Programming 126
An Approach for Planning Stronger Programs
By Aleph S'gan Adam Vinner

Congratulations! By reading this packet you are taking the first steps in educating yourself about how to plan a fun, meaningful, and innovative program. Using this information will ensure that your program is a success! The following release can be applied to any program, whether it will be conducted on the chapter, council, regional or international level. Enjoy!

-Aleph S'gan Adam Vinner

The 5 Folds of Programming

In case you don't know the 5 folds, they are the ideas and basis on which **_ALL_** AZA programs are planned around. They help ensure that programs are diverse and cover a wide variety of topics.

The 5 Folds of Programming: Social, Athletic, Judaic, Social Action/Community Service, and Education

The 6th and 7th Unofficial Folds: Food and Fire (Food was passed as the 6th unofficial fold by an international motion in 2011; Fire, my personal addition, is good for setting a fraternal mood and adding some excitement to any program. Fire=Fraternity)

   Although unofficial, including these folds will make <u>ANY</u> program more interesting.

Using the Folds: Don't use any fold in excess. Too much of a fold can be overwhelming; even the most popular folds, social and athletic, can become boring. Try to incorporate several folds at the same time, weaving activities together so that it doesn't seem like there is an "Athletic" section or a "Community Service" section.

The Basic Programming Strategy

   Tailoring Your Program: Start with a broad idea, then chip away the parts that are unusable or unlikely to be successful until you have a solid list of specific activities.
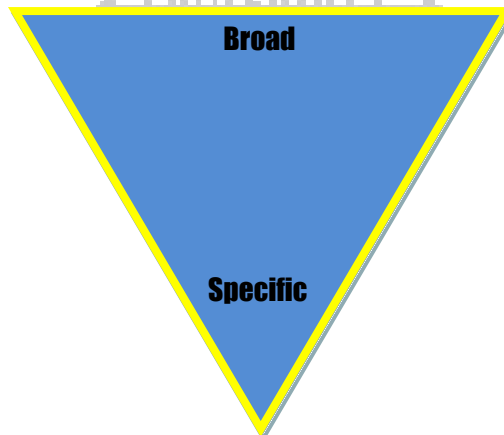
4 Steps to Brainstorm Ideas for a Program

1) **Pick a broad concept or theme** (anything from hygiene to outer-space, don't hold anything back) that you think has the potential to be an awesome program. Also, **select a purpose or goal for the program** (what you hope the participants will gain from attending). The purpose doesn't have to be profound or serious, but it should be accomplished by the end of the program.

      Tip: Make sure that you are knowledgeable or can easily research information about the idea or concept that you choose. This will make the planning process go much smoother.

2) **Brainstorm ideas** that are related to the chosen theme. Don't hold anything back here. List even the craziest, most "out there" details that you can think of. These can lead to the most innovative programming activities.

      Tip: If you get stuck, pretend you're watching a movie or reading a book about the theme. What happens at the beginning? How do the characters act? What might the characters be thinking or feeling? What happens next? Pretend that your program is telling the story. This method of programming will help ensure that the program transitions smoothly from activity to activity.

3) **Pair each item on the list of ideas with an activity** that simulates the idea, or can evoke a similar feeling. Try to replicate the idea in your program. The activity does NOT have to exactly mirror the idea. This step is often the hardest, but try not to dwell on it for too long. Try to avoid using cliché activities that you have seen during past programs. Pick activities that people will want to participate in. Your new activities have the potential to become instant classics!

      If you're really stuck, focus on finishing the outline rather than making it perfect. The outline can always be edited later. Each activity will determine which folds are involved with your program, so choose carefully if you want the program to have specific folds. Edit activities so they are fun and meaningful.

      Tip: Instead of just having the participants do the activity, make it a competition, add a new element, involve teamwork, or allow each participant (or group) to be spontaneous and creative. Also, don't be afraid to include a serious aspect to your program.

4) **Evaluate which activities will work best** for Simon Atlas (or whoever will be participating). Cut out activities that are unlikely to be successful. Only include those which will be fun and meaningful for the participants.

Still Stuck?

Another way to think about programming is to **start with a single, awesome activity,** and then build the program up by brainstorming other activities that can fit under a common theme. This method ensures that some aspects of the program will be a lot of fun and more likely to be a success.

Example of Brainstorming Program Activities- SiAt Blows Steam Night

1) Theme: Stress relief
Purpose: Learn cool ways to alleviate stress.
2) Details: exercise, breaking things, music, laughing, deep breathing, writing, talking
3) Activities: play handball, smash plates, standup comedy, chill while listening music, writing what's on your mind, talking to friends, sleeping, breathing exercises.
4) Evaluated activities: play handball, smash plates, standup comedy, writing what's on your mind

Creating an Icebreaker

Icebreakers set the tone for your program because they're the first taste that participants get. They can cause the participants to think on a deeper level or get excited for the upcoming program. Icebreakers come in 2 forms: questions and opening activities. Icebreaker questions are usually a faster way to introduce everyone; however, they can be monotonous if participants must wait a long time for their turn to speak. Opening activities are often longer and slightly more complex than icebreakers. They're a great way to set the tone of a program while involving all Alephs in a more active icebreaker.

Tips for Creating an Icebreaker:

1) The tone of an icebreaker should match the tone of the program itself. Asking a funny question before starting a serious-toned brotherhood program probably won't work out well.
2) Icebreaker questions don't need to follow the typical "Name, grade, school, *question*" format. But it's important that the group knows each other's names.
3) The question or activity should get people excited for the program and thinking about the theme.
4) Involve everyone as fast as possible because people will get bored if they have to wait a long time to introduce themselves or participate in the activity.

Example of Creating an Icebreaker-SiAt Blows Steam Night:

Split into groups of 3, each participant should tell the other group members their name; groups try to build a tower which simulates the buildup of stress in someone's life; How much stress can each group take before their tower topples over?

Structuring your Activities

Programs can take on many forms, so it's important to select the right structure for each activity. Also, vary the structure of each program to keep things interesting. Each activity can be in a different format, depending on how many people you want to participate. Consider how each activity will be run. Will there be small groups that rotate to several stations? Will everyone participate in a single activity? Or will some kids do one activity while others do a different activity?

Accomplishing the Purpose of the Program

Now that you have the basic elements of a program, it's time to combine them into something awesome! This is the time when you should add things to ensure that the purpose or goal of the program is accomplished (if the purpose of the program is already accomplished, skip this step). Ask thought-provoking questions after activities, lead discussions about the meaning of activities, and push the participants in the right direction until they figure out the purpose/meaning for themselves (trust me, it's better that way). Not every program needs to have a profound meaning, as long as the purpose, whatever it may be, is accomplished.

Writing an Outline

Anyone who reads a program outline should be able to run the program just from the information provided in the outline. To write a solid outline of that caliber, keep a few things in mind:

Catchy Title: Branch out from the typical "*insert program theme* Night". A fresh new title can go a long way when explaining and promoting your program.

Quick description: The details of each activity should be described. This should include the purpose/meaning for including it in your program (if there is a purpose/meaning). If you can't put it in words, make a diagram. This will help you run your program effectively.

Script/Quotes: Jot down a couple speaking points that you want to mention during your program. This can range from discussion questions to introducing an activity. Sometimes it's hard to remember the exact right way to word what you want to say. Think about what you want to say ahead of time to create the perfect effect.

Prepare for the Unexpected: List alternate ways to do each activity, multiple talking points, and specific details for setting up each activity so you can adapt your program to anything life might throw at you (and your program).

Timeline: Mark down the length of time that each activity is predicted to take. This will help you keep your program on track and help you adapt your program if your time prediction was wrong. Don't force a program to take up the full 2 hour time slot. It's better to end a solid program early than to drag it out beyond the point when it can be enjoyed.

Materials List: Read through your activities and list the supplies that are needed to do them. Make sure to specify which supplies are for each activity. This will help organize yourself when the time comes to buy materials and setup your program.

Location: Some programs require a specific area/ landscape to be successful. Check that your location has everything that you will need and that you have permission to use it.

Example of a Program Outline-SiAt Blows Steam Night:

SiAt Blows Steam Night

Purpose: Teach SiAt some cool ways to handle and alleviate stress

a.   0-20: Icebreaker/people arrive: Name, Grade, School, "What stresses you out and why?" **OR** Split into groups of 3, each participant should tell the other group members their name; groups try to build a tower which simulates the buildup of stress in someone's life; How much stress can each group take before their tower topples over?

***Do the first icebreaker if a lot of people are in attendance or if the program starts late.

   i.   Tonight we will learn some cool ways to help relieve your stress. There are 4 stress-relieving stations that will teach you different ways to relax.
   b.   20-25: Break into 4 groups.

20 minute stations:

   c.   Exercise: "Why does exercise help people relax?", split into several teams and play a round-robin style handball tournament.
   d.   Miscellaneous: Listening to music/Standup comedy/Deep breathing- "How are these things relaxing?" People can relax and enjoy some comedy (either from people in the group or YouTube) and music.
   e.   Breaking Plates: "Why might breaking plates help you relax?"; participants will be allowed to break several plates into a lined trashcan. They must wear safety goggles and gloves so they don't get hurt.
   f.   Writing/Talking: The chill station. People will first write what's on their mind, whatever they are thinking about. Then they will put it in a shredder/fire/dump it with water (can use dissolvable paper). Now what's bothering them is gone. For the remainder of the station people can talk with their group. Before they talk, ask: "Is talking to friends always a good way to relax?", "How did writing what's on your mind help get it off your mind?" ("Did it help you relax in the first place?")
        i.   No, friends can be the source of stress
      g.   105-120: Closing statement(s), cleanup, Havdalah

"Perfecting the Program"

By now, your program is pretty good. The final step is to go through the outline and make finishing touches. Is there a small detail that can greatly improve the program? Maybe a new spin on an activity that will make it that much better? Can you include the 6th or 7th unofficial folds of programming, food or fire? At this time you should evaluate each activity with the following questions: "Is it innovative?" and "Will it appeal to the Alephs who participate?" Answering these questions with "Yes's" will help perfect the program.

Now that you have a solid outline for your program, go back a few days after you've finished it and assess it! Taking a fresh look will change your perspective, which will enable you to develop your program even more. Here is a release, explaining how to improve your program, made by a past Grand Aleph S'gan, Daniel Cooper.

PERFECTING THE PROGRAM
GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PROGRAMS
BY ALEPH DANIEL COOPER - INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING EXCELLENCE CHAIRMAN

BBYO Celebrating 85 Years

STEP ONE - PROGRAM – In order to improve a program, the program must be planned. Focus on pushing through the outline, rather than taking your time to make it perfect.	**Music Night** - Participants will listen to and learn the history behind music.
STEP TWO - BRAINSTORMING - So you've got this program that's pretty good, but you want to make it a lot better. Take 10 minutes and write down any crazy idea that comes to your head, no matter how implausible. To involve your whole chapter, try telling your members the title of the program, nothing else, and have them come up with ideas.	•Go to a concert •Write our own songs •Create mock bands •Get a famous musician to come in and talk about being in a band •Music Videos

STEP THREE - EVALUATE - Take a look at the list you just made; can any of your ideas be replicated in your program? Try and use the ideas from your brainstorming as a starting point . For example, don't literally think of going to a concert, but instead, replicating a concert. The key is to get the ideas in your head flowing. If you think you're done, send the program to a friend or two and have them take a look at it. The more people the better!
 	
P.S. - This would also be the time where you should try and make the program 5/6 folds! Make sure you try and incorporate all of them, but it should not be forced. All the folds should fit organically.
	•Create Mock Bands
	  —Have groups fill out a Band Info sheet with information about Band
	•Go to a concert
	  —Have groups write a song and have them perform for the rest of the chapter.
	  —The next day, have the chapter perform the songs at a children's hospital and teach the children how to play instruments
	•Music Videos
	  —Have participants make a music video to their new song and then put the videos on YouTube.

STEP FOUR - ORGANIZING - Take your newfound ideas and integrate them into your original outline. Think of ways you can switch up the events planned to make the evening flow better.	**Battle of the Bands Night** - Participants are put into groups, where they will create their own band identity. They will then write a song and perform it in front of the group. They will then make music video's to their new 'hit single' and put the videos on YouTube. The next morning, participants will visit a Children's Hospital where they will perform the songs and teach the children how to play instruments
STEP FIVE - PERFECTING - Take a look at your outline; are their any minor details that should be added to make the program that much better? Should the location be different? Maybe serve food that corresponds to the program? Or maybe a guest speaker would really tie the entire program together? This step should take some time, so don't expect to finish it right away!	•Havdallah - Have leader play guitar •Ice-breaker - Have each person introduce themselves while trying to rap to a beat •Put a guitarist in each group to aid with song making •Have each mock band create a band t-shirt

JUST REMEMBER PBEOP!

The program improved can be found on Dashboard - Look under Melech's Battle of the Bands Night!

Reviewing your Program

After you run your program, it's time to reflect on how it went. Here are a few questions to ask yourself so you can plan an even better program next time! But don't be too hard on yourself. Just because your program may not have gone completely according to plan, that doesn't mean that it was a failure.

- How do you think your program went?
- Did the participants enjoy it?
- Did they get something out of it? (Was the goal/purpose accomplished?)
- What did you do right?
- What went wrong?
- How could you have improved the parts that went wrong?
- If someone else was going to run your program in the future, what advice would you give them?

Alephs of Simon Atlas AZA-

Wow, you made it to the end?! You must be really dedicated to learning how to program!

I spent a lot of time working on this release, so please take advantage of it. Use it as a guide and resource throughout your time in AZA. I hope this gives anyone who has an interest in planning a program some advice and inspiration for doing so.

Even though this packet is pretty long (8 pages!), it doesn't have all the answers. There is an infinite amount of ways to program; this is only one method. Call me, text me, email me, facebook me, telegram me, carrier pigeon me or use any other mode of communication to ask me questions or give comments about this packet and program planning in general.

I'm looking forward to an awesome and innovative programming term!

Fraternally submitted with undying love for Programming, the 5 Folds and Simon Atlas AZA #126,
I remain,
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