San Antonio Area Foundation
Where Giving and Community Connect

INVOLVING FAMILIES IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Quality Out-of-School Time (OST) programs can contribute to an array of positive academic, social and developmental outcomes for youth. Strong partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, including family members, is one of the characteristics of a quality OST program.

Research suggests that when families are involved in OST, they are more likely to be engaged in their childrens' education. They are more likely to help their children with homework, participate in school events, volunteer at school or attend parent-teacher meetings. At the same time, when OST staff invites family members to participate and seeks their input, student and parental satisfaction with the program improves and youth are more engaged.

Despite the benefits of family involvement, OST programs struggle to involve families for a number of reasons:

➢ Parents often work, attend school or have other responsibilities that limit involvement.
➢ Families may not have access to a vehicle, public transportation or childcare for younger children.
➢ Parents may be uncomfortable interacting with staff, in particular, if staff members fail to view families as assets.

WHAT IS FAMILY INVOLVEMENT?

Family involvement refers to the participation of a child or teen's family members in any aspect of an OST program and includes all adults in the household who participate positively in the lives of students, even non-family caregivers. Some family involvement activities occur on site and serve the needs of the program. Other family involvement activities are shaped by parents' interests or needs as shown in the table below.

OST FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES		
TYPE	**EXAMPLES**	**PURPOSE**
Parent-Child Shared Experiences	Family nights, community service activities and weekend trips for children and families	Provides opportunities for co-learning and sharing across generations
Adult Development	Parenting, GED, computer, and literacy classes, other educational and networking opportunities	Supports parents/caregivers, builds skills, strengthens ability to help children at home
Governance and Leadership	Parent surveys and focus groups, membership in parent advisory councils and committees	Gives parents and caregivers a voice in OST activities and programming
Linking to Schools and Community	Service fairs to introduce families to resources, forums to educate parents about school policies	Connects families to schools and community resources

Sources: Caspe, M., Flora Traub, and Priscilla M. D. Little. "Beyond the Head Count: Evaluating Family Engagement in Out-of-School Time," *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time*, no. 4 (August 2002): 1-15. U.S. Department of Education, Family Engagement Research Brief, http://y4y.ed.gov/Content/Resources/FI_Research_Brief_09212011.pdf.

STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING FAMILIES IN OST

Increase Comfort Levels and Promote Access

➢ Survey families to identify best times to hold events and learn about their interests

- ➢ Ensure meeting space is inviting and accessible through public transportation
- ➢ Provide transportation vouchers, invite siblings and offer child care

Support Families from an Asset-Based Perspective

- ➢ Consider the needs of families within the context of the program's need and mission
- ➢ Ask parents and caregivers for programming ideas and implement their suggestions
- ➢ Offer parenting classes, but not as a primary focus. Family members prefer to be seen as positive contributors to their child's development and may be put-off by parenting classes

Establish Trusting Relationships and Communicate with Families

- ➢ Hold orientation for new families and ask parents of current OST participants to help
- ➢ Greet family members by name and share positive news about the child regularly
- ➢ Speak to parents in their first language; use bilingual volunteers to translate materials

Recruit and Train Family-Centered Staff

- ➢ Hire staff with family involvement experience and recruit parents to volunteer
- ➢ Designate a staff person to fill the role of family involvement coordinator
- ➢ Provide staff training that promotes cultural sensitivity, respect and inclusiveness

Create Linkages between Families, Schools and Community Organizations

- ➢ Host forums or discussion groups that enable parents to network and share concerns
- ➢ Offer to attend a parent-teacher conference at school
- ➢ Refer families to partner agencies for assistance or information

NONPROFIT AGENCIES THAT INVOLVE FAMILIES IN OST PROGRAMS

Gemini Ink – www.geminiink.org

San Antonio Youth – www.sanantonioyouth.org

SAN ANTONIO AREA FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION INITIATIVE

The San Antonio Area Foundation is committed to increasing the high school graduation rate in Bexar County. Our High School Completion initiative awards grants to nonprofit organizations providing OST programs for Bexar County students in the 6th through 9th grades that:

- ➢ Address and improve at least one of the three dropout indicators – attendance, behavior or course grades
- ➢ Enable students to hold leadership roles or that engage families in participation
- ➢ Have a relationship with a public school

In addition, the Area Foundation builds the capacity of OST programs through training and technical assistance, convenes stakeholders, engages donors and commissions research to strengthen grantmaking.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Afterschool Alliance - http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/

Excel Beyond the Bell SA – http://beyondthebellsa.org/

Harvard Family Research Project – http://www.hfrp.org/

National Institute for Out-of-School Time (NIOST) - http://www.niost.org/

Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST) - http://www.txpost.org/

The Wallace Foundation - http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/Pages/default.aspx

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