

Promoting Positive Student Behaviors

Positive behavior begins and ends with relationships. This essential element can't be stressed enough: Build relationships with students in your programs. While it is important to have systems, protocols and schedules in place to support students and provide structure, cultivating meaningful connections is paramount. The better you know the youth in your program, the easier it is for youth to meet behavior expectations. Relationship building takes time. Be patient!

BEGIN WITH THE GREETING. From the time students enter your program, staff should be intentionally greeting them with hellos and acknowledging that they have arrived. There is power in greeting a student by name and letting them know you are glad they are there. Their transition from the school day to the Afterschool program should be one of warmth and acceptance.

PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION. Make time for staff to sit with students. By being eye level and sitting with them, or kneeling down beside them, it shows students that they are important and that they have value.

HOLD YOUTH ACCOUNTABLE. Students respond well to structure and boundaries. Youth are expected to make mistakes, it is important that staff are willing to coach them through these mistakes and guide them in how to choose positive behaviors. Make rules and procedures well known from the beginning and then be purposeful in supporting students to meet these expectations.

DAILY CHECK-INS. As a team, discuss youth in your staff meetings. What students are struggling with behavior? Who has circumstances at home that are impacting their lives? By shifting the focus to the emotional care of youth, not just the logistics and who is having "bad behavior," staff know what to look for and how to work with the obstacles that prevent youth from exhibiting positive behaviors.

LEARN TOGETHER. Incorporate time for positive discussions around behavior during your staff meetings. Instead of focusing on students with negative behaviors, reframe these discussions to include new interventions and strategies in helping these students succeed. Give time for staff to share positive strategies that they are using, as well as to share strategies that were unsuccessful.