

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AFTER-SCHOOL

Program Climate

- Cultural diversity is respected and celebrated in classrooms, program events, and in selection of activities and curriculum.
- Students feel safe and welcome in the program.
- The program doesn't feel like regular school, special education, or remediation.

Leadership

- The leader and leadership team expresses a clear focused vision that reflects the mission. It is shared by and motivates staff and participants.
- Clear statement of mission and goals are published and can be described by staff.
- Objectives are measurable and aligned with the mission and goals.

Discipline and Attendance

- Discipline and policies encourage problem resolution and keeping students in program, with suspension as a last resort.
- Attendance policies reflect a positive approach.
- Students, parents, and staff are involved in developing the program rules.
- Mediation programs that include students provide an alternative form of conflict resolution to all students.

Clustering and Staff Teaming

- Students are clustered into communities of learners, with each cluster having a defined space and an identity that distinguishes it from other clusters.
- Grouping are organized and routinely adjusted to met individual personal development needs and interests.
- Spirit and self-esteem are a major part of the team mission.
- Students are a part of a team but still can participate in activities within clusters.

Scheduling

- Rotating dynamic scheduling is used to maintain interest, excitement, increased opportunities and attendance.
- Theme based scheduling, using pre-activity, marketing, interdisciplinary instruction, and culminating closure celebration.
- Flexible scheduling is used to adjust the schedule to allow extended labs and projects, field trips, speakers, and other special activities.

Programming / Curriculum

- The curriculum concentrates on core concepts, or what all students should know and be able to do.
- The curriculum is inquiry based, and rooted in real life, relevant, problem-solving activities.
- The curriculum reflects the accomplishments and contributions of all students' racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds and builds a sense of social responsibility towards society as a fundamental democratic value.
- Students and parents have a voice in what activities and subjects the program offers.
- Reading and writing are integrated across the curriculum, with the goal of making every student a reader and a writer.

- Positive Youth Development is the building block of all activities.
- Academics and Enrichment are blended throughout the program.

Innovative Instructional Strategies

- High-level expectations for learning and behavior are communicated to all students.
- Varied instructional strategies are regularly used, including experiential, cooperative, project and peer group learning.
- Multiple Intelligence Learning and Developmental Assets building is included.
- An increased emphasis is placed upon the teaching of higher order thinking skills, (e.g., problem solving, reasoning, logic, analysis, synthesis and evaluation).

Student Support

- Opportunities for real-world application of learning are provided, such as service learning, community service and apprenticeship programs.
- Programs must be FUN! High energy and continually changing offerings.
- Recognition programs exist to honor a range of positive student accomplishments, including citizenship, attendance, and improvement.
- Bilingual, bicultural staff is available to support linguistic minority students and their parents.

Family Involvement

- Information about the program and the students involvement is sent home regularly in appropriate languages.
- Parents are in making decisions about the program and are used as learning resources (not as yard supervisors).
- Regular culminating activities that include parents occur regularly and at times convenient for parents to attend.

Community Collaboration

- Community agencies provide on-site or near-site services to families and students.
- The resources of the community are used in enriching the curriculum and expanding the classroom walls.
- Business partnerships support the program and contribute to the sustainability of the program.

Staff Development

- Retention is high and rotation is used to avoid burn-out.
- Recruitment includes a wide array of talents, interests and experiences.
- Staff is diverse and represents the ethnicity of the community.
- Training is on-going, regularly scheduled, and offers professional growth opportunities and college credits.

Sustainability

- Marketing is integrated through-out the program.
- Advertising of “Upcoming Events” is ongoing and current.
- Fundraising is part of a long-term plan to sustain and expand the program.
- Community resources regularly enrich and expand the program and a variety of organization are actively engaged.

Evaluation

- Participant performance is regularly assessed using a variety of measures such as homework, portfolios, observations, school grades, and attendance.
- Providers and stakeholders review the program, resources, needs, strengths and results are used to guide program improvement
- The program collects and examines data, attendance, family satisfaction, participation rates, test scores and grades to assess program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

- Each staff member receives written reports and has personal conferences based on frequent informal and annual formal observation and a formal summary evaluation each year.

Cognitive Activities

- Activities that stimulate thinking and intellectual abilities.
- Games and activities that reinforce academic skills and concepts
- Scientific experiments and projects
- Projects that require critical-thinking and decision-making skills.

Language Development Activities

- Activities that reinforce skills in using words effectively in their primary or secondary language.
- Storytelling activities
- Activities that require reading or giving directions.
- Word-based games such as Scrabble or Password.

Social-Emotional Activities

- Activities that provide opportunities for interaction and learning more about each other and themselves.
- Games that require teamwork and cooperation and build positive relationships.
- Activities that focus in a positive way on similarities and differences and increase self-awareness and self-esteem.

Ethical Activities

- Activities that help critically examine their values and those of other people and groups.
- Role-playing of social or interpersonal problems that develop among the group.
- Discussions to clarify or examine conflicting values or ethical beliefs among children or groups.

Physical Activities

- Activities that provide opportunities to learn and strengthen small and large motor skills and coordination.
- Games that encourage running, throwing, and active play.
- Projects that require fine-motor skills, such as cutting or lacing.
- Activities that build strength and endurance, such as aerobics or physical fitness.

Creative Activities

A high quality ASP should promote activities that encourage children to express themselves in non-programmed, imaginative ways by drawing inspiration from within themselves rather than from external models or directions. Some of the most frequently used creative activities involve the visual and performing arts.

- Art media, such as drawing, painting, or sculpting.
- Music, Drama, Puppetry, Creative Writing
- Dance or Integration of arts through a play, performance, or backyard circus.

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