



NIFTY 9

OVERVIEW OF EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE

Exemplary Performance

The skills, attitude, and enthusiasm of staff is key to running a high-quality program. Providing opportunities for staff to learn new strategies, approaches, and “tricks of the trade” to be more effective when working with youth is essential to ensure growth and commitment.



Nifty 9 Overview

**Knowledge and
Information**

Review

**Walk Through The
Day**

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Nifty 9 Overview

Key Points

The purpose of the e-Book is to clarify the Nifty 9. When you have read this material you will have an understanding of the 9 key elements, the building blocks and the puzzle pieces of exemplary performance, and you will have a lens to look through to guide your work.

Terms/Glossary

Professionalism: Your attitude and behavior at work

Safety: Creating a safe space for kids and staff both physically and emotionally

The Trilogy: These three ingredients—managing the environment, behavior guidance, and discipline provide the backbone of a strong program that promotes learning

Direct and Tell vs. Question to Connection:
Ability to ask questions rather than give answers

Holistic Instruction: The pattern of a good lesson: Opening (Objective, Prior Knowledge); Content (Explain, Model, Demonstrate, Teachable Moments); and Closing (Review, Reflect, Debrief-with a Commitment)



Transitions: Ability to move from one activity or location to another effectively

Debrief: Moving an activity into a learning opportunity by talking about what was learned

Prior Knowledge

"Alex is so good at working with youth!"

What does it take to be good at working with youth? Why is it that some people just seem to relate to youth, while others struggle to gain their trust and confidence?

Think back to your own life. What were the characteristics of the people you connected with in a positive way? How did they interact with you? What things did they say and do that let you know they were an adult who cared about you?

As you identify those things, ask yourself how you do the same things with the youth you serve.

Brain Power



When speaking with a Kindergarten student recently I commented on how well he was working on a project. When I inquired how he was able to do such a great job he pointed to his Program Leader and remarked, "She said I was smart so I am!" Everything we do with youth influences them. Identifying how we can support them through our interactions with them is critical. The Nifty 9 helps you think through 9 essential vantage points to strengthen your work.

Introduction

The Nifty 9 identifies nine key considerations and understandings that youth leaders need in order to be successful with youth. These nine are: professionalism, safety, managing the environment, behavior guidance, discipline, direct and tell vs. questioning to connection, holistic instruction, transitions, and debriefing. These nine provide the foundation for exemplary performance.

Debrief

What are the skills and understandings you believe you should have to be successful? How does what you have read fit into those thoughts? Identify any thinking that was confirmed, tweaked, or an Aha!



Knowledge and Information

The Nifty 9 is a list of the nine essential elements that a Program Leader needs to understand to be successful in working with youth. These 9 are comprehensive and identified to help you strengthen your performance if you are a frontline staff member and how to support your staff if you are a Site Leader (Site Coordinator or Site Director). We will look at each of the nine separately.

Professionalism: Professionalism speaks to your approach to your work. Characteristics of a professional include owning one's own learning and professional development, and continually updating skills to ensure that the results achieved are the outcomes that program desires. Professionals follow these basics:

- Learn every aspect of your job as a learning leader. Start to finish, this will help you be effective in working with young people.
- When at work, speak and dress like an after-school professional. This probably means a staff shirt, khakis or dress jeans, closed-toe shoes, and a badge. Your overall appearance will influence how others see and respect you.
- Keep your supplies and materials in a neat and orderly way so you can access them easily.
- Take care to discover what needs to be done to make the after-school program exemplary and then do everything in your power to make that happen. Understand the needs and interests of all the stakeholders—students, other after-school staff, principals, teachers, parents, and members of the community.
- Use a tone in your speech and behavior that speaks of enthusiasm, cheerfulness, interest, and commitment, rather than anger, resentment, hostility or says “this is just a job.” Be careful to leave personal anxiety and issues out of the workplace.
- If you make a mistake, apologize, learn from it, and move forward. This will give students permission to do the same.
- Be level-headed. Know that when a student or parent challenges you, it is not personal. Listen to the message behind the tone and respond with respect. Learn the difference between the “WHO” and the “WHAT.”
- When you agree to do something—DO IT, and do it to the best of your ability and on time. Under-promise and over-deliver—help the people you work with learn to trust your word. Do more than is expected and always produce high quality work.
- Handle conflict at the lowest level. Talk out differences of opinion, being open to “seeing” things from another’s point of view.
- Respect confidentiality. Keep information about students, families, and other staff members private. Your position will allow you to have sensitive information—be a person that can be trusted with this information.



Safety



Programs need to be places where young people feel safe both physically and emotionally. Clear expectations for safety should be set so that everyone: youth, staff, school day, parents and other stakeholders understand the procedures and protocols that are in effect to promote safety. Promoting safety begins with setting clear agreements around safety and how each of the different environments that programs find themselves in will look, sound, and feel when everyone is safe. Other procedures that should be in effect are attendance checks when youth do not show up for program when you are expecting them, procedures for checking identification if you don't recognize who is picking the youth up, emergency procedures that are practiced and prepared for, and that you have a zero tolerance for bullying.

Managing the Environment

Out-of-school time programs occur in a number of different environments and learning how to manage each of these environments so that the environment is your ally is important. Understanding the space, its boundaries, its limitations, its advantages, its pitfalls, and so on makes this easier. Knowing your place in the environment also makes a difference. Utilizing scans (both visual and auditory), keeping youth in a line of sight, managing by walking around, and maintaining high energy throughout the program are key to managing the environment.

Behavior Guidance

Behavior Guidance is what we offer to youth to help them make good choices about the behaviors they exhibit. It is critical that youth understand what is expected of them, what is acceptable and appropriate behavior in a number of environments and situations. Begin with agreements—we encourage Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Have Fun. These big buckets take care of the majority of Maslow's Hierarchy of Need and help to create a space for learning. If you focus on these agreements (notice that they are stated in positive actions) and fleshing them out, really listing the behaviors you expect rather than the things you don't want to see. Remember that if you ask someone NOT to do something and you don't provide an alternative behavior that is appropriate, you will leave a vacuum, and vacuums will be filled, often by repeating the behavior you do not want. It is important to remind youth that when they make a poor choice, they are only one choice away from a better choice. Youth must be encouraged to make changes in the choices they make if those choices do not lead to positive results. If they are making good choices, then it is important to celebrate and acknowledge those achievements.



Discipline

Discipline is a pro-active way to help instill the value of self-discipline and self-responsibility in our youth. Punishment, on the other hand, is a reactive response to a situation which can escalate to make a point. The purpose of discipline in the after-school space is to help youth develop the skills they need to be successful. Discipline requires that clear expectations have been set, individual rewards and consequences have been defined, and a step by step discipline plan has been developed. Agreements set



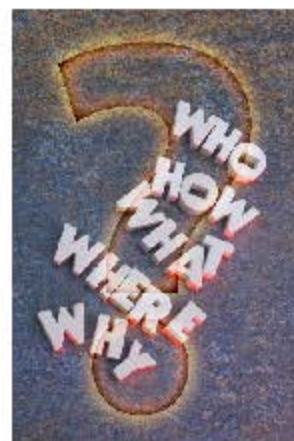
the clear expectations for behavior and should be universally understood by all stakeholders. Understanding discipline also means that leaders understand that the behavior youth demonstrates is a choice—a choice to follow agreements or a choice to ignore them. If youth has made a choice to ignore an agreement and as the leader you have had a conversation prior to this advising them that if they choose to ignore the agreement there will be a specific consequence, when this occurs, the consequence must be delivered. If you do not follow through on

this you will invite youth to challenge you more and more. In the challenge youth are trying to determine what the agreements really mean. Have you ever heard an adult in a warehouse store say to a child, 'If you don't stop this we're going home!'? Have you seen the adult say this on aisle 3, 6, 21, and 39 and then finally at the check stand? What you probably noticed is that only at the check stand does the youth change behavior. The reason is that this is the first time the youth understands that the consequence (going home) is a reality, because they will be leaving for home shortly. In discipline, it is essential to be impeccable with your word. If you are not going to follow through, then don't say that this is what you are going to do. If...then only works if the then occurs.

Direct and Tell vs. Question to Connection

As adults we tend to direct and tell young people what they should do. The difference between direct and tell is this. When you tell someone something, what you are doing is telling them the results you want to see. Examples would be—clean-up your room, do the dishes, or finish your homework. Direct usually occurs when the "tell" doesn't work. If I told you to clean-up your room and I check in on your room in an hour and nothing looks different, I can then direct you to clean-up your room by identifying each thing that you should do—make your bed, put your dirty clothes in the hamper, put your clean clothes away, and put your books on the bookshelf in alphabetical order. When you direct someone you not only tell them what to do but how to do it as well. The advantage for young people when you direct and tell is that when things don't work out, the youth can say, "I did what you said and it didn't work. It's not my problem and it's not my fault!"

Certainly there are times when direct and tell makes sense. When time is of the essence this is critical. When someone is brand new to a situation and has not a clue about how to do things, you might want to tell them what to do and how to do it. Otherwise it is important that you are creating buy-in and ownership so the youth are eager participants. To do this it is important to question to connection. Each person is unique and has a set of skills, talents and interests. When you direct and tell you do not engage this



unique aspect of a person, you instead determine that you know better than the person does what he/she should do to get the task done. When you ask questions, "What do you think? How do you see this working out? What supports would you need?" and so on, you are asking questions that will help youth think critically and make decisions. There is the adage that says, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Questioning to connection is teaching youth how to "fish" and as a result will lead to ownership as it helps youth to develop skills.

Holistic Instruction

Holistic instruction is a way to look at teaching and instructing youth. It is essential that youth have the baseline knowledge and information they need to apply the learning to projects, simulations and real-world explorations. We believe in the gradual release model which begins when the person with the most knowledge begins the instruction and then through hands-on, interactive activities, the learner becomes more proficient and eventually owns the learning themselves. C4K's holistic instruction model begins by looking at lesson design. There are three sections to the lesson: Opening, Content, and Closing. In the



Opening you state the objective (tell youth what you want them to learn) and activate prior knowledge (what do youth already know about this topic.) The Content section of the lesson plan follows an "I do," "We do," and "You do" model. In "I do" the leader models, demonstrates and explains the information. "We do," engages youth in additional modeling, demonstrating and explaining, and then, "You do," lets youth practice what they've learned in a controlled context (games, activities, projects). Note: youth will be able to work in an uncontrolled context where youth apply the skills they've learned to a project of their choice. During the "You do" phase it is essential that the leader circulates through the youth and takes advantage of the teaching moments that present themselves. A teaching moment is an organic moment (unplanned) in which learning has come together for at least one youth or group of youth. The leader calls for a time out so the youth can explain to his/her peers the learning and insight he/she has had. The third phase of the lesson is the Closing

which includes a Review (what did we do today), Reflection (so what, how can I use it) and Debrief (how will I use this information in the future in my personal and profession life). Remember that a student's professional life is learning

Orchestrating lessons around this holistic instruction model ensures that content is delivered in a meaningful way and the focus is on what the student learns and can apply. The activities that youth engage in should be hands-on and done with a partner or in a small group or team. The learning should be both instructional (you are teaching an identified topic with defined outcomes) and investigational (youth pose a question and a plan to find the solution to the question, and then implement that solution.) The Holistic Instruction model promotes the acquisition of 21st Century lifestyle skills which include:

- critical thinking and problem solving
- collaboration (listen and learn from others) and lead by influence
- agility and adaptability
- initiative and entrepreneurship
- accessing and analyzing information

- effective oral and written communication
- curiosity (asking good questions) and imagination.
- Holistic instruction is a tool to support learning.

Transitions

During the after-school program there are a number of transitions. A transition is the action of moving from one activity to another or one location to another. Transitions are not always easy. You will have youth who are "slow adapters" which is defined as a child who is slow to get started and slow to finish up. You must plan for these youth when you think of transitions. One of the successful strategies is to give them a "countdown" and keep them posted as to amount of time left before the transition begins. If you wonder if this strategy works or not, think about what happens when a football team has a 2 minutes warning called.

To manage successful transitions you must be very intentional. How should a transition look if it were executed flawlessly? Think this through. Get input from the youth and other staff members. Then schedule time in your planning to allow for this transition. Once you've completed a transition stop and ask the youth how well they think they did on this transition and to make suggestions as how to strengthen the transition.



Transitions are a very public face of the after-school program and it is essential for a variety of reasons that we are successful with transitions. Here are three of them: 1.) people will tend to judge the organization of your entire program based on what they see during transitions; 2.) the ability to transition smoothly is a skill that can be used throughout your life in any number of situations; 3.) closing one activity and opening another provides two essential bookends for youth.

Debrief

Debrief is a term that refers to asking questions and making connections between what is learned and one's life, and work (again, the work of youth is school). Debriefing can follow a number of protocols, but all are devised to help the youth make connections between the information presented and what they already know. It is through these connections that learning is strengthened. In a study of pre-schoolers with Sesame Street viewing, researchers learned the importance of debriefing the activity, if you want the learning to stick.

Bullet Points

The Nifty 9 is a lens to look at your own performance and the performance of staff that you supervise.

The Nifty 9 include:

- Professionalism
- Safety
- Managing the Environment
- Behavior Guidance

- Discipline
- Direct and Tell vs. Question to Connection
- Holistic Instruction
- Transitions
- Debrief

C4K Minute--Making It Real



Select one of the Nifty 9 areas that you believe you could strengthen. Take a look at this general descriptor and determine what specifically you would like to work on. Make a list of three things you might do to learn more about how to strengthen this skill. Consider asking someone you trust to provide feedback.

Debrief

What were your key learnings in this section? How will you apply them in your personal and professional life in the next 72 hours?



Review

Tricks of the Trade

Reviewing each of the nine areas provides you a framework for looking at your performance. For each area identify your strengths and weaknesses. Determine which area you would like to work on first and then chart a course.

Gem of the Day

Professionalism, safety, managing the environment, behavior guidance, and discipline provide the foundation for a successful after-school program. Although all of these 9 work together, it is challenging to make the other 4 work when you struggle with the first 5.

Important Take-A ways

In order to be exemplary performers, we need to have an array of skills and understandings to guide our work.

Troubleshooting

What if I am not able to determine how well I do in any these areas? What can I use to help me with this?

C4K has created a Nifty9 Rubric. This rubric has four categories—beginning, emerging, applying and integrating. All of the demonstrable behaviors for each category are placed in one of the columns. If you review the rubric you can highlight the things you demonstrate (if you're not sure, ask a trusted colleague to help you with this). When you see a behavior that is not highlighted, you can began to work on that behavior. Check out the Online Instruction videos that will help you in your quest. You can find the rubric in the Online Instruction section under Tools (for either Site Coordinator or Program Leader).



Best Practices

- Be responsible for your own professional development--make it your business to strengthen your performance.
- Look at each aspect of your program through the lens of the Nifty 9.
- To ensure that youth own their own learning, develop the skill of asking questions and question to connection.

FAQs

What is the single most important thing I can do strengthen my performance?

Since everyone who asks this question is at a different stage in development, this is not a one-size-fits-all answer. The most important thing you can do is really take a thoughtful look at your performance, determine what is most foundational to your development, and make goals around what you want to accomplish. Then every day work on what you want to improve. Celebrate your successes. Adjust when things have not gone so well.

Review

Key Learning

Since you have reviewed the material, ask yourself how you can translate the information into a learning for you, and then how will you practice that learning by implementing it or executing on a specific action. Think in terms of your personal and professional life. For example:

Personal: I have learned that I can be responsible for my own growth and development.

Professional: Learning requires the learner to make connections. I will do this with the youth in the after-school program.

Journal Entry



I did this well and celebrated by _____.

I did not do so well at _____, and I will strengthen my performance in the future by doing _____.

Debrief

Consider all that you have learned. What did you like? What did you dislike? How will you implement what you liked?

Universal

Regardless of your job or your content, the Nifty 9 apply professionalism, safety, managing your space, making positive choices for your own behavior, developing self-discipline, asking questions to ensure that you understand, learn what you need to know, making good transitions from one job to another and every day debrief, at least with yourself, what you liked and disliked, and go to work on what you disliked.

After-School

What works for you and your own development works well for youth as well. Consider how the Nifty 9 translates to them.

Positional

As a Program Leader learn every aspect of your job and develop the skills you need to be a positive role model for youth.

Walk Through the Day

Pre-Pre-Opening: During the Pre-Pre-Opening reflect on your professionalism. Ask yourself what you will do today to share your professionalism with the other people, both school day and after-school that you come into contact with.

Practical application: Make a list of three things you can do when you arrive on campus to demonstrate that you are a professional and understand your role on a school campus or in a club house.

Pre-Opening: Think through the importance of safety in your program. Set the tone for a safe place to be at 3:00 with your colleagues. Discuss anything that needs to be done to promote safety on your site.

Practical Application: Walk through the spaces that you will be occupying during your after-school program. Be sure that each area is safe and ready for youth.

Opening: During this segment of the program you have an opportunity to build relationships with the youth, not just some of the youth, but all of them. Many aspects of the Nifty 9 come into play during the Opening. Think through how these will integrate with one another.

Practical Application: Make a list of questions you will ask youth today during Opening that will promote the relationships you want to build with youth.



Rotations: During rotations you have an opportunity to apply holistic instruction, transitions, and debriefs, and how important it is to ask questions rather than direct and tell.

Practical Application: Select one of your rotations and determine how you will strengthen it. Perhaps if you select homework, you will want to focus on questioning. Perhaps if you select physical activity you will focus on holistic instruction and debriefing. If you select enrichment, you may want to select transitioning.

Closing: The Closing is the final transition of the day. It is transitioning youth from your program to home. Setting the youth up for a good evening can be done by sharing positive feedback with the parent/caregiver.

Practical Application: Plan your transition to home activities. Make a list of all your students and determine how you will specifically speak to each parent at least one time each week. Offer parents a compliment or praise for their student.