

Keys to Quality Afterschool

Spotlighting Best Practice, Tools and Resources in Out-of-School Time



Supervision Before- and After-School

Tips for working with groups of school-age children

Safety & Supervision

When asked, most parents indicate that the single most important consideration in choosing a before- and after-school program is that their children will be safe.

A lot can happen during before- and after-school programs. Practitioners must be able to respond to routine and atypical situations, as well as the personalities and behaviors of the children in their care. They must be flexible and responsive.

In school-age care programs practitioners have the opportunity to guide children's behavior so they develop skills in self-discipline and responsibility. By providing positive guidance and support, adults help children make good choices, settle conflicts, and work cooperatively.

This resource paper provides information and supports to help practitioners create school-age care programs that are safe and responsive to the individual needs of children and needs of groups of children.

Supervising School-Agers: 3 Steps

Parents enroll their children in school-age care programs to keep their children safe and supervised before- and after-school. Keeping children safe while they are in the program is the responsibility of the school-age care program and its staff. Effective supervision ensures that children are safe, interact with each other and adults in respectful ways, and are engaged in activities, and experiences that support their development and learning.

Developing supervision skills is critically important. This resource paper is a guide to skill development, the steps to what author, teacher and practitioner Steve Musson calls "with-it-ness".

Step 1, is all about safety. Practitioners are aware of and fully understand the basic safety and supervision requirements of the Department of Public Welfare. Practitioners new to school-age care and/or the program in which they work are introduced to the program's policies and procedures. They spend time becoming familiar with the program's indoor and outdoor space while learning their program's routines and performing everyday tasks. They meet and get to know their coworkers. Getting to know the children in their care is a priority. As they gain experience in the program, practitioners develop the ability to identify those times in the program schedule and the areas in their program environment that are the most challenging to supervise.

In **Step 2**, practitioners become more familiar the program expectations, policies, routines and the environment. They are building their relationships with both the children and their coworkers — teamwork is essential. Practitioners begin to think carefully about the experiences being offered and where those activities are located. They understand the consequences of putting high-energy, indoor activities near homework areas. They work with coworkers to determine responsibility for activities and program areas needing close supervision and those that can be monitored from a distance. As practitioners gain experience and confidence they develop active supervision techniques. Active supervision is a combination of watching and listening, being aware of the environment, children's individual behaviors, personalities, and characteristics, as well as how they interact within the group. Through observation and awareness practitioners recognize opportunities to enhance play and learning experiences.

(Supervising, continued on page 8)

Stage 1

Preventing injuries

Become familiar with certification standards

School-age care programs must meet the certification standards of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Child Day Care Regulations. These standards provide guidance regarding the minimum requirements that must be in place to ensure the health and safety of children ages birth through sixteen years old. Below are some of the standards that specifically apply to supervision of children. All school-age care staff should be familiar with these standards to ensure that their programs are in compliance and the physical and emotional safety of children in their programs are protected.

Staff-to-Child Ratios

- 1 staff per every 12 children kindergarten to 4th grade
- 1 staff per every 15 children in 4th grade through 15 years old

In mixed age groupings, the youngest child in the group dictates the ratio.

Comment: Low staff to child ratios help staff monitor children and their activities more closely in order to prevent accidents and injuries. Low staff to child ratios allow adults to form positive relationships with children, enables adults to work with children individually or in small groups, and provides more time to meet the individual needs of children.

Group Size

- For children kindergarten to 4th grade — no more than 24 children and at a minimum 2 staff per group
- For children 4th grade through 15 years old — no more than 30 children and at a minimum 2 staff per group

In mixed age groupings, the youngest child in the group dictates the maximum group size.

Comment: Low group sizes help staff more effectively manage, supervise, and keep track of children during typical daily activities as well as in emergency situations. Additionally when the number of children in a group is small,

each child gets more individual attention and positive interactions between adults and individual children is more likely.

Minimum number of facility persons in the child care facility.

- At least 2 facility people must be present when two or more children are in care.
- At least 2 facility people must be present when children are on an excursion away from the building.

Comment: Having at least two people on-site regardless of number of children at the facility ensures that in case of emergency at least one adult can stay with the children, while the other responds to the emergency. Excursions away from the program could refer to formal field trips or a quick walk around the block.

Supervision of children

- Assigning children to a group
- Knowing the names of the children in the group
- Being physically present with children in the group at all times

Comment: Typical school-age programs work with large groups of children. The size and location of program spaces vary widely — from typical child care center classrooms to elementary school multi-purpose rooms. Assigning children to specific groups and adults helps ensure

that children are physically safe, that no one is assumed to be somewhere or with someone else. Assigning children to the same adult offers the opportunity to build positive relationships with children and among the children in the group.

Supervision of children (discipline)

- No form of physical punishment
- No threats or actions that harm, ridicule, or degrade the child or child's family
- No harsh, demeaning or abusive language in the presence of children
- No restraints, ties, straps to restrict a child's movements
- No locking children in a confined space, closet or locked room

Comment: When children have a positive relationship with adults, they are less likely to misbehave. Adults must ensure that children are safe both physically and emotionally. Adults should work with children to establish simple rules, expressed in positive ways, that are easily learned and reinforced. While children need to be given firm limits, however Claire Cherry author of *"Please Don't Sit on the Kids"* noted "children and adults can waste a great deal of energy engaging in conflict under the guise of discipline."

(Become familiar, continued on page 4)

Getting to Know You: Games to Learn Names

Knowing the names of the children in your program and being able to call them by name as soon as possible is another first step in ensuring safe and supervised children. Here’s a couple of tried and true games that work for children and adults.

Pom Pom Toss

Make giant pompoms: Cut two donut shape circles. Holding the two shapes together, wrap yarn through and around the circles. Once the circles are completely covered, insert scissors between the two circles and cut yarn. Tie a string around the yarn and secure tightly. Remove cardboard.

Arrange children in a circle, not too close, not too far from one another. Include yourself in the circle. Explain that you are going to throw a ball to someone - pick someone out and ask their name, then say, “What’s your name?” “Mia” My name is Sam... Here you go” Throw to next person.

Mia says: Thank you Sam. Mia asks the next person’s name. “My name is Mia. Here you go” Throw to next person. Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance.

Once children have a handle on it you could add not only who they received it from, but to whom they will toss it: “My

name is Sam, I caught the pom pom from Mia and I am throwing it to Hunter.” Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance.

If you have a large group of children, break them into two small groups and after a couple of rounds bring both groups together. See how fast you can make it around the circle.

My Name is and I like to...

Everyone in the group stands in a circle. If the group is big break into smaller groups.

The first person says, “My name is _____ and I like to _____ (insert hobby and act out a motion from that hobby.) The rest of group then says, “(Child or adults’ name) likes to (hobby) and acts out motion. Example, “My name is Sophia and I like to ride my bike (act out riding a bike).

The next person repeats the process. The rest of group then says that person’s name, hobby, and motion and then repeats the first person’s info.

This continues until the last person goes, at which the entire group calls out the last person’s info and moves along through the whole group and repeats everyone’s info.

When you think of safety and supervision issues in your program what comes to mind?



Childhood injuries

When children play, there are bound to be skinned knees and scraped elbows. However, unintentional injuries are the leading threat to the lives and health of American children. Injury prevention is an essential part of quality school-age programs, and a major responsibility of school-age care providers. By understanding how injuries happen, planning ahead and taking simple precautions, most injuries can be avoided.

“Unintentional injury continues to be the leading killer of children ages 1 to 14 in the United States, and millions of children visit emergency rooms each year as a result of unintentional injuries.”

Report to the Nation: Trends in Unintentional Childhood Injury Mortality and Parental Views on Child Safety, Safe Kids USA

“In 2009, among children ages 1–4 and 5–14, unintentional injuries (accidents) were the leading cause of death. For children ages 5–14, the next most frequent causes of death were cancer.”

National Center for Health Statistics

“Among children ages 1–14, falls and being struck by or against an object or person are the two leading causes of injury-related emergency department visits.”

National Center for Health Statistics

The Who, Where and What of Supervision

Who's here and who's not?	Where are they?	What are your safety & supervision policies?
<p>Before children arrive, check the enrollment report ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Who is supposed to be here today? <input type="checkbox"/> Who is scheduled to be absent? <input type="checkbox"/> Check your voicemail or email — did anyone's schedule change? <p>As children are arriving, greet each child as you take attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Is anyone missing? <input type="checkbox"/> Recheck your notes. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the other children if he/she was in school today. <input type="checkbox"/> Call the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Call the parents/guardians. <p>As children are leaving, say goodbye to each child & parent (or other authorized person). Make sure each child is signed out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Who is authorized to pick up each child? <input type="checkbox"/> Are all children signed out? <input type="checkbox"/> Have you checked all program spaces inside and out, including bathrooms and other unlocked rooms, to ensure no children remain? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly count the number of children in your group — is anyone missing? <input type="checkbox"/> Know the names of the children in your care—learn them quickly. <input type="checkbox"/> Position yourself so you can see all of the children you are supervising. <input type="checkbox"/> Position yourself closely enough to act in higher risk activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Listen carefully, what do you hear or just as importantly, what don't you hear? <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with coworkers to ensure that supervision of the group is constant. <input type="checkbox"/> Never leave a child unsupervised. <p>Challenging Spaces and Places:</p> <p>Bathrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Always check bathrooms before children enter and after children leave. <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor bathrooms closely, being respectful of school-agers' need for privacy. <p>Large Outdoor Playgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Block off designated areas with cones or other physical clues. 	<p>What are your policies for ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Setting and enforcing rules for playground activities? <input type="checkbox"/> Explaining safety actions to the children? <input type="checkbox"/> Being sensitive to unsafe conditions? <input type="checkbox"/> Conducting regular safety checks to identify hazards? <input type="checkbox"/> Modifying the environment to reduce hazards? <input type="checkbox"/> Educating yourself on safety issues and practices? <input type="checkbox"/> Communicating to parents about safety measures? <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching what to do in an emergency and clarifying safety behaviors during practice drills and role plays? <input type="checkbox"/> Using special care plans for children with disabilities, and/or special health care needs? <input type="checkbox"/> What arrangements are made if parents are late in picking up their children? <input type="checkbox"/> What arrangements are made if coworkers are late or absent from the program?

(Become familiar, continued from page 2)

Release of children

- Children may only be released to a parent or designee identified by the parent at enrollment
- In an emergency, a child may be released to an individual upon the oral designation of the parent, if the identity of the individual can be verified by a staff person.

Comment: One of the most critical times of the day is pick-up. School-age care programs must have clear policies for the pick-up and release of children.

Staff cannot deny a child's release to a legal parent or guardian, however the program should have policies and procedures in place to ensure that the child is safe after they leave the program. Staff should be aware of any child custody agreements in place for children of separated or divorced parents and the program's policies for responding if the non custodial parent attempts to remove a child. Policies should also include how to respond to an individual who is impaired or intoxicated. Additionally, staff should be aware of what to do if a child is not picked up.

RESOURCES:

Cherry, C. (2002). *Please don't sit on the kids: Alternatives to punitive discipline. 2nd Edition.* Grand Rapids, MI: Frank Schaffer Publications.

DPW Certification Regulations for Child Care Centers are available online at: <http://goo.gl/t8J4>.

American Academy Of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs. 3rd edition.* Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; Washington, DC: American Public Health Association. Also available at <http://nrckids.org>.

Stage 2

Active & Positive Supervision

Top Ten Tips for Supervising School-Agers

To successfully supervise groups of children, adults must acquire and practice a number of abilities and skills. They must also develop supervisory techniques that work with the specific children in their care and the environments in which their program operate — inside and outside, on-site and on field trips.

The Importance of Relationships

1. Get to know the children in your care.

Take time to observe and listen. What do they like to do? What challenges them? Who are their friends? Get to know each child's abilities. Ask them what they are proud of or what their favorite things to do are. What do you think they do well ... tell them. Identify those children who may have particular short-, medium- or long-term needs for supervision.

2. Focus on the positive rather than the negative.

Make expectations known — give clear messages. Unclear: "If you don't clean up, we won't go outside." Clear: "Please put the games away now so we can go outside." Look directly at children when speaking with them. Notice positive behaviors. Ask children to help you come up with solutions for common safety and supervision problems.

3. Work as a team.

Staff who work together rather than each person doing their own thing, provide better supervision. In effective teams, members communicate frequently with each other and are clear about who is responsible for which tasks. For example, if an issue comes up with a small group of children that needs more focused attention, a quick word to a coworker allows the other to deal with the situation while supervision of the whole group is maintained.

Be Prepared

4. Establish clear and simple safety rules.

Try to establish rules that describe what children should "Do" rather than what you "Do not" want them to do. Some examples: Be respectful of others, yourself and the property; always remain with a teacher or group leader; inside the building walk.

Involve the children in developing rules and consequences.

5. Be aware of the challenging times of the day.

Some of the most challenging times of the day are as children move in out of the program during arrivals and departures, during transitions between activities, and bathroom breaks. Field trips, schedule changes, and new or substitute staff may present additional complications. Be aware of times when children are tired or at loose ends — accidents or unpleasant interactions may occur.

6. Have and rehearse your emergency plan.

Every regulated child care program is required to have an emergency plan. Training and drills are essential to having an effective response in times of emergency. Everyone from staff, children, parents and others connected to the program need to be familiar with the emergency procedures. Fire and natural disasters — floods, hurricanes, and tornados — tend to be what we think of first. However, school-age programs have also had to implement emergency plans to remove children quickly in response to bat infestations and release of asbestos from remodeling efforts in another wing of the building.

Location, Location, Location

7. Being aware of and scanning for potential safety hazards.

Being aware of safety hazards are not always just environmental or a part of the physical plant. What are the potential safety hazards in your program? Do you check the outdoor space daily? Has anything changed since the last time you used the space? Are you in shared space? What other activities have gone on in the program since you were last there? Are there other activities or people scheduled in the facility before, during or after your program? What potentials safety and /or supervision issues does this present?

8. Keep your eye on the action.

While interacting with children and communicating with

(Top Ten Tips, continued on page 8)

Too much of a good thing: *Tips for working with large groups of school-agers*

Fifty or fifteen -- after-school staff indicate that one of their biggest challenges in working with large groups of school-agers is connecting with individual children and youth. The secret to handling large groups of school-agers ... limit working in large groups.

Of course there are times, especially during the start or end of the program day to have all of the children in the program come together. Group time can foster participation and a feeling of community. Group activities might include rule making, problem solving, program planning, announcements, singing, simple games, movement activities, dramatic activities, and theme related projects.

Developing skills to manage quality group activities takes experience, patience, and good observation skills, as well as spontaneity. The key to successful group activities is planning and providing supervision to children and their activities.

One sample way of both planning activities and providing supervision to the program is based on the model in the illustration.

- **Concentrated supervision** – staff is directly involved in the activity due to the complexity of materials, equipment, and tools.
- **Focused supervision** – staff is within close visual and hearing ranges of two or three different activities; is available for children to ask questions; and may facilitate discussion.
- **Monitoring** – staff is centrally positioned within visual and hearing range of activities. Staff's attention is focused on the overall safety and supervision of the children.

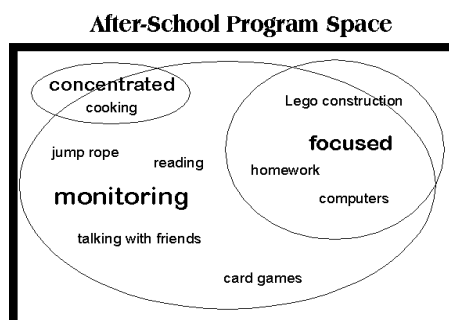
By offering a combination of variety and choice, the program can design activities that require varying degrees of staff involvement. The introduction of a new game may require the direct involvement of staff for a concentrated period of time, but as children become more

familiar with the game and the game evolves, staff may be able to step back into a less focused level of supervision.

Of course, there are activities that always require concentrated supervision of children. An art, or cooking activity using real tools or heat would require smaller groups and more direct supervision than a drawing activity or a marshmallow sculpture. Instead of trying to work with the entire group all the time, children can work in smaller groups based on their interests or activities. For example, three to four children create a "study group" to work on homework together. Five children sit together and play an exciting, no holds barred game of Uno.

Strategically placing staff within the program offers opportunities to spot restlessness or potential conflict and redirect children to other activities. It also increases the ability of staff to shift gears if an activity is not working well.

Teamwork counts — Working as a team staff can respond with varying levels of supervision as the dynamics of the program and activities change.



Next Steps ...

With your staff or coworkers discuss the following:

- What kinds of activities does your program offer?
- What kinds of activities would you like to offer but are not currently offering?
- Identify the kind of supervision each activity requires.
- Does the level of supervision change as the activity progresses?
- How could you use this model of supervision in your program?
- What would the challenges be?
- What would you need to be successful in implementing this model?
- How could this model of supervision assist you in offering different kinds of activities?

Stage 3

Achieving “With-It-Ness”

Educational psychologist, Jacob Kounin created the term “WITH-IT-NESS” to refer to the teacher’s awareness of what is occurring in the classroom. This is also sometimes referred to as the teacher having “eyes in the back of her/his head”.

Kounin, started his career as an educational psychologist at Wayne State University, in Michigan in 1946. He is best known for two studies that he did in the 1970s on classroom management. While his original research looked at how teachers handled misbehavior, before long he realized that it was more than what teachers did in reaction to student behavior, it was what teachers did to prevent problems from occurring at all.

Steve Musson took some of Kounin’s ideas and applied them specifically to school-age programs. Musson is on the faculty of Langara College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has expertise in outdoor recreation, play leadership, and recreation programming for children and youth. He has worked for the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and in licensed school-age care programs. He is also an author of a number of resources on school-age care.

In his book *School-Age Care: Theory and Practice*, Musson defines “with-it-ness” as the desire and ability to be aware of:

- What has happened (past);
- What is happening (present);
- What is likely to happen next (future).

“With-it-ness” comes with

understanding, practice and experience. Staff that are “with-it” understand the program’s policies and rules, have experience with the physical environment and program activities, and they know how to respond in the case of accident and injury.

However, “with-it-ness” is primarily relationship-based. What do the individual children in your program like to do? Who are their friends? What relationships do they have that are not as positive? What is happening in their lives that may be positive or negative? What frustrates them? How have they reacted in similar situations? What has worked to help them handle their frustration, anger, conflicts, etc.?

- Staff who are “with-it” **plan** — by knowing what is supposed to happen and when.
- Staff who are “with-it” **prepare** — by planning for the “what-ifs”.
- Staff who are “with-it” **anticipate** — by being aware of what is or what is not happening in the program or with the children.
- Staff who are “with-it” **sense** — what should happen given what is happening now and what may happen next.

By understanding the children in the program, staff who are “with-it” can most times stop an issue from escalating with a glance, a tilt of the head, or a hand on the shoulder of a child.

Put more simply by Steve Musson a true sign of being “with-it” is, “figuring out where you are not, and then going there.”

Things that make you go “Hmmm ...”

“When a child hits a child, we call it aggression.

When a child hits an adult, we call it hostility.

When an adult hits an adult, we call it assault.

When an adult hits a child, we call it discipline.”

— Haim G. Ginott

“A child seldom needs a good talking to as a good listening to.”

— Robert Brault

“Children naturally imitate those around them. When adults discover what a child’s behavior is actually communicating, they are better able to respond to the need rather than react to the behavior.” — Brad Blanton, Radical Parenting

“The real menace about dealing with a five-year-old is that in no time at all you begin to sound like a five-year-old.” — Jean Kerr

“Where did we ever get the crazy idea that in order to make children do better, first we have to make them feel worse? Think of the last time you felt humiliated or treated unfairly. Did you feel like cooperating or doing better?” — Jane Nelson

One of the most important things we can do is to send a child home in the afternoon liking himself just a little better than when he came in the morning.”

— Eda Leshan

(Top Ten Tips, continued from page 5)

coworkers is important, don't get so caught up in an activity that you lose sight of what is happening around you. Stand in strategic positions, facing the activities so you can scan the entire program environment. Occasionally, circulate around the program area, making eye contact and touching base with children as you can. Use your ears as well as your eyes. Escalating laughter is not always a good thing if a particular child is the target of bullying or ridicule.

9. Teach children the appropriate and safe use of each piece of equipment.

Both children and adults should be aware of playground rules and how to use play equipment properly. When introducing a new activity, take the opportunity to model respect for materials, tools, and processes and to share any safety issues. Use real tools rather than substitutes (saws rather than serrated knives to cuts small dowels).

10. Provide a balance of activities, but think carefully about the level of supervision required by the activities offered simultaneously.

School-age programs need to provide a variety of activities and opportunities for children. Try to ensure that there is a balance between those activities needing close supervision and those that do not.

As you gain experience with how the people in your program interact each other and the program environment, take the time for self-reflection. What are your hot button areas, activities, time of day, or people/children in your program. Try using the self-assessment on this page to evaluate your active supervision skills.

With confidence and support, you are well on your way to "with-it-ness".

Active Supervision Self-Assessment	
Name: _____ Date: _____	
Setting of self-assessment: <input type="checkbox"/> Indoors <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
How many positive interactions did I have with children? # ____	Ratio of Positive Contacts to Negative Contacts ____: 1 <i>To calculate, divide the # of positive by the # of negatives</i>
How many negative interactions did I have with children? # ____	
Did I have at least 4 positive contacts for each negative child contact?	Yes No
Did I move throughout the area I was supervising?	Yes No
Did I frequently scan the area I was supervising?	Yes No
Did I coordinate my supervision of children with my co-worker(s)?	Yes No
Did I positively interact with most of the children in my program?	Yes No
Did I call each child I interacted with by name?	Yes No
Did I handle most minor violations of behavior expectations quickly and quietly?	Yes No
Did I positively acknowledge at least 5 different children for displaying our program's behavior expectations?	Yes No
Overall Active Supervision score: 7-8 "Yes" = Super Supervision 5-6 "Yes" = So-So Supervision Less than 5 "Yes" = Needs Improvement	# of "Yes"

Adapted from Surgai, G. & Fallon, L. (2010 March). University of Connecticut.

(Supervising, continued from page 1)

By **Step 3**, practitioners have developed an almost extra sensory perception or "with-it-ness". They can apply their experiences with the environment, activities, and the people in the program to make connections between what has happened in the past and what is happening now to anticipate and respond to what is likely to happen next. With this sense of "with-it-ness" practitioners effectively handle both risks and opportunities in the program environment and

with the children in their care.

Developing supervisory skills is a process. With practice, experience and confidence adults can master the skills of "with-it-ness." As a result, they strengthen their ability to keep children safe while providing options and opportunities for children to develop a sense of identity, to establish positive relationships, and to explore and learn.