

October - December 2024

## Spotlight on the Standards

Afterschool Quality Standards



**Standard 4:  
Family and  
Community  
Partnerships**

**Setting Up Community  
Partnerships for Authentic PBL**  
A few tips for finding and working with  
partners to collaborate with students in  
hands-on project-based learning  
experiences  
by Tara Koehler, John Sammon

Project-based learning engages students through hands-on, collaborative experiences that develop critical skills while making learning fun. These experiences become more impactful when students can interact with community partners like local organizations, businesses, or nonprofits and local experts whose knowledge and skills align with your project's goals. Ideally, community partnerships should be reciprocal and mutually beneficial.



Tips for selecting and building community partner relationships:

- Research and understand partners.
- Leverage networks
- Align objectives
- Build and nurture relationships
- Support partner integration

Opportunities for community partner involvement:

- Collaborate on project planning
- Offer project challenges through visits or correspondence
- Provide student consultations and tutorials
- Give authentic feedback on student work
- Serve as the final project's audience

[Read the full article](#)

## Building Relationship and Behavioral Skills



### 3 Ways to Integrate SEL Into Classroom Practices

by Alicia Sewell

Highlighting and modeling SEL practices can help create an environment where disruptive behaviors are minimized. Traditional disciplinary measures offer quick fixes but often fail to address the root causes. Integrating SEL into classroom practices encourages students to develop self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and practical communication skills, leading to a more positive and conducive learning environment.

Cultivate a safe, inclusive environment.

- Establish clear expectations for respect and kindness.
- Encourage students to share their feelings and thoughts without fear of judgement.
- Engage students in activities that promote teamwork and understanding.
- Reinforce positive behaviors.

Teach and model emotional literacy.

- Incorporate activities that help students identify their own emotions and the emotions of others.
- Teach strategies for managing emotions.
- Use visual tools to help students articulate their emotions.

Model and practice empathy.

- Engage students in activities that require them to consider the feelings of others.
- Use role play to help students take on other perspectives.
- Read stories that explore diverse perspectives and discuss characters' emotions and actions.
- Model empathetic behavior in interactions with students.

[Read the full article](#)

## Health and Wellness

### 9 Ways to Support Diverse Learning Needs in Physical Education

by Will Ortlinghaus

Whether you are in an afterschool, school day, or child care setting, it is important to ensure that physical activities are inclusive for ALL students, regardless of ability levels. When children engage in physical activity, they are developing motor skills, social skills, and physical literacy, which includes the knowledge, understanding, and confidence to engage in physical activity throughout their lives. When students feel included and enjoy physical activity, lifelong healthy habits are developed.



Here are nine tips for supporting students' diverse abilities that promote inclusivity and equity while building confidence and self-esteem:

- Keep it fun and inclusive, emphasizing participation more than competition.
- Offer activities focusing on cooperation.
- Enlist peer helpers as coaches.
- Remove skill barriers if needed.
- Modify rules when necessary.
- Offer varying levels of competition.
- Use tape or cones to help with positioning.
- Modify activities so that all students can experience success.
- Use technology as a resource.

[Read the full article](#)



## Staff Support

### How to Support Teachers' Emotional Health

by Hedreich Nichols

In order for educators to effectively nurture interpersonal



skills and emotional intelligence in their students, they must first be supported in managing their own emotional health. Teachers are expected to "leave their personal lives at the door" and to don "protective emotional armor" in their professional lives, but it is important to remember that they bring all of their previous life experiences with them, and that can affect how they respond in the classroom.

Move beyond surface-level wellness initiatives by trying these strategies to offer genuine support and reflection opportunities.

- Time for silent reflection, journaling, or conversations with trusted colleagues to help teachers transition and center themselves emotionally
- Simple community practices like moments of silence, soft or upbeat music in hallways, or affirmation stones at entrances to help staff prepare for the day's challenges
- Opportunities to reflect on difficult interactions to identify triggers or biases that may influence teachers' responses
- Trigger Journals in which teachers can maintain a list of their common triggers and tally their emotional reactions, helping them recognize patterns and understand why certain behaviors and/or types of students provoke stronger responses
- Professional learning time and explicit instruction on how to access mental health resources without requiring them to share personal feelings unless they choose to do so

[Read the full article](#)

## STEM Activities

**The Role of Play in STEM Education: Inspiring Future Innovators**  
FUNdamentally Children and Dr. Gummer's Good Play Guide



Play is a vital aspect of childhood development that fosters curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving—key skills for success in STEM fields. It offers children a safe space to experiment, fail, and try again, helping them develop resilience and the ability to approach complex challenges with an open mind. Playful learning environments encourage innovation by allowing children to explore without fear of making mistakes, leading to more creative and critical thinking. The team-based play that is incorporated in many STEM activities also teaches collaboration, communication, and appreciation for diverse perspectives, all of which are essential in real-world problem-solving. By integrating play into STEM education, we nurture a generation of imaginative thinkers equipped with the skills, creativity, and resilience necessary to drive future scientific and technological progress.

[Read the full article](#)



### Fund for Teachers Professional Development Grant

Goals of a Fund for Teachers fellowship are for educators to:

- serve as problem solvers and innovators who create solutions to real problems of practice;
- reflect on their experience as a learner and transfer the most powerful aspects of their experience to student learning;
- integrate their experiences as Fund for Teachers Fellows into their teaching to create more globally minded students who are empowered to take action;
- and grow as leaders and change makers.

- **Maximum Award Amount:** Individuals may apply for up to \$5,000 and teams may apply for up to \$10,000.
- **Application Deadline:** January 23, 2025, at 5:00 PM
- **Eligibility Requirements:**
  - Full time PK-12 teacher
  - Plan to return to teaching for the 2025-2026 school year
  - At least 3 years experience

[Grant Application Website](#)

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