

Strategies for Success:

Create Solutions Together

This is a new process and there will be a lot to learn about and from each other as you go along. Be prepared; you may encounter some struggles along the way. But stay focused on your commitment to the youth and the goals of the partnership and work to keep the lines of communication open. Experienced partners advise not to let problems fester. As soon as you are aware of a problem with your partner, create a solution. Consider some of the following suggestions to help you foster and facilitate a healthy partnership.

Agree on responsibilities in writing.

To help reduce confusion about roles and responsibilities, partners are encouraged to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (see example) to outline the respective responsibilities of the school and the community-based organization. Use a Responsibility Checklist for the School and CBO to help determine the contents for your own Memo of Understanding.

“If you don’t have a Memorandum of Understanding, if you are not concrete with what you want, then really it could hurt you in the end.”

Build Consensus.

In order to have a true partnership, everyone should believe that the after-school program is in the best interest of the school, the teachers and staff, the youth and the CBO. To help build consensus among teachers and school staff, the principal is encouraged to set up a faculty meeting where the after-school director can talk about the organization, how the after-school program will run and what it will do for young people.

Meet regularly.

Building a relationship takes time and team building needs continuous effort. You’ve already established relationships with your CBO partners, now you have to invest time in maintaining those relationships. By meeting regularly, everyone is demonstrating their desire to understand where people are coming from and create solutions to potential problems. Everyone stays informed and the lines of communication remain open.

“I get calls from parents, no matter who is running the after-school program. So, when I talk to my manager, I explain that, whatever happens, I’m ultimately going to be called or held accountable for it. So we need to be on the same page.” *–School Principal*

Review policies and procedures.

While policies and procedures for CBOs often vary from site to site, schools have guidelines mandated by state and local education agencies. Since CBOs will be working at the school site, be sure to familiarize your after-school partner with the school’s rules and regulations, such as building permits, security procedures, custodian union rules, dress code procedures, billing and payment policies. Consider too, that CBOs may have more freedom to discuss controversial topics (e.g., sex education, religion). Schools are not afforded that same liberty. Be sure to make them aware of these restrictions when planning after-school programs.