

# PROFESSIONALISM BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL AND MENTOR FOR YOUTH

## Professionalism

Professionalism is not about the clothes you wear or the title you have—it is about accepting responsibility for your choices, attitude, and behavior and being a positive role model and mentor for youth.



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## Professionalism

### Key Points

The purpose of this e-Book is to provide you with information about professionalism and how that applies to your work in the after-school program. As a role model for youth, understanding your professional role and your circle of influence is essential. As a member of an after-school staff you must be a bridge between the school day and after-school, after-school and families, and of course, for youth themselves. You will have a deeper understanding of what professionalism means for your behavior after reading this e-Book.

### **Terms/Glossary**

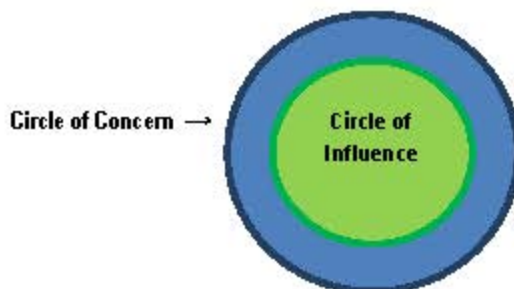
**Professionalism:** Professionalism is the competency and capacity to do the job you have been hired to do, and be a positive role model for others, especially the youth you work with in this case. Professionalism means accepting this mindset:

I am responsible for my own performance. If I do my best and am open to learning about how to strengthen my performance, there is no need to defend, deflect, rationalize, or explain. I can accept the input and feedback with “thank you” and then make the decision of how to apply the information.



**Role Model:** A role model is someone who demonstrates the behaviors that others will want to emulate. A positive role model has a positive effect on others, while a negative role model has the opposite effect.

**Circle of Influence:** Each person has a circle of influence that they assert sway over. Surrounding the circle of influence is a circle of concern. By focusing on the circle of influence you can reduce the size of the circle of concern.



**Levels of Initiative:** Initiative refers to the resourcefulness of a person to get a task done. The levels of initiative form the range of initiative from none to autonomy. They include:

1. Wait to be told
2. Ask permission

3. Offer a suggestion
4. I intend to...
5. Do it and report immediately
6. Do it and report periodically
7. Do it

### **Prior Knowledge**

What do you know about professionalism? Do you think that it is a “look” or about professional dress—suit, tie, or stilletos? Do you think it is about having a particular job—carpenters are not professional but doctors are professional? Do you think that professionalism ties to a level of education? Professionals may have some of these characteristics, but professionalism refers to someone who adheres to a high standard of behavior, accepts responsibility for their own improvement, and works to communicate effectively with others. In after-school it is also expected that a professional will be a positive role model and mentor for the youth they work with.



### **Brain Power**

Think back on the people you have known that meet the definition of professionalism that is written above. Who were they? What were the jobs they had? In what ways were they professional in how they behaved, and in how they interacted with you and others? What simple things do you do each day to demonstrate that you are an after-school professional?

### **Introduction**

While professionalism is not just your attire, it does play a part in helping others perceive you as professional. While professionalism is not about your level of schooling, it is supported by your level of education (which does not always have anything to do with formal education, but rather experience and expertise). While professionalism is not about the position you have, it is about the initiative you show while doing your work, your attention to detail, and seeing to it that you responsibly execute each and every day. This e-Book focuses on professionalism in the after-school arena.

### **Debrief**

Consider what you think about professionalism. What of the information presented above dovetails with your notion of professionalism? What doesn't? Think about your own behavior. What one thing could you do in the next 72 hours to elevate your level of professionalism?



## Knowledge and Information

### The Role of a Professional

Here are some tips about what it takes to be an effective after-school professional.

- Learn every aspect of your job.
- When at work, speak and dress like an after-school professional. Your overall appearance will influence how others see and respect you.
- Keep your supplies and materials organized and easy to find.
- Understand the expectations of your position.
- 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.
- Be level-headed. Listen to the message behind the tone, and respond with respect.
- When you agree to do something—DO IT, do it to the best of your ability, and on time.
- Do more than is expected, and always produce high quality work.
- Handle conflict at the lowest level.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Demonstrate respect and responsibility in all you do.



### Professionals Accept the Responsibility of Improving Performance and Learning

As a member of an after-school team, you will have many opportunities to participate in training and other staff development. While your attendance may be mandated, your attention is a choice that only you can make. Being present for the training means both showing up (arriving on time), choosing to be present (ready to fully participate), and accepting responsibility for learning something that will support your work with students.

One of the best ways to ensure professional growth is to routinely reflect on the work that you do with young people. This will help you to determine what skills you need to strengthen. Reflection is a cluster of skills that can become a habit as you practice them. Part of reflection is being able to use metacognition, the ability to think about one's own thinking and performance, in such a way that you can regulate and improve that thinking and performance. Reflection on your performance will give you intellectual ownership of yourself and your own abilities. It will require that you "stand back and observe your performance," ask



yourself questions, put together all that happened: the interactions, the facts, the ideas and the experiences, and make meaning of it so you can learn from those experiences. “Being able to learn from experience gives us the power to influence the meaning and impact of things that we do or that happen to us. It also increases our capacity to influence subsequent experiences. It puts us in charge. It does this by providing a clearer understanding of the world, a heightened sense of who we are

and can be, and an increased capacity and inclination to empower others.”<sup>1</sup>

Some questions that might guide your reflection include:

1. What occurred this week that I am particularly proud of?
2. What was the most challenging thing that occurred this week?
3. What occurred this week that I would like to “redo”?
4. If there is something I could change, what would it be? If the change was made, how would the results be different?
5. What did I learn this week that I can apply in the future?
6. Did I take a risk this week? How did it turn out?
7. When this week was I particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with my performance. What does that tell me about myself?
8. What insights did I have this week? How will I use that to guide my performance next week?

Being a learner and owning your own continuous improvement, is one of the keys to being an after-school professional. The final step of the reflection process is to make a commitment to take action, and set a time frame for taking that action. For example, I will try that by Wednesday of next week. The best ideas in the world without a commitment to action are nothing more than a good idea wasted.

### **Professionals Take Care to Communicate Effectively**

Practicing clear communication is another key to what it means to be a highly-qualified after-school professional. Communication is a two-way street. You must be both an intentional speaker and an empathetic listener. It is also important when you are communicating to know your audience whether that be parents, other after-school staff, school day staff, school administrators, and most importantly, youth. Finally, you need to understand the cycle of communication, and the importance of checking to be sure that what you intended to communicate is the message that was received.

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<sup>1</sup> Parrillo, Lorraine. How to Guide for Reflection. National Service Learning Collaborative. [www.learningtogive.org/doc/how2guide.doc](http://www.learningtogive.org/doc/how2guide.doc) 3-13-2010.

### As the intentional speaker:

- Before you speak, figure out what you want to say so you minimize the possibility of misunderstanding. Know what you want the end result of your communication to be. Organize everything you will say around this.
- Keep your message straightforward and simple. Layer the details and supporting information in a sequential way to help the listener to track the conversation. Remember to say only what you need to say to get your point across.
- Timing is everything. Sometimes you have no options, but when you do, pay attention to what is going on, and pick the right time to communicate. If you can, schedule a time for the conversation when everyone is fresh.
- Make eye contact with the person you are talking with, and pay attention to the person's body language.
- Make space to check for understanding.



### As the empathetic listener:

- Be attentive. Listen empathetically, as if the person speaking was making a point or sharing information about your experience. See it from the vantage point of the speaker.
  - Make eye contact with the speaker, and nod to show that you are hearing the message.
  - Confirm what you have heard by rephrasing the communication. Try to keep judgment out of your words; simply restate what you have heard.



**Sometimes communication is not one on one, but is, instead, you speaking to a group of people. If you are communicating to an audience, it is important that you know who the audience is.**

- Make eye contact with your audience. It will help them to stay with you.
- Your communication should target the interest, knowledge base, and background of the audience you are speaking to. It should be appropriate to who the audience is.
- Use language that is appropriate for the audience. It is easy to speak "after-school" and lose the people you are speaking to.

### Cycle of Communication

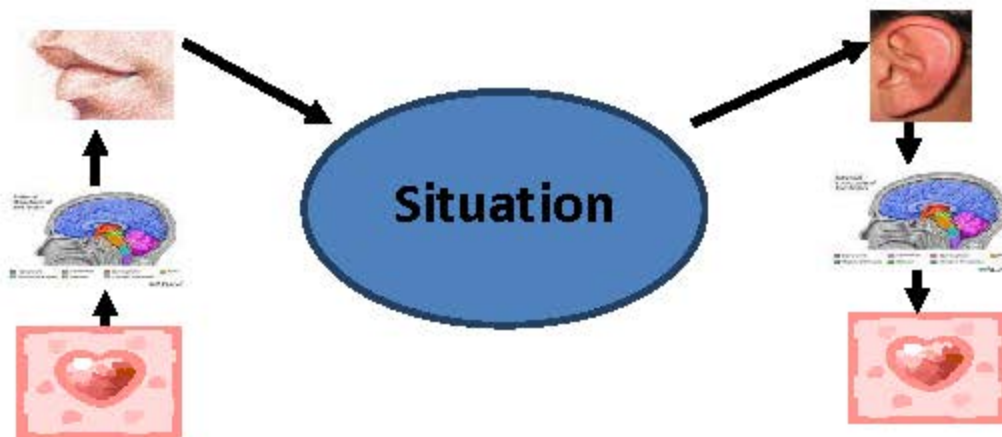
Communication is an attempt to share what one person is thinking and feeling with another person or group of people. Communication is made up of words to be sure, but it is also made up of body language, the tone of the words being said, and the ability of the person to connect with the person he/she is speaking to. In fact if we accept the findings of the Mehrabian's study on communication, we would find that the message is transferred in this way:



- 7% happens in spoken words.
- 38% happens through voice tone.
- 55% happens via general body language.”<sup>2</sup>

This study points out how important it is to understand how much is communicated by things other than words. Be conscious of your tone and body language.

The Cycle of Communication is further complicated by the fact that after the speaker feels the need to communicate, and then translates those feeling into words and utters them, those words go into a situation, a circumstance, in which the person who is hearing the words resides. As the speaker, you can only hope to know what that situation is by having built a relationship with the person who is listening to you. Once the words leave your mouth, they roll around in the situation, and then make their way to the person’s ears, into the brain, and then into the heart for interpretation. It is no wonder that communication often falls short of a shared understanding between the speaker and the listener.



### Levels of Initiative

Understanding the Levels of Initiative is critical. As a professional, it is important that you understand which level of initiative is required in each situation. Nothing can replace human judgment and the ability of each human being to be resourceful and organized in his/her effort to effectively get the job done. The Levels of Initiative are described in Stephen Covey's book The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit. Initiative is not an either-or-proposition but rather a continuum of initiative. The key question for a professional is, "What is the best course of action at this moment?"

**Level 1:** The lowest level is "Wait to be Told." At this level a person is not behaving in a professional manner. He/she will only do what is asked of them, and if it doesn't work out they will respond with, "I just did what you told me to do," and believe they are not responsible in any way for the outcome.

<sup>2</sup> Mehrabian, Albert. "Inference of Attitudes from Nonverbal Communication in Two Channels," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 3, June 1967, pp. 248-258  
[http://changingminds.org/explanations/behaviors/body\\_language/mehrabian.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/behaviors/body_language/mehrabian.htm) 3-13-2010

**Level 2** is “Ask for Permission.” This is also not a level of professionalism. As a new staff member it is appropriate to ask, but once you’ve been around for a while, to ask about the routine demonstrates an unwillingness to accept responsibility for the outcome. An example of this would be asking permission to distribute snack at 2:45 when it clearly states that this is the time in the schedule, and you have been doing so for 6 weeks.

**Level 3** is “Offering a Suggestion.” At this level you can find the beginning signs of professionalism. The person has thought things through, considered what is going on, offered an alternative or recommended solution, and is willing to demonstrate responsibility for the outcome.

**Level 4** is “I Intend to...” This level is exactly where you should be as an after-school professional unless you are confronted with an emergency. At this level you have absolutely considered the options, and determined which option will most likely lead to success. You would present your course of action to your supervisor to ensure that you are on the right path. It is quite likely that your supervisor will have information and/or experience you have not had. By sharing your intentions with them, you are inviting them to share their expertise, and offer any guidance that is needed. You have accepted the responsibility of the action while you are offering the respect to your supervisor by asking for an opinion.

**Level 5** is “Do It and Report Immediately.” In the case of an emergency, you will want to employ this level of initiative. If it is necessary to call 911, it would be foolish to contact your supervisor for permission. However, once the emergency is under control, it is important that you inform your supervisor.

**Levels 6 and 7**, while appropriate for you in your personal life, may not be appropriate in your professional life. You will use these levels if it is appropriate, but it is important that you have a clear understanding that this is acceptable to your employer.

### **Bullet Points**

- Professionals learn every aspect of the job they have.
- Professionals accept responsibility for their own learning.
- Professionals understand the Cycle of Communication, and know that it is important to both speak and listen from the heart.
- Professionals understand the levels of initiative and ask the question, “What is the best option?” when deciding what to do.

### **C4K Minute—Making It Real**

Think about someone you recently met that made a good impression on you. What were your first thoughts?

- “This is a person who likes people”
- “This is a person who is a hard worker”



- "This is a person who I would like to get to know better."

When you think about that person, look at the traits of a professional described above. Which ones, if any, would you use to describe your first impression? What do you think this person thought about you? Which of the traits of a professional do you embody?

### **Debrief**

What are your key learning's from the material you have read about professionalism in the e-Book? How will you use these key learning's to change your behavior? What commitment are you making to implement your learning in the next 72 hours?



## Review

### Tricks of the Trade

Ask yourself, “What is the most effective action to take in each situation?” Ask yourself if the steps you are taking are in the best interest of the youth you are working with. These two questions will serve as a litmus test for making good decisions.

### Gem of the Day

If you make a poor decision remember that you are only one decision away from a decision that will demonstrate your professionalism.

### Important Take-A ways

Professionalism launches you on a path of self-reflection and continuous improvement. It will affect both your personal and professional life.

### Troubleshooting

I work with someone who is anything but professional. What do I do to let this person know what I think in a professional manner?

Unfortunately not everyone we work with behaves professionally. The first step in dealing with this situation is to handle it at the lowest level, which means avoiding criticizing them to someone else. Go to the person with the intent of understanding what is going on rather than unloading your concerns and understanding of the situation on them. Stephen Covey tells a story of being on a subway in New



York when 2 children enter the car along with their father. The father seems to be ignoring the children as they create chaos in the car. Finally Covey speaks to the father as respectfully as possible about getting his children under control. The father looks at him and states, “I know I should do something, but we just left the hospital where my wife and their mother just

died and I don’t know what to do about any of this.” Needless to say once Covey understood the situation his perception of what he should do changed. So begin by trying to understand what is going on. Then if you believe you should, share how the person’s decisions are affecting you and the youth in the program. Ask if you can support them in making a change. If this conversation doesn’t lead to change, you can repeat it or share your concern with your supervisor.

### Best Practices

- Dress like a professional in a way that is appropriate for your job (Program Leaders need to be in company shirts, with badges, closed toed shoes, and appropriate skirt, pants, or shorts.)
- Behave in a respectful and responsible manner.
- Practice initiative and resourcefulness within limits.

### FAQ's

What if I understand the Cycle of Communication, but others don't? How do I share my knowledge with them?

Share with them the diagram. Explain that you are interested in learning to communicate more effectively and would like their help. Ask them to give you feedback on how well you're doing. You may discover as they help you they will also strengthen their own communication skills. Being accountability partners with one another could move the agenda forward even more quickly.

### Universal

No matter what job you do, if you consider yourself a professional, you will do the job with pride and intentionality. If you only have a job for a small amount of time you should do it to the best of your ability and hold your head high.

### After-School

Part time after-school staff come and go for a variety of reasons. While you are working as an after-school professional step up and give it your full effort. This will help you develop a deeper understanding of professionalism.



### Positional

As a Program Leader it is important that you take seriously the importance of being a positive role model. The youth you lead are looking for role models, and it is one of the most important aspects of your job.

### Review

In your journal, write about the information you are taking away from this content. Highlight your key learning's.

### 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 being responsible and respectful in all aspects of my life is part of embracing the characteristics of professionalism.

**Professional:** I want to remember that I have a circle of influence and if I want to expand that circle I must intentionally focus on what I can change and influence.

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_.



## Walk Through the Day

### The Openings

#### **Pre-Pre-Opening**

During Pre-Pre-Opening you have the opportunity to get your professionalism mind-set in place. Think through your entire day on your way to work. Think about how you will take advantage of every opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism.

#### **Practical Application:**

Speak to each person you meet on your way from the parking lot to your meeting place. Smile and look them directly in the eye. Let them know by your behavior that you are happy to be at work and looking forward to a terrific day.

#### **Pre-Opening:**

The Pre-Opening is time to prepare for the day, and set a positive tone for the work you will do. Enthusiasm and positive energy are contagious. Every member of the team contributes to the success of your program.

#### **Practical Application:**

Greet all of your colleagues. See if there is anything you can do to help them get ready. Demonstrate a positive attitude. You can create a positive influence for the whole team by the behavior you demonstrate.

#### **Opening:**

During the Opening you are having the first interaction with the students. Demonstrate to them that you are a professional by accepting responsibility for what happens during the Opening while you are showing respect to your fellow staff members, and each of the youth in the program.

#### **Practical Application:**

Be fully present for students. Greet each one with a welcoming smile. Check in with each of them to be sure they are ready for a positive program day.

#### **Rotations:**

Rotations require you to be prepared and to manage transitions as well as lessons, behavior guidance, managing the environment, paying attention to safety, holistic instruction, debriefing, and of course, guiding youth through questions. It is important that you do all of this through the lens of a professional.

#### **Practical Application:**

Have your supplies organized for easy distribution and use. Engage the youth in your program in helping you lead the program. Demonstrate professional behavior to model appropriate behavior for them. Keep everything moving forward, and insist that everyone is respectful to one another.

#### **Closing:**

At the end of the day, you have an opportunity to demonstrate professionalism to the parents or caregivers who pick youth up from the program. If your youth walk home after signing themselves out,

you have the opportunity to provide one last positive role modeling image. Professionalism should permeate all of your actions during the day, so keep focused as the day comes to an end.

**Practical Application:**

Greet parents and caregivers with a smile, and an inquiry about how their day went. Share a positive word with them about the student. If youth go home on their own, let them know you are glad they attended program today, and you are looking forward to tomorrow.





## Connect to Online Instruction

Program Leader Online Instruction Support

### Safety

#### ➤ KEY INDICATOR: Promoting Well Being

- **Safety**

Mini #85	Lock Downs
Mini #112	Fire Drills
Mini #113	Earthquake Drills
Mini #113	Earthquake

- **Supervision**

Mini #7	Line of Sight
Mini #131	Maslow's Hierarchy
Mini #51	Supporting Behavior – Eye Contact
Mini #52	Supporting Behavior – Scans and Proximity
Mini #53	Setting Agreements
Mini #84	Progressive Discipline
Mini #111	Consequences and Rewards
Mini #142	Supporting Behavior Choices—Manage By Walking Around
Mini #150	Supporting Behavior—Manage By Walking Around



Site Coordinator Online Instruction Support

#### ➤ KEY INDICATOR: Coaching

Mini #2	Accountability Model
Mini #3	Foundational Truths
Mini #8	Art of Delegation
Mini #13	Coaching – Directive and Conversations
Mini #15	Ownership Model
Mini #16	Teamwork
Mini #17	Goal Setting
Mini #19	Responsibility
Mini #23	Warm Fuzzies File

Mini #24	Observations
Mini #25	Non-Negotiables—Coachables
Mini #26	Psychological Warfare
Mini #42	Formal Observations
Mini #45	Keeping Notes—Follow Through
Mini #54	Work Plan
Mini #59	Scheduling Planning for PL's
Mini #60	Meeting with Supervisors
Mini #82	Hiring Right Staff
Mini #85	Supporting PL's #1
Mini #86	Supporting PL's #2
Mini #87	Supporting PL's #3
Mini #138	So, How Are You Doing?
Mini #139	Fail Forward
Mini #146	Changing Habits
Mini #147	Communication Continuum
Module #14	Leading vs. Managing
Lesson #13	Coaching Staff, Side-By-Side
Lesson #14	Coaching Conversations
Class #1	Arc of Staff Development
Class #10	Staff Development
Class #13	Performance Rubrics