Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Youth and Parents in Afterschool

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Presenters

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Agenda

1. Purpose and Goals
2. Recruitment
3. Retention
4. Resources
Purpose

Recruitment and retention of youth and parents is critical to the success of 21st CCLC Programs.

1. Participants will gain an understanding of strategies and practices for recruitment of youth and family participants in afterschool programs.

2. Participants will gain an understanding of strategies and practices for retaining youth and family participants in afterschool programs.

3. Participants will receive resources, tools, and evidence-based practices to attract and sustain youth and family participation.
Recipe for Recruitment and Retention

- 1 part vision
- 1 part relationships
- 1 part warm welcoming environment
- 1 part communication and outreach
- 1 part positive youth development
Recruitment
Recruitment: Planning

Developing and implementing a recruitment plan takes time, patience, and perseverance.

1. Identify audience
2. Identify audience needs
3. Develop a powerful vision
4. Create targeted communications
5. Market!

You may need to develop different recruitment plans or packages for the different populations you serve.
Recruitment: Planning

Recruitment Strengths

• What do you do well?
• What is working for you?

Recruitment Challenges

• What do you need help with?
Recruitment: Planning

Needs Assessment Benefits

• Understanding the unique needs of your community

• Being able to precisely target the scope of services and offerings based on identified needs

• If done in a participatory fashion, getting to know others in your community and opening conversations among stakeholders
Recruitment: Planning

Ways to Identify Needs

• Surveys

• Focus Groups

• Interviews

• Beyond the Bell Tool 35, a resource for planning a needs assessment
Recruitment: Developing a Strong Program Vision

Create a collective vision statement.

A vision is the “big picture,” values-based idea you and your stakeholders identify for your program. It is an ideal picture of what your program will accomplish and should be aspirational.

It should be clearly defined and agreed to by all. Vision statements can be used to guide and market programming.

Think about a vision statement as an avenue to tell the community what you do. It can guide your marketing as you communicate your program to possible participants.
Recruitment: Developing a Strong Program Vision

Questions to consider when creating a collective, succinct vision statement for your program:

1. What is our vision of where the program will be in five years? Ten years?
2. What does our program value?
3. What are our program’s strengths?
4. What is the most pressing need our program is trying to fill?
5. What are three words that represent key values and goals for the program, and that must be in our vision statement?
Recruitment: Sample Vision Statements

• Our Vision is to provide equal access to the arts for all young people and families in our community.
• Communities working together for student achievement
• To create a world where all young people are valued and thrive
• Uniting school, community, and family for young people’s liberation
• Youth and adults creating and thriving across communities
• Transforming young people by cultivating their voices
• Empowering youth to recognize and experience their possibility and promise
• To leave a sustainable world for future generations
• Youth – Peace & Social Change
Recruitment: Building Relationships

Building relationships is key to effective recruitment.

- Relationships with schools/districts
- Relationships with community partners
- Relationships with youth
- Relationships with families
Recruitment: Building Relationships

Connecting With Schools

One of the main paths to reaching youth is through the schools.

Do the school administrators and teachers understand what your program has to offer?

Do the youth?

How do you communicate with the schools?

How do you convey program information to stakeholders?
Recruitment: Building Relationships

Creating Partnerships and Identifying Partners

Partnerships are vitally important to a successful program.

Partnerships emerge from stakeholders that provide support through funding, volunteers, goods, or other services. They can also impact recruitment as high-quality offerings can increase student interest in the program.

What are your current partnerships?
Recruitment: Communication and Outreach

Every communication is a call to action. What is your intended outcome? (e.g., to encourage program enrollment, attendance at an event, provide information about the program?)

- Identify yourself and your vision.
- Keep your audience in mind. (Who are they?)
- Do you want to inform or persuade?
Recruitment: Communication and Outreach

**Communication Vehicles**

- Web page
- Fliers or brochures
- Twitter
- Newsletters
- News release to the local paper
- PTA/PTO meeting
- Facebook
- Craigslist

Free resources to create flyers/brochures/posters: [Canva.com](http://Canva.com) and [PosterMyWall.com](http://PosterMyWall.com)
Recruitment: Communication and Outreach

Communication Platforms

• Google Voice (free number and text)
• MailChimp.com (free email blasts)
• Boomerang Gmail (email is delivered until it is opened)
• Remind.com
• Instagram (utilize alumni or current participants)
• Snapchat
• One Call Now (automated phone and text message system)
• Free Facebook business page
Recruitment: Communication and Outreach

Tips for Developing Outreach and Marketing Materials

- Identify the audience and use words and phrases that are familiar
- Keep in mind the purpose of the materials
- Write from the reader’s point of view
- Engage the reader
- Emphasize the benefits of the program
- Use a simple design
- Use photos of current participants (with permission)
- Emphasize your name and logo
- Plan out the best distribution method
Recruitment: Communication and Outreach

In today’s world, there are many avenues to communicate with your established or potential participants.

Having a unified vision and an understanding of youth needs enables programs to develop focused outreach and marketing materials.
Recruitment Strategies

What are some of the recruitment strategies used by your program?
Recruitment Strategies

• Establish a standing meeting with an administrator once a month
• Establish a school day teacher liaison(s)
• Establish a relationship with the school counselors—ask for referrals and support
• Distribute paper fliers as students enter/leave school
• Utilize district family advocates to spread information about the program
• Speak about the program at a school event (orientation/family night)
• Share recruitment materials with teachers (ask for time within a teacher meeting)
Recruitment Strategies

• Host a job fair
• Utilize current participants (Student Ambassadors) to reach out (set up a table at lunch, make posters, provide treats)
• Provide an incentive for participants to bring a friend to the program
• Create a program bulletin board with information and pictures of recent activities/events and place in a visible location (Student/Staff of the Week)
• Survey nonparticipant youth regarding interests
• Teacher Pizza and PowerPoint at lunch
Recruitment Strategies

• Ask current participants to devise and implement a recruitment strategy
• Have a table at a community event
• Speak about the program at a public forum
• Host a recruitment fair
• Advertise online
Retention
Strategies to Retain Participants

• Providing a warm and welcoming environment
• Building supportive relationships among youth and staff and between youth
• Creating opportunities for youth to feel like they belong
• Promoting positive behavior within the program

All of these practices are elements of Positive Youth Development
Retention: Warm and Welcoming Environment

Programs that focus on building trusting and respectful relationships among staff, families, students, and community members are most effective in creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships.

When interactions with parents are characterized by a sense of welcome, they foster positive relationships. Creating a welcoming environment can transcend context, culture, and language.
Retention: Warm and Welcoming Environment

A warm and welcoming environment is a building block for programs, especially if youth are to succeed academically and personally. Research has demonstrated the connection between a positive climate (e.g., youth sense of belonging and feeling secure in a program) and **improved academic performance, increased levels of motivation, a strong willingness to learn** and **decreased behavior problems** (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Kauh, 2011; Marzano & Marzano, 2003).
Retention: Warm and Welcoming Environment

When youth and families come to your program, do they feel the program is inviting and is a place where they “belong”?

Does your program reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community?
Retention: Warm and Welcoming Environment

Welcoming environments provide parents with a reciprocal relationship where not only do they feel that they belong to the program, but also that the program belongs to them.
Retention: Tips for Building a Positive Environment Within Your Program

• Greet every youth who comes in the door by name—every time.

• Increase the number of one-to-one interactions among youth and between youth and the staff.

• Provide positive reinforcement for youth actions and ideas and offer specific feedback. For example, instead of saying “Good Job,” say “Thank you for listening,” or “Great job cooperating with your classmates.”

• Show your enthusiasm. If you are excited, young people in your program will be, too.

• Vary your activities and instructional techniques.

• When youth are absent for one or multiple days, make sure to let them know they were missed and you were concerned about them. Follow up if they indicate that a larger issue is going on.

• Keep youth engaged by providing variety, fostering feelings of progress, and offering challenges.
Retention: Positive Youth Development

Youth development means…

• Fostering positive growth in youth
• Building on their strengths
• Addressing their developmental needs
Retention: Positive Youth Development

How is your program incorporating youth development practices?

Retention: Positive Youth Development

How is your program incorporating youth development practices?

• Warm and Welcoming Environment

• Support for Positive Behavior

• Supportive Relationships and Opportunities to Belong

• Opportunities for Youth Choice, Decision-Making, Leadership, and Reflection

• Opportunities for Learning and Skill Development
# Create an Action Plan

**Smart Outcome:** By January of 2019 we will increase enrollment for our second semester by 20%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action Step(s)</th>
<th>Person(s) Responsible/Responsibilities</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Resources For Action Step Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Create Student Ambassador Program | 1. Ask for volunteers  
2. Create outreach materials/posters  
3. Set up information table in the cafeteria  
4. Create schedule | 1. Site Director  
2. Site Director/Lead staff  
3. Site Director and Students  
4. Site Director | 12/1/2018 | |
| Identify and cultivate relationships with 1 teacher liaison per grade level |  |  |  | |
Resources
In Chapter 2, you learned about the importance of creating a shared and powerful vision that can remain constant as you shape and develop your program over the next several years. A strong vision communicates to your participants, families, and community what you hope to accomplish with your after-school and expanded learning program. Remember, when developing a vision, it is important to include families, youth representatives, volunteers, staff members, school faculty and administrators, and community organizations.

**Directions:** First, have individuals read the questions below and write down their initial thoughts. Next, meet as a group to identify the top priority answers to the questions and craft a vision statement out of them (a sample agenda is included on the following pages). After you have established your vision, be sure to post it prominently along with your organization’s mission.

**Visioning Worksheet**

**Directions:** Please complete the questionnaire below prior to our visioning meeting. It is important that everyone comes to the meeting ready to discuss their answers and engage in an open-minded process to turn our collective ideas into one succinct vision statement for our program.

1. What is our vision of where the program will be in 5 years? 10 years?

2. What does our program value?

3. What are our program’s strengths?

4. What is the most pressing need our program is trying to fill?

5. List three words that must be in our vision statement—these should be words that represent our key values and goals for the program.

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Resources

- Summer Learning Recruitment Guide from the Wallace Foundation

- Program Profile: East Richland Community School District #1 21st CCLC (Illinois Quality Afterschool Quarterly)
  - [https://iqa.airprojects.org/quarterly/summer2015/profile.html](https://iqa.airprojects.org/quarterly/summer2015/profile.html)

- Illinois Quality Afterschool Special Topic Workshop: Increasing Student Participation with Quality Programs
  - [https://iqa.airprojects.org/iqa_database/workshop/12](https://iqa.airprojects.org/iqa_database/workshop/12)
Questions?
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