

Starting on the Right Note

Tips for Building Relationships with School Principals, Teachers and Custodial Staff

Be intentional in building strong communication and developing relationships with building staff from the very beginning of your program—don't make assumptions, be purposeful in your communication. Developing positive relationships with school personnel is instrumental in the success of your program and avoiding unnecessary conflict and tension.

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: A close, harmonious relationship with the principal is a major key to success!

Topics for discussion:

Use of space and facilities: including classrooms, restrooms, cafeteria, storage areas, program office space, if applicable. Also consider library, computer labs, and gym.

School policies/procedures: Ensure alignment.

- Student behavior expectations: do they follow a certain model that could also be used in the afterschool program? (i.e. PBS model).
- Certain rules for specific use of space/materials (i.e. computer lab rules, use of library and materials).
- Emergency procedures, etc.

Program content: How can you align programming with school day content? Consider enhancing and enriching school day learning, not duplicating.

Student referrals and recruitment: Are there specific students that would benefit from the program?

Staff meetings: Ask to be invited to a staff meeting to introduce and discuss the Afterschool program with teaching staff. See if you can be included in staff meetings on a quarterly basis.

Program Impact: How does the program secretarial and custodial staff in regard to responsibilities, expectations, communication, etc.?

Use of classroom spaces: Identify classrooms for program use and be aware of communication and accountability protocols with the teachers.

Meetings with Principal: Establish a means of regular and ongoing communication with the principal. Schedule a standing meeting twice a month, suggest regular emails, etc.

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CLASSROOM TEACHERS: It is essential to start off on the right foot with teachers whose classroom space will be utilized for the program. By developing a good relationship with teachers before the program begins, you can avoid a great deal of tension and conflict.

Topics for discussion:

Programming: Provide teachers with an overview of the afterschool program. Explain that afterschool learning expands on school-day learning and offers hands-on experiences that may not be available during the traditional school day.

Shared goals: Emphasize your shared goals: helping students become successful both academically and socially.

Be grateful: Thank teachers for the use of their classroom space. Even though the classroom is a public-school building, teachers take pride and ownership for their classroom. It is similar to using someone's office. Acknowledge the significance of the space and assure them it will be respected by the afterschool program students and staff. Assure them the property will not be disturbed and the room will always be left in great condition.

Communicate: Let teachers know that communication is key and provide them with your contact information. Check in with them regularly.

CUSTODIAL STAFF: Building and district custodial staff are an essential part of the school building. Establishing a good relationship with custodial staff will help you develop a respectful relationship from the start!

Topics for discussion:

Share program overview. The more information you can share with custodial staff, the better. They will appreciate being considered a part of the team.

Share program schedules and room use: Make sure these details have been approved by the principal prior to your meeting with custodial staff.

Offer assistance: Inquire if there are ways your program staff could be helpful in cleaning up after the program (i.e. put trash cans in the hallway, close all classroom blinds, etc.).