



Rush Hour

The daily transition between dismissal and arrival to your afterschool program can present unique challenges. Unlike the slow steady arrival of school-agers in the morning, the afternoon is a mad dash as dozens of children arrive from school all at once, often full of pent-up energy ready to be released in your program. Scheduling and staffing this time properly can really set the tone for the entire afternoon, and for your school age program as a whole.

Careful scheduling of both the staff and the environment can make the transition from school to afterschool as smooth as possible. Make sure that after school staff is familiar with the procedures of your program and the location of important information. This is especially important for new staff, or for programs whose staff work irregular schedules. Staff need time to communicate information with each other, share information about absences and review their plans for the day. Staff also need to arrive in ample time to prepare the spaces, snack and activities that will occur.

Instead of having shifts end just as school age arrives, having additional staff support available during the afterschool transition as can be really helpful in getting the afternoon started quickly. As children move on and off buses, wash hands and move through the center, having one or two staff available means children are well monitored and less likely to have bullying and other behavior issues that come from lack of supervision and too much waiting.

Even staff who do not work directly in school age can create schedules that support the school age program. They can do this by ensuring preschoolers are not using or moving through school age or common areas when the older children are arriving or using them. For example, if school age is scheduled to use the playground at 3:30, preschool should try to use it earlier in the day. This is especially important in the winter when it gets dark early; afterschool may be the only time children have a chance to get outside.

A smooth transition to the afterschool program is possible with intentional planning and preparation. If you would like help, remember you SACC TA is available to help you develop a plan that works for you!