

NATIONAL

AfterSchool

ASSOCIATION



**Core Knowledge  
and Competencies  
for Afterschool and Youth  
Development Professionals**



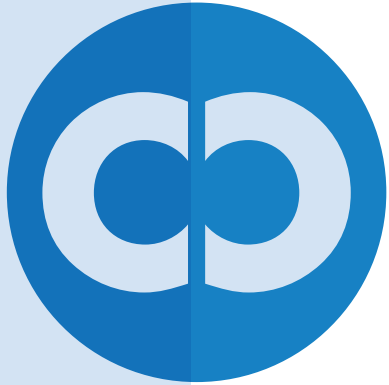
# The Mission of NAA

The National AfterSchool Association is the leading voice of the after school profession dedicated to the development, education and care of children and youth during their out-of-school hours.



## The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)

conducted the research and made the recommendations for the *Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals*, with leadership and coordination by Elizabeth Starr, Ellen Gannett, and Judy Nee, and with generous financial support from the Florida Afterschool Network, the National Afterschool Association and the State of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Key) as well as input from stakeholders in the field.



**NIOST** National Institute on  
Out- of -School Time  
*at the* Wellesley Centers for Women

# Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals



Adopted September 22, 2011



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### DEFINITION

Core knowledge and competencies describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by professionals to provide high-quality afterschool and youth development programming and support the learning and development of children and youth.

In the current system with such disparate standards, core knowledge and competencies serve to establish agreements across programs and funding streams about what it takes to work with and on behalf of children and youth. They are intended to set a foundation for professional development and career advancement, informing the course of study for educators. They can also provide guidance in the development of career ladders, credentials and qualifications, and other methods of assessing practitioner skill and knowledge (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2008).

Core knowledge refers to topics describing the knowledge needed by professionals to work effectively with school-age children and youth. Competencies are concrete, observable, and achievable; they establish standards of practice that strengthen the profession. Both core knowledge and core competencies are used to define the content of professional development curricula, set goals and outcomes for training, and design mechanisms for the demonstration and assessment of a practitioner's skills. (Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center, 2005)

## Introduction:

**CORE KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES****IMPORTANCE**

Core knowledge and competencies are important because they:

- Define what professionals need to know and be able to do in order to provide quality child and youth programming.
- Serve as the foundation for decisions and practices carried out by professionals in all settings and programs.
- Establish a set of standards that support the professionalization of the child and youth development field (Stone, Garza & Borden, 2004; Astroth, Garza & Taylor, 2004, *Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals and Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals*).

From a more symbolic standpoint, core knowledge and competencies can also be a unifying tool that brings related “sub fields” such as school age care, afterschool, youth development, recreation, and summer learning together—something the field of afterschool and youth development has struggled to do (Starr, Yohalem, & Gannett, 2009; Stone et al., 2004). They can provide a common language (Mdzev-Akale and Walker, 2000).

By articulating what effective afterschool and youth development practice looks like, core knowledge and competencies can help those within and outside of the field understand the unique role of afterschool and youth development professionals and, at the same time, the shared contributions that those working in a range of settings make to the lives of children and youth. (Starr et al., 2009).

Introduction:

## CORE KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES



### USES

Core knowledge and competencies can be used as a tool by many different sectors of the field: (Adapted from Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals, Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals, Ohio's Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12, and Starr et al., 2009.)

Practitioners develop knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, and the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals are designed to support formal and informal pathways of training and education. For those that choose a more formal route of college and university education, the core knowledge and competencies provide a framework for the development of coursework and curricula for higher education institutions. In a similar way, local trainers and training systems can utilize the core knowledge and competencies to plan and develop informal training programs and modules. Teachers and their supervisors can utilize the core knowledge and competencies to develop personal professional development plans and evaluate course and workshop offerings based on their alignment with identified needs. Thus by its flexible nature, the core knowledge and competencies can support diverse audiences and pathways (adapted from Florida Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners, edited by the Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) Professional Development Task Force – draft).

Introduction:  
**CORE KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES**

 **USES cont.**

| AUDIENCES  | POSSIBLE USES  |
|--|--|
| <b>Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development goal setting and planning</li> <li>• Tracking/documenting training and other professional development activities</li> <li>• Self-evaluation</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Program Directors/Administrators</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing, hiring, creating job descriptions, planning staff orientation/training, conducting staff evaluations</li> <li>• Professional development goal setting and planning</li> <li>• Establishing salary scales based on demonstrated competency and/or education</li> </ul> |
| <b>Trainers, Agencies</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding expectations of afterschool and youth development professionals</li> <li>• Assisting in the selection of a high-quality program</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Higher Education</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An organizing framework for credentials, certificates, and degree-granting programs</li> <li>• Facilitating transfer and articulation agreements</li> </ul>   |

Introduction:

## CORE KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES



### USES cont.

| AUDIENCES   | POSSIBLE USES  |
|---|--|
| <b>Families</b>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding expectations of afterschool and youth development professionals</li><li>• Assisting in the selection of a high-quality program</li></ul>   |
| <b>School Personnel</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding and appreciating the degree of knowledge and skill required in the afterschool and youth development profession</li><li>• Recognizing overlapping or complimentary knowledge resulting in more effective partnering</li></ul>  |
| <b>Federal, State, and Local Agencies</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An advocacy tool to develop policy, initiatives, and funding decisions that will enhance professionalism in the field</li></ul>  |
| <b>Professional Development Systems and Efforts</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating the framework for a broad-scale career development system that provides access to competency-based training/ education, ensures compensation commensurate with educational achievement and experience, and allows professionals to achieve recognition in the field</li></ul> |



**Introduction:****HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS FRAMEWORK****HISTORY**

Many states have been independently developing and using core knowledge and competency frameworks. Some work has been done to examine and crosswalk existing frameworks, and research shows that there is considerable agreement in the content of these documents (Mattingly et al., 2002; Starr et al., 2009; Vance, 2010)

This nationally recognized set of core knowledge and competencies is the result of an effort to bring together disparate work, identify consensus about core knowledge and competencies, and generate a unifying force for the professional development of a diverse field.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The goal of this project is to create a framework that:

- Applies to professionals working in a variety of settings and positions
- Applies to professionals working with a range of ages (5–18)
- Is based on current research
- Reflects the field

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### CROSSWALK OF EXISTING CORE COMPETENCES

For this project NAA and NIOST, in cooperation with the Florida Afterschool Network and Pennsylvania Key, began by crosswalking a sample of existing frameworks beyond the broad content areas, looking at the competencies themselves as well as indicators. We selected a subset of the myriad frameworks from states and localities across the country to review, focusing largely on those that target professionals working with a broad range of children and youth. We also included some that target those working with older youth or school-age children.

The following core knowledge and competencies frameworks were reviewed:

- 4 H Professional Research and Knowledge Base
- Achieve Boston Competency Framework
- Colorado School Age/Youth Development Core Knowledge & Standards
- Indiana Youth Development Credential Core Competencies
- Kansas and Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals
- Mott Foundation Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators
- National Collaboration for Youth Professional Development Competencies
- New Hampshire After School Professional Development System
- New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
- North American Certification Project (NACP) Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners
- Palm Beach County Core Competencies for After School Practitioners
- Pennsylvania Core Body of Knowledge for Early Childhood and School-Age Practitioners
- Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals
- U.S. Army School Age Services Professional Development Program
- Washington School Age Skill Standards
- Washington STARS
- Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals

Introduction:

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### CROSSWALK OF EXISTING CORE COMPETENCES cont.

Because many frameworks are derivative of the Kansas/Missouri model, we used their document as a starting point and model. Thus, the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals is a composite of what has already been tested through practice, and strives to reflect existing documents.



### PILOT AND REVIEW PHASE

After compiling existing competency frameworks into a single document, the draft underwent an extensive pilot and review process. Six sites from across the nation (AFTER SCHOOL Wisconsin Youth Company, Madison, WI; BOSTnet, Boston, MA; Francis Institute for Child and Youth Development, Kansas City, MO; Pennsylvania Key, Harrisburg, PA; Indiana Youth PRO Association, Indianapolis, IN; Dallas AfterSchool Network, Dallas TX) participated in pilot projects. They tested the competencies in a variety of ways, including crosswalks with their own existing state competencies and QRIS for validation, examination by students earning credentials in the field, introduction of the draft to providers, and as a tool for hiring and evaluating staff. Great effort was made to disseminate the draft widely throughout the field for review. An online survey was completed by students, program staff and directors, and leaders in the field. Many also graciously offered additional written comments. Close to 100 reviewers from across the country provided feedback.

Introduction:

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### CROSSWALK OF EXISTING CORE COMPETENCES cont.

#### Revision and Final Draft

The original draft underwent substantial revision based on the feedback received from reviewers and the pilot projects. Many spoke about the cumbersome length and found redundancies. We again turned to Kansas/Missouri, who has been revising their own set of core competencies. They, too, desired a more concise document and had recently taken out redundancies and moved “indicators,” or examples of the competencies, to a separate section.

In adopting their revised approach, we believe we now have a more usable and, most importantly, more flexible framework.

We truly hope these core competencies reflect the field, provide unification, and act as an important tool in professional development.

## Introduction:

**ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK****ORGANIZATION**

The core knowledge and competencies are grouped into ten content areas. These content areas are categories of knowledge that are widely used in the field and based on research.

Each of the content areas begins with a competency statement followed by three sections:

- **Rationale:** This section explains why each content area is important in the afterschool and youth development professional's practice
- **Supporting Evidence:** This section lists current documentation and research that support the rationale for the content area.
- **Competencies:** This section identifies specific, observable behaviors and skills that describe the range of practice of a capable afterschool or youth development professional. They reflect one's understanding of the core knowledge content areas and are organized within five levels.



## ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### CORE KNOWLEDGE CONTENT AREAS

- 1. Child/Youth Growth and Development**  
Knows the typical benchmarks of growth and development and uses this knowledge to provide a program that meets the multiple needs of children and youth.
- 2. Learning Environments and Curriculum**  
Creates a high-quality learning environment and implements age-appropriate curricula and program activities.
- 3. Child/Youth Observation and Assessment**  
Understands and applies observation and assessment techniques and tools to meet individual needs.
- 4. Interactions with Children and Youth**  
Recognizes the importance of relationships and communication in the practice of quality child and youth care, and implements guidance techniques and strategies to support children and youth individually and in group experiences to develop self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.
- 5. Youth Engagement**  
Acts in partnership with children and youth to foster appropriate child and youth leadership and voice.

## Introduction:

**ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK****CORE KNOWLEDGE CONTENT AREAS**

6. **Cultural Competency and Responsiveness**  
Actively promotes respect for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment that embraces diversity
7. **Family, School, and Community Relationships**  
Builds on respectful, reciprocal relationships across settings to promote optimal development for children, youth, and families and to enhance the quality of afterschool and youth development services.
8. **Safety and Wellness**  
Ensures the safety and wellness of children and youth by implementing prevention, preparedness, and health and safety practices.
9. **Program Planning and Development**  
Supports staff and serves as a role model around professional development plans by building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, providing developmentally appropriate practices, and connecting with and utilizing resources.
10. **Professional Development and Leadership**  
Acts ethically, is committed to continuous learning, and advocates for best practices and policies for children and youth.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### LEVELS

Professional practice develops over time with experience, training, and higher education. In recognition of this progression, the competencies are grouped by level in each core knowledge content area.

Each level is a prerequisite to the next, with knowledge and skill in one level required before moving to the next. Knowledge and skill development generally progresses from knowing and following practices to planning and implementing activities and procedures to eventually analyzing and evaluating programs and practices. In some instances, however, skills and knowledge are not completely linear and not all begin at the entry level, so some skills may seem similar across different levels.

The levels of competencies are not awards or certificates but provide a pathway to enter and progress within the field. The intent of the Core Knowledge and Competencies is to describe knowledge and skills that can be obtained in a variety of ways; thus, levels should not be tied to a particular position of employment, and degrees of education are simply suggested guides. (adapted from *Florida Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners Edited by the Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) Professional Development Task Force – draft*).

## Introduction:

**ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK****LEVELS**

- **Level 1 (Entry):** Level 1 includes the knowledge and skills expected of an entry-level worker who is new to the child/youth development field and has minimal specialized training/education or experience.
- **Level 2 (Developing):** Level 2 includes the foundational knowledge and skills expected of someone with some experience in the field. Level 2 includes Level 1 plus the knowledge and skills that might be commensurate with a Youth Development Credential, a certificate in child/youth development, or equivalent training/education or related work experience.
- **Level 3 (Proficient):** Level 3 describes a practitioner who can apply knowledge and information in the setting. It includes Levels 1 and 2 plus knowledge and skills that might be commensurate with an associate's degree in child/adolescent development or related fields (e.g., Social Work, Recreation, Special Education, Education) or related work experience.
- **Level 4 (Advanced):** Level 4 describes a seasoned practitioner who can apply knowledge and information in increasingly nuanced ways. It includes Levels 1, 2, and 3 plus the knowledge and skills that might be commensurate with a bachelor's degree in child/adolescent development or related fields or related work experience.
- **Level 5 (Mastery):** Professionals at this level have advanced from basic knowledge and understanding to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Level 5 includes Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an advanced degree in child/adolescent development or related fields or related work experience. This level reflects the skills and attributes of leaders (e.g., administrators, directors, supervisors). This level includes administrative competencies, which may apply to those in an administrative role, but also to those who play dual roles.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### A WORD ABOUT INDICATORS

Professionals in afterschool and youth development assume many roles and work in a variety of settings. Accordingly, the core knowledge and competencies are purposely broad and apply to diverse settings and positions.

Missing in this document are indicators, or specific examples of a core competency. By design, this national document leaves room for individual states or programs to customize indicators. For example, some states may want to include indicators divided by age ranges, such as school-age and older youth. A program focused on older youth may want to add indicators relevant to adolescent health and wellness, while a school-based program may need to have a greater focus on alignment with school standards. By developing their own indicators, states or programs can tailor these competencies to accommodate and support the diversity of the afterschool and youth development field.



### DISPOSITIONS

*(Adapted from Ohio's Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12, and Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals.)*

Every profession has a set of attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives that distinguish its members as a group. Together they are called “professional dispositions.” The afterschool and youth development profession also has dispositions that are highly valued among its members.



## Introduction:

**ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK****DISPOSITIONS cont.**

Although dispositions are an important part of professional practice, they are different than professional knowledge and competencies. Dispositions describe how a person perceives his or her work rather than what he or she knows or does. Dispositions are more often absorbed by newcomers and nurtured by seasoned veterans within the professional community than formally taught. They may be thought of as part of the “art” of the practice, which work in concert with the “science,” the things one needs to know and be able to do. Dispositions cut across all content areas of the core knowledge and competencies.

A person who is well-suited to the afterschool and youth development profession displays the following dispositions:

- Delights in and is curious about children and youth and how they grow and learn
- Shows warmth, caring, and respect for each child and youth as an individual
- Appreciates and supports the unique and vital role of children’s and youth’s family, school, and community
- Values ongoing professional development and continually seeks ways to increase one’s knowledge and skills that will support development and learning in children and youth
- Reflects on the personal beliefs and values that influence his or her attitudes and practices
- Recognizes and values the diversity found among children and youth, their families, and in the world around them, and understands that diversity impacts all areas of practice
- Values and nurtures imagination, creativity, and learning through exploration, both in children and youth and in herself or himself
- Demonstrates responsible professional and personal habits in working and interacting with others

Introduction:

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS FRAMEWORK



### DISPOSITIONS cont.

- Responds to challenges and changes with flexibility, perseverance, and cooperation
- Communicates clearly, respectfully, and effectively with children, youth, and adults
- Recognizes that quality out-of-school programs support families, children, and youth, and bridge the gap between school and home



## Content Area I:

**CHILD/YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

*Knows the typical benchmarks for growth and development and uses this knowledge to provide a program that meets the multiple needs of children and youth.*

**RATIONALE**

Research indicates that the growth and development of a child or youth is optimized when afterschool and youth development professionals know and apply the fundamental principles of human development. Understanding the typical benchmarks for child and youth growth and development (often called developmental milestones) as well as individual and developmental variations, including cultural differences and special needs, enables the afterschool professional to develop healthy relationships with each child or youth that will support his or her development and learning. It also enables the professional to design activities and environments that encompass developmentally appropriate practices, establish foundations for future growth, and engage young people in building social skills and knowledge. By integrating current knowledge about development and learning into their daily practice, afterschool and youth development professionals provide beneficial interactions and experiences for children in a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment.

The afterschool and youth development professional recognizes that an understanding of developmental patterns, individual differences, and influences of family and culture are critical to implementing developmentally appropriate practices in order to meet the needs of all children and youth (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators and Ohio's Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12*).



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## Content Area I:

**CHILD /YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT****COMPETENCIES****LEVEL 1**

- a. Is aware of basic benchmarks for growth and development.
- b. Recognizes that all children and youth have individual needs, temperaments, characteristics, abilities, and develop at their own rate.
- c. Accepts differences in development.
- d. Values different personalities, temperaments, and cultural influences.
- e. Recognizes that all children and youth learn and develop through experience and active participation.
- f. Explains current youth cultures, such as the use of technologies, vocabulary, clothing, and music.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Identifies benchmarks related to physical, cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, and creative development.
- b. Identifies and responds to individual differences in personalities, temperaments, development, learning styles, and culture.
- c. Promotes growth and development using appropriate services and resources.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Explains current theories and ongoing research related to child and youth development.
- b. Supports and practices inclusion.
- c. Communicates physical, cognitive, language and communication, social and emotional, and creative differences among children and youth.



Content Area I:

## CHILD/YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### LEVEL 4

- a. Applies research-based theories of growth and development to planning and practice.
- b. Collaborates with others to promote growth and development.
- c. Explains the multiple influences on development and learning.

#### LEVEL 5

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, and policy related to child and youth growth and development.
- b. Integrates information on growth, development, learning patterns, diverse abilities, and multiple intelligences, and applies to practice.



## Content Area 2:

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM**

*Creates a high-quality learning environment and implements age-appropriate curricula and program activities.*

**RATIONALE**

Afterschool and youth development professionals provide critical supports for children, youth, and families by fostering positive growth through social interactions, stimulating physical environments, and enriching intellectual opportunities. They understand and utilize strategies that are characteristic of high-quality environments such as consistent schedules and routines, transition activities for moving from one activity or place to another, offering interesting materials and activities appropriate to the age group, and arranging the space to enhance learning. They know and understand how to implement a variety of developmentally appropriate curriculum models to promote physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, communication skills, and creative expression. Children benefit from high-quality experiences and environments in immeasurable ways, including improved self-esteem and personal control, better life skills, enhanced communication between peers and within families, a genuine sense of purpose, a deeper understanding of diversity, and advancement in developmental outcomes and academic achievement (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators and Ohio's Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12*).



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## Content Area 2:

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM****COMPETENCIES****Creating a Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environment and Curriculum****LEVEL 1**

- a. Explains developmentally appropriate practice.
- b. Recognizes the importance of creating a developmentally appropriate learning environment and following a curriculum.
- c. Discusses how children and youth learn through relationships, activities, and play.
- d. Engages children and youth in activities that meet individual needs, interests, development, and skill levels.
- e. Identifies aspects of a developmentally appropriate environment and learning plan.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Creates developmentally appropriate learning environments and curriculum using appropriate methods, services, and resources.
- b. Provides an engaging, physically and emotionally safe, and inclusive environment to encourage play, exploration, and learning across developmental domains.
- c. Uses appropriate equipment, devices, and technology in support of teaching and learning.



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### Creating a Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environment and Curriculum

##### LEVEL 3

- a. Uses a broad collection of effective teaching/ learning strategies, tools, and accommodations to meet individual needs and enhance learning.
- b. Creates environments and learning experiences to value, affirm, and respect diverse needs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.
- c. Designs and implements learning opportunities that include goals and objectives.

##### LEVEL 4

- a. Applies content knowledge, concepts, and skills to create a developmentally appropriate learning environment and integrated curriculum.
- b. Develops a learning environment and curriculum using major theories of child and youth development.
- c. Reflects on the effectiveness of learning environments and curriculum to meet individual needs, interests, development, and skill levels, and makes appropriate accommodations.
- d. Collaborates with other agencies to maximize opportunities for children and youth.

##### LEVEL 5

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, resources, and policies related to the design of curriculum and learning environments.
- b. Teaches, mentors, and coaches others about how to design and adapt curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

## Content Area 2:

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM****COMPETENCIES cont.****Promoting Physical, Social/Emotional, and Cognitive Development****LEVEL 1**

- a. Closely supervises and interacts with children and youth during physical activities.
- b. Assists with fine and gross motor skill development.
- c. Encourages age-appropriate emotional expression.
- d. Models appropriate social interactions.
- e. Recognizes that change, stress, and transition affect social and emotional development and behavior.
- f. Understands that family and community have different cultural experiences that play a role in how children and youth respond socially to adults and peers.
- g. Appreciates how children and youth develop a sense of self.
- h. Extends learning through questions and conversations.
- i. Models listening and is responsive to encourage learning.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Provides a safe learning environment where all children and youth can explore and develop cognitive, social, emotional, and physical motor skills.
- b. Adapts cognitive and physical motor activities and interactions to support diverse needs, abilities, and interests as well as social and emotional development.
- c. Guides children and youth in expressing their feelings and asserting themselves in socially acceptable ways.
- d. Helps children and youth communicate and get along with others in a safe and inclusive environment.



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### Promoting Physical, Social/Emotional, and Cognitive Development

##### LEVEL 3

- a. Incorporates activities promoting cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development into all curricular areas.
- b. Supports children and youth in developing a sense of self.
- c. Guides children and youth in appropriately expressing their feelings and asserting themselves in positive ways.
- d. Provides activities and interactions that promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- e. Facilitates learning opportunities that reflect the cultures and values represented in the community of the program.

##### LEVEL 4

- a. Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of physical, social, and cognitive development activities and interactions.
- b. Designs learning opportunities that reflect the cultures and values represented in the program community.

##### LEVEL 5

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to promoting physical, cognitive, and social/emotional development.
- b. Advocates for policies and practices that promote the physical, cognitive, and social/emotional development of youth.
- c. Collaborates with other agencies to research and communicate information on social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development of youth.
- d. Teaches others how to design relevant, culturally competent learning activities which promote physical, cognitive, and social/emotional development.

Content Area 2:  
**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM**



**COMPETENCIES cont.**

**Promoting Language and Communication Development**

| LEVEL 1  | LEVEL 2  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Models appropriate and respectful communication skills.</li> <li>b. Responds to communication in a positive manner.</li> <li>c. Encourages children and youth to communicate in a variety of ways</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provides learning environments to promote the development and exploration of language and communication skills.</li> <li>b. Adapts language communication activities and interactions to support diverse needs and abilities.</li> </ul>         |
| LEVEL 3  | LEVEL 4  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Incorporates communication skills into all curricular areas based on the program population.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of language and communication activities and interactions.</li> <li>b. Develops and teaches strategies for integrating communication development activities into all curricular areas</li> </ul> |



Content Area 2:

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### Promoting Language and Communication Development

##### LEVEL 5

- a. Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to language and communication development.
- b. Collaborates with other agencies to research and share information on communication development.
- c. Advocates for policies and practices that promote the communication development of children and youth.



## Content Area 2:

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM****COMPETENCIES cont.****Promoting Creative Expression****LEVEL 1**

- a. Recognizes and supports individual expression, including cultural influences.
- b. Encourages children and youth to try new activities.
- c. Provides equipment and materials that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage imagination and creativity.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Provides a learning environment where children and youth can explore and develop creative skills.  
Adapts creative activities and
- b. interactions to support diverse needs and abilities.
- c. Identifies the community as a resource for creative experiences.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Incorporates activities for self-expression that reflect diverse cultural traditions.
- b. Articulates the value of creative expression as necessary to the development of the individual.
- c. Incorporates activities promoting creative development into all curricular areas.
- d. Uses the community as a resource for creative experiences.

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Advocates for the importance of creative expression for children and youth.
- b. Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of creative activities.
- c. Partners with community organizations that stimulate creative experiences for children and youth.

Content Area 2:

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### Promoting Creative Expression

##### LEVEL 5

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to promoting creative experiences.
- b. Demonstrates leadership in establishing partnerships with community organizations that stimulate creative experiences for children and youth.
- c. Collaborates with other agencies to research and communicate information on creative development.
- d. Teaches, coaches, and mentors others about the importance of integrating creative activities into all curricular areas.

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

Albert Einstein

## Content Area 3:

**CHILD/YOUTH OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT**

*Understands and applies observation and assessment techniques and tools to meet individual needs.*

**RATIONALE**

Systematic observations, documentation, and other effective and appropriate assessment strategies—in partnership with families and other professionals serving the same children— positively impact the development and learning of children and youth. Well-prepared practitioners understand the goals, benefits, and uses of individual observation and assessment. They know how to use information gathered from these tools and techniques to adapt the program to meet the needs of each child or youth. This can include learning more about children’s unique qualities, developing appropriate goals and plans, making referrals as appropriate, and implementing and evaluating effective curriculum. (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators and Ohio’s Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12*).



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Content Area 3:  
**CHILD/YOUTH OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT**

 **COMPETENCIES**

**LEVEL 1**

- a. Identifies children and youth as individuals and acknowledges that individuals develop at their own pace.
- b. Recognizes that observation and assessment are ongoing processes.
- c. Maintains confidentiality regarding observation and assessment information.
- d. Assists with the collection of information about growth, development, and learning.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Collects and organizes information to measure child/youth outcomes while following appropriate procedures for observation, assessment, and referrals.
- b. Assesses children and youth using appropriate methods, services, and resources.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Engages in ongoing assessment of individual growth, development, and learning, and applies this knowledge to practice.
- b. Identifies the role of risk factors and protective factors on children and youth development.
- c. Discusses the purpose, benefits, and uses of informal and formal assessments.
- d. Selects and uses observation results in planning and implementing learning activities.
- e. Recommends appropriate referrals based on observation, documentation, and assessment.



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### LEVEL 4

- a. Analyzes and evaluates observation and assessment data, and applies knowledge to practice.
- b. Selects and considers assessment and screening information when making curriculum and program decisions for individuals and/or groups.
- c. Implements formal and informal assessment tools for individual and group learning.
- d. Plans relevant and culturally appropriate assessments.
- e. Interprets assessment results and communicates them in a clear and supportive manner.
- f. Develops a plan that utilizes assessment information to improve curriculum and modify learning experiences.
- g. Collaborates to create partnerships for assessment.

#### LEVEL 5

- a. Selects appropriate assessment methods and tools for measuring child/youth outcomes, including longitudinal data collection to measure both short - and long-term progress.
- b. Partners with external evaluators and researchers to improve program quality.
- c. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, and policies relevant to observation and assessment.

## Content Area 4:

**INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

*Recognizes the importance of relationships and communication in the practice of quality child and youth care, and implements guidance techniques and strategies to support children and youth individually and in group experiences to develop self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.*

**RATIONALE**

Afterschool and youth development professionals recognize the critical importance of relationships and communication in the practice of quality child and youth care. Practitioners have realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations regarding the behavior of children and youth, and understand developmentally appropriate guidance techniques. They are aware of factors that may impact behavior and implement strategies to support children and youth individually and in group experiences to develop self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, and positive interactions with their peers and adults (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators and the North American Certification Project (NACP) Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners*).





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## Content Area 4:

**INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH****COMPETENCIES****Providing Individual Guidance****LEVEL 1**

- a. Demonstrates developmentally appropriate guidance approaches and interactions.
- b. Guides behavior in positive ways.
- c. Models and practices a positive attitude and respect for self and others.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Provides a supportive environment in which children and youth can learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors.
- b. Provides individual guidance and support using appropriate methods, services, and resources.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Uses age-appropriate guidance strategies.  
Demonstrates realistic expectations about the
- b. child/youth's social, emotional, physical, and
- c. cognitive abilities and needs.
- d. Partners with others to develop and implement
- e. individualized guidance strategies.

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Applies theories of child/youth growth and development to improve guidance and support techniques.
- b. Individualizes and improves guidance and support through child/youth observation and assessment data.
- c. Applies differentiated instructional, guidance, and support techniques to meet diverse needs and abilities

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Develops policies for effective child/youth guidance and support.
- b. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to individual guidance and support.



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### Enhancing Group Experiences

##### LEVEL 1

- a. Recognizes that working with groups is different from working with individuals.
- b. States the importance of organization and flexibility when working with children and youth in groups.
- c. Considers development, interests, age, abilities, and skill levels when grouping children and youth.

##### LEVEL 2

- a. Provides organization and flexibility when working with children and youth in groups.
- b. Identifies each child/youth's abilities and uses guidance techniques accordingly.
- c. Enhances group experiences using appropriate methods, services, and resources, including technology.
- d. Recognizes how group dynamics affect the learning process.

##### LEVEL 3

- a. Designs and adapts group experiences to promote engagement and learning.
- b. Plans and guides activities to teach children and youth cooperative group skills.
- c. Observes group activities and transitions to enhance individual experiences.

## Content Area 4:

**INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH****COMPETENCIES cont.****Enhancing Group Experiences****LEVEL 4**

- a. Analyzes observation, evaluation, and direct input from children and youth to improve group experiences.  
Designs and develops effective group
- b. activities and interactions based on current research and curriculum.
- c. Utilizes group management strategies based on theories of child and youth development.

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to enhancing group experiences.



## Content Area 5: **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

*Acts in partnership with children and youth to foster appropriate child and youth leadership and voice.*



### **RATIONALE**

Youth engagement is both a goal and a practice through which young people gain the knowledge and skills that support their ability to create change in their lives and the world in which they live (Fletcher). Afterschool and youth development professionals work with children and youth to cultivate personal, cultural, social, or institutional relationships through supporting child- and youth-led efforts, creating partnerships, and providing formal and informal mentoring. This includes fostering appropriate child and youth leadership and seeking out child and youth voice. Youth engagement is important at all age levels but will look different depending on participants' ages and developmental stages (adapted from *Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals*).

## Content Area 5: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

### SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

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- Fletcher, A. (2008). *Youth voice glossary*. Retrieved from the Freechild Project website: <http://www.freechild.org/glossary.htm>

### COMPETENCIES

#### LEVEL 1

- Provides all children and youth with leadership opportunities.**
- Promotes and supports child-initiated and youth-led learning and activities.**
- Provides an environment that offers choices.**

#### LEVEL 2

- Supports active participation of children and youth in the program.**
- Develops relationships with children and youth while respecting cultural and ability differences in participation style.**
- Fosters critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and goal-setting skills.**
- Engages children and youth in leadership activities.**
- Maintains appropriate emotional and physical boundaries between children, youth, and adults.**
- Explains youth culture within the larger community context in which children, youth, and families live.**

Content Area 5:  
**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**



**COMPETENCIES cont.**

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Shares leadership and work with children and youth as appropriate.**
- b. Provides children and youth with opportunities that serve others.**
- c. Develops the capacity for self-reflection, communication, empathy, and appreciation of diverse opinions and cultures in children and youth.**

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Designs activities to support leadership opportunities that align with developmental abilities.**
- b. Supports the implementation of curricular activities that celebrate and are informed by child/youth culture and voice.**

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to promoting child and youth empowerment, leadership, and voice.**
- b. Analyzes and reflects on organizational culture and implements changes that demonstrate the value and need for child and youth leadership, voice, engagement, and empowerment.**

## Content Area 6:

**CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS**

*Actively promotes respect for cultural diversity and creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment that embraces diversity.*

**RATIONALE**

Culture is defined as the intersection of one's national origin, religion, language, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and physical and developmental ability. Afterschool and youth development practitioners actively promote respect for and seek self understanding of cultural diversity. They integrate current and relevant knowledge related to cultural diversity in developing respectful and effective relationships and developmental practice methods. Knowledge and skills are employed in planning, implementing and evaluating respectful programs, services, and workplaces. The development of complex, interconnected, and evolving cultural competencies on both personal and organizational levels requires dedication and cumulative and consistent work (adapted from the *North American Certification Project (NACP) Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners and Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals*).





### SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

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Content Area 6:  
**CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS**

 **COMPETENCIES**

**LEVEL 1**

- a. Demonstrates awareness of own cultural beliefs and practices.
- b. Seeks new knowledge regarding cultural beliefs and practices.
- c. Follows program guidelines that include respect and use of non-discriminatory language.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Values cultural differences in children, youth, and families.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Communicates the cultural and environmental effects on learning, behavior, and development.
- b. Increases own understanding of different cultural groups, including one's own cultural identities, beliefs, practices, and biases.
- c. Creates an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment for all children, youth, and families.
- d. Identifies culturally specific organizations as resources for staff and community.

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Supports the cultural identity, beliefs, and practices of each child and youth.
- b. Creates a trusting environment by employing multicultural strategies and teaching respect for human differences.
- c. Incorporates global perspectives.
- d. Builds relationships with culturally specific organizations and other relevant community partners.
- e. Connects teaching and learning approaches to the experiences and cultures of the community and others.

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Evaluates, applies, and articulates current theory, resources, research, and policy promoting cultural competence and responsiveness.

## Content Area 7:

# FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

*Builds on respectful, reciprocal relationships across settings to promote optimal development for children, youth, and families and to enhance the quality of afterschool and youth services.*



## RATIONALE

Afterschool and youth development professionals understand that children and youth live and learn within a continuum of settings including their homes, schools and other learning environments during the school day, afterschool and youth development programs, and a variety of other community settings. Research indicates that successful afterschool programming depends on partnerships with families, schools, and communities that are built upon ongoing, interactive communication and a commitment to confidentiality. Practitioners build on respectful, reciprocal relationships across settings to promote optimal development for children, youth, and families and to enhance the quality of afterschool and youth services. This includes implementing culturally competent practices, knowing about and connecting families to community resources, and taking advantage of opportunities for appropriate, positive collaborations with other family, school, and community services (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators*, *Ohio's Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12*, and *Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals*).).

## Content Area 7:

**FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS****SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

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## Content Area 7:

# FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS



## SUPPORTING EVIDENCE cont.

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## COMPETENCIES

### Relationships with Families

#### LEVEL I

- Identifies the role of the family as central to the development of children and youth.**
- Respects choices and goals families make for their children.**
- Protects children, youth, and family confidentiality.**
- Communicates respectfully and positively with families from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.**
- Develops and maintains open, friendly, cooperative, and respectful relationships with families.**
- Identifies ways to support the relationship between children and their families.**

## Content Area 7:

**FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS****COMPETENCIES cont.****Relationships with Families****LEVEL 2**

- a. Respects the family's role in, influence on, and responsibility for education and development.
- b. Communicates with family members about program activities and goals and shares appropriate services and resources.
- c. Engages families in discussions regarding their child's development.
- d. Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- e. Provides opportunities for continual family involvement throughout the program.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Facilitates and models a strengths-based, family-centered approach.
- b. Engages families in discussions to promote respectful partnerships.
- c. Shares information with families about the relationship among learning activities, environment, and child development.
- d. Demonstrates support for families through reciprocal relationships.

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Partners, plans, and communicates to enhance family support and participation.
- b. Reviews the effectiveness of family involvement activities and input structures, and recommends changes as needed.
- c. Ensures regular staff training and oversees development of program policies, procedures, liabilities, and risk management regarding family and community involvement.
- d. Teaches, mentors, and coaches others about how to promote family and community engagement.

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research and best/promising practices related to family systems.

Content Area 7:

## FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS



### COMPETENCIES

#### Partnerships with Community

##### LEVEL 1

- a. Recognizes and uses community resources to support and assist families and enhance programming for children and youth.
- b. Works cooperatively and appropriately with volunteers and partners.

##### LEVEL 2

- a. Identifies the larger community context within which children, youth, and families live.
- b. Assists assigned volunteers in participating effectively in program activities.
- c. Builds reciprocal relationships within communities using appropriate services and resources.

##### LEVEL 3

- a. Demonstrates positive, reciprocal working relationships with community partners.
- b. Demonstrates effective working relationships with volunteers.

##### LEVEL 4

- a. Expands relationships with community partners to support learning, development, and well-being of children, youth, and families.
- b. Implements and supports volunteer program best/promising practices.
- c. Recognizes the influence of community norms on relationships, environment, and learning.

##### LEVEL 5

- a. Evaluates, applies, and articulates current theory, resources, research, and policy promoting relationships within communities.
- b. Develops and maintains a volunteer management system, as needed, using best/promising practices.
- c. Represents children and youth in collaborative community endeavors to support learning, development, and well-being.

Content Area 7:  
**FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

 **COMPETENCIES**

**Partnerships with Schools**

**LEVEL 1**

- a. Identifies that the school and afterschool program should work collaboratively.
- b. Identifies the existence of state academic standards

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Contributes to positive relationships between school and the afterschool program.
- b. Assists in maintaining positive behavior support policies consistent with schools (if school-based) and reflective of the culture of families.
- c. Explains education standards in place at schools attended by program participants.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Develops relationships with appropriate school staff to better meet the individual needs of students.

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Maintains ongoing dialogue with school personnel as needed.
- b. Participates in shared professional development with schools attended by program participants as appropriate.

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Promotes reciprocal relationships and partnerships with school personnel in which each party understands and respects the positive impact each type of program and learning environment can have on child and youth outcomes and school achievement.



## Content Area 8: **SAFETY AND WELLNESS**

*Ensures the safety and wellness of children and youth by implementing prevention, preparedness, and health and safety practices.*



### **RATIONALE**

The physical and emotional safety and wellness of young children and youth are vital for fostering development in all areas. Children and youth are more able to fully develop socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically when their health, safety, and nutritional needs are met. Afterschool and youth development professionals ensure safety, promote sound health practices, recognize and respond to child abuse and neglect, and provide nutritious meals and snacks. They know and implement a broad array of prevention, preparedness, and health and safety practices. Practitioners communicate information regarding the health and safety of children and youth to families while maintaining confidentiality. Afterschool and youth development professionals—working in partnership with families, schools, and communities—have a key opportunity and responsibility to provide relationships, environments, and experiences for all children that guide them on a pathway toward lifelong health and well-being (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators and Ohio's Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12*).

## Content Area 8: SAFETY AND WELLNESS



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## Content Area 8: **SAFETY AND WELLNESS**



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### **COMPETENCIES**

#### **Knowledge of Regulations**

##### **LEVEL 1**

- Protects others by following health and safety regulations and policies.**
- Practices safety awareness including personal safety.**
- Identifies, documents, and reports suspected child abuse and neglect as mandated by law. Responds calmly and effectively to a crisis.**

##### **LEVEL 2**

- Communicates and follows emergency preparedness plans.**
- Assists with and involves children and youth (when possible) in health and safety assessments.**
- Ensures adherence to health and safety regulations and policies, including those regarding the inclusion of children and youth of all cultural backgrounds and abilities.**

##### **LEVEL 3**

- Develops illness and injury procedures and emergency preparedness plans.**
- Develops and implements systems for documentation and notification of suspected child abuse and neglect, in accordance with state law.**

Content Area 8:  
**SAFETY AND WELLNESS**

 **COMPETENCIES cont.**

**Knowledge of Regulations**

**LEVEL 4**

- a. Partners with others in the development and/or revision of health and safety policies and procedures.
- b. Assesses how regulations and policies affect the quality of the program.
- c. Provides staff leadership and trains staff regarding regulations, policies, and protocols.
- d. Anticipates and plans for potential risks to protect children, youth, and adults.
- e. Articulates and monitors adherence to policies and regulations pertaining to health and safety.

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, promising/best practices, and policies related to health and safety.

 **COMPETENCIES**

**Environmental Safety**

**LEVEL 1**

- a. Recognizes and maintains safe indoor and outdoor areas.
- b. Follows safe practices.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Assesses and adapts environments, including when away from the facility, to ensure the safety of children and youth.
- b. Promotes safety using appropriate methods, services, and resources.
- c. Plans experiences to keep children and youth safe.
- d. Communicates policies, procedures, and information with families and staff.

Content Area 8:  
**SAFETY AND WELLNESS**



**COMPETENCIES cont.**

**Environmental Safety**

**LEVEL 3**

- a. **Creates safe environments and procedures for children, youth, and adults.**

**LEVEL 4**

- a. **Collaborates with others to ensure adherence to policies and procedures pertaining to the safety of children and youth.**
- b. **Develops policies and procedures for environmental (including the sensory and physical environment) safety.**

**LEVEL 5**

- a. **Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, promising/best practices, resources, and policies relevant to sensory, physical, and social/emotional, environmental safety.**



**Health and Wellness**

**LEVEL I**

- a. **Supports the nutritional needs and healthy eating practices of children and youth.**
- b. **Follows practices to support the emotional well-being of children and youth.**
- c. **States the importance of mental wellness and how it connects to the individual's overall health.**
- d. **Recognizes that children and youth have individual mental health needs and require an individualized response.**
- e. **Supports the physical health of each child and youth.**
- f. **Models healthy lifestyle practices.**
- g. **Maintains sanitary environments.**

## Content Area 8: SAFETY AND WELLNESS



### COMPETENCIES cont.

#### Health and Safety

##### LEVEL 2

- a. Promotes healthy eating practices by using appropriate methods, services, and resources.
- b. Communicates with others about the nutritional needs and preferences of children and youth.
- c. Promotes mental health using appropriate methods, services, and resources.
- d. Monitors the environment for healthy practices, making improvements as necessary.
- e. Implements procedures and plans experiences to promote health and fitness.
- f. Recognizes children's and youth's exploration and curiosity about the human body and responds appropriately.
- g. Facilitates age-appropriate discussions on healthy living topics.

##### LEVEL 3

- a. Designs, assesses, and modifies healthy environments and procedures to protect the health of all children, youth, and adults.
- b. Incorporates activities promoting healthy nutrition across curricular areas.
- c. Identifies and responds to nutritional issues.
- d. Accommodates diverse health needs and abilities.
- e. Promotes a healthy lifestyle.
- f. Recognizes signs of stress and trauma on children and youth and makes appropriate referrals.
- g. Identifies signs and symptoms of common childhood and adolescent health problems, including mental health issues, social issues, and risky behavior, and confers with supervisor and/or parent accordingly.
- h. Consistently monitors and implements strategies to support mental well-being of children and youth.

Content Area 8:  
**SAFETY AND WELLNESS**



**COMPETENCIES cont.**

**Health and Safety**

**LEVEL 4**

- a. **Assesses and adapts the program's nutrition plan.**
- b. **Collaborates with others to promote nutrition, physical health, and fitness.**
- c. **Designs and implements activities that incorporate healthy living topics.**
- d. **Trains staff on healthy living topics.**
- e. **Establishes policies and procedures for the documentation and notification of suspected abuse, neglect, and physical, verbal, and sexual harassment.**

**LEVEL 5**

- a. **Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, promising/best practices, resources, and policies relevant to health and wellness.**

"This conversation is not about just weight or size or BMI [body mass index]. It's about overall health and the kind of lives that we want our kids to lead...we've got to set them up for success."

Michelle Obama

## Content Area 9:

**PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

*Supports staff and serves as a role model around professional development plans by building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, providing developmentally appropriate practices, and connecting with and utilizing resources.*

**RATIONALE**

Program managers understand planning, organizing, and implementing best business practices. Additionally, practitioners understand the importance of relationships and positive communication among colleagues, especially those working together to create a nurturing learning environment for all children and youth. Developing a shared understanding with staff and families of regulations, applicable laws, policies, staff supervision, and quality standards, as well as how to meet regulations and standards, is essential to quality environments for children. Management supports staff and serves as role models around professional development plans, building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, providing developmentally appropriate practices, and connecting with and utilizing resources (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators*).





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**PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT****SUPPORTING EVIDENCE cont.**

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## PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



### COMPETENCIES

#### Program Planning and Evaluation

##### LEVEL 1

- a. Follows the program's mission and policies.
- b. Recognizes the importance of evaluations and assists in evaluating the program's effectiveness.

##### LEVEL 2

- a. Supports and implements the program's mission and policies.
- b. Promotes program planning and evaluation using appropriate services and resources.
- c. Is proficient in the use of technology needed to function effectively in current position.

##### LEVEL 3

- a. Aligns daily practices with the program's philosophy, policies, and procedures.
- b. Participates in strategic planning and goal setting for program improvement.
- c. Implements strategies to promote the value of the program in the community.
- d. Incorporates cultural diversity into the daily program.

##### LEVEL 4

- a. Develops and monitors program policies and procedures that integrate laws, regulations, and professional standards.
- b. Promotes collaborations to support the program.
- c. Describes and interprets program evaluation methods.
- d. Manages program resources effectively.

##### LEVEL 5

- a. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, and policies relevant to program planning and evaluation.
- b. Develops, implements, evaluates, and revises program policies.
- c. Manages program resources effectively.

## Content Area 9:

**PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT****COMPETENCIES cont.****Personnel Management****LEVEL 5**

- a. Adheres to employment laws and regulations.
- b. Incorporates principles of teamwork into interactions with others.
- c. Promotes personnel management practices using appropriate methods, services, and resources.
- d. Identifies resources and supports for financing professional growth opportunities.
- e. Develops personnel policies and procedures that integrate professional standards with laws and regulations.
- f. Recruits and manages staff and volunteers.
- g. Provides strong leadership and visionary direction for staff and volunteers.
- h. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, and policies relevant to personnel management.

**COMPETENCIES****Financial Management****LEVEL 5**

- a. Promotes financial management practices using appropriate services and resources.
- b. Develops a fiscal business plan that reflects the program's mission, philosophy, and financial position.
- c. Develops the program's fiscal policies and procedures, adhering to financial laws and regulations.
- d. Seeks and obtains additional funding opportunities to ensure sustainability.
- e. Articulates, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices related to financial management

## Content Area 10:

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

*Acts ethically, is committed to continuous learning, and advocates for best practices and policies for children and youth.*



## RATIONALE

Each afterschool and youth development professional is a member of a larger community of professional practice. Practitioners understand that their profession originates from a history and a core base of knowledge rooted in research that together serve as a foundation for the profession. Practitioners' behavior and actions must be grounded in a professional code of ethics and other professional standards related to their practice. The profession as a whole is elevated when each professional adopts the responsibilities of the profession regarding ethical behavior.

Practitioners are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate and share knowledge, reflect on and have a critical perspective of their work, and make informed decisions. When afterschool professionals are equipped with specialized education and training, and continue to learn and develop as professionals, they are better able to provide experiences and environments that support every aspect of children's growth and learning.

They are role models and advocates for best practices and policies, able to effectively communicate the importance of high-quality programming (adapted from *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators, Ohio's Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12, and Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals*).

## Content Area 10:

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP****SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

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**COMPETENCIES**

**Displaying Professionalism in Practice**

**LEVEL 1**

- a. Models a positive and respectful attitude when working with children and youth.
- b. Improves teaching and learning through professional work habits.
- c. Demonstrates the ability to work effectively with others.
- d. Acts ethically, maintaining confidentiality and impartiality, based on a professional code of ethics and other professional guidelines.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Manages demands of personal and professional commitments. Demonstrates commitment to a
- b. professional code of ethics and other professional guidelines.
- c. Interacts with others in a professional manner.
- d. Promotes professionalism using appropriate skills, services, and resources.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Promotes professionalism and ethical responsibilities by following a professional code of ethics.
- b. Demonstrates oral and written skills appropriate to one's professional role, including using technology.
- c. Demonstrates positive relationships and supportive interactions when caring for children and youth.
- d. Describes relationship between theory and practice.

## Content Area 10:

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP****COMPETENCIES cont.****Displaying Professionalism in Practice****LEVEL 4**

- a. Responds to challenges as opportunities for professional growth.
- b. Collaborates with other organizations and agencies to meet goals.
- c. Articulates a personal philosophy of education based on knowledge of child/youth growth and development, cultural competencies, best/promising practices, and a professional code of ethics.

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Evaluates, applies, and articulates current theory, resources, research, and policy promoting professionalism and professional code of ethics.
- b. Applies oral, written, and technological communication skills to one's specialized professional role.

"The focus of any afterschool program, no matter the age of the participants, should be about the quality of learning, development, and care of its participants. That same focus must also be extended to you. Attaining the competencies that you will need for your new job won't be easy, but it will be immensely rewarding. Learning requires both passion and practice."

Paul G. Young, NAA President & CEO





## COMPETENCIES

### Ongoing Professional Growth

#### LEVEL 1

- a. Seeks knowledge through interactions with other professionals.
- b. Identifies professional development requirements of the field and awareness of professional standards.
- c. Follows a professional development plan..

#### LEVEL 2

- a. Builds personal and professional competence by using appropriate skills, services, and resources.
- b. Develops and implements a professional development plan.
- c. Participates in activities, projects, and events within the field

#### LEVEL 3

- a. Practices ongoing self-reflection, self-assessment, and problem-solving strategies to promote professional growth.
- b. Engages in continuous, collaborative professional development for the benefit of self and others.

#### LEVEL 4

- a. Integrates knowledge of historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of child/youth development into planning and decision making.
- b. Participates actively in a leadership role in professional associations and builds professional relationships.
- c. Creates professional development opportunities for others.
- d. Evaluates and selects resources for ongoing professional development.

Content Area 10:  
**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

 **COMPETENCIES cont.**

**Ongoing Professional Growth**

**LEVEL 5**

- a. Evaluates, applies, and articulates current theory, resources, research, and policy promoting ongoing professional growth.
- b. Designs, implements, and evaluates professional development opportunities.

 **COMPETENCIES**

**Leadership and Advocacy**

**LEVEL 1**

- a. Identifies the need for leadership skills (to be a voice) in the child/youth development field for children, youth, and families.
- b. Identifies characteristics and qualities of leadership.

**LEVEL 2**

- a. Displays leadership skills and identifies strategies for advocacy.
- b. Promotes leadership and advocacy using appropriate skills, services, and resources.

**LEVEL 3**

- a. Participates in leadership and advocacy opportunities within the profession.
- b. Encourages and empowers others to engage in advocacy and leadership.



**COMPETENCIES cont.**

**Leadership and Advocacy**

**LEVEL 4**

- a. **Advocates for programs and policies that impact the overall quality of services for all children, youth, and families.**
- b. **Serves in leadership roles within the profession.**
- c. **Advocates for best practices in child and youth development.**

**LEVEL 5**

- a. **Evaluates, applies, and articulates current theory, resources, research, and policy promoting leadership and advocacy.**
- b. **Creates opportunities for others to serve in leadership and advocacy roles.**

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Funding and related supports for the development of the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals were provided by the National Afterschool Association, the Florida Afterschool Network, Pennsylvania Key, and the Child and Youth Care Certification Board.

The purpose of this project is to provide cohesion for the field by bringing together work that has already been developed, tested, and successfully implemented. To that end, we have drawn heavily from existing core competency frameworks. Most substantially, we used the Kansas and Missouri Competencies for Youth Development Professionals, including their current draft of revisions, as a model. In addition, we drew heavily from the School's Out Washington and Ohio's Afterschool Initiative competencies.

The following resources also informed our work:

- *4 H Professional Research and Knowledge Base*
- *Achieve Boston Competency Framework*
- *Colorado School Age/Youth Development Core Knowledge & Standards*
- *Florida Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners Edited by the Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) Professional Development Task Force - draft*
- *Indiana Youth Development Credential Core Competencies*
- *Kansas and Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals*
- *Mott Foundation Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators*
- *National Collaboration for Youth Professional Development Competencies*
- *New Hampshire After School Professional Development System*
- *New York City Department of Youth and Community Development*
- *North American Certification Project (NACP) Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners*
- *Ohio's Core Knowledge & Competencies for Afterschool Professionals Who Work with Children Ages 5–12*
- *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators*

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- *Palm Beach County Core Competencies for After School Practitioners*
- *Pennsylvania Core Body of Knowledge for Early Childhood and School-Age Practitioners*
- *Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals*
- *U.S. Army School Age Services Professional Development Program*
- *Washington School Age Skill Standards*
- *Washington STARS*
- *Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals*

Thank you for the work that has already been done, and for so graciously sharing your work for the common good of the field.

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## Pilot Sites

AFTER SCHOOL Wisconsin Youth Company, Madison, WI  
BOSTnet, Boston, MA  
Dallas AfterSchool Network, Dallas, TX  
Francis Institute for Child and Youth Development, Kansas City, MO  
Indiana Youth PRO Association, Indianapolis, IN  
Pennsylvania Key, Harrisburg, PA

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## GLOSSARY



*(Adapted from Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals and National AfterSchool Association Code of Ethics)*

**afterschool:** Before school, after school, school vacations/holidays, and summer.

**afterschool programming:** Any organized program provided for children and youth ages 5–18 during a time when they are not in school.

**afterschool and youth development professionals:** Those individuals who work in any organized program for children and youth ages 5–18 during a time when they are not in school.

**best/promising practices:** Evidence-based curriculum, programs or approaches.

**child/youth:** Typically, child refers to individuals between the ages of 5–12 years, and youth refers to individuals between the ages of 13–18 years. As programs may be multi-age and development varies, these definitions are not strict but general guidelines.

**cognitive/cognition:** Refers to both the knowledge possessed and the child's/youth's ability to think, reason, learn, and understand. Younger school-age children usually think in concrete ways. Older school-age children (adolescents) begin to use more complex ways of thinking.

**cultural competency:** Cultural competency requires holding and practicing a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable effective interactions with all children and youth within a cross-cultural framework.

**culture:** Culture encompasses the evolving identities, beliefs, and practices derived from the intersection of one's national origin, religion, language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and physical/developmental ability.

## GLOSSARY



**curriculum:** Curriculum in an afterschool or youth development program refers to program content and how it is delivered. Although a program may select a particular focus, high-quality programs incorporate all curricular areas into program plans. Program curriculum should also include a positive child and youth development approach that allows children and youth to develop a positive attitude toward learning and a successful approach to living.

**diversity:** Refers to the various backgrounds and races that comprise a community, nation, or other groupings. In many cases the term diversity does not just acknowledge the existence of diverse backgrounds, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc., but implies an appreciation of these differences.

**ethics:** The responsibility to intentionally choose what is right, moral, and just in practice and in principle.

**family:** All persons whom are responsible for and involved with the child/youth and who the child/youth identifies as having significant impact in their lives. Family in this context includes any caregivers responsible for raising the child and with whom they reside, be it extended family, foster family, legal guardian, etc.

**mental health:** A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

**professional development:** Opportunities that enhance a practitioner's knowledge and skills and impact attitudes/beliefs. This may include workshops, conference, coaching, team building, etc.

**special needs:** The needs of students who are identified and receive special education services in public schools in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.



## GLOSSARY



**strengths-based, family-centered approach:** A framework that places family as its focal point instead of the child, focusing on family strengths and families' ability to problem solve. It incorporates collaboration between schools, families, and service providers, emphasizing partnerships and community building.

**youth development:** The natural process of a young person growing and maturing. Youth development also encompasses the philosophy of working with young people in a manner that is strengths-based.

**youth empowerment:** Youth empowerment is both a goal and a practice through which young people gain the knowledge and skills that support their ability to create change in their lives and the world in which they live.

**youth leadership:** Youth leadership is a broad concept related to the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and aspirations utilized by one or more children/youth in influencing, motivating, informing, and inspiring desired actions and reactions by others.

**youth voice:** The goal of the concept of youth voice is that ideas, opinions, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and actions of young people are actively sought out and vocalized by placing young people in forums and in decision-making roles to offer their insights, ideas, and experiences.

**wellness:** A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

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