

**VietAID's Best Practices:
Staff Positively Guide Youth Behavior**
Thanh Nguyen, Youth Program Director

VietAID offers an after-school and summer program to 1st through 8th grade students from low income families in Boston Public Schools.



Photo Credit: VietAID

Key Takeaways:

- While youth are encouraged to work through homework problems on their own first, group leaders are always present to supervise and offer assistance if necessary
- Youth attention is held through relationship building and clear expectations.
- Youth behavior is addressed through a one-on-one conversation between the student and teacher. If this does not resolve the issue, staff with greater authority will step in.

Q: What is the level of supervision for youth and activities?

A: During the after-school program, students arrive and have a little down time to get settled. Group leaders and teachers engage students in conversation about their day and play games with them. After this, the group is dispersed to various rooms for the students to begin working on their homework. Throughout this time, there is always a group leader present to supervise.

If a student is having difficulty with their homework, supervisors will let students try to work it out on their own first. However, if the student still needs help after genuinely trying, the teacher is available to guide and talk them through the problem, but they never hand them the answer. In the event that there is a conflict between students, teachers intervene right away to diffuse the problem.

Q: How do staff attract and hold youth's attention and cooperation?

A: Staff establish the ground rules and expectations with students at the very beginning. There is a classroom agreement about the rules that students need to follow. Relationship building is also important to holding youth's attention. Staff intentionally communicate with and get to know the students on a personal level.

We try not to be set up like a school, because the students have had a long day of school already. Our after-school program is a safe space where students can get their homework done, have additional learning support, and feel comfortable.

The staff is here to be supportive and care about the students' progress. They ensure that students succeed academically, as well as socially, so that they are well-rounded people.

Q: What are a few examples of consequences when youth behavior is inappropriate?

A: The first measure is for teachers to have a discussion addressing the behavior in question with the student individually. They have the student talk the situation through, including what happened, what went wrong, and what could be better. If the situation is not resolved, then it is brought up to the next level, such as to my attention. I try to figure out what happened and how I can address it. If that does not help, the next step is to bring the student's parents into the conversation. We have parents come in and sit down with our staff and collectively talk the situation through.

The Vietnamese American Initiative for Development (VietAID) was founded in 1994 by community leaders and residents who believed that a community development corporation would provide comprehensive economic development programs and services to alleviate poverty and advance civic participation in the Fields Corner Vietnamese community of Dorchester. VietAID offers an after-school and summer program to 1st through 8th grade student in Boston Public Schools who are from low-income families. The program caters to both non-Vietnamese and Vietnamese students, although the majority of the students served are Vietnamese.