



The Cross-Cities Network for Leaders of Citywide After-School Initiatives

The Cross-Cities Network is composed of 25 leaders of citywide after-school initiatives in major cities across the United States. The Network brings leaders together on a regular basis to explore common issues and develop personal relationships to sustain their work. The project is staffed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In addition to bi-annual meetings, NIOST provides staff support for the following Network activities; weekly email updates from members; topical briefs on requested issues; research reports; and a database of initiative members.

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**ISSUE 2:
Focus on
Staffing**

After School Issues

Ready to Roll

Five Cities Share their Experience with Recruiting, Orienting and First Year Training of After-School Staff

There is no question about it. The after-school field is facing a major staffing shortage. The long-awaited arrival of public recognition and funding for after-school programs has spawned dozens of ambitious campaigns across the country seeking to create citywide programs for children and youth. This rapid scaling up has created a huge demand for qualified employees. At the same time, a strong economy in many cities has increased the competition for staff. For many initiatives, staying fully staffed has become a frustrating exercise of laboriously finding and developing the skills of staff members, only to see them leave for higher paying, full-time work shortly thereafter.

What can be done?

In several states, city after-school leaders are involved in efforts to craft long-term solutions to the staffing shortage. Some of these initiatives include wage and career ladders, scholarship programs, registries for tracking professional development, and credentialing opportunities. While system-wide developments such as these may ultimately help organizations attract and retain more qualified staff, the reality is that after-school programs, large and small, are scrambling to fill positions. To address these immediate

and pressing staffing needs, many after-school initiatives are creatively exploring local strategies for recruiting, orienting and training first year staff. The leaders we spoke with in New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver and Chicago are coping with the staffing challenge in different ways. Here are a few of their stories, strategies, and reflections.

Recruitment

How are after-school initiatives finding qualified staff?

The question, “Where should I look for staff?” may have a very different answer depending on who you speak with. Differences in a program’s design, philosophy, funding source, lead agency, or licensing requirements result in a range of personnel needs. Some programs rely heavily on public school teachers, others are activity-based and seek activity specialists. Some after-school organizations look to the community for the majority of their staff. Still others must meet state licensing standards when hiring staff, and therefore seek out those with specific education and experience in the field of after-school. Many after-school initiatives use diverse staffing patterns which mix general staff with specialists, volunteers, parents and public school teachers—creating a myriad of recruitment and management challenges for site coordinators.

Despite distinct differences, the after-school leaders we spoke with shared a number of successful recruitment strategies. Here are just a few examples.

Create a strong, positive reputation and good relationships within the community.

LA’s BEST:

LA’s BEST Chief Operating Officer, Debe Loxton, credits their strong community connections as the key to LA’s BEST’s success in attracting and retaining staff members. “Before opening a site,” explains Loxton, “we would talk to people. We would meet with the parent group from the school. We would go out into the surrounding neighborhood and get to know people.” Through taking

the time to gain an understanding of the community, its needs, interests and individuals, each LA’s BEST site was able to use informal community networks and “word of mouth” as their primary mode of recruitment. Loxton adds that LA’s BEST’s strong public image also significantly increased the attractiveness of this organization as a great place to work.

Related Strategies

- Make public relations a priority for your initiative. Create a buzz. Word of mouth is then

much more effective when recruiting.

- Forge relationships with organizations within your community to build local networks for finding staff.
- Be sure to have a positive, welcoming spirit in all external communication. Send the message, “Come join the fun.”

Forge Strong Partnerships with Other Organizations to Find Staff and Create Full-Time, Year Round Positions through Creative Job Combinations.

New York:

Many of NYC’s The After-School Corporation (TASC) grantees are community-based organizations (CBO’s) offering a range of programs supported by multiple public and private funding sources. As a result, many after-school staff members at TASC-supported sites play a variety of roles through one single employer. A staff member might be the Parent Liaison for a United Way-funded drop-out prevention program in the morning, and then might stay on to be an Activities Specialist with youth in the afternoon. “The masters of this are the settlement houses,” explains TASC’s Director of Training and Technical Assistance Lorna Palacio Morgan. “They learned long ago that to retain good people they need to mix funding and patch together full-time employment and bene-

fits. While these CBO-School partnerships are school-based, the staff represent the full range of community and city partners.”

Related Strategies

- Utilize educational aides from host schools/districts.
- Create formal links with colleges in order to place students as interns, work-study students, or volunteers through Americorps or America Reads.
- Connect with other youth-serving agencies to share staff and/or place older youth as junior staff in programs serving elementary school children.

Use Existing Staff as a Recruitment Resource.

Denver:

Denver’s After-School Director, Shirley Farnsworth, sees her existing staff as her primary recruitment resource, and credits good retention with reducing the need to recruit. She uses a variety of strategies, including: offering existing staff members referral bonuses for finding friends to work in program; requiring new staff to pay for their own CPR/first Aid training and reimbursing them if they stay in their positions for the year; and awarding a \$200 bonus to returning staff each year.

Related Strategies

- Build administrators’ skills and create the internal structure needed to effectively manage staff members’ diverse backgrounds, styles and schedules.
- Be as welcoming and flexible about the qualifications of new, entry-level staff members as possible. Then, be sure to create the training and support structure needed to guide their growth and build their skills.
- Host and/or attend Job Fairs and other larger scale hiring opportunities.

SAN DIEGO’S “6 TO 6” INITIATIVE

In 1995, San Diego’s Mayor, Susan Golding, declared that their city would be the first in the nation to offer before- and after-school services in every public elementary and middle school within three years.

“I honestly didn’t think it was going to be possible,” explains Deb Ferrin, the Child Care Coordinator for the City of San Diego. “We had 36 months to open programs in 171 schools. Somehow we had to find, hire and train over 800 people. When I

stop to think about it, it’s amazing that we pulled it off.”

How did they pull it off?

Ferrin explains that the key to their success was a combination of strategic planning and pure luck. “We had a system for recruiting staff at each site.” First, “6 to 6” recruited from within each host school. They looked for parents, teacher aides, and regular schoolteachers.

“Because the school was laying off large numbers of aides at the time,” Ferrin explains, “We really got lucky. We scooped up the aides as quickly as we could.”

The next approach was to create partnerships with all

area colleges and universities. “We contacted the departments of child development, education, recreation, counseling and work study offices.” “6 to 6” systematically set up relationships with ten colleges, gaining over 200 students through the Americorps program alone. “Americorps provided a terrific incentive for staff to stay because they received \$2,500 towards tuition or other education expenses if they remained for the full nine months.”

The third approach utilized by “6 to 6” was to recruit staff members from within the community. “We found most of our community staff

members through word of mouth. What really gave our recruitment efforts a boost was the incredible publicity our initiative was receiving. I think having that positive image really helped us attract staff.”

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Orienting Staff

How are after-school initiatives preparing staff members for their new roles and responsibilities?

Integrating a staff member into his or her new role presents many challenges and opportunities for after-school organizations. A new staff member's first few weeks often sets the stage for his or her later performance, attitudes, and philosophy towards working with children and youth in the program. Furthermore, it is during the first few months that many new staff members will leave their positions. What are some of the strategies after-school organizations are using to successfully orient and support staff during this critical period? Here are a few examples.

Convey and reinforce core messages.

San Diego:

"All our CBO's handled the initial orientation of staff in their own way. We realized that they also needed something more. They needed to hear the city's message—what we expected from them," explains San Diego's Child Care Coordinator, Deb Ferrin. "So, every fall we bring all the new staff together and tell them why the city is funding after-school programs, why what they do is so important, and what we're looking for from them."

Match new staff with veteran staff members.

Denver:

The Kaleidoscope Corner programs of Denver believe in promoting a strong team philosophy for children as well as staff. Reflecting this belief, at the start of each school year all new staff members are included in two days of training, along with fellow team members from their site. Subsequently, new staff members are matched up with seasoned staff members to guide them through their first few months on the job. This expectation for mentoring is part of the job descriptions for all lead staff and site coordinators.

Increase new staff members' enthusiasm and commitment by building on their interests and talents.

New York:

New staff members often feel that they have little to contribute when they lack the skills and experience of their more seasoned peers. This self-perception can lead new staff members to quickly lose interest in their positions. To help address this issue, one of The After-school Corporation's NYC sites encourages staff members to come up with and present their own ideas for a weekly activity club. The staff member with the best suggestion is allowed to lead the activity. To help them in developing their ideas, staff members are given an Activity Handbook as well as samples of lesson plans.

What's in the Works?

Senator Christopher Dodd, (D)

CN, is introducing "FOCUS" (Focus on Committed and Underpaid Staff), national legislation designed to award grants to providers and staff in order to support quality improvements. For more information contact: www.ccw.org.

National Institute on Out of School Time:

An upcoming article entitled Professional Development Systems: The State of the States—by Ellen Gannett, Associate Dir. of NIOST, with Darci Smith, Dir. of CALSAC (The California School-Age Coalition), and Judy Nee, Director, Center for Youth Programs, Florida Atlantic

University, will be published Spring 2001.

Expanded information on recruitment, orientation and training will soon be available on the NIOST web site: www.niost.org

The Center for the Child Care Workforce

is releasing a School-Age staff addenda to their **Model Work Standards**, due out Spring 2001. (See Resource section.)

LA'S BEST

Helping New Staff Members Translate Philosophy into Practice

"Our job is to translate our meaning and philosophy into practice. We believe that you must take people where they are and move them towards leadership."

– Debe Loxton, Chief Operating Officer, LA's BEST

"In a positive youth development approach, youth are not seen as problems to be solved, but as resource to be developed." At LA's BEST, this guiding philosophy applies equally to staff and youth. Staff members are viewed as assets. From day one, LA's BEST site coordinators communicate to new staff members that "they already know a great deal about how to work with youth," and that the strength of the program relies on their willingness to

share these individual talents and interests with children.

To support staff members as they strive to fulfill these expectations, LA's BEST uses two main orientation and training methods. The first centers around the delivery and reinforcement of core messages. LA's BEST has a strong philosophy developed over its 12 years of operations. To best convey these beliefs to new staff members, LA's BEST has developed a series of staff guides and videos which outline roles and responsibilities and clearly illustrate how the

LA's BEST philosophy is translated into practice. Before beginning work at their sites, all new staff members are expected to review/view these orientation products and discuss the LA's BEST approach with their site coordinator.

These LA's BEST core messages are then reinforced by lead staff and administrators throughout a staff member's tenure in the program.

The second component of LA's BEST orientation approach involves partnering Traveling Activities Consultants and Traveling Supervisors with Site Coordinators to guide each staff member's development. "During that first year," explains Debe Loxton, "the

Site Coordinator closely observes the new staff member. If she sees her/him struggling—if there is that disconnect—she'll call in the Activities Consultant. What happens next is that the Activities Consultant essentially "camps out" at that site and works with that staff member until she/he has mastered the skills needed to do a better job." Since Activity Consultants do not act in a supervisory role, they become almost like outside advisors or mentors for new staff members. This allows staff to discuss their problems and questions more freely, opening them up for greater change and growth.

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"Nothing we do—no activity, no program, no event—is as important as the effect that it has on the child."

– LA's Best After-school Enrichment Program Staff Guide

First Year Training of Staff

How are after-school organizations helping new staff members build their skills?

For after-school organizations, the challenges involved in training first year staff can be daunting. Unlike so many other fields, where employees can enter a workplace with little or no experience and progress gradually, in an after-school setting even entry-level employees need to master a wide range of fairly complex skills before they can be effective in their work with children and youth. Due to the part-time nature of most after-school positions, many new staff members spend their off-hours attending school or holding down second jobs, leaving little time, energy or incentive for them to participate in training. Cities differ greatly in their philosophies and emphasis on the training of first year staff. Here are a few examples illustrating their common beliefs.

Determine core competency areas.

Denver and New York:

Denver's Kaleidoscope programs and NYC's The After-School Corporation initiative have identified core areas that serve as the focus of training for staff members during their first year. While the two cities have different approaches to training entry-level staff, both agree that new staff should develop skills in the following areas:

- Safety, including first aid and CPR
- Group Management
- Conflict Resolution, and
- Appropriate Practices with Children and Youth

Offer training that is hands-on and relates directly to staff members' daily work with children/youth.

San Diego:

San Diego's "6 to 6" initiative believes that staff respond best to training that is not only hands-on, but also allows staff members to immediately try out new ideas in their programs. "We always make sure—whatever the topic is—that people can take something back to their programs and use it that day. When we offered a workshop on math games, we brought in a laminator so folks could actually make the games right there. When we introduced staff to the School-age Environmental Rating Scale, we

gave each of them a SACERS manual and rating sheets."

Partner with colleges, or link with state agencies or career initiatives, in order to offer certificates, credits or wage incentives to staff for participating in training.

Chicago:

All new staff members from City of Chicago funded youth and school-age programs are encouraged to take a 32-hour course entitled Advancing Youth Development (AYD) within their first few months of service. Upon completion of the AYD course, participants receive a Youth Worker Certificate. The AYD training is offered through two key intermediary organizations: the Chicago Youth Agency Partnership—for youth workers; and the MOST Initiative—for school-age workers. Participants can also take the course for credit from several Chicago-area colleges. One local university recognizes the course as part of its four-year undergraduate program in Youth Work. Plans are currently underway to make completion of the AYD course a requirement for all staff members working in City of Chicago-funded programs, as well as to link receipt of the Youth Worker certificate to wage increases.

* For more information on the AYD curriculum, check out the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work in the Resources section.

New York City's After-school Corporation:

What Should Every Staff Member Know?

It was during the first year of NYC's After-school Corporation (TASC) initiative when, as Director of Training and Technical Assistance, Lorna Palacio Morgan recalls, "We had this epiphany. Wait a minute! These young staff members need their own training. We realized that for many new staff members this was their first job. So we started to re-think our approach to training by asking the question: how can we tailor training to the widely varying skill levels of after-school staff? How do we build on the lessons learned as result of our first year?"

It was from that point on that TASC quickly developed an extensive series of graduated training opportunities designed to meet the differing needs of staff members. The continuum of workshops now ranges from core training modules for young people to week-long advanced institutes for seasoned staff and administrators. Some of TASC's offerings include: Supervising the Young Adult Employee, Managing Volunteers, and Engaging Parents in Using Technology. During the 2000/2001 year, TASC will

sponsor nearly 300 training sessions in all five boroughs of NYC. In order to deliver such a wide range of training opportunities, TASC has linked up with several training partners, including: The Partnership for After-school Education (PASE), Bank Street College, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and Columbia University Business School/Not-For Profit Management Institute.

One of TASC's contributions to the training arena has been the development of three first-year core knowledge training modules: one for young adults, one for new front-line staff, and one for new site coordinators. These core trainings were developed in conjunction with PASE.

Young Adult Employee Training (for ages 15-21)

This one-day, six hour training offered through PASE is specifically designed to meet the needs of young adults working in after-school programs. The training is divided into two sections. The Job Readiness portion of the training strives to help young

people recognize that they have the capacity to serve as role models for participating children. It focuses on helping them understand appropriate dress, speech and conduct. The Strategies and Ideas portion allows young people to experiment with conducting age-appropriate activities. Facilitators help participants identify the objective of activities and model positive group management strategies. Once a young person has completed this core training, he/she is invited to participate in Adult Core Training. Young adult participants are given a stipend and a public transportation pass for attending the training.

Core Knowledge Training for New Staff

This one-day, six hour training is designed to provide new adult staff with a foundation in four main areas: Safety, including first aid and CPR; Developmentally Appropriate Practices; Group Management; and Conflict Resolution. Under conflict resolution, TASC includes sections such as Culture and Conflict, and Drama and Conflict Resolution.

New Site Coordinator Training Institute

This five-day Institute is divided into two sections. The first section is a two-day program for Site Coordinators, either

before or immediately after beginning their positions. The Coordinators are given an orientation to understand their role as managers, and a framework for beginning to plan and operate their program, including the hiring of staff, budgeting, reporting, etc. At this first session they are encouraged to establish connections with other Site Coordinators for peer support. The second section of the Site Coordinator's Core Training is scheduled approximately six weeks later. It is designed to build on the "real-life" challenges and issues that Coordinators are experiencing, helping them refine their skills and give and receive peer support.

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Resources

The After-School Corporation (TASC) is leading a state-wide initiative designed to expand and improve after-school opportunities for youth in more than 150 programs in New York City. Policy Studies Associates, Inc, the independent evaluator for the project, has published a number of Resource Briefs related to staffing issues, including: *Matching After-school Staff to Project Needs and Activities*, *Identifying Staffing Needs and Recruiting Qualified Staff*, and a *Tool Kit—Building the Skills of After-School Staff*. TASC also offers workshops for administrators on the topics of recruitment, hiring and staff development, including: “*Non-Traditional Recruitment Strategies*.” Check out their web site: www.tascorp.org or contact Lorna Palacio Morgan, Director of Training, Technical Assistance and Resource Development. E-mail: lmorgan@tascorp.org

The California Department of Education/Child Development Division in collaboration with the University of CA, Irvine released a report, *School-Age Care and After-School Programs in California: A Study of the Options for Training, Certification and Professional Development*. 1999. CDE Press, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA. For more information call (916) 445-1260 or check out their web site: www.cde.ca.gov

The Center for the Child Care Workforce is involved in a wide range of activities designed to improve wages,

working conditions and the professional status of child care staff members. Some of their projects include: the Worthy Wage Network; the publication *Creating Better Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards for Early Childhood Staff*. 1998. (An addenda to these standards for *School-age Staff is due out Spring, 2001*); *Taking on Turnover: An Action Guide for Child Care Center Teachers and Directors* (Whitebook & Bellm, 1999), as well as a monthly newsletter entitled *Rights, Raises and Respect*. For more information check out their web site: www.ccw.org. Or call (800) UR-WORTHY.

The Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College, New York has released “*Supporting Community Learning: A Staff Development and Resource Guide for After-school Youth-Education Programs*”. 1995. Hill, Sara Louisa, Townsend, Leno O., Lawrence, Anne, Shevin, Jonathan, Ingalls, Susan. Authors. For more information call (718) 960-8054 or send E-mail: lena@alpha.lehman.cuny.edu

The National Training Institute for Community Youth Work has produced *Advancing Youth Development: A curriculum for Training Youth Workers (AYD) 1996*. This curriculum was developed with support of the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and is a collaborative project of the Academy of Educational Development (AED)/Center for Youth

Development and Policy Research, and the National Network for Youth. AED

also offers *Training Youth Workers at the Community Level: A Resource Kit*. 1996. For more information on AED resources, check out the AED web-site: www.aed.org/youth_worker.html

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time has been at the forefront of advances in the field of after-school and staff training for over 20 years. The NIOST web site offers a broad array of resources and information related to staffing issues, including the results of the MA Recruitment and Retention Project, *Building a Stable High-Quality After-School Workforce*, a fall 2000 article appearing in *Spotlight*, a **M.O.S.T.** (Making the Most of After-school Time) publication, and a chart of national efforts to improve staff recruitment and retention. The NIOST web site also offers numerous articles, books and videos related to staffing issues: www.niost.org

The National Women’s Law Center has released a report, *Expanding Possibilities: Be all that You can Be: Lessons from the Military for Improving our Nations Child Care System*, Applebaum, Judith, C., Campbell, Nancy Duff, Martin, Emily Martinson, Karin, authors. April, 2000. This report is available on their web-site: www.NWLC.org

School-Age Notes publishes a monthly newsletter on issues related to the school-age field.

The School-age Notes web site also offers a broad array of staff development resources through their on-line catalog: www.AfterSchoolCatalog.com



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