Youth virtual recruitment and retention is an awareness and measurement of virtual programming’s youth enrollment and attendance over time. A multitude of research has shown positive impacts from consistent attendance in afterschool programs. Increasing and retaining virtual attendance in afterschool programming can provide a greater sense of belonging and community, opportunities for leadership, and educational advancement for youth.

Online school, social media, virtual games, apps, and so much more are all vying for children’s attention, and youth are becoming burned out of screen time. Creating a highly attended, enticing, and refreshing virtual program can be a challenge. As you implement recruiting strategies such as; increasing youth’s sense of belonging, creating leadership opportunities, and maintaining an interest-based focus, can help you increase and maintain attendees.

Let’s take a deeper look into how we can incorporate these strategies to target key needs. Programs have the perfect antidote for feelings of isolation and loneliness. They create a community where youth can feel that they belong. Encourage youth to get to know each other and connect through teambuilding games and icebreakers. It’s important for youth to also feel a sense of purpose. Giving youth leadership opportunities and responsibility can increase confidence and youth buy-in. Finally youth need to be excited and engaged about what they are doing. Identify resources and curriculum that will spark your kid’s interests.

www.utah afterschool.org/summertools
Utah Afterschool Network's Virtual Team Building List of Resources
Youth have a need to belong and connect with others. Creating ways for youth to get to know each other is a great way to promote community building.
Utah Afterschool Network: Links to hundreds of Ice breakers and Team Building Games
https://utah afterschool.org/program-resources/resource-library/item/440-let-s-talk-about-team-building

Afterschool Alliance
Afterschool Alliance shares eight key components to retaining youth in afterschool programming
https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolsnack/Keys-to-Success-for-Summer-Learning-Recruitment_07-02-2018.cfm

YMCA
How do you create a sense of belonging and community when a screen acts as an interactional barrier? The YMCA has 7 tips to support you in fostering your social media community.
https://www.ymca.net/summer-buzz/foster-community-on-social-media

Utah Afterschool Network Covid-19: Activities and Curriculum Links
The virtual world opens up endless possibilities all begging for your kid’s attention. You may wonder how you can capture their interest and keep them coming back for more. Providing interest-based activities can peak interest and increase involvement. Utah Afterschool Network’s Covid-19 Resource page will link you to a multitude of resources for lessons, activities, and projects allowing you to select ones that will excite and engage your kids.
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Nx9rabxlilx-I2UJKjTrlQV5Ug27otKppKwlr0MHeW/edit#gid=1002571658

Texas Network of Youth Services and the Prevention and Early Intervention/ Community Youth Development Division of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services: Making It Work A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships
Engaging youth by allowing them to make choices, take responsibility, and exercise leadership is a critical piece in retaining youth participation. This guide outlines best practices for sharing leadership opportunities with youth.
http://4h.u canr.edu/files/2423.pdf

The following indicators in the Quality Self-Assessment Tool support youth recruiting and retention. A well structured program in and of itself is a key component of recruitment and retention. All of sections of the Quality Tool and Program Quality Assessment contribute to structuring a high quality program.

Program Quality Assessment

Quality Tool
Developing Meaningful Relationships: Section A