

## Section Five

# **Tip Sheets: Simple Ideas to Address Important Out-of-School Topics**

This section offers tip sheets containing ideas and resources on key issues involved in running out-of-school time (OST) programs. The following topics are covered in this section:

- Starting an Out-of-School Time Program
- Activities and Curriculum Planning
- Creating Effective Environments
- Promoting Reading and Literacy
- Homework Help and Academic Skill-Building Activities for After School Programs
- Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth Ages 10 – 14
- Integrating Service-Learning
- Legal Issues: Licensing and Liability
- Understanding Accreditation

These tip sheets offer quick and basic information on these topics as well as ideas about where to go for more in-depth information. Tip sheets can be used to help design new programs and improve existing programs. They can also be copied and used as handouts for training sessions.

## Starting an Out-of-School Time Program

This tip sheet is designed to offer basic guidelines, steps, and ideas to help with starting up or expanding an after school, before school, summer, or weekend program for young people. There is no one way or guaranteed “recipe” for starting an effective program. Because every community and every group of young people is different, every program’s start-up process will involve some unique elements and challenges. However, there are some basic steps and tips that work well for most start-up processes.

### Assess Needs:

- Research programs that are already available in the community, particularly those involving other National Service programs or streams. Find out what needs are being met and what “holes” need to be filled.
- Administer surveys to parents, school personnel, and other community members to find out about needs and hopes. To encourage a high rate of return, make surveys very short and simple (multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank with space for comments usually works well). Find out what sorts of activities people feel would be most beneficial and/or interesting (e.g., homework support, tutoring, recreation, sports, clubs, literacy, service-learning and community service activities, field trips, hands-on projects, vocational and/or academic skill-building).
- Assemble focus groups to discuss needs and ideas. Include all key stakeholders in the proposed program: parents, children/youth, school personnel, community members. Before convening a focus group meeting, develop specific questions to be addressed.
- Review information and establish what the primary needs and interests are.
- Determine what needs your group could appropriately address.

### Connect with Others:

- Find others who share your concerns and/or recognize the same needs that you wish to address.
- Develop partnerships based on resources that can be pooled to start up and run the program. Potential partners include schools, parent groups, other National Service programs or streams, community centers, the local YMCA or Boys and Girls Club, places of worship, and businesses.
- Form a planning group consisting of representatives from all partner organizations. Consider the parents and children who will be involved in your program as the most important partners and weigh their opinions accordingly. Involve this planning group in every stage of the start-up implementation and evaluation process.

### Decide on Goals:

Work with your planning group to decide what the basic goals of your program will be.

## Tip Sheets – Activities and Curriculum

### **Find Out about Licensing Requirements and Liability Insurance:**

Refer to the tip sheet: “Legal Issues: Licensing and Liability” for more details.

### **Develop an Action Plan:**

- Develop an action plan including specific steps to be taken, target dates, and names of people responsible for each step.
- Make sure responsibilities are clear and follow up regularly.
- Review your action plan regularly and revise as necessary.

### **Design the Program or Activities:**

- Work with your planning group to brainstorm activities that will be part of your regular daily schedule and activities that will take place on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Research and obtain curriculum and activity ideas and involve community experts who can help you plan activities. If literacy and/or homework help is a focus, secure the services of a reading specialist or schoolteacher.

*(See the tip sheet “Program Planning” for more ideas.)*

### **Develop an Operating Budget and Research Funding Possibilities:**

Work with partners to develop a basic start-up and regular monthly budget for your program. In order to create a sustainable program, you will need to secure funding. Members and volunteers may be able to provide most of the staffing required, but materials and long-term staff are important for high-quality, long-lasting programs. Seek out funding from several sources so that if one source is discontinued, you will still have funding coming in from other sources. The strongest programs have mixed funding streams including some money coming from families and some money coming from external funding sources.

- Ask partnering schools about available Title One funds and other funds available directly through public schools.
- Find out about parents’ ability to pay a fee for their children’s involvement.
- Look at the government’s website on out-of-school time program resources and funding at [www.afterschool.gov](http://www.afterschool.gov) to find out about federal funds and grants.
- Talk to local businesses about supporting specific aspects of your program.
- Research national, community, and family foundations that offer grants.
- Develop presentations and printed materials explaining your program and its needs that can be used with potential funders.

*(See “Building Partnerships” in the training materials section for more ideas.)*

### **Secure Space and Materials:**

- Negotiate with schools, churches, community centers, and other organizations that could offer resources of space to determine where your program will be held.
- Write up an agreement to be signed by all parties concerned specifying what space and materials can be used at what times during the day.

## Tip Sheets – Activities and Curriculum

- Buy or secure donations of necessary supplies for activities.  
(See the tip sheet “Creating Effective Environments” for more ideas.)

### **Staff the Program:**

- Develop job descriptions for all adult roles that need to be filled.
- Post job announcements and recruit volunteers at community centers, colleges and universities, and in newspapers.
- Ask the planning committee to help with recruitment.
- Carefully train all staff and volunteers.  
(See the “Training” section and the “Building Partnerships” training materials for more ideas.)

### **Market the Program and Recruit Participants:**

- Work with partners to spread the word via word of mouth, fliers sent home from school with students, newspaper announcements, fliers posted in public places.
- Develop application/enrollment forms and distribute them to all interested families.

## **Resources for Program Start-Up**

*Following are some resources that are representative of the vast array of materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

### **PUBLICATIONS:**

Unless otherwise indicated, the following resources are available through local bookstores, online booksellers, or through companies that specialize in curriculum and materials for children such as School-Age NOTES (1-800-410-8780 or [www.schoolagenotes.com](http://www.schoolagenotes.com)), Quest International (1-800-446-2770 or [www.quest.edu](http://www.quest.edu)), or Innovative Educators (1-888-252-KIDS or [innovative-educators.com](http://innovative-educators.com)). Many resources can be borrowed from the National Service Resource Center library (1-800-860-2684 or [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC)).

*Kids’ Club: A School-Age Program Guide for Directors* by Linda Sisson

*Before and After School Programs: A Start-Up and Administration Manual* by Mary McDonald Richard

*The Complete School-Age Child Care Resource Kit* by Abby Barry Bergman and William Greene

*By Design: A New Approach to Programs for 10 - 15 Year-Olds*

*The National School-Age Child Care Association (NSACA) Standards.* Available by calling NSACCA at (617)298-5012.

*School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual for the 90s and Beyond* by Michelle Seligson and Michael Allenson

**WEBSITES:**

[www.afterschool.gov](http://www.afterschool.gov) – This website offers connections to federal resources and information for out-of-school time programs including funding, food, publications, and transportation. It also offers information on successful after school program practices, opportunities to network with others in the field, and links to the websites of numerous organizations connected to children's issues.

[www.naccrra.org](http://www.naccrra.org) – The website of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies offers information on the availability of quality child care and after school programs all over the country. It also offers information on publications, regional conferences, and professional opportunities in the field.

[www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org) – The website of the National School-Age Care Association offers information on program accreditation, training opportunities, professional development, public policy, and their annual national conference.

[www.schoolagenotes.com](http://www.schoolagenotes.com) – The School-Age Notes website offers some helpful tips for starting a new program as well as an on-line catalogue of resources available for purchase, many of which address the issues involved in program start-up.

## Activities and Curriculum Planning For Five- to Eleven-Year-Olds in Out-of-School Time Programs

During their out-of-school time, young people need time to play, explore, create, learn new skills, and relax. A balanced program should offer children free time as well as a wide variety of structured activities that are fun and interactive and that help them develop or enhance leadership and social skills, self-esteem, conflict resolution abilities, academic skills, and interests and hobbies. Programming can include opportunities for children to participate in group projects and special-interest clubs, work on homework, participate in tutoring and mentoring, go on field trips, and serve their community. Quality out-of-school programs offer balanced, culturally relevant programming that is tailored to children's interests and developmental needs as well as the needs and desires of parents, schools and communities. Following are basic suggestions for developing and implementing successful programming:

**Survey Parents, Schoolteachers, and Children:** Put together a simple survey asking about needs, interests, and types of activities that should be offered.

**Involve Children in Program Planning:** Create a rotating "advisory group" of children who will represent the whole group. Present ideas to this group and get their input on a regular basis.

### **Decide on the Regular Daily, Weekly, or Monthly Components of your Program:**

Within each component, include many opportunities for children to make choices about their activities. Examples of components are:

- Homework and academic skill-building time – homework support, learning games for those not doing homework, tutoring, reading time
- Outdoor recreation – offering choice of organized games and free play
- Station rotation – choice between stations focusing on such activities as reading, board games, crafts, and computer use
- Clubs – children can choose to be a member of a certain club that meets weekly for a set number of weeks. Clubs could include art, music, dance, drama, sports such as basketball or soccer, reading, languages such as Spanish or French.
- Story time – children relax and listen to staff read a book or chapter of a book
- Reading time – children choose a book or bring a book and everyone participates in quiet reading for a certain period of time
- Field trips – children plan and participate in simple neighborhood field trips as well as more elaborate field trips requiring special transportation, planning and chaperones. Examples of field trip destinations: children's museum, art museum, parks, zoo, food pantry, nursing home, hospital, government buildings, historical sites.
- Service-learning projects – children plan and participate in community service on a regular basis (see the tip sheet, "Integrating Service-Learning" for more ideas)

## Tip Sheets – Activities and Curriculum

**Design Appropriate Routines and Environments:** Work with children to decide when and where different activities will take place, what kinds of transition time will be necessary, what materials and furnishings are needed to accommodate different activities, how the environment will look and feel, etc. Involve children in decorating the environment and change the way things look from time to time.

**Establish and Post a Schedule of Activities:** Make sure children and parents understand the regular daily and weekly schedule of activities. Children and parents appreciate a sense of structure. Be flexible to accommodate for special events and for projects that take longer than expected.

**Focus Activities on a Theme Each Week or Month:** Brainstorm ideas with staff, parents and children and go through activity books for ideas. Tie themes to community events and holidays or build on the same themes that children are exploring at school. As much as possible, let themes emerge from ideas that come from the children. Sample theme ideas follow:

- **Music** - Create instruments with household objects such as rice in a jar, glasses full of different amounts of water, and rubber bands stretched between nails. Have guest musicians come in. Research different instruments. Listen to and dance to all kinds of music. Hold a concert for families or at a hospital or nursing home.
- **Animals** - Create art and crafts representing favorite animals. Work together to create a mural of animals living in different parts of the world. Have guests bring in animals. Play charades and guess what animal is being acted out. Make animal costumes. Research endangered species and write letters about concerns. Visit an animal shelter.
- **All About Me** - Make books about talents, likes, dislikes, favorite things, etc. Make personal history charts. Hold a talent show. Bring in baby pictures and current pictures and make them into a matching game. “Spotlight” a different child each day and have other children share what they like about the child being spotlighted. Go to a hospital or home for the elderly and make “About Me” books with the people there.
- **Nature** - Plant seeds and watch them grow. Go on a nature walk and collect different plants then do some research to find out about the plants you have gathered. Learn about a favorite flower or plant and create a poster about it. Learn about the weather. Incorporate science activities. Visit a sanctuary or arboretum. Research environmental issues in your community and plan an on-going activity to remedy it (e.g. adopt a park, set up and run school recycling).
- **Journalism** - Read and discuss selected newspaper articles. Do “reports” on daily events. Conduct interviews and do reports about other children or family members. Find out about neighborhood and school events, take pictures to go with reports, and publish a newspaper. Visit a newspaper office or invite a reporter/editor to come in.

**Regularly Evaluate the Effectiveness of your Programming:** Use focus groups and surveys. Make changes according to suggestions of staff, parents and children.

## **Resources for Activities/Curriculum**

*Following are some resources that are representative of the vast array of materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

Unless otherwise indicated, the following resources are available through local bookstores, online booksellers, or through companies that specialize in curriculum and materials for children such as School-Age NOTES (1-800-410-8780 or [www.schoolagenotes.com](http://www.schoolagenotes.com)), Quest International (1-800-446-2770 or [www.quest.edu](http://www.quest.edu)), or Innovative Educators (1-888-252-KIDS or [innovative-educators.com](http://innovative-educators.com)). Many resources can be borrowed from the National Service Resource Center library (1-800-860-2684 or [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC)).

*School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual for the 90s and Beyond* by Michelle Seligson and Michael Allenson

*School-Age Ideas and Activities for After School Programs* by Karen Haas-Foletta and Michele Cogley

*Kids' Club: A School-Age Program Guide for Directors* by Linda Sisson

*Summer Sizzlers and Magic Mondays: School-Age Theme Activities* by Edna Wallace

*The Complete School-Age Child Care Resource Kit* by Abby Barry Bergman and William Greene

*Kids Create! Art and Craft Experiences for 3 - 9 Year Olds* by Laurie Carlson

*Adventures in Art: Art and Craft Experiences for 7 - 14 Year Olds* by Susan Milord

*Take Part Art: Collaborative Art Projects* by Bob Gregson

*Science Arts: Discovering Science Through Art Experiences* by MaryAnn Kohl and Jean Potter

*Showy Science: Exciting Hands-On Activities That Explore the World Around Us* by Hy Kim

*Cooperative Sports and Games* by Terry Orlick

*The Incredible Indoor Games Book* and *The Outrageous Outdoor Games Book* by Bob Gregson

*Games, Games, Games: Creating Hundreds of Group Games and Sports* by David Whitaker

*The Best Self-Esteem Activities for the Elementary Grades*

*The Kids' Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara Lewis

*The Activities Club Theme Guides* and Resource Kits (Examples of themes offered: Marvelous Masks, Nature's Treasures, Take Flight!, Photography in a Snap). Available from The Activities Club at (617) 924-1556 or [www.theactivitiesclub.com](http://www.theactivitiesclub.com).

*The Homework and Edutainment Club Guide* and Resource Kit. Available from The Activities Club at (617) 924-1556 or [www.theactivitiesclub.com](http://www.theactivitiesclub.com).

## Creating Effective Environments For Out-of-School Time Programs

Out-of-school time programs should strive to create environments that are comfortable, well-equipped, and appropriate for the program's activities and the ages and needs of young people served. We are all affected by the various environments we encounter each day. Young people who attend out-of-school time programs that offer attractive, child- or youth-centered environments are generally happier and more well-behaved. Many programs face challenges due to shared space and/or inadequate space, but creativity, negotiation, and some of the ideas on this tip sheet can help. The following are simple steps and basic questions to help you think through important issues and create an appropriate environment for your program.

**Create a Vision:** What sort of environment would best support the mission and activities of your program? What kind of environment do the young people in your program want? Meet with staff and youth to discuss wants and needs and create an overall “vision” for how you want your program space to look and feel.

**Involve Stakeholders:** How can you involve children, parents, and staff in designing and creating program environments? Young people like to help design and create their own environment. Put together a design team with representatives from children in every age group. Involve parents, staff, and other stakeholders in brainstorming sessions as well as designing space, obtaining materials, and decorating.

**Analyze Space Available and Think About Possibilities for More Space:** What indoor and outdoor space do you have available to you? Do you need more space? How can you get it? Be creative! Analyze the space you have and other spaces in your building that could be available. Make sure you're effectively utilizing the space currently available to you. If necessary, develop a plan for obtaining more space.

**Check for Safety Hazards:** Is your space safe? Regularly check all spaces used by your program for possible hazards. Look for toxic materials (such as cleaning supplies), broken equipment and furniture, electricity or heating problems, etc.

**Obtain Necessary Materials and Supplies:** What sorts of décor, furniture, equipment, and materials would be most appropriate for each activity that your program offers? Make a list of necessary supplies for the activities you do regularly as well as a “wish list” of supplies that could enhance your program. Send home announcements and approach local businesses asking for donations of books, art supplies, posters, games, area rugs, old beanbag chairs, cushions, carpet squares, book shelves, etc.

**Create Different Spaces for Different Activities:** How can you divide up available space and make it appropriate for the different types of activities your program offers? If your main program space is one large room, consider setting up movable partitions or simply set up a line of chairs to divide space. A big open space invites young people to run around. If your space involves different rooms, analyze which spaces are best for which activities.

## Tip Sheets – Effective Environments

**Decorate your Space:** How can you decorate your space to make it interesting, stimulating and exciting? Put up posters, create murals, and display artwork done by youth. Put up different decorations in different areas to create appropriate environments for activities that will take place in each area. Have young people help you design and create decorations.

**Develop Effective Strategies to Cope with Shared Space:** If other groups are using your space when your program is not in session, how can you create an attractive environment specific to your program needs? Try to negotiate with those who share your space about sharing furniture, resources, supplies, and responsibilities for decorating and cleaning the space. Work to develop and maintain positive relationships with other building residents. Do you have to set up and dismantle parts of your décor on a daily basis? If so, put posters, signs, and decorations on large bulletin boards or cardboard panels that can be brought out and put away each day. Put materials in rolling carts or store materials in plastic tubs that can be stacked away in a closet. Sort materials according to the activities they're typically used for so that you can easily pull them out and put them away.

### Resources for Creating Effective Environments

*Following are some resources that are representative of materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

Video and companion materials, “*A Place of Their Own: Designing Quality Space for Out-of-School Programs.*” Available by calling the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (781)283-2547.

The chapters “Indoor Environments” and “Outdoor Environments” in the book, *The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care*. Available by contacting the National School-Age Care Alliance at (617)298-5012 or [www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org).

The following resources are available through local bookstores, online booksellers, or through companies that specialize in curriculum and materials for children such as School-Age NOTES (1-800-410-8780 or [www.schoolagenotes.com](http://www.schoolagenotes.com)), Quest International (1-800-446-2770 or [www.quest.edu](http://www.quest.edu)), or Innovative Educators (1-888-252-KIDS or [innovative-educators.com](http://innovative-educators.com)). Many resources can be borrowed from the National Service Resource Center library (1-800-860-2684 or [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC)).

The section “Environment: The Bridge Between Event and Experience” in the book, *School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual for the 90s and Beyond*

The section “Space and Storage” in Chapter 4 of the book, *The Complete School-Age Child Care Resource Kit*

The section “Out-of-School Environments” in Volume One of the series, *Caring for Children in School-Age Programs* by Derry Koralek, Roberta Newman, and Laura Colker

## Tips for Promoting Reading and Literacy In Out-of-School Time Programs for Children Ages 5 - 12

Although most people think of one-on-one tutoring when they think about incorporating literacy activities into their out of school time programs, tutoring is just one of a broad range of activities that can help increase a child's understanding and use of language. Some programs have the resources and expertise to set up and maintain regularly scheduled and thoughtfully structured one-on-one tutoring sessions. Other programs do not have the resources for a full-blown tutoring programs, but they can still do a great deal to help children develop basic literacy skills.

Because reading is language-based, it is important to incorporate activities that enrich young people's understanding and use of language or promote a love for words and reading in an effective out-of-school time program. And you don't have to be a reading expert to do it! Following are some of the simple things you can do to promote reading and literacy in your program.

**Create a Print-Rich Environment:** Make books a prominent part of your environment. Solicit book donations from families of children in the program, local businesses and booksellers. Develop a diverse book collection and rotate the books that are set out on a regular basis. Include plenty of simple books for new readers. Pop-up books can help younger children get interested in books. Many children are also fascinated by "How things Work" books and books on favorite topics such as cars, airplanes, planets, and animals. Magazines with colorful pictures can also be very popular. Include classic children's literature and books that emphasize development of positive character traits. Create a cozy, inviting reading corner with bookshelves, beanbag chairs, a rug, and pillows.

**Set Aside a Reading Time:** Set aside a regular time period every day or on certain days of the week when children read on their own or to each other. Let children see staff reading their own books during this time. Thirty minutes of reading time a day can make a real difference.

**Read Aloud:** Have children help you select books to read aloud to the group. Be sure to include multicultural books. Books with chapters work well for older children so that you finish one chapter each time you read. Younger children generally like stories that can be read in one session. Be sure that readers read with animation and enthusiasm. Young children especially like it when a reader changes voices for different characters.

**Create Plays or Skits from Favorite Books:** Have children work in small groups to create a play from a book they have read. Plays can be very simple, put together in an hour or so or they can also be elaborate, week- or month-long projects, complete with scripts and costumes.

**Read Instructions:** Ask children to read instructions for games, computer software, crafts, etc.

## Tip Sheets – Promoting Reading and Literacy

**Assign “Reading Buddies”:** Have older and younger children read to each other on a regular basis. Give older children simple training about appropriate “reading coach” techniques.

**Write Stories:** Have children make up and write out stories. Encourage them to draw illustrations for their stories and create storybooks. Children can work individually or in small groups. Use computer word processing programs if available.

**Start a Newsletter/Newspaper:** Have children write a regular newsletter about past and future neighborhood and/or program activities. They can include opinion columns, photos, interviews.

**Keep Journals:** Give each child a small notebook and set aside a few minutes each day for writing and/or drawing. Encourage children to write about thoughts and feelings as well as events of the day. Help them get started by giving them a question to answer such as: What is the best thing that happened to you today? If you could go back and do last week all over again, what would you do differently? Assign a staff person to regularly respond to journals through individual conversations with children or comments in their journal. Younger children can draw pictures in their journals and explain their drawings to staff. Drawing helps children express themselves on paper and prepare for writing.

**Engage Children in Conversation:** Encourage staff to talk actively with children, to ask them questions about school, hobbies, and family life. Snack, recreation and transition time can be an especially opportune time for these conversations. As staff ask questions and listen attentively to answers, children can learn to organize their thoughts, present clear answers, and enjoy conversation. Research shows that interactive conversation is very important to developing literacy and reading skills.

### Resources for Promoting Literacy

*Following are some resources that are representative of the many materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

#### **PUBLICATIONS:**

Unless otherwise noted, the following books are available at a local bookstore or through an on-line bookseller.

*101 Read Aloud Classics* by Pamela Horn

*Children's Classics to Read Aloud* by Edward Blishen

*Developing Multicultural Awareness Through Children's Literature: A Guide for Teachers and Librarians, Grades K - 8* by Patricia L. Roberts and Nancy Lee Cecil.

*The Service Learning Bookshelf: A Bibliography of Fiction and Nonfiction to Inspire Student Learning and Action* compiled by Cathryn Berger Kaye. Available by calling (310) 397-0070.

### **WEBSITES AND ON-LINE PUBLICATIONS:**

#### **For Elementary School-Aged Children** (primarily Kindergarten through third grade)

[www.ash.udel.edu/ash](http://www.ash.udel.edu/ash) - The Alphabet Superhighway site contains ideas for tutoring sessions, ready-made activities for kids, and many resources and links.

[www.ciera.org](http://www.ciera.org) - The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement's site includes a Toolkit for Tutors, reviews of publications, profiles of model programs, and family literacy ideas.

[www.ed.gov/americanreads](http://www.ed.gov/americanreads) - The U.S. Department of Education offers information related to the America Reads challenge and links to many resources for promoting literacy. On-line publications available on this site include:

- *Read\*Write\*Now! Basic Kit*. Activities for Reading and Writing Fun
- *Read\*Write\*Now! Partners in Tutoring Program*: Ideas for activities, reading lists
- *America Reads Challenge Resource Kit*. Designed to assist in the set up of an America Reads Challenge project, this kit offers tip sheets and further links

[www.etr.org/nsrc](http://www.etr.org/nsrc) – The National Service Resource Center website offers many downloadable publications including *Principles and Key Components for High Quality America Reads National Service Program Initiatives*. The site also offers access to the America Reads listserv.

[www.nwrel.org/learns](http://www.nwrel.org/learns) - The LEARNS site features downloadable resources, innovative ideas for literacy practices, and conversations on timely issues with others in the field of literacy and education-based national service projects.

#### **For Older Children and Pre-Teens**

[www.twc.org/forums/index.html](http://www.twc.org/forums/index.html) - WriteNet encourages direct dialogue between students, writers, and teachers involving literary contests, e-mail feedback from teachers on writing, and correspondence with writers-in-residence.

[www.nypl.org/branch](http://www.nypl.org/branch) - For older children, the New York Public Library System offers "Teen Link," featuring a book list for young adult readers, writing by teens, and links to homework help.

[www.pen.org/readers](http://www.pen.org/readers) - Readers and Writers sends writers and their books into schools and out-of-school time programs to promote excitement about reading and writing.

## Homework Help and Academic Skill-Building Activities for After School Programs

After a long day at work, many parents want to spend time with their children in the evenings without having to focus on homework. Some parents with limited English or academic proficiencies feel overwhelmed by their children's need for help with homework. Many young people like to finish their homework during their after school program so that they can work on assignments with friends, get help and support from program staff, and get homework "out of the way." For these and other reasons, many after school programs offer homework time or homework assistance as part of their program.

After school programs can not only help young people get their homework done, they can also help youth enhance their attitudes towards homework and learning. With well-trained and enthusiastic staff, after school programs can offer engaging skill-building activities as well as an up-beat and encouraging environment for completing homework and mastering the skills involved in assignments. Homework help in after school programs can take many different forms including:

- Homework help is offered. (Young people know that if they want to do homework, staff will be available to help them.)
- Time is set aside for all children to work on homework. (Young people without homework can read a book, do research, work on the computer, or do other individual academic skill-building activities.)
- A homework/learning area is created. (Young people visit this area when they wish and/or are required to spend a specified amount of time in this area at some point during the afternoon. In this area, children work on homework, participate in tutoring, or take part in games that build academic skills.)

Following are tips and ideas to help you successfully integrate homework into your program and help young people get excited about learning.

**Create a Special Homework/Academic Skill-Building Area:** Work with young people to decorate a room or area for homework and academic learning and come up with a creative name for the area. Fill the area with books, learning games, computers, school supplies like paper, pencils, rulers, etc. Put up colorful posters on the walls about books, animals, science, etc. Young people can come to this area whenever they like and stay as long as they like, rotate through this area in groups throughout the afternoon, or be directed to spend a specified amount of time in this area each day. If young people don't have homework, they can read or participate in skill-building games during the time they spend here.

**Set Up Peer Tutoring Pairs:** Invite older children to sign up to be tutors to younger children. Offer the tutors some basic training and hold regular meetings with them. Be sure that tutoring doesn't interfere with the time tutors need to complete their own homework.

## Tip Sheets – Homework Help

**Bring in Tutors:** Recruit parents, community volunteers, other National Service program participants, and local college and high school students to serve as tutors. They can help with homework in general or specialize in tutoring a specific subject. Ask tutors to come in at regular times each week and commit to serve in the program for a specified amount of time. Be sure that all tutors receive appropriate training (see “Resources” at the end for information on tutor training). Regularly meet with tutors to discuss the needs of “tutees.” Assign tutors to individual young people or to small groups so they can get to know each other and learn to work together.

**Create a Homework Sign-Off Log:** Once young people finish a homework assignment, have them check in with a staff person or volunteer who can go over their work and put a star or check by their name in a homework log book. Develop a system for letting parents know how much homework their children have completed each day. Offer monthly prizes for those who’ve successfully completed a certain number of assignments.

**Prepare Engaging Learning Games:** Stock your academic area with flashcards, spelling, reading, and math games, and computer learning games. Ask local toy stores and computer software companies for donations. Plan spelling and math contests, science experiments, book-writing activities, read-a-thons, and other simple learning-focused activities.

**Hire or Train an Academic Learning Specialist:** Select a staff person or volunteer to coordinate homework and academic learning activities in the program. This person can train and direct volunteers, prepare learning games, coordinate tutoring, and help with homework.

## Resources for Homework and Learning Activities

*Following are some resources that are representative of the many materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

### **PUBLICATIONS:**

#### **General**

*Homework and Out-of-School Time Programs: Filling the Need, Finding a Balance* by Susan O'Connor and Kate McGuire. This booklet contains many ideas for integrating homework into an after school program. Available by calling the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at (781) 283-2510.

*The Homework and Edutainment Club Guide* and Resource Kit by the Activities Club. The guide contains step-by-step instructions for setting up an effective homework program and instructions for hundreds of learning activities supporting different academic subjects. The resource kits contain age-appropriate learning tools and games for different age groups. Available from The Activities Club by calling (617) 924-1556.

### Science Activities

The following resources are available through local bookstores, online booksellers, or through companies that specialize in curriculum and materials for children such as School-Age NOTES (1-800-410-8780 or [www.schoolagenotes.com](http://www.schoolagenotes.com)), Quest International (1-800-446-2770 or [www.quest.edu](http://www.quest.edu)), or Innovative Educators (1-888-252-KIDS or [innovative-educators.com](http://innovative-educators.com)). Many resources can be borrowed from the National Service Resource Center library (1-800-860-2684 or [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC)).

*Science Arts: Discovering Science Through Art Experiences*  
by MaryAnn Kohl and Jean Potter

*Showy Science: Exciting Hands-On Activities That Explore the World Around Us*  
by Hy Kim

*The Kids' Nature Book: 365 Indoor/Outdoor Activities and Experiences*  
by Susan Milord

*Science in Seconds for Kids: Over 100 Experiments You Can Do in Ten Minutes or Less* by Jean Potter

### WEBSITES:

#### Homework Help and Learning Games

<http://www.ed.gov/free> – The U.S. Department of Education web site offers free on-line resources on all academic subjects submitted by thirty-five different federal agencies.

<http://www.ash.udel.edu/ash/index.html> – The Alphabet Superhighway offers fun games and learning activities.

<http://www.tristate.pgh.net/~pinch13> – B.J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helper has links to many sites offering help on different homework subjects.

<http://www.startribune.com/stonline/html/special/homework> – This Homework Help site offers links and opportunities to ask homework questions.

#### Literacy Activities and Tutoring Tips

<http://www.nwrel/LEARNS> – The LEARNS website offers information and ideas on promoting reading and literacy and effectively training tutors.

<http://www.ed.gov/americanreads> – The America Reads website offers resources, links, and publications to promote literacy as well as information on tutor training.

## Out-of-School Time Programs for Youth Ages 10-14

### Understanding the Needs of Youth

In their older elementary school years, young people begin to develop more awareness of themselves and the world around them. They begin to focus heavily on peer relationships and have a strong need for a sense of belonging. They typically desire a higher degree of independence and want to be treated more like adults and less like “little kids.” They generally enjoy opportunities to take on new responsibilities such as helping younger children, planning activities, and participating in community service. Research has shown that successful youth development programs support the healthy development of young adolescents by offering them opportunities to:

- Build close relationships with peers and adults and develop a sense of belonging in an environment of physical and social safety
- Have input and make decisions regarding the activities they take part in, the rules they abide by, and the setting where they spend their time
- Take on meaningful roles that involve responsibility and opportunities for leadership
- Become involved in the larger community and make real contributions while broadening their knowledge and understanding of the world around them
- Be exposed to a wide range of challenging and interesting learning experiences that help them build understanding, skills, and competencies
- Belong to a positive peer group, develop good relationships with caring adults, and participate in meaningful and tangible projects that enhance self-esteem and offer opportunities for leadership

*(Adapted from statements by the Community Network for Youth Development – see “Resource” section for details)*

Youth who participate in effective programs have opportunities to develop positive self-concepts and peer relationships as they engage in interesting, meaningful, and useful activities. Youth who lack these opportunities during their out-of-school time often feel lonely, develop antisocial behaviors, and become involved in substance abuse and crime. Out-of-school programs that meet the developmental needs of young adolescents can do a great deal to positively shape their lives.

### Ideas for Developing Appropriate Youth Programs

The following tips should help you understand and meet the needs of young people ages ten to fourteen:

**Learn About the Developmental Needs of Older Children:** All staff and volunteers working with this age group should participate in training on the social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development of early adolescents. Children of this age are going through intense changes and adults need to understand what they are going through. The books and manuals listed at the end of this tip sheet can offer important information to help with training.

**Learn About the Specific Needs and Wants of the Young People Served:** Through focus groups, informal conversations with individual young people and parents, surveys, and other strategies, find out about the interests, concerns, and desires of youth in your community. Survey parents, school personnel, community members, and youth about their observations of what kids are doing during out-of-school time and their ideas and hopes for a youth program.

**Get to Know the Youth in your Program:** Encourage all staff and volunteers to develop personal relationships with every young person in your program. Find out about their interests and talents, the music they like, their families, their dreams, and their fears. One idea is to assign staff to specific youth so that everyone has a mentor. Youth are likely to open up to staff and volunteers who:

- Solicit and listen to their ideas
- Take every opportunity to sit and chat with them in small groups
- Show an ongoing interest in specific aspects of their lives

**Recognize Youth as Program Owners:** Assemble a youth advisory committee to discuss and make decisions about the program. Rotate the youth who participate in the advisory group so everyone gets a chance. Encourage input from all youth as well as those who are part of the advisory group. Youth are more likely to enjoy a program that they help to create. Regularly involve youth in:

- Developing policies and a “social contract” for the program (a code of behavior that lays out what is appropriate and inappropriate in the program)
- Activity and project planning
- Planning and preparing snacks
- Designing and setting up the environment
- Securing donations
- Resolving their own conflicts
- Working with community agencies

**Develop Long-Term Activities With Tangible Results:** Examples of activities that have proven very effective with this age group are:

- Service-learning projects: Youth can make a real difference in their community and develop self-esteem, life skills, and responsibility as they

## Tip Sheets – Programs for Youth Ages 10 - 14

plan, execute, and reflect on projects. (*For specific ideas, see tip sheet on service-learning.*)

- Apprenticeships: Staff members and community volunteers can lead a series of sessions that offer youth opportunities to develop interests and skills and finish tangible projects over the course of several weeks. “Apprenticeships” could include working with a carpenter to build a chair, working with an architect to design a dream home, or working with a lawyer to prepare and present a “mock court” case.

**Involve Youth in Programs for Younger Children:** Young adolescents generally enjoy the responsibility and leadership opportunities involved in working with younger children and younger children love attention from older kids. Following are examples of some ways that youth can be involved in programs for younger children:

- Reading Buddies: Youth are paired with younger children and regularly read with their “buddy.”
- Arts and Crafts: Youth prepare arts and crafts activities to do with younger children once a week or more.
- Homework Help: Youth spend a small amount of time each day or each week helping younger children with their homework
- Health and Life Skills: With the help of staff and volunteers, youth can prepare and present information on smoking, nutrition, the importance of working hard in school, conflict resolution, etc.

## Resources for Youth Programs

*Following are some resources that are representative of the many materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. Unless otherwise indicated, the resources listed here are available through local bookstores, online booksellers, or through companies that specialize in curriculum and materials for children such as School-Age NOTES (1-800-410-8780 or [www.schoolagenotes.com](http://www.schoolagenotes.com)), Quest International (1-800-446-2770 or [www.quest.edu](http://www.quest.edu)), or Innovative Educators (1-888-252-KIDS or [innovative-educators.com](http://innovative-educators.com)). Many resources can be borrowed from the National Service Resource Center library (1-800-860-2684 or [www.etr.org/NSRC](http://www.etr.org/NSRC)).*

### **PUBLICATIONS:**

*By Design: A New Approach to Programs for 10 - 15 Year-Olds.* A kit including two manuals and a video detailing ideas and best-practices for running effective programs for youth ages ten to fifteen.

*Working with School-Age Children* by Marlene A. Bumgarner. A comprehensive manual on understanding and working with children of all ages in out-of-school time programs.

*The Kid’s Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara Lewis. Offers step-by-step instructions for planning effective projects and more than 500 service project ideas appropriate for youth of all ages.

## Tip Sheets – Programs for Youth Ages 10 - 14

*What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character* by Barbara Lewis. Designed for ages eleven and over, this book offers activities to help youth think about choices and consequences and explore such character traits as confidence, restraint, integrity, and forgiveness.

*Adventures in Peacemaking: A Conflict Resolution Activity Guide for School-Age Programs* by William Kreidler and Lisa Ferlong. Offers hundreds of ideas and games to help children and youth of all ages learn to resolve their own conflicts.

*3:00 to 6:00 PM: Programs for Young Adolescents* by Leah M. Lifstein and Joan Lipsitz. Ideas and tips for running effective programs for young adolescents.

*Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth* by Milbrey W. McLaughlin, Merita A. Irby, and Juliet Langman. Offers an in-depth look at exemplary neighborhood organizations and the roles they play in providing positive, supportive environments for inner-city youth. Available through your local bookstore or on-line bookseller.

### **ORGANIZATIONS AND WEB SITES:**

YouthInfo: [www.youth.hhs.gov](http://www.youth.hhs.gov)

Developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this web site offers reports, statistics, resources, and links to other web sites related to understanding and supporting the needs of youth.

U. S. Government: [www.Afterschool.gov](http://www.Afterschool.gov)

This site offers reports, research, ideas, networking opportunities, and information on funding related to out-of-school time programs. It also offers links to web sites for teens.

The Search Institute: [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

The Search Institute conducts research and evaluation, develops publications and practical tools, and provides training and technical assistance to support the healthy development of youth. Articles and information focusing on adolescents is available on their web site.

National Youth Development Information Center (NYDIC): [www.hydic.org](http://www.hydic.org)

This organization offers information on current policy issues, program development and evaluation, research, training, funding, and publications pertaining to youth programs.

National Youth Leadership Council: [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)

This organization helps young people become involved in service, leadership, and public policies.

Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD)

Phone number: (415) 495-0622

This organization works to promote positive youth programs and collaborations to support youth in the San Francisco Bay Area. They also offer information on youth development.

## Integrating Service-Learning in Out-of-School Time Programs

Young people can find great satisfaction and wonderful learning opportunities in planning and participating in community service. Out-of-school time programs can be the perfect setting for service-learning. Community service projects are transformed into service-learning by emphasizing the academic and social skills involved in planning and performing ongoing projects and by engaging young people in reflection on their work. Following are tips and project ideas to help you incorporate service-learning:

**Choose Appropriate Projects:** Young people of all ages can be involved in planning, executing and reflecting on service activities. Younger children often respond well to projects that have quick and tangible results and involve a lot of action (like picking up trash, doing a performance for elderly people, writing letters to soldiers overseas). While projects for younger children may be quite simple, they can still offer children opportunities to participate in planning and reflection. Older children can often take on more involved projects that require more extensive preparation. Children of all ages can benefit from participation in on-going service that allows them to get to know those they are serving. Involve children in brainstorming and researching project ideas. Give them specific and age-appropriate roles in planning and executing projects.

**Keep It Simple:** Meaningful service-learning opportunities do not need to involve lots of money, complicated transportation, or many materials. Service can be simple, tangible, and focused and can take place in walking distance from your site or right at your site. Bear in mind that effective service-learning should involve on-going projects rather than single episode projects.

**Have Young People Help Plan and Execute Projects:** Actively involve youth of all ages in planning and executing service-learning projects. Children can help with every step of the planning and execution of almost any project. Project planning offers youth excellent opportunities to develop research, planning, and other important life skills.

- Discuss community needs and encourage youth to think about the resources and abilities they have that could meet the needs they see.
- Younger children may need you to offer them concrete ideas and options about appropriate service projects. Older children can take more of a leadership role in brainstorming and researching ideas.
- Youth can be involved in:
  - ⇒ making phone calls (finding a project, coordinating logistics, asking questions about needs, times, dates, etc.)
  - ⇒ thinking about what materials are needed to complete the project (using math skills to figure out quantities needed)
  - ⇒ obtaining materials (getting donations, going with staff to purchase supplies, etc.)
  - ⇒ dividing up work (deciding who should do what and when it needs to be done)

## Tip Sheets – Integrating Service-Learning

**Develop Partnerships:** Set up a partnership with a local service agency such as a local Volunteer Center, community center, National Service project, food bank, nursing home, homeless shelter, or hospital. Invite a representative to come and talk with youth about the work of their organization and about the needs the organization tries to meet. Young people can "adopt" a group and develop meaningful relationships as they serve the same people on a regular basis. Have youth suggest types of organizations they'd like to partner with and help them research potential partnerships. They can look at the yellow pages listings for social service organizations and ask parents and community members for ideas.

**Be Persistent and Specific:** Many service agencies and volunteer centers are not used to the idea of young people as volunteers. They may not readily have ideas about what young people can do to help. Chances are, once service agencies meet the young people and see the good they can do, resistance will melt away.

**Engage Young People in Reflection:** Reflection and "preflection" are key elements in the process of transforming "service" into "service-learning." Through encouraging youth to think about and reflect on the needs of their community and the impact of the projects they do, staff can make the most of the learning possibilities inherent in service projects. Effective reflection practices should include:

- a special time set aside for group discussion
- an ongoing process of capitalizing on the "learning moments" that arise throughout the process of planning, executing, and following up on the project

*Ideas for reflection questions to be used in discussions:*

- ⇒ How do you think our project made a difference? What more could we have done?
- ⇒ How does it make you feel to help other people?
- ⇒ What did you learn that you could apply to other aspects of your life?
- ⇒ What can we do to follow up on our project? What more can we do about the issue we addressed?

**Celebrate Efforts:** Young people need to see that their efforts are worthwhile and appreciated. Sometimes projects don't go as planned and the results are not gratifying. Young people's efforts can always be congratulated and the work they have done and the learning they have achieved can be celebrated regardless of the overall success of the project.

- Regularly thank young people for their work.
- Make sure that organizations and individuals benefiting from your group's work express their thanks directly to the young people involved.
- Help young people see that the good feelings they get from helping others is part of their reward.
- On a daily basis, recognize young people who help each other, show courtesy, and do things without being asked. Help youth see that their everyday actions are connected to building and sustaining a strong community.

## Tip Sheets – Integrating Service-Learning

**Involve Families:** Parents and family members can offer great support for service-learning and often welcome the opportunity to be involved in the program in meaningful ways. Tap into the knowledge, ideas, and resources of families. Have youth find out what ideas their parents have about the needs of their community. Ask for help from families in planning and executing service projects.

### Examples of Service-Learning Activities

Following are some tried and true ideas that are easy to organize and execute in almost any community with young people of different ages. All suggested activities can teach young people planning skills while helping them develop awareness and understanding. Along with each project suggestion are examples of specific learning that could be tied to the project.

SERVICE PROJECT	SOME LEARNING POSSIBILITIES
Plant a community garden in partnership with senior citizens in your neighborhood.	Learn about plants, gardening, and landscaping. Get to know seniors and learn from them.
On a regular basis, perform a play, read to people, or sing a song at a nursing home or hospital and take time to get to know people there. If transportation is an issue, set up a pen-pal program.	Practice singing, performing, conversation, and/or writing skills. Learn about nursing homes, aging, or hospitals. Learn how to relate to new people and make new friends.
Develop "reading buddies." Within your program or in partnership with another program, assign older children to younger children and have them read to each other regularly.	Solidify the reading skills of both younger and older children. Older children learn responsibility, patience, and teaching skills. Offer older children simple training about being a good tutor.
Hold a toy/food/clothing drive for a homeless shelter or soup kitchen.	Learn about hunger and homelessness. Practice counting, and sorting skills.
Put together "personal hygiene kits" (toothpaste, soap, etc.) for a homeless shelter.	Learn about homelessness. Use math to figure out numbers of kits to be made given the number of items available.
Adopt a local park and work to keep it clean. Pick up trash on a regular basis. If there seems to be a shortage of trash receptacles, find out who is in charge and write letters.	Learn about the impact of litter. Learn to do research and practice writing skills. Learn to notice needs and do something about what you notice. Learn about responsibility and accountability.
Develop a fruit and vegetable stand that serves snacks to children and sells healthy food to adults.	Learn about food and nutrition. Learn entrepreneurship. Practice math skills and learn about marketing and business skills.
Regularly sort food at a nearby food pantry or help prepare and serve food at a soup kitchen.	Learn about hunger issues in your community. Use counting and sorting skills and/or measuring and cooking skills.
Write a cookbook. Sell it and give the proceeds to a local cause.	Learn about healthy cooking and menu planning. Practice marketing and language arts skills.

## **Resources for Service-Learning**

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### **PUBLICATIONS:**

*Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for Young People Who Want to Make a Difference* by Barbara Lewis. Service project ideas for young people that range from simple one-time projects to large-scale commitments.

*Kid's Guide to Social Action: How to Solve the Social Problems You Choose* by Barbara Lewis. How-to manual offering kids the tools they need to effect change and inspirational stories of youth who have made a difference.

*Children as Volunteers* by Susan J. Ellis, Anne Weisbord, and Katherine H. Noyes. Ideas for designing appropriate and effective volunteer opportunities for children under age fourteen.

*The Service-Learning Bookshelf: A Bibliography of Fiction and Nonfiction to Inspire Student Learning and Action* by Cathryn Berger Kaye. Available by calling (310) 397-0070.

*Making a Difference* (student magazine) featuring activities, writing by young people, ideas on service.

*The Real Heroes* (video) featuring personal testimonies from young people involved in a variety of service projects.

*Today's Heroes* (videos and guides) featuring typical teenagers who share stories of service experiences. Available from the Points of Light Foundation by calling 1-800-272-8306.

## Tip Sheets – Integrating Service-Learning

### **ORGANIZATIONS AND WEB SITES:**

The Service-Learning Exchange

Phone: 1-877-LSA-EXCHange; Web site: [www.lsaexchange.org](http://www.lsaexchange.org)

Offers opportunities to connect with peer mentors, information on events and initiatives, help locating local resources.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

Phone: 1-800-808-7378; Web site: [www.nisl.coled.umn.edu](http://www.nisl.coled.umn.edu)

Offers publications lists, info on joining a listserv, links to other sites, general information on service-learning.

ServNet

[www.servenet.org](http://www.servenet.org)

Connects youth to volunteer opportunities in their local community.

The Points of Light Foundation

Phone: (202) 729-8000; Web site: <http://www.pointsoflight.org>

Offers information on volunteer centers as well as youth service training opportunities and publications.

Learn and Serve America

Phone: (202) 606-5000; Web site: <http://www.nationalservice.org/learn/index.html>

Offers information on grants and resources available to State Education Agencies and national or regional community-based nonprofit organizations for service-learning through the Corporation for National Service.

## Legal Issues: Licensing and Liability

### Licensing

**Definition:** Licensing involves a minimum set of standards for health and safety that are required in order to legally operate an out-of-school time (OST) program. In most states, many OST programs are required to be licensed by the state (those that are church- or school-run or that serve only older children are often exempt from licensing requirements). In order to be licensed, a program must show that it is in compliance with a list of requirements. These requirements may address such issues as food handling and storage methods, child sign-in, sign-out procedures, cleanliness of the environment, number of square feet of space per child, child-to-adult ratio, and types of activities offered.

**Requirements for Licensing:** Requirements for licensing vary from state to state. To find out about licensing requirements in your state, contact the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office for Children, or the Education Department (states house their licensing divisions in a variety of different departments) and ask about licensing requirements for out-of-school time programs. You can also find information on your state's requirements by contacting the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care at 1-800-598-KIDS or <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/states.html/>.

### Liability

**Definition:** "Liability" is a legal term for accountability. Members and volunteers are usually considered accountable for the young people they work with in out-of-school time programs. Project staff members are accountable in many ways for the members and volunteers they supervise. In any case where people may be held legally accountable for the safety and welfare of other people, liability insurance is advisable.

**Importance of Insurance:** Most organizations, regardless of their focus, can benefit from liability insurance. If a child, volunteer, or member in an out-of-school program is injured on-site or if a parent or child accuses a member or volunteer of child abuse or other offenses, the organization that runs the program may be held responsible and can be sued. Insurance can help defray the cost of lawsuits. Even if your program operates in cooperation with an organization such as a church or school that has insurance for its building and the activities it directly operates, you are a separate organization with your own staff, your own hours, and your own policies. This means that you need your own insurance.

## Tip Sheets – Licensing and Liability

**Different Types of Liability Insurance:** There are insurance policies that cover the whole organization, called “umbrella policies.” There are also policies that specifically cover injuries to staff or children, lawsuits, use of motor vehicles, special events, or any other special need you may have. Check with your state’s Child Care Resource and Referral agency, or child care licensing board to find out if your state requires that you have a certain type or amount of liability insurance in order to operate an OST program. Consult with an insurance agent or broker to determine what kind of insurance is best for your situation.

**Obtaining Insurance:** Contact National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) at (202) 232-8777, 1-800-424-2460, or [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org). They have a list of insurance companies that have created plans specifically for out-of-school time programs. Contact local insurance providers. Explain your program and your needs and ask about options and premiums. Talk to other programs and organizations to find out what sorts of policies they have. Ask programs if they’ve had to make claims, how they like dealing with their insurance company, and how much the premiums are. When you call a prospective insurer, it’s important to ask lots of questions. The National Network for Child Care has a list of ten recommended questions:

1. What are the requirements to be insured? Does my program qualify?
2. What is covered by the policy?
3. What risks are excluded from the policy?
4. How long does the policy last?
5. What are the liability and medical payment limits?
6. How much are the premiums? Are there deductibles?
7. How do I file a claim?
8. What is the company’s financial reputation?
9. What is the company’s claim and service reputation?
10. How knowledgeable and helpful is the insurance agent you speak with?

**Coverage for Members and Volunteers:** Make sure that your insurance policy specifies that unpaid individuals such as AmeriCorps members, VISTA members, Foster Grandparents, etc. serving in the program are covered. Members and volunteers need to be covered by liability insurance just as regular paid staff members should be covered.

## **Resources for Information on Licensing and Liability**

*Following are some resources that are representative of the many materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, the Corporation for National Service, or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

### **DOCUMENTS AND ARTICLES:**

*Insurance Basics for Community-Serving Programs* by Charles Tremper and Pamela Rypkema. Available from the Non Profit Risk Management Center on line at [www.nonprofitrisk.org/](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/)

*Massachusetts Technical Assistance Paper Number 3, Effective School-Age Care Program Operations* developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. Available by calling (781) 283-2547.

*School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual for the 90s and Beyond*, Michelle Seligson and Michael Allenson, 1993. Available by calling the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at (781) 283-2547.

*Liability Insurance and the Child Care Center*, by Carol Volker, Ph.D. Found on the National Network for Child Care website: [www.nccc.org/Business/liabil.ins.ccc.html](http://www.nccc.org/Business/liabil.ins.ccc.html)

*Thank Goodness We Had Insurance.*  
Found at [www.smartbiz.com/sbs/arts/vel26.htm](http://www.smartbiz.com/sbs/arts/vel26.htm).

### **ORGANIZATIONS AND WEB SITES:**

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care  
Phone: 1-800-598-KIDS. Web site: [www.nrc.uchsc.edu/states.html](http://www.nrc.uchsc.edu/states.html)

National Association for the Education of Young Children  
Phone: (202)232-8777 or 1-800-424-2460. Web site: [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

Nonprofit Risk Management Center  
Phone: (202) 785-3891; Fax: (202) 296-0349. Web site: [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org)

National School Age Care Alliance  
Phone: (617)298-5012; Fax: (617)298-5022. Web site: [www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org)

## Understanding Accreditation

Accreditation is a way to show that your program measures up to a generally acceptable definition of a “quality” program. If a program is “accredited,” an outside organization has held it against a certain set of standards and certified that it meets these standards. While licensing processes and requirements vary from state to state, accreditation involves a standard, nationally recognized process and set of standards. The primary organization involved in accrediting out-of-school time programs for elementary school-age children is the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA). NSACA’s standards for accreditation are grouped in six categories:

1. Human Relationships
2. Indoor Environment
3. Outdoor Environment
4. Activities
5. Safety, Health, and Nutrition
6. Administration

**The Importance of Accreditation:** Accreditation is not yet a requirement for operating an out-of-school program in most areas of the country. But striving to meet a tried and true set of standards of quality can only improve your program. In many areas of the country, parents, school personnel, and funders are increasingly interested in the accreditation status of out-of-school time programs. Some states offer a higher rate of reimbursement or subsidies for accredited programs. Accreditation can make a real difference in your program’s ability to offer young people excellent programming, obtain more funding, attract more participants, and build a solid reputation.

**The Process of Accreditation:** NSACA accreditation is a three-step process. Certain fees are associated with each step. The first step involves the purchase of the NSACA Standards. The second step requires a self-study kit entitled ARQ (Advancing and Recognizing Quality). After the self-study phase, when you feel you are ready for accreditation, you can schedule an endorsement visit (an observation of your program conducted by two qualified NSACA endorsers). The fee for this step covers the accommodations, travel, and paperwork of the endorsers.

Each program pursuing NSACA accreditation determines its own timeline. After working with the Standards for six months to a year, the program may decide to purchase the ARQ Kit. The self-study and program improvement process can take from six months to a year. When your program feels ready, you apply for an endorsement visit.

**Pursuing Accreditation:** To pursue accreditation, contact the local National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA) affiliate in your state. Call NSACA at (617) 298-5012 or visit their web site at [www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org) to find out about local affiliates. The NSACA web site has a full explanation of the process of applying for accreditation.

## Tip Sheets – Accreditation

**Help Available:** NSACA can put you in touch with trainers or organizations that do training in preparation for accreditation.

- NSACA and its affiliates offer orientations to the standards and introductions to the ARQ (Advancing and Recognizing Quality) System.
- The National Institute on Out-of-School Time provides training on the ASQ (Advancing School Age Quality) process and on-site technical assistance with Quality Advisors.
- The NSACA membership network, at both the national and state levels, provides peer support to OST professionals working on program improvements and accreditation.
- NSACA national staff is available to answer questions on the NSACA accreditation application process and provide names of others that are nearby and involved in the accreditation process.

### Resources on Accreditation

*Following are some resources that are representative of the many materials available on the subject. This listing does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Government, Corporation for National Service or the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children, Youth, and Families  
Child Care Bureau  
Phone: (202)690-6782  
Web site: <http://www.act.dhhs.gov>

National School-Age Care Alliance  
Phone: (617)298-5012; Fax: (617)298-5022,  
E-mail: [staff@nsaca.org](mailto:staff@nsaca.org)  
Web site: [www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org)

UCHSC at Fitzsimmons  
National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care  
Phone: 1-800-598-KIDS; Fax: (303)724-0960  
Web site: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>

Book: *The NSACA Standards for Quality School-Age Care*, 1998  
Available by calling the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at (781) 283-2547 or the National School-Age Care Alliance at (617) 298-5012.