

AFTERSCHOOL *news*



Involving Families and Communities in the Arts

Parents are likely the most important supporters of afterschool and expanded learning programs. After all, few activities can be more exciting to parents than seeing their child dance across a stage, sing a song, or act in a play. These public performances are equally as thrilling for the students who are eager to show their parents and family what they have learned.

Involving Families and Communities is one of the practices in the arts section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/arts), a free, online staff development resource based on promising practices in afterschool programs. The goals of involving families and communities in the arts are to develop interest and skills; develop community resources to support ongoing arts learning; and increase understanding, enjoyment, and support of the arts.

A few strategies for successfully involving families and communities include the following: involve parents in the planning process, seek out community resources, invite local artists and performers to participate, and create projects that offer opportunities for families to participate. Afterschool instructors may find that parents, like their students, respond differently to various subject areas. Parents who feel unsure about their ability to help with a science fair or to participate in a reading event because they are not native speakers of English may be more willing to create costumes for a play or help paint a mural. Connecting activities such as plays, concerts, dance performances, and art exhibits with social and cultural events within the community can also foster greater parental involvement. For example, families that have already planned on attending a street fair will be delighted to show others the drawings or paintings their children created to honor the event.

Projects that focus on students and families' cultural and ethnic heritage can also provide new opportunities for communities to engage in the arts. Students and families will learn new things about each other as students create projects based on their parents' favorite childhood songs, dances, movies, and plays. Maybe the Macarena deserves another shot at popularity at your afterschool program. Or have students recast their parents' favorites using today's styles, and parents may learn a thing or two about current musical tastes.

With careful planning and execution, afterschool arts activities can be fun ways to involve students' families and the community in your program.



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The SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool 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*

ART LESSON PLANS: AFTERSCHOOL LESSON PLAN DATABASE

This resource has activities for six content areas, including the arts. Lessons are browsable by content area and grade level.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/lessonplans/



"How can you not support an afterschool program when the singing and instrument-banging children are full of smiles as you watch them go by?"

DOUG WIXOM
project manager

Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center

SOUTH SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

The Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center in Salt Lake City serves the needs of refugee families living in a single apartment complex. The center was named after Moo, a 7-year-old Southeast Asian girl who was killed by another refugee at the complex in December 2007. Following her death, the community created an afterschool program for children living there.

The complex owner donates an apartment free of charge to the program, enabling 30 to 50 children to participate each day. "There was no tradition of afterschool programs for children in the countries from which these refugees have come. In some cases there wasn't even a tradition of regular school attendance. We had to convince the parents that we could provide a physically safe and academically sound program for their children," explains Doug Wixom, project manager with the Hser Ner Moo center.

To encourage family involvement, the center hired an outreach worker to visit families. The staff also appealed to residents' cultural heritage. For example, one of the more successful events was a cultural program that residents helped plan. Various ethnic groups provided food, singing, and dancing. Some 150 people attended.

Another example of how the center uses its location to encourage family involvement was a sing-along class. Twice a week, instructors lead the children around the complex in a huge, single-file, musical parade. Each child has an instrument that he or she bangs in time to the music on a portable CD player. As Wixom explains, "How can you not support an afterschool program when the singing and instrument-banging children are full of smiles as you watch them go by?"

IN YOUR *words*

Has your afterschool program tried any of these family involvement activities? (Select all that apply.)

- Collecting oral histories and traditions from students' family members
- Festivals with dance, music, and food that reflect students' cultural backgrounds
- Inviting families to see student performances and works of art
- Other (E-mail us and share your stories with us.)

To participate in this survey and view the results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200909.html.

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TRAINING *tip*

Community Involvement by Giving Back

Community service is another way to cultivate stronger ties among afterschool programs and family and community members. For example, Canstruction (www.canstruction.org) is a competition where teams of architects, engineers, and students design and build structures made from cans of food that have been donated by families, community members, and businesses. The structures are displayed in public, and the participants later donate the canned food to local food banks.

EVENTS *calendar*

Oct. 19–20 School's Out Washington: The Bridge to Afterschool and Back 2009 Conference
www.schoolsoutwashington.org
VANCOUVER, WA

Oct. 22 Lights On Afterschool
www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa.cfm
NATIONWIDE

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

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