



Building Professional Development Systems for the Afterschool Field



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Child Care Bureau





BUILDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS FOR THE AFTERSCHOOL FIELD



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The Afterschool Investments Project

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides federal resources for child care that support both direct services and quality enhancements. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care Bureau awards CCDF grants to states, territories, and tribes. With nearly half of the children receiving services being of school or kindergarten age, CCDF provides significant funding for afterschool care in a variety of settings. The majority of CCDF dollars are used to provide subsidies to eligible low-income children under age 13. A portion of CCDF funding is also used for quality improvement initiatives, such as professional development and technical assistance, with the goal of building the capacity of states to deliver quality services including programs before and after-school, during summers, and on school holidays.

To support state efforts to provide quality afterschool opportunities, the Child Care Bureau awarded a technical assistance contract on out-of-school time to The Finance Project and its partner, The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. The Afterschool Investments project provides technical assistance to Child Care and Development Fund grantees and other state and local leaders who support afterschool efforts. The goals of the project include:

- Identifying ways that states and communities are using Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy and quality dollars to support out-of-school time programs, and sharing these practices and approaches with other states;
- Identifying administrative and implementation issues related to CCDF investments in out-of-school time programs, and providing information and context (about barriers, problems, opportunities) as well as practical tools that will help CCDF administrators make decisions; and
- Identifying other major programs and sectors that are potential partners for CCDF in supporting out-of-school time programs, and providing models, strategies, and tools for coordination with other programs and sectors.

To meet these goals, the Afterschool Investments project is:

- Regularly updating and maintaining State profiles of afterschool resources, policies and issues;
- Creating tools and materials to support the development and sustainability of afterschool efforts; and
- Providing targeted technical assistance to state child care administrators and other state leaders around building partnerships and developing state policies that promote investments in high-quality afterschool programs.

For more information about the project or to submit a request for technical assistance or information, contact The Finance Project at (202) 587-1000 or by email at afterschool@financeproject.org. All project tools and resources can be found online on the Afterschool Investments Project website: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/afterschool/>.



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Introduction

The afterschool field evolved considerably during the past decade.¹ Demand for programs increased due, in part, to the rise in the number of working parents and the increased attention to academic success. A growing research base on the benefits of afterschool programs has highlighted their value, supporting further investment and program expansion. With this expansion has come heightened concern about quality.

Professional development plays a vital role in supporting quality afterschool programs.² Providers who have participated in education and training opportunities are more likely to deliver quality programs that contribute to positive youth outcomes.³ Moreover, studies in the education and early care and education field show that participation in professional development is associated with higher levels of worker retention and decreased turnover.⁴ Despite growing recognition of the importance of a trained afterschool workforce, the field lacks a fully developed professional development system. A professional development system not only includes comprehensive education and training to adequately prepare afterschool providers for their work, but also offers various supports to ensure the value, quality, alignment, and accessibility of the education and training offered.

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels are currently considering how best to support the professional development needs of those who work with children in afterschool programs.

¹ In this brief, the term “afterschool” is used to refer to the care of school-age children when they are not in school. This term includes programs that occur before and after school and during the summer and holidays. The term afterschool provider is used interchangeably with school-age care worker and youth workers.

² In this brief, the term “professional development” is used to refer to a variety of educational and training opportunities for afterschool providers.

³ Beth M Miller, *Pathways to Success for Youth: What Counts in After School: Massachusetts After-School Research Study Report* (Boston, Mass.: United Way of Massachusetts Bay, 2005), at: www.wcwonline.org/proj/mars/MARSfull.pdf; and Susan Bodilly and Megan Beckett, *Making Out-Of-School Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2005).

⁴ Julie Dennehy, Ellen Gannett, and Rachel Robbins, *Setting the Stage for a Youth Development Associate Credential: A National Review of Professional Development Credentials for the Out-of-School Time Workforce* (Wellesley, Mass.: Wellesley Centers for Women, National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2006), at: www.niost.org/youth_devel_Setting_606.pdf.

Several factors are driving the heightened interest in developing professional development systems for school-age care workers, including:

- an increased focus on establishing a system of professional development for early care providers, particularly as a result of the Bush administration's early childhood initiative *Good Start, Grow Smart*, which has highlighted the need for a similar focus on school-age care;
- the success of statewide afterschool networks in raising awareness of what is needed to create a comprehensive system of support for afterschool programs, including a professional development system; and
- efforts to improve children's academic achievement by providing afterschool academic and enrichment programs as well as the need to ensure program staff have the requisite skills and training to provide programs that will accomplish these objectives.

States and localities have taken a variety of approaches to building professional development systems for the afterschool field. This brief highlights challenges in building afterschool professional development systems and introduces three approaches for systems-building efforts. It then profiles a number of state and local efforts to build essential components of professional development systems and discusses lessons learned from creating effective professional development systems for afterschool.

Challenges in Building Afterschool Professional Development Systems

In many states and localities, training for afterschool providers is connected to the professional development system for early care and education. However, characteristics of the afterschool workforce and elements of the afterschool field pose unique challenges to creating a strong system. These challenges, and their implications for professional development systems, include the following.

- [The nature of the workforce and of the job.](#) Like early care and education, the field of afterschool is characterized by low wages and high turnover. In addition, the afterschool workforce tends to work part time. These factors can dampen workers' ability and motivation to pursue professional development as well as the incentive for programs to provide professional development opportunities for workers in the field.
- [A lack of identity as a profession.](#) Many see afterschool care as supplemental or interim work. In this largely paraprofessional workforce, workers may not view themselves as professionals or see afterschool care as a career. In addition, many providers use volunteers heavily in program delivery. These issues may make providers less likely to invest in training.





- [A lack of identity as a field.](#) The term “afterschool” refers to a broad array of programs (arts, academics, recreation, youth development, etc.) that serve children of different ages. This diversity in program focus can make it difficult for professional development system leaders to design and provide training geared to the desired skill set for providers.
- [Varying prior experiences and educational backgrounds.](#) Recent studies have found that afterschool providers vary greatly in age, education, and prior experience.⁵ The various experiences and backgrounds of participants make it difficult to design a system and offer trainings that meet providers’ diverse needs and abilities.
- [Different professional development goals.](#) The desired duration and intensity of professional development offerings differ among members of the afterschool workforce, with some providers wanting single workshops and others interested in pursuing degrees. This highlights the likely need for different modes of delivery and entry points for an after-school professional development system.

Approaches to Afterschool Professional Development System-Building Efforts

Most of the system-building activity is occurring at the state and local levels, though in many cases leaders are utilizing national organizations for technical assistance and guidance on professional development systems for the afterschool as well as the early care and education fields. These efforts reflect many similarities, but the exact strategy and approach undertaken in each state or locality varies depending on such factors as the presence of professional development systems for other fields (e.g., child care); the relationships with, and levels of support from, relevant agencies and leaders; and current afterschool training offerings. Approaches include building off the early childhood professional development system, connecting existing systems, and creating a new system.



⁵ Nicole Yohalem and Karen Pittman, *Putting Youth Work on the Map* (Washington, D.C.: Forum for Youth Investment on behalf of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition, November 2006), at: www.forumfyi.org/Files/Putting_Youth_Work_on_the_Map.pdf.

- **Building off the early childhood professional development system.** Many states have strong early care and education professional development systems and have successfully expanded them to the school-age care field. For example, **Illinois** is building a professional development system based on an existing framework in the Gateways Initiative from the early care and education field.⁶
- **Connecting existing systems.** In other cases, state and local officials from many systems and agencies are collaborating to create a system for school-age care providers. Existing programs and operations are connected and built on. Responsibility for operating the system lies across agencies through the use of interagency agreements. These efforts typically involve several state agencies, including labor, education, child care, workforce development, and juvenile justice, which all have a stake in ensuring a qualified after-school workforce.
- **Creating a new system.** Alternatively, some states may want to create a new system to address the specific needs of workers in the afterschool field. Modifying the system for early child care is not seen as viable or ideal. Instead of connecting existing systems, a new system is needed.

The leadership structure for an afterschool professional development system can vary, regardless of the approach utilized. In some cases, an agency such as child care assumes the lead role. In other cases, leadership is shared across agencies and organizations. Many have found that professional development for afterschool workers is not easily nested within one agency, because the scope of the system cuts across the mission of many programs.

In some cases, state legislation has provided the impetus for building a system. **Washington** STARS (State Training and Registry System), a career development system for the early care and education and afterschool fields, was established through statewide legislation. Components of Washington STARS include an online registry of trainings, scholarships for training participants, and a trainer approval system.⁷

Legislation also can promote system-building by creating a market for training and credentials. Leaders of state and local system-building efforts report that some colleges have designed courses focused on afterschool and youth development but have stopped offering them regularly because of a lack of enrollment. Similar problems existed for the early care field before Head Start legislation was passed requiring teachers to have a credential. The mandate for additional training created an influx of potential students and led to increased demand for the child development associate credential.

Yet legislation does not always ensure an operating system; in **Florida**, early care and afterschool program directors and administrators must have an administrator credential. However, only one county has leveraged this mandate into a professional development system (see “Making It Work in Florida’s Palm Beach County” on page 8). Even in instances

⁶ For more information about the Gateways Initiative, see www.ilgateways.com.

⁷ For more information about Washington STARS, see www.stars.dshs.wa.gov.



of legislation, many leaders have spent time building public awareness of the need for a professional development system to gain support and partners.

Because of the diverse nature of afterschool programs, a wide variety of partners are needed to develop an afterschool professional development system. These include practitioners, intermediaries, state agencies (labor, justice, education, child care, youth development, etc.), resource and referral agencies, and higher education and community college systems. In many states, statewide afterschool networks have played an active role in establishing professional development systems.⁸ Since 2002, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has provided core funding to statewide afterschool networks, with 32 of networks currently receiving funding.

Making It Work in Florida's Palm Beach County

Building a *statewide* professional development system for afterschool workers in **Florida** has proved challenging. In Florida, local early learning coalitions are quasi-governmental, community organizations that are responsible for implementing Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) quality earmark activities. Most coalitions use the funds to support services and systems for early childhood, leaving few funds for afterschool system-building efforts. Furthermore, because of the structure of licensing in the state, approximately 90 percent of afterschool providers are license-exempt. Therefore, licensing provides little incentive for staff members to seek training or work toward the school-age care certification or credential offered by the state. Finally, even if staff members show interest, few venues in the state offer school-age care coursework toward the credential, and classes are not regularly offered or easily accessible.

Palm Beach County, however, has taken steps to overcome many of these challenges by linking and supporting the various components of a local system. Although the county's professional development system for school-age care is in its infancy, strong partnerships among the child care community, the community college system, and school-age care advocates benefit the system. The county has mandated that in addition to the standard 40-hour training required of all licensed child care workers in the state, all school-age workers must take an additional 10 hours of training specific to youth development and afterschool programming. The afterschool training is offered by Palm Beach Community College. To help school-age workers pay for the courses, the county has devoted funds for training scholarships. In addition, the county is working closely with the community college to develop articulation agreements with other two- and with four-year education institutions. Finally, a local advocacy group, Primetime Palm Beach, has been an important link to the provider community. The group sponsors forums to solicit provider input into course development, offers youth-focused trainings, and helps with outreach efforts.

For more information, visit www.thechildrensforum.com/schoolage.



⁸ For more information about statewide afterschool networks, see www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net.

Networks provide a vehicle for connecting various afterschool stakeholders to build partnerships and encourage policies that improve the quality, quantity, and sustainability of afterschool programs in their state.

State and Local Efforts to Build Components of a Professional Development System

Professional development systems have several interconnected components. The National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), a service of the Child Care Bureau, has developed a framework that describes the essential components and connections of a professional development system.⁷ Although the framework was developed to help states and localities develop systems of professional development for early childhood, the components are relevant for states and localities aiming to build a system for the afterschool field or incorporate school-age care workers into their early childhood professional development systems.

The five interconnected components of this framework are:

- **funding;**
- **core knowledge and core competencies;**
- **qualifications and credentials;**
- **quality assurances; and**
- **access and outreach.**

Efforts to create professional development systems for the afterschool workforce are relatively new. While many states are taking a comprehensive approach, they tend to focus on building and implementing one or two of these components in their initial stages of work. The following section describes these components in detail and highlights examples of states and localities that are currently working to build and/or strengthen these system components.

Funding

Funding is the foundation of any system. Investment is needed to plan and implement professional development systems for afterschool programs and to make training financially feasible for participants. Financial support for the system can include funding; scholarships and financial incentives for trainings, courses, and degrees; compensation and retention initiatives; and tiered reimbursement or rewards for programs as part of a quality rating system.

The nature of the workforce and the lack of identity as a field make providers less likely to pursue professional development for school-age care workers, especially if trainings are costly. System-building leaders cite the need for funding to support the delivery of professional development and to provide scholarships for trainings, courses, and degrees.

⁷ See NCCIC's one-page document, "Elements of a Professional Development System for Early Care and Education: A Simplified Framework and Definitions," at: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/goodstart/pdsystem.pdf>.



Incentives and compensation plans reward workers who engage in professional development or attend trainings. For example, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, which includes operating programs in 24 states, provides scholarships to child care providers and rewards staff members who improve their education with a stipend or increased wages. Afterschool providers are able to be part of the program in seven states; however, T.E.A.C.H. programs are typically restricted to full-time employees. This limits how many afterschool providers are able to access the funding because of their typical part-time work schedule. However, expanding the program to all part-time employees—early care and school age—would dramatically increase the cost of the program to states.

Professional development accomplishments can also be tied to tiered quality rewards and reimbursement, including those that are part of a quality rating system (QRS).¹⁰ These systems were initially developed by the early care field and enable programs to be evaluated, typically on a voluntary basis, on meeting quality standards to earn a designation, such as a “star rating.” As of November 2006, 13 states and the District of Columbia have implemented a statewide QRS, with many other states developing one.¹¹ In many instances, developing a QRS has served as a catalyst for building a statewide professional development system.

The national experts interviewed for this publication indicate that most funding for professional development system-building comes from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). According to state and territory CCDF plans for fiscal years 2006–07, 33 states and 2 territories use school-age child care set-aside funds for practitioner training.¹² Additional funding comes from foundations and state and local agencies (see “Afterschool Academies Initiative” on page 11).

- In **Massachusetts**, the Achieve Boston initiative received funding from various public and private sources for a pilot project to compile Boston’s professional development offerings in a training catalog and website and distribute training vouchers.¹³ Funding sources included the city of Boston, the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Boston Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Harvard University, and Verizon.
- Palm Beach County in **Florida** has devoted county funds to help school-age care workers pay for courses developed by Palm Beach Community College. Prime Time Palm Beach, a local nonprofit intermediary organization with funding from the county and various foundations, sponsors forums to support course design, provides trainings, and supports outreach efforts.

¹⁰ For more information on QRS, see Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Using A State Child Care Quality Rating System to Promote Quality in Afterschool* (Washington, D.C., 2007).

¹¹ *Child Care Bulletin 32* (winter/spring 2007), at: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/ccb/issue32.pdf>.

¹² Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *CCDF Plans for the States and Territories, 2006–2007* (Washington, D.C., 2006).

¹³ For more information on Achieve Boston, see www.achievetoboston.org.



Afterschool Academies Initiative

The Afterschool Academies Initiative, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, aims to build the capacity of afterschool educators by providing high-quality, in-depth professional development opportunities. The academies are intensive, two- to three-day trainings that provide supervisors, directors, trainers, head teachers, and afterschool staff with specialized, hands-on workshops from specialists in the field. Academy participants also receive follow-up support through four weeks of structured online discussions with academy leaders and fellow participants. To date, academies have been conducted in San Jose, **California**; Atlanta and Macon, **Georgia**; and Raleigh, **North Carolina**; several more are scheduled before the end of 2008. The academies have been received well, serving nearly 100 participants per training.

After successful academies, a follow-up regional academy was held for participants from **Georgia, North Carolina**, and **South Carolina** in May 2007. This event proved valuable in bringing together key stakeholders from each state to build relationships and discuss next steps for building a professional development system. Each state brought a team that included state agency officials and representatives from afterschool organizations as well as frontline afterschool providers. During the three-day meeting, teams were given time to develop and rank priorities and create an action plan for building a professional development system in their state.

Afterschool Academies are developed and implemented through a partnership involving Foundations, Inc., Community Network for Youth Development, Citizen Schools, YouthLearn at the Education Development Center, and individual consultants. To sustain the work that is being done in the Afterschool Academies, this initiative will produce tools to guide the continued delivery of academies, train new facilitators, and develop a cost structure to support future implementation and growth.



Core Knowledge and Core Competencies

A key component of a professional development system is identification of what every practitioner should know and be able to do to provide high-quality afterschool care, better known as core knowledge and competencies. Core knowledge is the basic set of information that providers are expected to know and core competencies are the interactions and observable skills of putting the core knowledge in action. Core knowledge and competencies can serve as an important basis for the other components of the professional development system (see “Core Content Areas” below). This component also includes creating a career lattice—a framework to recognize and track providers’ professional development.

Core Content Areas

Core knowledge and competencies are typically centered around core content areas. **Kansas** and **Missouri** used the following content areas in their bi-state core competencies.

- **Child/Adolescent Growth and Development:** understand how youth learn and develop in each of the domains—physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative.
- **Learning Environment and Curriculum:** establish an environment that provides learning experiences that meet each youth’s needs, capabilities, and interests.
- **Child/Adolescent Observation and Assessment:** observe and assess what youth know and can do in order to provide curriculum that meets their developmental and learning needs.
- **Families and Communities:** work collaboratively with families and agencies/organizations to meet the needs of youth and to encourage the community’s involvement with youth development.
- **Health, Safety, and Nutrition:** establish and maintain an environment that ensures the healthy development, safety, and nourishment of youth.
- **Interactions with Children/Youth:** establish supportive relationships with youth and guide them both as individuals and as a part of a group.
- **Program Planning and Development:** establish, implement, and evaluate youth development programs.
- **Professional Development and Leadership:** serve youth and families in a professional manner and participate in the community as a representative of the youth development field.

Source: *Kansas and Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals*, 1st. ed. [online], October 2006, at: www.openinitiative.org/SACC.htm and www.kansasenrichment.net.



The knowledge and competencies outlined must be broad enough to encompass the wide range of settings, types of programs, and ages of children served by afterschool programs. Competencies usually include steps or levels to reflect a continuum from basic skills to advanced levels of training and experience. Practitioners progress through the levels based on formal and informal training, education, responsibilities, and experience.

Many professional development systems create career lattices or career pathways to define levels of experience, education, and training for various positions and compensation levels. The lattice or pathway should be applicable for providers with entry-level skills as well as for those at an advanced professional level. These models differ from a typical career ladder by recognizing multiple points of entry into the professional development system and facilitating movement within the field and across settings, programs, and age groups.

Identifying or developing standards for core knowledge, core competencies, and content areas provides many benefits to a professional development system-building effort. The standards create a common language and shared expectations for those in the afterschool field. For example, clearly defined competencies help program leaders design job expectations, establish salary scales, and help develop professional development plans. They also enable a baseline of current levels of knowledge and skills to be evaluated; evaluation results can improve training delivery by identifying and targeting training needs. Core knowledge and competencies also create set standards that can lead to the development of professional credentials.

Many states have created core competencies, typically building on existing standards from other fields. The experience in **Kansas** and **Missouri** illustrates a collaborative effort to develop core competencies (see "Developing Bi-State Core Competencies in Kansas and Missouri" on page 14).



Developing Bi-State Core Competencies in Kansas and Missouri

In fall 2004, both **Kansas** and **Missouri** independently began to bring together stakeholders to create competencies for youth workers, building on existing competency structures. Recognizing opportunities to pool resources, prevent duplication, and provide consistency, the two states worked collaboratively to develop one set of core competencies to serve as the foundation for both states' career development systems. The competencies were developed with leadership from the Opportunities in a Professional Education Network (OPEN) Initiative, which provided staffing support for the development of the content and funds for the graphic design, and the statewide afterschool networks in Kansas (Kansas Enrichment Network) and Missouri (Missouri Afterschool Network), which encouraged workgroup participation and provided funding to print and distribute the competencies. Additional support for developing the competencies came from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Community Education Division, and Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services.

The workgroup was diverse, consisting of staff from youth programs, higher education institutions, federal and state agencies, school-age organizations, and community-based trainers from both states. In summer 2005, a draft of the bi-state document was put into a web-based survey, and more than 100 professionals from both states commented on the content. The final document, *Kansas and Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals*, was released in October 2006. The collaborative leaders held five summits throughout both states to introduce the competencies and their use to the field. Other outreach efforts included presentations at conferences and articles in newsletters.

Collaboration across state lines continues in the Kansas City area; a virtual technical assistance network has been built to map current training opportunities in the area and identify any potential gaps in technical assistance services. Possible future bi-state collaboration includes piloting a school-age care director credential.

For more information on the bi-state core competencies for youth development professionals, see www.openinitiative.org/SACC.htm and visit www.kansasenrichment.net. For more information on the Missouri Youth Development Credential, see www.mosac2.org/tra/index.htm#ydc.



Qualifications and Credentials

Ideally, professional development trainings should follow a clear sequence, from basic knowledge and entry-level skills to advanced content. They should count toward a licensing requirement, credential, or degree or be valuable to the participant in some other way. A credential is defined as a certification “that recognizes an individual based on a set of defined skills and knowledge.”¹⁴ Building off the core competencies, a credentialing program outlines the types of trainings, number of training hours, and demonstration of ability for certification and continuing education. While the credential plays a vital role in professionalizing the field and enabling afterschool workers to gain recognition for the training they receive, it must also be supported by other aspects of the system.

There is no national professional credential for school-age care providers similar to the child development associate (CDA) credential in the early care and education field. However, the military school-age credential,¹⁵ created by the *U.S. Military Child Care Act*, is a competency-based credential that follows the core competencies of the CDA and has served as a model for many of the school-age care credentials created at the state level. These credentials are often aligned with the National AfterSchool Association’s standards for quality school-age care.

At least 11 states—**Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania,** and **Wisconsin**—and 1 locality, **Boston**—have created a school-age care or youth worker credential, certificate, or associate degree.¹⁶

- **Connecticut** created a credential in afterschool education via a partnership among Charter Oak State College, the Connecticut School-Age Care Alliance, the Connecticut After School Network, and Connecticut Charts-a-Course. All of the required coursework is offered through the distance learning program at Charter Oak State College. Providers pursuing the credential must also compile a professional resource file and document 240 hours of experience working in the afterschool field, which can include a practicum. Connecticut Charts-a-Course, the statewide professional development system, has provided scholarships for the credential program.
- **Missouri’s** Youth Development Credential, developed by the Missouri School-Age Community



¹⁴ Dennehy, Gannett, and Robbins.

¹⁵ For more information on the military model, see www.cdacouncil.org/pro_mil.htm or www.pba.army.mil/cys/school_age_services.htm.

¹⁶ For more information on state- and local-level credentials, see www.niost.org/YDAMatrix0806.pdf.

Coalition, was piloted in Kansas City and St. Louis before becoming a statewide credential. Coursework is offered at Metropolitan Community College–Penn Valley in Kansas City and St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley. The courses provide training opportunities to adults working with school-age children throughout the metropolitan areas. Kansas is considering adopting the same credential model.

- In **Massachusetts**, Achieve Boston recently developed a School-Age and Youth Development (SAYD) credential. The credential is modeled after the Indiana Youth Development Credential and requires a mix of college-level coursework and training as well as experience working with children and youth. Afterschool providers were recruited in fall 2006 to take part in the pilot phase of the project. Classes began in 2007 and were offered free of charge. Participants gain college credits and earn a \$2,000 bonus for completing the community-based training program. Achieve Boston has worked with early care and education and other statewide professional development systems to ensure SAYD can be replicated throughout the state.

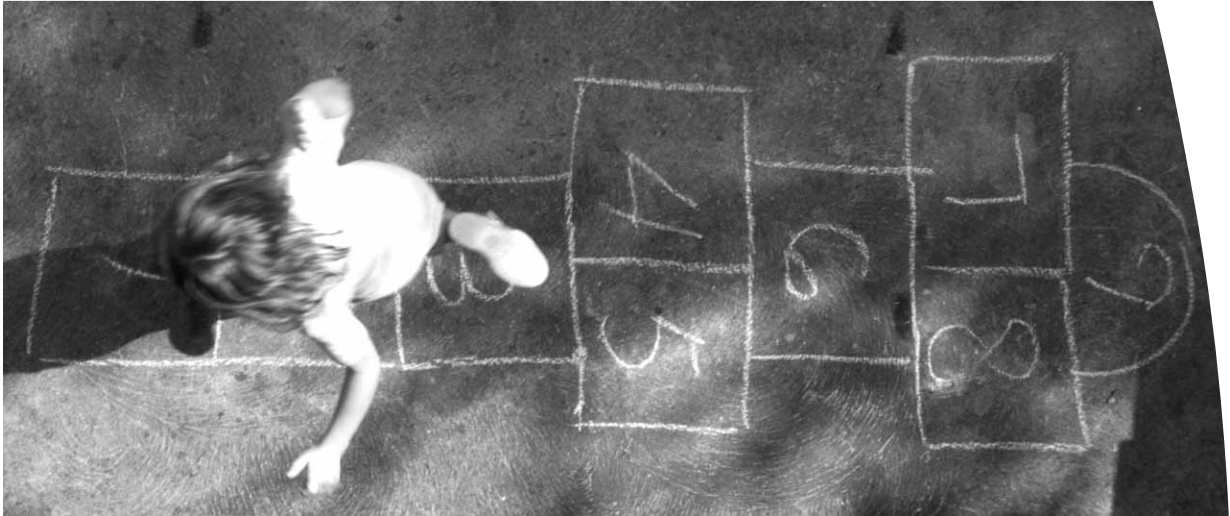
Quality Assurances

Establishing the core competencies and credential qualifications outlined above does not ensure training will be effective. Trainings and trainers must be monitored and evaluated to make sure the content and delivery of training meet quality standards. To do this, many states and afterschool leaders are creating approval systems and evaluations for educators and trainers who provide professional development and are monitoring training content to ensure quality.

One quality assurance mechanism is to require individuals who provide training and professional development opportunities to be certified. Other ways to ascertain the quality of training are monitoring content by requiring training designs or lesson plans to be submitted for review and observing training delivery. Evaluations from participants can also be a tool for gauging quality.

- **Pennsylvania's** quality assurance system (PQAS) provides a registry of certified instructors. As part of the certification process for instructors, the state teaches prospective instructors about the components of the professional development system, effective adult learning techniques, and how to align their courses with Pennsylvania's core knowledge.
- In **North Carolina**, the School-Age Enhancement Project was started in 2004 to improve the quality of, and availability of training for, afterschool programs throughout the state. CCDF quality funding was used to create 20 school-age specialist positions to provide training and technical assistance. The project also developed a training evaluation tool that is completed by all training participants; participants





are asked whether they will use what they have learned in the training and whether they would attend another training offered by this presenter. The current satisfaction rating approaches 99 percent. In addition, the statewide project manager visits each specialist quarterly and monitors the schedule of trainings offered, attendance rosters, and evaluations.

Access and Outreach

Afterschool providers must be aware of trainings and able to easily access them for the professional development system to be fully utilized. Having a listing of all professional development opportunities available in a centralized location such as an online database or catalog is a frequent technique. This training registry also can be used to document and quantify the professional development growth of providers and help them create professional development plans. Many states have taken a regional approach to improve the outreach and access of trainings as well as provide career development advising components.

- **Ohio** has developed various components of a professional development system, including a professional development registry. Piloted in 2003, the software for the professional development registry was used by the state's quality rating system, Step Up to Quality, to gather information from the providers working in centers applying to be part of the Step Up to Quality pilot in 2005. The professional development registry provides a wide array of benefits.
 - Training participants can use the registry to access information on available training opportunities, link to scholarship information, and share their professional history with potential employers. They can also monitor their progress on Career Pathways, a six-level model based on education, experience, and training. The professional development registry is aligned with the state's Career Pathways levels and, once participants register their training, they are immediately given points and can determine where they are on the pathways.

- Trainers can advertise trainings, receive feedback from participants, monitor enrollment, and submit applications for specialized trainings. Programs can use the registry to verify staff qualifications, track employee training, post job announcements, access statewide and regional salary information, and gain assistance in applying for Step Up to Quality and other quality improvement efforts.
- State officials can use the registry to easily verify the information required for licensing, thus reducing the administrative burden on licensing specialists.
- One of the goals of the School-Age Enhancement Project in **North Carolina** is to make sure trainings are available in all 100 of the state's counties. To help ensure access, the project has 20 specialists, each of whom supports one of the 18 regions set up by the child care resource and referral agencies (CCRAs); additional specialists support extremely rural areas. Specialists build on the resources within a community and engage local entities in training design and delivery. They develop partners to provide workshops, work with staff in the 50 local CCRAs to provide training, and collaborate with the public school system to train those working in afterschool public school programs. In some cases, specialists work with community colleges to provide the seven-hour basic school-age care (BASC) training on licensing, child development, and quality practices, as a component of a youth development class offered at the community college. At the end of the class, students receive credit for the class and proof they have taken the BASC training, which is required for providers working in licensed programs.

Because of the unique characteristics of school-age care professionals, diversity in the types of trainings offered and in the ways they can be completed help define an accessible professional development system. Accomplishing this diversity may involve multiple methods of delivering training content, including classes, workshops, mentoring programs, and distance learning opportunities. Technology is playing an increasingly important role in making training more accessible for providers. For example, **Arkansas** State University Childhood Services plans to make its school-age specialist modules, an introductory training curriculum, available online.

It can be particularly challenging to engage family care providers in a professional development system. Family child care providers often are not part of the networks through which training opportunities are promoted. Additional barriers also can impede their access to trainings, such as geographical location and nontraditional work schedules. While most afterschool programs struggle to provide substitute teachers for those attending training during hours of operation or compensation for providers for the time they spend in trainings, providing accommodations or initiatives to enable family child care providers to participate in professional development can be even more difficult. The **Oregon** Center for Development in Childhood Care and Education has begun to address the professional development needs of family care providers by developing suggested quality practices for caring for school-



age children in family child care settings that include younger children. The center also includes provider tips for implementing the suggested practices.

Infrastructure to Support a Professional Development System

A strong infrastructure is needed to help connect the various components of a professional development system and coordinate efforts to create a comprehensive system. This includes a stable governance structure, effective leadership, adequate planning, and technical assistance and expertise. Many leaders cite the system infrastructure as vital to the long-term success of a professional development system.

Building professional development systems for the afterschool field is a relatively new undertaking. Many efforts are young, with only certain components of these systems fully implemented. **Pennsylvania** provides an example of a state that has sought to build a comprehensive system, including a strong infrastructure (see “Pulling All the Pieces Together in Pennsylvania” below).

Pulling All the Pieces Together in Pennsylvania

Keys to Professional Development is a statewide system for professional development that builds off Keystone Stars, **Pennsylvania’s** quality improvement system. While the professional development and quality improvement systems are housed at the state office of child development, the professional development offerings are localized through six regional hubs (keys) across the state. These hubs develop a local plan for professional development tailored to meet the needs of the state’s different communities. School-age child care projects in each of the regions focus on providing professional development and technical assistance to public and private afterschool programs.

Keys to Professional Development is open to all child care practitioners in all settings, including home-based and school-age programs. The elements of the professional development system mirror the model developed by the National Child Care Information Center.

Funding

- The system is funded with a blend of CCDF quality dollars and state funds.
- Practitioners can choose from a menu of financial supports, including
 - The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship (scholarships for tuition, books, and, transportation); and
 - The Professional Development Refund Program (nominal fees for noncredit opportunities and reimbursements for the cost of credit classes and credential assessments).



Core Body of Knowledge

- Eight content areas of competencies reflect specific learning objectives for early childhood and school-age care.
- The content areas often are used to design content and curriculum course offerings.
- The professional development record, a companion document, helps providers assess their knowledge, identify gaps, and develop a professional development plan to meet their educational needs.
- An accompanying career lattice identifies the multiple pathways for professional growth and development available in the state.

Qualifications and Credentials

- In addition to offering the child development associate credential and the director's credential, Pennsylvania is piloting a school-age professional credential in fiscal 2006–07.
- Regional Keys staff members work with the higher education institutions in their communities to develop articulation agreements outlining the transfers of credit among colleges and universities.

Quality Assurances

- The Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System (PQAS) certifies individuals who provide professional development opportunities or technical assistance.
- PQAS-certified instructors and technical assistant consultants must submit sample training designs and resumes.
- Regional Keys staff members monitor trainings to ensure they meet Keystone STAR standards and align with the state's established core body of knowledge.
- Each professional development event is evaluated by the instructor and the participants.

Access and Outreach

- The six regional Keys staff members gather information about professional development needs in their region, coordinate schedules, distribute professional development calendars to providers, and post offerings on the statewide searchable, online calendar.
- The state maintains a professional development instructor registry, a database that tracks all completed professional development events in the state.
- Career development advising is offered as part of the professional development system.

For more information on Pennsylvania's Keys to Professional Development, visit www.pakeys.org/profdev.



Lessons Learned

Despite the considerable diversity reflected in initial efforts to develop professional development systems in states and localities nationwide, many similarities in experience can inform the afterschool field and future efforts. Key lessons are to:

- build off and connect to existing systems where possible;
- understand the workforce and support workers' needs;
- develop a broad base of support;
- nurture partnerships and collaboration; and
- incorporate incentives in system-building efforts.

Build Off and Connect to Existing Systems Where Possible

National experts and state and local system-building leaders note it is frequently easier to build off or connect to an existing system than to start from scratch. In some instances, states had recently worked on building a professional development system for the early care and education field and that effort used many of the same players being convened to work on a system for the afterschool field. These states took advantage of the resources and knowledge gathered to further a system-building effort for afterschool care. Linking to the efforts of another field can create efficiencies and make the task seem more manageable. However, it is important to be strategic about connecting to the other field and to make sure existing systems can be modified to adequately meet the needs of the afterschool workforce (see “Strategically Starting to Build a System in Georgia” on page 22).

Understand the Workforce and Support Workers' Needs

The diversity within the afterschool workforce is one of the main challenges in designing a professional development system for the field. In addition to diversity of settings and of ages of children served, cultural diversity should be addressed in the professional development offerings. National experts note the importance of having available training meet the full range of needs of afterschool providers. To better understand those needs, some states, including **Illinois** and **Massachusetts**, have conducted afterschool workforce studies to inform their design of a professional development system. Evaluating the workforce and workers' training needs at the program level can help providers select appropriate trainings through the adoption of professional development plans (see “Creating Agency-Specific Professional Development Plans in California’s Alameda County” on page 24).



Strategically Starting to Build a System in Georgia

As members of the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council (GAIC) considered how to enhance and create more quality afterschool and summer learning programs across the state, they decided to gather baseline data on **Georgia's** current professional development landscape to determine how to build on it to better serve the afterschool and summer learning workforce. They began this process by conducting a multi-level stakeholder assessment with their network partners, including afterschool providers, afterschool and youth development organizations, and public agencies that fund professional development for child care providers (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Bright from the Start; Georgia Department of Education, 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program; Georgia Department of Human Resources, Youth Initiatives Department; and the Children and Youth Coordinating Council).

The first phase of this assessment gathered information on the content and frequency of trainings, how professional development opportunities are promoted, how trainings are funded, what professional development data management systems are being used, and how stakeholders could benefit from a statewide afterschool professional development system. The second phase included more in-depth discussions with key stakeholders. Information collected during both assessment phases enabled GAIC to better understand the professional development landscape in Georgia and identify gaps that a more comprehensive professional development system could address. For example, GAIC discovered that most trainings were offered on basic topics (e.g., first aid and safety); offerings on more advanced topics, such as project-based learning and 21st-century skill-building, were limited. Moreover, GAIC identified challenges such as a lack of incentives for youth development staff to pursue professional development and limited state licensing requirements; as a result, very few afterschool programs went through the licensing process.

Along with identifying these challenges, the multi-level stakeholder assessment successfully created more consensus among stakeholders on the desired outcomes of an afterschool and summer learning professional development system. It also helped identify organizations and public agencies that should be part of the Georgia Afterschool Professional Development Team. This newly formed team now includes representatives from the policy and funding fields, professional development and training organizations, and large afterschool programs. Team members attended the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation Afterschool Academies in Columbia, South Carolina, and were able to gain ground in their strategy discussions by incorporating the stakeholder assessment data that demonstrates the state's strong professional development foundation. The baseline data enabled the team to develop and order priorities and create an action plan to strengthen Georgia's existing professional development infrastructure for afterschool and summer learning.

Georgia's resulting action plan has two overarching goals. The first goal is interagency alignment. The second goal is implementation of an afterschool and summer learning professional development system that will enhance program quality and relevance to youth development and success.

For information on the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council, visit www.afterschoolga.org/.



Develop a Broad Base of Support

A lesson echoed by many national experts and state and local system-building leaders is the importance of developing a broad base of support. This includes getting buy-in from key people and making sure all the “right players” are involved from the beginning. The exact mix of stakeholders will vary from state to state, but it typically includes representatives from state agencies, intermediaries, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations. Including providers throughout the planning process also is essential. Early involvement of all relevant stakeholders will help avoid turf issues later.

- In **Illinois**, stakeholders from around the state gathered in October 2006 for a School-Age Credential Symposium. To support the development and systemic supports needed for a credential, four subcommittees (Core Knowledge, Quality Assurance, Access and Outreach, and Qualifications and Credentials) were formed as a result of the meeting with representatives from the education, child care, workforce development, and youth development fields.

Nurture Partnerships and Collaboration

Partnerships and collaboration play a critical role in successfully creating professional development systems (see “Building Strategic Partnerships in Vermont” on page 25). Although one agency may take the lead in developing a component of a system, all system-building efforts require collaboration, especially to ensure appropriate linkages to other parts of the system. The college and university systems have been important partners in many states’ efforts, particularly in helping develop qualifications and credentials. They have helped design for-credit courses and degree programs and created ways to capture work experience and community-based trainings in a credential program.

Incorporate Incentives in System-Building Efforts

For a system to be comprehensive and sustainable, the interests of all stakeholders must be represented, aligned, and met. Incentives at various points can ensure that the entire system is working together and pulling in the same direction. Legislation can help create incentives for programs and providers to pursue training, which in turn creates a larger market of training participants and compels higher education and training organizations to create and provide relevant training opportunities.

Moreover, compensation and incentives are necessary to make afterschool providers invest the time and energy to participate in the professional development system. Examples of mechanisms for providing incentives are presented in the T.E.A.C.H. model and states’ efforts to link professional development to QRS. The QRS system in **Vermont**, Vermont STARS (STep Ahead for Recognition System), offers built-in incentives in the state’s Child Care Subsidy Program for regulated child care programs linked to STARS achievement levels.¹⁷ Vermont also has a bonus payment system separate from subsidy payments that honors professional development achievement.

¹⁷ For more information on Vermont STARS, visit www.STARSstepahead.org.



Creating Agency-Specific Professional Development Plans in California's Alameda County

California's Alameda County School-Age Provider Professional Development Project allocates state funding to Title V school-age child care programs in Alameda County to implement agency-wide professional development training plans. The California School-Age Consortium (CalSAC) manages the project through a contract administered by the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council and Every Child Counts First Five Alameda County.

During the summer, CalSAC recruits Title V Delinquency Prevention Program-subsidized child care agencies in Alameda County to participate in the project. Each agency designates one staff member to serve as the project manager who completes a needs assessment of his or her staff's skills and agency's priorities. Based on the results of the needs assessment, project managers work with CalSAC to develop an agency-wide professional development plan and select training opportunities from CalSAC's training resource guide. Project managers then arrange for staff training with the funding they receive from the state. Staff members who complete their professional development plans and stay in their jobs for the entire school year may receive up to \$1,000 in stipends. Project managers also are eligible for these staff stipends, in addition to receiving an additional \$1,500 for fulfilling project manager duties.

Funds for the project come from the state tobacco tax and Assembly Bill 212, which aims to build a skilled and stable child care workforce throughout the state. Although most counties use these funds for the early care and education workforce, Alameda County reserves funds for school-age sites. The project also uses flexible funds to pay for substitutes, monthly job coach meetings with project managers, peer-learning online discussions, course materials, and other training enhancements.

CalSAC views the Alameda County School-Age Professional Development Project as a model to be replicated in other counties. Other professional development opportunities provided by CalSAC include free training for afterschool providers, access to a fee-for-service consultant pool for a wide range of services, and regional and statewide conferences. In addition to this project, CalSAC has partnered with local workforce investment boards to connect young adults in the community to jobs in afterschool programs and provide opportunities for continuing education.

For more information on the Alameda County School-Age Provider Professional Development Project, visit www.calsac.org.



Building Strategic Partnerships in Vermont

In July 2005, **Vermont's** child development division organized a collaborative committee of after-school stakeholders to address the professional development needs of this unique workforce. The committee of 12 to 15 individuals represents various community sectors and organizations, including the Vermont Department of Education, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Vermont, the Vermont-Out-Of-School Time (VOOST) Network, the Vermont School-Age Care Network (VSACN), and the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC). Together, they set out to build a solid professional development system for Vermont's afterschool and youth workers.

The committee has developed a draft set of core competencies that was used to design a new online, three-credit, entry-level course for afterschool providers through Community Colleges of Vermont (CCV). This course serves as the first of several courses that will shape a certificate or credential for youth workers in the state. A collaborative of Vermont higher education institutions has emerged, with CCV and Goddard College at the forefront; outreach to other higher education institutions in the state continues.

In addition, one of the partners, VCCICC runs the child care apprenticeship program, a system of scholarships and wage enhancement incentives for incremental professional development. The committee will use this model to develop an afterschool professional development compensation system that includes funding from various sources.

The committee also used a low-cost, easily developed online survey to conduct a needs assessment of the field. The results will be used to inform future development of new elements in the professional development system. Immediate objectives for the committee include promoting the use of competencies in the field, exploring the development of a credential for afterschool professionals, strengthening relationships with higher education partners to develop a career lattice, and creating effective outreach strategies to inform workforce members of professional development opportunities in their communities and in the region.

Funding for this collaborative effort comes from several sources, including CCDF, the Vermont Children's Trust Foundation, VOOST, and VSACN. The child development division consistently invests more than the federal requirement in quality set-aside funds for school-age care, funding a full-time afterschool systems director and a consultant to facilitate the collaborative professional development framework project as well as offering college tuition scholarships for afterschool care providers working in regulated afterschool settings.

For more information on Vermont's core competencies for afterschool care and its emerging professional development system, visit www.northernlightscdc.org.



Conclusion

Professional development systems for the afterschool field can help ensure the quality of afterschool programs and a strong, stable afterschool workforce. This brief describes the various components of a professional development system and highlights examples from across the nation of states and localities implementing such systems. The lessons learned from these early efforts can inform the field as it matures and provide direction on how to create and strengthen professional development systems for the afterschool field.

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