

Southeastern Pennsylvania School Age Child Care Project



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Camp Training Ideas for the Busy Director

March 2009

So, it's 8:30 Monday morning and you finally got all 30 of your leaders with a donut in one hand and a cup of juice in the other settled down to begin their summer training. There's a lot of information that has to be passed along and you want to make sure they walk away with more than just sticky fingers. Here are some ideas to create interest and improve the effectiveness of your staff training and motivate your staff to want to be there.

Promote mandatory meetings and trainings in a fun way. This may take extra time but it will be worth it if staff remember and look forward to meetings and trainings. Create a special flyer inviting staff to the "event." It will make them feel special and by marketing specifically to them, they will want to come. The key thing is to have fun and promote true excitement. Do something like this for the not-so-fun mandatory type events.



For example, promote water safety training with a beach theme with weekly reminder flyers. Use a "Jaws" motif and have an inflatable shark in a kiddie pool so the employees see it when they come in to work. Leave a plastic baggie with sand, shells, plastic fish, watermelon slice eraser, fake ants, beach toys, and a blanket (fringed ticket for event) in the employee's mailboxes.

Since learning depends on motivation from life events. Make learning active, experiential and arouse the staff's emotions. Use creative titles for your daily training events. Staff will be curious and wonder what's up! Use titles of popular songs, movies or TV shows as the title for individual areas to be covered in training. E.g. "Titanic" or "Jaws" for swimming pool rules. "Leave it to Beaver" or "Peewee's Big Adventure" when dealing with kids. You get the picture!

On the day of the training have your schedule in order. First thing in the morning, do warm-up activities and action songs. Icebreakers are a great way for staff to begin to feel more comfortable with each other.

Ice Breakers Ideas

5 Card Draw

Give everyone a playing card. If you have more than 52 people in your group, add decks of cards as appropriate. Tell everyone that they have three minutes to find four partners and introduce themselves. The group with the best "hand" wins a special prize. How about a deck of cards for each of them!

Fortune Cookie Introduction Game

Have strips of paper that have a statement to finish such as "I like being a camp counselor because..." Have each person introduce himself/herself and finish his or her sentence. Pass out fortune cookies as a reward for volunteering to draw a strip.

Count To 10

As a group - individually! Only one person can say one number at a time until the group has collectively counted to ten. If two or more say a number at the same time the group must start all over again. MUCH HARDER than it sounds. May take a few days to even count to five!

Then move into the dry, cerebral stuff, like official policies and procedures. Have some activity that was started in the morning continue after lunch so they 'need' to come back to complete it. Don't have something long and drawn-out after lunch - keep it active during the sluggish period. Close out the day with a bang!

Make sure you diversify your training approach. Think of your audience 30-50% of the population is visual learners, 20-30% is auditory learners and 10-30% is tactile-kinesthetic. Different learning styles have different needs. For tactile-kinesthetic learners have several breaks, use color in your presentation, and have hands-on practice activities. For your auditory learners; give verbal instructions, paraphrase written information and highlight the important points. Get the visual learners to read the information and make sure they get the handouts.

Make learning memorable as well as fun! Reviewing your policies, procedures and regulations can be boring. Take a new look at how you can get this information across to staff in an attention-grabbing, memorable & fun way? Brain research shows us that the use of novelty helps us engage our learners.

Policy & Procedure Activities

Timesheets

After discussion, hand out timesheets with 10 mistakes on them, and have a contest to see who can find the most!

Accident/Incident Reports/Safety Issues

Do a skit using returning staff in the roles of a junior camper and leader. Susie skins her knee and Tom the leader has to report it. The staff in the audience writes out their version of an accident report on the situation and turns it in. This will help you as a supervisor determine who needs additional training in this area.

Proper Attire/Dress Codes/Appropriate Behavior

Model the appropriately and inappropriately attired leader and rules to follow regarding behavior. This could be illustrated through a slide show, fashion show, or video presentation. Use veteran staff in these scenarios - they will feel needed and important as co-instructors.

Role-Playing

Scenes of situations that staff may deal with. Have new and veteran staff mixed in these improvisational skits. Gather the players and read off a scenario. Have them act out the situation and come to a conclusion about it. Examples include the "angry parent, bored or obnoxious kid, and "What if?" scenarios.

The magical close- how do you reinforce the skills and knowledge you just communicated. A good way to see how much your staff gained from the training is to have them list ten things they learned/enjoyed during the training and circle two or more that they intend use within a week or month. This is a nice way for everyone to see how the training is going to be practically applied. Another way to check for understanding is the "TV Game Show" format.

Closing Activities

Family Feud (can be the "Friendly Feud")

Same as TV show except no buzzer - instead contestants grab a stuffed animal sitting on the middle of a table. Ask questions you want staff to know the answers to, the ones that they will be asked by the public ("Name a city Park & Recreation Commissioner", "Name a city park") or one that will teach them what to do in a certain situation ("Name something you would do upon giving first aid to a child") Of course, harder categories, ones with only a couple of specific answers ("Name the two locations that gymnastics is taught during the summer") can be used to separate the top leaders from the pack. To be fair - separate seasoned staff and mix with new recruits. Make sure everybody gets an equal shot; maybe even have 'new staff only' question categories.

Jeopardy

The categories can include skills like songs, games, and crafts, in addition to policies, procedures and other important information that has been covered. List these across the top of a poster board with value points in ascending order. The higher the point value, the harder the question.

Win, Lose or Draw

Draw things that relate to leadership or camps

Vision Quilt

Everyone is asked to write goals for the summer on a sticky note or two. Perhaps the first year leaders would be expected to put down one goal, whereas the veterans would write down three to provide more challenge. If you want to reinforce training skills to be learned, you could do this exercise on the first day of training and include goals for what the leaders hope to get out of training as well as their summer-long goals.

Remember keep your staff involved - physically and mentally. Get their interest up before the meeting and once there, keep them going. Make them a part of the training through interactive activities and role-playing. Challenge them to demonstrate their new knowledge in a fun way through game shows. Hold them accountable to apply their training through setting goals. Pretty soon, you'll find your staff looking forward those training meetings!

Hughes, Karen *Magnetic Training The Art of Making Training Come Alive for the Learner*. NAEYC.

The Camp Rena Collection Free Tips for Leaders.
www.canoreab.com/freetips/staff-training.html.

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunity

Setting the Stage for Success in Shared Space in School Age Child Care Presented by Roberta L. Newman

Vast numbers of after school programs take place in shared space - that is, space that is used by someone else at other times during the day. And some programs operate simultaneously in shared space; other groups and activities use the space at the same time the program is operating. Operating in shared space presents many challenges for program leaders and staff, but with creativity and imagination, these challenges can be overcome. This workshop offers a wide range of ideas and strategies for creating effective, inviting environments in shared space situations.

Through large and small group discussion and small group exercises, the workshop focuses on the following issues and challenges:

- Identifying Special Concerns in Shared Space: set up and take down, storage of materials and equipment, impact on "host" of space, interface of host/program policies, and more.
- Developing Management Strategies for Success in Shared Space: problem solving; developing mutually acceptable written guidelines and contracts
- Exploring Resources for Shared Space: identifying furniture, equipment, storage containers
- Exploring Strategies for Creating an Attractive, Inviting, Dynamic Environment in Shared Space

Date: May 16, 2009
 Time: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
 Location: Montgomery Early Learning Centers/ Southeastern PA School Age Child Care Project
 201 Sabine Avenue
 Narberth, PA 19072
 Cost: \$20 (Lunch Provided)

Register online at www.pakeys.org.

For More Information Contact the School Age Project at 610-617-4550 option 4 or email us at sepasacc@melc.org.

Checks can be made payable to MELC. Payment must be received 3 days prior to the event, for your registration to be maintained.

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