

*second annual
June 2007*

promising afterschool practices

a showcase of innovative, creative, & successful afterschool programs

The logo for njafter3 features a stylized white arc above the text "njafter3" in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. Below the text, a smaller line of text reads "dedicated to expanding afterschool opportunities for New Jersey's kids".
njafter3
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 Second Annual Promising Afterschool Practices Showcase. The *Promising Practices Initiative* is part of our overall training and technical assistance strategy, through which *NJ After 3* offers a combination of hands on and program specific staff development opportunities. We believe these efforts lead to high quality afterschool programs that benefit children and families in four main areas:

- *Keeping Kids Safe*
- *Improving Student Achievement*
- *Promoting Positive Youth Development*
- *Supporting Working Families*

Through *Promising Practices*, *New Jersey After 3* is drawing upon knowledge amassed by forty-four community based organizations, ninety-four public schools and countless individuals, who together have an extraordinary amount of experience in managing high-quality, youth-enriching afterschool programs. By sharing practices across the *NJ After 3* network that have worked well, *NJ After 3* hopes to build a database of practices and successful strategies that any afterschool program can adopt. From supporting staff development to incorporating youth voice into program activities, there is so much for programs to share without having to “reinvent the wheel.”

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 details about a particular practice. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Valli'.

Mark Valli

President & CEO,
New Jersey After 3, Inc.

Introduction

New Jersey After 3

New Jersey After 3 (NJ A3) 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 60 non-profit-run, school-based afterschool programs state-wide. Currently those programs serve over 13,000 children in more than 90 schools state-wide.

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 captures some of the most innovative, creative, and successful ways that *New Jersey After 3* programs are serving youth.

This publication compiles a selection of these strong, effective and replicable practices that are currently utilized 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 already 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 young people.

How can Promising Practices help you?

Promising Practices can help afterschool programs in two 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 entirely from scratch. Further, sharing Promising Practices among programs promotes community-wide improvement and provides recognition.

NJ A3'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 hosted by *New Jersey After 3* and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time in February, 2007. A panel of reviewers read and discussed more than 30 submissions addressing a wide variety of program activities and strategies. Nine practices were selected for further review. This included a verification site visit from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. The nine 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 seven activities as Program Tips, which may also prove helpful to those seeking to develop high quality afterschool programs.



Peer Leadership Program

**Communities in Schools of New Jersey and
Henry H. Davis Elementary School
Camden, New Jersey**

Category: Leadership

Partners

Communities in Schools of New Jersey (CIS NJ) is a national program that for the past twenty-nine years has connected schools with community resources. The Communities in Schools national network provides access to needed services for more than two million youth and their families each year. CIS NJ has been a NJA3 afterschool program partner with Henry H. Davis Elementary School since 2004.

Henry H. Davis Elementary School is the largest elementary school located in Camden. Davis Elementary school currently serves 960 children in grades PreK-sixth.

Program Enrollment: 200 (Grades K-6)

Practice Description

Program leaders at Davis School's afterschool program have created Project Leadership for fifth and sixth grade children in the afterschool program. Project Leadership has three roles for student volunteers; help with homework, assist with activities for younger children, and help in the afterschool program's office. Currently, one afternoon a week, twenty student volunteers support the program operations and activities of over 100 kindergarten through second grade children.

To join in Project Leadership, volunteers must sign a "contract" and participate in two training sessions. In the "contract," children agree to serve the program for a year, accept their role as program leaders, and use their leadership roles to improve the afterschool program. Training focuses on the responsibilities of volunteering and leadership. Volunteers are rewarded monthly for their participation (i.e. pizza party or movie). The volunteers are mentored by the program director and other program staff

in areas such as social and communication skills, public speaking, negotiating, and various office skills. Activity and instruction schedules change each week, affording volunteers the opportunity to work with different teachers and perform a variety of tasks. At the close of each volunteer session, the children meet with a staff program leader and discuss their experiences for that day. In addition, children receive a journal and are encouraged to document their experiences.

This youth leadership practice benefits the entire afterschool program. Kindergarten through second graders benefit from peer assistance and cross-age socialization. Older children gain work readiness skills and career exposure by shadowing teachers with various specialties, such as technology, guidance counseling, or academic focus. Volunteers are given the opportunity to give input on how to make the program better and to help lead lessons. Volunteers have the opportunity to receive additional training in specific or requested areas of activity leadership. The Peer Leadership program has opened the lines of communication between program staff and students. Peer Leadership helps program staff gain better insight into the opinions of the children and build stronger relationships with them. The practice generated a lot of excitement and motivated children to attend the afterschool program on a more consistent basis. Children have asked for additional volunteer work time and there is a waiting list of new volunteers.





Rationale for Practice

The afterschool program staff was looking for innovative ways to attract children from the upper grades into the afterschool program. The practice gives older children a sense of authority, leadership, and ownership in the afterschool program. The activity was based on the knowledge that engaging children in leadership opportunities can contribute to increased self-esteem and civic engagement. Through Project Leadership, children are offered a structured environment for practicing leadership, skill building, guidance from and mentoring by caring adults, and the opportunity to contribute to program design.

Tips for Adaptation

- **Staff buy-in:** The success of the program depends on total staff support. Explain the practice and the objectives to staff. Help them realize how this practice can empower and motivate children.
- **Job rotation:** Alternate the volunteer activities weekly to allow volunteers opportunities to gain different experiences.

- **Feedback:** Allow time for the volunteers to meet with each other and staff to reflect on their experiences.
- **Support:** Designate a staff facilitator to support the volunteers.
- **Rewards:** Offer incentives (e.g., pizza party, movie, etc.) for participation and to recognize accomplishments.

Contact Information

Communities in Schools of New Jersey
155 Washington Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Phone: (973) 242-0706

Executive Director: William Allen
Site Coordinator: Samara Lawry; slawry@cisnj.org,
samaralawry@hotmail.com
School Principal: Tina Yuli

Multi-site Basketball & Cheerleading League

**Boys & Girls Club of Trenton & Mercer County
and Mott Elementary School
Trenton, New Jersey**

Category: Family, School and Community Connections

Partners

The Boys & Girls Club of Trenton & Mercer County's mission is to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens. The Boys & Girls Club offers activities and programs that build character, encourage education and career exploration, promote healthy living, and instill appreciation for the arts.

Mott Elementary School serves 479 students in grades Pre K-eighth. Mott School operates as a “whole school reform model” as developed by James Comer of Yale University. As an Abbott district, the school implements a whole school reform model to assure universal literacy by third grade and attainment of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at every grade level.

Program Enrollment: 110 (Grades K-8)

Practice Description

Students from third through eighth grades can participate in a multi-site afterschool basketball league at Mott School, managed by the Boys & Girls Club of Trenton & Mercer County. Initially, the league involved three *NJA3* sites. It has since expanded to include eight *NJA3* sites. The senior program director at Mott serves as the league's host and facilitator. There is a sixth through eighth grade league and a third through fifth grade league. In addition to the basketball teams, four sites have cheerleading teams that are composed of *NJA3* program participants.

The students in the basketball league practice three times a week and play games at home, or at other sites twice a week. In addition to practices and games, players are required to participate in homework help/tutoring. The students are expected to do their homework before or after practice. The majority of the students qualify for Supplemental Education Service (SES) and receive individual tutoring from certified teachers. The Boys & Girls Club currently employs twenty-two SES instructors at seven program sites.



Transportation to away games is arranged and provided by each program site and built into their *NJA3* program budget. League standings are shared with and posted at each team's program site. The home school of each game runs a concession stand as a student government fundraising activity.

Excitement for the basketball league extends beyond those who play. The basketball league has attracted participation from school staff. Three teachers coach the leagues and cheerleader teams. Program staff report that typically, at both home and away games, bleachers are filled with youth, parents, school staff, and administrators. A sports banquet is planned to recognize basketball and cheerleading participants. The success has led to proposed plans for future soccer and football leagues, which will begin in fall 2007.

Program leaders suggest that the basketball league has led to deeper partnership between multiple *NJA3* sites in addition to bringing the Mott School community closer together. The students are enthusiastic participants, and the leagues have created a “buzz” among other middle school students in Trenton.



Rationale for the Practice

The afterschool program basketball league at Mott Elementary School was created in response to recent district budget cuts that eliminated school directed afterschool program activities and sports. The league was also created to attract sixth through eighth grade students to the afterschool program. The creation of the basketball league provided an attractive afterschool activity and needed homework and academic support. It has also restored a valuable resource for the school, i.e., positive and healthy activities for students.



Tips for Adaptation

- **Plan ahead:** Put schedules together using the school calendar to avoid scheduling games when school is closed. Schedule games twenty minutes apart when more than one is slotted for a day.
- **Expect the unexpected:** Have a staff member as a back up to referee in case the referee is unable to attend.
- **Have reliable transportation:** Have a back-up plan for transportation in case scheduled source of transportation is unavailable.
- **Contingency plans:** Have some form of entertainment and back-up plan available when visiting teams are delayed or games cancelled.
- **Communication is key:** Make sure to communicate with each site involved to ensure everyone is on the same page and have contact information for all staff involved.

Contact Information

Boys and Girls Club-Trenton & Mercer County
212 Centre Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08611
(609) 392-3191

Executive Director: Dave Anderson
Site Coordinator: Corey McCall; cmccall@bgctrenton.org
School Principal: Elizabeth Ramirez

Street Art Sticker Project

**Paterson YMCA and
Alexander Hamilton Academy
Paterson, New Jersey**

Category: Sample Activity Plan — Continuous

Partners

The Paterson YMCA provides afterschool programs for children at three Paterson schools in addition to providing general youth programs, swimming and sports leagues, teen centers, counseling and health awareness, and a variety of instructional classes for all ages. The YMCA has a summer LEAP program for teenagers and Even Start, a program that supports family literacy and services to families with young children.

Alexander Hamilton Academy began as a charter school, serving grades Kindergarten through four; in 2001. It now serves 327 students in grades Kindergarten through eighth. Alexander Hamilton Academy began a NJA3 program, in 2004 in partnership with the Paterson YMCA. The Academy is located within walking distance of the YMCA, allowing students to use resources from both organizations.

Program Enrollment: 120 (Grades K-8)

Practice Description

This activity raises students' awareness of key community issues and develops a unique appreciation and understanding for the visual arts. Students photograph and sketch art that they see in the community. Through facilitated discussion, students talk about why street art and murals have become prevalent in urban culture. Students engage in discussion about the positive and negative components of street art. The intent of this activity is for students to understand how art creates positive messages

and how students can create and communicate their own positive messages through the sticker art activity.

To start the activity, the lead facilitator (preferably with a background in the arts and group facilitation) leads several discussion groups on community and social issues such as gang violence, homelessness, poverty, drugs, and urban culture. Following discussion, the facilitator and group walk around to observe street and public art and other points of interest within

a four-to-five-block radius in the neighborhood. Students photograph art, take notes, or draw sketches as a means to capture what they observe. Having seen examples and talked about using art to communicate positive messages, students use their sketchbooks to create their own art design that shares a positive message about a social issue important to them. Through a series of draft sketches, students get feedback from their peers and the facilitator. Final

sketches are printed on label paper to make sets of stickers.

For the activity to be a success, the program needs sketchbooks, drawing tools, notepads, digital cameras, standard label sheets for a photocopier to create stickers, and magnet sheets for creating magnets. A recommended book for additional art exposure is "Speck Report: A Collection of Uncommon Things" by Peter Gordon Buchanan-Smith. The book includes 200 color and fifty black and white illustrations (available in bookstores and on the Web).



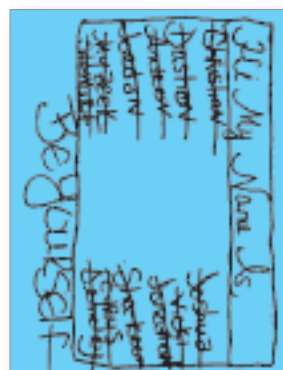


Rationale for Practice

The rationale for developing this activity project was to foster awareness of social issues and art. Students previously not interested in the arts have developed a new perspective regarding street art and the role that youth play in creating street art.

Tips for Adaptation

- **Repeat:** Plan several local walks in the neighborhood where students live.
- **Materials:** Stickers can be made on photocopier using label paper. Make sure to buy label paper which specifies “copier” to avoid damage. Label and magnet sheets are available at craft and office supply stores. Cameras were borrowed from the partner organizations.
- **Copying:** Make sure to keep the images in black and white to allow for best copying. Pictures can be colored in later.
- **Planning Artwork:** Images should be drawn on a large scale so it is easier for students to create and revise, and so the art can be reduced to fit on a label.
- **Prepare:** Get a permission slip for each student who will participate in neighborhood walks. Facilitator should prepare by doing research on street art and its history and surveying local area for street art and other public art displays.
- **Agreements:** Students need to agree that they will not destroy public or private property by displaying their work on them. Students should be aware that defacing property is against the law.
- **Inspire:** Regularly remind students to “dig deeper and keep thinking” to exercise their creativity and critical thinking skills.



Contact Information:

Paterson YMCA
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School Principal: Virginia Galizia

* This practice was developed by former employee Victoria Fernandez, who is now a Site Coordinator at New Jersey Community Development Corporation.

Supplemental Academic Activities

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

Category: Program Content

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 in Warren County and has additional locations throughout the state. In September of 2005, Family Guidance Center began an afterschool partnership with the Taylor Elementary School. The afterschool program includes recreational, homework, and personal growth activities.

Taylor Street Elementary School serves 240 students in grades Kindergarten through second. As part of the Washington Borough public school district, Taylor Street School strives to build a community of lifelong learners and provide a balanced curriculum that meets the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of all students.

Program Enrollment: 100 (Grades K-2)

Practice Description

Afterschool program staff provides creative and engaging activities as a supplement during homework assistance. The NJA3 program director linked aspects of the school district's curriculum with innovative academic enrichment activities during post-homework time. Some students often are able to complete their homework before the end of the homework/academic assistance session. Once homework is checked for accuracy, students are given enrichment activities while waiting for their peers to finish. This practice creates additional and engaging opportunities for academic support

and learning. The activities are designed for different sets of students, grouped by grade. Some activities can be delivered across grade groups. Two of the enrichment activities are "Minute Math" and "Project Read."

Minute Math (1st and 2nd grade): Children are given approximately 48 simple addition (first grade) or addition/subtraction (second grade) equations and are encouraged to solve as many as they can in one minute (three minutes for first grade). Worksheets are corrected by afterschool program staff, and students graph their scores and follow their progress in improving number of correct answers over time.



Project Read: While responding to flash cards, children read, sky-write, and say words aloud. To practice sentence-building, children create a “human sentence” by replacing “subject,” “action,” “how,” “why,” “where,” and “when” cue card with actual words. Once a proper sentence is made, students take turns selecting a replacement word and rejoin the line. Sentences can be humorous and focus on enhancing sentence construction and meaning.

Other enrichment activities include special day packets (e.g. Groundhog’s Day, Chinese New Year, etc.) that use math and language art skills, synonym and antonym puzzles, word scrambles, and word searches.

The afterschool program director prepares the enrichment materials and disseminates them to the other eight staff members. Enrichment materials are adapted from web-based curricula and other resources. The director takes primary leadership in delivering the enrichment activities and provides overview and training to each of the staff. Staff often focus on preparing music, arts, or craft enhancements that correspond with the enrichment activities. Once students are familiar with the activity, they also have the option to participate independently.

Rationale for Practice

Since performance in some Warren County middle schools has not met State requirements for adequate yearly progress (AYP), students need additional assistance on basic skills in math and language arts in the lower grades. The afterschool program director saw the inclusion of a homework enrichment practice as an opportunity to provide the younger students with additional academic support to help strengthen their skills and better prepare them to meet middle school academic challenges.

Tips for Adaptation

- **Non-competitive:** The activities should not be competitive.
- **Age appropriate:** The activities should be fun. Remember to keep the material age appropriate in order to keep interest level high.
- **Special help:** Recognize that each child has a different pace and approach to enrichment work and consider grouping them accordingly encourage collaborative work and peer support.
- **Attention span:** Keep readings short with lots of pictures to keep those with shorter attention spans engaged.
- **Flexibility:** Trust the group leaders to know what additional enrichment activities children can handle on a given day.



- **Adequate materials:** Be sure to have sufficient copies of the worksheets/packets available for distribution.
- **Web resources:** Helpful web sites include: www.aplusmath.com, www.atozteacherstuff.com, www.schoolexpress.com, www.kidsdomain.com, www.edhelper.com, freecoloring-pages.com, and www.getworksheets.com.

Contact Information

Family Guidance Center of Warren County
492 Route 57 West
Washington, New Jersey 07882
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School Principal: Jacqueline Cooper

Student Run School & Community Newsletter

**Jewish Renaissance Foundation and
William C. McGinnis Middle School
Perth Amboy, New Jersey**

Category: Family, School and Community Connections

Partners

Jewish Renaissance Foundation (JRF) is a nonprofit, nonsectarian humanitarian organization located in Perth Amboy that has worked to bring quality, accessible and culturally competent social, medical, and educational programs to Middlesex County and countries abroad since 1995. JRF espouses an enduring and visionary commitment to serve the needy, working poor, and indigent populations within the community.

William C. McGinnis Middle School, located in Perth Amboy, was refurbished in the mid-1990s. Innovative programs at McGinnis include the State Department of Education's endorsed Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (L.E.A.D.S.) program as well as the Collins Writing and Math for Understanding program. McGinnis School serves approximately 1,425 students in grades fifth through and eighth.

Program Enrollment: 270 (Grades 5-8)

Practice Description

The afterschool program director at McGinnis developed the "Newsletter Connection," a student led writing and reporting club that produces several newsletters each year. The practice is designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop communication skills and establish relationships within their community. Working on the newsletter is one of the enrichment choice activities that follow the program's homework assistance session. Student enrollment is voluntary and they can participate in the newsletter enrichment activity only after they have completed their homework. Open enrollment occurs after each publication to offer opportunities to any students interested in exploring journalism and creating the newsletter. Approximately, 50% of the students turnover between

newsletters, due the open enrollment policy; this allows other students to become involved in the activity. The editor and designer hold their job responsibilities for the entire year. The newsletter team meets four times a week for an hour and fifteen minutes to produce the newsletter. Students participating in the activity are primarily between grades fifth through seventh.

One program staff member with computer software and journalism experience and one youth assistant staff member facilitate newsletter activities. The students, along with staff, determine the number of published issues, distribution plans, and content goals. The students participate in discussions to choose news coverage topics and assign tasks. They work on all phases in the development of the newsletter including interviewing, photography, writing, designing layout, editing, and distribution. Much of the preparation for article writing involves interviewing. Students plan a schedule of people to interview and may spend two to three days per week interviewing for an upcoming article. Interview questions are prepared in advance by students with staff assistance. News items include school and current events, along with highlights and stories on program enrichment activities. The draft newsletter is stored on the computer for review, proofreading, and editing by the students editors, then the staff facilitators, and finally by the program director. The final newsletter is photocopied and circulated around the school, at school events and meetings, and to community agencies and families.

Program staff believes that the newsletter activity has been successful in promoting literacy and writing skills. Some students have been more motivated to complete their homework, as it is a requirement for participation in the newsletter crew. Several classroom teachers have reported improved classroom behavior and critical thinking skills from participating students.



Rationale for Practice

The newsletter practice focuses on developing critical thinking, communication, and negotiation skills while providing a means of drawing out the hidden talents and creativity of students. The afterschool program staff had four goals in mind when creating the newsletter practice: (1) improve program and students relationships with parents, school, and community; (2) integrate with and create awareness of school practices and events; (3) market and display the quality of the *NJA3* program and skills developed; and (4) allow students to have some ownership in the program. The newsletter provides opportunities for students to create a living document to express their talents and creativity and to share their work with the school and neighboring community.

Tips for Adaptation

- **Open enrollment:** Have sign-up sheets after each publication to encourage new member recruitment.
- **Dissemination:** Hand deliver newsletters whenever possible and use a photocopy machine to save on printing costs.
- **Technology and supplies:** Have students use tape recorders during interviews whenever possible. Use newsletter soft-

ware such as Microsoft Publisher. Other helpful supplies include computer lab with internet access, digital cameras, journals, pencils, and high quality paper. Talk to the manager of the supply store for discounts on ink cartridges or open stock materials that can be donated.

- **Thank You notes:** Send notes to resource suppliers and interviewees with a copy of the newsletter.
- **Staff:** It is helpful if staff have computer skills and some journalism experience. Assign a staff with strong writing and proofreading skills to assist with editing.
- **Photo release:** Have photo release consent forms at all times. Supply them to the newsletter crew; it can be time consuming collecting afterwards.

Contact Information

Jewish Renaissance Foundation
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Perth Amboy, New Jersey 08861
(732) 324-2114

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Site Coordinator: Idressa Calland; jrfdressa@aol.com
School Principal: Roland H. Jenkins

Group Leader Mentoring Program

**Jewish Family Services, Inc. and
Cliffside Park Public School #6
Cliffside Park, New Jersey**

Standard: Staffing

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 professional counseling to all who call upon its services. Jewish Family Services established its partnership with the Cliffside Park School District to provide afterschool programming in 2005.

Cliffside Park Public School #6 is comprised of both an elementary school and a middle school facility. The elementary school facility houses approximately 360 students in grades Kindergarten through sixth. The middle school facility houses the district's entire seventh and eighth grade population of approximately 350 students.

Program Enrollment: 250 (Grades 1-8)

Practice Description

The comprehensive afterschool program offered at Public School #6 is called "Club Ed". Club Ed developed the Group Leader Mentor Program as a staff professional development and training initiative. Less experienced program staff is matched with certified school teachers working in the afterschool program who volunteer to serve as mentors.

The staffing structure at Club Ed includes group leaders, usually college or high school students working towards a teaching or

youth development career, and certified day schoolteachers who teach in the afterschool program during select program hours. The schoolteachers are responsible for the academic content of the afterschool program. Group leaders serve as teacher aides during the afterschool program activities.

The site coordinator offers this mentoring opportunity to all program staff on a volunteer basis. The site coordinator compiles information that will guide the matching process, including individual needs, common interests, age-group preferences, and desired skill development. In many cases, matches are fostered by pre-existing relationships. Mentors and mentees are supported by a step-by-step guide, created by the site coordinator, to initiate the mentoring relationship. Mentors may have one or two mentees assigned to them. The pair or small group is likely to work together at least twice a week, providing an opportunity for coaching and observation.



Participation in the mentoring initiative involves the following commitments:

- Complete periodic surveys that report on participation and experience;
- Maintain regular contact through e-mail, phone, informal meetings; and
- Consult with the program director once every three months to give formal feedback/report.

Hosting a Group Leader Mentor Program requires planning and preparation on the part of the site coordinator. The site coordinator must gauge receptivity among the potential participants and convey the mutual benefits of participation to each party. Full and genuine participation is needed to make a worthwhile mentoring partnership.

This practice has benefits program-wide. Group leaders have reported that they have become more adept at leading program activities with academic content. They also report value in being regularly observed and advised by experienced teachers. Participating in the mentoring program gives the opportunity to exchange tips on behavior management, teaching methods, and teaching culture. Feedback from mentors suggests that they would prefer the opportunity to work even more closely with group leaders.

Rationale for Practice

The group leader position provides the staffing backbone of the afterschool program. This position is structured to provide constant support and supervision of the students in the program during all program hours. Students and families rely on the group leaders for guidance, advice, and program leadership. At the same time, group leaders have relatively limited experience working with children compared to certified teachers working in the program. Common challenges faced by group leaders include classroom management, transition time, discipline, and parent/family communication. While traditional training and development help address the needs of group leaders, there is strong need for additional coaching and support. Certified teachers as mentors can provide the skilled guidance that only years of teaching experience can provide. According to the program director, the Group Leader Mentor Program provides an effective, timely, scalable, and inexpensive tool to help meet this critical need. The Group Leader Mentor Program gives mentors the opportunity to share their teaching practices and to groom younger education and youth development career professionals.



Tips for Adaptation

- **Preparation:** Communicate with teachers and group leaders prior to the matching process to compile background information and maximize the chances of a successful match. Utilize a variety of factors to establish matches, including pre-existing relationships, skill needs, common interests, and age-group preferences.
- **Communication:** Be sure to communicate the benefits and expectations of the program to each participant so that there is “buy in” prior to matching.
- **Accountability:** Build in feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and informal “check-ins,” to identify needs and successes and make adjustments.
- **Recognition:** Recognize each participant during staff and/or parent events such as student showcases or staff meetings.
- **Share Best Practice:** While respecting confidentiality, share aggregate feedback and learning with the entire program staff.

Contact Information

Jewish Family Services
1485 Teaneck Road
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Phone: (201)837-9090

Executive Director: Lisa Fedder
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Cliffside Park School 3 Principal: John Brunelli,
Cliffside Park School 4 Principal: Christine Giancola,
Cliffside Park School 6 Principal: Lorraine Morrow

Student Walking Club

Educational Information & Resource Center and Cold Springs Elementary School Gloucester City, New Jersey

Category: Health and Safety

Partners

Educational Information & Resource Center (EIRC) is a public agency that provides education related programs and services to parents, schools, communities, nonprofit organizations, and privately held businesses throughout New Jersey. The services expand into thirty-six states and eight foreign countries. EIRC offers many resources, including academic support and enrichment curriculum design and childcare.

Cold Springs Elementary School of Gloucester City is dedicated to helping each child reach its full potential in intellectual and social growth. The school serves children in grades Pre-K through third. The mission of the school is to help children develop basic learning skills, mastery in all academic areas, and at all grade levels through a structure that encourages individual thinking and supports the needs and differences of each student group.

This program is part of *New Jersey After 3's* Building Healthy Communities initiative funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service's Learn and Serve America program. It is designed to support youth in creating and conducting service-learning projects that help combat childhood obesity in school-based afterschool programs supported by *New Jersey After 3*, The After-School Corporation and EducationWorks.

Program Enrollment: 270 (Grades K-3)

Practice Description

The program staff at the EIRC Cold Springs School developed the First Grade Walking Club. Two days a week children walk together around the school building (inside if inclement weather) tracking their walking mileage with pedometers. Mileage is depicted cumulatively on a distance chart. Currently,

the Club is working towards completing the distance between the school and Storybook Land in Cardiff, New Jersey. Once the walk is complete, the children update the mileage chart and figure out how many miles are remaining to complete the journey.

In addition to walking, children have engaged in supplemental activities in healthy living and lifestyles. During the first month, students spent time in cooking classes, which included the preparation of healthy snacks. Recipes were sent home to share with families. Children also learned about pedometers and methods to track distance and time. Nutrition and fitness experts visited the program as guest speakers to talk about related health topics. Special program events have been set up to engage parents in the children's activities. These supplemental activities are also available to all other children in the afterschool program.

Children wrote to local businesses informing them of their club activities, and requested sponsorship for club t-shirts and a culminating trip to Storybook Land. The children are preparing to walk in the upcoming Gloucester City School District Health Fair, seeking community food donations of one canned good per mile to contribute towards the local food pantry.

Program staff indicates that the Walking Club has helped to promote healthy living for the children participating. Children have learned how nutritious eating and exercise can contribute to families leading healthy and happy lives. According to program staff, one of the most important features of the Walking Club is the practice of goal setting. Program staff believes that through the Club children are seeing the connection between hard work and completing of long-term goals.



Rationale for the Practice

The Gloucester City School District recently implemented nutrition guidelines and banned all unhealthy treats. The Walking Club provides the opportunity to teach children that eating healthy and being physically active every day can be fun and can help to establish healthy habits in childhood that can last a lifetime. The children themselves contributed to the thinking around creating a walking club and came up with the goal to walk to Storybook Land. Research has pointed to the relationship between nutrition and school readiness and performance. The Walking Club serves as an effective activity to promote healthy living while making connections to learning, school, community, and families.

Tips for Adaptation

- **Plan:** If you are working with young children, brainstorm ideas before asking them how they would like to shape their walking club. Give them suggestions and then they can come up with their own ideas. Make sure the activity is age appropriate.
- **Support:** Seek input and participation from the community. Connect the community to the walking activity.

- **Safety:** Make sure the walking environment is safe. Before students set out, walk the path and inspect that the path is safe (i.e. no obstructions, hazards, etc.).
- **Fun:** Keep the activity fun to keep the children engaged in the walking goal.
- **Goals:** Set a distance that is manageable. Include a completion incentive.
- **Supplies:** pedometer, paper, etc.

Contact Information

Educational Information & Resource Center
606 Delsea Drive
Sewell, New Jersey 08080
(856) 582-7000

Executive Director: Dr. Charles Ivory
Site Coordinator: Meghan O'Connor;
mmoconnor@gcsd.k12.nj.us
Principal: Martin O'Connor

Children's Theater Program

**The Glassboro Child Development Centers and
Dorothy L. Bullock Elementary School
Glassboro, New Jersey**

Category: Program Content

Partners

The Glassboro Child Development Center's mission is to provide year-round programs and enrichment for children and youth from ages six weeks to young adult. The GCDC also offers activities and opportunities that empower and assist parents with the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of their children. GCDC emphasizes learning through play and the development of the whole child.

The Dorothy L. Bullock Elementary School's mission is to provide a nurturing, student-centered learning environment, and to better the lives of all children by encouraging each child's uniqueness and developing their self-esteem. The school currently serves 526 children.

Program Enrollment: 120 (Grades K-3)



Practice Description

The GCDC afterschool program partnered with Learning Stages, a non-profit community-based children's theater group, to develop "ClassACT." ClassACT is a theatre program within the afterschool program for second and third grade children. During an eight-week period, twenty-one second and third grade children brainstormed, planned, and wrote forty-five minutes of original work with staff from the theater group and the afterschool program. Children quickly took ownership of the project. The children worked together and with staff on all phases in production development, including script development, set and background design, lights, sound, costumes, and original songs. Some of the children's original stories, which were part of the final production, were "The Adventures of Four Friends" and "Soccer Scandal."

In order to participate, the children were required to attend ClassACT three times a week. At the end of the eight weeks, children presented their work at two separate culminating performances, to the school community and to parents and families. Teens from the Teen Academy program, Glassboro Intermediate School's afterschool program, also managed by GCDC, contributed to ClassACT by creating the programs and public relations materials and serving as ushers.

ClassACT provided children with exposure and appreciation of the arts as well as building their self-confidence in public performance and communication/writing skills. Program leaders believe that participation in the project contributed to improved attendance. Parents and school community members were invited to offer comments on the drama production on a ClassACT Critic's Curtain posted in the school lobby. Feedback from parents and school staff has been very positive.



Rationale for the Practice

Many children have little exposure to the arts. ClassACT has expanded arts exposure from simple arts and crafts to more sophisticated and challenging practices in drama, music, set design, and dance. This program content practice offers a community service role for teens, engages parents in afterschool activities, and highlights the importance of early experience and exposure to the arts. This practice is made possible by the partnership of two community organizations, bringing their resources and youth development interests together.

Tips for Adaptation

- **Materials:** Roll of butcher paper, donated costumes, sound equipment, lights, and donated props are all helpful.
- **Space:** Secure permission for evening and day school performances.
- **Publicize:** Plan early and publicize the performance to draw in school community members.

- **Invitations:** Be sure to invite afterschool program stakeholders: NJA3, school board, funders, and parents and families.
- **Commitment:** Be sure parents and children understand the commitment needed for the success of the program. Participants must be available to work on program three times per week.
- **Display Work:** Photograph and display pictures of children and their work on the production throughout the development and design process.

Contact Information

Glassboro Child Development Centers
31 South Main Street
Glassboro, New Jersey 08028
(856) 881-3331

Executive Director: Joan Dillon
Site Coordinator: Lynn Shute; lshute@gcdckids.org
School Principal: Joseph DePalma

New Jersey & You Curriculum Project

**The YWCA of Essex & West Hudson and
Main Street Elementary School
Orange, New Jersey**

Category: Sample Activity Plan – Continuous

Partners

The YWCA of Essex and West Hudson is a non-profit women's membership movement, nourished by roots in the Christian faith and sustained by the richness of many beliefs and values. Strengthened by diversity, the YWCA draws together members who strive to create opportunities for women's growth, leadership and power in order to attain a common vision: peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all people. Each year this YWCA serves over 500 children in its day and sleepover summer camps, over 200 children in its early childhood education programs, and nearly 200 children in its afterschool program.

The Main Street Elementary School was built in 2004 and serves students in grades Kindergarten through eighth. It is the only Kindergarten through eighth school in the Township of Orange. The school operates as a "whole school reform model" as developed by Dr. James Comer of Yale University.

Program Enrollment: 200 (Grades K-8)

Practice Description

New Jersey and You is a hands-on, creative, activity based lesson series, developed by the afterschool program staff, to teach fourth grade students about the state of New Jersey. Students participate in the activities for an hour and a half, twice a week for eight weeks. The curriculum is adapted from the nine core competencies materials supplied by NJA3. Students complete projects that include a New Jersey environment collage, a county map, or a collage of state tourist attractions. Eat New Jersey is an activity included in the curriculum that leads students to bake a large cookie in the shape of New Jersey.

The first step to implementing the curriculum is to pre-test students on their knowledge of New Jersey. The test's questions line up with those that appear in the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) statewide assessment for 4th grade. Afterward, the group leader gives an overview on how the activity connects to NJ ASK, the activity's timeframe and needed materials. The group leader familiarizes students with a map of New Jersey by examining the state map and counties and where students live. As a follow up activity, students research New Jersey on the computer during afterschool time. Students work in groups to choose a particular county on which to focus. Students can research county history, buildings, famous people, agriculture, geography, and the economy. They also participate in peer-sharing time or group presentations. The goal is for students to develop a general fact sheet about New Jersey.

Rationale for Practice

The rationale for developing this practice was to increase student knowledge about the state of New Jersey. While students receive some background in state history and geography through their school classes, this supplement can help them to be better prepared for the fourth grade NJ ASK, which includes a section on knowledge of New Jersey.



Tips for Adaptation

- **Materials:** The Eat New Jersey activity requires cookie baking ingredients such as cookie dough, cookie sheet pans, and cookie cutters made in the shape of New Jersey. Other activities require art supplies such as construction paper, scissors, crayons, and markers and a large map of New Jersey.
- **Assessment:** Use questions from NJ ASK to survey baseline knowledge on state information/history. Consider using a post-participation survey to assess change in knowledge.
- **Publicize:** Make sure that cookies and artwork have an opportunity for public display in the school.
- **Background research:** It is important for the group leader to research New Jersey and to be familiar with NJ ASK. Utilize web sites for curricular support and ideas such as “Enchanted Learning” (<http://members.enchantedlearning.com>). Use New Jersey travel and tourist web sites to gather information. Other web sites to consider include www.atozteacherstuff.com and www.eduweb.com.
- **Hands-on:** Hands-on projects and group work sparked interest and creativity.

Contact Information

YWCA of Essex and West Hudson
379 Park Avenue
Orange, New Jersey 07050
(973) 672-9500

Executive Director: Lori Williams
Site Director: Ayesha Cross; AyeshaC@ywcaewh.org
School Principal: Carole Brotspies



Promising Practices Program Tips

1 Get on Your Feet

Partners: Boys & Girls Club of Paterson and Paterson Public School #10

Category: Health and Safety

The Boys & Girls Club of Paterson afterschool program staff created an activity to energize students with an exercise routine. After taking attendance, children and staff get on their feet and begin a low impact warm-up that can lead to 10 minutes of squats, running in place, and/or jumping jacks. The activity was created to help students release their energy in a positive and healthy way so they could focus on their homework, which follows afterward.

Contact Information:

Boys and Girls Club of Paterson
264 21st Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey 07501
(973) 279-3055 Ext. 10
Executive Director: Peter Thornton
Site Coordinator: Jose Angel Martinez

2 The Girls Club

Partners: Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC) and Lindenwold Middle School

Category: Family, School and Community Connections

The EIRC program at Lindenwold Middle School created a partnership with the South Jersey Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority to integrate the Betty Shiraz Delta Academy. Twice a month Sorority members volunteer their time to provide workshops and trainings to help girls increase their self-esteem and motivation, develop leadership skills, plan for

meaningful careers, and set goals. The Girl's Club includes 40-45 girls from the ages of 10-13.

Contact Information:

Educational Information and Resource Center
606 Delsea Drive
Sewell, New Jersey 08080
(856) 582-7000
Executive Director: Dr. Charles Ivory
Site Coordinator: Ellen Kamen

3 Newsletter

Partners: Unified Vailsburg Services Organization & Alexander Street School and Alexander Annex Early Childhood Center

Category: Family, School and Community Connections

The NJA3 program at Alexander Street School developed a newsletter to build relationships with parents and strengthen the connections to the community. The site coordinator collects information about the program and families, and records it in a monthly newsletter. The newsletter covers program updates, new curriculum information, and news about student accomplishments. The newsletter is distributed to families and the broader school community.

Contact Information:

Unified Vailsburg Services Organization
P. O. Box 6039
40-42 Richelieu Terrace
Newark, New Jersey 07106
(973) 374-2000
Executive Director: Robert Farley
Site Coordinator: Talisha Allison

4 Student Showcase

Partners: Jewish Family Services, Inc. and Cliffside Park Schools #3, #4, #6

Category: Family, School and Community Connections

The Club Ed after school program implemented “end-of-term” student showcases at each of its three Cliffside Park partner schools. Towards the end of each term, the parents of Club Ed students, along with the rest of the school community, are invited to attend presentations and view student work on display. Presentations include drama pieces, dance or video productions, poetry, and art. Every student is encouraged to represent his or her work in some way during each showcase.

Contact Information:

Club Ed/Jewish Family Services, Inc. Bergen County
1485 Teaneck Road
Teaneck, New Jersey 07666
(201) 837-9090
Executive Director: Lisa Fedder
Site Coordinator: Maurice Frumkin

5 Reward System

Partners: Morristown Neighborhood House and Frelinghuysen Middle School

Category: Social Climate/Program Culture

Morristown Neighborhood House’s after school program staff created a reward system to recognize students for showing effort, being helpful, and showing respect to peers and staff. Staff rewards students with tickets when they observe positive behaviors and interactions. At the beginning or end of each month, 20-30 students with the most tickets win a prize. Prizes have included a VIP meal in the teacher’s cafeteria or trips to restaurants or Nets games. This practice is designed for middle school students.

Contact Information:

Morristown Neighborhood House Association
12 Flagler Street
Morristown, New Jersey 07960
(973) 538-1229
Executive Director: David Walker
Assistant Site Coordinator: Elizabeth Freitag

6 Snack Clean up Crew

Partners: Jewish Family Services of Central New Jersey/ Linden School #1

Category: Program Operations and Administration

The NJA3 program at Linden School #1 implemented a snack time practice to ensure tidiness and help the program transition from snack to general programming. Students who exhibit positive behaviors during the program are selected to be

members of the Clean up Crew, a team that goes into action following snack time. Clean up takes about 10 minutes. Crews rotate to provide opportunities to as many students as possible. Students express that participation in the Clean up Crew has increased their pride in the school. Students also receive a special snack as a reward for their work.

Contact Information:

Jewish Family Services of Central New Jersey
625 Westfield Avenue
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07208
(908) 352-8375
Executive Director: Tom Beck
Site Coordinator: Robert Platt

7 Reward System

Partners: Mt. Olive Child Care & Learning Center and Chester M. Stephens Elementary School

Category: Social Climate/Program Culture

The afterschool program staff at the Mt. Olive Child Care afterschool program at Stephens Elementary School developed a reward system to encourage positive student behavior and peer relations. When the children demonstrate positive behavior, assist peers, or take responsibility for clean-up and other tasks they are given award stickers. Every Friday there is an awards ceremony and children with the most stickers are acknowledged. Program leaders believe that the reward system has contributed to positive changes in student behavior and more respectful relationships between peers, in addition to improved child/adult relations.

Contact Information:

Mt. Olive Child Care & Learning Center
150 Wolfe Road
Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828
(973) 426-1525
Executive Director: Gail Reuther
Site Coordinator: Elizabeth Sturgeon



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www.niost.org



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