



**Afterschool Guide to  
Building  
Relationships  
and Routines**



New Hampshire  
Afterschool Network

NATIONAL

**AfterSchool**  
ASSOCIATION



**Introduction** 02

**Activities for Getting to Know  
Each Other** 05

**Activities for Fostering  
Relationships** 13

**Activities for Building Routines** 21

**References** 24

**“Young people can thrive when they feel safe and supported to learn and lead” (Ramasmwamy, McGovern, and Akiva, 2013, p. 6). As an afterschool professional, you play an important role in creating quality programs.**

Providing youth with “safe, supportive relationships and a positive emotional climate” (Palmer, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 2009, p. 8) is imperative for developing the program quality that we know makes a difference for kids. **The Afterschool Guide to Building Relationships and Routines helps afterschool practitioners create safe, supportive environments through program activities that build relationships and routines.**

This Guide supports NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Content Areas 2 -Learning Environments and Curriculum, 4 – Interactions with Children and Youth, and 5 – Youth Engagement.

## **Building Relationships**

**As social beings, relationships are the cornerstone of youth’s connection to society and the world. Youth develop relationships in all facets of life, in their families, communities, school, teams and social groups, and their afterschool programs. They might develop relationships with anyone they cross paths with; those older, younger, the same age, of different cultural backgrounds, from various neighborhoods, or across gender identities. The relationships they cultivate impact their mental health and well-being. Positive relationships provide a sense of comfort and security and self-confidence that influence their effectiveness to thrive in a social world. This sense of comfort and**

**security helps relieve stress to enhance their ability to focus and be more productive.**

Building relationships might be thought of as building friendships. However, it goes deeper than that. It is about making personal, meaningful connections with others, learning how to effectively engage with others in a group, and taking risks to engage with others we don’t know, willingly share about ourselves, and connect in new settings. According to CASEL (2019), building relationships is one component in fostering healthy and valuable relationships, along with communication, social engagement, and teamwork.

Trust and respect are the foundation to building relationships and can make or break a relationship. All aspects of building relationships ultimately reflect on trust and respect. The following intentions rely on trust and respect to build relationships:

- Engage with others in a genuine and positive manner
- Be an active communicator in both listening to and expressing ideas
- Be mindful of others and their feelings and current situations
- Be mindful of yourself and how your words can be perceived
- Show interest in learning more about others by asking questions and remembering the important things they told you
- Welcome and accept diverse people and opinions

- Be open to receiving and providing constructive feedback
- Show others your appreciation
- Convey kindness, empathy, and understanding

## Building Routines

**A routine is the sequence of steps regularly performed in completing a task or a habitual process for completing a procedure. Routines exist in every aspect of our lives. You likely have developed a series of routines in your afterschool program. If you feel you have not, reflect on the daily operation of your program. You may have established routines without intentionally doing so.**

Just as relationships can instill a feeling of comfort and security, so too can routines. Routine gives us predictability in knowing what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and how to do it. This predictability in turn can create a sense of ease and lessen stress. If major change happens that disrupts our daily order, routines can provide stability as we deal with the change.

The use of routines in afterschool programs not only establishes program procedures, but also sets behavior expectations. When youth know what needs to be done and the parameters in which to do it, they can focus on the task instead of engaging in undesired behavior. This means a more efficient learning environment as you spend less time managing behaviors and more time supporting fun, engaging learning activities. In addition to setting behavior expectations, routines can impact youth development and well-being. Routines foster responsibility and self-management skills that enhance youth's independence.

## Putting It Into Practice

**Within this guide, you will find a variety of activities that focus on youth learning more about each other and fostering their relationships as well as ideas for implementing program procedures to build routines.**

An ideal time of year to implement these activities is the beginning of the program year when everyone and



everything is fresh and new. However, relationship building is constant and on-going. New routines can be established at any time and existing routines updated to meet changing needs. Therefore, it is encouraged that you use these activities throughout the program year so youth continue developing and deepening their relationships. As you implement these activities and others to support building routines and relationships, consider the following tips.

- Encourage youth to incorporate the intentions listed in the Building Relationships section each and every day to build new relationships and care for existing ones.

- It is important for youth to build relationships with program leaders as well as other youth. Put in the time to develop positive relationships with youth to ensure their trust and respect.
- Program leaders and youth should give their undivided attention and ignore distractions in order to be present when with others. Save the moment for another time if the distractions are too great to be present.
- Model how to effectively build relationships through your actions with youth and staff.
- Make time for youth to build relationships with each other, both at the start of your program year and throughout because relationship building never stops.
- Recognize the unique characteristics of your program and the youth in the program and establish routines that accommodate both.
- Make sure routines are simple and easy to understand so they don't require much direction after they are established.
- Clearly communicate routines, both verbally and in writing.

## Inclusive Practices

**As you implement the activities in this guide, consider ways to make them inclusive of all youth ability levels, including those with visual impairments, hearing impairments, and intellectual and physical disabilities.**

Always make the following part of your routine practices:

- Allow youth to move at the pace and intensity level at which they are comfortable.
- Make sure movements can be completed by all youth and adapt movement to youth's physical abilities.
- Encourage youth to stand, sit, and perform movements during activities based on their comfort levels.
- Ask youth with sensory limitations about approaches to include them in the activity.
- If you are uncertain how to modify an activity to ensure it is inclusive, ask youth for their thoughts on approaches that work for them.





## PART ONE

# Activities for Getting to Know Each Other

## Name Game

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will become more familiar with the names of other youth in the program as they play a ball-tossing game.

**Materials Needed:**

Ball

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and explain that they will practice becoming more familiar with each other's names. Explain that one youth will toss a ball to another. As they toss the ball, they will state their name and the name of the youth they are tossing the ball to. Have the group determine a way to pass the ball to each other, such as a bounce pass, under-the-leg pass, or overhead pass, making sure the method can be completed by youth of all abilities. Provide a ball to one youth and begin the game. Continue play until each youth has taken a turn.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

- If youth have difficulty tossing and catching a ball, Have them simply state their name and the name of another youth in the group without tossing a ball.
- Make the activity more difficult by incorporating two or more balls.
- If youth are familiar with each other's names, have them choose a favorites category, such as favorite sport. Invite youth to share their favorites before playing the game.

## Tell Me About Yourself String Game

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will introduce themselves in a large group setting and evaluate what information about themselves they want to share in their introductions.

**Materials Needed:**

- String or yarn
- Scissors

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and have each cut a one-foot length of string for themselves. Invite them to take turns introducing themselves by telling interesting facts and information about themselves as they slowly wind the string around their index fingers. Encourage youth to continue talking as long as it takes to wind the string around their fingers.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

- Have youth cut the string in varying lengths, from a few inches to a few feet, so each introduction will vary in length according to the length of the string.
- If the group is large, have a few youth conduct their introductions each day over several days.

## Commonalities

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will engage in conversation with a partner to share information about themselves and identify commonalities and differences they share with their partner.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing utensils

**Directions:**

Invite youth to divide into partners to learn more about each other. As each set of partners discuss themselves and their interests, encourage them to identify three things they have in common and three things that differentiate them. Invite each set of partners to create a chart with two columns, one labeled "Commonalities" and one labeled "Differences" and write their identified commonalities and differences in the corresponding columns. Encourage youth to change partners and repeat the activity with their new partners. Invite

youth to share and discuss their charts with the group when completed.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

- Encourage younger youth to draw pictures depicting their commonalities and differences, instead of writing.
- Encourage older youth to create Venn diagrams, instead of charts, to illustrate the commonalities and differences.

## Have You Ever?

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will learn more about each other and what makes each unique by exploring their commonalities and differences.

**Materials Needed:**

- String or yarn
- Scissors
- Large sheet of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Prior to conducting the activity, cut a piece of string approximately 20-feet long and tie the ends together to form a loop. A larger loop may need to be made depending on the group size.

Invite youth to brainstorm a list of questions starting with the phrase, "Have you ever...?" Examples might include Have you ever ridden a horse? or Have you ever eaten fried pickles? Be sure the questions are culturally relevant to the youth in the program. Have youth record the questions on a large sheet of paper. Lay the loop of string in the activity area and invite youth to stand along the outside of the loop. Explain that the outside of the loop represents the answer "no" and the inside of the loop represents "yes". Read aloud each question and direct youth to either step inside the loop or stand outside, depending on their answers to the questions. After answering all of the questions,

invite youth to engage in a conversation about the commonalities and diversity that exist among their peers and the uniqueness of each individual.

## About Me Poem

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will write an acrostic poem using their names and words or phrases that describe themselves.

**Materials Needed:**

- Writing utensils
- Paper

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and explain that an acrostic poem uses the letters in a topic word to begin each line of the poem and each line of the poem relates to or describes the topic word. Invite youth to write acrostic poems using their names as the topic word and phrases that describe who they are as the lines of the poems. Have youth begin the writing process by brainstorming a list of words or phrases that describe themselves. Then have them use their lists of words to write poems about themselves in which each line begins with a letter in their names. Invite youth to share their poems with the group as a way of introducing themselves to others.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

- Have youth choose partners and invite them to write an acrostic poem about their partners.
- Have younger youth use pictorial representations, instead of words or phrases, as their descriptors. Encourage them to make sure that the names of the pictures begin with the letters in their names.

## Ten Random Things about Me

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will identify and create a list of personal attributes to share with a group. Youth will identify commonalities and unique attributes of the groups.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing utensils

**Directions:**

Ask youth to define random. Explain that random means made or occurring without definite aim, reason, or pattern. Invite youth to write a list of ten random things about themselves. The random things can be those things that immediately come to mind and in any order, such as favorites, facts, likes, and dislikes. After youth have created their lists, invite them to share the lists with the group as a means of introducing themselves. Encourage them to identify commonalities among themselves as well as attributes that make them unique.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

- Invite younger youth to use pictorial representations when writing their lists.
- Have youth choose partners and create a list of ten random things about their partners.

## About Me Web

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades 3-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will share a personal facts and information about themselves with a group. Youth will identify commonalities and unique attributes within the group.

**Materials Needed:**

Ball of string or yarn

**Directions:**

Invite youth to gather in a circle. Encourage them to think of facts about themselves. Give the ball of string to one youth and invite the youth to say one of their facts. Have the youth toss the string across the circle to another youth while holding on to the loose end of the string. Encourage the second youth to say

one of their facts and then toss the string to another youth while holding onto the end. Make sure youth are tossing the string to others across the circle to form a web. Have the group continue this process until all youth in the circle have had a turn to share a personal fact. After the web has been formed, invite youth to discuss commonalities or unique attributes they noticed. Explain to youth that commonalities bring people together and help them to build relationships, much like the building of the web.

## Partner Interviews

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades 3-5

**Objectives:** Youth will practice questioning techniques as they interview their peers to learn interesting facts about each other.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing utensils

**Directions:**

Invite youth to choose partners. Encourage youth to spend a few minutes brainstorming questions they would like to ask when interviewing their partners to illicit fun and unusual personal facts. When ready, have youth begin their interviews. Have youth record the questions and answers included in the interviews. After all youth have been interviewed, have them gather as a group and invite them to share the findings of their interviews and discuss the unique facts and commonalities revealed through the interviews.

## Anonymous Paper Ball Toss

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades 3-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will anonymously respond to question prompts that reveal interesting information about themselves and their peers will try to determine who provided the answers.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Marker
- Paper
- Writing utensils

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group. Have them brainstorm a list of five questions to reveal interesting information about each other, such as If you could live anywhere in the United States, where would you live? or What is your favorite ice cream flavor? Invite youth to write the questions on a large sheet of paper posted in a visible location.

After the list of questions is complete, encourage youth to write their answers to the five questions on a sheet of paper. Have them refrain from writing their names on their papers so their answers are anonymous. Ask youth to form a circle, crumple their papers, and toss their paper balls into the center of the circle. Invite each youth to pick up a paper ball and return to the circle. Have youth take turns reading the anonymous answers. After the answers are read, invite the group to guess who provided the answers based on what they already know about each other.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Refrain from guessing who provided the answers if youth are more comfortable keeping their answers anonymous.

## About Me Cubes

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will share six interesting facts about themselves by illustrating each side of a cube with pictorial representations of their facts.

**Materials Needed:**

- Six-sided, small cardboard boxes
- Construction paper
- Drawing utensils
- Tape
- Scissors

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, collect a variety of six-sided, small cardboard boxes and tape all sides of the boxes in place to create cubes. Ask families to donate boxes as needed.

Invite youth to brainstorm a list of at least six facts about themselves, such as their favorite game or sport, talent, favorite food, or family members. Provide each youth with a cardboard cube. Have them cut construction paper to the size of the cube, making one piece for each side of the cube. Direct them to select six facts from their brainstormed list and decorate each sheet of construction paper with an illustration depicting one of the six facts. After they have completed the illustrations, have them glue one sheet of construction paper to each side of the cube.

Gather youth as a group after they have completed their cubes. Invite them to take turns tossing their cubes and sharing the illustration and fact that turns up on their cubes. Continue sharing until each youth has an opportunity to share at least one fact from their cube.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Invite youth to choose partners and create a cube of facts about their partners. Have the partners share their cubes and the facts they learned about each other.

## Partner Biography

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will write a biography about a partner as a means of getting to know one another. Youth will need to research their partners and analyze their findings to determine the information to include in the biography.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Construction paper
- Drawing utensils
- Stapler

**Directions:**

Explain to youth that a biography is a history of a person's life written by another person. Tell youth that they will choose partners and write a biography of their partners. Invite youth to ask their partners information about memorable events in their lives, family members, or personal accomplishments. Once youth feel that they have sufficient information, encourage them to begin writing the biographies. Have them write according to their skill level, for example younger youth may write each piece of information as a sentence, while older youth may write several sentences or paragraphs to describe events. Encourage youth to draw illustrations to accompany their text. Next, have youth create a cover and title for their biographies using a sheet of construction paper. Have them compile their biographies, with the cover as the first page, and bind using a stapler. Invite them to read aloud their biographies with the group when completed.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Invite younger youth to partner with older youth to guide and assist them with this activity.

## Photo Puzzle

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will work as a group to create a puzzle using their photos. Youth will become familiar with each other as they share facts about themselves along with their photos while constructing the puzzle.

**Materials Needed:**

- Photos of youth
- Poster board
- Glue
- Scissors

**Directions:**

Take a photo of each youth prior to the activity. If a camera is not accessible or photos cannot be printed, ask families to donate photos and explain

that they will be used for an activity and will not be returned.

Gather youth as a group and ask them to take turns introducing themselves by sharing their photos. Invite them to share interesting facts about themselves as they share their photos. Encourage them to identify commonalities among themselves as well as attributes that make them unique.

After all youth have shared their photos and facts, explain to them that they will work as a group to create a puzzle using the photos. Provide youth with poster board and glue. Invite them to place the photos in an interesting configuration and make adjustments until the photos are in their desired design. Have youth glue the photos in place once they have achieved their desired design. Thin the consistency of the glue with water to eliminate lumps or irregularities when adhering the photos. Allow adequate time for the glue to dry. Next, invite youth to draw puzzle shapes on the backside of the poster and cut the poster into the shapes they have drawn. Encourage youth to complete the puzzle as a group and share information they have learned about each other during the creation of the puzzle.

## Partner Introductions

**Recommended Age Range:** Grade K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will become more familiar with each other as they introduce a partner to the group.

**Materials Needed:**

None

**Directions:**

Invite youth to choose partners. Encourage them to choose partners who they do not know well. Allow youth several minutes to share facts about themselves with their partners, including their favorites, talents, hobbies, or personal accomplishments.

Gather youth and have them sit in a circle, making sure they do not sit next to their partners. Have

youth take turns introducing their partners to the group by announcing them in the following manner, "I am proud to introduce you to..." As youth make their introductions they will share a few of the facts they learned about their partners during their conversations. For example, "I am proud to introduce you to someone who loves gymnastics, is in the 4th grade, and has two older brothers. May I introduce you to Ophelia." Invite the youth who is introduced to stand and those in the circle to clap. Have youth continue with their introductions until each has been introduced.

## Line Up

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will become more familiar with each other as they attempt to line up in order based on a specific characteristic.

**Materials Needed:**

None

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and ask them to line up in random order. State a characteristic to the group and explain that they will need to line up in order according to the characteristic. Examples of characteristics and line ups include: smallest to largest shoe size, chronologically by birthday, or alphabetically by last name. Have youth check their line up when finished to be sure it is in order.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Have older youth line up according to the characteristic without talking to each other.

## Musical Questions

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will become more familiar with each other by answering questions about themselves and their interests.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Basket or similar container
- Scissors
- Playlist of youth's favorite songs
- Device to play playlist

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, cut paper into several strips. Write one "getting to know you" question on each strip of paper. Questions might include: What is your favorite food?, What is your favorite board game?, and What is your favorite book? Place the questions in a basket or similar container. Invite youth to participate in these preparations.

Gather youth in a circle and provide one youth the basket containing the "getting to know you" questions. Explain to youth they will become more familiar with each other while playing a game similar to Musical Chairs. Start the playlist and have youth pass the basket around the circle. Randomly stop the playlist. Instruct the youth holding the basket when the music stops to choose a question from the basket, read it, and answer it aloud. After stating an answer, youth will place the question back into the basket. Restart the playlist and have youth continue passing the basket around the circle until the playlist stops and another youth answers a question. Continue play until each youth has had an opportunity to choose and answer a question.

## Getting to Know Each Other Charades

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will act out their answers to questions about themselves and their interests. Youth will attempt to guess the answers to the questions based on the actions of the actors.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing utensils

- Basket or similar container
- Scissors

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, cut paper into several strips. Write one “getting to know you” question on each strip of paper. Questions might include: What is your favorite food?, What is your favorite board game?, and What is your favorite book? Place the questions in a basket or similar container. Invite youth to participate in these preparations.

Gather youth in a circle and provide them with the basket of “getting to know you” questions. Explain to youth that they will play a game of Charades in which they take turns acting out their answers to the questions contained in the basket. Invite one youth to volunteer to begin the game. Instruct the youth to choose a question from the basket and read it aloud. The youth will act out their answer to the group when ready. The group will attempt to guess the youth’s answer to the question based on their actions. Continue play with the next youth after the group has correctly guessed the youth’s answer. Continue play in this manner until each youth has had an opportunity to choose a question and act out their answer.

## About Me Trading Cards

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will design and create trading cards that showcase their interests, talents, or achievements.

**Materials Needed:**

- Unlined index cards
- Drawing utensils
- Photos of youth (optional)
- Glue or tape (optional)
- Samples of trading cards

**Directions:**

Provide youth with sample trading cards and

discuss the type of information found on the trading cards. Explain to youth they will create trading cards that showcase their attributes, interests, talents, or achievements. Instruct youth to use the supplies and draw a picture of or adhere a photo of themselves onto one side of an index card. Have youth choose the information about themselves they want to include on their cards, such as their physical stats, a talent or achievement they are proud of, or their favorites. Encourage youth to write their chosen information onto the backside of their index cards. Invite youth to share their completed trading cards with the group or to trade cards with other youth to become more familiar with each other.



## PART TWO

# Activities for Fostering Relationships

## Pass a Kind Word

**Recommended Age Range:** Grade K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will verbally recognize their peers for acts of positive behavior and treatment of others based on their observations and experiences with their peers.

**Materials Needed:**

None

**Directions:**

Gather youth in a circle. Invite one youth to volunteer to begin the game. Instruct the youth to look at the youth on their right. Have the youth tell the other youth a kindness they have noticed about them. The kindness might be a thank you or acknowledgement of an act of kindness or a job well done, a recognition of following the rules, or recognition of an attribute that reflects kindness. Encourage the youth being recognized to express their gratitude. Have youth continue passing the words of kindness around the circle in this manner.

**Variations and Differentiation:**

- Have youth toss a ball to another youth in the circle and state their words of kindness to the youth who caught the ball. Ensure that every youth has an opportunity to be recognized.
- Make this activity part of the daily routine and implement each day during a group gathering. Have youth randomly share their words of kindness based on their experiences for that day.

## Relationship Mural

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will show their appreciation for those they have built meaningful relationships with as they create a group mural.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheets of paper
- Tape

- Paper
- Drawing utensils

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity have youth create a mural canvas by posting several large sheets of paper together in an accessible location in the program environment. Explain to youth that they will create a collaborative mural of portraits of people with whom they have built meaningful relationships. Provide youth with paper and drawing utensils. Have them consider people in their lives they have a significant relationship with, such as family members, teachers, community members, or peers. Encourage them to select one individual to showcase. Invite each youth to draw a portrait of their chosen individual on a sheet of paper and write the individual's name and a description of why their relationship with that person is significant. Instruct youth to tape their portraits onto the large sheets of paper to create a mural. Encourage youth and families to visit the mural to learn more about the relationships their peers have established.

## Build or Damage

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-8

**Objectives:** Youth will discuss the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication in building relationships. Youth will identify communication techniques that can enhance or damage their relationships.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, invite youth to assist in creating a chart titled "Communication" on a large sheet of paper. Have them draw two columns on the chart, one labeled "Build" and one labeled "Damage" and post the chart in a visible location.

Gather youth as a group. Explain to youth that the

manners and words we use when communicating can impact our relationships with others. Positive, respectful words and manners help to build relationships, while negative words and disrespectful manners can damage our relationships.

Invite youth to brainstorm the type of words and manners associated with positive or respectful communication techniques. Examples might include making eye contact or asking relevant and thoughtful questions. Have youth record the responses on the chart in the column labeled “Build”. Next, invite youth to brainstorm words and manners associated with negative or disrespectful communication techniques. Examples might include interrupting or not paying attention to a conversation. Have youth record the responses on the chart in the column labeled “Damage”. Review the chart with the group once youth have completed their brainstorming and ask for their commitment to respectfully communicate with others.

## Building Community

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will discuss ways in which they can become involved in their community and build community relationships. Youth will take action on the ideas they have developed.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Scissors
- Writing utensils
- Basket or similar container

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and discuss who their community is and what their community means to them. Explain that they can build relationships within their community by being caring and thoughtful citizens. Invite youth to discuss ways

in which they can build relationships or do kind acts for those in their community. Ideas might include a trash clean-up day at the school playground or local park or making thank you cards for community volunteers. Encourage youth to think of ideas that are realistic and achievable. Have youth cut paper into several 8” by 2” strips, record each response on a strip of paper and place in a basket or similar container. Share with youth that they will choose one of the ideas from the basket each week, or a frequency they are comfortable with, and devise a plan for completing the act. Consider that the ideas they have devised may require support outside of the afterschool program and significant time investment. After youth complete each act, encourage them to discuss the success and how they feel they have impacted their relationship with the community.

**Variations and Differentiation:**

Invite youth to write about their experiences in journals.

## How to Be a Good Friend

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will discuss and record ways in which they treat each other to develop meaningful friendships and relationships.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and share the following statement “You must be a good friend to have good friends.” Invite youth to discuss what the statement means and whether they agree with it. Have youth discuss ways in which friends treat each other to build meaningful relationships. Have youth record their responses on a large sheet of paper posted in a visible location. Share the following list of ideas if not mentioned by

youth during their discussion.

- Friends listen to each other
- Friends build each other up
- Friends consider how their actions might affect each other's feelings
- Friends try to understand each other's feelings and moods
- Friends help each other solve problems
- Friends give each other genuine compliments
- Friends can disagree without hurting each other's feelings
- Friends are dependable
- Friends respect each other
- Friends are trustworthy
- Friends support each other with opportunities to change
- Friends care about each other

**Variations and Differentiation:**

Invite youth to choose one of the ideas from the list to use as a journal prompt to write about building relationships.

## Put Your Trust in Me

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will use verbal language and observation skills to guide their partners through an obstacle course while their partners' eyes are closed. In turn, youth will use their auditory skills and trust in their partners as they are guided through an obstacle course with their eyes closed.

**Materials Needed:**

- Jump ropes or tape
- Cones
- Large sturdy items to use as obstacles, such as tables, chairs, and empty boxes

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, gather a variety of objects from within the program that can be used to create an obstacle course, such as chairs, tables and empty boxes. Invite youth to use the objects to design and

set up an obstacle course. Have youth use jump ropes or tape to define the pathways and boundaries of the obstacle course.

Invite youth to choose partners. Explain that one partner will be "sightless" by closing his or her eyes and the other partner will act as a guide. Have one set of partners take their place at the start of the obstacle course. When ready, the guide will begin providing their partner with verbal directions for navigating through the obstacle course while their partner remains "sightless". Encourage youth acting as guides to provide clear and detailed directions. For example, "There is a chair about one step in front of you. Take two steps to your right and four steps forward to get around it." Allow another set of partners to begin the obstacle course when the previous partners are approximately halfway through the course. If time allows, have each set of partners switch roles and take another turn completing the obstacle course. After all partners have completed the activity, invite them to discuss the challenges they encountered and how they managed them. Have youth discuss how this activity relates to developing trust, which is a key component of relationships.

## About Our Community

**Recommended Age Range:** Grade K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will get to know more about each other as they discuss their community and create three-dimensional representations of significant locations in their community.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheets of paper
- Drawing utensils
- Wood blocks
- Lego® building blocks
- Various construction materials

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and discuss with them that we can get to know each other and build

relationships by learning about the communities in which we live and participate. Have youth form small groups of three or four. Consider forming mixed-age groups so older youth can guide and assist younger youth as needed. Have group members share information about their community with each other and the places that are meaningful to them and where they enjoy spending time, such as where they like to eat, shop, and have fun. Provide each group with a large sheet of paper and drawing utensils. Encourage them to draw a map of their community, including where they live, the places talked about during their discussion, schools, stores, parks, and other landmarks. Have them label the places and streets they have drawn. Next, have groups work together and use construction materials to build three-dimensional representations of the maps they drew. Invite them to create buildings, trees, street signs and other details. Invite each group to share their constructions when completed. Encourage them to discuss what they learned about each other during the design and construction process.

## Emotions and Feelings

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-3

**Objectives:** Youth will discuss the impact emotional displays have on building relationships. Youth will create drawings illustrating emotions.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Scissors
- Writing utensils
- Basket or similar container
- Drawing utensils
- White construction paper

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity have youth cut paper into 8" by 2" strips, enough for each participating youth to have one strip. Have youth assist in writing one word describing an emotion on each strip of paper

and place in a basket or similar container. Words may include: excited, angry, happy, surprised, frustrated, anxious, nervous, bored, puzzled, worried, jealous, sad, proud, and confused.

Gather youth as a group and ask them how our emotions and feelings impact our relationships with others. Discuss that by sharing emotions and feelings, others not only have a better understanding of you, but it also strengthens relationships. Explain that emotions can often be communicated with simply one word or non-verbally through facial expressions, gestures, posture, and stance. Present the basket of prepared word strips to youth. Invite each youth to choose an emotion word from the basket. Provide youth with construction paper and drawing utensils. Have youth create drawings that illustrate the emotion words they have chosen. Encourage youth to label the drawings with the name of the emotions. Invite youth to share their illustrations with the group when completed.

## Ways to Build Relationships

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-8

**Objectives:** Youth will reflect on ways in which they build relationships with others and will work together to create a group list of these methods.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group. Tell youth that they are building and strengthening their relationships with others every day, often without even being aware they are doing so. Label a large sheet of paper with the title "Ways to Build Relationships" and post in a visible location. Invite youth to brainstorm ways in which they build their relationships. For example, youth might invite a new classmate to play on the playground during recess or actively listen to a

friend tell about a problem they have. Have youth record their responses on the chart as they share their ideas. Review the list when completed and have youth discuss how successful these methods have been for building their relationships.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Have each youth create individual “Ways to Build Relationships” list. Encourage them to create an illustration for each idea listed and share their completed lists with the group.

## Caring for Our Relationships

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-8

**Objectives:** Youth will discuss ways in which they care for their relationships and create posters depicting their most meaningful action.

**Materials Needed:**

- Construction paper
- Drawing utensils

**Directions:**

Invite youth to work together in mixed-aged partnerships, so that older youth can guide and assist younger youth. Have each set of partners create a poster depicting ways in which they take care of or strengthen their relationships. Each set of partners will begin by brainstorming actions they can perform to care for their relationships. Ideas might include: greeting each other and saying goodbye, listening, asking each other questions, laughing together, playing together, and encouraging each other. After they have completed brainstorming, have each set of partners choose a care action that is most meaningful to them. Encourage them to draw an illustration depicting the care action they have chosen and create a title for the illustration. Invite each set of partners to share their completed posters with the group and explain the care action they chose and why.

## Adjectives for Relationships

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8

**Objectives:** Youth will brainstorm adjectives that describe their meaningful relationships and will define the adjective through illustration or collage.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers
- Paper
- Collage items such as buttons, beans, and ribbon
- Glue
- Scissors
- Drawing utensils

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group. Explain that adjectives are descriptive words that allow readers and listeners to have a clearer understanding or mental picture of something. Invite youth to brainstorm words or adjectives that describe relationships and write their ideas on a large sheet of paper posted in a visible location. Adjectives might include respectful, loving, supportive, pleasant, friendly, and safe. Invite each youth to think of one of their meaningful relationships and choose one adjective from the list that describes that relationship. Encourage youth to write their chosen adjective on a sheet of paper and describe or define the adjective using drawings and collage items. Invite youth to share their pictures with the group when completed.

## Greeting Cards

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will express their sentiments to those they have built relationships with by creating greeting cards.

**Materials Needed:**

- Construction paper
- Writing utensils
- Drawing utensils
- Various craft materials, such as glitter and sequins
- Glue

**Directions:**

Gather youth as a group and ask if they have ever sent a greeting card, to who, and why they sent the greeting cards. Discuss with youth that greeting cards are used as a way to maintain and strengthen our relationships with others. They are a means of expressing sentiments to others and conveying our thoughts in an interesting format. Explain to youth that they will make a greeting card for a person with whom they have developed a relationship, who might need well wishes or words of encouragement or thanks. Have youth begin by determining who they will make a card for and for what purpose. Next, have them brainstorm a message for the cover and inside of the card. Encourage them to fold a sheet of construction paper in half and write the cover message on one-half of the outside of the sheet of paper and the remaining message on the inside of the folded paper. Instruct youth to use drawing utensils to create illustrations and craft materials to decorate their cards. Have them sign the cards and include personalized messages, if desired. Invite youth to share their completed cards with the group and encourage them to give the cards to the intended recipients.

## Give a Shout Out

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will practice a relationship building technique by providing a shout out to a peer to recognize or acknowledge a positive behavior or attribute.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Scissors
- Writing utensils

- Envelopes, one per youth
- Basket or similar container

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, have youth cut paper into 8" by 2" strips. Gather youth in a circle. Provide each youth with an envelope and have them write their name on the outside of the envelope. Have youth place their envelopes in the basket or similar container. Instruct youth to pass the basket around the circle and choose an envelope, making sure they do not choose their own envelope. Provide each youth with a strip of paper and encourage them to write a shout out message acknowledging an attribute they admire or appreciate or a positive action performed by the youth whose envelope they chose. Depending on youth's comfort level, have them sign their shout out message or keep the message anonymous. Instruct youth to place their message in the envelope and return the envelope to the basket. Have youth pass the basket around the circle and remove their envelopes. Invite them to read aloud their shout out messages. Discuss with the group how they felt about receiving an acknowledgment, how they felt about writing an acknowledgment, and why it is important to provide a shout out to others.

## Good Sportsmanship Builds Good Relationships

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will share their ideas about good sportsmanship practices while playing a variation of the game Hot Potato.

**Materials Needed:**

- Ball
- Playlist of youth's favorite songs
- Device to play playlist

**Directions:**

Gather youth and have them sit in a circle. Discuss with youth that sportsmanship is encouraged in athletic competition. Sportsmanship practices help to build relationships among athletes. Ask youth

what sportsmanship means, what behaviors exhibit good sportsmanship, and how sportsmanship can impact their relationships with other players.

Explain that the group will play a version of the game of Hot Potato. In this version, youth will pass a ball around the circle while music is playing. When the music stops, the youth holding the ball will share one idea about good sportsmanship. Provide one youth with the ball and begin the music to start the game. Randomly stop the music and encourage the youth holding the ball to share a thought about sportsmanship. Continue play until each youth has had an opportunity to share their thought about sportsmanship.



## **PART THREE**

# **Activities for Building Routines**

## Routines Charades

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will utilize their non-verbal communication skills as a means to learning about and becoming more familiar with the afterschool program routines.

**Materials Needed:**

- Index cards
- Writing utensils
- Basket or similar container
- Minute timer or stopwatch

**Directions:**

Invite youth to divide into mix-aged groups of four or five and play this game within their small groups. Have each group brainstorm a list of ten different daily routines that have been established in the afterschool program. Encourage the groups to name the routines using one to four words, such as entering the program, attendance, snack, and clean up. Have group members write the name of one routine on each index card and place in a basket or similar container. Invite each group member to choose an index card. Have group members take turns acting out the routine written on their cards while the remaining group members attempt to guess the routine being acted out. The group will have one minute to act out and guess as many routines as possible. Encourage each group to continue play in this manner until each group member has had an opportunity to act out a routine.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

- Invite young children to complete the game as partners.
- Have youth describe the routine to group members without saying the name of the routine.

## Safety Routines

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will become familiar with the

health and safety procedures in place in the afterschool program and demonstrate how the procedures work.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Review the program's health, safety and emergency routines and procedures prior to conducting the activity. Write the name of these procedures on a large sheet of paper posted in a visible location. Be sure to include the procedures such as attendance and headcount systems, restroom breaks, hand washing, disaster drills, lock down and lock out, as well as other health and safety procedures.

Gather youth as a group and explain that several procedures exist to ensure the health and safety of those in the program. Some of these routines occur daily, while others are situational. Share the prepared list of procedures. Invite youth to explain or demonstrate each of these procedures and when they would use each. Provide additional explanation as needed. Encourage youth to chart additional health and safety procedures they can make part of the program routines.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Conduct a practice session of one or more of these procedures to allow youth to become more familiar with the routine.

## Peace Pact

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will discuss and determine behaviors they can regularly engage in to promote a peaceful program.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheets of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Explain to youth that a peace pact is a set of

guidelines for how to behave and treat others to promote a peaceful program. Share the following discussion prompts and invite youth to discuss. Encourage them to respond with specific actions that are “do” statements versus “don’t” statements.

- We treat others with respect. This looks like...
- We care about each other. This looks like...
- We resolve conflicts in positive ways. This looks like...

Have youth record their responses on a large sheet of paper posted in a visible location. When they have completed, review the recorded actions and discuss that these actions are guidelines for treating each other in the program. Post the peace pact in the program for youth to refer to regularly.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Invite youth to develop additional discussion prompts around peaceful actions they would like instilled in their program and encourage youth to discuss and record responses on the chart.

## Feedback Department

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5, Grades 6-12

**Objectives:** Youth will develop and implement a system for collecting feedback about issues and suggestions for improving the program. Youth will utilize their problem-solving skills to recommend resolutions.

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Discuss with youth that issues will arise within any afterschool program and that it is important to have a means for resolving these issues and improving the operation of the program. Share with youth that they will devise a system for collecting program issues and suggestions as well as determining

resolutions. Invite youth to brainstorm a method for receiving feedback and suggestions from all participants in the program. Have youth consider if anonymity needs to be considered within this method. Then, invite youth to brainstorm a method in which feedback will be addressed and who will lead the effort. Consider having youth form a committee of decision-makers and encourage all interested in participating in the committee to apply for the position. After the methods are agreed upon by youth, be sure they clearly communicate their system prior to implementation. The system can be recorded on a chart and posted in the program. Once the system has been in operation for some time, encourage youth to evaluate its effectiveness and determine any needs for improvement.

**Variations and Differentiations:**

Consider having youth divide into smaller groups and invite each small group to brainstorm one part of the whole system. Have the small groups reconvene to discuss each group’s ideas and determine which they feel would be most effective.

## Kind Kid Versus Rude Dude

**Recommended Age Range:** Grades K-5

**Objectives:** Youth will categorize actions and words that express good and bad manners and identify situations in which these actions and words might be expressed.

**Materials Needed:**

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers

**Directions:**

Prior to the activity, create a chart on a large sheet of paper with two columns, one labeled “Kind Kid” and one labeled “Rude Dude” and post in a visible location. Gather youth as a group and discuss that manners provide a framework for how people behave in various situations. Manners can be exhibited through actions and words. Invite youth to brainstorm actions and words that represent use

of good manners and bad manners. Have youth identify if their named manners are good by writing them in the column on the chart labeled “Kind Kid” and identify if they are bad by writing them in the column on the chart labeled “Rude Dude”. As youth brainstorm both good and bad manners, invite them to describe situations in which they or others might have used these manners. Encourage them to tell what “Kind Kid” actions or words can be used in place of the “Rude Dude” actions and words. Post this chart in the afterschool program and encourage youth to reference the chart and utilize the “Kind Kid” words and actions as part of their daily routines.

## References

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), *What is SEL?*, 2019. Retrieved from <https://casel.org>

National AfterSchool Association. (2011). *Core knowledge and competencies for afterschool and youth development professionals*. Oakton, VA: Author.

Palmer, K. L., Anderson, S. A., & Sabatelli, R. N. (2009). How is the afterschool field defining program quality? A review of effective program practices and definitions of program quality. *Afterschool Matters*, 9, 1-12.

Ramaswamy, R., McGovern, G., and Akiva, T. (2013). Introduction to the active-participatory approach. Ypsilanti, Michigan: The Forum for Youth Investment



NATIONAL  
**AfterSchool**  
ASSOCIATION