

# How to Establish a Successful Summer Youth Program

# Role of Continuing Education

- As with many non-traditional programs, continuing education is the perfect department to house a summer children's program. However, establishing a successful program requires a great deal of planning and consideration. While these programs are revenue generators, they can be unprofitable due to the costs involved, and require certain campus resources.

# PRELIMINARY WORK

- 1. Survey the community/schools to determine whether there is a need for a program in your area.
- 2. Determine the type of program and age groups that the program would serve.
- 3. Decide whether you intend to run an academic based program or a camp. A camp requires special licensing and permits. If your program provides food services and consists mostly of recreational activities, it could very well be considered a camp and the licensing requirements could be costly. For example, a camp could be required to have nurses on staff. At Brooklyn College, we do not run a camp. We do not provide food. Students have the option of bringing their own lunch or purchasing lunch from the college cafeteria. Most of the courses are academic in nature, and the day is structured from 10 am to 3 pm. Early drop off and late pick up services are available.
- 4. Meet with program developers/educators to consider curriculum and scheduling. Our program was initially structured to run for four weeks. However, after the first two years, we extended the program to six weeks based upon feedback from parents.

# PRELIMINARY WORK CONTINUED

5. Determine campus resources that will be needed (such as cafeteria space, classrooms, computer labs, and gyms).
6. Determine program structure based upon community feedback. Some summer programs are structured by age groups with fixed modules for each group. Others offer students choices as to modules they wish to take.
7. Meet with campus personnel to determine whether the campus resources are available. For example, during the summer, we require that a section of the cafeteria is reserved from 12 pm to 1 pm for the summer youth program. Assure that there will not be a problem with having a large number of children on campus during the summer.
8. Meet with college communications to develop a marketing plan for the program. Most summer camps and programs start marketing their programs in December and January.
9. Plan personnel needed for the program. Hiring the right staff can often determine whether or not the program is successful. Generally, the program would require a director, coordinator for various age groups (elementary, middle school, and high school), teachers for each subject area, and program escorts. Program escorts are college students who escort the children from location to location and assist the teachers in the classrooms.
10. Prepare a preliminary program budget to determine tuition that would need to be charged in order for the program to be profitable.

# PREPARING FOR THE SUMMER PROGRAM

- Prepare final program budget, based upon projected enrollments, instructional and personnel costs, and costs of materials.
- Decide whether you will offer an installment plan. Because the tuition is expensive, we offer parents the option to pay in three installments provided the final payment is paid before the program begins.
- Prepare an information packet for parents, indicating as much information as possible about the program.
- Schedule and promote a series of open house events for interested parents. We have found that these events are very well attended because the parents have very specific questions. These events also give parents the opportunity to meet the program director and some of the teachers.
- Prepare posters for schools and community centers to promote the program.

# RUNNING THE SUMMER PROGRAM

- Determine number of class sections that are required based upon final registrations; adjust personnel needs accordingly.
- Purchase walkie talkies for teachers and program coordinators to communicate in event of emergency;
- Conduct separate orientation sessions for personnel and parents prior to start of program. During these sessions, the program requirements are outlined. Assure that all parents/guardians provide emergency contact information. Inform parents of drop off location and pick up location. Inform parents of program procedures, such as absences, authorized persons to pick up child, and any other important information.
- Develop contingency plan in case of teacher/personnel absences during the program.
- Evaluate program teachers

# SUMMER PROGRAM FOLLOW-UP

- Send thank you letters to parents
- Send parents program evaluation forms
- Meet with staff and teachers to discuss problems that occurred and what can be done to rectify for next year
- Meet with college staff (Human Resources, registrar, communications, cafeteria, etc) for feedback.