

UNITED WAY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY

Connecting Schools and Afterschools

A List of Tips for Afterschool Programs

Interpersonal Connections: *Relationships*

- Create opportunities to have fun with your school staff: host dinners/activities/discussion groups.
- Follow through on all commitments made to the schools.
- Maintain a strong visual presence in the school.
- Find those administrators and teachers who are your champions. Celebrate them early and often.
- Partner with teachers who are leaders in the school and can be powerful advocates.
- Recognize teachers/afterschool educators who model exemplary communication/collaboration.
- Be persistent and purposeful in your communication with school staff. Always keep administrators informed.
- Empower your staff to connect and collaborate with teachers.
- Think of creative ways/use multiple strategies to engage your principal. Gaining the support of the Principal is key as they can “validate and reinforce the teacher’s participation.”
- Although support from administrators is indispensable, be mindful that your key contacts in the school may be teachers or support staff (i.e. the guidance counselor et. al).
- Be able to powerfully message the value-add of your program for school staff. Pay particular attention to how your program’s mission fits into the vision/goals of the school. Review the school’s improvement plan and mission statement.
- Create a newsletter that updates school staff as to what children are learning in your program.

Management Systems and Structure: *Systems*

- Formalize communication with teachers. Ask administrators and teachers which method of communication works best for them. Model flexibility by creating different systems of communication (email/phone/written reports/meetings etc).
- Collaborate on a system for sharing grades, progress reports, and methods of evaluation.
- Deliver reports on students to teachers that communicate successes/challenges, observations about learning/behavior etc.
- Model flexibility in your communication methods with busy teachers.
- Utilize classroom observations to see how teachers manage their classroom and what curriculum is being taught. Provide time in staff meetings to share and discuss these observations.
- Establish your program as a resource for teachers who wish to get information to and from parents.
- Engage consultants/advisors for joint work.

Alignment of Curriculum: *Getting on the same page*

- Host regular forums to jointly discuss afterschool activities/curriculum and develop afterschool activities/themes/curriculum that can complement what is being taught in school.
- Plan activities for your students that coincide and complement curriculum being taught to many of your students.
- Share with school staff what children are learning in your curriculum information with classroom teachers if it relates to their subject.
- Have afterschool staff visit classrooms/invite school staff to visit the afterschool program.
- Invite teachers to relevant curriculum planning meetings.
- Have an afterschool staff member attend “the right meetings” at school. Find out which meetings would be the most appropriate and helpful.
- Establish a “visiting teacher day;” invite a teacher to complete a project with the students around their subject area.
- Hold joint trainings to plan and implement curriculum and learning approaches/models/techniques.
- Afterschool meet with teachers to align the language they use: vocabulary, lesson style, themes etc.
- Seek teacher advice for the books that are made available to students
- Invite math teacher(s) to a staff meeting to brief the staff on what the students are learning