

# How To Create A Successful After School Program: A RESOURCE GUIDE



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Written by the San Francisco Unified School District  
School Health Programs Department  
Expanded Collaboratives for Excellence in Learning (ExCEL)  
After School Program

School Health  
Programs Department



San Francisco  
Unified School District





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*A full list of schools and partners can be found at [www.healthiersf.org/ExCELafterschool/About/index.html](http://www.healthiersf.org/ExCELafterschool/About/index.html)*

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*For an electronic version of this Resource Guide visit:  
[www.healthiersf.org/ExCELafterschool](http://www.healthiersf.org/ExCELafterschool)*

# Introduction

## Another Manual?

We know what you're thinking—you've already got plenty on your plate. You're running an after school program at an elementary school, a middle school, or a high school, and it's challenging work. There are students to keep track of, staff to monitor, forms to fill out. You already have a number of manuals that you have received or purchased from a variety of sources. Why do you need another manual for your shelf?

## It's Not for You. It's for the Kids.

This manual is for the children and youth who rely on your program every weekday.

- The vast majority of children at the schools we serve face socioeconomic risk factors that are placing their academic achievement at risk. In California, 49% of students receive free/reduced price lunch, and 21% of parents report not having graduated from high school.
- Across California, youth appear to be carrying violence into their daily lives. Nearly half of California middle school students (42%) have been in a physical fight in the past year.
- In addition, only 29% of California middle school students report that they have a caring adult to turn to in school.<sup>1</sup>
- The immediate impact of these risk factors is already apparent in children's low literacy, math achievement, and school attendance. In California schools, students' literacy is far below national norms. For example, only 75% of fifth graders and 73% of seventh graders performed at basic or above in English Language Arts on the California Standards Test 2004-2005.

These kids are counting on you and on us to offer them the stellar programs they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. So we did some research. We looked at the best practices of after school programs

here in San Francisco and across the country, and we selected the best of what's been tested and found effective.

## But We Already Have a Great Program.

You do! As an example, San Francisco Unified School District's most recent outcomes assessment showed **statistically significant academic gains in both Reading and Math** for students in the 16 after school programs we launched three years ago. What's more, a nationwide poll found that 69% of police chiefs believe after school and child care programs are the most effective strategy for **reducing youth violence**.<sup>2</sup>

This manual will help you provide your students with an even better program than the one they already attend. Our goals in distributing this manual are three-fold. We want to:

- 1) Ensure past successes continue;
- 2) Ensure that all the after school programs across California can implement similar best practices; and
- 3) **Help make your job easier.**

For example, this Resource Guide will help you and other program staff run more efficient meetings, find more volunteers, and make the best use of community partners.

Thank you for all that you do for California's children and youth.

<sup>1</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2000; cited by the Afterschool Alliance, [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

# How To Use the Resource Guide

This Resource Guide is not just another binder to put on your shelf. It's something to turn to throughout the school year.

This information is presented in a binder so that you can take pages out and copy them; add pages you gather from trainings; and insert other resources that you find helpful. In this way, the **Resource Guide is a "living" document**. There's no need to read this from front to back. Feel free to flip to an area you'd like more information about and go from there.

The Resource Guide is broken down into ten chapters, each of which focuses on research-validated program strategies that can make an after school program truly shine. Here's what to look for in each chapter:

- **Overview**—This one-page overview will give you basic definitions of the topics covered, as well as information on why the best practices are important to your program, and when and how you can implement them.
- **Quick Quiz**—These quick quizzes are based on the best practices we gathered from our research, and they are designed to help you identify strengths as well as opportunities for growth. The quizzes will help you assess your program's capacities at three levels:
  - **Level 1**—At this level, you are working to establish your program. Your program is in the beginning stages of development and is identifying its vision, program schedule, procedures, and other areas to establish a good foundation for after school activities.
  - **Level 2**—At this level, you are ready to kick your program up a notch. You have established basic programming and procedures and have identified areas for improvement. You are beginning to examine and implement practices that will move your program towards exemplary status.

- **Level 3**—At this level, you have identified your program's strengths. You work under a continuous improvement model and are constantly re-evaluating your program to increase its impact. You are sharing your knowledge with others by hosting site visits, and providing training and mentoring.
- **Tips**—These sheets contain hands-on advice that you can use and share with staff to remind them of best practices. They offer fundamental ways to enhance your program activities, services, and management.
- **How To Guides**—Every chapter provides "How To" Guides to help you and your program build new capacities. Our templates and worksheets can be used off the shelf or adapted for your specific needs.

In the Appendix you will find a "Reality Check" to assist you in assessing your progress. Each time your program implements new ideas, conduct a "reality check" with staff, students, and parents to evaluate your success. The tool provides some sample questions to ask each of these key after school players.

Additional Questions? Feel free to give the ExCEL ASP District Coordinators a call at (415) 242-2615.