School Wide Co-curricular Programs- How do we do that?

**Goal:** How do we review the program that we have now and begin to implement an engaging co-curricular program that is meaningful and will educate the whole child? How can we expand the “teachable moment” outside of the classroom?

1. *Begin with a review of your current program:*

Useful tool; SWOT Analysis. Use this to discover the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of your program.

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| **SWOT Analysis** | |
| **Strengths**  *What are our strengths? What has a positive effect on our school? What do we do really well?* | **Weaknesses**  *What has a negative effect on our school? What are we not doing as well? How could we improve?* |
| Examples: Qualified teachers and coaches, excellent facilities, involved community, etc. | Examples: Lack of interest, attendance, not enough staff, etc. |
| **Opportunities**  *What external factors can help us?* | **Threats**  *What is standing in the way of our success?* |
| Examples: Local facilities (swimming pool), participation count towards a school letter, funding from organizations, etc. | Examples: Over programmed students, lack of flexibility in programming, etc. |

1. *Consider your school community-* Seek the opinions and gather information from the school community, parents, staff and students.

**School Community/Environment-**

* What are the factors that I must consider? This can include cultural, socio-economic, historical or religious beliefs.
* What is our school vision? Philosophy? Goals? Consider how can the co-curricular program can align, improve, or aid in accomplishing that vision.
* What are our cherished traditions that cannot be changed?

**Ideas of questions that can start off the survey or discussions-**

**Parent Survey and Discussion:**

* What are the top two outcomes that you have witnessed from your child’s participation in co-curriculars?
* What do you think motivates your child to participate in a co-curricular?
* What do you hope your child will achieve/attain/experience by participating in co-curriculars?
* What sort of programming would you suggest?
* What would you identify as the biggest obstacle to our co-curricular program?

**Faculty Survey and Discussion:**

* What is the importance of the co-curricular program in developing the whole child?
* What are your suggestions to make the program better meet the needs of a diverse student body of all ages?
* How are we facilitating social activism, social justice and community service in the clubs? What are the challenges of this?
* What assumptions do people have about the current program?
* Describe how are you expanding the teachable moment outside of the classroom.

**Student Survey and Discussion:**

* If there were two things that you could change about the program, what would it be?
* Do you feel that you are engaged and have the opportunity to learn in your co-curricular?
* Do co-curricular programs help you get to know other students and feel integrated into the community?
* Do you feel that we offer enough variety in the programs? Explain your answer.
* Do you feel that our teachers support you in enhancing your learning or helping you develop new skills?
* If you miss your co-curricular, please list the top three reasons for doing so (e.g. appointment, too tired, sick, homework, stress of school, test the next day, etc.)
* What keeps you motivated throughout the program? (e.g. teammates, sense of commitment, recognition, etc.)
* How would you like to see the co-curricular program celebrated or recognized at the school?

1. *Share Your Results-* Let the staff, students and community know that you are listening and that you have heard them. Honest and *continued* dialogue about the content you discovered will be important.

Ways to do this:

* Faculty Meeting
* Focus Groups with Students
* School Newsletter
* Information night

1. *Develop a Plan and Share It*

Create a vision with goals and a mission statement. There are a lot of online guides that provide step-by-step processes of how to do this. In the process include all stakeholders of your school; administration, teachers, counsellors, parents, and students. Share this mission statement. Post it around the school, put it on your website or in your handbook.

Communication during times of change is key. When things are changing, there can be the feeling of uncertainty, restlessness and skepticism. The staff need to have confidence that there is a plan and that steps are being taken to achieve them. A chart such as this (below) can be posted in the faculty lounge and updates can be given on a monthly basis. A visual representation will help keep faculty informed, continue to convey its importance, as well as highlight accomplishments.

**Co-Curricular Improvement Plan**

**Goal examples (monthly, by semester/term, yearly):** Professional Development for Coaches, implementing community service options, creating community partnership, etc.

**Year One-**

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| **Goal:** | | | | | |
| **Focus** | **Strategy** | **Indicator of Success** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Update** |
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**Year Two-**

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| **Goal:** | | | | | |
| **Focus** | **Strategy** | **Indicator of Success** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Update** |
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**Year Three-**

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| **Goal:** | | | | | |
| **Focus** | **Strategy** | **Indicator of Success** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Update** |
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1. *How do we make it engaging and meaningful?*

When planning an activity, can you answer the following questions?

* What is the objective of this?
* How will I create meaning? (does it have a community tie? emotional?)
* What skills/knowledge do the students need to know? Or how can I help them acquire this?
* Is there a final product/presentation/activity?
* What are my indicators of success? (Ways to measure this: track attendance, send out a survey/or discuss with students, goals are being met, % of student body that participates, see if participation rises in certain clubs, track to see if there is a connection with academic success and co-curricular participation, do they continue to pursue interest outside after graduation, etc.)

Example co-curriculars with meaningful engagement:

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| **Co-curricular:** Field to Fork  **Objective**: To help broaden students knowledge of where our food comes from, nutritional content, and sustainability  **Create meaning:** Travel to local farms, Farmer’s Markets, Cooking Lessons with fresh produce  **Skills/Knowledge:** No prior experience necessary. Will be acquired through classroom, hands on sessions, or through facilitators such as Farmers and Chiefs  **Final Product:** Students hosted a dinner for their families (they created the menu, shopped for the food, and cooked the meal)  **Indicators of Success:** High participation rate, enthusiasm, students making healthier choices at lunch, asking when they can do it again. | **Co-curricular:** TEA Time (Teens, Elderly and the Arts)  **Objective:** Students will partner with a local Seniors home where they will help teach art lessons  **Create meaning:** Students will be the instructors of different activities and begin to build relationships with residents  **Skills/Knowledge:** Some artistic experience an asset. Club Leader can help teach craft before students lead the participants.  **Final Product:** Art Show, Bulletin Board  **Indicators of Success:** Residents are engaged, students continue their volunteer position, high participation rate |

1. *Plan for the Roadblocks-*

There will be people who are not supportive, some ideas may fall through, and you might not reach your goals in the time that you wanted to. Don’t give up! Refer to your mission statement, communicate with the community, ask for help or guidance, address the nay-sayers, and learn from your mistakes.

1. *Celebrate Your Achievements and Thank Your Staff (a lot!)*

**Ideas:**

* Share the trophy case! All co-curriculars should have a place where they are recognized and highlighted.
* Bulletin Boards
* Co-curricular Star of the Month- Highlight a student every month doing something exceptional
* Social Media (Twitter, Facebook Page)
* Co-curricular Banquet/Breakfast/Pizza Party

**For Your Staff-**

* Provide feedback, positive reinforcement and support (Thank you cards)
* Start faculty meeting with positive co-curricular highlights
* Listen to staff ideas and concerns (Find P.D. opportunities to help expand their knowledge)
* Create a climate of teamwork (a visual such as school clothing is great)
* Talk to your administration about how to “give back” the time those teachers put into volunteering to coach lead a club (extra prep, team teaching, self directed PD, etc.)

1. *Renew, Reflect, Review-*

The process of change is ongoing as our school environments will continue to evolve. You will need to continue to renew, reflect, and review monthly, by the semester/term, and each school year.

**Resources**

After School Program in the 21st Century, Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve It. *Harvard Family Research Project, 10 2008.* [www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/issuebrief10/companion.pdf](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/issuebrief10/companion.pdf).

Asia Society: <http://asaisociety.org/expandedlearning>

Fantastic planning and implementation resources.

Chung, A., Gannett, E., & de Kanter La Perla, A. (2004). *After School Programs from Vision to Reality.* WNET Education.<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/afterschool/index.html>

Gabriel, J. G., and Farmer, P.C. *How to Help Your School Thrive Without Breaking the Bank.* Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2009. Available on Amazon.

National Institute on Out-of-School Time at the Wellesley Centre for Woman

<http://www.niost.org/>

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