CREATING A UNIQUE PROGRAM CULTURE IN 5 EASY STEPS

Step 1: Reflect on the youth learning goals of your program.

Question: Gather all partners and ask the question, "What change do we want youth to experience as a result of this program?"

Example: to support strong academic programs, career technical education, and visual performing arts as we work to create a culture-rich environment where the whole child is important.

Step 2: Define target population (grade level, achievement gap subject areas, demographics, etc.)

Question: Dig deeper than just identifying grade levels and unmet needs. Also consider, what is relevant to their own life experiences and what their developmental needs for their age are (e.g. cognitive and emotional)

Example: Youth engagement and reading comprehension is an unmet need and low-income middle school boys are the most challenging to reach.

Step 3: Research relatable social issues for target population

Question: Put yourself in the place of your target population. What social issues are relevant to them? How can you support their growth in those areas?

Example: Peer pressure to belittle and bully.

Step 4: Construct a theme of interest for the target population

Question: What is new? What are the hot topics? What activities are popular?

Example: Some middle school youth respond well to dystopian themes and fantasy involving competition where ideas of social identity and belonging are explored.

Step 5: Create links to the theme, as you develop a program schedule and curriculum,

Question: How do lessons relate to the theme? What are the similarities and differences?

Example: Leadership lessons are woven into program to draw a contrast from the literature. The nutrition goal (understanding benefits of whole verses processed foods) was developed from the characters in the book consuming processed foods before whole foods which caused issues because the whole foods spoiled.