

# The Story of a Goose: Creating an Afterschool Culture That Matters!

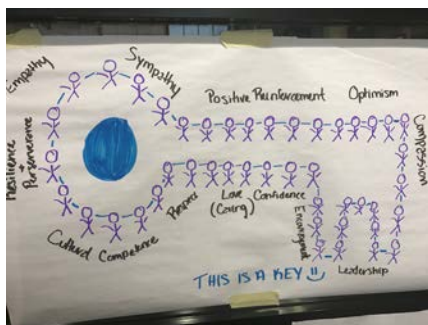
How do we create a culture where children feel safe and free to express themselves? How do we build spaces where they can thrive? Our obligation is to build a culture where our youth understand that someone will listen and guide them with integrity. Years ago, someone introduced me to a story called [“A Sense of a Goose.”](#) The story explained that when geese fly in a V formation, they reach their destination 71% faster than by flying alone. Everyone flies in formation to fulfill the goals of the



community. The flapping of the wings gives the leader the lift to keep going strong. This story has so much wisdom, and I often use it to train afterschool directors how to create an intentional afterschool culture.

We can learn a lot from the story of these geese. Once we read the story in our training, we discuss the take-aways, and how we can create a community for our children and youth. Afterschool directors first begin to create their culture by drawing a symbol that represents the values and norms they desire for their program. The purpose is to draw out a vision of the culture they want for their program. It's also important for each participant to ask, "Who do I need to be to lead a community with intention?"

Another lesson we learn from this story is that when one goose is wounded, two geese stay behind to support the goose to catch up with their flock or wait for another flock. As a leader of an afterschool program, we set the tone of unity and support. Everyone in our community will feel the intentional energy we generate. We need to have an unobstructed vision of what we want our community members to experience. We must also observe and listen to how our staff and participants interact with each other. If we don't like what we observe, then we get to declare what we want to see, and act to create it. It's not easy to do. It will often take years to see proof that our community members are experiencing unity and support, like the geese in the story. The leader must stay focused and committed to creating a community by design. We will only start to see the evidence as we begin to speak the language of unity and support.



Yet another lesson is learning how to effectively communicate with each other. In the parable of the geese, we learn that they honk from behind to redirect or confirm the direction the flock is headed. When the children are encouraged to take ownership of their afterschool experience, it speaks volumes about the program culture. Everyone in our community understands the common goals because they have a voice and contribute to building a community that counts.



Jirayda Urena, currently the Director of Programs for Ready, Set, Learn, Inc. in the Bronx, NY attended my Director's training in 2016. As her symbol, she chose a seed that will bloom into a community of leaders and creators. She is working on manifesting this culture into reality. Her persistence and commitment attracted an investor, so that she could establish her own afterschool program in the Bronx in the fall of 2017. She named her afterschool program "BLOOM." Jirayda describes BLOOM as an afterschool enrichment program that is culturally sensitive, and designed to empower and support children to understand multiple perspectives, develop creativity, and explore their imaginations.. The program will cultivate a supportive environment as well as to help create strong family ties.



There are so many more lessons we can learn from ["A story of a Goose."](#) As leaders of afterschool programs, our focus on creating an intentional culture is critical to the youth, staff and families we serve. Congratulations, Jiryda for stepping into your dream!



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