Introduction

Out of school time program leaders across the nation are tasked with closing the achievement gap – a tall order but while many leaders are up to the challenge, they need support for their programs to continue being effective for their students with diverse needs. With input from leaders like you, we have developed tools for you to use to help you and your programs succeed.

About this Toolkit

The tools in this toolkit are centered around five distinct themes.

- **Breaking the Box Toolkit** The thing that makes OST unique is that we don't have to fit our programs into the traditional model like schools do. We can do programming right afterschool, but even that is a box. This toolkit looks at using youth voice and networking which leads to partnerships.
- **Effective Leaders Toolkit** Even the best OST leader faces staff burnout or performance issues. A good leader dives into this work but often need support or strategies that are effective to make change within their organizations. This toolkit can help you implement coaching and promote a culture of feedback.
- **Developmental Relationships Toolkit** One of the things that makes OST programs unique is the relationships that youth form with the adults in programs. These are relationships that help youth develop into responsible adults, face their mental health challenges, and develop social emotional skills. This toolkit provides a detailed background on youth mental health, developmental relationships and a new spin on SEL.
- **Engaging Families Toolkit** For OST programs to be most effective, they need to see families as more than just people you need to attend an event but rather elevate parents from participants to true partners. This tool explores unique ideas for family engagement and assessing effectiveness.
- **Telling Your OST Story Toolkit** OST programs must prove themselves to donors, administrators and partners. We know what we do works, but telling the story is another issue altogether. This toolkit includes a template letter for administrators, national data on OST, and a short list to help you develop your impact report.

Contents
Breaking the Box Toolkit

Breaking the Box

A Blueprint for Networking

Youth Led Focus Group

Possibility Propositions

A Blueprint for Networking

The Start to Beautiful Partnerships

About this Tool

Partnerships are essential in the work that we do in the out-of-school-time space. This is a planner that you can use to support creative partnerships and networking ideas that can help you build those partnerships to increase resources. This tool includes out-of-the-box ideas for networking, a guide for building a networking plan, and templates that you can use in your planning.

Networking can be a great way to find new potential partnerships to increase resources to your programs. But networking can take a lot of time, effort, and planning to execute. To be successful in networking, it takes a lot of trial and error. Here are the steps to follow when planning for networking, guided questions, and suggestions to help you be successful.

Table of Contents

FOUNDATIONS
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Networking Ideas

- Where to network
  - o Career Fairs: you might not be hiring or looking for work, but that doesn't mean you can't check out your local career fairs to connect with other organizations and agencies.
  - o Check out community events that have vendors: either be a vendor yourself or just go and talk with the other organizations.
  - o Research speed networking events in your area: speed networking is when various people gather and spend a set period talking to each other individually and exchange information.
- Capitalize on social events you attend. Whether you go to the gym or enjoy the occasional paint night, anytime that you are out and about can be an opportunity to network.
  - o Does your organization have swag or gear? Wear your organization's shirt to the gym and stir up a conversation with your treadmill neighbor.
  - o Always have business cards handy or download a business card app on your smartphone. Hand them out anytime you get a chance to introduce yourself at a social event.
- Can you work outside of the office? If yes, work remotely from local hubs.
  - o Co-working spaces are great places that have become popular in recent years where many remote or hybrid employees will go to complete their work. These collaborative environments offer the chance to connect with others during your workday that you otherwise might never get to interact with.
  - o Cafes are always bustling with working individuals. Like co-working spaces, working at a cafe offers the chance to connect with new people outside your existing network.
  - o Contemporary food courts and halls are yet another unique public setting where people are working from.
- Don't limit yourself. Be creative. Think about atypical organizations and agencies that might be interested in working together on your program.
  - o Establish sponsorships from companies that may seem unusual at first such as coffee shops, grocery stores, local sports teams, or funeral homes.
  - o Connect with volunteer networks such as state-run volunteer programs, churches, or local sorority and fraternity chapters.

- o Be sure to check out events hosted at your local government offices including town hall meetings.
  - o Work within your current network. Ask your peers and colleagues where they are going and what they are doing.
- When in doubt, create your own networking event.

Build a Networking Plan

1. Develop overarching goals. *(See appendix A for **Goal Setting Template**).*
   a. What are your goals?
      i. Are you trying to deepen your connection within the community?
      ii. Are you trying to bring awareness about your program?
      iii. Are you hoping to identify potential volunteers, program partners, or donors?

Figure 1

Main Goal	
Connect with 10 potential partner organizations to bring more programmatic offerings during after school time throughout the year.	
Objective 1	**Objective 2**
Research and identify similarly missioned organizations offering services unique to ours.	Set up introductory meetings and site visits with potential partners to see their organization and for them to see ours.
Objective 3	**Objective 4**
Personally connect with strong potential partners for a coffee meeting to initiate partnership discussions.	Attend one networking opportunity per month.

2. Identify potential networks. (See appendix B for **Networking Contact Log**).
   a. Who are the people or groups that you want to connect with? Do they align with your organization's vision and mission?
   b. Create a list of potential audiences. Some ideas are:
      i. Professional organizations
      ii. Government agencies
      iii. Volunteer programs
      iv. Churches

     v. Schools and school districts
     vi. Rotaries

3. Choose the appropriate networking channels for you.
   a. There are multiple places you can go to begin your networking journey. Some will be in conjunction with your target audience, some will not. Some will be in person, and some may be online platforms.
   b. Prioritize your list of identified networking channels based on where you want to spend your time and energy first. This will help inform what you do first and beyond.
   c. Potential networking channels:
      i. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn are great ways to connect with others that are tangentially connected to you or your organization through accounts that you are already connected with.
      ii. Being a member of professional organizations and attending their events are great ways to become part of an existing network and create new connections of your own. There are many professional organizations out there that could align with your needs and program mission. For example, one of them might be the National Education Association (NEA) and your state chapter.
      iii. Attending industry events and conferences are wonderful ways to connect with others locally and nationally.
4. Construct an action plan.
   a. Identify desired networking activities.
   b. Develop structured steps for each activity.
      i. Here are some things to consider when developing the steps you will need to take.
      ii. Do you have an elevator pitch about you and your organization?
      iii. What is your budget for networking events? *(*See appendix C for **Budget/Expense Log**).
      iv. What events align with your calendar?
      v. If needed, how can you adjust staffing to capitalize on networking opportunities?
   c. Create your elevator pitch.
      i. Your elevator pitch is a 30 second sales-like speech or pitch that you will use when you introduce yourself and your organization to new contacts.

ii. Your elevator pitch for yourself should include:
1. Your name and title – this could be your professional work title or a title that you hold in another capacity.
2. What you do – this could be how you serve your organization, but it can also be non-work related.
3. What skills and strengths do you have?
4. Do you have a personal philosophy that reflects how you approach your work? i.e. teaching philosophy.
5. Why you? – this is purposefully vague. This is a deep question that only you can answer.

iii. Your elevator pitch for your organization should include:
- Your name and title within the organization.
- Your organization's name.
- A succinct description of your organization. You can draw on the mission statement for this by isolating the main ideas of the mission statement and refining the wording for conversation as needed.
- Other questions you can answer to help you develop your pitch include:
  - How is your organization unique from others?
  - How are you being effective in programming?
  - What is the level of impact your program has made on its stakeholders?
  - Why your organization? – there are elements of your answer that might touch back on the organization mission, however, this is purposefully vague. This is a deep question that only you can answer about your organization.

Figure 2

My name is Michael, and I am the Program Director at Sandy Beach Kids Club. We bring local children together every afternoon for a variety of social clubs to help them build their social skills and emotional wellness. We've seen tremendous reductions in our students' behavioral referrals and suspensions from their schools due to participating in our program. We're changing students' lives through teatime and tee time.

d. Check your calendar and map out your timeline.
  i. Cross-referencing your organization's calendar for potential scheduling conflicts with networking opportunities is an important step in your plan. If you are integral to the operations of programming, you will want to ensure your availability to attend the networking event and plan for appropriate staffing if your priority will be to attend the event during programs.
  ii. Mark your calendar accordingly to keep yourself accountable.
  iii. Create your timeline for networking events. Some things to consider in your time:
   - Event Preparation: Allocate sufficient time before each networking event to prepare adequately. This may include researching attendees, refining your elevator pitch, and gathering necessary materials or resources.
   - Travel Time: Factor in travel time to and from the networking venue, especially if it's located outside your usual work or home area.
   - Event Duration: Determine the duration of each networking event and plan your schedule accordingly.
   - Timing of evening: Consider the frequency and timing of events that cater to your target audience and organizational objectives.
   - Follow-Up Actions: Plan time for post-event follow-up activities, such as sending thank-you notes, connecting on social media, or scheduling follow-up meetings.
   - Work Commitments: Coordinate networking events with your work commitments to avoid conflicts and ensure coverage if necessary to minimize disruptions in programming.
   - Personal Commitments: Consider any personal commitments or obligations that may coincide with networking events, such as family events or appointments. Ensure your networking schedule accommodates these commitments to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
   - Budget (See appendix C for **Budget**/**Expense Log**): Consider any financial considerations associated with attending

networking events, such as registration fees, travel expenses, or networking memberships.

5. Determine what resource you will need
   a. Identify what you will need to support your networking efforts. Some examples of resources to consider
      i. Time
      ii. Access to events
      iii. Memberships to organizations
      iv. Personal connections
6. Evaluate the success of your networking.
   a. Select measures of success that you can easily measure without bias. Some measures of success could be:
      i. Total event attendees
      ii. Number of one-on-one connections
      iii. Number of contacts exchanged
      iv. Follow-up methods and response rate
      v. Number of new successful partners or donors established
7. Make necessary changes to the plan to optimize your desired outcomes.
   a. Be prepared to pivot based on new learnings and results. For example, you may learn after speaking with a new contact that their organizational mission does not align with yours after all or perhaps when following up through multiple emails and phone calls, you have not heard back from them.
   b. Reevaluate the plan to meet your current needs.
      i. Set regular intervals for evaluating networking goals and outcomes, such as monthly or quarterly reviews, to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
      ii. Identify successful networking approaches and tactics to replicate in future efforts.
      iii. Analyze any challenges or shortcomings encountered during networking activities and develop strategies to overcome them in subsequent engagements.
      iv. Continuously adapt and optimize networking plans based on feedback, insights, and evolving organizational needs to ensure ongoing effectiveness and relevance.
8. Reflect on the process and your progress.

a. Networking is never over. Once a networking contact or relationship is established, it will need work and maintenance to ensure continued success.
b. Nurture the relationships that you've built. Stay in touch with your networking contacts through regular communication channels such as email, phone calls, or social media interactions. Share updates about your organization, projects, or achievements to keep contacts informed and engaged. Proactively follow through on any referrals, introductions, or recommendations provided to networking contacts to show your commitment to their success.
c. Don't continue to pursue networking avenues if proven unsuccessful or no longer valuable or aligned with your organization.

Anticipate Challenges

When establishing new contacts and securing new opportunities, sometimes the answer is no, which can be very discouraging, but remember that "no" in this case could mean "not now". Sometimes it's just because of capacity at the time. Ask if it is possible to connect at another time or if they would be open to connecting down the road. Perhaps there is an event that your organization is hosting that you can invite them to if they aren't able to talk at the moment. In many industries, we are all vying for the same limited opportunities and resources. Collaboration, not cutthroat competition should be your goal. It can be challenging to predict outcomes, but that doesn't mean you don't take the leap. Once contacts have been established, relationships are going to require ongoing stewardship and maintenance.

Networking requires a significant investment of time. Manage your time carefully. As it is predominately a social endeavor, networking can be exhausting. Take space for yourself and maintain a self-care routine. Establish boundaries for how much time and under what conditions you will network. Remember to be true to yourself. Unconscious and conscious biases run rampant. Your biases may limit your exploration of new opportunities and resources. As a leader, always try to be open-minded and reflective. Don't sacrifice your authenticity just for the gains.

APPENDICES

A: Goal Setting Template

Main Goal	
Objective 1	**Objective 2**
Objective 3	**Objective 4**

B: Networking Contact Log

Network	Contact Name	Email Address	Phone Number	Address	Opportunity
Afterschool Network Association	Sally Bright	Sally@ana.org	(333)-989-5222	1100 N. Angel St	Funder Meet & Greet 10/5/2020 at 4:00 pm

C: Budget/Expense Log

Total Budget___*$3,000*_____

Event	Date	Cost	Remaining Budget
Sample Event/Membership	00/00/0000	$45	$2,955

D: Calendar Template

Month:						
Sunday	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**

E: Event Information Template

Network_____

Contact Name_____

Email Address _____ Phone Number_____

Address _____

Opportunity _____

Date _____ Time _____

Location _____

Budget_____ RSVP Information _____

Other _____

Notes_____

_____

Post Event

Contacts Collected

Name: Email: Organization: Follow-up Needed: Yes/No	Name: Email: Organization: Follow-up Needed: Yes/No
Name: Email: Organization: Follow-up Needed: Yes/No	Name: Email: Organization: Follow-up Needed: Yes/No

Notes

_____

_____

_____

F: Follow-up Form

Organization_____

Contact Name _____

Email Address _____ **Phone Number**_____

Address _____

Communication/Meeting Log

Date: Time: Location: Purpose: Notes:	Date: Time: Location: Purpose: Notes:
Date: Time: Location: Purpose: Notes:	Date: Time: Location: Purpose: Notes:

Youth Led Focus Group
A facilitator's guide

About this Tool

This is a facilitator's guide for implementing youth focus groups and action planning to address the barriers that leaders face around your program model and breaking out of traditional boxes.

Diving Into Focus Groups and Surfacing with Success

A focus group is a structured discussion of a specific topic. Program leaders can use focus groups to solicit feedback from multiple perspectives and identify insights on program design. The focus group process can help you gain in-depth insight from target student groups, create opportunities for student voice and choice, and fuel program change.

Focus groups are a great way to collect narrative data on your program from your stakeholders, especially your students. This guide focuses generally on students' experiences in the program. Throughout this tool we will use the analogy of a swimmer on a swim team to help you visualize and execute the various steps you'll need to take in this process.

Charting A Course for Victory

For the focus group to be successful, it is essential to prepare properly. This procedure will keep you on the right path.
1. Define the purpose of the focus group.
2. Identify a date, time, length of session (no more than 2 hours recommended), and location for the focus group. Select time based on the best structure of the group. Consider a survey to assess participants' availability.
3. Decide on the target focus group participants and ideal focus group sample population.
   - Is there a specific demographic or sub-population of students that you want to target? Be specific about whom you want to participate in the focus group (i.e. students who attend less than 50% of the time, second-language learners, single-parent households, etc.) Be prepared to explain the criteria

used to select students who participate in the focus group, ensuring it is a fair and equitable process.

- What is the ideal size of your focus group? Consider the ages of the participants, other demographics, and the purpose of the focus group when deciding on the number of participants. Focus groups should be 5–10 participants. Depending on your program and the data you want to collect, consider having multiple smaller groups.
- Identify a student or two to take part in the planning and facilitation process with you (if appropriate). Ask them how they would like to contribute to the process and what interests them the most. They can help develop the questions, they can be a persuasive voice in getting their peers to participate, or you can have them lead or introduce an activity.

4. Recruit participants and get written consent from caregivers for student participation and recording of the focus group session.
5. Make a facilitation plan.
   - What group norms do you want to set for the group?
   - Who will lead the focus group?
   - Will you need a second staff member to help facilitate?
   - How will you ensure accessibility for participants?
6. Develop the right questions to ask students.
7. Develop an evaluation form for students to complete at the end of the focus group. Design a form to capture feedback from students about their experience participating in the session.
8. Make a list of what supplies you'll need and check for inventory.
9. Consider the following:
   - Will you be providing a meal or snacks for participants?
   - Are you providing an incentive such as a gift card or honorarium (consider the ages of your focus group)?
   - Will participants need transportation?
   - Does everyone know each other, or will you need name tags?
   - What activities can you incorporate into the focus group time to make it more engaging and productive based on your participants?
   - Can you hold the focus group virtually?
   - Will a virtual focus group allow for easier access for student participation?
   - Will having a virtual focus group be the most effective way for you to engage students?

Swimming Through Logistics

With your plan in mind, make sure that everything is in place so that you are ready for the day of the focus group.

- Scheduled staff and assigned roles
- Picked up food for participants
- Secured participant incentive(s)
- Set up the space
- Gathered supplies
- Arranged transportation for participants
- Prepare nametags
- Sent reminders to participants
- Print evaluation forms

Focus Group Outline

Starting Off with a Splash

- Facilitator and staff welcome participants upon arrival.
- Invite participants to place their first name on a name badge sticker.
- Invite participants to grab a snack or enjoy a meal based on what you've planned.

Prepping Our Minds

1. Establish group norms.
   a. Sample group norms:
      i. There are no wrong answers.
      ii. This is a safe space where you can share your thoughts freely.
      iii. Nonjudgemental zone – listeners will openly hear what the speaker is saying and offer responses respectfully.
      iv. Speaking stick – those who have the stick have the turn to talk.
      v. Confidentiality – anything another person says in this room should not be repeated by listeners.
2. Share purpose of focus group.
3. Explain the session procedure.
4. Inform students how what is shared will be used to inform programming.
5. Ask if there are questions.
6. Warm-up exercise to break the ice.

Diving In Deep

- Asking the right questions: What is detailed below is a recommendation and a starting point for questions to engage in discussion during the focus group. You will want to think about specific questions relevant to your work and your program that could add to your learnings during the focus group. Remember that you will want to ask open-ended questions during this process.
- Questions that you can ask: This list of questions starts slightly broad but gets more specific about programming further down the list. Feel free to customize as you see fit.
  1. Why are you in this program?
  2. How would you describe this program to a friend who is not enrolled?
  3. Do you feel safe and seen here? What is your evidence?
  4. What do you enjoy about being in the program?
  5. Do you benefit from participating in the program? How?
  6. What new skills have you gained while in our program?
  7. What are your favorite activities that you participate in during our program?
  8. What are your least preferred parts of the program?
  9. What current parts of the program would you like changed or eliminated?
  10. What other new activities would you like to see offered here in the program?

Follow-Up Prompts

Things you can ask or say when responding to a student's answer or when your question is accidentally close ended.

- Tell me more about that.
- Can you elaborate on that?
- Give me an example.
- What makes you think that?
- Explain what you mean by that.
- Does anyone feel differently?

Activity Suggestions

Your focus group doesn't just have to be a structured discussion where participants speak one at a time and listen to each other silently. Instead, try creative discussion prompts and methods to draw out student responses. These are just a few ideas that you could try.

Rating	Magic Potion or Planet	Crazy 8's
You could have different activities posted around the room on chart paper and give students sticky notes to place their individual rating on each activity. This exercise is great for questions related to program content. Have participants indicating their levels of enjoyment or engagement in the various activities in your program.	Have students describe their ideal program and what it would look like compared to the existing program. You can be creative and use various artistic supplies for this activity or have students work together in teams to design their potion or planet. This approach focuses on students' voice and choice allowing them to use what interests them most to inform your program development. • Magic potion: Create a recipe for your ideal program. List all the "ingredients" and their corresponding qualities. • Planet: Create your own program "universe". Describe what it looks like, the landscape, the population, the language, the opportunities, etc.	This is a great visual exercise for students to create solutions to problems they see in the program. You can have students identify various issues they see in the program and have them work individually or in small groups to create solutions to one problem. You'll need a piece of paper with 8 boxes on it. In each box, they must draw a different solution to the same problem. Give them a set time to complete their sketches.

Crossing the Finish Line

- Closing questions
  - Is there anything else that we should have asked today?
  - Is there anything else that you would like to share?
- Ask students to complete an evaluation of their experience in the focus group.
- Express appreciation and give incentive, if applicable.
- Offer to stay to speak with anyone independently if they choose.

After the Meeting

The primary purpose of the focus groups is to inform your planning and implementation of effective programs for your youth. Here are some next steps.

1. Flesh out the notes from the session as soon as possible following the session.
2. Review your notes and identify emerging themes.
3. Decide on key priorities based on the themes.
4. Develop an action plan for addressing top priorities

Create a Winning Game Plan

With information gathered from the focus group and the analysis of the data, it's time to create a plan for moving forward. The following steps will help you build your action plan.

1. Set SMART goals: SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. You'll want to identify a few SMART goals to support changes that you want to make because of the findings during the focus group.
2. Identify tasks: With each goal, identify the tasks that will need to be completed to reach them, list them out and set expectations around who will be responsible and when.
3. Allocate resources: Similarly, identify the resources that you will need to reach your goals. Consider who also is responsible for those resources and their management.
4. Prioritize tasks: Create an order of operations based on which tasks need to be completed first to move on to the next eventually leading to accomplishing your goal.
5. Set deadlines and milestones: Keeping yourself time bound is not just an element of the goals you set but also will ensure that progress towards that goal

is made. Setting up mini goals along the way or milestones will help keep you on track as well as celebrate progress.

6. Monitor and revise plan: As you work towards those goals, monitor progress and make changes as needed. You may even find you must reevaluate the goals you set and adjust accordingly.

7. Celebrate: It is a good idea to celebrate by highlighting achievements and learning experiences. It recognizes the hard work of all involved, boosts morale, and reinforces a sense of community. Celebration helps to motivate people to be eager and ready for future efforts.

Going for Gold

The best program leaders and the best programs treat this process like a cycle. Even after the championships, there is another season and a new goal. Once you've had your focus group, created an action plan, and implemented your plan, it is important to return to the beginning of the process. This provides you with the chance to circle back with the focus group and see if the changes implemented met their needs and inform of what comes next for the program.

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Possibility Propositions
A series of questions to support engaging hard-to-reach youth

About this Tool

Here is a series of questions for leaders to help support out-of-the-box brainstorming around engaging hard-to-reach youth.

Into the Unknown: Engaging Youth is a Realm of Possibilities

Engaging youth in education programs can be challenging due to a variety of factors. Many young people may feel disconnected from traditional educational methods, perceiving them as irrelevant to their interests or daily lives. Additionally, competing priorities—such as extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, and social dynamics—can make it difficult for them to prioritize education outside of the school day. Issues like lack of motivation, varying learning styles, and a desire for more interactive or hands-on experiences further complicate engagement. Finally, systemic barriers, such as socioeconomic challenges and limited access to resources, can create additional obstacles, making it crucial for programs to be adaptable and relevant to youth needs and preferences.

Engaging hard-to-reach youth is like embarking on a daring adventure. With each step, you can uncover hidden gems as you search for the treasure trove of possibilities. With this tool you will target high probability students, identify contributing factors to engagement, and envision programs that excite students.

What are Possibility Propositions?

Possibility propositions are the dreams and visions of what a preferred future could look like. These possibility propositions are developed by asking questions that probe into issues or areas where you want to make a change in your program to ultimately engage hard-to-reach youth. There are four steps to this "investigation" in which participants develop possibility propositions for their programs.

1. Start by asking questions.
   a. Who are our hard-to-reach youth?
   b. Why are they hard to reach? What is the evidence for our conclusion?

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    c. What is in our circle of control? What are the things within our ability to change in our program to better support hard-to-reach youth?

    d. What is outside of our circle of control? What factors may impact youth that are hard-to-reach that we cannot change?

    e. What outside barriers make it more difficult to reach youth?

    f. Do the program stakeholders reflect the identities of our hard-to-reach youth?

2. Interview staff to help identify practices that are effective.
   a. What is working in the program?
   b. What isn't working in the program?
   c. What have you tried recently that has been successful?
   d. What are students saying about the program?
   e. What can we do to remove barriers for our students?
   f. Do youth feel seen and heard in the program?

3. Ensure equitable access by creating an online survey to solicit feedback in a virtual environment for those you can't reach in person. There are great online tools that you can use to facilitate this including Google Forms and Survey Monkey.

4. Gather the information from your questions, interviews and surveys and identify themes by looking at what was shared. Begin to think about what the possibilities could be to get hard-to-reach youth engaged and to keep them engaged.

5. Envision the future and develop the possibility proposition linking the best practices that were explored, and the themes discovered.

Example

We propose creating 'Youth-Centered Empowerment Hubs' to better engage our youth. These hubs would serve as inclusive spaces designed by and for hard-to-reach youth, offering a range of tailored support services and opportunities to foster holistic development.

Effective Leaders

Coaching Model

Feedback Loop

Coaching Model

About this Tool

This tool serves as a model that you can use to implement coaching for staff including how to identify when coaching is needed, design of coaching sessions, and effective approaches to coaching.

Contents:

A. About Coaching
B. Developing a Coaching Plan and Sessions
C. Leaders as Coaches
D. Appendices
- o A: Coaching Form
- o B: Coaching Form Completed Sample

A: About Coaching

Coaching is a process. Effective coaching contributes to personal and professional growth, leaving individuals feeling renewed and ready to tackle new challenges.

Why use coaching?

Leaders use coaching to support staff because it fosters continuous professional development, enhances performance, and builds a positive program culture. Coaching helps staff refine their skills, overcome challenges, and achieve both personal and program goals. By offering targeted guidance, feedback, and encouragement, coaching empowers staff to reach their full potential, leading to better outcomes for students and a more effective, engaged team. Through coaching, leaders not only improve staff performance but also create an environment of trust, collaboration, and growth.

When to use coaching?

Coaching provides personalized, data-informed professional learning and facilitates self-reflection to improve practice. The goal of coaching is to increase achievement for all students and the program overall. Coaching can be used when reflection isn't sufficient for improvement.

One way to make sure that the coaching that you provide staff is of high quality is to consider the following[1]:

- How is the staff member supporting a positive program culture? Are the students focused on learning and engaging?
- Does the staff member understand what they are teaching or facilitating? Are lessons and activities well planned? Can they connect the activities to student outcomes?
- Are student outcomes being met? Does the staff member know if student outcomes are being met?

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[1] Sutton, J., PhD. (2024, May 23). *Instructional Coaching Toolkit: Best Questions & Strategies*. PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/instructional-coaching/

Types of Coaching

Coaching is a valuable tool for professional development, but its focus can vary depending on the needs of the staff member and the goals of the program. Two primary types of coaching—coaching for growth and coaching for performance— address different aspects of staff development. While coaching for growth emphasizes skill development and long-term professional expansion, coaching for performance targets specific areas where improvement is needed to meet immediate goals. Understanding when and how to apply each type of coaching ensures that staff receive the appropriate support to thrive in their roles.

The chart below details the purpose of each type of coaching as well as key considerations to make when considering each type of coaching, and when it might be appropriate to implement each type of coaching.

Figure 1

	Growth	Performance
Purpose	Coaching for growth is aimed at helping staff develop new skills or enhance existing ones. It is future-oriented, focused on professional development, and helps staff reach their full potential. This type of coaching is often used when staff members show promise or interest in furthering their abilities but may need guidance in refining or acquiring new competencies. The process encourages reflective practice and allows the staff member to explore innovative approaches, strategies, and techniques.	Coaching for performance is designed to address specific performance issues or gaps in meeting outcomes. This type of coaching is more corrective and solution-focused, often used when a staff member is struggling to meet expectations or outcomes. The goal is to identify performance challenges, provide targeted feedback, and offer strategies to bring the staff member up to the expected standard.

Key Considerations	• The focus is on long-term development, not immediate performance improvement. • The staff member is often motivated and receptive to learning, making the process collaborative and exploratory. • Growth coaching involves feedback that promotes curiosity, experimentation, and skill refinement.	• The focus is on immediate improvement and solving specific issues affecting performance. • The staff member may need more direct guidance or instruction, and the coaching may involve more structured interventions. • Feedback is typically more prescriptive, aimed at addressing deficiencies and aligning performance with organizational goals.
When to Use	• When staff members have mastered foundational skills and are ready for advanced professional development. • When they express interest in leadership roles, new responsibilities, or skill expansion. • When you want to nurture a culture of continuous learning and professional evolution within your program.	• When a staff member is underperforming in key areas and needs targeted intervention. • When there are gaps in student outcomes directly related to the staff member's actions or lack of execution. • When consistency in practice is crucial for meeting program-wide goals, and the staff member needs to follow established guidelines.

B: Developing a Coaching Plan and Sessions

Design Coaching Sessions[2]

Trust the process. When implemented, these elements of effective coaching make the coaching process positive and successful for you and your staff members.

Part 1

1. **Prepare:** Review previous goals, action steps, and data including engagement and performance.
2. **Observe**: Observe the staff member so you can identify specific instances to speak to and to identify a coaching area (area of need) and approach (based on the need and receptiveness).
3. **Identify:**
   a. Identify the purpose of coaching. Is the coaching to support staff growth or to improve staff performance?

Figure 2

Growth	Performance
Is the purpose of coaching to help the staff person grow their skills or develop new skills?	Is the purpose of coaching to address performance issues and gaps or meeting outcomes?

   b. Identify the need to talk to staff about coaching. Identifying the need to talk to staff about coaching ensures that the coaching process is purposeful and tailored to the specific needs of the staff member. Prepare to discuss the identified needs with the staff member in a supportive and constructive manner. Clearly communicate the purpose of coaching and how it will benefit the staff member and their students ensuring that coaching is a collaborative and growth-oriented process.

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[2] *Teacher Leader Tools & Resources*. (2022). The School District of Philadelphia.
https://www.philasd.org/teachingandlearning/teacher-leader-resources/

  c. Identify the appropriate approach for coaching. What approach will be effective based on the coaching needs of the staff?

Figure 3

Directive	Facilitative	Collaborative
If the staff member demonstrates low skill or knowledge, you as the coach need to be more instructive during debrief.	If the staff member demonstrates moderate skill or knowledge, you as the coach need to facilitate reflection using intentional questioning and data.	If the staff member demonstrates a high level of skill or knowledge, you as the coach need to be a partner in reflection
What you might say/ask		
"I will show you how to follow the process. Then we can discuss it afterwards." "Let me show you what I mean when I say *(specific example)*." "I am going to remind you of each step as you do them to help you through the whole process."	"When this happened, what steps did you take? What do you think you should have done to have a better outcome?" "What do you think the difference will be by making this change?" "You said, '*(what was said)*.'" Could you tell me more about what you mean?"	"What do you notice about the students who mastered today's objective?" "16 out of 20 students did not complete the assignment. What do you think is contributing to this?" "What will you do differently next time and how can I support you?"

Part 2

 4. **Debrief**: Discuss observations in a debrief with the staff member and have them share their insights as well. There are three key components of an effective debrief: Praise, Reflection, and Action Planning.

Figure 4

Praise			
Name some positive and effective actions the staff member took and the impact it had on students' learning and engagement. • One thing you saw. • One thing you heard. • One thing you liked/enjoyed.			
Reflection			
Craft questions designed to aid staff members' reflection and understanding. Questions should be open-ended and not leading.			
What to do	Ask targeted questions aligned to the student outcomes.	Include data whenever possible with guided questions to support reflection.	Include questions specific to the staff members' mindsets.
Purpose	Targeted questions aligned to help focus the reflection on the core purpose of improving student achievement. These questions ensure that the staff member's efforts and strategies are directly linked to the desired educational results.	Including data in guided questions promotes objective reflection and provides a concrete basis for discussion. Data helps in identifying patterns, successes, and areas for improvement.	Questions specific to mindsets address attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that influence their practices. These questions encourage self-awareness and reflection on how mindsets affect student learning and engagement.
How to formulate	1. Identify the specific outcomes or learning objectives. 2. Craft questions that	1. Gather relevant data such as assessment scores, participation rates, or specific	1. Reflect on the staff member's attitudes and beliefs as observed or expressed.

	relate to outcomes, prompting reflection on their practices and how they influenced student performance.	examples from the observation. 2. Create questions that guide the analysis of data and draw insights.	2. Develop questions that prompt them to consider how these mindsets impact their teaching and student outcomes.
Example	• "How did the strategies you used today help students achieve the learning objective?" • "What evidence do you have that the students understood?"	• "70% of the students met the learning objective. What strategies did you use that you think contributed to this success?" • "The participation rate was lower during group activities. What do you think caused this, and how might you adjust your approach?"	• "You mentioned believing that students can succeed with the right support. How did this belief shape your approach to the lesson?" • "You seemed focused on ensuring participation. How do you think this affected the engagement?"

Action Planning
Develop an action plan together to improve outcomes and articulate the impact on students.

Step	*Details*
Start with the end in mind.	Set professional learning goals. Be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound in each goal. Discuss what exactly will be different and how it will be measured. This is where you would suggest or collaboratively draft the goal. Set an achievement date for each goal.

Outline the action steps.	For each goal, set actionable steps. Each action step should have a measure for and a timeline for accomplishing the step towards the goal. Action steps should be high impact, observable, transferable, and achievable.
Summarize	Have the staff member explain how the action steps will impact student learning. They should be able to articulate how a shift in their thinking will impact their facilitation and student learning.

Part 3

5. **Plan for next steps**- Plan for implementation of action steps and ongoing coaching. Cement learning and confirm staff member's readiness to implement action steps through practice and application. Think about and discuss with the staff member what else needs to occur for them to be able to implement the action steps.
    a. **Check-in:** Regularly check-in with the staff member on the goals and progress being made to reach them. Coaching is a process. Revisit and repeat the above steps to support the staff member as needed.
    b. **Schedule next observation**- When will you see the staff member's action steps in practice? Set the expectation and hold the staff member and yourself accountable to the timing set in the action plan.
    c. **Coordinate on-going coaching session**- As the staff member works through their action plan and implementation, support their growth through ongoing coaching sessions. Secure and schedule those opportunities intentionally to provide check points, feedback, and evaluation along the way.
    d. **Other opportunities for growth**-
        i. Encourage participation in opportunities for additional training and professional development.
        ii. Offering professional mentorship.
        iii. Scheduling shadowing of staff peers.
        iv. Support the pursuit of certifications.

C: Leaders as Coaches

You as the Coach

These are reflective questions you can ask yourself after a coaching session to determine its effectiveness.

- What steps did I take to build a trusting relationship with the staff member?
- Can staff articulate their students' areas of strength and determine how to build upon them? Did I provide actionable feedback that was clear and specific?
- How can we apply data to directly inform programming/instructional decisions? How well did I use data to support our discussion and decision-making?
- How do I use targeted questions to promote staff reflection on established goals? How did I adapt my coaching approach to meet the individual needs of the staff member?
- Can staff self-identify an area of focus? How can I further support staff in developing the skills needed to focus and take ownership of their professional growth?

Effective Approaches to Coaching

- Actively listen- Carefully listen to what they are saying, paying attention to the details including tone and body language.
- Be transparent- Being transparent in the process is important to help guarantee that actions and decisions are visible and understood.
- Ask questions- Questions can help you get to the heart of the matter to understand the nature of the circumstances and how best to address them.
- Be empathetic- Using empathy ensures that they are treated with care and understanding.
- Communicate well- Communication is key and it's a two-way street to ensure that instructions and feedback are clear and understood by all.
- Monitor for progress- Checking in periodically and providing feedback is necessary to help adjust and ensure the job gets done.
- Goal setting- Set goals ensuring clarity or purpose and with a desired outcome in mind.

- Collaborate- Sometimes it takes a team, and collaboration is your friend so that no one left out on their own and everyone has the support they need.
- Celebrate the progress made by acknowledging the effort and success that went into the process.

Appendix A: Coaching Form

Staff Member_____

Observation Date_____ **Observation Time**_____

Observation Notes

Notes of Praise	Areas Needing Growth

Purpose of Coaching *Circle one*

Growth   **Performance**

Debrief

Praise- *Name some positive*	*One good thing you saw.* *One good thing you heard.* *One thing you liked/enjoyed.*
Reflect- *Craft questions to aid reflection and understanding. Craft questions in advance.*	*Ask targeted questions aligned to the student outcomes.* *Include data whenever possible with guided questions to support reflection.* *Include questions specific to the staff members' mindsets.*

Action Planning
Develop an action plan to improve outcomes. Start with the end in mind. Outline the action steps. Have them summarize.

Goals Be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound.	Goal 1:	Achievement Date:
	Goal 2:	Achievement Date:
	Goal 3:	Achievement Date:

Action Steps

Goals	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
Goal 1	Action: Measure: Timeline:	Action: Measure: Timeline:	Action: Measure: Timeline:

Goal 2	Action:	Action:	Action:
	Measure:	Measure:	Measure:
	Timeline:	Timeline:	Timeline:
Goal 3	Action:	Action:	Action:
	Measure:	Measure:	Measure:
	Timeline:	Timeline:	Timeline:

Implementation *What else needs to occur for them to be able to implement the action steps?*	
Plan for checking in	
Next observation	
Plan for coaching sessions	
Recommendations for continued development	

Appendix B: EXAMPLE Coaching Form

Staff Member_____Mickey Johnson_____

Observation Date_____November 11, 2022_____ **Observation Time**___4:30 – 5:30 PM____

Observation Notes
Objectives: Students will understand the concept of fractions and be able to identify fractions in different representations. Desks are arranged in rows, all facing the front. The classroom is tidy and well-organized, with educational posters related to math concepts displayed on the walls. Mr. Johnson begins with a brief explanation of fractions, using a pizza analogy. He asks the class, "Who likes pizza? How many of you have shared a pizza with friends?" Some students respond enthusiastically, but the engagement seems to be surface level. A few students are distracted and talking to each other. Only a few students raise their hands. Several students appear disengaged, looking around the room or doodling. Some pairs engage actively, while others struggle to stay focused. Mr. Johnson circulates the room, offering assistance, but seems to spend more time with a few specific pairs, leaving others without much guidance. Engagement levels vary, with some students working diligently and others appearing off-task (e.g., looking at their phones, talking to neighbors).

Notes of Praise	Areas Needing Growth
Mr. Johnson uses clear and relatable analogies, including pizza, to explain fractions. Mr. Johnson circulates the room to offer individual support.	Student engagement needs to be improved. Consider using more interactive methods or group activities to maintain interest. Strategies to foster collaboration among students could be beneficial, such as structured partner work or group discussions.

Purpose of Coaching *Circle one*

Growth   **Performance**

Mr. Johnson demonstrates strong content knowledge and a well-prepared lesson plan. However, there is a noticeable challenge in keeping all students engaged and ensuring understanding across the class. Focused coaching on engagement strategies and collaborative activities may help address these areas.	

Debrief

Praise- *Name some positive*	*One good thing you saw.* *One good thing you heard.* *One thing you liked/enjoyed.*
	You effectively used visual aids and manipulatives, such as fraction circles, to help students understand the concept of fractions. This hands-on approach can be very beneficial for visual and kinesthetic learners. During the lesson introduction, you used a relatable analogy by asking, "Who likes pizza? How many of you have shared a pizza with friends?" This helped to make the concept of fractions more accessible and relatable to the students. I appreciated how you circulated the room during guided practice, offering personalized assistance to students who were struggling. Your willingness to provide individual support demonstrates your commitment to student understanding and success.
Reflect- *Craft questions to aid reflection and understanding. Craft questions in advance.*	*Ask targeted questions aligned to the student outcomes.* *Include data whenever possible with guided questions to support reflection.* *Include questions specific to the staff members' mindsets.*
	• "How did your use of visual aids and manipulatives, like the fraction circles, help students understand the concept of fractions?"

	• "What specific strategies did you use to engage students who seemed disengaged, and how effective do you think these strategies were in helping them meet the learning objective?" • "Can you identify any students who demonstrated a strong understanding of fractions during the lesson? What teaching methods do you think contributed to their success?" • "Considering the participation levels observed, with 30% of students appearing disengaged, what do you think contributed to their lack of engagement, and how might this data inform your future lesson planning?" • "Reflecting on your focus on student engagement, how do you perceive the impact of your enthusiasm and presentation style on student interest and participation?" • "What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of collaborative activities? How do you see your role in facilitating these activities to enhance student learning and engagement?"

Action Planning

Develop an action plan to improve outcomes. Start with the end in mind. Outline the action steps. Have them summarize.

Goals *Be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound.*	**Goal 1:** Increase student engagement during lessons.	**Achievement Date:** January 15, 2023
	Goal 2: Enhance students' understanding through collaborative learning.	**Achievement Date:** February 20, 2023
	Goal 3: Develop effective classroom management strategies.	**Achievement Date:** March 10, 2023

Action Steps			
Goals	**Action Step 1**	**Action Step 2**	**Action Step 3**
Goal 1	**Action:** Integrate more interactive activities, such as group work, games, and hands-on experiments, to keep students engaged. **Measure:** Track student participation through observation checklists and student feedback. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by winter break	**Action:** Ask open-ended questions to stimulate critical thinking and encourage class discussions. **Measure:** Use a rubric to assess the depth of student engagement and thinking. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by winter break	**Action:** Use technology tools to make lessons more engaging and dynamic. **Measure:** Assess the impact on student engagement through digital tool usage reports and surveys. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by winter break
Goal 2	**Action:** Implement structured collaborative learning activities where students work together to create projects. **Measure:** Evaluate group cohesion and	**Action:** Pair students with varying levels of understanding to work as peer tutors and learners. **Measure:** Measure the effectiveness of peer tutoring	**Action:** Integrate cooperative learning strategies to encourage students to explain concepts and strategies to each other. **Measure:** Assess the quality of

	individual contributions through observation and peer assessment rubrics. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by end of January	sessions through pre- and post-assessments and student self-assessments. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by end of January	student explanations and peer interactions during cooperative learning tasks through structured observation and feedback. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by end of January
Goal 3	**Action:** Establish and communicate clear expectations for behavior and participation at the beginning of each lesson. **Measure:** Monitor adherence to expectations through observation and behavior tracking logs. **Timeline:** within 2 weeks from observation	**Action:** Implement and maintain consistent classroom routines. **Measure:** Assess the effectiveness of routines through classroom observations and feedback from students. **Timeline:** Planned and executed by winter break	**Action:** Attend workshops or training sessions focused on classroom management techniques and strategies. **Measure:** Reflect on experiences and implement strategies. Measure their impact through observation and feedback from students and colleagues. **Timeline:** Attend at least 1 PD
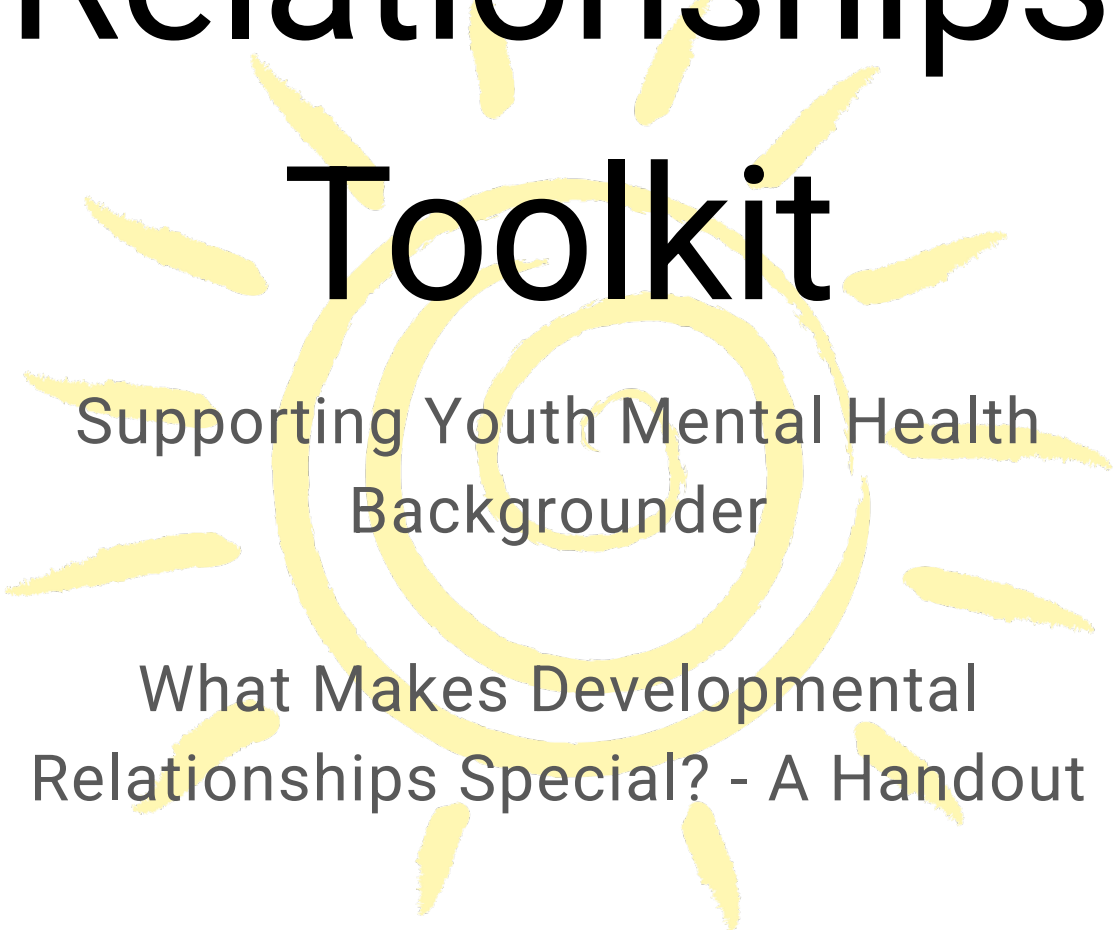
			opportunity within the first two months

Implementation	
What else needs to occur for them to be able to implement the action steps?	
Plan for checking in	Meet for 30 minutes at the beginning and end of every week to discuss week's plans and week's progress
Next observation	One month from first observation (12/11/22)
Plan for coaching sessions	In depth coaching-1 hour session during the first week of each month 12/2/22 1/5/22 2/4/22 3/6/22
Recommendations for continued development	• Attend upcoming OST network conference • Shadow Nancy, a seasoned, long-term staff member

Developmental Relationships Toolkit

Supporting Youth Mental Health Backgrounder

What Makes Developmental Relationships Special? - A Handout

Not Another SEL Curriculum Conversation Cards

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Supporting Youth Mental Health Backgrounder

About this Tool

OST leaders can use this backgrounder to educate themselves and staff as well as to help develop guidelines on creating a safe, supportive space, while maintaining healthy boundaries. This backgrounder provides a background around youth mental health and supports as well as summarizes many of the resources and services available in moments of crisis. Information in this tool was gathered from various professional organizations who specialize in mental health research, recognition, and response. While this toolkit offers comprehensive information and background for supporting youth mental health, keep in mind the need to contact your professional program staff or school-day partners such as a counselor, psychologist, or social worker.

Included in this Toolkit:

- Impacts on Youth Mental Health: This section provides information and background on the impacts on youth mental health including the impact of COVID-19, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and other effects on youth mental health.
- Understanding Youth Mental Health Issues: This section provides information and background on behaviors, symptoms, and conditions that are present in youth who are struggling with their mental health.
- What Can Leaders Do to Support Youth Mental Health: This section provides information and background on the Circles of Control[3] and how that can support leaders when understanding what can be done to support youth struggling with their mental health. This section also reviews how to create a positive program culture, developmental relationships, supporting staff with professional development, and social-emotional (SEL) programming.
- Recognizing and Responding to Changes and Crises: This section provides information and background on recognizing the signs of changes in youth mental health including how those changes present and how it looks different from what is considered typical behavior. This section also reviews how to have a conversation with youth around their mental health.

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[3] Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic* ([Rev. ed.].). Free Press.

- <u>Who to Contact in a Crisis:</u> In this section, a detailed chart lists agencies and services that can be contacted during a mental health crisis along with information about what services they provide, when to contact them, and notes about their specialty and potential outcome if engaged. This list also includes organizations and agencies that can support different affinity groups such as Indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA+, and more.
- <u>Other Mental Health Resources:</u> In this section, a detailed chart lists other resources to support youth mental health who can be engaged for supports like professional development, training, direct support and more.
- Supporting Yourself While Supporting Students: This section provides information and strategies for supporting leaders and other adults who work directly with youth and are impacted though secondary trauma or compassion fatigue.

Contents

A. Impacts on Youth Mental Health
B. Understanding Youth Mental Health Issues
C. What Can Leaders Do to Support Youth Mental Health
D. Recognizing and Responding to Changes and Crises
E. Who to Contact in a Crisis
F. Other Mental Health Resources
G. Supporting Yourself While Supporting Students

A: Impacts on Youth Mental Health

What we learned about mental health from COVID-19[4]

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound and traumatizing impact on every student and community. Although communities experienced different illness rates and approached learning in different formats and other disruptions, their life changed. For young people they lost essential instructional time, opportunities for socialization, and many families suffered losses, housing insecurity, and other traumas. For youth serving organizations, this experience has amplified the importance of mental health for students, their families, leaders like you and your staff. Even still, mental health can be a challenging topic to talk about as it can be stigmatized or evoke shame. Students who experience mental health challenges deserve support, compassion, and care.

What we know about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)[5]

Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs are potentially traumatizing events or conditions that happen between ages 0-17. This can include experiences with violence such as domestic violence, abuse, or neglect; family instability or separation; substance abuse and mental health issues; poverty, housing, and food insecurity; or even death. These are just some of the possible experiences that can impact someone's well-being, physical, or mental health as they develop throughout their childhood, ultimately impacting them in the long term. For youth serving organizations, it is important to be aware of the community you serve and the potential that your students and their families have experienced adverse life circumstances as this can have significant impact on individual mental health.

What affects a student's mental health?

There are many contributing factors to a student's mental health. In 2021, the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General released an advisory on the state of youth mental health and included a model for the factors impacting youth mental health based on Bronfenbrenner's biological model and the WHO's Determinants of Adolescent Health

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[4] Bell, I. H., Nicholas, J., Broomhall, A., Bailey, E., Bendall, S., Boland, A., Robinson, J., Adams, S., McGorry, P., & Thompson, A. (2023). The impact of COVID-19 on youth mental health: A mixed methods survey. *Psychiatry Research*, *321*, 115082. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2023.115082

[5] *About adverse childhood experiences*. (2024, May 16). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html

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Development.[6] This model is depicted below as five concentric circles. In the center are the students. Out from the student circle is their family circle. Then the circle of community around the family followed by the surrounding environment. The last circle is society. Each circle has various contributing factors or characteristics that can impact that student's mental health. Some examples for each include:

- Individual characteristics: ex. Age, gender, race, genetics, disability, sexual orientation, etc.
- Family structure: ex. Familial relationships, financial stability, generational trauma, etc.
- Community context: ex. School climate, program climate, relationships with peers, academic pressure, etc.
- Environment: ex. Neighborhood safety, access to healthy foods, natural disasters, etc.
- Society: ex. Discrimination, racism, popular culture, government policies, etc.

Figure 1
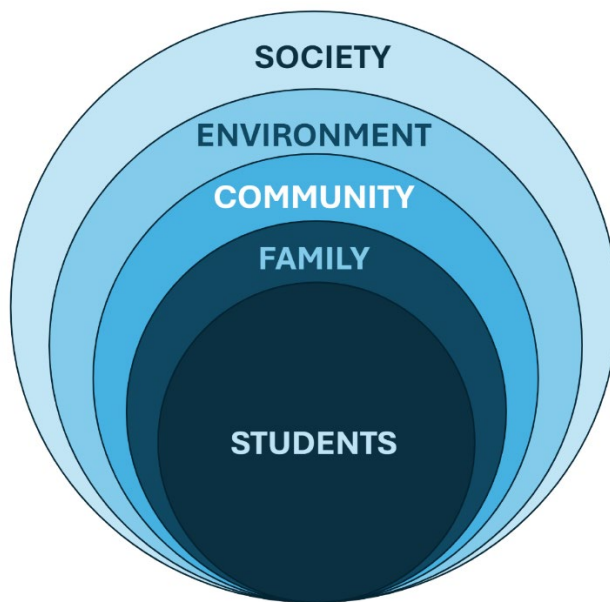
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[6] *Youth mental health — current priorities of the U.S. Surgeon General.*
(n.d.). https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html#:~:text=Create%20positive%2C%20safe%2C%20and%20affirming,including%20trauma%20and%20behavior%20changes

B: Understanding Youth Mental Health Issues

How do mental health issues present in youth?[7]

Issues with youth mental health can present in many ways and can lead to diagnosable mental illness as well as self-harm and suicide, eating disorders, or substance abuse. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines mental health in childhood as "reaching developmental and emotional milestones and learning healthy social skills and how to cope when there are problems."[8] The CDC website offers extensive information and practical support for addressing various signs and symptoms of different mental health disorders. The table below highlights some of the signs and symptoms you may see in youth who are struggling with mental health issues.

Signs	Symptoms
Depression[9]	- Difficulty paying attention - Self-destructive behaviors - Changes in energy such as tiredness or restlessness - Changes in eating and sleeping habits - Disinterest in doing things - Feeling sadness or worthlessness
Anxiety[10]	- Separation anxiety - Intense symptoms of fear including difficulty breathing, dizziness, increased heart rate, etc. - Social anxiety - Fear of worst-case scenarios
Attention-Deficit disorder (ADD)[11]	- Difficulty collaborating - Risky behaviors - Fidgeting - Forgetfulness

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[7] *Mental health.* (n.d.). DASH | CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm

[8] *Learn about Children's Mental Health | CDC.* (2023, August 23). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/index.html

[9] *Anxiety and depression in children | CDC.* (2023, July 25). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html#depression

[10] *Youth mental health — current priorities of the U.S. Surgeon General.* (n.d.). https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html#:~:text=Create%20positive%2C%20safe%2C%20and%20affirming,including%20trauma%20and%20behavior%20changes

[11] *Attention-Deficit / hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).* (2024, May 15). Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). https://www.cdc.gov/adhd/

	• Frequent daydreaming
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)[12]	• Impulsive, repetitive behaviors • The need to do or say something repeatedly • Holding to certain processes or rules that must be adhered
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)[13]	• Nightmares or night terrors • Helplessness and hopelessness • Irritability and anger • Continual fear or sadness • Avoiding a triggering event as well as places or people associated with the event

C: **What Can Leaders Do to Support Youth Mental Health**

How can leaders of programs help improve a student's mental health?
The circle of control is a helpful way to begin thinking about what you can do to support students with their mental health. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* Steven Covey created a model that shows 3 concentric circles: concern, influence and control.[14]

Figure 2

CIRCLE OF CONCERN

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

CIRCLE OF CONTROL

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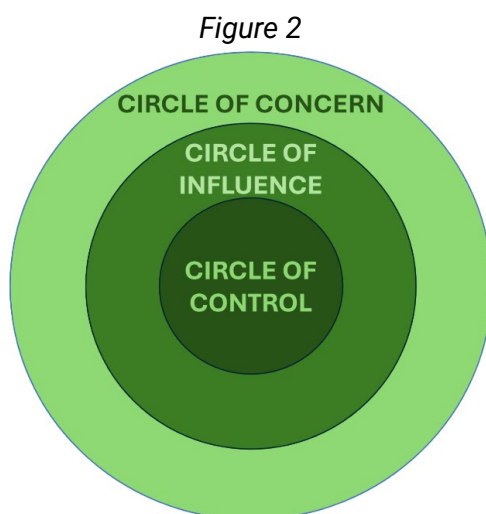
[12] *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder in Children | CDC*. (2023, July 26). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/ocd.html
[13] *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Children | CDC*. (2023, July 26). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/ptsd.html
[14] Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic* ([Rev. ed.].). Free Press.

Using Covey's model, leaders can identify the factors that they can change or have influence on to positively impact students' mental health. While there are many circumstances and conditions that fall outside of our control, there are some potential solutions and supports that you can control or influence which ultimately impact youth mental health. The table below describes each circle and how it can connect to the factors impacting mental health and what you can do within each circle. It is important to note that there are elements of each factor that may overlap with things that you can control or influence.

Understanding Circles of Control	Circle of Control	Circle of Influence	Circle of Concern
	Things that we can change ourselves	*Things that we are concerned about, but have some power to effect change*	*Things that we have no control over*
Connection to factors impacting mental health	• *Community*	• *Community* • *Environment* • *Society*	• *Individual characteristics* • *Family* • *Environment* • *Society*
What is in the circle	• Developmental relationships • Program climate • Academic pressure • Our own actions and responses	• Healthy food • Peer relationships • School climate and academic pressure • Discrimination and racism • Popular culture • Natural disasters • Government policies	• Student's age, gender, race, genetics, disability, sexual orientation • Familial relationships • Financial stability • Generational trauma • School climate and academic pressure • Discrimination and racism • Popular culture • Natural disasters • Government policies

What you can do	Developmental relationships	Healthy food	Students identify
	Developmental relationships • Develop caring relationships with students. • Cultivate students' abilities to shape their own lives. **Program climate** • Create a positive program culture where students feel safe in the program and are surrounded by trusted adults who can be resources for students. • Include social and emotional learning (SEL) programs and other evidence-based approaches. **Academic Pressure** • We can set the tone around academics in our programs. • We can help students build skill sets to manage stress and achieve	**Healthy food** • We cannot control what food options are available outside of our programs, but we can control the options within our programs. • We can provide nutritional information and instruction. • We can connect those experiencing food insecurities with resources. **Peer relationships** • We cannot control peer relationships, but we can influence them by helping students work through peer issues. • We can use restorative practices to help heal hurt because of wrongdoing. • We can incorporate social-emotional skill building	**Students identify** • We cannot change a students' identity. We can be an ally for the student regardless of their identity. **Familial relationship** • We cannot change a family's dynamic or the students' relationship with their family. We can be an advocate for the student, and we can connect the family to resources as appropriate. **Financial stability** • We cannot change a family's financial situation, but we can teach financial literacy to our students and offer resources and information to families to help them. **Generational trauma**

	academic success. Other • Take care of your own wellbeing. • Educate ourselves and our staff to address student mental health. • Work to better understand impacts on student mental health. • Know how to respond and the options available for mental health support.	and collaboration. School climate and academic pressure • We can influence teachers and families to help minimize the pressures students may feel. • We can collaborate with schools and school day teachers to better understand what is happening in the school day setting and how it impacts OST programs. Discrimination and racism • We can create a culture of acceptance and tolerance within our programs. • We can hold policies that discrimination and racism is not tolerated in our programs.	• We cannot change the trauma families have experienced through the generations. We can help the student overcome some of those traumas by helping them build the skills to navigate a healthy and successful future. School climate and academic pressure • We cannot change the school climate or academic pressures from school and families. Discrimination and racism • We cannot change the existence of discrimination or racism in the world. Popular culture • We cannot control popular culture.

		• We can be allies to our students. Popular culture • We can influence how students are impacted by popular culture by teaching them how to manage its influence on their lives. • We can incorporate discussions in our programs around the topic. • We can reduce screen time within our programs limiting the amount of time students encounter the internet and social media during program hours. Natural disasters • We can impact how we prepare for and respond to those disasters. • We can teach how to prepare	Natural disasters • Nothing can change natural disasters from happening. Government policies • We cannot control government policy.

		for or bring in others who can offer this support. • We can practice our own responses to natural disasters such as drills and emergency procedures. • We can be a conduit for resources to help those who have been impacted by natural disasters. Government policies • We can influence government policy by sharing our voice and representing our stakeholders in public forums. • We can vote. • We can teach students about civics and hold conversations around government systems and functions. Other	

		- Learn to recognize signs of changes in mental health among students, including trauma and behavior changes. - Partner with other organizations and connect youth to external resources	

How do leaders create a positive program culture and a safe program space?
A positive program culture and a safe program space are the foundation of any successful youth program. A positive program culture is one where participants feel respected, valued, and included, creating an environment that encourages growth, learning, and collaboration. It involves promoting empathy, diversity, and mutual respect, ensuring that all voices are heard and acknowledged. A safe program space is a physical and emotional environment where students feel secure, free from judgment, harm, or discrimination. Together, these areas are crucial because they foster trust, engagement, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for students to thrive, both personally and academically. When youth feel safe and supported, they are more likely to participate, build healthy relationships, and develop the social-emotional skills necessary for their long-term success.

Here are some guiding questions to help you get started thinking about how to create the program culture and space that you want.

Program Culture: A positive program culture is essential for fostering an environment where all participants feel safe, valued, and supported. Leaders can create such a culture by being intentional about inclusivity, empathy, and respect.

- Is your space nonjudgmental? – An environment where individuals can express themselves without fear. Students should feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences without worrying about being judged.
- Does it feel inclusive for a diversity of abilities, backgrounds, and views? – Ensuring that everyone, regardless of their abilities, background, or perspectives, feels welcome and valued. Inclusivity means recognizing and celebrating differences and that diverse voices are heard and respected.
- Is there room for empathy? – Fostering an environment where students and staff are encouraged to actively listen and share the feelings of others through teaching and modeling empathy and compassionate responses.
- Are there program norms for respectful communication? – Norms help ensure that all interactions are respectful and supportive. These norms should be developed with students' help, outline acceptable behavior, and provide a framework for addressing conflicts constructively.
- Is there a focus on positive reinforcement? – Focusing on positive reinforcement means recognizing and celebrating positive behavior and achievements of students. This helps build a supportive and motivating environment where students feel valued and encouraged.

Developmentally appropriate relationships between students and staff: Having strong, healthy relationships between students and staff is key to ensuring students feel seen and heard. This shows students that staff care about their wellbeing and acknowledge their feelings.

- Do students feel comfortable approaching staff with their concerns? – Students should feel that staff are approachable and willing to listen to their concerns.
- Are staff members trained in active listening? – Active listening involves fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what the student says. It shows students that their voices are valued and heard.
- Do staff members acknowledge and validate students' feelings? – Validating students' feelings means recognizing and accepting their emotions and perspectives as their personal truth. This helps students feel understood and supported.
- Are there opportunities for students and staff to build trust? – Create opportunities to build rapport and trust between students and staff, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
- How do staff handle conflicts or disciplinary actions? – Effective conflict resolution should be fair, respectful, and aimed at teaching positive behavior rather than merely punitive responses to negative behavior.

Staff Training: By providing staff with opportunities to improve their skills and understanding of youth mental health and trauma-informed care you set the expectations around the culture you want to cultivate. Provide staff with the tools to help them recognize the signs of students struggling with their mental health and strategies they can use to support students in crisis.

- Have staff been trained in trauma-informed care? – Trauma-informed care involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of trauma emphasizing physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both students and staff.
- Do staff use de-escalation strategies to support students that are emotionally dysregulated? – De-escalation strategies are techniques used to help reduce the intensity of emotions students may be experiencing. These strategies help manage and diffuse emotionally charged situations calmly and effectively.
- Are staff familiar with mental health first aid? – Mental health first aid training provides staff with the skills to help someone experiencing a mental health crisis. This includes recognizing signs of mental health issues and providing initial support until professional help is available.

- Do staff have regular opportunities for professional development? – Ongoing professional development ensures that staff stay informed about the latest practices and strategies for supporting students effectively.
- Are staff practicing self-care? – Staff self-care ensures that staff members have the support they need to manage their own stress and well-being, which is crucial for not only maintaining a healthy and effective work environment but also having the capacity to continue serving youth.

Curriculum integration: Strategies for cultivating these values include discussing relevant social issues during program time, promoting diversity in reading materials, and implementing a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that teaches skills like self-regulation and conflict resolution.

- Does your curriculum design prioritize practices that foster empathy, respect, and inclusivity in your program environment? - Incorporate activities and discussions that promote understanding, respect for diversity, and compassionate interactions.
- Are social-emotional learning (SEL) components included in the curriculum? – SEL components teach students skills like self-regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution, which are crucial for creating a positive program culture.
- Is there a focus on diversity in reading materials and resources? – Diverse reading materials and resources ensure that students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and learn about different perspectives and experiences.
- Are current social issues discussed in a respectful and inclusive manner? – Discussing current social issues helps students develop critical thinking and empathy. These discussions should be facilitated in a way that respects all viewpoints and encourages open dialogue.
- Do you have activities that promote teamwork and cooperation? – Teamwork and cooperation activities help students build relationships and learn to work together effectively, fostering a sense of community and mutual respect.

SEL Programming

SEL should not just be an add-on that you tack onto existing programs. Instead, SEL practices should be infused in every aspect of your program design. Our free tool, Link to -Not Another SEL Curriculum: What You Can Do Everyday will provide you with strategies you need to build a culture of social emotional care in your out-of-school program. Not Another SEL Curriculum includes Conversation Cards with "look-fors" that OST practitioners will see in their programs, question prompts and things to say when those "look-fors" pop up in order to develop students' social-emotional skills.

Program leaders can use the questions on these cards to facilitate conversations with students in the moment to make real situations occurring in your program opportunities for building social and emotional skills. Not Another SEL Curriculum will guide leaders to bring SEL into the everyday, all completely free!

D: **Recognizing and Responding to Changes and Crises**

Recognizing signs of changes in a student's mental health
When a student is experiencing a mental health crisis, the top priority is maintaining the health and safety of the student and others. In a crisis, a student may harm themselves or others, damage property, and struggle to function pro-socially. This type of crisis is the peak of a child's escalation cycle.

The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on *Protecting Youth Mental Health* suggests things that you may see in students leading up to a crisis that if identified you may be able to provide help and support before it reaches a critical moment including irritability, anger, withdrawal, appearance, and more.[15]

Signs	How it presents	How it differs from typical behaviors
Mood swings	Intense fluctuation of emotions (sometimes described as a roller coaster of drastic changes from happy to sad).	Mood swings in adolescents are to be expected at times as there is so much that can affect their day-to-day and their development. However, mood swings that are extreme or uncharacteristic for the student in question should be noted and addressed based on the severity.
Irritability	Non-developmentally appropriate temper tantrums. Sudden anger or grouchiness.	Temper tantrums are expected and understandable with students of preschool age and even the early elementary years. Outside of what is developmentally appropriate, temper tantrums can be a sign that something else is happening for the students that is causing them to lash out in this way.
Anger	Physically and emotionally expressed anger.	Everyone experiences anger at times, but in these cases it is either uncharacteristic,

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[15] *Youth mental health — current priorities of the U.S. Surgeon General.* (n.d.). https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/index.html#:~:text=Create%20positive%2C%20safe%2C%20and%20affirming,including%20trauma%20and%20behavior%20changes

	Crying or physical retaliation. Verbal outbursts, such as yelling and arguing.	extreme, and a significant challenge to de-escalate.
Withdrawal	Uncharacteristic self-isolation. Shyness and self-consciousness.	It is important to note that withdrawal is different from typical shyness or self-consciousness. Students will at times need space to cool down and process things and want isolation. When this comes out-of-the-blue, becomes the norm, or they don't bounce back, that is when you need to start seeking support for them.
Physical changes	Physical appearance including their clothing and body (clothing has recently drastically changed either in style or condition, clothing has gone unwashed or becomes increasingly ragged). Changes in weight and hygiene. Clothing that does not coordinate with the temperature conditions.	For example, students who struggle with self-harm may try to mask their injuries with long sleeved clothing even in incredibly hot temperatures.
Other changes	Unusual sleeping or eating pattern. Changes in their mindset and thought process. Changes in school and program performance.	Some of these may be difficult to observe depending on your program. Things you may identify are if your program regularly provides snacks or meals and the student does not eat. These behaviors may also connect to other things you see. Often, you will see multiple things that are signs a student is struggling.

Steps to having a conversation about someone's mental health condition[13]
There are many variables to having conversations with youth around their mental health, especially when there is concern for their safety. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) from the National Council of Mental Wellbeing is a training resource for anyone looking to build their skills to recognize and respond appropriately to mental health challenges.[16]The following steps to having a conversation about someone's mental health are based on MHFA practices. These guiding conversation elements and questions are not one-size-fits-all. Please use your discretion and best judgment. Consider the ages of those involved, known factors about their mental health, and your ability to provide support or connect with resources. It is also recommended that formal training in MHFA be pursued to support the development of these skills.

Setting the Stage
1. Offer yourself as someone that they can talk to. If they do not want to talk to you, ask them if they would be comfortable speaking with someone else.
2. Have the conversation in a place that is comfortable for the student, preferably in a quiet location.
3. Walk them through a calming exercise such as deep breathing, a visualization exercise, or provide a stress relieving fidget.
4. Actively listen to them without judgment. By giving them this support and creating a comfortable situation for the conversation you build trust and increase the chances of them opening up to you.

Using Appropriate Language
1. Acknowledge what is being shared and show empathy. You can say things like "I really appreciate you talking to me. I know this must be difficult."
2. Refrain from making comments like "you've got this", "it's just a bad day", "things will get better". This can make them feel like their feelings are unjustified or that you are not taking them seriously.
3. Reassure them that it's okay for them to feel the way they do, that is part of being human, but there are things that we can do to help them feel better.

Open-ended Questions
1. Ask them open-ended questions like:
    a. Can you tell me more about how you are feeling today?
    b. In the past week, how often have you felt this way?

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[16] *Mental Health First Aid USA – Mental Health First aid*. (2024, May 1). Mental Health First Aid. https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/

      c. Is there anything that you do when you feel like this to help you feel better?

      d. When you're feeling this way, how do you like to be supported?

      e. What would you like to happen next?

Next steps must be determined by the conversation's outcome. If you are in a crisis and concerned about the student harming themselves or others, contact the appropriate support persons or agencies.

E: **Who to Contact in a Crisis**

Each crisis will have different circumstances and variables that need to be considered in your response including the signs of changes in a student's mental health, the impacts on mental health, and what has already been done to support the student. Unless you have had extensive training in crisis response or are a mental health professional, your best course of action is to contact your professional program staff or school-day partners such as a counselor, psychologist, or social worker. If you do not have access to those professionals, there are some other resources you can contact.

Who You Can Contact *Chart*
The chart below details various agencies, organizations, and resources that you can engage when experiencing a youth mental health crisis.

Who: Details about the professionals within the agencies, organizations, or resources including their expertise and/or specialty.

What: Details about the services and supports of the agencies, organizations, or resources.

When: Details about when it is appropriate to contact the agency, organization, or resource.

Important to note: Details about what to know and consider when contacting the agencies, organizations, or resources as well as how to contact and potential results of engaging them.

Who You Can Contact

Resource	Who	What	When	Important to note
Community based or School-based Crisis Intervention Response Team *(sometimes referred to as CIT, CIRT or Network)*	Law enforcement, fire and rescue personnel in partnership with health services and mental health advocates.	Professional trained in crisis response to provide support in a crisis situation.	When you need crisis support, but there is no imminent threat; those experiencing severe symptoms of mental illness, substance abuse, and other instances of crisis.	Their mission is to reduce and prevent unnecessary or inappropriate hospitalizations or arrests. Support will vary from place to place.
Crisis Text Line[17]	A live, trained volunteer Crisis Counselor who responds from a secure online platform.	Free confidential 24/7 support Crisis Text Line (741741) for texting/messaging.	When you need support for any type of crisis: anxiety, bullying, self-harm, suicide, violence, abuse, eating disorders, etc.	Text "HOME," "START" or "HELLO" to 741741. The goal of the conversation is to get the messenger to be calm and safe. Sometimes they provide a referral for further help. A conversation lasts anywhere from 15-45 minutes.
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline[18]	Trained counselors who can aid those	Around the clock phone line and text line	Those experiencing a crisis such as suicidal	988 will contact 911 if there is an imminent risk to the caller/ texter's life.

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[17] *Crisis Text Line | Text HOME to 741741 Free, 24/7 mental health support.* (2024, May 1). Crisis Text Line. https://www.crisistextline.org/#:~:text=Text%20HOME%20to%20741741%20from,moment%20to%20a%20ocool%20calm.

[18] 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (n.d.). *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Call. Text. Chat.* 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. https://988lifeline.org/

(previously known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)	experiencing a crisis such as suicidal ideations or other emotional distress.		ideations or other emotional distress.	Chat is also available at https://988lifeline.org/.
911 *(and non-consensual rescue)*	911 trained call center professional who contacts emergency law enforcement, firefighters and/or EMTs.	Emergency phone number.	Imminent threat of suicide within 24 hours.	A last resort, there is an imminent threat of suicide within 24 hours, and all other strategies have been exhausted. Use of 911 is very controversial among suicidologists. Results can be unsuccessful. Can escalate and result in arrest, severe injury, or even death.
Support for Specific Subpopulations				
Resource	**Who**	**What**	**When**	**Important to note**
Trevor Project[19]	A crisis counselor 24/7, 365 days a year, from anywhere in the U.S via text, chat, or phone.	Free and confidential support for LGBTQ+ youth in immediate crisis.	Immediate crisis or thinking of self-harm	In very specific instances of abuse or a clear concern of an in-progress or imminent suicide, Trevor counselors may need to contact a child welfare agency or emergency service.
We R Native[20]	Resources by Native youth, for Native youth	A comprehensive health resource.	For immediate help with grief, anxiety,	We R Native is not monitored 24/7.

[19] *The Trevor Project*. (n.d.). https://www.thetrevorproject.org/. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/
[20] WeRNative. (2024, June 1). *Home – We r native*. We R Native. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/

	promoting holistic health and growth.	Free confidential 24/7 support Crisis Text Line (741741) for texting/messaging. Text campaigns for support in multiple areas including health and wellness, Two Spirit and LGBTQ+, fitness, and more.	stress, or sadness.	Text "NATIVE" to 741741.
Trans Lifeline[21]	Run by trans people for trans people and questioning peers.	A confidential hotline offering direct emotional support to trans people in crisis.	If you need someone trans to talk to, even if you're not in a crisis or if you're not sure you're trans.	The hotline is not available 24/7. Check the website for updated availability. Operators will not act on non-consensual active rescue.

[21] *Trans Lifeline.* (n.d.). Trans Lifeline. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/

F: Other Mental Health Resources

What	About	How it helps
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)[22]	Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) from the National Council of Mental Wellbeing is a training resource for anyone looking to build their skills to recognize and respond appropriately to mental health challenges.	Course work prepares individuals to be able to respond to a variety of mental health crises such as panic attacks, self-harming, suicidal ideations and behavior, psychosis, and more.
MHFA Action Plan ALGEE[23]	ALGEE is a 5-step action plan created by MHFA and can be used to support someone exhibiting mental health symptoms.	The five steps can be used in any order. A – Approach, assess for risk of suicide or harm. L – Listen without judgment. G – Give reassurance and information. E – Encourage professional help. E – Encourage self-help and other strategies.
Safety Planning Intervention[24]	Safety Planning is a step-by-step plan facilitated by mental health professionals for when a person is in crisis, to stay safe (and alive) in the moment and in the future. While OST programs may be engaged, this needs to be done by a professional team.	Provides people who have experienced a suicidal crisis with a specific set of coping techniques and resources to use in order to reduce the possibility of suicidal behavior.

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[22] *Mental Health First Aid USA – Mental Health First aid.* (2024, May 1). Mental Health First Aid. https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/

[23] Kapil, Rubina. "ALGEE: How MHFA Helps You Respond in Crisis and Non-crisis Situations - Mental Health First Aid." *Mental Health First Aid,* 15 Apr. 2021, https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2021/04/algee-how-mhfa-helps-you-respond-in-crisis-and-non-crisis-situations/

[24] Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention. "Home - Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention." Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention, 1 Feb. 2022, https://suicidesafetyplan.com/

Warmlines[25]	Warmlines is a peer-run listening line staffed by people in mental health recovery themselves. These directories are either by state or nationally available and are listed on the Warmlines website.	Warmline operators are unlikely to call the police if they talk about suicide or self-harming. Most Warmline operators have been through extreme challenges themselves and are there to listen. The purpose of Warmlines is to reduce hospitalization and forced treatment.
QPR Online Gatekeeper Training[26]	QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) are steps that anyone can learn on how to recognize the signs of a suicide crisis. QPR Online Gatekeeper Training is available to anyone looking to develop skills in suicide crisis response.	The 60-minute online course which is available for a fee prepares individuals to use QPR, how to get help or learn more about preventing suicide for someone in crisis, common causes of suicidal behavior and the warning signs.
Black Mental Health Alliance (BMHA)[27]	Based in Baltimore, MD, the BMHA have a referral database for those looking for mental health support and offers training and forums to the community.	This databased resource connects people to culturally aware, licensed mental health professionals through a referral process. For those seeking looking to connect with a mental health professional, they will need to fill out a questionnaire and someone will follow up within 24 hours.
Talk Saves LivesTM [28]	Talk Saves LivesTM from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is a 45–60-minute education program that provides an	This course teaches common risk factors and warning signs of suicide, and how to keep everyone safe.

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[25] *Warmlines.* (n.d.). https://warmline.org/

[26] *QPR Institute | Practical and Proven Suicide Prevention Training.* (n.d.). https://www.qprinstitute.com/individual-training

[27] *Black Mental Health Alliance |.* (n.d.). https://blackmentalhealth.com/

[28] *Talk Saves Lives* TM. (2024, March 4). American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. https://afsp.org/talk-saves-lives/

	understanding of the leading cause of death, including the up-to-date research on suicide prevention, and what they can do to save lives.	The training is also available in Spanish.
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (ASFP)[29]	The AFSP is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a community empowered by research, education and advocacy to act against the causes of death.	AFSP funds scientific research, offers educational opportunities to the public about mental health and suicide prevention, advocates public policies in mental health and suicide prevention, and provides support to those affected by suicide.
Other	Partner with other organizations and connect youth to external resources.	Consider local departments of health and human services and the Department of Education.

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[29] *Home*. (2024, June 3). American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. https://afsp.org/

G: Supporting Yourself While Supporting Students

What about you?[30]

When we support youth who are facing these challenges, we can also feel the weight of their trauma and distress. This emotional burden, known as compassion fatigue, arises from continuous exposure to others' trauma. Understanding how compassion fatigue happens is essential for program leaders and staff to maintain their well-being and continue providing effective support.

- What is Compassion Fatigue? (also known as secondary traumatic stress disorder)
  - A natural but unfortunate by-product of working with traumatized individuals. People experiencing compassion fatigue may show symptoms like post-traumatic stress disorder. Compassion fatigue typically presents with multiple symptoms. Symptoms of compassion fatigue can include diminished ability to be empathetic and caring, exhaustion, anger or irritability, anxiety, depression, sleep problems, hopelessness, feeling like a failure, and disconnection.
- What can you do? [31]
  - Set boundaries
    - Work/Life balance- try to establish and maintain healthy boundaries between work and life outside of work. While this is easier said than done in many cases, setting these boundaries can help improve your overall health and well-being.
    - Be assertive- learn to be able to say "no" and to set boundaries when necessary. Learning to say "no" can promote mental health by helping you create, follow, and protect your priorities.
    - Focusing on self-care- this can mean making healthy diet choices, exercising regularly, and getting good sleep. Taking these measures can lower your risk of illness and increase your ability to truly be present in your work.

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[30] *Secondary traumatic stress*. (n.d.). The Administration for Children and Families. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/secondary-traumatic-stress

[31] Yu, X., Sun, C., Sun, B., Yuan, X., Ding, F., & Zhang, M. (2022). The cost of caring: Compassion fatigue is a special form of teacher burnout. *Sustainability*, *14*(10), 6071. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14106071

Brown, H., PhD. (2024, May 27). *What is compassion fatigue? 24 causes & symptoms explained*. PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/compassion-fatigue/

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- Hobbies
  - Connect with nature- participate in outdoor activities such as nature walks, hiking, and gardening to remain connected to the earth. Being in nature can help reduce anger, fear, and stress and increase good feelings.
  - Creative expression- creative outlets such as singing, dancing, or writing can give you the opportunity to channel your energy and stretch your creative muscles. Creativity can bring meaning to your life and help you focus on the moment.
- Self-care and Mindfulness
  - Relaxation strategies- meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, deep breathing, mindful coloring, and more. Using these techniques can help reduce tension, stress, and anxiety.
  - Focusing on self-care- this can mean making healthy diet choices, exercising regularly, and getting good sleep. Taking these measures can lower your risk of illness and increase your ability to truly be present in your work.
- Set the tone in your program by:
  - Building relationships with staff and students.
  - Holding accountability for staff, students, and yourself.
  - Establishing healthy practices to support mental health and social-emotional learning.
  - Model self-care strategies to protect your commitment to OST.
  - Practice what you preach.

What Makes Developmental Relationships Special? - A Handout

About this Tool
Using a framework designed by Search Institute[1], this handout details what constitutes a developmental relationship, the five elements, and strategies for initiating them.

What is a Developmental Relationship?

Search Institute defines Developmental Relationships as close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.[32] In OST this looks like mentorship and guidance from trusted adults, peer support and collaboration, agency of choice and leadership opportunities, skills building and personal growth, and being part of a community.

About the Chart
The chart details elements of developmental relationships as well as strategies to support building those relationships.

Five Key Elements: There are five key elements to building developmental relationships which are listed in the chart below. Each element includes descriptions of what implementation can look like.

Strategies for Initiating: For each of the five key elements, there are multiple strategies to support initiating those elements in your program.

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[32] *Developmental relationships*. (2024, March 29). Search Institute. https://searchinstitute.org/developmental-relationships#:~:text=Developmental%20relationships%20are%20close%20connections,the%20power%20of%20developmental%20relationships

1. **Show students that you care.**	
• Be a person they can trust. • Pay close attention to students during your time together. • Make students feel seen, heard, and valued. • Take time being in students' company and reflect a positive outlook. • Praise students for more than their success. Praise them for trying.	

Strategies for Initiating	• Active Listening
	     o When students talk, take the time to truly listen with complete attention, no distractions.
	 • Ask questions
	     o Be inquisitive. Ask about their day, what they're working on, or what they need.
	 • Compliment
	     o More than just acknowledging a new haircut, compliment them on the something they did well, be more specific than "good job", elaborate by saying exactly what it is you liked about it.

2. **Teach students to persevere.**	
• Hold high expectations and hold students to them. • Be a cheerleader for students and encourage them to push through challenges. • Hold students accountable for their choices. • Teach students that mistakes and failures are part of life and expected.	

Strategies for Initiating	• Set goals
	     o Sit down with them and set goals for a period, whether that be for the week or the quarter or the year. Be sure to revisit frequently to check in on progress, assess needs, and reevaluate as needed.
	 • Positive Mindset
	     o The only way the little blue engine made it up the hill was by believing in itself, but students need cheerleaders too in order to be successful. Believe in your students' abilities. Reflect and encourage a positive mindset.
	 • Learn from mistakes and failures
	     o Taking a moment when there are bumps in the road to acknowledge what happened and why, then working with that student to make a plan to move forward.

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3. **Help students reach their goals.**	
• Be a guide for students during difficult situations. • Help build students' confidence. • Teach students to stand up for themselves and others. • Set parameters to help students stay on the right path.	

Strategies for Initiating	• Be present
	   o Being available can make all the difference. Setting a culture where students can feel comfortable coming to you at any point in time with their needs shows that you are ready to help them navigate and advocate.
	• Provide feedback
	   o Let them know what you think. Share something that you liked and suggestions on how to grow. Be positive.
	• Mentor
	   o Students need a guiding voice, a conscience, someone to give them advice to help them make their own informed decisions.

4. **Give students respect and listen to them.**	
• Treat everyone with kindness and fairness and without bias. • Keep students in conversation especially when it comes to decisions about them. • Teach students how to solve problems and think critically. • Give students opportunities to be the leader in the room.	

Strategies for Initiating	• Model
	   o Give respect to everyone as a model for how students should also demonstrate respect to others.
	• Build a community
	   o Student voice extends beyond a single student. Hear from groups of students and have them collaborate on more than class projects to help them build a stronger community.
	• Ask for their opinion
	   o How do you students feel? Ask them for their thoughts and feelings and include their ideas in the decision-making process.

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5. **Broaden students' horizons by connecting them to new opportunities.**	
• Open students up to vast possibilities in their future. • Share new ideas and experiences with students. • Take students to new places and introduce them to new people. • Connect students with others who will help them grow and succeed.	

Strategies for Initiating	• Make connections
	   o Bring in resources for students to experience and learn from, be it guest speakers, specializing organizations, community leaders, etc.
	• Talk about big dreams
	   o Have conversations with students about what they dream their life to be and help them conceptualize how to achieve it.
	• Provide opportunities
	   o Once you lay the groundwork, have students help run the show. Get them involved in leading and facilitating activities inside and outside the classroom.

Not Another SEL Curriculum: What You Can Do Every Day to Implement SEL Beyond Standard Curriculum

About this Tool

This tool allows leaders to bring SEL into everyday student activities through a set of conversation cards with "look-fors". "Look-fors" are behaviors that we may see from students and these conversation cards can help support you as you support students in real time. Leaders can use the questions on these cards to facilitate conversations that support youth social-emotional development in their everyday life experiences.

SEL Curriculums are becoming more prominent amongst programs, but sometimes the best way to teach these skills is in the everyday moments of students' time with us. The Conversation Cards found in this tool can help program leaders and their staff recognize moments in their programs where they can have intentional conversations – in the moment – to build students' social-emotional skills.

Why is this important? Because SEL is the process through which "young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions[33] social-emotional learning needs to happen in the real world, so that students can transfer the skills to their everyday lives.

Each card focuses on one of the five social-emotional competencies (social-awareness, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills) and walks you through what to look for to identify when to start a conversation, questions you can ask students, and what to say in the moment to help build students' SEL skills. These conversation cards are designed to support conversations one-on-one, in small groups, or even in a program. These cards serve as a guide to having conversations with students to help build their social-emotional learning. You can use these questions and response suggestions as you see fit in the context of the conversation. These cards also serve as a starting point. Each situation and conversation will yield different results, and you may need to pursue additional support or interventions based on each unique scenario you encounter.

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[33] *Fundamentals of SEL – CASEL*. (2024, July 15). CASEL. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/

Social-emotional competencies

The social-emotional competencies include social and self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.[34]

- Social awareness: being able to understand different perspectives and show empathy including feeling compassion or concern for others.
- Self-awareness: to know and understand your own emotions and thoughts including recognizing your own strengths and limitations.
- Self-management: being able to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations including managing stress and being self-motivated.
- Responsible decision-making: being able to make responsible choices about behavior and social situations including safety and evaluating potential consequences.
- Relationship skills: to establish and hold healthy relationships and to communicate well, actively listen, work collaboratively, and ask for or offer help.

Click here to access *Not Another SEL Curriculum Conversation Cards* or scan the QR code.

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[34] *What is the CASEL framework? – CASEL*. (2023, March 3). CASEL. https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/

Engaging Families

Family Engagement Survey

Five Outside-the-Box Ways to Engage Families

Trust Building Tool

Family Engagement Survey

About this Tool

Family engagement is essential to the success of your program. This survey is designed to gather valuable insights from parents and guardians about their experience with after-school offerings. Their feedback helps you to understand how well you are meeting their child's needs, as well as those of their family. By sharing their thoughts, they help improve your services, identify strengths, and address areas where you can better support them and their children.

This survey includes broad questions that can be customized to fit the unique aspects of different programs and age groups. You are welcome to adjust the multiple-choice answers to reflect the specific goals and offerings of your program. The information you provide will guide you in making informed decisions, developing new initiatives, and ensuring that you provide the best possible environment for learning, growth, and engagement.

Program Revolution: We Want to Hear from You!

Thank you for taking time to answer questions in this survey. The purpose of the survey is to get input from you about our program. We hope you will help us learn more about how our program impacts you and your child and your thoughts on our programmatic offerings.

1. Why did you enroll your child in this program?

2. What learning activities does your child enjoy?

3. What skills do you want your child(ren) to learn at the afterschool program? *Check all that apply.*
    o   Reading
    o   Public speaking
    o   Listening
    o   Math
    o   Responsible decision making
    o   Self-management
    o   Relationship building
    o   Health living
    o   Other:_____

2. What is the most important thing to you about the afterschool program? *Check all that apply.*
    o   Childcare so I can work
    o   Help with homework
    o   A safe place to be after school
    o   Tutoring
    o   Social activities with peers
    o   Improve academic outcomes
    o   Activities for my child(ren)
    o   Other:_____

3. My child(ren) receive help completing homework at the afterschool program.
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

4. How does the afterschool program meet your child(ren)'s needs?

5. How does the afterschool program meet the needs of you and other adults in your household?

6. My child(ren) are safe at the afterschool program.
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

7. How do you know they are safe at the afterschool program?

8. My child(ren) has/have positive relationships with staff at the afterschool program.
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

9. How do you know they have positive relationships with staff at the afterschool program?

10. What I say matters to the afterschool program staff.
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

11. How do you know that what you say matters to the afterschool staff?

12. What do you like about the afterschool program?

13. What do you dislike about the afterschool program?

14. How would you improve the afterschool program?

15. Do you have any other comments or feedback about the survey?

Five Outside-the-Box Ways to Engage Families

About this Tool

This tool is an overview of non-traditional ways that programs can engage families.

Are you fresh out of ideas on how to get the families in your program more engaged? Are you experiencing parent-teacher conference burn-out? Here are 5 hot-off-the-press ideas for you to try in your programs to reimage what family engagement means.

Home Visits[35]

- Who: Staff, family members (guardians in particular), and students.
- What: Visits by teachers to student homes to meet with parents enable teachers and parents to create connections that can help foster parent involvement in their child's education.
- Where: The family home.
- When: At the beginning: When enrollment occurs, and the relationship is established.
- Ongoing: Based on student and family need and established goals.
- How: Staff and family members come together as equal partners to form trusting connections. Home visits meet families where they are—figuratively and literally—with the goal of creating trust and improving educational outcomes.
- Why: A student's academic performance relies on family involvement and engagement with their child's education.

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[35] Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL). (n.d.). *REL Blog | Family Matters: The role of Home Visits in Children's learning.* https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/midatlantic/Blog/30187

Parent Café[36]

- Who: Parents and caregivers.
- What: The Parent Cafés process was developed by parent leaders from Strengthening Families Illinois in 2007. Cafés provide parents and caregivers with a welcoming space to connect and learn from each other.
- Where: On-site, virtually, or can be coordinated by parent host at another public location.
- When: Monthly (recommended) or quarterly.
- How: Cafés are safe spaces where caregivers talk and listen to each other on topics that matter to them. Caregivers explore their strengths and create strategies from their own wisdom and experiences to use with their families.
- Why: They help families build resilience and relationships, offer a platform for support from peers, learning opportunities in parenting, child development, and social emotional learning.
- Possible adaptations:
  - Dad Café
  - Mom Café

Doorstep Dialogue/Bus Chauffeurs

- Who: Staff, students, families, bus drivers or other transportation staff.
- What: Staff members take the bus home with students to meet the families where they are – at home – providing opportunities to speak with caregivers with whom you are otherwise unable to engage in the program space.
- Where: At the family home.
- When: After program hours when students are transported back home.
- How: Staff members take turns throughout the year to ride the bus home with students and take a few minutes at drop off to speak with the family.
- Why: Sometimes getting caregivers and family members to your physical location can be a challenge due to transportation barriers and limitations and time constraints for working parents. This provides an opportunity to connect with those caregivers' face to face when nothing else seems to work.

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[36] CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY. (2005). STRENGTHENING FAMILIES ILLINOIS: STATE PROFILE. In *CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY*. https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Illinois.pdf

Events Beyond Program Walls

- Who: Community organizations and places, staff, families, and students.
- What: Events can be academic or social in nature or a combination of both.
- Where: Events do not always need to be held at the school. Consider community locations such as a park, beach, community center, or church. This should be about having events in spaces where families can not only get to but offer a safe space within the community.
- When: Schedule events at a date and time with family availability in mind. This can mean non-traditional times. For example, in farming communities, Sundays may be the best day - not 5pm on a weekday. If your program serves families working shift work, 8 am might be the perfect time after the overnight shift. If your families work on the weekends, avoid scheduling family events on those days. Think about who your families are, understand their needs, and meet them where they are by scheduling events based on these considerations.
- How: Choose the focus of your event. Collaborate with the parent-teacher association or parent committee to plan the event. Identify places and spaces that align with the focus of the event and offer attractive engagement opportunities.
- Why: Having events at alternate locations can be about being in safe spaces for some communities. Holding the event at one of these alternative sites can create social opportunities for some families.

Event ideas

	Art in the Park	**Cultural Festival**	**Library Reading Event**
Where	Local Park	Community center or local church	Community library
What	Outdoor art workshop with activities like painting, sculpting, and crafts, led by local artists.	Celebration of diverse cultures with food, music, dance performances, and art exhibits.	Book reading sessions, storytelling by local authors, and a book swap event.
Why	Encourages creativity and provides a venue for artistic expression in a communal setting.	Promotes cultural awareness and appreciation among students and families.	Promotes literacy and provides exposure to different genres of books.

STEM at Home

- Who: Staff (create and provide), students and family (complete).
- What: Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) allow students to explore their interests. Assign a project that requires assistance from an adult family member to help engage caregivers.
- Where: To be completed by student and family at home.
- When: Monthly kits (if doable), quarterly, or by subject/content; during program breaks such as winter break, spring break, or summer vacation
- How: Staff decide on curricular connections and design/develop a STEM kit for caregivers to participate in with their child. Send kit home with student based on decided timeline. Give a completion date goal for the assignment and encourage families to capture/share the progress either via social media or as part of a culminating activity/event at the program.
- Why: Caregivers will learn more about what their child does in the classroom and their child's potential interests.
- Possible adaptations:
  - Visual Arts at Home: Follow the same process, but instead of a STEM kit, create a take home visual art project that can be completed at home by students and families.
  - Book Club at Home: Encourage nightly reading as a family with a Book Club at Home. Instead of completing a STEM project together, they read together which could include weekly activities paired with the reading. This could be journaling, reflection activities, character or scene drawing, sequence activities and more. This can culminate in a family engagement event in your program built around the book.
  - Poetry at Home: Get families to do some creative writing together with thematic prompts and guides for writing a short poem. Host a culminating engagement event where poems can be shared or even hold a poetry contest judged by their peers. Make it on-going as a "poem-of-the-month" activity tied to seasonal themes or content in your program. You could also have them collect the poems over time to create their own poetry books.

Trust Building Tool

About this Tool

This tool is designed to help program leaders build meaningful, long-lasting trust with the families they serve. Trust is the foundation of any successful relationship, particularly in community-focused programs where caregivers need to feel confident that their children are safe, valued, and supported. This document not only outlines why trust may be lacking but also provides actionable steps for leaders to understand and address these concerns.

The primary goal of this tool is to guide program leaders in building and maintaining trust with families. It encourages reflection on both personal and organizational practices and explores how leaders can actively foster trust through intentional action. Using the framework of David Horsager's 8 Pillars of Trust, the tool helps programs evaluate their current relationship with caregivers and implement strategies to enhance trust over time.

Contents

    A. Introduction to Trust
    B. The 8 Pillar's of Trust
    C. Trust Self-Assessment
    D. Strategies for Building Trust

A: <u>Introduction to Trust</u>

Accept the facts

Trust is hard. We all come with different lived experiences that have impacted our ability to trust, but when it comes to leaders like you and the communities you serve, building trust amongst your stakeholders is essential.

Begin by understanding that they might not trust you. To get started, reflect on these questions.

<u>Questions caregivers might be thinking:</u>
- Will my child be treated with care and sensitivity?
- If something is going on with my child, will I be contacted immediately so we can work together to figure it out?
- Will my child be provided with security and encouragement?
- Will staff be professional, kind, perceptive, and insightful enough to recognize when my child is sad, distant, scared, hungry or sick?

<u>Questions you should be asking yourself:</u>
- Do my staff and I reflect the culture and demographic of the community we serve?
- What was the culture in the program like prior to your tenure?
- What historically has been done in the program to build trust and engagement with caregivers?
- What societal barriers may be affecting caregiver trust?
- Has anything happened in your time with the program that would have negatively affected the trust of your students' caregivers?

B: The 8 Pillars of Trust[37]

Developed by David Horsager, the 8 Pillars of Trust provide a comprehensive framework for out-of-school time programming, ensuring that program leaders build and maintain strong, trusting relationships with families. By focusing on these pillars, programs can better understand what impacts trust in their programs, enhance program effectiveness, foster community, and achieve long-term success by identifying areas of improvement.

- Clarity- Families are more likely to trust and commit to programs when they have a transparent understanding of program goals, activities, and expectations which helps them understand the value and purpose of the program, fostering trust and engagement.
- Compassion- Compassionate staff who address individual needs and concerns create a supportive and trusting relationship with families as it demonstrates care and concern for each child's well-being and development.
- Character- When staff are ethical and transparent through integrity and honesty in interactions with families and their children, it enhances overall trust in the program.
- Competency- Attending professional development and staying updated on best practices allows staff to be skilled and knowledgeable in managing and facilitating activities which instills confidence in families about the program's quality and safety.
- Commitment- Demonstrating dedication to each child's development and well-being shows families how committed staff are, which reassures them of the program's stability and reliability, fostering long-term trust.
- Connection- Actively engaging with families and creating a sense of community ensures that they feel valued and included in the program, building strong connections that enhance collaboration and mutual support.
- Contribution- Delivering meaningful outcomes and positive results demonstrates the program's value and effectiveness by meeting and exceeding expectations, strengthening trust and satisfaction among families.
- Consistency- Reliable and predictable actions and decisions from staff create a stable environment demonstrating consistency in communication, behavior,

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[37] Gabe@TrustEdge.com. (2022, March 29). *The 8 Pillars of Trust | David Horsager*. David Horsager. https://davidhorsager.com/the-8-pillars-of-trust-the-leading-indicator/

and follow-through which builds confidence and trust in the program over time.

C: Trust Self-Assessment [38]

About this assessment:
This self-assessment helps you to evaluate the level of trust families have in you and your staff. By assessing the eight pillars of trust—clarity, compassion, character, competency, commitment, connection, contribution, and consistency—the assessment aims to help you identify the level of trust in your program, highlight strengths and weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

Step 1: For each area, read through all five statements and select which one holds the most truth for you and your program.

Area 1: Clarity

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff clearly communicate the program's goals, activities, and expectations to families.
	4: The purpose and structure of the program can be easily understood without needing constant clarification.
	3: Staff regularly provide updates and information about the program's progress and any changes to schedules or activities.
	2: There is confusion and inconsistency in communication, leaving families unsure about what to expect.
	1: Families are left out of important program decisions and updates, leading to frustration and mistrust.

[38] This assessment was inspired by and adapted from https://www.teamtrustsurvey.com/.
 Team Trust Survey | online trust-building tool for teams. (n.d.). Team Trust Survey. https://www.teamtrustsurvey.com/

Area 2: Compassion

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff demonstrate genuine care and concern for the well-being and development of each child in the program.
	4: Families are supported and understood by staff who take the time to address individual concerns and needs.
	3: Staff actively seek feedback from families and show empathy towards their challenges and experiences.
	2: There is a lack of empathy and understanding from staff leading to feelings of isolation and neglect among families.
	1: Staff are indifferent or uncaring, causing a disconnect in their relationships with the program.

Area 3: Character

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff consistently act with integrity and honesty in their interactions with families and within the community.
	4: Staff are trusted to do what is right, even in difficult situations, and uphold ethical standards.
	3: Staff prioritize transparency and accountability, admitting mistakes and taking responsibility for their actions.
	2: There are instances where staff act unethically or dishonestly, eroding trust and confidence among families.
	1: Staff integrity and their commitment to the well-being of the children in their care is questionable.

Area 4: Competency

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff demonstrate expertise and competence in managing and facilitating engaging activities for children.
	4: There is confidence in the abilities of staff to provide a safe and enriching environment for their children.
	3: Staff continually seek opportunities for professional development and stay updated on best practices.
	2: There are instances where staff lack the necessary skills or knowledge to effectively manage the program, leading to concerns among families.
	1: A lack of competence or expertise in staff raises doubts about the program's quality.

Area 5: Commitment

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff show dedication and commitment to the well-being and development of every child in the program.
	4: Staff are trusted to prioritize the needs of the children and invest time and effort in their growth and success.
	3: Staff demonstrate resilience and perseverance in overcoming challenges and obstacles to ensure the program's success.
	2: There are doubts about the level of commitment from staff, leading to uncertainty and instability within the program.
	1: Staff are inconsistent or unreliable, causing concern about the long-term viability of the program.

Area 6: Connection

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff actively engage with families and foster a sense of community and belonging among participants.
	4: Families are connected and supported by staff who prioritize building relationships and fostering a sense of belonging.
	3: Staff facilitate opportunities for families to connect and collaborate with each other, creating a supportive network within the program.
	2: There is a lack of connection or engagement from staff leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection among families.
	1: Staff are distant or aloof, hindering their ability to connect with the program and each other.

Area 7: Contribution

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff consistently deliver meaningful and positive outcomes for children, contributing to their growth and development.
	4: Staff are trusted to deliver on their promises and provide value for their children's participation in the program.
	3: Staff actively seek feedback and input from families to ensure that the program meets their needs and expectations.
	2: There are instances where staff fail to deliver on their commitments, leading to disappointment and frustration among families.
	1: There is a lack of contribution or impact from staff, which leads to families questioning the value of their student's participation in the program.

Area 8: Consistency

Selection (X)	Statement
	5: Staff demonstrate consistency and reliability in their actions and decisions, creating a stable and trustworthy environment for families.
	4: Staff are dependable and maintain standards and expectations for the program over time.
	3: Staff uphold consistent communication and follow-through on commitments, building trust and confidence among families.
	2: There are inconsistencies or fluctuations in the behavior and actions of program leaders, causing confusion and uncertainty among families.
	1: Staff are unpredictable or unreliable, undermining their confidence in the program's stability and effectiveness.

Scoring

Step 2: Transfer the number of the statement you selected for each area and add the number of that statement to the columns for the corresponding area. Total the areas. The number should be between 8 and 40. If it does not, the assessment has not been completed correctly. Based on your total, you will fall into one of 5 Trust Levels.

Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Total
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Self-Assessment Trust Levels

<u>Trust Homeostasis (35-40)</u>
Trust Homeostasis is characterized by families having complete confidence in you and your staff. This level signifies a harmonious and highly effective partnership between you and your stakeholders.
- Families are fully informed about the program's goals, activities, and outcomes.
- Families have open, transparent, and constructive communication with staff, discussing both positive developments and areas for improvement.
- Families are comfortable raising sensitive issues and trust that they will be addressed constructively and with empathy.
- There is a strong sense of community, with families feeling appreciated and supported by staff and others.
- Staff actively encourage and integrate feedback from families, leading to innovative and collaborative solutions that benefit all children.
- Staff and families act as strategic partners who mentor and guide their children, fostering deep, lasting connections.

<u>High Trust (27-34)</u>
The High Trust level indicates a robust and open relationship between families and staff, where feedback and mutual growth are prioritized.
- Staff work through their concerns with families in a collaborative manner without requiring frequent intervention.
- Families are willing to seek and give feedback on sensitive issues and appreciate public acknowledgments and apologies when needed.
- Sensitive issues, when brought up, are handled constructively, often initiated by staff or families and resolved with joint effort.
- Staff and families coordinate actions to reach defined goals, valuing each other's roles and resources.
- Staff facilitate and help families navigate conflicts, fostering personal and professional growth for both children and parents.
- Staff recognize and celebrate stakeholders' unique contributions and talents, creating an inclusive and supportive environment.

<u>Trustworthy (19- 26)</u>

The Trustworthy level represents a basic functional relationship where tasks are completed through clear expectations and good communication, though deeper relational growth may be lacking.

- Families handle concerns independently, but issues often end up involving staff.
- The focus remains on maintaining positive, professional decorum with minimal emphasis on personal growth and deep relationships.
- When difficult issues arise, they are often met with discomfort and quickly addressed to avoid prolonged awkwardness.
- Clear roles and cooperation help solve most challenges, with respect for boundaries and responsibilities.
- Staff, particularly leaders, serve as central decision-makers, ensuring the team stays on track to accomplish goals efficiently.
- There is general respect and recognition among families.

<u>Trust Deficient (11-18)</u>

The Trust Deficient level is marked by significant interpersonal and organizational mistrust, leading to stress, frustration, and negative impacts on the program's effectiveness.

- Families are critical and blame each other or staff with negative feedback of interactions.
- Meetings and communications are closed and guarded, with visible divisions among families and staff.
- Problem-solving sessions are competitive, with concerns over hidden agendas and self-interest.
- The environment feels unsafe, with sensitive issues discussed in the background rather than openly.
- Decisions are slow, unsupported, or undermined, and there is a lack of effective leadership.
- Families focus on deficiencies.

Trust Breakdown (8-10)

The Trust Breakdown level indicates a severe breakdown in trust and communication, characterized by blame, anger, and an inability to function cohesively.

- Staff and families are in open conflict, with hostile feedback.
- Meetings are often abandoned, and conflicts are destructive and personal.
- Unresolved mistrust and blame prevent productive discussions, even on routine matters.
- Compromise is impossible.
- Specific individuals are viewed as core problems, and decisions are mired in self-serving arguments.
- The environment is intimidating, focused on public punishment for mistakes, leading to a breakdown in trust and collaboration.

D: **Strategies for Building Trust**

Listen: Listening demonstrates that you value and respect others' perspectives.
- Create space for them to be heard.
    o Provide opportunities for families to share their voice through discussion groups, focus groups, family surveys, and most importantly-conversations.
    o Ask them questions and check in frequently through preferred communication methods, during arrival and/or dismissal times, or whenever else you may see them.
    o Create availability and give them your time when they reach out to you.
- Actively listen to what they say.
    o Don't interrupt when others are speaking and withhold judgement for what they are sharing, keeping personal opinions to yourself and understanding that what they are saying as their truth.
    o Respond by acknowledging what is being shared through statements like "What I am hearing you say is (rephrase or restate what you heard)" or "If I understand you correctly you are saying is (rephrase or restate what you heard)".

Have Patience: Developing trust and solid relationships takes time. Patience allows for thoughtful responses and understanding of complex situations, fostering trust through consistent and calm interactions.
- Provide ample time for discussions.
    o Schedule extended meeting times for important discussions that may take more time.
    o Allow parents and children to express their thoughts without rushing them.
    o Ask open-ended questions that invite detailed responses, showing you are willing to listen thoroughly.
- Be supportive during challenges.
    o Offer ongoing support and check-ins to families facing challenges, reinforcing your commitment to their well-being.
    o Celebrate small progress and milestones with families to maintain motivation and trust during difficult times.

Increase Representation and Allyship: Reflecting the community through a staff that represents the demographics of your program and being an ally shows that you understand and support diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

- Include diverse perspectives.
    - Incorporate cultural events and celebrations that reflect the community's diversity, showing respect and appreciation for different backgrounds.
    - Recruit staff and volunteers from diverse backgrounds to increase representation within your program. When hiring for your program, look for qualified, diverse candidates who reflect the community that you serve.
    - Use materials and resources that reflect the diversity of the community, including books, decor, lesson content, etc.
- Utilize the community.
    - Develop partnerships with local organizations to support diversity and inclusion efforts either as resources that families can be connected to or to bring diverse opportunities into your program.
    - Host community events to encourage participation and feedback from all families.
    - Advocate for issues important to the community, using your platform to raise awareness and support.

Communicate: Effective communication ensures that information is clear and transparent.

- Be clear and consistent.
    - Send regular updates about program activities, schedules, and changes.
    - Use plain language and avoid jargon to ensure all families understand the information being communicated.
    - Establish a consistent communication schedule so families know when to expect updates.
- Ensure your communications are accessible.
    - Communicate through various channels (email, social media, in-person meetings) to reach all families.
    - Provide translation services or materials in multiple languages to ensure accessibility for non-English speaking families.
    - Offer face-to-face meetings for those who prefer personal interactions over digital communication.
- Be personal.

Be Empathetic: Empathy involves understanding and sharing the feelings of others, which helps build strong, trust-based relationships.

- Show understanding.
    - When listening to concerns, express empathy by acknowledging their feelings and validating their experiences.
    - Share similar experiences or stories that show you understand their perspective and challenges.
    - Offer words of comfort and support, reinforcing that you care about their well-being.
    - Differentiate your feelings from their feelings. This is necessary to maintain some objectivity, and not lose your sense of self or let your opinions negatively impact the trust being built.
- Provide emotional support.
    - Create opportunities for families to share their experiences and support each other and connect with local resources for support services.
    - Be available to listen and provide comfort during difficult times.
    - Remain neutral on sensitive matters. You may not fully understand or agree with what is being shared, but it is important to be unbiased and professional.

Build Relationships: Build strong relationships through consistent, positive interactions.

- Foster personal connections.
    - Host family events where parents, children, and staff can interact informally and build relationships.
    - Take the time to learn about each family's background, interests, and needs.
    - Encourage families to share their stories and experiences with the program community.
- Maintain regular contact.
    - Check in with families regularly, not just when there are issues, to show ongoing care and interest.
    - Send positive personal notes or messages to celebrate achievements or milestones in their child's progress.
    - Make yourself accessible for informal chats during program drop-offs and pick-ups.

Develop Self-Awareness and Mindfulness: Being self-aware and mindful helps you manage your actions and reactions.

- Reflect on your actions.
  - o Regularly seek feedback from families and colleagues to understand how your actions impact others.
  - o Take time to reflect on your own experiences as a program leader or staff member and make adjustments to improve interactions.
  - o Practice mindfulness techniques to stay present and focused when you need to the most.
- Manage your reactions.
  - o Use deep breathing or other techniques to self-regulate before responding to stressful situations.
  - o Acknowledge when you are wrong and apologize sincerely. Take ownership of your mistakes and hold yourself accountable.
  - o Remain open to criticism and use it as an opportunity for growth, showing that you are committed to self-improvement.

Be Realistic: Be realistic about what is within your capacity.

- Set achievable goals.
  - o Clearly communicate what the program can and cannot provide. Set realistic expectations.
  - o Outline steps and timelines for achieving goals, so families understand the process and can track progress.
  - o Adjust goals based on feedback and changing circumstances.
- Be honest about limitations.
  - o Avoid making promises that put your program in a tough place and work collaboratively with caregivers to find mutually beneficial and attainable solutions to their concerns.
  - o Explain the reasons behind decisions and limitations, helping families understand the context.

Follow-up: Following up on commitments and promises shows reliability by demonstrating that you keep your word.

- Respond in a timely manner.
  - o Respond to inquiries and concerns in a timely manner.
  - o Provide updates on the status of issues or requests, even if there is no immediate resolution.

- o Check back with families after resolving an issue to address any further concerns.
- Maintain ongoing communication.
    - o Send recap emails or notes following meetings or events to reinforce what was discussed and any next steps.
    - o Use surveys or feedback forms to gather insights and show that you value their input in improving the program.

Show Commitment: Showing commitment to the program and its participants demonstrates that you are dedicated to their success.

- Demonstrate dedication.
    - o Invest in professional development to continuously improve your skills and the skills of your staff to provide the best for students.
    - o Advocate for the program's needs and successes to stakeholders and the wider community.
    - o Be a consistent presence in the program, showing that you are reliable and dedicated to the community.

Telling Your OST Story

Letter to School Day Administrators

National Data on OST Effectiveness-Highlights

Impact Report Checklist

Letter to School Day Administrators

About this tool

Here are two example letters that can be used to introduce school day administrators to your OST program. One is written as a community partner and the other as a school day leader. Place the contents of the letter on your organization's letter-head, revise the letter to fit your context and send it to your prospective partner.

These letters can be adapted to introduce other stakeholders such as potential program funders to the work that you want to do or are already doing in your programs.

Date

Recipient's Name
Recipient's Title
School Name
School Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear **Recipient's Name**,

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." — Helen Keller

I am the leader of **Organization**. **I/Organization** believe(s) that there is a fantastic opportunity to positively impact the lives of students through a collaborative effort. Out-of-School Time (OST) programs play a vital role in supporting students' development by providing opportunities beyond the traditional school day. **(Insert a compelling statistic about your program).** We believe that forging a partnership between your school and our OST program can further enhance the educational experience for students.

Our program offers supplementary learning opportunities that reinforce concepts taught during the school day and access to a range of enrichment activities. We prioritize student voice and choice and the development of social-emotional skills including teamwork, resilience, and problem-solving. With adult mentors and positive peer relationships, students develop a sense of belonging, leading to increased engagement and motivation to learn.

We understand the importance of addressing the needs of our students and providing them with comprehensive support to thrive academically and beyond. We invite you to explore the possibility of partnering with our program to offer enrichment opportunities for our students. Together, we can create a learning ecosystem that fosters academic achievement, social-emotional growth, and lifelong learning. (**Customize a specific ask here such as a new program, deeper engagement, data, etc.)**

Thank you for considering this partnership opportunity. We look forward to discussing the possibilities further and exploring how we can work together to benefit our students. Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Title/Position
Your Contact Information

Date

Recipient's Name
Recipient's Title
School Name
School Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear **Recipient's Name**,

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." — Helen Keller

I see a fantastic opportunity to positively impact the lives of students through programming that extends beyond regular school hours. Out-of-School Time (OST) programs play a vital role in supporting students' holistic development by providing enriching opportunities beyond the traditional school day. **(Insert a compelling statistic about OST impact).** I believe that an OST program at **Name of School** can further enhance the educational experience for our students.

[Insert the name of the program or organization] could offer supplementary learning opportunities to reinforce academic concepts taught during the school day and access to enrichment activities including existing after school clubs. The program design would prioritize student voice and choice and the development of social-emotional skills including teamwork, communication, resilience, and problem-solving. We could work with local community partners to provide broader and deeper learning experience for our students, which is not available to them during traditional school hours. We would build a team of expert teachers from our school staff and invite community partners into the program to support staffing.

As education professionals, we all understand the importance of addressing the needs of our students and providing them with comprehensive support to thrive academically and beyond. I believe that our students deserve this kind of opportunity. (**Customize a specific ask here such as a new program, deeper engagement, data, etc.)**

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to discussing further the program's potential to offer additional enrichment opportunities for our students.
Sincerely,
Your Name
Your Title/Position
Your Contact Information

National Data on OST Effectiveness-Highlights

About this Tool

This summary is a snapshot of national data showing the role OST programs play in the lives of youth and their families as well as the ways in which these programs can positively impact student success.

OST (Out-of-School Time) programs play a crucial role in supporting students to make academic and social-emotional gains through various approaches and activities. By integrating these strategies into their programming, OST programs can create enriching learning environments that support students in making academic progress while simultaneously fostering their social-emotional growth and well-being.

Meeting Their Needs

- Kids are missing out on afterschool programs as demand surges. According to research from America After 3 PM and the Afterschool Alliance, 50% of America's children (nearly 25 million) are not able to access afterschool programs. Additionally, 57% cite cost as a barrier, 47% say there is a lack of programming, and 53% do not have a safe way for their children to get to and from programs. Barriers are greater for low-income, BIPOC children and families with 61% being unable to afford programs, 44% not having programming available, and 58% not having safe transport to and from programs. [1]
- Participation in 21st CCLC programs has a positive impact on student engagement in school for students at all grade levels.[2]
- Parents agree that OST programs keep children safe and out of trouble and help children build their social skills. [1]
- OST helps working parents by providing peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised and that they reduce the likelihood of unsafe risk-taking including drug use.[1]
- OST programs provide healthy beverages, snacks, or meals. [1]
- OST programs offer safe and positive environments.[5]

Promoting Academic Growth

- Regular participation in afterschool programs helps narrow the gap of academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes and reduce absences.[2]
- Approximately half of students who regularly participated improved their math (48%) and English (48%) grades.[3]
- In a major study of OST programs, 69% of students increased their rates of homework completion and teacher reported classroom participation.[3]
- OST programs offer opportunities for direct literacy skill building.[5]
- Low child: adult ratios in OST create opportunities to tailor instruction and meet individual students' needs.[6]

Health & Wellbeing Needs

- OST programs provide children opportunities to practice social skills and develop strong peer relationships.[1]
- OST programs support student academic achievement by playing a role in reducing health disparities in youth.[4]
- OST programs provide healthy snacks and meals afterschool which may be the only afternoon and evening food for some students.[4]
- Incorporating physical movement and exercise into OST also helps develop cognitive functions in children. Concentration and memory are essential for both academic and professional success.[4]

Youth Development Needs

- 62% of students improved showed behavior.[3]
- OST programs that use evidence-based practices aimed at improving the personal and social skills of youth can lead to positive social behaviors.[4]
- OST programs provide an environment to develop positive relationships between adults and children.[5]
- OST programs deliver activities that are developmentally appropriate, relevant, and engaging allowing students to grow skills including critical thinking, self-regulation, leadership, and perseverance.[5]

Resources

1. America After 3 PM Health & Wellness & Afterschool Alliance. (2022). *Promoting healthy futures: Afterschool provides the supports parents want for Children's Well-Being*. https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM/AA3PM-Healthy-Futures-Report-2022.pdf

2. Afterschool Alliance. (2023). *21st century community learning centers: Accelerating learning. supporting families. earning results.* https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/21stCCLC-Overview-2023.pdf

3. Afterschool Alliance. (2021). *The academic and social and emotional benefits of participation in 21st century community learning centers*. https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/21stCCLC-Research-Brief-2021.pdf

4. *Out of school time | Healthy Schools | CDC*. (n.d.). https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/ost.htm

5. Naftzger, N., PhD, Wheeler, K., EdD, Hall, G., PhD, & National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2023). Connecting afterschool program quality to social, emotional, and literacy skill development. In *https://www.niost.org/Afterschool-Matters-Spring-2023/strong-start-strong-readers-2*. Afterschool Matters.

6. Neild, R.C., Wilson, S.J., & McClanahan, W. (2019). *Afterschool programs: A review of evidence under the Every Student Succeeds Act.* Philadelphia: Research for Action. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593600.pdf

Impact Report Checklist

About this Tool

The following is an outline of possible content to include in your annual impact report to share with your stakeholders. Customize the content to fit the needs of your organization and your audience.

About: Provide general information about your program including the vision and mission. Consider also including a brief history of the program if applicable.

Program Highlights: data-based (choose three or four of these to include)
- Number of students served and respective age groups/grades
- Number of programs/activities offered (types of programs/activities offered)
- Amount/length of programming (hours/days/weeks)
- Attendance data
- Numbers of snacks/meals provided
- Number of students receiving services (i.e. tutoring, mentoring, transportation, etc.)
- Family engagement data
- Demographic data: race, gender, SES, etc.

Progress Data (choose two or three of these to include)
- Academics (math and reading)
- Attendance data (OST attendance, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, early dismissals)
- Social-Emotional data (behavioral referrals, suspensions, etc.)
- Family engagement (i.e. attendance/participation at events, responsiveness, etc.)
- Year over year data comparison (as applicable)
- Funding Disclaimer: If 21st CCLC, include funding disclaimer.

Other things to include
- Warm fuzzies
  - Pictures
  - Quotes from stakeholders
  - QR code to video content

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Sample Content for Sample Report

The Sunshine Youth Program (SYP)

About
- Vision: The Sunshine Youth Program (SYP) fosters bright futures for at-risk youth in our community by providing comprehensive, empowering, and innovative educational opportunities that cultivate their potential and inspire positive changes.
- Mission: The Sunshine Youth Program (SYP) is dedicated to nurturing academic, personal, and social development of at-risk youth in low-income neighborhoods through our 21st CCLC after-school and summer programs. We strive to equip participants with essential life skills, instill a love for learning, and promote active engagement within their communities, empowering them to thrive academically and personally.

Program Highlights data-based
- Number of students served by grade
    - Kindergarten: 22
    - First: 14
    - Second: 21
    - Third: 13
    - Fourth: 15
    - Fifth: 19
- Available activities
    - Daily homework help
    - Reading and math intervention services
    - Chess club
    - STEMday Wednesdays
    - Jump rope club
    - Hearts for Art
    - Bookworm book club
- Amount/length of programming (hours/days/weeks)
    - 360 hours
    - 120 days
    - 30 weeks

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Progress data
- Academics (math and reading)
  - Students enrolled in SYP showed a 15% increase in math proficiency and demonstrated a 20% improvement in reading comprehension.
- Social-Emotional data (behavioral referrals, suspensions, etc.)
  - Students enrolled in SYP had a 30% decrease in behavioral referrals and saw a 40% decrease in suspensions.
- Year over year data comparison (as applicable)
  - Students who reenrolled in SYP experienced a 25% increase in academic proficiency compared to the previous year. Students demonstrated significant improvements were observed across all areas of social-emotional well-being, with a 20% reduction in suspensions and behavior referrals.

Funding Highlights
- Federal Funding through the Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC accounts for 75% of program funding ensures that students have access to opportunities at no cost.

Other
- Pictures
- Quotes from stakeholders
  - Maya, 4th grade student: "SYP isn't just a program; it's a second home where I feel supported, inspired, and encouraged to chase my dreams. It's where I discovered my love for learning and gained the confidence to believe in myself."
  - Mr. Nguyen, SYP teacher "Being a part of SYP has been incredibly rewarding. Watching our students grow, learn, and flourish right before our eyes is a testament to the transformative power of education and community. Together, we're shaping the leaders of tomorrow."
  - Mrs. Rodriguez, parent: "SYP has been a lifeline for our family. Not only has it provided my child with invaluable academic support and enrichment opportunities, but it has also created a sense of belonging and camaraderie that extends far beyond the classroom. We are forever grateful for the positive impact it has had on our lives."