

Helpful Tips from Afterschool Directors

BEFORE THE PROGRAM BEGINS:

Be familiar with and have a clear understanding of your programming and outcome measures.

- Create a compelling purpose and clear vision for the program that can be shared in understandable terms.
- Create a name/logo/slogan and mission statement and market it consistently through several media sources (newsletter, posters, announcements, flyers, newspaper, online, etc.).
- Develop program policy handbooks for students/parents and for staff. In addition, have an outline of these program policies and procedures that can easily be referenced.
- Prepare job descriptions and staffing responsibilities.
- Hire and orient staff.
- Meet with key stakeholders in the school and community to introduce yourself and the afterschool program. It is critical to develop good relationships early.
- Incorporate student voices into your afterschool program early. Develop a plan on ways to include students in programming and planning.
- Identify space, both for programming and for storage, that is needed for program implementation.
- Design and create a program bulletin board where announcements/updates can clearly be posted in each program location (i.e. each elementary building site, middle school sites, etc.).
- Clearly post banners or signage on the exterior of the school building, if allowed, identifying the afterschool program.
- Create a daily, weekly, or monthly program schedule that clearly outlines activities, times, and locations, as well as the nutritious snack options.
- Set and post security and emergency plans.
- Create and distribute enrollment forms.
- Host an open house for parents/students prior to start of the program.

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FIRST DAY OF THE PROGRAM:

- Make it a top priority to get to know the students. The sooner you know students names, the stronger your program will be, and students will feel connected to the program.
- Be sure that all program space is clearly identified.
- Provide an orientation guide to all participants.
- Be sure all enrollment materials have been turned in by all participants.
- Make sure all program staff are easily identified using name tags or t-shirts. Have introductions.
- Check to ensure that staff to student ratios are appropriate.
- Work hard to get youth voice and leadership incorporated into the program at the onset; don't wait to bring this important element into the program later.
- Encourage students to provide input. The program is for them and their ideas are welcome.
- Leave facility space better than you found it. Even if your program didn't make the mess, work to keep the space cleaner than you arrived—it goes a long way in developing positive relationships. Make connections with the custodial staff early.
- Meet with staff on a regular basis to answer questions, get feedback on progress, and provide addition guidance if needed.
- Be available, especially in the first few weeks of your program, to meet with teachers and other administrators who would like to learn more about the program.

FIRST MONTH OF THE PROGRAM:

- Check that the programming structure and staff structure are working. If there are red flags, address them immediately.
- Invite school administrators to visit the program.
- Provide any information to the school required.