



Peer-to-Peer Learning Conversation
Notes from August 13, 2015
Older Youth: Student Recruitment and Retention

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Challenges in recruiting and retaining middle and high school students:

- Communicating between afterschool staff, students, and families can be challenging.
- Getting and keeping older students is particularly challenging with the many “competing interests” for their time after school.

Successful strategies recruiting and retaining middle and high school students:

- Communicate by keeping connected with the school staff and administration. Having afterschool staff present in the school during the day aids recruitment and retention by making connections with students and becoming a familiar face. Staying connected to the school counselors about students who would most benefit from afterschool activities and support is valuable.
- Send program enrollment forms out with the district enrollment/registration forms.
- Promote program/recruit at parent-teacher conferences and other school events.
- Offer field trips, sweatshirts, and other “swag” for older students.
- Text students about events or other interesting activities the night before. This is a good method of bringing the event to the front of students’ minds and often increases the likelihood of participation.

- Develop projects that enable student buy-in and ownership:
 - Students from one program are building a “tiny house” on the back of a truck. When finished, they will sell the house with proceeds going back into the program.
 - This program also will offer a “Culinary Chemistry” class for middle school students this year in which they can create a “Cookie Connection” business to benefit the program.
 - Another program offered a “Movie and Broadcasting Club”; student participants videotaped interviews with students who were not participating in afterschool and asked them what activities they were interested in/what they would like to have offered in the afterschool program.
 - Club leaders in one program will meet monthly with 21st CCLC staff to discuss planning and events.
- Enlist students to create and administer a survey of what other students would like to see in an afterschool program. One program found that students were interested in an Anime Club and in sports that are not offered at the school, such as Frisbee golf. They partnered with their City Parks and Recreation Department to coordinate unique afterschool sports program offerings.
- Give students a leadership role in developing and running activities and clubs.
- Student voice, student ownership, student leadership = successful student recruitment and retention.

Resources

- Celly (<https://cel.ly/>) is a free online tool for sending reminders or alerts, exchanging two-way messages, moderating discussions, conducting polls, sharing photos and files, and more. The Celly platform connects students, parents, teachers, administrators, coaches, and community members to the afterschool program. Message recipients can choose to receive messages as text, email, or download an app.
- Tiny House: A Community Project (<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/tiny-house-collaborative-project-hth>)