

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING



FEATURED *resources*

THE AFTERSCHOOL CORPORATION "INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS"

www.tascorp.org/publications/catalog/specialneeds

KIDS INCLUDED TOGETHER

www.kitonline.org

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION "HELP STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES"

www.ed.gov/teachers/needs/speced/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln



AFTERSCHOOL *news*

Including Everyone: Helping Special-Needs Students Participate in Afterschool

With nearly 13% of youth ages 5 to 15 meeting the federal Maternal and Child Health definition of children with special health-care needs, you most likely have at least one special-needs student in your afterschool program. "Special needs" is a broad category that can include everything from autism to cerebral palsy to dyslexia to attention deficit disorder. Mary McAllister Shea, vice president of organizational outreach at Kids Included Together, a nonprofit that provides training to help community-based organizations include children with disabilities in their programs, offers some strategies for including special-needs students in afterschool programs.

Get all of the players involved. Shea suggests having a meeting with parents, day school teachers, special education teachers, and other staff who work with the student. Both teachers and staff from the regular school day can suggest strategies that work with a specific student and also let you know what areas the child excels in.

Prioritize your needs. If you have limited experience working with special-needs students, integrating them into your program can feel overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be that way. Think about what you need the most—training, additional staffing, technical support, supervision, or access to resources—and then pursue what you identify as the most important.

Support your staff. With the proper training and guidance, most staff can work successfully with special-needs students. This might mean bringing in a special education instructor or another specialist for training, but it will empower your staff and give you more flexibility in your program.

Include students in as many activities as possible. "Even if a special-needs student is doing a modified lesson or has a staff person assigned to him or her, that child will learn the most by working with peers. You will also create an environment where students are eager to work together regardless of ability," says Shea.

¹ Shea, M. (2007, July). July 2007: A time for reflection and commitment. *School-Age Notes*, 27(11), 1, 6.



"Special needs" is a broad category that can include autism, cerebral palsy, dyslexia, and attention deficit disorder.

The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.



"We use the community as one of our learning environments and do as much as possible to integrate our students into the community."

PAM JAMESON
site coordinator

SMILE

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

The SMILE (Students Motivated In Learning at Everhart) afterschool program in Tallahassee, Florida, is showing that there are no limits to what students can do. SMILE is a 21st Century Community Learning Center program that serves students with moderate to severe mental disabilities, many of whom have physical disabilities as well.

Pam Jameson, site coordinator at SMILE, acknowledges that the program is unique because special-needs students constitute the majority of the program's participants. She is quick to point out, however, that her program uses strategies that all afterschool programs can use with special-needs students. "We see possibilities of what every child can do rather than focusing on limitations," she says.

Jameson also says that the program operates with the belief that all of its staff can work with special-needs students. Although many instructors have training or certification to teach special-needs students, others learn by working with these qualified staff members. Through agreements with colleges, SMILE also recruits trained volunteers who are majoring in special education and want on-the-job practice. The program has several partnerships with community organizations, including the Boy Scouts and a hands-on science program called High Touch High Tech Science.

IN YOUR *words*

We think interest in afterschool is growing! How many students do you expect to have in your afterschool program compared to last year? (Select one.)

- More
- About the same
- Less
- We're still not sure

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200708.html

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NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING

at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory



TRAINING *tip*

Students on the Job

A special-needs student can have more opportunities to participate in afterschool activities if he or she is paired with another student. Even the simple process of pairing students can provide learning opportunities. In one afterschool program the National Partnership visited, a visually impaired student interviewed and selected the students to assist her in navigating the afterschool program. The experience helped integrate the visually impaired student into the class and encouraged other students to take the role of helping a classmate more seriously.

Do you have a training tip you would like to share? E-mail us at afterwords@sedl.org with "training tip" in the subject line.

EVENTS *calendar*

- Oct. 18 Lights on Afterschool!
NATIONWIDE
- Oct. 20 The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
2007 Afterschool Conference
MESA, AZ
- Oct. 22-23 The Bridge from School to Afterschool and
Back: Northwest Regional Training Event
VANCOUVER, WA

For more events, visit our calendar at www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.