



SHARING CLASSROOM SPACE IN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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Sharing space and resources is a fundamental component of community schools. Bringing together a wide range of services in one facility is cost-effective and provides a natural outreach mechanism. However, weaving theory into practice requires patience, open communication and courtesy.

The following are some key lessons learned and anecdotes on sharing classroom space between regular school day staff and extended day staff. They reflect the hands-on experience of people working in afterschool programs.

Open communication is critical.

- Send letters to classroom teachers introducing yourself and your role in the after school program.
- Let them know the times and days you will be using their classroom.
- Assure them you will listen to their concerns and suggestions.
- What an afterschool staff person may not notice may have consequences for the teacher the next day.

"There are lessons in all this for us and for our students, how to maintain 'grace under fire', and also to leave the world better than you found it. It may be playing a bit of a game to keep everyone happy but if that is what it takes to help our children then we'll keep right on playing it!"

Make sure the room is put back at least the way it was found.

- Children will need to know from day one the rules of classroom use: do not touch any of the teachers' or students' belongings, do not write on the desks, etc.
- If anything is broken do not throw it away! Leave a letter to the teacher explaining how it happened and if possible replace it, as soon as possible.
- Make sure chairs are placed on tables for the custodians to clean the room.
- If the room needs to be swept after use, then also run a damp mop over it too. If the library books aren't straight on the shelves when you are through, then find a parent volunteer to come in during the day to help the librarian straighten up.

"There is nothing more frustrating for a teacher than to arrive at school, do duty, then go to the classroom thinking they are ready to begin the day's lesson and find chairs rearranged, chalk or dry erase markers gone, printer paper gone, teacher desk supplies missing, sewing machine needles missing, marks on the student work displayed on the wall, posters ripped, etc."

"I like to put it this way; If someone uses your kitchen to make Thanksgiving Dinner for their family while you are gone, how would you like to find it when you return? I'm sure you would notice every detail, every spill, every dish not properly put away."

Offering to share resources can lead to better relationships between afterschool personnel and teachers.

- Bringing in program supplies to ensure the teacher's supplies aren't used.
- Offering additional supplies and considerations that the 21st CCLC or other resources can provide. What do teachers need that you will also need to enhance the education of the children?

"We have found a way around this issue by buying stuff for the rooms that we use and doing favors for them. If they think you took 5 pencils then buy them 10!"

"Often the complaint is that supplies are pirated, leaving the day teacher short, so bringing in program supplies to ensure the teacher's supplies aren't used scores big."

Saying THANK YOU!

"Usually the instructor who is facilitating the activity in the room will leave a note on the board saying thank you."

In summary, veteran space-sharers remind us that the best way to create a partnership is to work together in meeting goals - *"the point of our programs is the kids and not the things."* We want

school staff to want partners to share space, and vice versa. We want them to go to bat for each other and work together to help best support our children and families.

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