

Inclusion Tools for After School Professionals

SPECIAL NEEDS INCLUSION PROJECT, SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, 1663 MISSION STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103 282-7494

SNIPPET #12: What you're already doing for effective inclusion

INCLUSIVE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (OST) PROGRAMS

While all children benefit from high quality out-of-school time programs, these programs give children with special needs a unique opportunity to experience meaningful and authentic belonging. Beyond the benefits of providing learning and enrichment activities, OST programs offer children with special needs the chance to interact with their non-disabled peers and engage in physical activity and play in a way that's not always possible during the regular school day. OST can be a safe haven where children with special needs can learn and succeed side-by-side with children of all abilities.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PROGRAM QUALITY

Inclusive OST programs ensure that all children feel welcome and valued. Program quality is one of the most important inclusion strategies, and is a necessary component of successful inclusive services. **An excellent OST program has already taken the first critical step towards effective inclusion by focusing on quality.** If program staff relate and connect to youth, help foster relationships between children, and ensure the health and safety

of their program participants, then they have already mastered a few of the foundational skills of high quality programs.

How can staff ensure that their program is high quality? The San Francisco Afterschool for All Advisory Council has adopted a specific set of knowledge and skills called "core competencies" for afterschool and OST staff and supervisors. These competencies are the fundamental components of a successful program, and are a tool to help increase the quality of afterschool programs in San Francisco.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR AFTERSCHOOL STAFF

San Francisco Afterschool for All recommends the items with an asterisk (*) as baseline competencies. The other items are recommended for staff who have mastered the baseline competencies.

Policy and Procedures

- 1) Ensures for the health and safety of participants*
- 2) Follows safety and emergency procedures*
- 3) Maintains accurate program records and follows reporting procedures*

Program Goals and Content

- 4) Deliberately designs and conducts activities that are focused on program goals*
- 5) Supports a program environment that is learner-centered*
- 6) Ability to connect and relate to youth*
- 7) Promotes a sense of physical and emotional safety*
- 8) Supports positive relationships between staff and program participants*
- 9) Supports positive relationships between participants*
- 10) Conducts activities that expand the participants' knowledge and understanding of their own immediate community and the larger global community
- 11) Promotes the meaningful engagement and leadership of the participants
- 12) Incorporates activities to promote physical health
- 13) Incorporates academic content and skill development that contributes to participants' school success and helps address the achievement gap
- 14) Ability to implement project-based learning

Professionalism

- 15) Demonstrates positive work and team ethic*
- 16) Adequately informs, shares information, and collaborates with important adults*
- 17) Advocates for the participants' needs, providing referral information when appropriate*
- 18) Respects and honors cultural and human diversity*
- 19) Strives for self-improvement
- 20) Communicates effectively with other staff, stakeholders, and parents
- 21) Ability to effectively support English learners.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR AFTERSCHOOL SUPERVISORS

Supervisors of afterschool programs have their own set of competencies. Just like for staff, the baseline competencies for supervisors are marked with asterisk (*). Supervisors should have a mastery of the basics, and then move on to the other competencies.

Policy and Procedures

- 1) Maintains accurate program records and follows reporting procedures*
- 2) Ability to establish and implement effective administrative policies and procedures, as appropriate*
- 3) Ability to establish and implement effective financial policies and procedures, as appropriate*

Staff Support and Program Management

- 4) Ability to successfully manage program staff*
- 5) Ability to recruit high-quality staff and volunteers*
- 6) Ability to engage, and support afterschool staff in implementing program activities to achieve program goals*
- 7) Ability to connect and relate to youth
- 8) Strives for self-improvement
- 9) Ability to promote the professional growth and development of program staff

Community and Collaboration

- 10) Advocates for the participants' needs, providing referral information when appropriate*
- 11) Ability to support long-term sustainability through collaborative relationships and fundraising*
- 12) Has a working knowledge of and abilities to use resources within the broader community

Program Design and Improvement

- 13) Ability to design program activities that support program goals and incorporate needs and interests of program participants, their families and the broader community*
- 14) Ability to articulate within the organization and to external stakeholders the program's mission and goals, and how program activities align to them
- 15) Ability to gather and review data and conduct evaluations for timely program improvement.

The above core competencies are aligned to the California After School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool. Based on local and national research, the goal of the competencies is to be a tool for increasing afterschool program quality for all children in San Francisco.

For more information, visit the San Francisco Afterschool for All website at

<http://sfafterschoolforall.blogspot.com/p/what-are-core-competencies.html?m=0> .