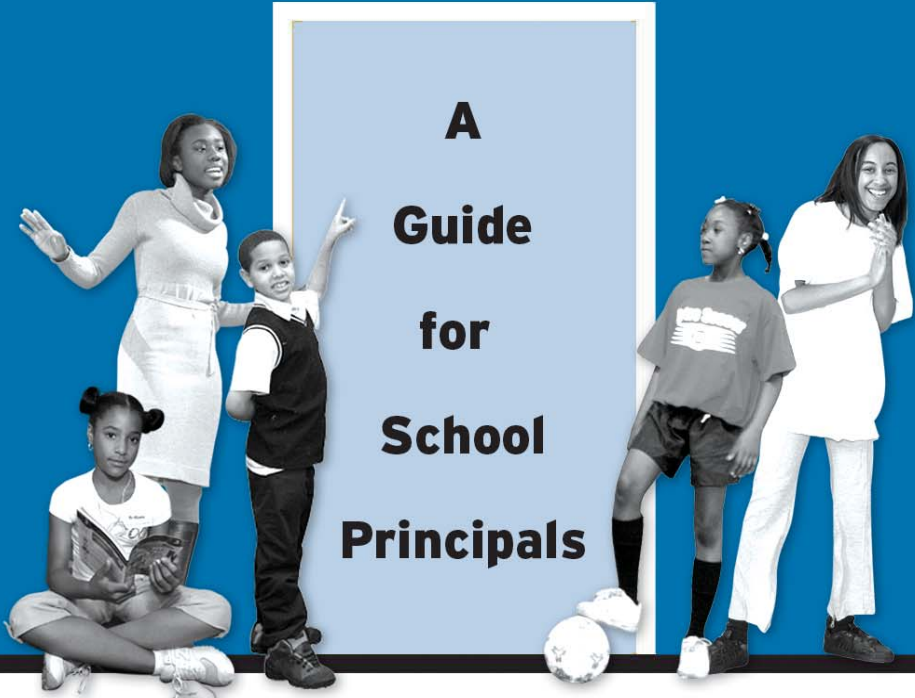


TASCO

THE AFTER-SCHOOL CORPORATION



**A
Guide
for
School
Principals**

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Welcome



Dear Principal,

This guide is an updated version of a publication originally issued by **The After-School Corporation** (TASC) in response to principals' requests for more information about TASC-sponsored after-school programs. As you may know, TASC is an initiative that offers New York a special experience - one that is different from but connected to the school day, and that supports students by enriching their learning.

TASC is a partnership that depends on many different groups, including the Department of Education, more than 80 community-based organizations (CBOs), teachers, parents, Parent Coordinators, volunteers, and of course, the students themselves. As principals, you have assumed a vital role in the partnership by inviting TASC into your buildings.

We have learned a great deal from principals who have shared experiences and asked many questions. Their views on their after-school program's strengths and weaknesses and ideas about how the programs could best contribute to their schools helped shape the original





guide and are reflected in this new edition. And this guide remains open to change, because TASC continues to evolve, and we continue to learn from each other. Thus, we invite you to send us your reactions to what you read here, along with additional questions that should be addressed. Because the guide is available on our website (www.tascorp.org), its electronic version can easily be updated to reflect your suggestions.

We hope you will read the guide knowing that TASC is grateful for the way principals have helped us improve our services. We are also gratified by your willingness to make a place for the program in your school. Many principals have echoed the feelings of one of your colleagues, who told us, "An after-school program isn't a frill. It's critical for our children's education."

Sincerely,

Lucy N. Friedman
President
The After-School Corporation



“The people supervising the program are always sensitive to the **needs of our students** as well as those of the school. The site coordinator meets with me on a regular basis so that we can make sure the after-school program is congruent with our daily instructional program.”




I wanted to ask ...



What is the principal's role with a TASC-supported program?

As you think through your role in the after-school program and discuss it with the community-based organization (CBO) that manages it, bear in mind that a fundamental element of the TASC model is a full-time site coordinator. This structure reflects two convictions - first, that the planning and problem solving needed to operate a successful program require a much greater time commitment than the three hours the program is in session; and second, that the effort involved should not rest solely on the shoulders of the principals. It is the site coordinator's job to take the lead responsibility for managing day-to-day operations of the program.

Nevertheless, TASC has learned from experience that **your contributions are essential to the success of the initiative** - and it is clear that principals share this view. Good school leaders feel a sense of ownership in an important program taking place in their buildings, and many principals have chosen to play a significant role in their after-school programs. These principals have observed their programs in action, established solid relationships with staff, and consulted with CBOs about how to improve operations. Although CBOs are officially responsible for after-school programs, your contributions will make your after-school program a more effective educational experience for your students. Your involvement also helps coordinate activities, themes, initiatives and policies between the school day and the after-school program.



What are the key steps I need to take to get our after-school program off to a good start?

Perhaps no time is busier for principals than the beginning of the school year. Still, principals and site coordinators have repeatedly told us that any effort to establish - or cement - a cooperative relationship with the after-school program's CBO at the start of the year is a worthwhile investment. They also suggested the following first steps:

- **Confirm** that there is a designated office space available and ready for the site coordinator's use.
- **Introduce** the site coordinator to the entire school staff and make it a special point to connect him or her with people who will be instrumental to the success of the program - for example, the assistant principals, the Parent Coordinator, the custodian, and the UFT representative.
- **Invite** the coordinator to all staff meetings, and ask him/her to sit on school wide committees, such as the School Leadership Team.
- **Include** after-school staff in organizational charts you distribute for your school.
- **Distribute** your staff handbook to after-school staff.
- **Give** the site coordinator practical information about your school - for example, which spaces are available for program activities, which teachers are sharing their rooms with the after-school program, and when other after-school activities and programs are scheduled to take place.
- **Take** the coordinator step by step through the dismissal procedures in your building. For example, are all students dismissed to an auditorium? Can parents enter the building to pick up students? Once these procedures are clearly communicated, the coordinator can work on making the transition from school



day to after-school time safe and consistent with your policies.

■ **Make** certain that you and the CBO share accurate information on the program's enrollment capacity and that the CBO keeps you updated about new openings. Principals say timely information on whether slots are available lets them know what to tell teachers and parents who ask about enrolling children.

■ **Develop** a regular mechanism for communicating with your site coordinator - to discuss ideas, to debrief, and to measure progress toward shared goals. (For information on a process TASC has developed to help programs measure their own progress, see the discussion of the Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool, p. 24-25)

Besides discussing logistics with the site coordinator, should I talk to her about big-picture issues - for instance, the style and the direction of the program and the role I want to play in it?

Absolutely, and the earlier the better, according to many principals and site coordinators. It is helpful if you can be as clear as possible about your expectations for the program at the outset. In many instances, your vision will require considerable thought, planning, and discussion to translate into operations. For example, many principals have told us that they share our view that after-school programs should offer students activities that support what is going on in the classroom, while giving students a different kind of experience than the one they receive during the school day. The translation of this type of vision into operations **requires an ongoing dialogue** among you, the site coordinator, and your teachers. By initiating this communication right at the beginning of the program, the after-school staff will be primed to follow through on your expectations, your vision and your school wide policies.

“This year our site
coordinator... has become a part
of the school community.
She attended our summer
staff development training
and participates in staff training
throughout the year.”





Do I have a role in staffing decisions?

The CBO is responsible for hiring, managing, and paying all staff in the after-school program. Some site coordinators screen candidates and give the principal the opportunity to approve candidates for key positions. When programs want to hire staff from within the school, the principal can recommend members of his or her staff and give the site coordinator final decision-making authority. **We encourage you and the CBO to determine together what your role will be in candidate selection.**

Because after-school program staff can be selected from among your teachers, community members, volunteers, or other groups, some principals ask what the balance between school staff and external staff ought to be. Our belief - and one endorsed by a number of principals - is that both kinds of staff members have important contributions to make. Teachers bring educational expertise to the program, are familiar with the students, and understand the school culture. Other staff members add new skills and knowledge to the mix, and help connect students to their communities. Parent volunteers can create a link between the parent body and the school, and your Parent Coordinator is in an ideal position to communicate with family members about the after-school program.

Does the Department of Education or TASC require that any after-school staff-for example, physical education staff - have Department of Education licenses?

Because the after-school program staff are hired and paid by a CBO, the Department of Education does not require that they be certified. However, TASC strongly encourages the site coordinators to include certified teachers in the diverse mix of staff that we have learned is most beneficial for students.



People with very diverse backgrounds staff our after-school program. What does TASC do to prepare them and support them in the work they do?

At minimum, first-year site coordinators must undergo a week of training, and other first-year staff must receive training for at least 15 hours. But that's only the tip of the **extensive learning process that TASC offers to all kinds of staff members**. Throughout the year, TASC hosts frequent workshops, seminars, and training institutes for staff. TASC has partnered with over forty training providers, including New York University, Columbia University, and Child Care, Inc. Two key TASC training partners, The Partnership for After-School Education (PASE) and the Bank Street College of Education, have assisted TASC in designing a core curriculum for training after-school professionals.

My CBO is planning to have high school students work with students. Is that a good idea?

Teens give younger students the opportunity to interact with people closer to their own age, and the mentoring role that they can play in these programs is an important reason why some programs use a large number of high school students. However, in comparison to more mature staff, teens need more direction on specific roles and responsibilities. In response to these needs, TASC has developed training specifically for younger, less experienced staff. In addition, we have developed training to guide the site coordinators in managing these younger staff members. If you feel that teens in the after-school program are not being given proper guidance and monitoring, be sure to communicate that concern to your site coordinator. It is important that the CBO be mindful that teens -- who can show great maturity but who are not adults -- are most effective when given specific roles and responsibilities.



My school already has other after-school programs and activities that share goals and approaches with TASC. Should there be an effort to enroll students who are engaged in these programs and activities in the TASC-supported program? What is the site coordinator's role in making that happen?

It is the site coordinator's responsibility to help coordinate all after-school activities in your school. She or he will try to ensure that all students participating in an after-school activity are enrolled in the TASC-supported program.

All participants in the after-school program should have similar experiences and feel part of the program even if they are enrolled in tutorial or other special offerings. TASC's goal is to provide all students a **comprehensive after-school experience** with participation in as many of the arts, sports, and other recreational activities as possible. Naturally, arranging this kind of cross-enrollment poses space and scheduling challenges, and the site coordinator may turn to you for advice. For example, your help may be needed to identify extra space for the students who are also engaged in other after-school activities but who join the after-school program for part of the time.

“There should be
no surprises!

If there’s an equipment
problem, the coordinator
must inform the teacher.”





My school has rules and expectations for students during the day. Can I expect that the CBO will generally maintain the same tone and standards for students in after-school hours?

Yes. One of the primary roles of the site coordinator is to integrate the programs and policies of the after-school time with what happens during the school day. Some rules may need to be adjusted to accommodate different situations in the after-school program, but the site coordinator is prepared to follow the procedures and practices that are established for the regular day school program. The more you **communicate your rules and policies** to the site coordinator, the easier it will be to adjust those rules and policies to after-school needs.

What specifically are CBO responsibilities for ensuring student safety?

We recognize that your safety plan defines procedures for everyone who attends, visits and works in your building. The site coordinator needs to have a copy of the safety plan and be familiar with its contents. We recommend that he or she have input into the annual revisions of the safety plan.

Because TASC shares with you a **safety-first** policy for after-school programs, we are pleased to report that over the years very few safety and security problems have arisen in TASC-sponsored programs.



Can other principals and TASC staff give me tips for heading off problems that come up when school and CBO staff share rooms and equipment?

Shared space and equipment pose a challenge to many after-school programs, especially when the programs are new to the school. Even established programs starting a new school year may have to go through an initial adjustment during which the regular school staff and the after school staff learn how to work in each other's spaces, share resources and work out problems when they arise. There are bound to be situations in which the teaching staff finds irregularities in the condition of their rooms on the day following an after-school activity or when after-school staff complain that classroom teachers are being overly restrictive with the use of their rooms. Until the different staffs **develop trust** in one another, small problems can become major issues.

As always, good communications are the key to building trust. To facilitate communications, site coordinators have suggested that you distribute a list of who uses which rooms during the school day. Site coordinators can then use this information to identify teachers they need to contact regularly in order to avoid problems. Also consider using a strategy that one Staten Island site has found helpful -- developing a checklist of specific conditions that after-school staff can refer to in order to monitor whether the room is being left in the proper condition at the end of the day. If you do find that teachers are taken by surprise by conditions created by sharing their rooms, be sure to inform your site coordinator that communications need to



be improved. Similarly, ask that teachers extend the same courtesy to CBO staff by sharing information about classroom projects and needs.

Principals also suggest that to **set the tone** for successful sharing of space, it helps to emphasize to both after-school and school staff that, rather than talking in terms of what belongs to school day students vs. what belongs to after-school kids, it is more productive to think in terms of working with a common group of students.

What kind of relationship should I expect with after-school staff? What should I expect of them and what do they expect of me?

The after-school and TASC staffs are grateful for your support and respect the expertise you bring to the program. We try to strike a balance between drawing on that expertise and not intruding too much on your time. During the program's start-up period, and throughout the year, TASC staff will visit your school. The TASC program officer, who is responsible for monitoring your program, will visit frequently. Other TASC staff members may also visit. Sometimes, staff members will bring potential funders or other interested groups to observe the after-school program. In these situations, TASC staff will notify you as early as possible.

If you wish to speak to a TASC staff person during a site visit or any other time, **please feel free to contact us.**

“The TASC program has a good collaboration with the school. The program takes into account our existing after-school program and coordinates overlapping times perfectly. There is a **well-planned schedule** for student movement from one program to another.”





I've been finding that students and parents come to me the morning after a problem has arisen in the after-school program. I know that's natural and even desirable since I am the school leader, but what role can I expect the CBO and its after-school program to play in addressing these problems?

Many parents are accustomed to turning to the principal when their children experience problems in the school building. Similarly, when parents are dissatisfied with their children's experience in the after-school program, they may call on the principal for a solution. For example, parents may be concerned that their children did not finish their homework during the after-school hours, or someone may question the way an after-school staff member supervised an activity.

You may want the parents to continue to turn to you in these situations, but you should also feel comfortable referring them to the site coordinator. Because the CBO has hired a full-time site coordinator to be in the school during the school day, this person should be able to respond to many of parents' problems. Also, some programs have hired **parent liaisons** to help. And if you have not already done so, you may want to ask your Parent Coordinator to be the point person from within the school to focus on parental concerns.

It may take a little time, but as parents learn more about the after-school program and how it is integrated into the school, they should gradually recognize that they need not rely solely on you and your office to address difficulties connected to the program.

“I worked hard to get
the after-school office
next to our general office,
not on the fourth floor.

I think that sends
the right message
to parents.”





What kind of relationship does TASC have with the Department of Education? How can that relationship help the TASC program in my school?

Over the years, TASC has developed a **strong partnership** with the Department of Education (DOE) and works regularly with Central and Regional offices. From the outset, the Department of Education has endorsed the TASC initiative and demonstrated its support by allocating funds to support after-school programs. The Department has also designated liaisons to TASC, and in the past, assigned Department of Education employees to help TASC staff review proposals. The DOE has also provided space, security, food services, and when appropriate for our special needs participants, transportation and paraprofessional assistance.

TASC has also collaborated with several regions and districts on federal and state proposals and has partnered with DOE in several initiatives, such as the Summer Success and AIDP programs. We look forward to the continued support of this partnership, as we strive to provide effective school-based after-school programs to youngsters across New York City.

If you have any questions about the DOE's relationship with TASC or about how to facilitate action on your requests for the after-school program in your school, we encourage you to contact your TASC program officer. The program officer will work with regional and central liaisons to answer your questions and address your issues.

“The CBO should become part of your staff. When the CBO first came into our school, I sensed our staff could put their guard up. After all, they were strangers in the building. That’s why I thought it was important to **introduce the program** to the entire staff, not just the people who work with it.”





I know that TASC programs vary, depending on the school and the expertise of the CBO. But are there broad features that TASC thinks these programs need to have to best foster students' growth and development?

Yes, TASC has articulated a set of common elements that we look for in all of our diverse programs. Together, these elements comprise our vision of what a quality after-school program consists of - and many of them are nationally recognized as cornerstones of good programming. The core elements are:

- **Program eligibility** for all children in the school
- **Activities** that span homework help; literacy, math, and science; the arts; sports; community service; and field trips.
- **Regular attendance** - daily for elementary and middle school students, with more flexible requirements for high school students to allow them to work or meet other obligations.
- **Involvement of parents and families** as volunteers and participants.
- **Full-time**, year-round site coordinators.
- **Diverse staffs** with varied skills and a 1:10 adult-student ratio.
- **Nutritious food** and sufficient time to eat and socialize with adults and peers.

“It is essential that the day and afternoon programs are **seamless** so that what is done during each is supported by the other. This includes following all school rules and regulations.”





How can I help get parents involved in the after-school program?

After-school hours are an excellent opportunity to reach out to parents, to give them information and to involve them in school wide initiatives. Site coordinators set a **high priority on working with students' families** and to engage parents in many different roles, including those of administrative assistants, program aides, and volunteers. As the school's principal, you may offer advice and recommendations, and your school's parent coordinator can be an important source of help in this area. TASC also retains a staff member to focus on helping all of the after-school programs get parents more involved. We think - and many principals agree - that this effort not only engages parents in after-school, but helps develop a stronger link between parents and the whole school.

What are the goals of homework help in the after-school programs?

Many parents want their children to do their homework during the after-school program, and it is an activity that every program offers. While the extent and design of the homework component is up to the individual site, the goal in most programs is to get students off to a good start on their assignments and to help them with basic academic skills. This may mean that students will not complete all their homework during after-school hours, but we expect that parents, too, will play a role in helping their children with homework. We encourage parents to see after-school as a time when students begin their homework assignments and **get extra help with basic skills**. However, TASC programs also offer students a rich menu of activities, such as art, recreation, sports, academic enrichment and leadership development, which are a critical part of children's development.



Is it important to encourage my teachers to use after-school time to complement specific units or lessons they are teaching in the classroom?

A number of principals have endorsed this approach. As one principal put it, "If you integrate the two programs, you get real educational pay-off during the day."

The core elements of the TASC program model make sense to me. But as a principal I know that a vision is only as useful as understanding how it translates into operations - and then working for continued improvement. Does TASC have a system for that? And is there a way I can work with program staff to strengthen operations as we go along?

Yes to both questions. Over the past few years, TASC took the lead in developing a **Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool**, a version of which has been adopted by the New York After-School State Network (NYSAN). The Tool consists of sets of indicators or criteria for each of 10 essential ingredients of after-school programs -- ingredients that are consistent with the core elements of the TASC program model. Using the Tool, assessment teams at each school make ratings (on a scale of 1-4) to measure their program's progress in meeting 10 sets of specific goals that translate the 10 criteria into operational terms. The Tool also helps the team set priorities for action plans to strengthen areas that they have assessed as needing work. The Tool was



developed with input from representatives of the entire TASC community, including principals. Its use offers constituencies of after-school programs a practical system for self-assessment and continuous improvement. Principals and Assistant Principals are invited and strongly encouraged to work on teams that are formed at each school to use the Tool to further these goals.

Besides the self-assessment, have TASC-sponsored programs been examined through an independent outside evaluation?

Again, the answer is "yes." Policy Studies Associates, Inc., an independent research firm, has conducted a five-year longitudinal study that followed students at 96 TASC-supported programs. Evaluators collected data through surveys, site visits, focus groups, and through a review of administrative records that covered 52,355 students who participated in TASC programming and 90,806 non-participating students in the same schools. The results showed that students in grades Pre-K through eighth grade who participated in TASC-sponsored programs showed **substantial improvements in math achievement**. The study also found solid gains in school attendance rates for children in grades Pre-K through eight who attended TASC-sponsored programs, and for high school students in the lowest quartile of school attendance.

One important focus of the evaluation was its queries to principals about how they viewed the TASC-sponsored programs. Fully 97 percent of principals who were surveyed reported their schools had strong relationships with their after-school programs.

“As the school year winds down, I realize the **impact** the after-school program has had on the students and the community.

Three hundred youngsters attended the program. The program’s design of homework assistance, sports, arts integration and technology provided students with new experiences.”





I would like to share ...

We are aware that this guide does not capture all of the elements that contribute to your working relationship with TASC-supported after-school programs, but we hope it will become **the start of an ongoing dialogue**. Once again, we encourage you to respond to this guide and let us know how we can shape future publications for school principals.

Your contributions will continue to help develop and improve the after-school programs. Each one of you has become an essential element of this initiative. We congratulate you on your dedication to children and thank you for making your schools a home to quality after-school programs that enhance the education of your students.

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