

Professionalism eBook--Excerpt

The Nifty 9 includes the 9 areas of practice and performance C4K believes is important when striving for excellence. Professionalism—owning your own learning and growth, as well as successes and mistakes, is essential for the positive role model and mentor for youth. Following is an excerpt from the eBook on Professionalism which shares some characteristics of a “professional”.

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 afterschool 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 afterschool program exemplary and then do everything in your power to make that happen. Understand the needs and interests of all of the stakeholders—students, other afterschool staff, principals, teachers, parents, 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.

