
IDENTIFYING STAFFING NEEDS AND RECRUITING QUALIFIED AFTER-SCHOOL STAFF

A Resource Brief

PREPARED BY POLICY STUDIES ASSOCIATES, INC.

It happens over and over: A site coordinator comes on board to turn a proposed new after-school program into reality. She has lots of energy, fresh ideas, good support from her host school and sponsoring organization, and financial backing from TASC. What she doesn't have is staff—the key ingredient that can make or break a program serving children and youth.

What kinds of staff does a TASC-supported project need? Where can those staff be found? This Resource Brief addresses those questions with examples of promising practices from TASC sites.

that focus on artistic growth need instructors who can teach these skills.

Sometimes translating goals into staffing requirements is complicated. "I try to think about the skills a person would develop in certain kinds of work," explained the coordinator of a project with broad youth development goals. "A person whose last job was interacting with the public, especially with people of many ages, has probably learned to be flexible and find creative ways of catching people's interest. It might not matter if they were ever a teacher, a youth worker—we can build those skills as long as they're experienced with kids."

What Kinds of Staff Do We Need?

TASC site coordinators say they consider three factors when deciding what kinds of staff to hire: program goals, the principal's level of involvement, and student characteristics.

1. Match Staff to Program Goals

Some goals clearly dictate the staff who are best suited to helping children meet the project's expectations. For example, projects designed to help children complete homework and to continue the lessons taught during the regular school day usually want staff with experience in academic subjects, such as certified teachers—although these staff are usually more expensive than other instructors, so few projects hire them exclusively. Projects

Academic Goals Guide Hiring Decisions

The TASC project sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History at C.E.S. 42 (Bronx) has a strong academic component. Its site coordinator sought two types of staff: enrichment specialists who were experienced teachers, and instructors with the maturity to supervise groups of children working on academic activities. She settled on four board-certified or provisional teachers to lead hands-on science activities and 26 group leaders, all of whom are at least 18 years old and have high school diplomas, to support the specialists. Parents and teachers from the school day help as volunteers.

2. Involve the Principal in Staffing Decisions

Many TASC projects are hosted by principals whose project involvement is deep and hands-on. They want the project to succeed, and they often have strong opinions about which staff will bring the best chance for success.

Some coordinators look for ways to make the principal's involvement an asset. "I saw my principal as a real resource for staffing," said the coordinator of a project with a strong recreational component but weak academic enrichment. "I appreciated his concern for the program. I saw it as an opportunity to get help finding staff in a specific area." Since her principal preferred after-school staff who had Board of Education credentials, the coordinator asked him to recommend three classroom teachers with expertise in teaching literacy.

Other principals have organized teams to help select after-school staff or assigned

a school-community liaison to help the coordinator with hiring decisions.

3. Consider Student Characteristics

Site coordinators consider the age, social development, language skills, and other characteristics of students they serve when they identify the qualities or skills that staff should reflect. "My project serves mostly young children, so I look for people who have at least one year experience working as a day care provider or camp counselors," one coordinator explained.

Not surprisingly, language skills are especially important for projects that serve high percentages of non-English speakers, sites coordinators say. At the project sponsored by Educators for Social Responsibility at P.S. 24, for example, 98 percent of staff speak Spanish, the first language of many students and parents. The site coordinator, principal, teachers, and parents all agreed that the staff's bilingual skills have improved communication between the school and parents, especially about homework completion.

A Principal's Involvement Shapes Hiring

The principal of P.S. 24 (Brooklyn), who hosts a TASC project sponsored by Educators for Social Responsibility, organized a staff selection committee that included the school liaison, an assistant administrator, and ESR's executive director. The principal made two other contributions to hiring decisions:

- *She encouraged the site coordinator to employ school aides who could provide some continuity with the regular school day. She also advocated hiring parents as group leaders because they know the children well.*
- *She recommended hiring community members as a way to build neighborhood investment in the project and school.*

"Excitement, creativity, and passion for children are the most important staff qualities for all projects."

— Site coordinator

Where Can I Find Good Staff?

We asked coordinators of well-staffed TASC projects to share their recruitment secrets. The answers were surprisingly simple:

1. Start a Word-of-Mouth Buzz

Tell everyone you know that you're hiring, and tell them exactly what you are looking for. That means former employees and bosses, friends, and neighbors.

2. Don't Overlook Candidates in Your Own Back Yard

Put the word out in the host school that you need help—not only from homeroom teachers but also from music and art specialists, guidance counselors, coaches, teacher's aides, and parents. Ask parents and directors of local organizations if there are any community leaders who might make good staff.

A TASC project operated by Clearpool at P.S. 43 (Bronx) relies on the school's parent-teacher association to locate staff who know the school program, its administrators, and its students. The coordinator of this project even hired the PTA president to help improve parent outreach, which resulted in the recruitment of four parents as group leaders.

3. Advertise at Local Colleges, Universities, and High Schools

College students pursuing degrees in education or social services are potentially good after-school staff. The part-time nature of the job fits their work-study schedules, and sometimes they can receive credit for after-school teaching. The coordinator of the TASC-sponsored project at P.S. 123 (Manhattan), operated by New York University's Metro Center for Urban Education, attracted college students by posting job listings on the school's Internet job service and in the student paper.

High school honors students can also make good assistants, especially if they are committed to their own education and can act as role models for the after-school participants.

These staff need extra training and supervision, however, and sometimes aren't mature enough to manage after-school participants who are close to their own age. For these reasons, the coordinator of the American Museum of Natural History project at C.E.S. 42 only considers applicants who have experience as paraprofessionals and/or some college education. Many are

recommended by their college deans or department heads.

"I look for [college students] with a genuine interest in children, high energy, sensitivity to cultural issues, and an understanding of the school environment."

—Site coordinator

4. Ask for Referrals

Networking among youth-serving professionals, including youth workers, school counselors, and child advocates, can generate referrals of reliable, creative, motivated job candidates. For instance, the coordinator of the project operated by NYU Metro Center for Urban Education at P.S. 123 used informal connections with high school counselors to locate and hire five honor roll students. In addition to submitting a three-page application form and their report card, job candidates had to provide a letter of recommendation from a teacher.

The site coordinator says these referrals helped her know that the applicants were reliable and also gave her a contact—someone who knew the student's situation—she could call if the student later had trouble with the job.

The nonprofit organization that sponsors your TASC project may be another good source of referrals. Many first-year sites recruit youth workers, group leaders, and even site coordinators from within the parent organization. Sometimes these staff come just to help with program start-up, but often they stay as permanent staff. Staff who have worked in or for the sponsoring organization have the advantage of knowing its goals and its leaders' preferences, and they can smooth the way for a new site coordinator.



New after-school projects face many tough challenges, but identifying and locating good staff does not need to be one of them. The practices described here offer a starting point for staffing a project with people who care about children and have the skills needed to

help students benefit from after-school experiences. Other Resource Briefs will address other staffing issues, such as how to use staff effectively. The resources listed on this page can also provide more information on after-school staffing.

Sources for More Information

Afterschool Alliance
P.O. Box 65166
Washington, DC 20035-5166
(202) 296-9378
www.afterschoolalliance.org

Americorps
Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
(800) 94-ACORPS
www.americorps.org

National Association of Child Care
Resources and Referral Agencies
1319 F Street NW, Suite 810
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 393-5501
www.childcarerr.org

National Center for Child Care Workforce
733 15th Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005-2112
(202) 737-7700
www.ccw.org

National Center for Schools and
Communities
Fordham University
33 West 60th Street, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10023
(212) 636-6699

National Helpers Network
245 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1705
New York, NY 10016
(212) 679-2482
www.nationalhelpers.org

National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02181-8259
(781) 283-2547
www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC

National PTA
330 N. Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
(800) 307-4PTA
(312) 670-6782
www.pta.org

Partnership for After-School Education
120 Broadway Suite 3048
New York, NY 10271
(212) 571-2664
www.pacesetter.com

Schools of the 21st Century
Bush Center in Child Development &
Social Policy
Yale University, 310 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 432-9944
www.yale.edu/bushcenter/21C

In 1998, The After-School Corporation (TASC) launched an initiative to improve the quantity and quality of after-school programs for students in the public schools of New York City and State. Through grants to nonprofit organizations that sponsor school-based projects, TASC now serves students in kindergarten through twelfth grade at almost 200 sites. This Resource Brief shares some of the promising practices used by TASC projects. We hope that it helps your planning, program improvement, and further exploration into the world of after-school services. For more information on the Resource Briefs or the companion Tool Kits, which contain checklists and other practical materials, contact TASC's Research and Education Policy staff at (212) 547-6950 or www.tascorp.org. This brief was prepared for TASC with support from The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York.