Partnering with Families of Students in Out-of-School-Time Programs

Out-of-School-Time (OST) programs take place before school, after school and in the summer. Programs are located in schools and communities and serve families with children Pre-K to graduation. OST programs provide educators and families with unique opportunities for connecting, providing academic supports and creating partnerships.

OST programs offer a bridge between home and school. Research indicates that family involvement in after school programs contributes to better programs, improved academic and behavioral outcomes for students, reduced risk-taking by teens and improved parenting skills.

OST teachers and staff members often have more face-to-face contact with families than occurs during regular school hours. With these frequent and personal contacts, OST staff and teachers have the opportunity to build supportive relationships with families who may not communicate frequently with their child's school. OST programs often have resources and mission statements that address barriers to learning for both students and their families.

Partnerships between schools, OST programs and the community can bring supports and services to families. Such programs might include child care, career planning, GED classes, computer classes, parenting groups, health care, counseling, mentoring, recreation, tutoring, homework help and enriched learning experiences.

21st Century Community Learning Centers, authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, are federally funded OST programs. These programs create community learning centers to provide academic enrichment opportunities for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. They meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects and offer students an array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs. They also offer literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

Sample Action Steps

- Establish a team or utilize an existing district and school planning teams consisting of parents, community members and staff to guide the after-school program. Provide training for team members to equip them to participate.
- Broadly define family partnerships to include families attending events, families accessing services for their children (like health care), volunteering in the OST program, participation in adult education opportunities and recreational programs, helping children with homework and assisting children with planning for their future.
- Provide families with many different opportunities for partnership.
- Invite parents to participate in field trips for educational enrichment.
- Communicate with families in their language and without educational jargon.
- Delegate staff to greet parents at drop-off or pick-up times.

- Delegate staff to accompany groups of children as they walk home.
- Offer programs for parents, being sensitive to their busy schedule and commitments.
- Train staff to be family-friendly.
- Intentionally develop friendly relationships.
- Communicate regularly with families.
- Welcome families into the program.
- Respect families and honor their efforts to help their child succeed
- Invite families to share information about their culture, values and their hopes for their child.
- Provide information and activities to help families extend and apply lessons learned in the program to the child's home and community.

Resources

21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program – For grant information, see keywords: 21st Century. www.ode.state.oh.us.

Increasing Parent and Family Engagement in After School – A guide for after-school programs by The After School Corporation. www.tascorp.org

How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School – The Harvard Family Research Program offers a guide to understanding how to engage families in after- school programs is a critical resource for after-school providers looking to create or expand an existing family engagement program. It offers a research base for why family engagement matters, concrete program strategies for engaging families, case studies of promising family engagement efforts and an evaluation tool for improving family engagement practices. www.hfrp.org

Web sites

AfterSchool Alliance. www.afterschoolalliance.org
AfterSchool.gov – connecting afterschool providers to federal resources that support children and youth during out-of-school hours, www.afterschool.gov
Child Trends – research briefs for practitioners. www.childtrends.org
Harvard Family Research Project www.hfrp.org

Source

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