



AFTERSCHOOL *news*



Talking About Homework

Research reveals that when afterschool staff, day-school teachers, students, and parents communicate openly and regularly, students are more engaged and focused on their homework. As a result, teachers report an increase in homework completion.¹

Day-school teachers can provide helpful insights about student work and homework assignments. Let teachers know homework help is available, and ask teachers about what types of materials and resources are typically needed. Invite day-school teachers to participate in afterschool homework time periodically to help establish priorities and procedures, and to provide direct support to students who may need additional help completing complex assignments.

Communicating with day-school teachers and families can be a simple process. The homework section of the online Afterschool Training Toolkit (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/homework) offers tools such as a homework log and a template for memos to day-school staff. The homework log is useful for recording assignments and tracking progress. It can also be used to help students manage their time, prioritize the things they need to do, and assess their own progress. The memo template gives an example of how you can provide ongoing communication with day-school staff.

To involve families in student homework, invite them to visit and participate in the afterschool program during homework time. A visit provides examples of positive homework environments and an opportunity to discuss strategies parents can use at home. It helps parents see how checking in with their children, using homework logs, and asking them to keep track of questions they have will provide structure and accountability for students.

Discussing the structure and expectations of homework time can help students set and meet homework goals and is another way to keep parents and day-school teachers informed. Consider using a written agreement, signed by students, parents, teachers, and afterschool staff, that details each person's commitment to homework completion. This written agreement should clearly describe each person's role in homework and what is expected during homework time.

Seppanen, P., Love, J., deVries, D., Berstein, L., Seligson, M., Marx, F., & Kisker, E. (1993). *National study of before- and after-school programs*. [Final report.] Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning.



Photo courtesy Bedford County 21st CCLC

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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.

www.sedl.org/afterschool



RECOMMENDED *resource*

AFTERSCHOOL CURRICULUM CHOICE: LITERACY RESOURCES

This free online resource helps practitioners locate and make informed choices about high-quality literacy resources to enrich their programs.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/guide/literacy



Photo courtesy Bedford County 21st CCLC

"The Bedford County program has been built after a careful review of best practices in afterschool programs."

WALTER CURFMAN

director

Bedford County 21st Century Community Learning Center Consortium BEDFORD COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

When students first attend the 21st Century Community Learning Center Learning Consortium in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, they often hide their low grades from afterschool staff. The program includes homework help as part of its activities, and as the weeks pass, the same students who hid assignments and report cards become eager to show their work and the academic progress they have made.

"The Bedford County program has been built after a careful review of best practices in afterschool programs," explains director Walter Curfman. When students enter the afterschool program, they have a snack and then engage in 1 hour of homework help and tutoring. There is typically a student-adult ratio of 6 to 1, which allows students to get help if they need it. Afterschool staff check students' agendas and assignment books to learn what homework students have, and they stay in contact with day-school teachers and parents through newsletters, e-mail, and conversations. Students receive rewards and recognition for completing assignments and improving grades. Curfman reports that both students and parents like the afterschool homework help. Students like having someone there to help them, and parents report that it eliminates conflict and allows them to focus on other family activities.

IN YOUR *words*

How do you keep students engaged in their homework?
(Select all that apply.)

- Students begin homework right away so they finish before they get tired.
- Students work in groups and use manipulatives, white boards, computers, and other resources.
- We communicate with students, parents, and day-school teachers so that everyone understands expectations.

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200809.html.

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TRAINING *tip*

Let Students Take the Lead

If you have conferences with parents, be sure to include students in the meeting. Letting students talk about expectations and successes gives them more ownership of their work. In the homework section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit, the Involving Day Schools, Families, and Communities practice includes a video showing how afterschool staff can communicate with both day-school teachers and parents (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/homework/pr_families_communities.html).

EVENTS *calendar*

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| Oct. 16 | Lights On Afterschool
www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa.cfm
NATIONWIDE |
| Nov. 5-6 | Best of Out-of-School Time High School BOOST-er Summit
www.boostconference.org/booster
SAN DIEGO, CA |

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

Newsletter available online at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords