

**Program Power Ups:**  
**Introduction to Youth Development**  
Connecticut Network for Children and Youth

# Purpose of the Session

To cover the fundamentals of youth development theory and practice and identify the connection to working with youth in out-of-school time programs.

## Handouts:

1. Developmental Theories
2. Connecticut After School Network Quality Self-Assessment

## Tool (CT-QSAT)

3. Search Institute Developmental Relationships Framework
4. Filling in the Gaps (Canzano, Anthony, & Scott, 2016)

# Opening Activity

**MATH  
IS FUN!**

- Take a look and review the handout
- Are you excited?
- Is there an opportunity for youth voice?
- What is your engagement strategy?

# CT-QSAT - Relationships

## 1. Relationships — Interactions and Engagement

A quality program works with intention to build positive relationships with children/youth which are the foundation of all other quality components.

A quality program is one where:

	PERFORMANCE LEVEL				PLAN TO IMPROVE		
	1	2	3	4	RIGHT NOW	SIX MONTHS	TWELVE MONTHS
1 Adults are role models of positive and respectful relationships with both fellow staff and children/youth.							
2 Adults build a sense of community and a welcoming, positive social/emotional climate.							
3 Adults actively implement strategies to build positive relationships with each and every child/youth participant.							
4 Adults are actively engaged with the children/youth as observed through their enthusiasm, interest, and interactions.							
5 Children/youth are shown how to make responsible choices and offered opportunities to practice these skills.							
6 Children/youth are empowered to request, design, and/or select activities that follow emerging interests. 							
7 Children/youth are active participants in leadership activities that may include program planning, activity leading, evaluation, and community outreach.							
8 Both adults and children/youth promote physical and emotional safety through a culture of support, inclusion and mutual respect.							



### Zooming In!

Quality Indicator #6: Children/youth are empowered to request, design, and/or select activities that follow emerging interests.

#### PERFORMANCE LEVELS

##### 1= Entry

- Program materials are limited.
- Children/youth do not have choices in activities.
- The physical space does not allow for successful implementation of activities.

##### 2= Developing

- Some materials are available but are often kept in a locked closet.
- Children/youth must ask to use stored materials.
- Staff understand the importance of providing children/youth with choices but are not consistent about doing so.

##### 3= Proficient

- Supplies and materials are always accessible.
- Children/youth are encouraged to provide feedback.
- Staff provide opportunities for youth choice by administering monthly surveys on program options.
- The physical space is intentionally arranged to complement activities.

##### 4= Advanced

- Supplies and materials are consistently stocked and accessible to children/youth.
- All staff provide multiple opportunities for youth choice in their groups.
- There is a youth council that participates in program decisions, design, plans, and events.
- The physical space is organized to allow positive peer interaction and promote collaboration on projects.
- Space is often used as a model for other program providers to learn from.

#### IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

##### RIGHT NOW:

addressed within the first 30-60 days of assessment

- Program materials and supplies are purchased.
- Broken equipment is replaced.
- Materials are made easily accessible to children.
- Staff work with children/youth to create regular methods of incorporating youth voice in programming.

##### THIS YEAR:

addressed by the end of the program year

- During meetings, staff discuss how activities can offer children/youth opportunities to take initiative and explore their interests.
- Staff work with children/youth to re-organize space to meet activity needs.

##### NEXT YEAR:

addressed at the beginning of the new program year

- Staff meet at the beginning of the year to plan activities and reflect on the program environment.
- Staff identify opportunities for children/youth to be engaged as leaders and create intentional avenues for feedback.
- Children/youth are recruited to create a youth council.
- Staff take inventory of program supplies and place orders quarterly.
- Children/youth are acknowledged for the leadership and contributions to the program.



# Youth As Leaders

Recognizing youth as leaders – when children can make choices and take leadership roles they become empowered, become more engaged in the activities of the program:

- feel more “ownership” of the afterschool program
- academic benefits from youth engagement in leadership activities
- foster youth voice and participation

- What does a youth leader look like?
- Children and youth come into our programs with many different types of personalities

- All children and youth have potential to be a leader
- We will use a “lens” designed to help identify the seeds of leadership
- The key is empowering each youth by nurturing those seeds

- The Lens- Leadership potential begins with recognizing where the potential is located.

# Leadership Theory

- Trait Theory
- Great Events Theory
- Transformational Leadership Theory:

“Leaders are made not born.”



# Make Expectations Clear and Developmentally Appropriate

- Sometimes we have expectations of the children we work with that do not match where they are developmentally
- Understanding key developmental milestones helps us be more intentional about the programming we offer
  - Think of how you would address an issue with a first or second grader versus a middle school youth
- In understanding these milestones, programs are able to provide opportunities that are developmentally appropriate

# Connecting Developmental Theory to Your Work

Erikson – 8 Stages of Development

Piaget – 4 Developmental Stages

Bronfenbrenner – Ecological Systems Theory

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Search Institute – 40 Developmental

Assets/Developmental Relationships Framework



# Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory

- Linguistic
- Logical/Mathematical
- Spatial
- Body/Kinesthetic
- Musical
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalist



# Search Institute – Developmental Relationships Framework

1. Express Care – which shows children that a person can be dependable, listen to them, believe in them, and provide encouragement to name a few
1. Challenge Growth – which holds children accountable, helps them fail forward, and stretch and expect their best
1. Providing support – This helps them navigate situations, set boundaries, know someone will advocate for them, and empower them.
1. Sharing power – is about mutual respect. How they are included in decision making, collaborative activities, leadership opportunities, and feeling respected makes a world of difference in the relationship building process.
1. Expand Possibilities – As we have discussed throughout this section, afterschool does all of these things. Helping to inspire, broaden horizons, and connect with the larger world to grow.



# Why Does Understanding Youth Development Matter?

- Out-of-school time programs provide the space for experimenting, learning and testing social cues, learning to cooperate and work together.
- Activities that are (SAFE) sequenced, active, focused, and explicit, regardless of setting or focus, children perform better academically, socially, and emotionally
- Developmental theory provides a roadmap for planning
- It is something that you probably are already doing in your practice.
- It is typically small tweaks to practice that make a huge difference in program delivery.
- Research shows that the one caring adult in a child's life, one, can determine if a child stays in or drops out of school.
- You make a difference.

# How Do We Integrate This into Programming?

- Thinking ahead
- Intentionality
- Alignment
- Using research in practice
- Active learning environments

# Steps to Intentional Programming (BLT)

1. Connect the idea to prior activities or learning to help tee up the idea or introduce something that will have a longer duration.
1. Connect activities over a period of time (not too long or too short) helps engage the children and youth in the program. When doing this, we recommend using the BLT method, nope not bacon, lettuce, tomato, but Big Idea, Linking, and Teaser.
1. The BLT bookends the activity. How we introduce the activity, connect it to something else, and then ask a teaser question to peak interest makes all the difference in engagement.
1. At the close of the activity, reflection is key to help with metacognition of the knowledge gained. Reflection helps the children and youth think about thinking...with questions that draw them out.

# Introduction and Reflection

- This is where the magic happens – helps assure SAFE activities
- Introduction:
  - Big Idea– tells the kids what to be watching for or paying attention to
  - Linking – connects what we’re doing today to something we did before
  - Teaser – something to get the kids excited (a hint, a question, etc.)
- Reflection:
  - Big Idea – what did they discover about the idea you prompted about in the intro?
  - Linking – How can they connect what they learned to real life experiences?
  - Teaser – What would they like to do next with this information, idea, or concept?

# BLT Example: Math Moves! Pie Charts and Bar Graphs

- (B) In this activity, we're going to move information around to understand it better
- (L) We've been learning about comparing numbers to see what's bigger – this can make it easier.
- (T) Be thinking about which way makes the most sense to your brain.
- Sort the group by answers to an open-ended question (favorite kind of cookie)
- Pie Chart:
  - Everyone stands by the people in their same category
  - Count how many people are in each category
  - Now form a circle, staying together with your category
  - Teacher stands at the center of each circle
  - Teacher gives a piece of yarn to the outside edges of each category
  - Now you have a 3-D pie chart – look to see which slice is biggest, smallest, etc.
- Bar Graph:
  - Each category forms a line and each person in the category puts their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them, arms extended fully
  - Category lines should start right next to one another
  - Now you have a 3-D bar graph – look to see which line is longest, shortest, etc.
- (B) What did we do to our groups to make them easier to understand? How did it feel to your brains?
- (L) Can you think of any other times that you might make a pie chart or a bar graph?
- (T) Pie charts and bar graphs can help us inform people and make changes -- what's most interesting
  - Nutrients in our drinks (sugar per drink bar graph)
  - What we do with our time (inside, outside, transition pie chart)
  - What we like best about our afterschool (pie chart or bar graph)

# How Knowing Youth Development Helps You Connect

- Planning and developmentally appropriate practice
- Behavior management and grouping
- Youth leadership and mentoring
- Social-emotional and academic skill building

“Believing in people before they have proved themselves is the key to motivating people to reach their potential.”

John Maxwell



“Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. That simple, that difficult.”  
-Warren Bennis

Simon Sinek – Find Your Why

# Creating Impactful Program Experiences

Are there any children that come to mind when you think about developmental theory?



“A Lens for Recognizing Leadership Potential

- Youth as Individuals
- Using an asset based framework
- Valuing diverse strengths and perspectives equally

# What is an Asset Based Approach?

- Look for each child's strengths and build on these.
- Recognition and exercise of each child's strengths builds
  - Confidence
  - Persistence
  - Self control
  - Improves communication abilities.
- Recognition of children's diverse strengths enables our lens to focus on hearing their voice.
- Valuing Diverse Strengths and Perspectives Equally
- Youth feel marginalized when their thoughts or ideas are discounted as "you don't understand."

# Recognizing Youth Leadership

- What does a leader look like?
  - High energy
  - Respected by peers
  - Socially, intuitively adept
  - Requires staff attention

# Group Work

Think of a challenging child you have worked with, then do the following:

1. Identify three to five strengths that this child possesses
2. What makes this child stand out?
3. What are some “leader actions” that they exhibit?
4. List some steps you can take to harness and build leadership skills.

Be prepared to share with the larger group

# Points to Ponder

- What good does it do us as youth workers to be able to recognize what leadership looks like in action?
- Thinking about the current structure of your after school program:
  - Three ways you can build opportunities for youth to practice these leadership skills
  - Three ways you can continue to foster these skills

# Making Small Tweaks

- What is one thing you will change in your own practice as a result of this session?
  - Remember, it does not have to be a big change, tiny tweaks along the way lead to greater program improvement over time.
  - Most activities can be easily implemented and have the potential to foster youth leadership and voice.
- By combining many of these strategies you can create group projects based on children's strengths.

# Resources and More Information:

- Bennis, W. (2003). *On Becoming a Leader*. Cambridge MA
- Bass, B.M. (1990). *From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision*. Organizational Dynamics
- Bateman, J. (2008) Georgia School Age Care Alliance
- Canzano, Anthony, & Scott (2016). *Filling in the Gaps*. Journal of Expanded Learning Opportunities. San Diego, CA.
- Maxwell, J. (2007). *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville, TN
- Whitaker, D. L. (2002). *Multiple Intelligences and After School Environments*, Nashville TN. School Age Notes
- CT After School Network: [www.ctncy.org](http://www.ctncy.org)