



The Story Behind The Story: In Their Own Words

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ILLINOIS QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL

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The Story Behind The Story

Practical Steps to Recruitment and Retention

- Students benefit most from their afterschool experience when they participate regularly and spend the most time engaged in authentic learning activities
- Students participate more regularly when programs offer interesting and diverse enrichment opportunities
- Staff must be trained on how to challenge and encourage students.

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Practical Steps to Recruitment and Retention

- Appeal directly to students and their parents
- Be clear about your program's purpose
- Identify target populations
- Recruit friends to join together

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Practical Steps to Recruitment and Retention

- Identify specific participation barriers
- Develop strategies to overcome barriers
- Set recruitment and retention goals
 - Attendance
 - Retention

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Practical Steps to Recruitment and Retention

- Build positive relationships
- Identify students' interests and develop program activities based on those interests
- Be responsive to the needs of your participants and their families
- Be flexible

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Practical Steps to Recruitment and Retention

- Strive to gain participant buy-in (This is essential!)
- Establish a strong relationship with school day staff
- Partner with organizations in the community to enhance the afterschool program



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Practical Steps to Recruitment and Retention

- Communication is key!
 - Listen and incorporate feedback
 - Develop two-way communication with participants and their families
 - Keep parents, families and community members informed about afterschool program activities

Identify Students' Interests

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Informal interviews



Be Responsive to Students ' Needs

- Align program schedule with participants' needs
- Offer a variety of activities
- Allow participants to choose their activities

Be Responsive to Students' Needs

- Incorporate unstructured time into the program schedule (especially for older youth)
- Provide leadership, community service, and employment opportunities

Be Flexible

- Incorporate participant feedback
- Monitor and adjust as necessary

Remember

- Middle and high school students vote with their feet
- Over enroll to reach recruitment and retention goals
- Hiring “caring staff” is essential to program success

Peer Panelists

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