the cost of an accident, the cost of maintaining an automobile, money values and more.

Program staff members also can benefit, as the site provides resources for program leaders.

“Eggs-perimenting” Fun

In this experiment youth will have the opportunity to:

- observe and record observations;
- make a scientific hypothesis;
- summarize what they learned from this hands-on experiment.

Materials Needed

- a glass
- an egg (fresh, not boiled)
- salt
- water



Activity Plan

Have youth get into small groups. Provide each group with a glass, an egg (fresh and raw), a container of salt, and a spoon or stick for stirring. Fill each glass about half full of water. Ask youth to put the egg in the glass of water and record their observations. What happens to the egg?

Then invite youth to remove the egg from the water and stir in a measure of salt. Have youth record the results. Stir in another measure of salt; record the results. Youth might repeat this several times, recording their observations after each addition of salt. Ask youth to record their best hypothesis about what happened, and have them share their ideas.

The Explanation

The egg is denser than the water. That is why, initially, the egg sank. As salt was added to the water, the water's density increased. Gradually, the water became denser than the egg and the egg floated.



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Ask youth if they can think of another way to prove that the density of the water increased as salt was added. See if any youth suggests comparing the weight of two glasses -- one half full of water and the other with the exact same amount of water with several tablespoons of salt added. A sensitive scale will show that the salt water weighs more (is more dense) than the water without salt.

Bouncing Eggs In Science

Description : A chicken's egg is enclosed by a shell that has a high calcium content. If a raw egg (shell still intact) is placed in a glass of vinegar, a reaction (RXN) takes place. The acetic acid in the vinegar will dissolve the eggshell. The reaction will begin immediately when the egg is placed in the vinegar but will not be complete for two or three days. After two or three days, the egg will survive a drop of four to five inches.

Background Information: This activity can be used to begin a lesson on states of matter. Be sure to completely cover the eggs with vinegar or hard shell will remain on those areas and quickly break the egg when it is dropped. Leave the eggs soaking in the vinegar for at least three days and be very gentle when removing them from the vinegar.

Goal: Youth will observe the chemical reaction between calcium and vinegar.

Concepts:

Youth will be able to:

- Set up and observe the chemical reaction between the calcium in a chicken egg to vinegar.
- Test the effects of the chemical reaction by having a bouncing egg contest to see which egg withheld the most bounces.

Materials:

- Raw chicken eggs
- Vinegar
- Plastic spoon
- Clear plastic cups

Procedure:

- Allow each of the youth to place a raw egg into a clear plastic cup (this is so that youth can observe the chemical reaction on the entire egg).
- Completely cover each of the eggs with vinegar (it is very important to completely cover the entire shell!)



Activity Ideas

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- Set the eggs in a place where they can easily be observed without needing to be moved for at least three days.
 - ⇒ Have youth carefully observe the chemical reaction on their egg.
 - ⇒ Keep a running journal on how much shell has disappeared.
 - ⇒ Have youth write where the shell has gone and why they feel it disappeared.
- VERY CAREFULLY remove the eggs with a plastic spoon. There should be a thick waxy film on the egg.
- One at a time, have youth drop their egg (about 4 to 5 inches) Have entire group watch and record how many times each youth's egg was dropped before breaking.

ASSESSMENT:

- Discuss various guesses about the happenings of the egg shell.
- Discuss why one egg survived more drops than others.
- Have youth think of other items that calcium or vinegar would react with: baking soda and fire or baking soda and vinegar



Titanic Challenge

This cooperative game will help youth learn how to work together to develop a strategy where all can be successful in meeting the inherent challenges of this game.

Materials Needed:

- Three hula hoops per team
- Items (ex. Cones) to mark off a start and finish lines

Description of Idea

Explain to the youth that they will all be aboard a **sinking ship** (behind the identified start line). They may only use **life boats** (the **hula hoops**) to get to safety (the other line-finish line). The object is to get all the people safely off the boat as quickly as possible using only the life boats. Youth may only **step in the hoops** and may pick up hoops, but only those that are empty. Hula hoops cannot be dragged or tossed. Teams may take any number of passengers on the lifeboats but if any passenger steps out of the hoops all the people in the lifeboat must return to the ship. Teams may step out of the lifeboat only when they have reached the finish line but they may not throw the hoops back to the boat. (They will need to put one hoop in front of the other until they reach the finish line, but do not tell them this unless they absolutely cannot figure it out).

Activity Ideas

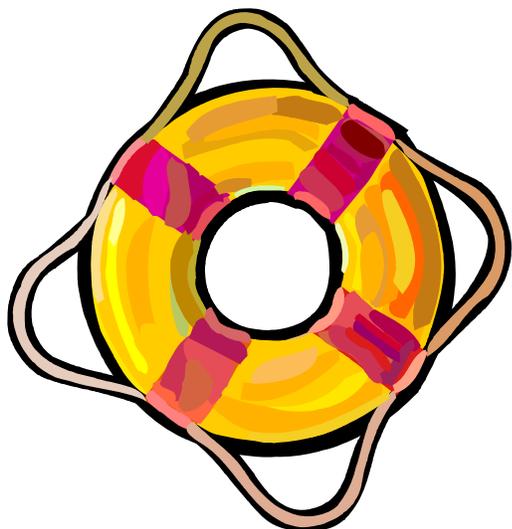
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Divide youth into groups of **six or less**. Give each group 1-2 minutes to brainstorm ideas on how to solve their dilemma; each member in the group must offer a suggestion before they decide on a course of action. Then tell groups they have (five or so) minutes to begin with. At the end of five minutes, gather groups together and discuss what they have done, what has worked, etc. Allow youth to begin again, using ideas they may have gathered. At the end of the activity, discuss again the types of behaviors which were helpful to groups successfully completing the challenge.

Other Suggestions:

Try adding or removing hoops for different strategy ideas. Also you can make certain color hoops "icebergs" that cannot be moved.



Triangle Tag

Purpose of Event: To have youth work together and practice their chasing, fleeing, and dodging skills.

Suggested Age Level: 10 years old and up

Materials Needed:

- Cones to identify playing area

Description of Game

Have youth form groups of three and join hands. The fourth group member will be outside the circle of three that are holding hands. The fourth person will be the chaser. Designate one person in the circle as the person that the chaser will try and tag.

On the adult leader's signal, the chaser will try and tag the designated person in the group. The group holding hands will work together to try and protect the taggee. Play for a designated amount of time and if they tag the taggee then switch roles.

Variations:

Have the circled group hook elbows instead of hands.



Staff Selection: What is Important for Out-of-School Time Programs?

Part 1 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., Tawana Bandy, B.S., and Mary Burkhauser, M.A.

Background

Research on successful out-of-school time programs repeatedly has found that the caliber of a program's staff is a critical feature of high-quality programs that achieve positive outcomes.¹ Therefore, attracting, selecting, and retaining high-quality staff has become a major objective of out-of-school time programs. To expand what is known about staff selection, Child Trends recently conducted a review of existing research 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.²

This brief presents findings from that study and the research review, as well from other research about staff selection, and links these findings to effective strategies for recruiting and selecting frontline staff. The brief also describes these strategies.

What is Staff Selection?

Staff selection has been identified as one of six core implementation components—or *implementation drivers*—necessary for helping practitioners implement evidence-based and innovative services effectively.^{2,3}

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 first driver: *staff selection*.



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Why is Staff Selection Important for Out-of-School Time Programs?

The move toward implementing evidence-based out-of-school time programs has prompted interest in a suitable workforce and, in particular, the experience, education, credentials, and skills that practitioners need to facilitate high-fidelity implementation of new and innovative services for children and youth. Indeed, the practitioner is the person who is most responsible for delivering the services effectively to program participants. Therefore, it is becoming imperative to identify successful strategies for recruiting and retaining high-quality staff and to determine core competencies associated with effective practitioners of evidence-based and innovative programs. Research conducted on staff selection in the human services field suggests that both formal qualifications (e.g., education, background, certification, and experience) and less measurable personal and interpersonal characteristics (e.g., commitment, communication skills, and attitudes toward youth) may be important when recruiting staff. Despite the limited availability of empirical research about the selection of effective practitioners for out-of-school time programs, key issues to consider when hiring staff have emerged from the field. These issues include experience, education, skills, readiness for and commitment to the program, and personal characteristics.

How Can Programs Recruit Appropriate Staff?

The successful recruitment of appropriate and committed staff in many ways determines the success of an out-of-school time program. In that recent study, Child Trends found that program directors use five major strategies to successfully recruit appropriate staff:⁴

- ***Hire volunteers and promote from within*** – Program volunteers and current staff already have a commitment to the program and an understanding of program goals. Therefore, many program directors reported recruiting volunteers for paid positions. Additionally, program directors suggested creating a “career ladder” to help current staff advance (for example, from frontline staff to administrative staff). This approach can be an effective way to retain talented individuals in the program.
- ***Encourage peer recruitment*** – Current high quality staff members who are committed to the program are often good resources for recruiting new staff. Program directors noted that practitioners who have delivered a service or program successfully can be the best recruiters.

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- **Tap into AmeriCorps programs** – AmeriCorps programs such as Public Allies and Teach for America can be good resources for recruiting staff members who are enthusiastic and mission driven. However, program directors noted that staff members recruited from these programs were most successful when the program was clear about its selection criteria and program staff were heavily involved in the recruitment process.

- **Conduct community outreach and form partnerships** – Collaborative partnerships with schools and community-based organizations can be effective vehicles for recruiting staff, although, as noted above, it is important that programs are clear with partners about their selection criteria for staff prior to the recruitment process. Additionally, programs should work with partners to understand the preexisting obligations of potential staff and to try to work collaboratively, rather than competitively. Program directors suggested meeting with public school principals to identify strong teachers in their schools who might be interested in after-school jobs, along with participating in community outreach activities and events with other local organizations. Program directors also noted that another good way to attract staff is to establish a presence on university and college campuses by participating in job fairs.

- **Capitalize on media and technology** – Media outlets, including newspapers and the Internet, are major sources for recruiting staff for out-of-school time programs. Program directors reported advertising job opportunities in community and local newspapers, as well as on Web sites such as Craigslist and Idealist.org.

In addition, out-of-school time staff members reported that they often use referral and return incentives. For example, some programs offer a monetary incentive to staff persons who refer friends, which can offset the costs of recruitment efforts. And some seasonal programs provide staff with monetary or benefit incentives to return the following year.⁵

How Can Programs Select Appropriate Staff?

Given the primary role that staff members play in the delivery of services, it is essential to select people with the capacity to carry out evidence-based and innovative practices. Selecting appropriate staff members has an impact on whether programs are implemented with fidelity and the degree to which the intended target population achieves successful outcomes.⁶

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Results of a study examining high performing after-school projects funded by The After-School Corporation (TASC) are instructive in this regard. The study set out to determine what characteristics, if any, these programs shared. Evaluators found that high performing projects were led by experienced staff with a common vision about what the program wanted to achieve.⁷ Even though limited research exists on staff selection for out-of-school time programs, as mentioned earlier in this brief, the available evidence suggests three major factors that should be considered when hiring staff members:

- 1) commitment to a program's mission;
- 2) skills and abilities to work with youth effectively; and
- 3) experience and credentials.

Consider Staff's Commitment to the Program

Assessing potential staff members' commitment to implement evidence-based and innovative services within an out-of-school time program can ensure that newly hired staff members have the motivation to implement program services with integrity. Key areas to assess when selecting staff members include their attitudes toward the services and program guidelines, their openness to learning a new skill, and their willingness (or unwillingness) to buy into the program's mission and goals. Program directors of evidence-based and promising out-of-school time programs

reported that they consider commitment and buy-in to be vital characteristics for practitioners in out-of-school time programs.⁹ Specifically, they cited the following characteristics as critical for successful program implementation:

- ***An understanding and belief in the program's overall vision and goals*** - Program directors reported that staff members should believe in the program's mission because they are then more likely to abide by the appropriate program guidelines or, as one program director noted, "the established and research-proven recipe," for implementing the program as designed and planned.
- ***Commitment to and passion about the program*** - Program directors underscored the idea that committed and passionate frontline staff members are necessary for developing strong, positive relationships with youth and achieving positive youth outcomes associated with program goals. In addition, part of assessing commitment, program directors noted, is determining whether or not potential staff members have sufficient time to dedicate to the program without experiencing burnout.

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One program, knowing that dedicated classroom teachers are at risk for burnout, only asked them to commit a couple of hours each day to participate in homework help sessions.

Consider Staff's Skills and Abilities to Connect With Youth

Staff's ability to connect with youth is a critical ingredient of successful out-of-school time programs. In particular, there is evidence that staff's ability to promote supportive interactions among youth and between staff and youth is related to achieving positive outcomes for youth. In Youth Roundtables conducted by Child Trends, youth mentioned relationships and personal connections between participants and staff as a common reason for joining and continuing to participate in out-of-school time programs. These positive interactions were associated with higher levels of academic self-esteem and frequency of out-of-school time attendance.¹⁰

The Youth Development Learning Network of the National Collaboration for Youth has specified 10 youth development worker competencies that also address practitioners' skills in connecting with youth.¹¹ These competencies were developed by a working group made up of key representatives from the National Collaboration for Youth member organizations.

The core competencies are based on the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes needed by youth development workers to serve as resources to youth, organizations, and communities.¹²

These core competencies include:

- Understanding and applying child and adolescent development principles;
- Communicating effectively and developing positive relationships with youth;
- Facilitating age-appropriate activities for program participants;
- Respecting and honoring cultural and human diversity;
- Involving families and communities;
- Working as a team and demonstrating professionalism;
- Empowering youth;
- Identifying potential risk and protective factors for youth;
- Demonstrating the qualities of a positive role model; and
- Interacting in a way that supports asset building.



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Out-of-school time programs can benefit from using core competencies when developing job descriptions, selecting and hiring staff, conducting staff assessments, rewarding staff for good performance, or terminating staff for poor performance. In Child Trends' recent study on effective implementation strategies, program directors of successful out-of-school time programs emphasized the importance of these staff competencies, including the ability to communicate effectively with youth and present information in an accessible, youth-friendly format.

Because training staff to connect effectively with youth is typically more challenging than is training staff in other areas (e.g., organizational skills), program directors suggested prioritizing this competency when recruiting and selecting staff. It is also good for programs to highlight the value of hiring culturally competent staff members who have the ability to work and respond in a way that acknowledges and respects participants' culturally based beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and customs.¹³ Out-of-school time programs should consider the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of participants when recruiting and selecting staff. Research indicates that successful programs employ at least some staff members who represent participants' cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Consider Staff's Experience and Credentials

Staff credentials, including education and work experience, are often cited as additional factors to consider when selecting people to implement out-of-school time programs. Program directors of effective out-of-school time programs have called attention to the value of having college-educated staff.¹⁴ Interviews and a Roundtable conducted by Child Trends with program directors underscored this issue. One program director noted that young people often look up to frontline staff as "role models"; therefore, when programs stress academic excellence, it is important that they have educated frontline staff. At the high-school level, the need for highly qualified staff is especially significant. Findings show that older youth tend to view out-of-school time programs as an opportunity to develop skills in a specific area of interest, rather than just as a place to meet friends in a safe environment.¹⁵ Hence, staff credentials and level of experience may be particularly relevant to out-of-school time programs serving older youth.



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Program directors participating in a Child Trends Roundtable also discussed the importance of recruiting and selecting staff members whose experiences and skills complement one another and encouraging them to work together as a team. Such arrangements not only give staff opportunities to learn from one another, but also give youth in the program a chance to see adults working together as a team.¹⁶ However, program directors also noted that clear expectations must be set for the team from the beginning to ward against competition among individual team members.

Conclusion

Despite the need for additional research, a growing consensus is emerging about what should be done to ensure that out-of-school time programs hire the most appropriate staff to implement practices effectively and achieve positive outcomes. On the basis of the available evidence, Child Trends offers the following recommendations and action steps to support the use of effective staff selection strategies.



Recommendations for Staff Selection, Based on Available Evidence

1. Recruitment practices should be comprehensive. Using a comprehensive approach increases the likelihood of finding appropriate staff to implement program practices effectively.

2. Recruitment and selection practices should include multiple factors, such as education, interpersonal skills, and abilities.

Research findings suggest that while education and experience are important criteria to consider when hiring staff, personal characteristics such as the ability to connect with youth are equally, if not more, important for achieving positive outcomes with youth.

2. Staff should be culturally competent.

Culturally competent staff members have the ability to work and respond in a manner that acknowledges and respects participants' culturally based beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and customs. Out-of-school time programs should consider the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of participants when recruiting and selecting staff. Research indicates that successful programs employ at least some staff members who represent participants' cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

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3. Out-of-school time programs should apply consistent standards to evaluate applicants to facilitate the decision-making process-

Using core competencies to assess staff and make hiring decisions can ensure that appropriate staff members are consistently selected.

4. Out-of-school time programs should assess staff readiness, motivation, and openness-

Key areas to weigh when selecting staff members include their attitudes toward the services and program guidelines, their openness to learning a new skill or skills, and their willingness to buy into the program's mission and goals.

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