

Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

September / October 2009

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ASU Childhood
Services

Helping Children and Youth with ADD Monitor and Manage Their Own Behavior and Establish Positive Relationships

After-School

by Roberta L. Newman

(Final article in a series 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*)

As indicated in previous articles, the informal atmosphere of school-age programs can be very challenging for children and youth with ADD. They often have great difficulty managing their behavior in the face of varied stimulating activities, sights, and sounds; freedom of movement; and freedom to choose where, how, and with whom to spend their time. This article provides suggestions for helping children and youth with ADD structure their time and participation, monitor and manage their behavior, and establish positive relationships.

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Guiding the After-School Involvement of Children and Youth with ADD

Throughout the program day, there are many ways after-school staff can help children and youth with ADD connect with program activities and engage in positive program experiences.

Arrival

It is essential to establish a procedure or plan for greeting and welcoming children with ADD as soon as possible on arrival to the program. Help them make the transition from school to program and make a decision about what to do first. Initially, this can be done by a staff member, but responsible, independent children in the program can also take on the role of being a peer support for a child with ADD once routines are established.

Scheduling for Flexibility and Predictability

Both flexibility and predictability are important to school-age children. Freedom and flexibility provide opportunities to explore, investigate, extend and expand activities, and be creative. Routines and predictability help children feel safe, secure, organized, and in-control. Balancing flexibility and predictability is critically important for children with ADD who can easily lose focus and self-control when there is no underlying structure to support an atmosphere of freedom and informality. Here are some tips for

implementing a schedule that can meet the needs of children with varying capacities for handling freedom and choice:

- *Establish a sequence for routines that is flexible, yet predictable (e.g. snack is available at the same time in the same place every day, homework help is available from staff or student mentors in the homework area at the same time every day).*
- *Provide variety and change within predictable segments of the schedule (e.g. clubs meet from 3:00 to 4:00 P.M., but different clubs are offered every day against a backdrop of free choice activities in interest centers; children can move between three activity options every day when they arrive after school: 1) go outside or to the gym to blow off steam, 2) participate in quiet activities or chat with friends inside, 3) visit the snack area to re-fuel for the afternoon).*
- *Be sure everyone in the program is aware of the schedule. Post highlights of the daily schedule near a high traffic area where it will be noticed. If possible, post the schedule near a dry erase or chalk board where changes can be noted.*

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- *Talk individually with children with ADD about the schedule on a daily basis to help them internalize the routines and regular occurrences and assimilate daily changes. Help them personalize the schedule to their needs and create strategies to help them remember what to do when (e.g. help them create “self-talk” phrases as reminders: “Re-fuel right after school.” “Rest and relax after snack.”)*
- *Create smooth transitions, giving attention to how to help children change from one part of the schedule to another. Consider role playing transitions, rehearsing, talking them through. Work with children to agree on cues or reminder phrases that will help them begin and end transition periods.*
- *Provide children with daily and/or weekly planning sheets to plan how they will use their time in the program. Check with them periodically to see if they need help sticking to their plans or to help them adjust their plans if necessary.*
- *Encourage children to evaluate how they use their time in the program on a regular basis. Devise a simple form that asks questions such as: “What did I accomplish today?” “What did I forget to do?” What is something I would like to do tomorrow?”*

Helping Children and Youth Focus in and Engage in Activities

It is often difficult for children and youth with ADD to focus in and stay engaged in program activities. Use the following suggestions to help children with ADD understand how to get productively involved in program activities and experiences:

- **Managing Free Time and Free Choice**

Even with built-in routines and predictable events, after-school programs typically offer significant amounts of free time and free choice. Here are some techniques for helping children with ADD structure and manage their freedom:

 - *Help children manage larger blocks of free time or large projects into smaller components or tasks. Take a few moments at the beginning of each day to make lists which help them plan what to do 1st, 2nd, and 3rd.*
 - *Help children tune in to instructions for new or special activities by using the following techniques:*
 1. When giving instructions verbally, draw attention to important steps by saying something like: “This is one of the most important things you will need to think about.” “This is the first thing you must do if you want the experiment to work.”

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2. Present the same instructions in several different ways. Give them verbally. List them on a chalkboard or poster. Have the child write them down. Display them on an overhead projector. Create a rhyme, chant, or melody which contains the instructions.

3. Use brightly colored chalk or markers when posting important written instructions.

4. Use fresh or novelty materials to spark and keep children's interest in a project (e.g. special foil or textured papers for collage, unusual fabrics with designs from different cultures for sewing projects, varied props to use when building with blocks).

5. Use special signals (agreed upon in advance) to let children know when you need their attention at different times during a project. Choose a special word or phrase, a special sound, or a silent gesture.

- *Use the DDADA technique for introducing and teaching new games. DDADA is an acronym for a five step process which helps children understand how to play and get started with new games in a quick, efficient way.*

Step 1: Describe how the game works.

Step 2: Demonstrate how to do it.

Step 3: Ask if children have any questions (do they understand?).

Step 4: Do It without further delay.

Step 5: Adapt It if it could be better, safer, more inclusive, or more fun if you played it differently.

Facilitating Children's Involvement

All children have varying capabilities for managing their free time and behavior independently. As children with ADD work to develop self-monitoring and self-control during free time, staff will need to facilitate their involvement from time to time. Use the following techniques to help children re-focus in a positive way:

- *Be a role model for behaviors you want to see children exhibit. Do this by leading activities, participating in activities with children, taking a break to relax with children, and using effective communication and problem solving techniques to work through problems and conflicts with children and adults.*
- *Maintain proximity control by positioning an adult near children with ADD and/or other special needs as a reminder and deterrent to undesirable behavior.*

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- *Redirect children to another activity or another area of the environment if behavior is escalating and children cannot regain control.*

Providing Appropriate Homework Support

Children with ADD often have difficulty focusing in and sustaining their attention on homework assignments and projects. It can be even more difficult for them to direct their attention to homework, when it is optional for them to do so. With this in mind, there are many important decisions to make when planning how to implement homework support or help. It helps to take a systematic approach to planning. Here are a few suggestions from some of the leading experts on homework help in school-age programs:

Think through the issues around providing homework help ahead of time.

- Ask yourself how you experienced homework as a child. Were you successful? How did you feel about homework? What helped you get it done? What made it difficult? Where did you do homework? How did you feel about the environment where you studied? Then ask, "If I were a child again and attended the school-age program where I work, could I work on my homework in the program? Why or why not?"

- What are some of the typical problems around homework in your program? (Lack of appropriate space? Too many distractions? Lack of appropriate, comfortable space? Lack of appropriate supplies to support homework? Fear of homework? Poor attitudes toward school and homework? Lack of understanding of how to do homework? Lack of students' self-confidence? Lack of staff confidence and/or skills for providing homework support and help? Lack of support from parents? Conflicts between parents and children and the program about homework expectations?)
- What can your program do to minimize or eliminate these problems without compromising overall program goals for providing variety and choices?
- How much do you know about how the schools children attend feel about homework? What more do you need to know about their expectations and needs?
- What is (or what should be) the role of program staff while children are doing homework?

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- How does providing homework help and support fit with your overall program philosophy and goals? What potential conflicts exist, if any? What is the best way to address any conflicts?

Once you have developed your program's general approach to providing homework help and support, look closely at the specific needs of children with ADD. Create specific structures and supports to help these develop habits for organizing, staying on task, completing, and evaluating homework.

- Create blank homework assignment forms and folders to help children set priorities and homework goals and organize their homework. Use bright colors for homework folders.
- Have children describe the homework tasks verbally to check their understanding of what needs to be done OR have them make a list of steps.
- Work with children to help them break down large projects or long term projects into segments.
- Place and use timers in the homework area to help children stay on task.
- Create homework partners who help each other monitor homework habits or give each other help in certain areas.
- Help children with ADD establish a daily routine that includes doing their homework at the same time every day. Allow children to set their own schedule. The schedule might incorporate doing homework in two or three short time blocks, interspersed with time for breaks.
- Create a form for helping children monitor with work habits. Grad L. Flick suggests questions such as:
 - * Did I follow directions?
 - * Did I pay attention?
 - * Did I ask for help if I needed any?
 - * Did I finish my work correctly?
 - * Did I check my answers?
- Consider developing a homework contract between schools, your School-age program, parents, and the child (see NIOST resource, *Homework Assistance & Out-of-School Time: Filling the Need, Finding a Balance* for a sample contract format.).



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Assessing Your Program's Support for Children and Youth with ADD

Observe your program and assess how well children with ADD are structuring their time and participation in activities. Then, develop plans for improving their ability to function more independently. Incorporate the suggestions provided in this article as well as your own ideas. As you develop your plan, focus on developing strategies for managing the following program components: *Arrival, Scheduling for Flexibility and Predictability, Free Time and Free Choice, Helping Children Focus in and Engage in Activities, Facilitating Children's Productive Involvement, Providing Appropriate Homework Support.*

Strategies and Techniques for Helping School-Age Children with ADD Establish Positive Relationships with Others

Social skills and social graces are essential skills for establishing positive relationships with others. As discussed in previous articles, children and youth with ADD often have very poor social skills. Their poor attention means that they are often unaware of how their behavior is seen by others. Their poor self-monitoring and impulsivity makes it difficult for them to reflect on their actions and take steps to correct unacceptable social behavior. For the same reasons, they often have difficulty identifying and expressing their thoughts

and feelings and are easily frustrated when group activities call for teamwork and cooperation.

One of the most helpful things staff can do for children with ADD is to work with them individually to help them identify skills that are lacking and build skills they need to interact in positive ways with others. This usually includes skills such as: listening, sharing, taking turns, being polite, solving problems and conflicts, expressing thoughts and feelings, and controlling anger. For example, staff can use the following techniques to encourage children with ADD to develop and use social skills and social graces that help build positive relationships:

- *Giving feedback and reminders*
- *Using cognitive strategies/productive thoughts*
- *Giving positive strokes and genuine compliments when things go well*
- *Setting expectations, boundaries and guidelines that are linked to appropriate consequences*
- *Breaking down group problems, tasks, and projects into smaller segments to make it easier for children to work together*

In addition to these strategies and techniques, this section provides a variety of additional suggestions that can be very useful in helping children with ADD build and improve their relationships with others.

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Helping Children Use Active Listening Techniques

Children with ADD can learn to break down difficult communications into parts by learning how to use active listening techniques. These techniques help you stop and think before you react too quickly to what other people are saying. They help you check out whether or not you really understand other people's thoughts and feelings. Active listening techniques help you begin a dialogue with another person so that you can learn what is on the person's mind and the person can also learn what is on your mind. Using these techniques can help children prevent disagreements and conflicts from escalating. Here are samples of a few active listening techniques you can teach children how to use:

- **Summarizing.** *Identify the high points of what the other person says to you before you say something back. (e.g. "You're saying it's boring to sit around inside at a table and play Checkers and you would rather play outside.")*
- **Paraphrasing.** *Put the other person's comments in your own words. (e.g. "When you tell me this game takes too long to play, I think you don't like to wait too long to take turns.")*
- **Questioning.** *Clarify what the other person says to you by asking questions about what*

they say. (e.g. "You said you don't like to read books in the library corner. Is that because the kids in there are talking and playing music?")

- **Empathizing.** *Tell the other person that you understand how they are feeling. (e.g. "I didn't mean to knock over your block tower. I'm sorry you feel bad. Can I help you rebuild the tower?")*

Helping Children Learn and Use Social Graces

Using social graces is an important part of getting along with others. Here are some suggestions for helping children with ADD develop social graces:

- *Be a role model for demonstrating the use of social graces. This includes courteous actions such as:*
 1. Greeting and others and saying good-bye in a friendly way
 2. Saying "please" and "thank you" when appropriate
 3. Introducing people to each other
 4. Giving sincere compliments
 5. Offering to help when someone is having difficulty
 6. Using a pleasant tone of voice
 7. Recognizing and acknowledging the feelings of others

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8. Letting others finish what they are saying without interrupting
 9. Apologizing when you are in the wrong
 10. Being neat and clean in appearance
- *Create and play out role play situations to give children opportunities to learn and practice social graces.*
 - *Create posters featuring different social graces and display them around the room.*
 - *Make social graces the theme of the week or month - have children think about how to use social graces in different program areas, during routines, and during transitions.*
 - *Create a club around the theme of social graces and etiquette (e.g. tea ceremonies, etiquette at different kinds of sporting events, etiquette at concerts or other public events and gatherings). Hold special events to use and demonstrate the social graces children learn: a family tea, a trip to a concert or sporting event, a talent show put on by children in the program.*

Developing Strategies for Encouraging Sharing and Cooperating

It is often difficult for children with ADD to share equipment, space, or materials with others in after-school programs, especially if they are

also easily frustrated, highly intense, or negative in mood. Here are some tips for structuring sharing so that it is easier for children to handle:

- *Use timers to encourage sharing. Children find it easier to wait their turn when they can see exactly how long the wait will be.*
- *Use sign up lists with a specified amount of time for use of limited popular items.*
- *Help children use problem solving to work out ways for several children to share the same area or materials at the same time.*
- *If certain items are regularly in demand by a large number of children, brainstorm ideas for increasing the supply of these items. When a shortage of space is the problem, involve children in thinking about ways to rearrange the space so that more children can be accommodated.*

Helping Children Learn and Use Problem Solving Skills

Teach simple, easy-to-remember, step-by-step problem solving skills that children can use when they have disagreements and problems. One example of an effective problem solving process is the **SIGEP** method:

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1. Stop (Calm down, regain composure and self control).
2. Identify (What is the problem about?)
3. Generate (Brainstorm possible solutions to the problem)
4. Evaluate (Which solutions would work best?)
5. Plan (Select a solution and make a plan to carry it out and follow-up to see that it's working.)

Here are some additional tips for helping children learn and use problem solving techniques:

- *Have children solve problems in different role playing situations. During the role plays, have children pause and think about different alternatives and talk about what might happen if different alternatives were chosen. Encourage children to notice and talk about their feelings during the role plays, especially when they have strongly differing views of a problem. Talk about strategies to use when feelings are strong (e.g. Cognitive Strategies/Positive Thoughts).*
- *Use the techniques regularly, drawing children's attention to the fact they are using it.*
- *Post problem-solving steps around the room.*
- *Create a problem solving club.*
- *Set up a peacemakers table - a place where children can go to work through difficult situations before they escalate. Provide forms*

for children to write down the process and results of their problem solving negotiations.

Helping Children Learn Strategies for Anger Management

Use Cognitive Strategies/Productive Thoughts strategies to help children develop techniques for controlling anger. Here are some specific self-talk phrases that can help children cope effectively with anger:

"I can stay cool."

"I can handle this myself."

"I can figure out how to work this out."

Diffusers like deep breathing and counting backwards can also help children with ADD manage anger. In addition, it is helpful provide children with books on anger management to help them think ahead about how to deal with angry feelings when they arise.

Helping Children Learn Strategies for Handling Teasing and Ridicule

Children with ADD are often targets of teasing and ridicule of their behavior. At the same time, they are usually among those who are least able to tolerate this harassment. They often are called names like "retard" or "weirdo." Here are some suggestions for helping children cope with taunting:

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- *Work with ALL children in the program to create “democratic atmosphere” characterized by mutual respect and concern.*
- *Show interest in children’s activities, interests, and accomplishments. Give sincere positive strokes as an antidote to teasing and ridicule. Comment on children’s competence. Avoid “back-handed” compliments and sarcasm (e.g. avoid comments like: “Great job, too bad you don’t do that all the time.”).*
- *Help children with ADD develop strategies for staying in control in the face of teasing. Teach self-talk phrases such as:*
 - “I can tell myself to ignore him.”
 - “Think about something else (or someone else).”
 - “Walk away; leave the area.”
 - “Pretend you are wearing a coat of armor.”
 - “Think about something you are good at.”
- *Work with children to create ongoing special interest clubs as a venue for developing social skills around common interests.*

Assessing the Relationship Climate in Your Program

Observe your program and assess how well children with ADD are establishing positive relationships with others in the program. Then, develop strategies for helping them develop social skills which can help them connect with others in

positive ways. Incorporate the suggestions provided in this article as well as your own ideas.

For more ideas, strategies, suggestions, and resources for meeting the after-school needs of children and youth with ADD, consult *Helping Children and Youth with ADD Succeed in After-School Programs* by Roberta Newman (available at Newroads-Consulting.com).

Additional Resources

For more information on how to use the DDADA technique, see Therrell, J., MSP. *How to Play with Kids*. Austin, TX: Play Today Press.

For more information on providing appropriate homework help and support for children with ADD and other children in programs, see research by NIOST, *Homework Assistance & Out-of-School Time: Filling the Need, Finding the Balance* and resource from Children’s Out-of-School Time, Inc. *Homework and Edutainment Club Program Guide*. Both items are cited on the Resource List for this manual.

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.

Kids Can Cooperate. Seattle, WA: Parenting Press, 1984, pp. 41 - 45.

For more information on creating a democratic environment, see Kreidler, W. J., *Adventures in Peacemaking*.

Icebreaker Activity Ideas

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The beginning of the school year marks the start of a new program year for many afterschool programs. Building a strong sense of community and spending time for the staff and youth to get to know one another is essential in order for strong relationships to develop. Below are a sampling of icebreaker activities that you may find helpful when building community at your program.

Chain Gang

Begin by asking youth "Who can do something really well?" After a brief discussion about some of the youth's talents, pass out paper and ask youth to write down five things they do well. Then provide each youth with five different-colored paper strips. Have each student write a different talent on each paper strip. Then create a mini paper chain by linking the five talent strips together. As youth complete their mini chains, use extra strips of paper to link the mini chains together to create one long class chain. Have youth stand and hold the growing chain as you link the pieces together. Once the entire chain is constructed and linked, lead a discussion about what the chain demonstrates. For example, it might illustrate that...

- All youth have talents.
- The youth in this program have many talents.

- If the youth in this program work together, they can accomplish anything.
- Our program is stronger when youth work together than when individual youth work on their own.

Hang the chain in a visible space in your program as a constant reminder of the talents they possess and the benefits that can result from teamwork. This activity can also be used by program administrators to discuss the importance of team work as it relates to the program staff.

Cool Introductions

Have youth write three things about themselves. They should *not* put their names on their papers. Then have each youth crush his or her paper into a ball. Now you're ready for a getting-to-know-you "snowball fight." Tell youth they cannot begin until you say "go" and that they must stop when you say "freeze." Remind youth not to throw "snowballs" at anyone's face. When you say "go," give youth 30 seconds to a minute to toss their "snowballs." When you say "freeze," every youth should pick up one snowball. Each youth should open up the snowball and find the youth it belongs to. Youth should chat with their partners about the information on the sheets. Then youth will be responsible for introducing the youth whose snowballs they "caught" to the rest of the group.

Icebreaker Activity Ideas

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Time Capsule

On the first day of your school year program create a time capsule that will be opened on the last day of school. Provide each youth with a toilet paper tube. Give students time to decorate their tubes with their names and drawings. Then provide to youth a question sheet that includes questions such as *What is your favorite television program?* and *What is your favorite sport?* Or have the group brainstorm questions to ask one another on their own. In addition, take a photo of each youth, record their height, and have youth trace one of their hands. Put all of those things inside the tube and put the tubes inside a time capsule. At the end of the year, provide a question sheet identical to the one you provided at the beginning of the program year. Have youth complete the sheet before opening the time capsules they created early on in the year. Once they've opened their capsules, they can compare their answers and do the math to figure out how much growth has occurred. If the youth are young, staff or older youth will do the measuring.



Mystery Friend

On the first day of program, assign each youth a "mystery friend." (Only you know that the youth are actually paired; each youth's mystery friend has them for a mystery friend!) Tell youth that they may not reveal their mystery friends to anyone -- including the mystery friend. Explain to group that for the first week of program they are to study and observe their mystery friends -- and think of questions they might ask the person when they finally get to "meet." (Little do they know -- they are being observed by their mystery friends too!) At the end of the week, invite youth to "introduce" themselves to their mystery friend. The two friends then interview each other, asking questions related to the things they wondered about during the observation period. After the interview, youth can use notes taken during the interview to write brief biographies about each other or a poem. This is a great activity to get youth to mingle outside of their cliques.

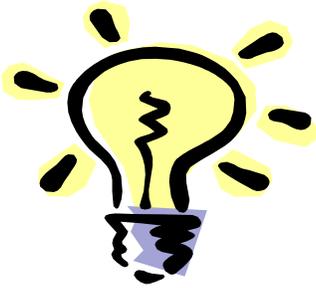
Two Truths and a Dream

A staff member models the activity by telling two things that are true about herself or himself and one thing that is a dream -- one thing that she or he *wishes* was true but is not! Everyone will learn interesting, surprising, even sad, things about one another and have fun.

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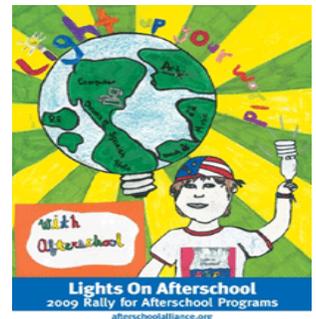
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SAVE THE DATE: 10th Annual Lights On Afterschool October 22, 2009

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” was mailed out in July to licensed school-age programs across the state. If you did not get one in the mail, the guide can be downloaded 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!



Don't forget to register your Lights on Afterschool Event by visiting www.afterschoolalliance.org and click on "Register". Be a part of the growing number of programs in Arkansas that are making the effort to showcase the importance of afterschool programs and underscore the need for quality afterschool programs for all children!

Reminder!

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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

**Next course begins
October 1 - November 15
February 1—March 15**



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

4-H National Youth Science Day - October 7, 2009

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4-H Youth Learn and Lead on Alternative Fuels

As our nation grapples with important environmental issues such as global warming, sustainability and energy independence, “biofuels” —sources of energy obtained from recently harvested plant materials— are at the forefront of the discussion of alternative energy sources. At 4-H, we encourage the youth of today to become our nation’s future leaders. And, as such, it’s important for youth to understand and engage in the important environmental issues our global community faces together, and the opportunities available for a greener tomorrow.

For the second annual *4-H National Youth Science Day*, the University of Wisconsin has designed “Biofuel Blast,” the 4-H National Science Experiment which will introduce young people all around the nation to biofuels. Youth will become a scientist for the day, discovering how ordinary household products can create alternative energy, and how that fuel can power many of the things we use each day.

Share in the Debate about the Next Great Biofuel

On *4-H National Youth Science Day* – October 7, 2009 –millions of young people all across the U.S. will actively participate in a live demonstration of how organic materials can be converted to fuel to supply energy. The experiment offers several activities to showcase how cellulose and sugars in plants can be used to create ethanol. In one activity, for example, youth will combine corn syrup and yeast in a plastic container and cover the bottle’s mouth with a balloon. They will watch as the yeast breaks down the natural sugars in the corn, which will release ethanol gas that will inflate the balloon. In addition to testing corn syrup, youth will test and discuss other alternative fuel options, including switchgrass, sawdust, sorghum and even algae. These fuel alternatives – researched by the 106 Land-Grant Universities and Colleges across the nation that oversee 4-H youth development programs in every state – differ by region throughout the U.S., providing an opportunity for youth to learn about their home region as well as others. The National Science Experiment will encourage a national youth debate to discuss the “best” biofuel based on experiment outcomes. Young people will be able to see how their small creations are part of a major current nationwide discussion. Youth will also be engaged before, during and after the experiment via several popular communication mechanisms, including cell phone text messages, Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, and through the 4-H.org Web site.

One Million New Scientists. One Million New Ideas.™

For over 100 years, 4-H has been at the forefront of teaching youth about science, engineering and technology. *4-H National Youth Science Day* is an important annual part of 4-H’s *One Million New Scientists. One Million New Ideas.™* campaign, with a bold goal of attracting one million new youth to science, engineering and technology programs by the year 2013.

For more information about *4-H National Youth Science Day*, contact Willa Williams, 4-H STEM Instructor or to download the experiment, visit www.4-H.org/NYSD.

We Went on a Road Trip!

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The role of afterschool has expanded with changes in economic and social infrastructures, widening income and achievement gaps, increased risks for children, and an alarming failure and drop-out rate. While its function as a safe space supportive of positive child and youth development remains critical, the last decade has seen greater focus on afterschool as an educational space that can support children's success in school. Professional development plays a vital role in supporting quality afterschool programs. To help afterschool programs execute the necessary elements of a quality program, the Arkansas Out of School Network and its various partners conducted a multi-day institute addressing various core ingredients of a high quality afterschool program.

Road Trip 2: An Afterschool Journey was held July 19-21, 1009, at the C.A. Vines 4-H Conference Center in Ferndale and was sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Education. Over forty afterschool educators participated in the multi-day institute that focused on teaching and learning 'afterschool style'. During this institute educators experienced how in afterschool, academically-related knowledge and skills are best learned when taught using methods that are based in and foster positive child and youth development and address multiple intelligences.

The Road Trip served as a strong, cohesive, comprehensive professional development experience focused on evidence-based practices

and peer learning. The starting point was a road trip metaphor that carried participants on the afterschool journey. The four wheels of the car metaphorically used on the journey each addressed the basics that create and sustain high quality afterschool:

1. A positive environment that supports learning and youth development
2. Connections to academics and skills for success in school
3. Hands-on, engaging learning experiences
4. Skilled staff

The idea of the four wheels working together are threaded through all sessions. The reinforced everywhere throughout the institute. The sessions and activities were designed to give participants the new tools and knowledge needed to implement in their programs and to inspire them to continue on the journey to strengthen the afterschool field across the state. Stay on the look out for information regarding a future Road Trip. This is one experience you will not want to miss!



Resources and Research

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Resources On Afterschool

(www.afterschoolresources.org/directory/about_this_web_site.html) is an online tool created by the Collaborative Communications Group and funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation that features selected resources. Resources are available in the areas of research and evaluation, promising practices, professional development, public awareness and communications, policy, and financing in after school. This online tool can be useful for after-school practitioners and statewide after-school networks.



Upcoming AOSN Technical Assistance Calls

The Arkansas Out of School Network will be hosting one hour long technical assistance calls on topics that matter the most to afterschool programs in Arkansas. Participation in such calls is FREE but requires prior registration in order to gain call in number information. The only equipment needed is a phone. If you are interested in participating in any of the upcoming call, please contact Woodie Sue Herlain at wherlein@astate.edu.

DATE

TOPIC

October 23, 2009

Bullying

November 13,
2009

Building
Community
Partnerships

New Spanish Resource from Design Squad

Design Squad and Lemelson-MIT InvenTeams have teamed up to create Invent It, Build It/Invéntalo, Constrúyelo, an activity guide for youth leaders that delivers five hands-on challenges designed to spark the inventive spirit of kids aged 9-12. Limited copies of the guide are available for free in English AND Spanish. To request a copy, contact design-squad_feedback@wgbh.org. Indicate if you would like English and/or Spanish versions. Please include your name, organization, mailing address (indicate work or home), and e-mail. Invent It, Build It/Invéntalo, Constrúyelo is also available in pdf format. http://pbskids.org/designsquad/parentseducators/getting_started.html



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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.ⁱ 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.”



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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 TIME 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.

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- **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.

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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.

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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.

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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 topicⁱⁱⁱ 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.



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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.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFF TRAINING BASED ON AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

Present background information, theory, philosophy, and values of the new program or practice to staff. Make training meaningful to staff by sharing the underlying assumptions or theory about why the new practice will make a positive difference with children and youth.

Introduce and demonstrate important aspects of the new practice or program. Practice demonstrations should represent real interactions and situations as much as possible.

Provide staff with opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback in a safe training environment. Ask staff members to reflect on how new practices differ from their past or current ways of interacting with the children and youth that they serve.

Provide staff with ongoing support and follow-up training. 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.

Allow sufficient time for training. Training should take place over multiple days and sessions involving foundational issues and opportunities to learn and practice new skills. Pre-service training should be provided before staff interacts with program participants. Mid-year training sessions and ongoing technical assistance should also be provided to reinforce newly learned skills.

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Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at every stage of development. Its mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children.

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The Finance's Projects Funding Tip

Tip: Maximizing Federal Funding – Using AmeriCorps Funds to Support Youth Programs and Services

Maximizing federal funding is a financing strategy that can substantially expand the funding base for youth-serving programs, providing a source of stable revenue and potentially freeing up other funds. This funding tip highlights AmeriCorps State and National Grants, a source of federal funding for youth-serving organizations.

When accessing federal funding sources, it is important that program leaders determine whether a specific funding source is worth pursuing. Consider the following questions to assess if a specific federal funding source meets your program's goals and resource needs.

- **Does this funding support the goals and priorities of my organization?** What types of investments can the funding source support? Does it align with your organization's priorities and needs?
- **How do you access these funds?** What types of programs or organizations can apply for funds? Can youth programs apply directly for the funds or do funds flow through the State or Local government?
- **Should I apply?** How many grants are given out each year? What is the average grant size?

What are the reporting requirements? Is it worth the time and effort to apply?

AmeriCorps State and National Grants

1. Does this funding support the goals and priorities of my organization?

Managed by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent agency of the federal government, AmeriCorps grants support high-quality programs that meet community needs throughout the country through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps state and national grants support nonprofit and private community-based organizations to hire, train and engage AmeriCorps members to operate or plan national and community service programs that address four major issue areas: education, public safety, human needs, and environment. Grantees design activities for a team of members serving full- or part-time for up to one year. Sample activities include:

- tutoring and mentoring youth;
- assisting crime victims;
- building homes;
- restoring parks; and
- recruiting community volunteers.

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2. How do you access these funds?

AmeriCorps State Grants: Funds flow to State Public Service Commissions who then allocate the funding to grantees. Eligible applicants include public or non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, and schools. Applicants apply directly to the State Commission. For more information see: http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/state.asp.

AmeriCorps National Grants: Funds flow directly from the CNCS to grantees. Eligible applicants include public or non profit organizations, institutions of higher education, states or tribes, and consortiums of any of the above. Applicants apply directly to the Federal Agency. For more information see: http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/national.asp.

3. Should I apply?

Key considerations when deciding to apply for AmeriCorps state and national grants include the following.

- The **average State Grant** is \$200,000. Awards generally last three years with annual increments. Reporting requirements are set by each individual State Commission. See the requirements for your state: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/>

[statecommission.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/statecommission.asp).

- The **average National Grant** is \$3 million. Awards also last for three years with annual increments.
- **Funded organizations are responsible for** recruiting, selecting, and supervising AmeriCorps members to serve in their programs.
- **Sponsoring partners must provide** 33 percent of the program operating costs and 15 percent of member support costs.
- **Ask other grantees** about their experiences. View a list of current grantees that may be contacted with questions about what it is like to operate an AmeriCorps National grant at: http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/08_0725_nofa_ac_nat_contacts.pdf.
- **ARRA funds supporting 100,000 new AmeriCorps members.** The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) designated \$201 million for the expansion of AmeriCorps State, National and Vista Grants. AmeriCorps National and State grants were awarded May 8, 2009. **ARRA AmeriCorps grants will only be awarded to existing grantees.**

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Example from the Field

The Lewis-Clark Service Corps AmeriCorps program at Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, ID supports 75 AmeriCorps members including students, recent graduates, and other individuals who have not attended college. The members are placed at about 40 sites throughout the state in a variety of settings: charter schools, public schools, homeless shelters, other colleges and universities, and state agencies such as the Department of Corrections. Each year, members tutor and mentor about 5,000 at-risk students at all ages from pre-school through adulthood.

Keys to success include strong partnerships with community organizations that host members; extensive host site training; ongoing member support; and multiple offices, in Boise and Lewiston, to ease the effort of keeping touch with sites across a large state. For information on the Lewis-Clark Service Corps AmeriCorps program, contact Debi Fitzgerald, (208) 792-2084, dfitzger@lcsc.edu.

To see a list of AmeriCorps grantees in your state, go to: http://www.americorps.gov/about/role_impact/state_profiles.asp.

Additional Resources from The Finance Project



Corporation for National and Community Service Funding

Opportunities for Afterschool (January 2009)

Thinking Broadly: Financing Strategies for Youth Programs (January 2007)

Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Sources for Youth Programs (January 2007)

- Visit The Finance Project's online federal funding database, which highlights over 100 federal funding sources that can support youth programs.
- Visit The Finance Project's Youth Programs Resource Center and Clearinghouse for information and resources about developing, financing, and sustaining youth programs. The clearinghouse, jointly developed by The Finance Project and The Forum for Youth Investment, features more than 1000 research, promising practice and technical assistance resources developed by organizations in the field that aim to improve the lives of youth.



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Grant: AmeriCorps State and National grants - For service opportunities across several programs in education, clean energy/environment, healthy futures, veterans and opportunity.

Funder: Corporation for National and Community Service.

Eligibility: Certain state commissions and multi-state organizations.

Deadline: Jan. 26, 2010.

Amount: \$363 million for an unspecified number of grants.

Contact: www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=74.

Grant: Student learning opportunities - For providing summer enrichment programs for minority and economically disadvantaged middle school students in mathematics, science, engineering and technology.

Funder: U.S. Department of Commerce.

Eligibility: Institutions of higher education.

Deadline: Oct. 19.

Amount: Three grants of an unspecified amount are planned.

Contact: The program contact is steve.j.drescher@noaa.gov; at press time, the full notice was not available.

Grant: Youth Leaders for Literacy - For young people who increase literacy skills and appreciation for reading among their peers.

Funder: National Education Association, Youth Service America and the Pearson Foundation.

Eligibility: Children and youth who range from age 5 to 25.

Deadline: Oct. 30.

Amount: 30 youths will receive \$500 and \$500 worth of books.

Contact: <http://tiny.cc/UGSq8>.

Grant: Siemens We Can Change the World Challenge - For youth-led environmental projects.

Funder: [Siemens Foundation](#), [Discovery Education](#) and the [National Science Teachers Association](#).

Eligibility: Students in grades kindergarten to eight.

Deadline: Jan. 31, for elementary schools; March 15, 2010, for middle schools.

Amount: Students compete for more than \$100,000 in cash and prizes.

Contact: <http://wecanchange.com>.

Grant: Big Green - For environmentally friendly projects that encourage youths to take care of the environment, be active, live healthier and engage in community service.

Funder: Nickelodeon.

Eligibility: Elementary and middle schools and after-school community-based organizations with 501(c)(3) status serving kids age 5 to 15 years.

Deadline: Dec. 31.

Amount: \$2,500 or \$5,000 each. The latter amount must be matched one to one.

Contact: www.bghevent.com/grant/index.htm.

Grant: Field trips - For educational field trips to museums and other places.

Funder: Target.

Eligibility: Education professionals who are at least 18 years old and employed by an accredited U.S. K-12 public, private or charter school.

Deadline: Nov. 3.

Amount: 5,000 grants of up to \$800 each.

Contact: <https://targetfieldtripgrants.target.com/register.php>.

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Grant: Lowe's Toolbox for Education - For school-improvement projects focused on one-time basic needs.

Funder: Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation.

Eligibility: Public schools and public school parent-teacher groups in Lowe's store communities.

Deadline: Oct. 16.

Amount: \$5 million for grants of about \$5,000 each.

Contact: www.toolboxforeducation.com.

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: Responsible Sports Community grants - For sustaining youth sports programs.

Funder: Liberty Mutual.

Eligibility: Nonprofit youth sports organizations and leagues.

Deadline: Nov. 30.

Amount: 20 organizations will each receive \$2,500.

Contact: https://www.responsiblesports.com/community_grants/default.aspx.

Grant: Play Day awards - For service projects and play space enhancements.

Funder: KaBOOM! and NFL PLAY 60.

Eligibility: For those that complete the Play Day process.

Deadline: Oct. 30.

Amount: Five \$1,000 grants.

Contact: http://kaboom.org/build_playspace/find_funding/grants/play_day_grants.

Grant: Responsible Sports Community grants - For sustaining youth sports programs.

Funder: Liberty Mutual.

Eligibility: Nonprofit youth sports organizations and leagues.

Deadline: Nov. 30.

Amount: 20 organizations will each receive \$2,500.

Contact: https://www.responsiblesports.com/community_grants/default.aspx.

