



Expected Practices for School Age Programs-Middle School

Based on MOST Effective Practices

INTENTIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN:

1. The program sets clear, focused goals that are aligned with mission and are responsive to family/community needs.
2. A variety of activities are offered that foster the development of knowledge and skills that link to program goals.
 - Activities and materials are appropriate for the participant's developmental levels.
 - Activities provide opportunities for participants to learn new skills.
 - A variety of activities are planned throughout each week to support the following learning experiences:

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|--------------------|-------------------------|
| o Arts | o Math/reasoning |
| o Music | o Science/nature |
| o Drama/theater | o Cultural Awareness |
| o Movement | o Cooking and Nutrition |
| o Language/reading | |
 - There are adequate materials to support the variety of activities.
 - Fieldtrips and special activities are regularly planned.
3. Staff provide regular, ongoing sessions with activities that build upon each other.
 - Participants have the opportunity to complete long-range projects.
4. Participants are provided with time and structure to reflect on learning. For example:
 - Check in and check out with participants each day
 - Reflective journaling
5. Staff support positive youth development and incorporate the strengths and interests of participants.
 - Activities and materials reflect participant's varied interests. New materials to extend choices are added periodically in response to participant's interests.
 - Activities and materials support and encourage social/emotional learning, physical maturation, identity development and cognitive growth.

6. All participants have the opportunity to take initiative, explore and be creative.
 - The daily routine is familiar to participants. A written schedule is posted in the center.
 - Open-ended activities and materials are available to encourage choice and individual expression.
 - Participants are free to decide whether to participate in any activity.
 - Accommodations are made to allow for full program participation, regardless of ability.

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTICIPANTS:

1. Staff and participants build authentic relationships through reliable, ongoing interactions that develop trust and demonstrate high expectations for participants.
 - Staff interactions with participants consistently convey warmth, support, trust, and mutual respect.
 - Staff use a variety of positive communication strategies such as give-and-take conversations, open-ended statements and open ended questions to expand and encourage participants to explore their ideas.
 - Staff interactions with participants consistently convey high expectations and belief in the ability of participants to succeed.
2. Staff use consistent positive guidance and behavior management techniques.
 - Supervision of participants is adjusted appropriately for different ages and abilities.
 - Staff provides clear and consistent expectations and use positive non-punitive techniques to guide participant's behavior.
3. Staff respect and recognize participants as individuals.
 - Staff actively promote social skills and positive relations among participants.
 - Offer non-judgmental support to participants.
4. Staff believe in and focus on the development of the full potential.
 - Provide respectful accommodations that create a safe and successful environment for every participant.
 - Staff are able to identify participants who need more assistance behaviorally or developmentally, determine the necessary supports, and create an individual plan.
 - Participants and staff collaboratively create supportive expectations that focus on interests and needs of each individual participant.
5. Staff ensure participants and adults understand their roles and boundaries. For example:
 - Group agreements/guidelines
 - Rules
 - Policies
 - Job descriptions

YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP:

1. Staff respect and recognize participants for their contributions.
 - Participants are recognized publicly (i.e. during formal announcements, in individual interactions with staff members, etc.).
 - Participant work, accomplishments, and participant success is displayed visibly in each space with participant's permission.
2. Staff engage participants to share ownership in program planning, implementation and evaluation.
3. Participants are encouraged to develop and extend activities, which are of interest to them.
4. Participants are enabled to build and practice skills that contribute to leadership, identity development and community building.
5. Participants are engaged in a range of leadership roles that positively affect themselves, others and their community.

RACIAL AND CULTURAL INCLUSION:

1. Racial and cultural diversity is promoted at all levels of the organization.
 - Hiring practices are non-discriminatory.
 - Staff reflect the diverse cultural, racial, and linguistic characteristics of the participants, families, and community served.
 - Programming provides opportunities for participants to learn about and see themselves reflected in the diversity of activities, materials and experiences offered.
2. Ongoing and progressive learning on implicit bias, racial equity, cultural identity and cultural inclusion is provided at all levels of the organization including in programming and for staff, volunteers and board.
3. Leadership works to recognize and assess organizational bias, identify and implement strategic responses to create inclusive environments.
4. Leadership ensures a culture of high expectations for all participants and families of every racial and cultural background. For example:
 - Mission
 - Values
 - Description of programs
 - Reports to funders

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:

1. The program supports ongoing meaningful partnerships with family, school, and community.

- Staff communicates and partners with the following groups regarding community issues and opportunities:
 - Families
 - Schools
 - Additional stakeholders
 - Program uses community resources to expand program activities.
 - Staff provide information about and connections to community resources that meet the needs of participants and their families.
 - Staff, families, schools and other stakeholders intentionally work together to address needs for participants with confidentiality and sensitivity.
 - Staff, families, schools and/or relevant stakeholders share information about how to support individual participant's development including discussion on sensitive issues.
 - Program activities include opportunities for civic involvement and community-service.
2. The program is informed by and responsive to the culture(s) and identities of families and community.
 - Staff demonstrate knowledge of and affirm participants' cultures, identity, traditions and practices.
 - Program provides opportunity for participants, their families and community stakeholders to share and learn about community cultures, traditions and practices.
 - Program activities, artwork displayed, guest speakers, and special events reflect and feature participants' and the community's cultures and identities.
 3. The program provides communication methods that are respectful and inclusive of family and community assets.
 - Program policies encourage communication between staff and families for the individual participant's well-being.
 - Staff provide orientation information for new families and makes a conscious effort to meet each participant's family.
 - Staff communicate with parents/guardians and participants with a conscious effort to make face-to-face contact when possible.
 - Parents are encouraged to be involved in the program when relevant.
 - Families and community stakeholders are kept informed about the program.
 - Staff establish system to communicate with families about daily program events, activities, and participant's preferences. This may include notes, email, text, phone calls, newsletters, work samples, message boards, information sheets, and/or other electronic means of communication, as appropriate.
 4. The program ensures families have meaningful opportunities to influence program development and continuous improvement.
 - Parents are offered the opportunity to be involved in decision-making roles (e.g. board, committees, permission for activities).
 - Families are encouraged to give input and are provided opportunities to get involved in program events.

- Families are regularly engaged in evaluating the program.

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND STAFF SUPPORT:

1. Leadership of the organization ensures the mission is understood by all.
 - Responsibilities of each staff member are clearly defined. New staff receives a thorough orientation to their duties and responsibilities, and to mission, program policies and procedures.
2. Leadership of the organization ensures regular and ongoing program support and oversight.
 - There is a clear supervisory structure for both staff and program.
 - The agency provides effective, ongoing supervision of all staff, both paid and volunteer, and provides a regular evaluation of all paid employees.
 - The organization's budget provides sufficient funds to accommodate the goals of the program.
3. The organizational environment is respectful of and values individual staff members' culture and identity.
4. Staff and volunteers are recruited from the community served and represent the cultural background and identity of the participants.
5. Appropriate supervision and support is provided to staff to be effective in their jobs.
 - Staff have time to plan the program, to share participant and program-related information, and to gather needed materials, equipment, and resources.
 - Organization has a process and structure to reflect and gather information from staff, families, participants and community stakeholders to support continuous program improvement.
 - Organization has capacity to effectively hire and retain high quality staff (i.e. guide staff professional development, monitor and address staff retention, etc.).

ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY:

1. Staff identify physical and emotional safety and risk factors for participant and staff and implement policies and procedures to address them.
 - The program has written policies and procedures in place for the protection and well-being of participants in the areas of:
 - o health (including hygiene, illness prevention, ill participant procedure, medications, health records)
 - o child abuse and neglect
 - o positive child guidance and behavioral expectations
 - o emergency & safety (addresses handling of injuries, emergency evacuation procedures)
 - o supervision (attendance, tracking of participants, departure of participants)
 - o field trip (any trip away from the building/program space)

2. Staff provide an environment that builds community.
 - Ample space and furnishings are provided for program activities.
 - Program space is physically comfortable, clean, well maintained and aesthetically pleasing.
 - There are furnished spaces where participants eat and a designated safe area to store their possessions.
 - Staff has space to store personal possessions and program materials.

3. Staff provide an engaging and developmentally appropriate environment to enhance the emotional and physical well-being of the participants.
 - Staff ensure that areas used by participants are clean and safe: indoor and outdoor areas are free of safety hazards.
 - Staff ensure that program spaces are set up each day and that participants have adequate amount of space to create and use materials for activities.
 - Spaces are available where individuals or small groups can be alone, away from general group activities.
 - A comfortable area is available where participants can relax including soft furnishings.

4. Staff make intentional decisions about the nutritional, physical and emotional well-being of the participants.
 - Personal hygiene practices are incorporated into the daily program
 - Meals and snacks are provided which include fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. Mealtimes are pleasant and social experiences.

5. Health, safety and behavior procedures are communicated to staff, participants and families relevant to the program.
 - Families are given written information about the program, including:
 - Program policies: discipline, health, emergencies, attendance, etc.
 - Program practices: hours, activities, food service
 - Parenting information; community events