

**Communications Strategies to Refine the Afterschool Program and
Accommodate Students' Needs and Interests**

Introduction

This is the second year for our 21st century afterschool program for 8th graders at Providence Middle School in Chesterfield County. We meet on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 2:10-5:00. Our program consists of enrichment through 4-H and Parks and Recreation, an on-line class for 1 high school credit called Career Awareness, and tutoring mainly in math and language arts but also science and civics when needed.

Our staff of 10 consists of two Providence teachers (one of which is our Site and Enrichment Coordinator), two teacher assistants, a language arts tutor, a math tutor, an on-line teacher, 4-H Coordinator, and a Parks and Rec Coordinator. One of the school secretaries also works with us. The two eighth grade teachers and two Instructional assistants are our liaisons with the eighth grade teachers especially for math and language arts. As the Project Coordinator, I work closely with the eighth grade guidance counselor, eighth grade principal and Dr. Wosnock, school principal. I am in touch with our grant writer, Susan Dandridge- MacFarland, frequently for information and advice.

Slide 2—We use various surveys and inventories throughout the year to help us plan, evaluate and change what we need to do to be a successful program.

Slides 3-5—After the first semester, we mail surveys to the parents and electronically send surveys to teachers and students. Students' grades after the second grading period are observed and last year more emphasis was placed on preparing students for the Math SOLs and bringing up their math grades. When the 8th grade principal and I met recently, she felt that math and language arts needed to be emphasized in tutoring. We have rearranged the schedule to allow at least 40 minutes instead of 30 minutes for tutoring.

Slides 6-9—We begin the year by asking our students to complete surveys on hobbies, career and personal interests and extracurricular activities. From these results, the PASS staff tries to plan activities and field trips that address a lot of these interests.

Slides 10-11—We meet with students in small groups in the first week and together establish rules, guidelines and consequences. A final copy is signed by the student, a staff member and sent home to be signed by a parent.

Slide 10—Team Building Activities Team Building Activities begin the first week of PASS, which helps all of us, staff and students, get to know one another. These culminated this year in a field trip to Laser Quest for all of the students and staff.

Slides 13-16—Tutoring There are three teachers who tutor in math and language arts and if needed in the areas of science and civics. (One teacher shares her time with both groups.) This year for the first time, eighth graders have to pass four core subjects and an elective to continue to ninth grade. We have at least 40 minutes of tutoring each of the three days.

Slide 17—On-line Class Our on-line course, Career Explorations, meets for forty minutes twice a week. Power point presentations are part of their grade. Before beginning this course, students explored the websites of Virginia View and Virginia Wizard. Because we do not have enough hours

through the PASS program to complete this on-line class by the end of the school year, other career programs and activities experienced in PASS will be a part of the completion of this class.

Slide 19—Career Enrichment These as well as other classes and activities help to introduce students to different jobs and the college atmosphere. We visit both John Tyler Community College Campuses as well as experience college life through a VCU basketball game. (The VCU Rams and Providence Rams have the same mascot.) Parents were included in our trip to the basketball game and we are planning a parent, student and staff field trip to a Squirrels' Game.

Slides 20-24—Parks and Recreation We have a Parks and Recreation Coordinator, Leslie Keller, with us every day and she plans many wonderful activities and speakers both for our school year and summer program. Students are currently experiencing a fitness program through a fitness instructor in Chesterfield County. She will have four sessions at Providence Middle and we will visit her gym for a fifth session.

Slides 25-26—Schedules We have tried two schedules this year and our current one emphasizes more tutoring and smaller groups for all sessions. Each week a new schedule is printed highlighting the different activities for that week.

Slide 27-Staff Meetings Staff meetings are held once a month on the third Monday (usually) at 2:15 to allow for the Providence teachers, assistants, and the 8th grade principal to attend. We discuss upcoming events, activities, students' needs and eighth grade teachers' concerns about their students in PASS. We are constantly looking for ways to make the PASS program more successful and motivating for our students.

Slide 28—Parent Newsletter We mail a newsletter once a month to parents, highlighting our activities for that month and mentioning upcoming events for the following month.

Slides 30-32—4-H 4-H of the Virginia Extension Service has been a great co-applicant and partner for our program. Bethany Eigel, Chesterfield 4-H Coordinator and Jennifer Farrow, 4-H Technician, continue to provide activities and speakers for our program. They are a part of our monthly staff meetings and both 4-H and Parks and Rec coordinate our enrichment activities together.

Slides 33-34—Police Department Chesterfield County Police Department is another important partner with our program. They often coordinate their activities through our Parks and Recreation Dept.

Slides 35-36-- Kidz r Cookin Class Cooking was one of the top three interest choices of our students. There are five classes that teach students how to cook healthy meals on a strict budget. Wendy Huett, our chef, was a former middle school teacher who has a passion for teaching healthy cooking and eating habits to students. Students receive a recipe book of the entree's they made and a certificate of achievement for completing the class.

Slides 37-39—FeedMore Virginia Food Bank FeedMore provides a healthy snack, juice, milk and dinner each day. This is one of the biggest motivating factors for consistency of attendance by our students. We currently have 54 students enrolled in our program and 46% of them have attended 75% of the total number of days (45) so far.

Slide 40—Our students are transported home by three buses around 5:00 in the afternoon.

Slides 41-42—Adult Education Part of our grant provides tuition for 10% of our parents who want to take GED or Adult Classes at the Chesterfield Adult Education Center. We currently have two parents who are taking classes—in Excel, Basic Computer Skills and Windows 7. Two other parents

signed up but one class didn't meet and the other parent could not get transportation to the class. Last year we had five parents who completed Adult Ed. Classes successfully.

Slide 43-46 Service Projects Our staff feels it's important for our students to have the opportunity to give back to their community by doing service projects periodically. We normally take 16 students to an elementary school to work with two classrooms of four year olds. The elementary teachers, their students and our students really enjoy their time of sharing.

Making cards for special occasions for our troops and for a nursing home has been another service project that students have been enthusiastic about.

Slide 47—Relate 2 U Program Two Prevention Specialists from Chesterfield Mental Health Dept., Karl Kalber and Robin Jones, provide 5 lessons on positive relationship building with family, friends and boy-girl relationships. Robin developed the program about six years ago for high school students but it has worked well for our eighth graders.

Slides 48-50—PASS Activities Slide 51—Scott Males, the PASS Site and Enrichment Coordinator, teaches computer classes for Providence and is currently taking classes for a degree in Administration. He provides a vital part to our program by knowing the students and eighth grade teachers and acting as a liaison for us. He also keeps our statistics for our grant objectives current.

Slide 52—PASS Brochure

Our brochure is a very important communication tool, providing information to students, teachers, parents and community leaders. We give one of these to every 7th grader in the spring as well as have them available with the secretary in the office. These can also be passed along to others as we encounter people from organizations and businesses.

I talked to two individuals involved in two organizations, one that provides jobs and help to homeless high school seniors in the city of Richmond, and the other that provides jobs to disabled young people. Both of these influential people said that it is of primary importance to publicize our 21st Century After School Programs through the media for the purpose of sustaining our programs for the future. Each of our schools should have a person who is in charge of PR for the school. This person is an excellent resource to let others know what your 21st Century Afterschool Program is doing. I am always talking to others about my job and my husband also gives me names of people who are interested in talking and working with our students. Thank you for your attention at the very end of our conference. I will be glad to talk to anyone with questions or you can certainly e-mail me.