COLLABORATION AND CO-PLANNING BETWEEN AFTERSCHOOL AND SCHOOL-DAY STAFF

A collaboration between ExpandED Schools and the New York Hall of Science, STEM Educators Academy is taught by collaborative teams of school-day and afterschool educators at middle schools across New York City. Focused on relevant, hands-on, and design-based projects connected to the city's science standards – spanning biology, engineering, chemistry, and more — the program is designed to nurture student interest and engagement in STEM while also supporting educator skill development.

One of the key pillars of the STEM Educators Academy model is collaboration. Collaboration is a relationship based on mutual respect in a learning environment that results in co-planning and/or co-facilitating activities, and can happen between after school educators, school day teachers, youth and visiting guest experts. This resource is designed to support co-planning in collaborative educator teams made up of afterschool and school day-staff. Working together can build a sense of cohesion across the day for youth in the program, and can be the foundation of a "bridge" between the school and afterschool program more generally. However, many of the strategies here can also apply to collaborative relationships with other valued partners like youth and guest teaching staff.

CO-PLANNING

Co-planning is usually focused on instruction, STEM facilitation and the co-teaching relationship. Co-planning might include:

- **Reflecting** on your team's instruction or facilitation using your own experience, feedback from youth, or data about your program
- **Deciding** co-teaching strategies you will use to deliver upcoming lessons as a team (perhaps referencing this co-teaching strategy article) to be intentional about playing to each other's strengths, areas of development, or passions
- **Developing** new curriculum materials together that deepen the existing curriculum or better meet students' needs, interests, and lived experiences
- **Thinking** about your co-teaching relationship. What are the strengths? Where is there room for improvement?
- **Discussing** students' learning styles and developing strategies to better serve them
- **Brainstorming** strategies to better utilize youth interests, skills, and identities in your STEM programming. Are there opportunities to share decision-making power with them directly?
- **Planning** trips, incentives, and special experiences for your students
- **Interacting** with other STEM educator teams online or in person (for example: sharing lesson plans or planning a meet up with a program at another site)

STRATEGIES TO MAKE CO-PLANNING WORK FOR YOU

➢ ASSESS HOW YOUR TEAM WORKS

Some teams need to have their co-planning date and time scheduled in advance, so they really stick to it. Others do well on the fly and are able to change their schedule as needed. Does your team do better with structure or flexibility? Can you use a shared calendar to carve out time to be together? Plan accordingly.

➢ CONSIDER LENGTH AND FREQUENCY

Does your team prefer smaller co-planning chunks more frequently, or a longer session less often? Consider all your options: co-planning for half an hour twice a week, one hour once a week, or a four-hour chunk once a month.

➢ USE TECHNOLOGY

Co-plan from the comfort of your home via google hangout or zoom! Or plan together in person and share your "divide and conquer" work via collaborative google docs.

➢ PLAN AHEAD

What planning already exists in your program that you can capitalize on? For example, is there a yearly theme or annual schedule that you can use to plan ahead? Has your team already selected lessons that you plan to lead together? Planning ahead where possible can help you get as much in order in advance (and see what materials you will need to make a bulk order for!), so that you can save in-the-moment co-planning for more immediate, pressing concerns.

➢ FRONTLOAD AND BACKLOAD

The beginning and end of the year are natural times to step back and plan in a larger chunk. Before programs start are a good moment to frontload and take a bigger chunk of planning hours to build your co-planning relationship, decide on some co-teaching strategies, and make sure you have the number of lessons needed for the length of your program. The end of programming is a perfect time to reflect: what went well? Where could the relationship be improved for next time? What would you change about the lessons you used in future sessions?