

*third annual  
June 2008*

# ***promising afterschool practices***

*a showcase of innovative, creative, & successful afterschool programs*

The logo for 'nj after 3' features the letters 'nj' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by 'after' in a smaller lowercase font, and '3' in a large, bold, lowercase font. Above the '3' is a stylized white arc with a vertical line through it, resembling a clock face or a stylized '3'. Below the logo is the tagline 'dedicated to expanding afterschool opportunities for New Jersey's kids' in a small, lowercase, sans-serif font.  
**nj after 3**  
dedicated to expanding afterschool opportunities for New Jersey's kids

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*President & CEO of NJ After 3*
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# Greetings,

**Welcome to New Jersey After 3's Third Annual Promising Afterschool Practices Showcase.**

*Promising Practices* is part of our overall Training and Technical Assistance Initiative, through which *NJ After 3* offers a combination of offsite and onsite training and development opportunities. These efforts lead to high quality afterschool programs that benefit children and families in four main areas:

- **Keeping Kids Safe**
- **Inspiring Student Learning**
- **Promoting Positive Youth Development**
- **Supporting Working Families**

Through *Promising Practices*, *New Jersey After 3* is drawing upon knowledge amassed by 46 community based organizations, one-hundred and seven public schools, and countless individuals, who together have an extraordinary amount of experience in managing high-quality and youth-enriching afterschool programs.

The goals of the *Promising Practices* Competition and Showcase are to promote sustainability in the field of afterschool and to develop high-quality afterschool programs. By sharing practices that have worked well across the *NJA3* network, *NJA3* is building a collection of successful strategies and activities that any afterschool program can adapt.

We hope you find the practices included here relevant to your work. We encourage you to call the Site Coordinators listed if you want to learn more about a particular practice. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mark Valli  
*President & CEO,*  
*New Jersey After 3, Inc.*

# Introduction

## **New Jersey After 3**

*New Jersey After 3 (NJA3)* is a private, non-profit corporation dedicated to expanding and improving afterschool programming for New Jersey's kids. Its vision is that all New Jersey children will have the opportunity to participate in high-quality, comprehensive, structured, supervised, and enriching afterschool activities. *New Jersey After 3* was formed as a public-private partnership to maximize the resources available to afterschool programs for New Jersey kids. *New Jersey After 3* funds an extensive network of over forty non-profit-run, school-based afterschool programs statewide. Those programs serve over 15,000 children in 107 schools statewide.

## **What is a Promising Practice?**

A Promising Practice is a system, process, or activity in a program that works and leads to good results. It's something that would work in other programs, if only they knew about it. Promising Practices capture some of the most innovative, creative, and successful ways that programs serve youth.

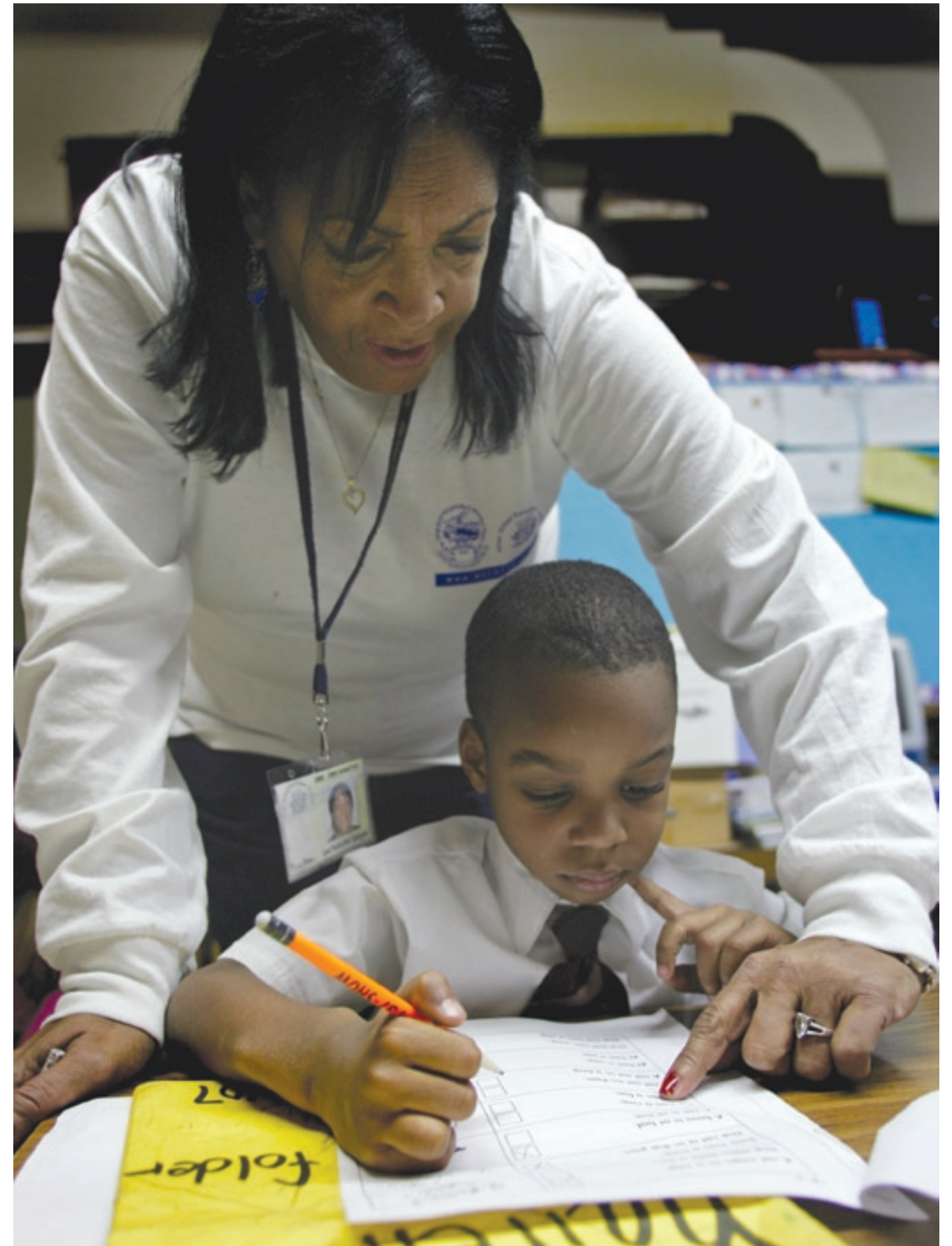
This publication compiles a selection of these strong, effective, and replicable practices that are used in *New Jersey After 3* afterschool programs. By sharing these practices, *New Jersey After 3* hopes to assist programs in incorporating approaches and strategies that have been field tested and refined by their peers, leading to an expansion of quality services throughout its network. These services, in turn, should meet a variety of needs found among today's youth.

## **How can Promising Practices help you?**

Promising Practices can help afterschool programs in three distinct ways. First, by examining your own program to see which activities could be considered Promising Practices, you engage in a reflection process that can help you define your strengths and weaknesses and set program priorities. Once you know why something works, you can leverage that strength and channel it into other activities. Conversely, you can see what does not work, and take steps to improve it. Second, by learning about other programs' Promising Practices, you can adapt activities or processes that are proven to work, rather than creating them from scratch. Third, sharing Promising Practices among programs promotes community-wide improvement while providing an opportunity for well deserved recognition.

## **NJA3's Selection Process**

The practices included in this publication were submitted by *New Jersey After 3* Site Coordinators as part of a Promising Practices Workshop and Annual Competition facilitated by *New Jersey After 3* and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time in February 2008. A panel of reviewers read and discussed submissions from more than twenty-five programs; the applications addressed a wide variety of program activities and strategies. The evaluation process included a verification site visit from the staff at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. The ten finalists demonstrated the practice in action or some representation of the practice as part of the site visit. Each practice summary in this book contains a description of the practice and strategies for implementing the practice. We have also included an additional five activities as Program Tips, which may also prove helpful to those seeking to develop high quality afterschool programs.



# Academic Reinforcement and Enriching Exploration

**Family Guidance Center of Warren County  
Taylor Street Elementary School  
Washington, New Jersey**

Category: Family, School, and Community Connections

## Partners

**Family Guidance Center of Warren County** is dedicated to strengthening families affected by mental illness, substance abuse, family conflict, and emotional adjustment. Family Guidance Center provides a range of treatment, prevention, and educational programs that serve three major population centers in the county: Washington, Phillipsburg, and Hackettstown.

**Taylor Street Elementary School** serves 205 students ranging, from Pre-Kindergarten through second grade. As part of the Washington Borough public school district, Taylor Street School strives to provide a balanced curriculum that meets the academic, social, and emotional needs of students to develop life-long learners. In September 2005, Family Guidance Center began an afterschool partnership with the Taylor Street Elementary School.

**Program Enrollment:** 180 (Grades K-2)

## Practice Description

Working with support from teachers, parents, and the school Principal, the *NJA3* program site coordinator at Taylor Street Elementary School developed two innovative programs to support student academic progress. The Academic Reinforcement program is designed to assist students who need additional support in reading, phonics, and/or mathematics. The Enriching Exploration program provides selected students with more challenging levels of activity and engagement.

**Academic Reinforcement Program:** The program targets students who are below grade level in basic skills, including reading and mathematics, and often have difficulty completing homework without consistent one-on-one assistance. Through discussion with the *NJA3* site coordinator and the school Principal, classroom teachers identify students who could use additional support.

Students are then matched with two other members in their grade who need the same support. Working in small groups, students meet twice a week with two education specialists who are teachers in the school. Groups reinforce classroom learning by reviewing classroom materials and related concepts during thirty-minute meetings. Participation by the students is voluntary and fully supported by parents and the school's Principal. Staff initially were concerned that children might feel singled out, but the children enjoy the more individualized attention and look forward to working in their groups.

**Enriching Exploration Program:** The program focuses on students who regularly perform above grade level but still have trouble focusing and connecting to learning experiences. Although these students show great academic promise, they exhibit disruptive behavior during the school day and the afterschool program, which limits their learning success. Children are identified for participation in the Enriching Exploration program through the same process as the Academic Reinforcement program. During weekly one-hour meetings, students work together in mixed grade groups that are facilitated by an education specialist. To provide more challenging and engaging academic activities, students receive an additional level of work in a content area that the entire afterschool program experiences. For example, during the Chinese New Year Unit, all students in the afterschool program learn about the holiday and review Chinese writings. Students participating in "Enriching Exploration" completed an additional project focused on watercolor art and Chinese symbols.

Afterschool program staff observe that both programs have helped increase student performance and self-confidence. Classroom teachers report that more children are completing homework, and parents are more positive about the educational experiences of their children in the classroom and in the afterschool program. These programs have helped to strengthen the relationship between the



school administration, faculty, and *NJA3* staff. Since the inception of each program, there has been a significant decline in disruptive behaviors both in the afterschool program and in the classroom. The afterschool program site coordinator is continuing to track rates of homework completion and behavior (discipline warnings and teacher reports).

## Rationale for the Practice

Students performing below grade level in school often struggle with homework during the afterschool program hours. At the same time, parents expect that homework is completed fully and correctly during afterschool program time. The afterschool program endeavored to meet parent expectations, but it was clear that an additional strategy to support student academic progress was needed. More broadly, some of the upper level Warren Hills District schools have performed below the state requirements for adequate yearly progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It was believed that students needed additional assistance on basic skills in math and language arts in the lower grades to help them be successful in the upper grades.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Collaboration:** Develop trusting relationships between the school administration and the *NJA3* program staff.

**Parental Involvement:** Inform parents of the additional support and benefit to their child; provide feedback on child's progress.

**Be Specific:** Be sure to make a distinction between enrichment and formal tutoring when naming your program.

**Communicate:** Speak with classroom teachers on a regular basis for student updates and feedback

## Contact Information

Family Guidance of Warren County  
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Principal: Jacqueline Nassry

# Celebrating Through Quilting

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark**  
**First Avenue Elementary School**  
**Newark, New Jersey**

Category: Social Climate/Program Culture

## Partners

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark's** mission is to encourage and enable all young people to aspire to reach their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark offers activities and programs that enhance self-esteem, instill good character traits, develop positive relationships, encourage education and career exploration, and promote healthy living.

**First Avenue Elementary School** serves 1,160 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through eight. The First Avenue School strives to empower all students to achieve their full potential. A modern school building recently was completed and is equipped with technology and science labs, music rooms, a community health center, and a humanities room. Staff members are committed to ensuring all students achieve proficiency on statewide achievement tests, acquire language proficiency, mathematical skills, and background in the arts and sciences needed to be successful in life.

**Program Enrollment:** 188 (Grade K–2)

## Practice Description

Students at the First Avenue Elementary School afterschool program engage in quilting as a story-telling activity in celebration of various holidays and events. Quilting invites young people to develop and appreciate the visual arts in a unique way and offers an avenue for the larger community to take part in a youth project. Staff members created a sample quilt to introduce and promote the partnership between The Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark and NJA3 to program parents, Club members, school and program staff, and the overall community. Since the project's inception, students have completed quilts around themes such as: Many Hands Coming Together to

Make a Quilt, Class Family Tree, Celebrating Our First Year, and One Hundred Day. All of these quilts are proudly displayed in the school building.

Quilting activities have been offered at the afterschool program for more than a year, and all students are invited to participate. Typically twenty to thirty students in Kindergarten through second grade work on the quilts with guidance from afterschool program staff. Each month, the participating students discuss a new theme. Once a theme is chosen, afterschool staff members help students develop their ideas for individual quilting squares and share them with the group. Once the students have expressed their thoughts orally, they work on translating their ideas into art. Staff provide a small sample quilt and encourage self-expression.

The quilting process begins with one large sheet of fabric. Students participate in measuring out the squares that will be used for the quilts. Once the material is cut, each student is given a quilting square to design. Staff provide youth with an assortment of fabric markers, crayons, glitter, glue, and other materials. Each student has fun creating a piece of a larger group project. Once the quilting squares are ready (about one month later), program staff, parents, and volunteers from the community help to sew the squares together. Completed quilts are shared with the school, community organizations, and program supporters.

Quilting has helped nurture relationships and build team spirit among the school, parents, Club members, program staff, and community members because the activity draws in participation from these partners. Stronger relationships help sustain overall support and commitment by others to the afterschool program.

**Quilting has helped nurture relationships and build team spirit...**



## Rationale for the Practice

The quilting program started in 1999 by a parent liaison who has since become an afterschool program staff member. The site coordinator was looking for ways to promote and market the recently formed partnership between NJA3 and the Boys & Girls Clubs at the First Avenue Elementary school. The quilting project seemed like a fresh and exciting way to promote partnership and acknowledge the program's sponsors. Another intent of the quilting program was to introduce students to visual arts in a unique way with a project that supports self-expression.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Plan Ahead:** Consider possible themes in advance. Gather age-appropriate materials for students to use. Share library books and Web-based materials with students to help them think about themes and quilt square design.

**Staff:** It is helpful for the facilitator to have sewing and quilting skills.

**Materials:** Pre-determine the size of the quilt to ensure adequate design materials. Have a sample quilt to show to students.

**Resources:** You may need help from parents and community members to sew quilts together. Recruit volunteers prior to launching the project.

**Display Location:** Work with school administration to select a location to display the quilts. Consider other possible venues for exhibiting the quilts, such as community organizations, schools, and supportive businesses.

## Contact Information

Boys and Girls Clubs of Newark  
 155 Washington Street, Suite 202  
 Newark, New Jersey 07102  
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 Site Coordinator: Lisette A. Curry;  
 lcurry@bgcn.org  
 Principal: Anthony Orsini

# Girls Leadership Club

**Jewish Family Services of Bergen County  
Cliffside Park Schools #4 and #6  
Cliffside Park, New Jersey**

Category: Program Content – Arts, Literacy, Math, and Science

## Partners

**Jewish Family Services of Bergen County** serves the Bergen County community with programs such as senior care management, individual and family counseling, computer and vocational training, employment assistance, aid to new Americans, and school-based services. The mission of Jewish Family Services is to strengthen and preserve the well-being of individuals and families, to help them effectively meet the challenges and changes through life by providing quality human services, and to provide professional counseling to all who call upon its services. Jewish Family Services established its partnership with Cliffside Park School District to provide afterschool programming in 2006.

**Cliffside Park School #4** is an elementary school serving Grades 1-6 and has an enrollment of approximately 375 students. School #4 is committed to providing a solid foundation for its students by means of a dedicated staff, increased parental involvement, and strong community support.

**Cliffside Park School #6** complex is comprised of both an elementary school and a middle school facility. The elementary school houses approximately 300 students in Grades 1-6. Strong emphasis is placed on balanced literacy, guided reading, and math foundations, with close attention paid to New Jersey State Core Content Standards. The middle school houses the district's entire seventh and eighth grade population of 330 students. Maximizing student potential, strengthening decision-making skills, teaching respect, and building strong self-concepts are goals that are at the forefront of the middle school's educational philosophy.

**Program Enrollment:** 325 (Grades 1-8)

## Practice Description

Club Ed is a comprehensive afterschool program run by a partnership among Jewish Family Services, *New Jersey After 3*, and the Cliffside Park School District. Club Ed is offered to all Cliffside Park students in Grades one-eight. At Cliffside Park Schools #4 and #6 a Girl's Leadership Program has been developed. Girl's Leadership Club is offered for 1 hour and 45 minutes per week and open to girls in grades five-eight. Thirteen girls are enrolled at School #4 and eight-teen girls are enrolled at School #6.

The Girl's Leadership Club is facilitated by an AmeriCorps member who is part of the *NJ After 3* AmeriCorps Program and is affiliated with Jewish Family Services. The content of the activities, which include discussion and project-based learning, is planned by the AmeriCorps member with support from the site coordinator and input from the students. The Girl's Leadership Club offers girls a chance to deal with problems and concerns that are difficult to manage in every day life. Through group discussion and activities, girls become critical thinkers and active participants in changing their own lives. The club includes innovative activities in a variety



of *NJA3* content areas, including visual arts, literacy, science/technology, health and fitness, character development, and career exploration. The curriculum consists of a structured, sequenced set of activities that use active learning techniques and that focus on particular goals. The activities are intended to provide tools for personal growth that are not provided during the regular school day. Club activities also may include a service-learning component. For Women's History Month club members selected two books with empowering female lead characters to read aloud to elementary school classrooms. Other content topics included:

- Peer pressure
- Tolerance
- Self-esteem
- Sexism and racism
- Health
- Female bullying
- Fashion
- Celebrating female diversity

Girls participating in the club are given frequent opportunities to assess their interests in club activities and provide their feedback on previous sessions. The club facilitator regularly surveys participants for comments and suggestions. Survey responses indicate positive feelings about the club, such as "I love Mondays because of Girl's Leadership Club," and "Girl's Leadership has helped me grow as an individual."

## Rationale for the Practice

The site coordinator was aware that many girls experience mistreatment, bullying, and peer pressure throughout elementary and middle school. Specifically, during Club Ed program hours, staff members observed girls teasing, spreading rumors, and excluding others. One staff member noted that "this age is when girls learn a lot about bonds and the trust of female friendships in addition to the bullying and cruelty of the "girl world." The club was created to help address the need for girls to examine themselves and to consider the role they play in the community of friends, family, and peers. It is hoped that the club experience will help equip girls with the tools they need to cope with tough issues they will confront throughout their lives.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Research:** Many media and web-based materials can be used for curriculum content. The facilitator will need to spend some time before hand preparing materials, interactive exercises, and hand-outs. Check out: *Mean Girls* (movie), *Odd Girl Out* (book), and *Teaching Tolerance* (website).

**Staffing:** Select a facilitator with an appropriate background which may include coursework in psychology, women's studies, gender studies, or sociology. It is helpful for the facilitator to be someone passionate about girl's/women's issues.



**Confidentiality:** Establish, from the beginning, a safe and confidential environment and get group agreement on boundaries.

**Parent Communication:** Parents must be informed of the nature of discussions and issues that are covered in the program content. Communicate regularly with parents through e-mail or newsletter updates, and make sure parents are informed and given the opportunity to "opt out" from their child's participation in some discussions.

**Atmosphere:** Create a supportive, relaxed, and informal atmosphere to promote honest and authentic dialog.

## Contact Information

Jewish Family Services of Bergen County  
105 Teaneck Road  
Teaneck, NJ 07666  
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Site Coordinator: Maurice Frumkin;  
MauriceF@jfsbergen.org  
Principals: Christine Gaincola and Lorraine Morrow

# Kid's Cooking Club

**Work-Family Connection**  
**Florence Avenue School**  
**Irvington, New Jersey**

Category: Health & Safety

## Partners

**The Work-Family Connection** is a not-for-profit educational organization founded in 1989 and offers before and after school programs at schools, extended-day Kindergarten, vacation/holiday programs, and summer camps. By operating in the schools, the Work-Family Connection can better achieve its mission of providing high-quality services to children that responds to the needs of families, schools, and communities. The programs are licensed and nationally accredited with qualified, nurturing staff that provide educational and recreational extended learning opportunities to the youth they serve.

**Florence Avenue School** is one of eight elementary schools located in Irvington. The school currently serves 439 youth in grades K-5. School administration and staff have established a school culture that is socially positive and academically challenging, and provides a collective effort toward student success.

**Program Enrollment:** 439 (Grades K-5)

## Practice Description

The Kid's Cooking Club provides engaging and creative ways to raise youth awareness of nutrition and healthy eating. Twice a week, children in grades one through five gather around a table in the teacher's lounge to prepare a variety of dishes they might not otherwise sample. Each session is one hour long and includes ten to four-teen students. The cooking instructor selects healthy, kid-friendly menus and shares knowledge of the kitchen, safe cooking protocols, and general table etiquette with students. The Kid's Cooking Club helps students to explore new foods, eat healthy, work together on meal preparation, and learn about food service careers.

**The Kid's Cooking Club helps students to explore new foods, eat healthy, work together on meal preparation, and learn about food service careers.**

Under the guidance of a cooking instructor, students prepare and enjoy healthy meals. Sample dishes, many of which do not require stove-top or oven cooking, include tropical fruit salad, garden salad, and spaghetti and meatballs. All menu selections are approved by the site coordinator, and student files are checked for known allergies or food concerns.

As they prepare the entrée of the day, students learn about the recipe ingredients, including food origins, growing methods, and nutritional value. Ingredients from different cultural foods become starting points for students to explore different regions of the world.

The instructor also discusses the food pyramid. Students review where their ingredients fit on the pyramid to help them understand the importance of a balanced diet.

From the beginning of the lesson to clean up, students learn the importance of maintaining sanitary workspaces and conditions for healthy eating. Following the initial preparation of the kitchen and cooking space, students wash appropriate food items and learn to select the freshest ingredients. Safety is stressed, as students are introduced to the art of slicing

and dicing using plastic utensils. In addition to cooking skills, students learn about portion sizing, formal table setting, and dining etiquette. At the end of each lesson, students gather around the table to socialize and share the final food product with their peers.

The Cooking Club lessons promote healthy meal choices at home and encourage students to participate with parents in meal preparation; this in turn, encourages family bonding and family conversation. Parents and students express excitement over the Cooking Club, and recipes from the afterschool program often are repeated at home.



Images of Kid's Cooking Club courtesy of Jennifer Farley; image of spaghetti and meatballs www.iStockphoto.com

## Rationale for the Practice

The afterschool program wanted to support families eating and cooking together because that promotes teamwork, conversation, healthy meal choices, family bonding, and life skills. The Kid's Cooking Club was developed to meet these goals and to coincide with the school's focus on healthy kids and healthy school lunches. According to the site coordinator, implementing Kid's Cooking Club "offered a focus on the backbone of a healthy community and family."

## Tips for Adaptation

**Plan Ahead:** Choose a kid-friendly menu and assemble ingredients ahead of time.

**Facility Requirements:** A kitchen facility with a sink and workspace is necessary. An oven and stovetop are extremely helpful and offer more opportunity for actual cooking beyond food preparation.

**Safety First:** Check for any food allergies or other concerns. Review all safety protocols and precautions with students to avoid injury.

**Budget Limitations:** Healthy food options can be expensive, so be sure to budget funds to last the entire length of the program.

**Experienced Staff:** Select a staff person or hire/acquire a community member or parent volunteer to serve as a cooking instructor. Instructors should have a passion for cooking and have experience working with young children.

**Storage Capacity:** Plan for appropriate storage space prior to purchasing supplies and ingredients.

**Helpers:** Cooking is hands-on and children require help. Seek volunteers to assist.

## Contact Information:

The Work-Family Connection  
 P.O. Box 1155  
 Whitehouse Station, New Jersey 08889  
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 Site Coordinator: Jennifer Farley;  
 jfarley@asepofessex.org  
 Principal: James Washington

# Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

**Morristown Neighborhood House  
Frelinghuysen Middle School  
Morristown, New Jersey**

Category: Program Content – Arts, Literacy, Math, and Science

## Partners

**Morristown Neighborhood House (MNH)** was founded in 1898 as a settlement house that helped immigrants acclimate to American culture. MNH's core mission is to help new immigrants, aid families who are confronting economic challenges, and foster cross-cultural acceptance. On an average day, more than 1200 children and youth receive services from MNH programs in Dover, Randolph, Denville, and Morristown, including Frelinghuysen Middle School.

**Frelinghuysen Middle School** is an exemplary middle school of 934 students that uses a team structure approach. The school administration and staff are committed to lifelong learning, a positive school climate, family and community partnerships, high expectations, equity and excellence for every student.

Program Enrollment: 200 (Grades 6–8)

## Practice Description

The Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program at Frelinghuysen Middle School brings eighth grade students from the afterschool program together with Morristown High School volunteer mentors (freshmen through seniors). The mentors provide advice about transitioning to high school, and support as the eighth graders go through adolescence. Mentors and eighth-graders meet in groups once a week for one hour. The mentoring program has been in place for two years.

Group mentoring meetings are informal and are facilitated by the high school under the supervision of program staff. Approximately twelve eighth-grade students and twelve high school students participate in the group mentoring meetings. Each meeting begins with refreshments provided by the afterschool program followed by team-building activities and a topical discussion. Sample discussion

topics include expectations for the first day of high school, high school clubs and activities, high school teachers, peer pressure and bullying, and freshmen anxiety. The eighth-graders are encouraged to suggest discussion topics for future meetings. High school students discuss future meeting topics and potential content with the supervising program staff one week prior to the meeting.

Volunteer high school mentors learn about the program through word of mouth, guidance office flyers, and Morristown Neighborhood House (MNH) events. An afterschool program staff member, who supervises the mentoring program and is a teacher at the middle school, also coordinates recruitment efforts. Once selected, high school mentors are required to complete a five-hour mentor training workshop provided by the United Way of Morris County. Most of the high school mentors are involved in Peer Group Connection, a high school peer-mentoring program designed to support freshman during their first year at Morristown High.

The mentoring program promotes positive outcomes for eighth grade students by providing them with a welcoming forum to discuss their concerns about high school and by fostering supportive relationships with peers. Based on surveys, eighth-graders find the program very beneficial, and the program makes a difference in their transition to high school. At a recent MNH Open House showcasing local youth programs, mentors expressed high satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment when discussing the Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program.

## Rationale for the Practice

Program staff members observed a decline in eighth grade participation in the afterschool program, except when field trip

**The mentoring program promotes positive outcomes for eighth grade students by providing them with a welcoming forum...**



Image courtesy of Ericka Ryans.

days or sports clubs are scheduled. One of the program objectives was to implement programming that would help retain eighth grade participation. Conversations with students and program staff revealed that rising freshmen had only one formal opportunity to interact with current high school students during the high school transition period. Creating more opportunity for interaction in a comfortable and relaxed setting has proven to be a sound strategy for supporting eighth grade students' needs and encourage participation. The mentoring program also provides opportunities for high school students to perform community service hours, which is a requirement for graduation.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Address Needs:** Listen to the needs the older students in your program identify; create programming activities and interests to address those needs.

**Staffing:** Select a program facilitator who relates well with older students and can coordinate recruitment of high school youth.

**Mentor Training:** Partner with an organization that can provide formal training, screening and appropriate supervision of the peer mentors.

**Discussion Content:** Work closely with high school students to help them facilitate group discussion and to draw out topics of interest to eighth-graders.

**Schedule:** Consider the optimal meeting time for (day/times per week) that realistically recognizes school schedules and individual student obligations. Many high school students have part-time jobs after school. Recruitment should target high school students who can commit fully to the schedule.

**Atmosphere:** Create a supportive, relaxed, and informal atmosphere with food, social activities, and comfortable seating arrangements to promote honest and authentic dialog.

## Contact Information

Morristown Neighborhood House  
12 Flagler Street  
Morristown, NJ 07960  
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Executive Director: David Walker  
Site Coordinator: Ericka Ryans;  
ryanse@neighborhood-house.org  
Principal: Ethel Minchello

# Staying Young Kid's Camp

**Educational Information & Resource Center (EIRC)  
Cold Springs Elementary School  
Gloucester City, New Jersey**

Category: Program Content – Arts, Literacy, Math, and Science

## Partners

**Educational Information & Resource Center (EIRC)** is a public agency that serves parents, schools, communities, and non-profit organizations, and privately helps businesses in thirty-six states and eight foreign countries. EIRC offers many resources, including programs in gifted and special education services, creative problem solving, academic support, child care, and child assault prevention programs.

**Cold Springs Elementary School of Gloucester City** is dedicated to helping children reach their full potential. The school serves children in grades Pre-Kindergarten through third. The Cold Springs Elementary School supports the intellectual and social growth of each child and fosters mastery of the basic skills of learning in all academic areas and at all grade levels.

**Program Enrollment:** 238 (Grades K–3)

## Practice Description

Staying Young Kid's Camp is a fun, and non-competitive fitness program for third grade students in the afterschool program. Developed by the site coordinator at Cold Springs Elementary School's afterschool program, the camp originally offered simple stretching and fitness exercises once a week. Now, it is a daily program activity in which every child participates and includes warm-ups, stretching, non-competitive races, drills, and discussion about health and fitness topics. Currently, the fifty-day fitness program engages almost sixty students.

The program begins when students gather in the gymnasium for attendance following school dismissal. Students start with warm-ups, stretching, push-ups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks. Teams are

formed to take part in more robust and fun activities that include non-competitive relay races, team drills, and soccer. Activities encourage teamwork and change to keep students interested. Many youth were reluctant to participate at first, but the non-competitive fitness activities inspired students to join.

Throughout the program, students chart their progress, which includes endurance, heart rate, and strength. Youth set personal fitness goals on the first day and are taught how to check their heart rates before and after the activities. As the program unfolds, students increase the number of repetitions of the activities, develop strategies to improve their own personal progress, and use the chart to see their improvement.



Students became so engaged in fitness that afterschool staff members began to include discussion about healthy eating and staying fit. Stemming from student interest, the afterschool staff incorporated healthy living topics and activities into post-homework time by distributing hand-outs developed by the site coordinator that include written exercises on hygiene, nutrition, and health.

As children became involved in the program, they developed more confidence in their abilities both in and out of the gym. Discipline problems that once took up time decreased, and students learned to work together in teams and respect each other. The afterschool program staff has noticed a positive change in student behavior during homework time and reports that students are more focused and better able to concentrate on their work. The program also has motivated students to share what they have learned about fitness and health with their families, strengthening the school's connection to parents.



**As children became involved in the program, they developed more confidence in their abilities both in and out of the gym.**

## Rationale for the Practice

Many of the third grade afterschool program staff work at other school locations during the day and are not able to be at the program location immediately following the school day. While waiting for program staff to arrive, other staff needed to engage over sixty children in activities that would be enjoyable for all students and promote healthy living. Additionally, the site coordinator looked for inclusive activities that would accommodate all students' levels of fitness and ability.

## Tips for Adaptation:

**Make it Fun:** Make the activities fun so students will engage while developing an interest in fitness.

**Dynamic Staff:** Select a facilitator who is engaging and can energize the student group. The facilitator should have some knowledge of physical fitness activities and some health and nutrition background.

**Options:** Discuss with students a list of optional non-competitive games and let them choose which ones they would like to play.

**Team Spirit:** Encourage team spirit and appreciation of all ability levels. Promote collaboration and good relationships to avoid bullying and teasing.

## Contact Information

Educational Information & Resource Center  
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Sewell, New Jersey 08080  
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Principal: Martin O'Connor

# Club Day

**Paterson YMCA**  
**Norman S. Weir School**  
**Paterson, New Jersey**

*Category: Program Content – Arts, Literacy, Math, and Science*

## Partners

**Paterson YMCA** is a community service organization that promotes positive values through programs that build spirit, mind, and body, and welcomes all people, with a focus on youth. The Paterson YMCA provides afterschool programs for children at three sites, offering them an opportunity to develop positive leadership skills in a well-equipped and safe environment.

**Norman S. Weir School** endeavors to prepare students with the necessary skills to succeed and become leaders in the multicultural and technological world of the 21st century. Weir School administration and faculty believe that all children can learn. Teachers work to improve the academic skills of students so the students are more productive in school and society. The school will utilize a variety of teaching strategies that best meet the learning styles of the students. Norman S. Weir School is an elementary and middle school, serving 570 students.

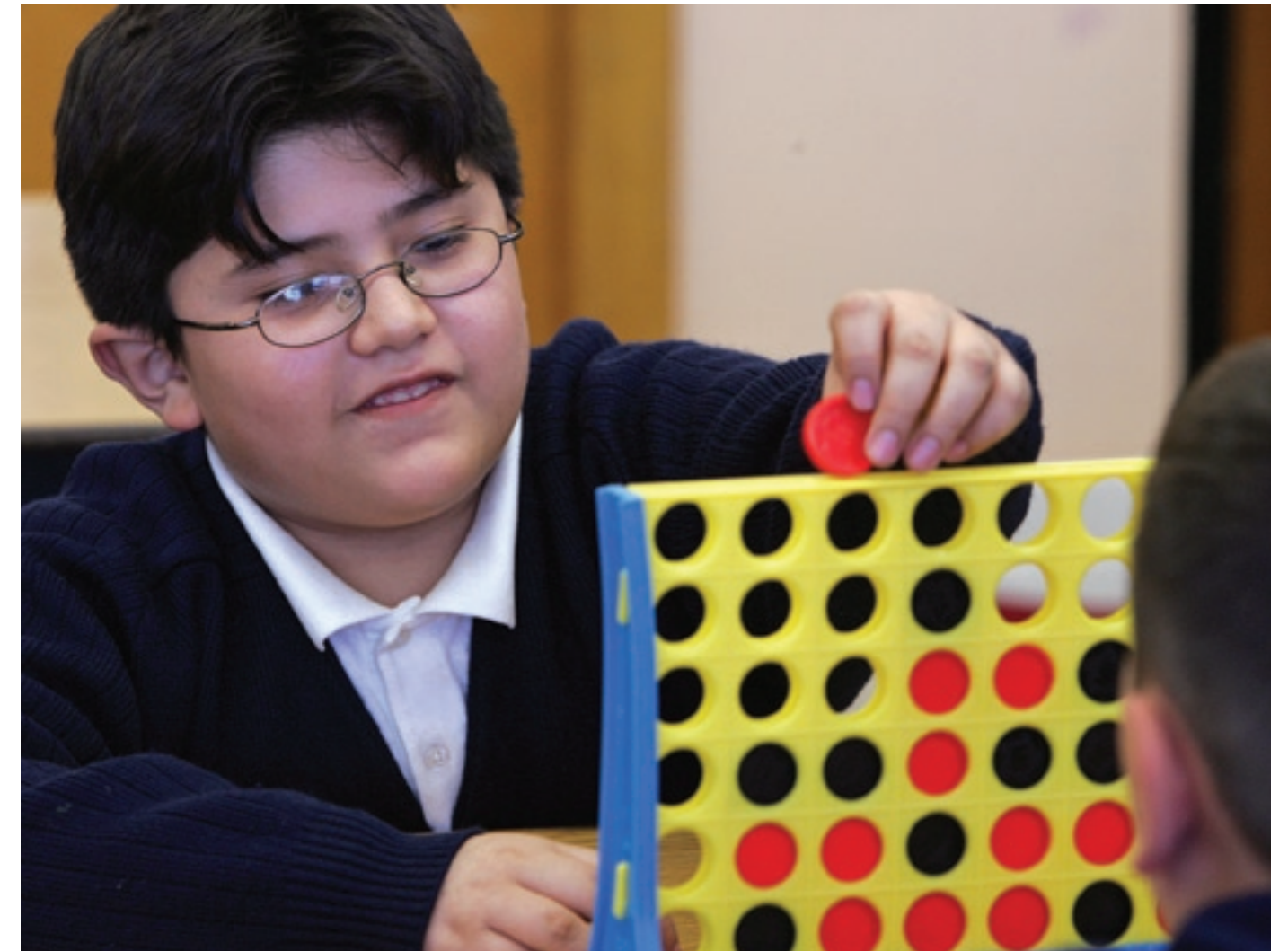
**Program Enrollment:** 140 (Grades 1–8)

## Practice Description

The afterschool program at Weir School offers special Club Days. Club Days are a special set of activities (clubs) that run twice a week for four weeks. Each club has a specific focus and curricula and can accommodate approximately ten students. Examples of clubs include, Game Masters, Healthy Chefs, Newsletter Team, and Jump Rope Jive. In one club, Mascot Mania, participants made a five-foot paper-maché tiger, symbolizing the school mascot. The mascot now greets visitors as they enter the school. There are eight different clubs from which all students have the opportunity to choose. Clubs repeat across sessions so every student has an opportunity to join. When Club Days is scheduled, students participate in regular homework help time and then enjoy an hour of club time before wrap-up and dismissal.

The Club Day program has been in place at the Weir afterschool program for two years. Planning begins in September when afterschool program staff meet to brainstorm club themes that tap into the interests and hobbies of both students and staff. Staff members are encouraged to think about their own talents in sports, arts and crafts, technology, music, and drama. Once club themes are chosen and staff is assigned, each club facilitator creates a proposed four-week curriculum and orders needed supplies.

When selecting clubs, students are able to designate their first three choices. In most cases, students are placed in one of their top three clubs. Students are encouraged to expose themselves to new challenges and try out different clubs.



## Rationale for the Practice

The afterschool program staff members were interested in expanding content for the afterschool program. Children regularly participated in arts and crafts and physical activities but did not have the opportunity to participate in longer-term projects (i.e. projects that take a number of sessions to complete). Furthermore, many of the regular program offerings did not tap into the creative strengths and interests of program staff. Afterschool program leaders noted that they wanted to give staff and students a creative outlet while also providing them with a sense of ownership in the program. Through Club Days, staff members become active participants in program development, and students feel a sense of “choice,” while experiencing broader peer interaction.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Targeting Interests:** Help program staff identify personal interests and hobbies to develop clubs that they would plan and lead with enthusiasm. Encourage staff to market their clubs to students to raise excitement.

**Breadth of Programming:** Offer a wide variety of clubs so that students can explore a range of topics over the course of the academic year.

**Supplies:** Consider a full-year club schedule and buy bulk supplies to last through all sessions.

**Youth Voice:** Ask students to give feedback about favorite clubs and their own interests. Use this information to develop programming plans and stimulate staff interests.

**Selection Process:** Develop a selection process that balances the need to accommodate students’ first choices with the program’s need to rotate participation. Communicate to students how the selection process works.

## Contact Information

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 Paterson, New Jersey 07505  
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 Site Coordinator: Joseph Borchard;  
 jborchard@paterson.k12.nj.us  
 Principal: Grace Giglio

# Head-Heart-Hands Collage Project

**The Newark Museum**  
**Calvin Coolidge School, George Washington School,**  
**and Hurden Looker School**  
**Hillside, New Jersey**

Category: Program Content – Arts, Literacy, Math, and Science

## Partners

**The Newark Museum** is New Jersey’s largest museum. It serves the public as a leader in connecting objects and ideas to educate, inspire, and transform people of all ages. The museum offers eighty galleries of world-class collections from around the world. The mission of the museum is to attract, entertain, and spark the curiosity of its constituencies to promote learning.

**The Calvin Coolidge School** promotes hands-on learning experiences and the development of critical-thinking skills to create independent learners and inquisitive problem-solvers. The Calvin Coolidge School currently serves 226 students in third through sixth grade.

**Program Enrollment:** 60 (Grades 3–6)

**George Washington School** is in its seventh year as a magnet school, serving 300 students in grades third through the sixth. The mission of the school is to involve students in an educational program that fosters their confidence and abilities in using technology, the arts, and mathematics to enhance their lives and to prepare them for the future.

**Program Enrollment:** 90 (Grades 3–6)

**Hurden Looker School** opened in September 2001 with a commitment to meet the needs of third through sixth grade students and prepare them for life. Staff are committed to prepare students to become productive and innovative members of a technologically advanced global society. The school serves 500 students.

**Program Enrollment:** 120 (Grades 3–6)

## Practice Description

The Head-Heart-Hands project provides a unique way for youth to express who they are and what matters to them through making collages. This project is implemented at Calvin Coolidge School, George Washington School, and Hurden Looker School in Hillside. During the one to three week project, children create a series of three collages: 1.) Head, to express thoughts about who they are, 2.) Heart, to express their feelings and passions, and 3.) Hands, to show the tools they use to create expression. As they create, share, and discuss their collages, students gain deeper insight into themselves and their peers and appreciate how art can be used as a tool of communication. The Head-Heart-Hands project is operating at the Calvin Coolidge School and two other afterschool locations in Hillside.



Image courtesy of Suad Gacham.

The project begins with the facilitator sharing and discussing a completed collage series. The “Head” collage incorporates a headshot photo to help identify the student artist. (Before starting the project, program leaders collect permission slips from parents to take a head-shot photograph of each student.) The “Heart” collage features a heart shaped frame that identifies what is in students’ hearts and what matters to them. A cutout tracing of a hand forms the background for the “Hands” collage, where students show how they use their hands to express themselves.

Students develop their own collages using a variety of materials, including photos, cut-out words, and general arts and crafts items. Each collage takes about two hours to complete; the entire collage project can be completed in one week or extended over three. Once the students have completed their collages, they present them to their peers. Through facilitated discussion,



students talk about similarities and differences among the collages and the art of self-expression. While every student in the Coolidge afterschool program is given the opportunity to work on the project, staff found it ideal to limit the project to twelve students to encourage discussion.

Completed collages are collected from all participating schools and displayed at the Newark Museum. At a scheduled family night where students celebrate their work, parents have remarked about how they see new aspects of their children through the collages.

**At a scheduled family night where students celebrate their work, parents have remarked about how they see new aspects of their children through the collages.**

## Rationale for the Practice

Program leaders saw a need to help teachers get to know and understand the students in their programs. Through each collage series, teachers learn more about individual students and their motivations and values. This project also creates an opportunity for teachers to become better acquainted with students with whom they might not normally work directly.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Lead by Example:** Prepare a self-expression collage to serve as an example for the students.

**Family Involvement:** Make a flyer to send home to parents/guardians so students can bring in personal items such as family photos to add to their collages.

**Materials:** Spark creativity by providing a variety of materials, including old magazines of various themes, glue sticks, scissors, foam cut-outs, jeweled pieces, ribbons, black mat boards, and a digital camera.

**Freedom of Expression:** Encourage students to express themselves freely in their collage design and set a tone of respect among participants.

**Group Work:** Keep groups to three or four students to allow open discussion among the students while they design their collages.

**Uniformity:** Consider a uniform background, such as eight-inch by ten-inch mats, to unify each series of three collages for presentation.

## Contact Information

The Newark Museum  
 49 Washington Street  
 Newark, New Jersey 07102-3176  
 Phone: (973) 596-6550

Executive Director: Mary Sue Sweeney Price  
 Site Coordinator: Suad Gacham; sgacham@newarkmuseum.org  
 Principals: Sharon Festante, *Calvin Coolidge School*; Christine Sidwa, *George Washington School*; and Alphonsus Platt, *Hurden Looker School*.



# Philanthropic Student Council Fundraisers

**AtlantiCare Behavioral Health  
Warren E. Sooy Jr. Elementary School  
Hammonton, New Jersey**

Category: Family/School/Community Connections

## Partners

**AtlantiCare** provides health related services to more than sixty locations throughout southeastern New Jersey. The AtlantiCare organization is dedicated to improving the health of the communities it serves through teaching hospitals, affordable health care plans, and childcare centers. The philosophy of serving health and wellness to one resident at a time enables AtlantiCare to deliver exceptional care to the entire community.

**Warren E. Sooy Jr. Elementary School** provides a variety of experiences in a safe educational atmosphere to over 900 students in second through sixth grade. The school strives to inspire a love of learning in each child by developing different instructional-based styles of teaching based on student interest, motivation, ability, and learning styles. The goal of the school is to deliver a well-rounded education and help develop responsible and productive citizens.

**Program Enrollment:** 150 (Grades 2–8)

## Practice Description

The Philanthropic Student Council helps students take a leadership role in making a difference in their community. Created by the afterschool program site coordinator, the council is responsible for organizing fundraising activities for the afterschool program to participate in. The goal of the council is to provide youth with opportunities to create, plan, and direct their own community-service activities.

Enrollment in the council is open to all youth in the program, allowing students from various grades to participate. To join the council, volunteers must commit to a one-year term. At the beginning of each year, elections are held to fill the positions of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Students interested in being elected for these positions run a campaign using posters, flyers, and word of mouth to enlist the support of their peers.

Once a month council members meet to brainstorm ideas for the next fundraiser. As a group they offer ideas and suggestions for charity organizations or individuals to support, fundraising activities, event times and locations, and how to advertise the event. Once the ideas have been recorded, the council selects a charity to support and how to manage the event. The rest of the time is spent organizing and publicizing the event.

Many of the events involve some form of competition. In order to increase motivation, family and community members are encouraged to attend. Examples of fundraising events that have occurred include Penny Points, Chore Wars, Bake Sale, and a Fun Run. Some of the fundraising recipients have included The Humane Society, The Homeschool Association, Gabrielle Campione Memorial Fund, and the American Cancer Society. Students also raised money to purchase a new wheelchair for a local child, and continuously collect soda can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House.

The experience of serving as a council member has had an enormous impact on youth. Students comment on how they have learned to work together as a group, respect the opinions of others, increase their self-confidence, and help others in need. The council also helps open lines of communications between program staff and students. Students share their community-service ideas with staff helping staff gain insight into what matters to the students.

The afterschool program has raised over \$10,000 for various charities. Whenever possible, the site coordinator arranges for the grant recipients to receive the donation in the presence of the council members. The fundraising practice nurtures the afterschool program's partnership with community organizations, bringing families and the community together by encouraging them to work together towards the good of the community.



## Rationale for the Practice

By creating the Philanthropic Student Council, the site coordinator hoped to add a community service component to the afterschool program curriculum. While students often participate in community-service activities, rarely, do they get the chance to create, plan, or direct those activities. Providing youth ways of giving back to the community has given them a sense of pride and accomplishment. Through the council, youth are given the opportunity to develop leadership skills, work collaboratively, and learn communication skills in the context of community service.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Student Voice:** Let students decide on targeted charities and fundraising strategies. Offer adult guidance as the council launches and then transfer leadership to the students.

**Supplies:** Supplies and materials may be needed for the fundraisers. Help students write to local businesses for support and/or supplies.

**Fundraising Goal:** Set a realistic monetary goal for each fundraising event so that the afterschool program students will be successful in reaching the target.

**AlertMedia:** Bring positive attention to the student accomplishments through press releases that highlight the involvement of the whole afterschool program and the school.

**Develop a Contract:** Work with students to develop a contract that serves as a guidepost to decision-making, communication, behavior, and commitment for membership on the Council.

**Community Involvement:** Use special flyers and other school notices to recruit school, community, and family volunteers for the fundraising events.

## Contact Information

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Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey 08234  
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hammontonafterthree@hotmail.com  
Principal: Kristina Erman

# Discovering Robotics

**Vacamas Programs for Youth  
McKinley Elementary School  
Newark, New Jersey**

Category: Science and Technology

## Partners

**Vacamas Programs for Youth** is a non-profit organization founded in 1924. It is committed to enabling children of low-income families to enjoy positive experiences. This commitment has been extended to year-round programs that provide groups with positive, nurturing, and challenging experiences. Camp Vacamas is located in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains of rural New Jersey, only forty-five minutes outside of mid-town Manhattan.

**McKinley Elementary School** believes that every child possesses talents, abilities, and the genius to excel. The school community is committed to ensure that each child exceeds his or her social, emotional, and academic potential. By providing enriching experiences, a nurturing and wholesome environment, and innovative instructional practices, all children can learn. The McKinley school serves 1,200 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.



**Program Enrollment:** 150 (Grades K–8)

## Practice Description

Afterschool program leaders at the McKinley Elementary School launched a Robotics Club for students in fourth through eighth grade using an “Innovation Generation” grant from Motorola. During the ten-week program, approximately ten to twelve students met to design, build, and program their own robots using LEGO Mindstorms kits. The goal of the Robotics Club is to offer students a fun and challenging way to explore engineering, physics, and computer programming.

The LEGO Mindstorms kit is at the core of the club. Working in groups of four, students build computerized robots using instructions, materials, and computer software provided in the

kit. Students are introduced to the design process, which they use to design and program robots in five stages. Each week, group members rotate roles, which include leading the group, locating parts, reading instructions, and participating in the building.

Once the basic robots are built, students use the kit’s computer software and laptop computers to program the robots to perform simple tasks. The kits provide a set of suggested programming activities, in which the robot tasks become increasingly challenging. As they work, students test and redesign their programming instructions, gaining hands-on knowledge of the principles of programming and mechanical engineering. All robotics club participants enjoy a final event that usually includes a pizza party, movie night, or other fun activity offered by Camp Vacamas.

As a culminating project, students participate in a robot “face-off” with other afterschool programs at the Vacamas campsite. Students who have attended the program for at least 60% of the sessions are eligible to participate. At the face-off,

each group is given a limited time to program their robots to tackle challenges, such as traveling through an obstacle course. A final competition, in which robots walk, identify colors, steer themselves, avoid obstacles, and dance, concludes the project.

## Rationale for Practice

Working with limited funds, the site director searched for fun and educational activities that would stimulate thinking and engage youth during the afterschool hours. The Motorola grant provided the program with the opportunity to expand its programming to include technology, engineering, and physics.

**The goal of the Robotics Club is to offer students a fun and challenging way to explore engineering, physics, and computer programming.**

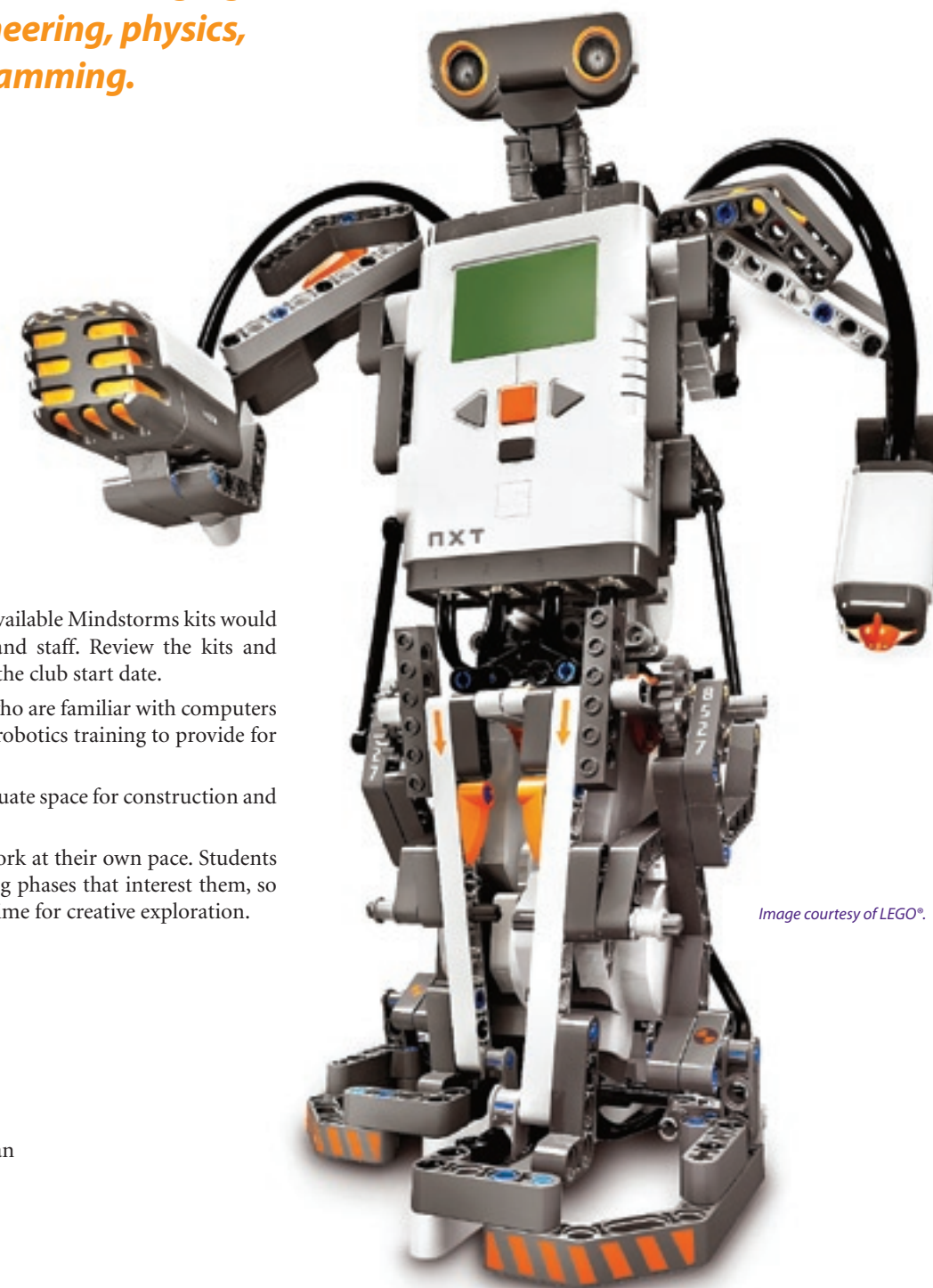


Image courtesy of LEGO®.

## Tips for Adaptation

**Materials:** Investigate which of the available Mindstorms kits would be most appropriate for students and staff. Review the kits and accompanying lesson plans prior to the club start date.

**Staff Training:** Find staff members who are familiar with computers and robotics or have staff complete robotics training to provide for a more enriching program.

**Facilities:** Be sure that you have adequate space for construction and competition.

**Flexibility:** Encourage students to work at their own pace. Students will want to spend more time during phases that interest them, so keep a flexible schedule that allows time for creative exploration.

## Contact Information

Camp Vacamas  
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West Milford, New Jersey 07480  
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campmckinley@vacamas.org  
Principal: Carloyn Granato



**MOTOROLA**

# Promising Practices Program Tips

## 1 Weekly Program Staff Meetings

**Partners:** Boys and Girls Clubs of Newark, First Avenue Elementary School

**Category:** Staffing

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Newark at First Avenue Elementary School afterschool program holds weekly program staff meetings with formal detailed agendas to promote follow-through and documentation of tasks and assignments. Meetings are held on Monday evenings and include all program staff and volunteers, when available. The use of a formal agenda serves multiple purposes: 1.) documents all items that need discussion and tracks follow-up; 2.) keeps staff and management informed of all tasks and relevant due dates; 3.) keeps a record of important information that can be passed on to staff absent from the meeting. Weekly staff meetings have helped to build team spirit between program staff and the site coordinator and nourished interpersonal communication.

**Contact information:**

Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark  
155 Washington Street, Suite 202 Newark, New Jersey 07102  
Telephone: (973) 350-5915  
Site Coordinator: Lisette A. Curry, lcurry@bgcn.org



availability to lead activities. The program activity schedule meets their needs and responds to student interests. Teachers typically complete a survey in the spring, which assists program planning and administration. Collaborating with day school teachers as leaders of afterschool program activities boosted enrollment, while building stronger relationships between the school and the afterschool program.

**Contact information:**

Boys & Girls Club of Trenton and Mercer County  
212 Centre Street Trenton, New Jersey 08611  
Phone: (609) 392-3191  
Senior Program Director: Corey McCall, cmccall@bgctrenton.org

## 2 School/Program Staffing Partnership

**Partners:** Boys and Girls Clubs of Trenton and Mercer County, Mott Elementary and Monument Elementary Schools

**Category:** Staffing

A desire for high quality staff and programming led the afterschool program site coordinators at Mott Elementary and Monument Elementary afterschool programs to partner with day school teachers to offer innovative and exciting afterschool program choices. School day teachers are surveyed their interests and

## 3 Sport Stacking with Speed Stacks

**Partners:** K.E.E.P., Inc., Walnut Ridge & Cedar Mountain Primary Schools

**Category:** Program Content

Students attending the afterschool programs located at Walnut Ridge and Cedar Mountain Primary schools participate in “sport stacking.” Sport stacking is an individual and team sport in which participants stack and un-stack 12 specially designed plastic cups (Speed Stacks) in pre-determined sequences. Sport Stacking is a hands-on activity offered to all 1st- 4th grade students in the afterschool program at least twice a week. Sport stacking is developmentally appropriate for all elementary ages and is broadly appealing. Participation in sports stacking develops eye-hand coordination, ambidexterity, concentration, and quickness. Enthusiasm for sport stacking has spread to home and parents, also!

**Contact Information:**

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11 Park Lake Road Sparta, New Jersey 07871  
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Site Coordinator: Linda Nasarow, lnasarow@vtsd.com

## 4 Operations Manual

**Partners:** El Club del Barrio, Inc., Lafayette Street and Ridge Street Schools

**Category:** Program Operations/Administration

The site coordinator of the Lafayette Street and Ridge Street School afterschool programs created comprehensive, user-friendly operations manual. The operations manual has 17 sections and contains a library of forms related to categories such as: Enrollment, Attendance, Medical policies, Emergency information, Calendars, Daily programming, Staffing, Field trips/release, and Building safety. The manual ensures that all staff are well informed about programmatic operations, procedures, and compliance requirements. While requiring consistent updating, it is a valuable

daily management tool for site coordinators and an important tool during leadership transition or new staff orientation. Manual contents are used in preparing and generating reports, and are an asset for funder site visits and proposal writing.

**Contact Information:**

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76 Clinton Avenue Newark, New Jersey 07114  
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Site Coordinator: Gabriela Almagro,  
RUSCoordinator@elclubdelbarrio.com

## 5 NJA3 Next Top Model

**Partners:** Educational Information and Resource Center, Lindenwold Middle School

**Category:** Program Content

Girls in grades 5-8 attending the Lindenwold Middle School afterschool program have the opportunity to participate in the NJA3 Next Top Model program. A 16-week curriculum emphasizes poise, public speaking, confidence, self-esteem, body image, and positive character development. Program components include the production of personal portfolios, participation in a point contest, and a guest speaker series. The program culminates in a fashion show during which girls with the highest cumulative points for participation, random acts of kindness, good peer relations, poise, style, and presentation that have been earned over the course of the entire program and during the fashion show, are awarded “Top Model” status. Program leaders explain that working towards the goal of top model status requires personal growth in areas other than beauty that better equips the girls to succeed in their communities and schools.

**Contact information:**

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