

Lee, Out of School Time's Best Practices: Informal Staff

Interview with Frank Morrissey

The Joseph Lee School offers an out-of-school-time program for the students in grades K-8. The program includes academics taught by a Joseph Lee teacher, a snack, and an hour of enrichment taught by seasonal staff.



Photo Credit: Boston Public Schools

Key Takeaways:

- Staff are hired that are skilled enough to not require trainings prior to the start of the program.
- Constant feedback is offered to staff.
- Rules are enforced the same as during the school day and staff use a three strike system.
- Staff are solution-focused and communicate with students when handling infractions.

Q: What kind of staff trainings are offered/required prior to and during the program?

A: For the academic portion of the program, no training is required because it is taught by Joseph Lee teachers, all of which are certified by Massachusetts. In terms of the enrichment portion of the day, we typically hire college students. Our program recently transitioned from an extended learning time program to an out of school time program, which caused the size of the students served to shrink considerably. Because of this, I was able to keep the enrichment staff with the most skill and experience. When I hire enrichment staff, they are skilled enough that they can already prepare a syllabus for the year with their goals for the program. I would then check-in with the staff periodically to make sure they were sticking to their plan. We provided constant feedback and observations. So specific trainings were not necessary due to the level of expertise the staff already had.

Q: How strongly and regularly are rules enforced by staff?

A: During the academic block, the Joseph Lee teachers are already very familiar with the students and vice versa. Rules were enforced the same as the typical school day, during this time. We have a three strike policy. When a situation was serious, it would be brought to my attention. I would typically contact the parents, and the child would receive a strike. After three strikes, the child would be removed from the program. In terms of classroom management, the system in

place is very similar. Teachers would handle smaller issues within the classroom. If a student received three strikes while in class, they would be sent to me. The teachers would also establish a dialogue about any issues that occurred. For example, if one student was teasing another, the teacher would stop the class and have a conversation with the students about bullying. This was possible because the classroom sizes were so small.

Q: How are negative peer-to-peer interactions handled by staff?

A: Everything is very solution focused. If an infraction occurs, the teacher has a conversation with everyone involved. If it was a larger issue, the teacher would bring it up with the entire class. Ultimately, if it was too much for the teacher to handle, it would be given to me. How I handled the situation was specific to the infraction. Responses could range from a write up, to a phone call home, or, in a few cases, immediate termination. We run discipline as if it is part of the normal school day.

The Joseph Lee School offers an out-of-school-time program for the students in grades K0-8, including the students with autism. The program includes an hour of academics taught by a Joseph Lee teacher, a snack, and an hour of enrichment taught by seasonal staff. The activities in the enrichment period range from basketball, to yoga, boy/girl scouts, swimming, art, music, MMA, gardening, and others. The program partners with community organizations such as Yes, Standstrong, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Handel and Haydn Society.