



Embracing the Challenges of Working with Older Youth

BOOST Conference
Palm Springs, California
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Learning Point Associates

A non-profit educational consulting organization with a vision of an education **system** that **works** for **all learners**.

Since 1984, our goal has been **positive educational change**.

Over a decade of providing research-based resources, tools and professional development for **afterschool programs**.

We are **advocates** for a **broader** agenda for **student** learning. Basic proficiency is **not** enough. “College Ready” is **not** enough—building **21st Century Skills**.



What We'll Do Today


- Why Older Youth are important
- Developmental issues
- What works
- What are you doing now? What could you be doing?
 - Working with intentionality
- Planning for success—tools to help
- Supporting resources



First, A Question:

What are your hopes and dreams for the students you are serving?

- Think about it, and write it down on the sheet provided
- Then, think about your greatest challenge for making those hopes and dreams happen and write it down (ONLY ONE!)
- Share those two answers with the person next to you at the table
- Tell each other what you are currently doing to make those hopes and dreams happen



One City's Statistics:

Out of **100** Chicago Public Schools' High School Students, only

50 students **graduate** high school,

and only **8** earn a **four year degree**

A photograph of a person sitting in a library, reading a book. The person is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants. They are sitting on a wooden bench or table, with their legs crossed. The background shows bookshelves filled with books. The text "Why Older Youth?" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Why Older Youth?

Why the conversation and programming are different:

- Developmentally different than younger students
- Societal demands are different
- Different engagement issues
- Low attendance
- High potential for engagement
- Participation



Characteristics of the Age Group

- Concerned about body and appearance
- Highly developed motor skills
- Worry about clumsiness, illness and diet
- Think abstractly
- Learn by doing
- Less influenced by parents, more influenced by peers
- Need and demand more freedom and privacy
- Mask true feelings
- Need praise and adult recognition
- Admire heroes that demonstrate characteristics of friendship and romance
- Recognize diversity of ideas

What Afterschool Should Offer This Age Group

- Presentations and projects that involve appearance
- Opportunities to discuss and address physical risk, including smoking, drugs, drinking and sexual activity
- Opportunities to tutor younger children
- Opportunities to show competence in a public setting
- Individual projects as well as teamwork in small and large groups
- Substantial choice and clear limits
- Opportunities to express feelings through projects and activities
- One-on-one opportunities to talk with adults



More of What Afterschool Should Offer This Age Group

- Loud and quiet areas and activities
- Discussions of diverse ideas and opinions with adults and peers
- Specific help with skills areas that are causing problems
- Opportunities for job skill development
- Opportunities to catch up or move ahead with academic interests
- Opportunities to work on school day projects and papers with library and internet support
- Problem-solving and reasoning skills practice
- Help with life planning



Critical Areas to Address for Older Middle School Age Youth

Similar to Older Teens, with these critical identifiers:

- Need more energy outlets
- Use logic and reasoning, but are often inconsistent in use, ideas and moods
- Often feel awkward and embarrassed in some situations, so public displays and participation can be challenging
- Want to achieve and appear competent
- Very strongly identify with peers and take cues from them



How is Your Program Doing?

Look through checklist for self assessment:

- Take a few minutes to fill it out
- Particularly, write down the activities your program currently does to meet these needs/concerns
- Share your greatest success and your greatest challenge with your table
- Next steps



Intentionality is Key

Mapping **what you are doing** and how it will help you reach your **goals** should always be in the forefront of your mind in every programming decision you make.



Planning Process

- Literature Review
- Environmental Scan
- Information from Constituencies:
 - Who? Staff, Teens & Families
 - How? Surveys & Focus Groups
- Program Planning
- Feedback Cycle—constant tweaking



Surveys, Focus Groups and Interviews

- Surveys—A Warning!
 - Advantage for staff and parent
 - Danger for students
 - Follow up necessary
- Focus Groups Can Be Your Best Friend
 - Opportunity to establish rapport
 - Follow up on anything not clear, explore more deeply
 - Help gain support for planning
 - Can follow up individually



Ideas and Planning Into Action

Based on what you've identified in this session, what are **2 things** you can do to improve how you serve older youth **right now**.

- Take the top area you identified and another area.
- What would success look like if you addressed these two areas?
- Who needs to get involved?
- What resources will it take? (Money, additional stakeholders, planning, etc.)
- **Commit** to a timeline



Checking and Tweaking

Each month, go back to the checklist and action plan:

- Where are you? Are you making progress?
- Celebrate your success
- Address your challenge (often, it is **time**)
- **RECOMMIT**
- Revise your action planning
- **Always think: How are you doing reaching your hopes and dreams?**



Web Resources

<http://www.casel.org/pub/articles.php>

www.foruforyouthinvestment.org

<http://www.wkkf.org/Default.aspx?LanguageID=0>

http://www.childtrends.org/_portalcat.cfm?LID=C6CEDAFE-34FF-4DFD9CD745899CE5D128&CFID=610644&CFTOKEN=24427707

<http://tascorporg/content/document/detail/1487/>

Research Support

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Embracing the Challenge of Working with Older Youth

**What are your HOPES & DREAMS for the
students you work with.....**

**What is your one BIGGEST CHALLENGE in your
work.....**

Older Youth Activities Assessment

Directions: Reflect on the activities you are currently providing. Read the following list of components that could be addressed in activities or programs for older youth. Below each question, indicate how well you think your program is addressing each component or describe what activities or practices support your assessment.. Afterward, review your checkmarks and comments. Indicate the areas that appear strong and the areas that could be improved.

	Yes	In Process	No
1. Students are given a wide variety of choice in the activities they are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			
2. Students have had a strong say in what activities are offered and how those activities are designed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			
3. Students have the opportunity to pursue other interests (such as sports, theatre, work, other clubs) and are still welcome to participate in your activities or programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			
4. Students have the opportunity to participate throughout the school year and summer (if summer activities are offered).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

5. Healthy snacks are offered daily.

6. Safe group interaction is fostered.

7. Peer confrontations are minimized and handled.

8. Staff build strong rapport and connections with students—they know each student’s goals, family background, challenges

9. Activities build on participants’ strengths and interests.

10. There are opportunities and support for problem-solving and reasoning skills practice

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

11. Activities encourage skill development.

12. There are opportunities for individual projects as well as team work.

13. Staff are aware of and respond to the interests, talents, and developmental needs of individuals.

14. Coaching and feedback strategies are implemented.

15. Cultural and/or linguistic differences are respected.

16. Projects or activities allow for opportunities to express feelings and emotions.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

17. Culture is integrated into activities.

18. There are opportunities for youth to show competence in public settings.

19. There are opportunities for youth work on and present projects that involve appearance

20. There are opportunities for one-on-one time to talk with adults.

21. Youth are provided guidance and given the opportunity to with and tutor younger children.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

22. The spaces where activities are offered provide options for loud and quiet activities.

23. Participants are respected for their individuality.

24. Activities are age appropriate and in line with styles, abilities, and interests of the participants.

25. Participants participate in setting program or activity rules.

26. Rules are clear, consistent, and fair.

27. Rules address cooperation, sharing, caring for materials, participating, discipline strategies, and conflict resolution.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

28. Staff develop written plans, with each activity correlated with a specific outcome.

29. There are opportunities for discussion of diverse opinions with adults and peers.

30. Students have opportunities to get specific help with skill areas that are causing problems.

31. Students have the opportunity to catch up or move ahead with academic interests.

32. Students have the opportunity to work on school day projects and papers with library and internet support.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

33. Staff, students, parents, and (possibly) community members work together to establish goals.

34. Participants are involved in the community, and community members are involved in activities.

35. Staff regularly praise participants' positive behavior with sincere and specific comments.

36. Staff engage participants and consistently call each participant by his or her name and welcome them.

37. Staff intentionally build and promote relationships characterized by warmth, respect, honesty, and caring.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

38. Staff respond to participants with respect, acceptance, and appreciation; they listen to what participants say.

39. Staff are cooperative and respectful; they model positive adult relationships.

40. Participants are given clear, demanding expectations.

41. Staff support participant initiative and encourage leadership and decision making.

42. Staff provide opportunities for participants to make informed, responsible choices on what, how, and with whom.

43. Each student develops a set of personal goals with progress measures and can verbalize their goals and progress.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

44. Youth and staff define and implement ways to resolve conflict.

45. Participation is encouraged for long periods of time.

46. Staff emphasize belonging and membership.

47. Staff help youth envision possible futures.

48. Leadership opportunities are provided for youth.

49. Youth are encouraged to take on meaningful challenges.

Older Youth Activities Assessment (continued)

Yes In Process No

50. Staff foster perceptions of self-autonomy in youth.

Checklist Results

Where you surprised by your checklist results? What areas appear strong? What areas could use improvement?

Choose one or two areas that are your highest priorities to address.

Older Youth Focus Group Sample Questions

Staff Notes:

- Begin each Focus Group with a general welcome and introduction.
- Talk to the participants about what you are trying to accomplish and why they are there.
- Ask each participant to introduce him/herself, giving their name and telling the group one thing about themselves.
- Before the focus group starts, make sure you establish a way to take notes to collect the comments and suggestions (have a note taker, bullet chart, etc. Recording is probably not a good idea here).
- Consider handing participants a blank copy of the questions for them to think about or turn ideas into you later if they aren't as comfortable sharing.

Introductions (5 min.):

Sample: We would like your honest opinions on various questions—we are trying to help get some activities set up that you and your friends might be interested in and we really need your help figuring out what those might be. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone's opinion is important. Your answers will be confidential. We will be taking notes, so it's important that only one person talk at a time. Please feel free to be informal; no need to raise your hand. Know that we will do our best to help put together real activities from these ideas and we hope we can count on your help in making at least some of them happen.

Questions:

Staff Notes: When conducting the session spend 5 - 8 min. / question

The questions will seem very general, you might not come up with specific programming ideas (although it would be good to ask about you might have in mind. For example, if a student says they like skateboarding, ask them if they'd be interested in designing and making their own deck.)

1. What do you typically do after school [Typical answers are working, hanging out with friends, shopping, playing video games, watching reality TV, etc. From these general answers, it's important to delve into what it is they like about it. The trick here is to try to think of positive ways they could do elements of what it is they like in your activities.]

2. If "working" comes up as an answer, ask what they do at their job and how often they do it? What do they like about their job? What don't they like about it? Has it made them think about what kind of job they might like to have? If so, what?

3. What are your plans when you are done with high school? [If there's a shoulder shrug, or a "Don't Know," try to delve deeper—what is it they'd like to

do? They might be interested in going to college or a trade school, but they don't know the path it would take to get there.]

4. Are there any activities you'd like to try if you had a chance?
5. If we were to offer activities, when would you like them to happen?
6. Would you be willing to help on a Leadership group to help plan these activities to make sure they meet your needs and interests?
7. Do you have any concerns or questions about this process or these activities?

Staff note: These are just sample questions—be sure you follow the conversation wherever it goes. Make sure one person doesn't dominate the conversation—if you see that starting to happen, tell that person you appreciate their great input and let them know you'd love to talk to them more about their specific ideas after the session, but you've got to hear from the others while they are there—make sure to catch them before you break up the meeting to follow up or set an additional interview time.

Be sure to thank the group for their great participation and leadership. Let them know you value their contributions and look forward to their help in making the activities happen. If they didn't contribute much, give them your contact information and let them know they can email you their thoughts or set up another time to talk.

Foundations Proposal

Workshop Title

Embracing the Challenges of Working with Older Youth

Workshop Description: (500-750 words)

Please describe your session. Include the degree of participant involvement, the extent to which the session will provide hands-on learning opportunities, and the practical usefulness to the participant of the knowledge gained.

Afterschool programs for older youth offer many unique experiences to prepare students for careers and post-secondary education; however, afterschool programs targeting this special population also face a myriad of challenges. This workshop is designed to bring middle and high school programs together to learn how to become more intentional about the activities they offer in order to recruit and retain older youth in high quality engaging programs. To help frame the workshop, several examples of successful middle and high school programs based on research from around the country will be used to demonstrate examples of successful afterschool programs dedicated to older youth.

The first portion of the workshop will be devoted to establishing a community of learners. Participants will be asked to introduce themselves to others at their table by providing a brief summary of their program. Next, they will be asked to do a guided writing activity. During this activity, the attendees will take a few minutes to individually think about the hopes they have for their program and the challenges they face. Each table will then discuss common themes, and they will be asked to share their table discussions with the full group. These themes will be taken into consideration as the workshop proceeds.

The overlying theme of the workshop is intentionality. By the end of the workshop, each participant will understand that all the activities implemented in their program should help them reach the goal(s) they have set for the program. First, though, the program must understand the needs of the students it serves. Attendees will learn how to create a needs assessment for students, staff, and parents. For students, the needs assessment may take the form of focus groups. Older youth are more likely to be honest when they are with their friends and believe that their voice is really being heard. They can be asked what kinds of activities they would be willing to attend, who would they like as coaches or instructors in the afterschool program, and what end result they want from the program (e.g., job preparation, credit recovery, service learning, etc.). Exploring the needs of staff and parents can be accomplished through surveys. Staff and parents can also be asked if they have a special skill or hobby that they would be interested in demonstrating or teaching in the afterschool program. Examples of needs assessments will be provided to participants, and there will be an open discussion on needs assessments they have used previously at their programs.

In the second portion of the workshop, attendees will be asked to think about what they want to accomplish with their program by outlining their goal(s) and ideal outcome(s) through a logic model. After the needs assessment is complete, program staff can begin to

think about the goals they want to set for the program. Working at their tables, the teams will be provided scenarios of needs assessments results to help them set goals and outcomes for a program. For example, a scenario may indicate that the primary goal of the program is to increase graduation rates. Facilitators will work with the attendees on the logic model so they understand how to set intermediate and long-term goals that will ultimately lead to an increase in the school's graduation rates.

The final portion of the workshop will be an activity where staff will think about how to implement activities and strategies that will help them accomplish the goals they have set. They will also be asked to make sure the goals have measurable, tangible outcomes. Again, the logic model will serve as the primary tool for this activity. Facilitators will walk through various programming typologies such as apprenticeship, youth development, and mentorship programs that have demonstrated success through research. Participants will then be asked to think about their scenario again and to brainstorm two or three strategies that would help them achieve their goal and how they would measure their success through an indicator tool.

Although this workshop provides a brief overview of how a middle or high school program can intentionally provide engaging programming that will help staff reach tangible goals, the participants will be provided a variety of tools to take back to their staff so they can begin their discussions and work through the tools at their own programs.

Workshop Abstract: (25 to 50 words)

The workshop abstract will be used to promote the session in the conference guide. Please be certain the abstract accurately reflects the session content.

Overwhelmed by the challenges of running an afterschool program for older youth? Learn how to create a quality afterschool program for young adults through intentional design and delivery. This workshop will walk through developing effective needs assessments, creating a logic model, and implementing programming typologies that align with your goals.

Workshop Objectives:

List participant outcomes.

Participants will learn effective programming elements for older youth as currently seen through research and case studies of successful models.

Participants will learn how to create effective and creative needs assessments for students, staff, and parents.

Participants will learn how to use a logic model to set short, intermediate, and long-term programmatic goals.

Participants will learn how to intentionally implement activities to help achieve the goals and how to effectively measure the impact of the goal.

Workshop Outline: Describe training techniques and activities planned.

In order to keep adult learners engaged, a variety of training techniques and activities are planned. The first ice breaker activity involves participants in small group discussions at their tables along with an individual reflective activity followed by a whole group share out. This allows participants to think about their own programs while realizing that other programs from around the country have similar successes and challenges.

Learners are most likely to learn by participating in hands-on activities. Thus, scenarios outlining various older youth programming situations will be provided to the participants as they work in small groups at their tables. The small groups will work through various exercises including how to create a needs assessment. Participants will also walk through a logic model by setting short, intermediate, and long-term goals using scenarios as their guide. Building on the logic model, the final activity will ask the teams to think about how they would measure each goal. Each team will be provided a worksheet to walk them through this process.

To have an impact at the program level, it is essential that the participants bring the information back to their staff for deeper discussion. Therefore, the facilitators will debrief each activity and talk with the participants about how they would do each activity with their staff. Additionally, each individual will receive a packet with the session's Power Point and tools. Attendees will also be asked to provide their e-mails if they would like to receive electronic copies of the documents.

Audience:

Administrators/Program Directors, Supervisors
New Program Staff
Experienced Program Staff

Conference Strands:

Engaging All Learners: Older youth

Program Characteristics:

Middle School
High School
School Year Program
Summer Program

Action Plan Worksheet

“A school ought to be a magical place where you are queen or king, and where what you get to do is to focus on your intellect, and on what you can accomplish as a human being, and you come to understand what your life can be....”

—Ruth Simmons

Name: _____ Date: _____

Goal: _____

Reason for the goal: _____

What I will do:

Who will help me:

What I will need to do it:

When I will do it:

How I will know I have done it: