

School Connections Tool Kit #1- Getting Started

What are school connections, and how do they benefit children and families?

The first thought that comes to mind is, *“It takes a village to raise a child!”* If we (i.e. public/private school sectors, Pre-K, and School Age Care) embrace this philosophy, we continually communicate with one another to share children’s strengths, interests, personal needs and familial needs. This is such a simple concept, but without this, shared philosophy and trustful relationships are challenging to obtain.

How is it possible to embrace “A Village” philosophy?

Ask your team...

- Do we know what happens in each other’s educational settings?
- How do we find this out?
- What are the commonalities, beyond educating the same children?

How is it possible to build trusting relationships?

Ask your team...

- Does the school know who our leaders are and vice versa?
- Who has connections with the other educational settings?
- What first steps should we take towards relationship building?
- How do we see our relationships with one another as a time saver in the long run and make it a daily priority?

Here are some reasons to create school connections...

- Children attending high quality Pre-K come to Kindergarten ready to learn.
- Children attending School Age Care have better school attendance and achieve higher grades in school.
- Observation and assessment in a variety of environments allow for more time to get to know each child.
- Having daily face to face contact with families benefits the children, their families and the program.
- Building respectful relationships between the school-day and afterschool staff creates a foundation that allows staff to trust each other, plan together, share a common vision, and share responsibility for student success. (Young, P. G. (2011, November). Relationships among leaders key to aligning the learning day. *School-Age NOTES*, 32(3), 3–6.)

First Steps to School Connections

STEP #1 Introduce yourself to school leadership with a face to face 20 minute meeting:

- a) share your programs mission
- b) share your contact information
- c) share your handbook
- d) share that in the next few weeks you will be extending an invitation for them to visit your program

STEP #2 Within a week's time:

- a) ask the children to write and/or sign a personal invitation to come see the program, ensuring to allow for their scheduling needs. (e.g. "Please come visit with us next week between 3-5 PM, RSVP so we know what day to expect you. Thank You.")
- b) ask the children to deliver it to the school principal

STEP #3 Prepare for the visit

- a) find out the principal's favorite snack and serve it that day
- b) gather advocacy materials as resources to provide
- c) create display of teachers' biographies which include pictures and credentials

STEP #4 Within a week after the initial visit:

- a) prepare for another event that involves leadership, school teachers and school personnel. (e.g. snack time, a talent show, or a kickball game).
- b) create a long term plan for future events to continue relationship building.

Additional resources to help start your school connection process:

CONNECTING SCHOOL AND AFTERSCHOOL 15 WAYS TO IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS
https://www.naesp.org/resources/1/A_New_Day_for_Learning_Resources/Building_and_Sustaining_Partnerships/Connecting_School_and_Afterschool_15_Ways_to_Improve_Partnerships.pdf

ADVOCACY FOR AFTERSCHOOL
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/PA-afterschool-facts.pdf>

BUILDING SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (SEE PAGE 4 Insight #2)
http://www.sedl.org/insights/2-1/building_supportive_relationships_in_afterschool.pdf