

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENHANCING SCHOOL-AGE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

The afterschool field has grown and changed dramatically over the past 20 years, moving from a focus on child supervision and recreation to providing an essential support to advance positive outcomes for children's growth and learning. States/Territories continue to experience challenges in system-building efforts that will ensure that we can recruit, retain, and support this unique and mostly part-time workforce.

As States/Territories consider next steps for the school-age (SA) professional development system (PDS), whether working on aligned systems or elements of a system such as core competencies, credentials, coaching, career pathways, or compensation, it will be important to have the data needed to understand the current reality.

- What are the characteristics of your workforce?
- What training, education, and technical assistance (TA) opportunities are available?
- What are the greatest needs of current and prospective members of the workforce?
- What do leaders need to be prepared to implement specific organizational and management practices that support the workforce?

The following table identifies specific approaches and associated considerations and provides space to capture relevant ideas related to:

- An aligned PDS
- Core knowledge and competencies
- Credentials
- Career pathways
- Technical Assistance
- Compensation



An aligned early childhood (EC) and SA PDS consists of interrelated programs, services, and supports with a common goal of building and sustaining an effective workforce. An aligned PDS includes at a minimum all of the primary EC and SA sectors (Child Care, Head Start/Early Head Start, public preschool/primary education, and early intervention/special education), settings (centers, schools, and homes), and roles (direct service professionals and those who work on behalf of young children and their families).

Approaches	Considerations	Ideas for Our State/Territory
<p>Integrate SA workforce needs and considerations into the PDS <i>OR</i> align cross-over areas with any separate youth development or allied fields (e.g., schools, health and mental health, etc.) PDS and supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What sectors and systems comprise your State's/Territory's vision for an aligned PDS? ▪ Where do SA professionals fit in this vision? Consider your State/Territory context, including its political and fiscal situation, where and how the PDS fits in its larger early learning and early childhood systems, and its specific professional development (PD) goals and priorities. Is SA care considered part of the early childhood continuum? Is it part of the youth development field serving youth up to age 21? Schools? Human services? ▪ What systems and/or components currently support the SA workforce? Can the current systems or components of the systems be built upon/strengthened? Could they be strengthened most by integration or alignment? ▪ How will representatives from across SA settings be involved in PDS planning and work groups (e.g., child care, youth development, school-based, summer camps, recreation, human services)? 	

Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKCs) refer to the expectations for what the workforce should know (content) and be able to do (skills) in their role working with and/or on behalf of children and their families. All EC and SA professionals need the foundational knowledge and skills described in CKCs, at a minimum, to adequately perform their roles. Various roles, settings, and sectors may require additional *specializations* of knowledge and skills for professionals to be most effective. Specialized knowledge and competencies for the SA workforce are typically built on or embedded in States'/Territories' CKCs.

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<p>There are multilevel SA specialized knowledge and competencies, either embedded in a universal CKCs document or as a separate document. When developed as a separate document, these SA specialized criteria are often referred to as SA or Youth Development CKCs with some encompassing professionals working with youth up to age 21.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing specialized knowledge and competencies can be a way to unify the SA workforce. Involving all settings (e.g., child care; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; youth development programs; summer programs; school-based programs; family child care; and family, friend and neighbor care) in creating the specialized criteria can create strong partnerships and ownership of this foundational PDS component. 	
<p>The SA knowledge and competencies align with the national SA core competencies developed by the National Afterschool Association (NAA). www.naaweb.org/resources/core-competencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do the SA competencies reflect unique SA issues? For example, does the criteria include that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities provide youth with voice and choice and promote engagement in learning, critical thinking and problem solving. • Activities reflect youth culture and offer opportunities to build youth leadership. • Providers increase family engagement, and school and community partnerships. 	

Credentials are academic degrees, licenses, or certificates awarded to individuals who successfully complete State/Territory or national requirements to enter specialized roles in the early childhood profession (NAEYC, in development 2012). Credentials may be role specific, such as director, infant/toddler, or SA credentials. They may also be content specific, such as a literacy credential. Credentials are often based on CKCs established by the State/Territory PDS, require completion of the defined training or educational requirements, and can include other requirements, such as practical experience and other professional achievements or contributions that must be documented by the individual and verified by the entity awarding the credential. Most credentials are time limited and must be renewed or maintained through additional training hours, coursework, or other professional activities (*Setting the Stage for a Youth Development Associate Credential*, Denney, J.; Gannett, E.; Robbins, R. 2006).

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<p>21 States/Territories have developed SA credentials. Currently, there is no national credential, but NAA and others are exploring the possible development and pilot of a credential, building from existing credentials developed by various States/Territories and Regions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is developing an entry-level credential for the SA workforce a priority need for your State/Territory? Would national criteria help with your SA workforce needs related to credentials? ▪ Including the full range of stakeholders as listed in the CKCs section in discussions of need and in development, if determined appropriate, is critical to a SA credential's usefulness and success. 	



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<p>Like entry-level credentials, SA director/program administrator credentials can directly link with EC credential offerings on crossover criteria like administration, fiscal management, and supervision. These credentials can also have customized content on specific SA program development and curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do the professionals providing the credential training/education have relevant education and specific experience in out-of-school-time or youth development programs? ▪ Can content from allied fields like education, social work, psychology, recreation, and arts be accessed to prepare SA directors/program administrators? 	
<p>Align and incorporate credentials into the PDS and other quality improvement efforts such as the career lattice, registry, and quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As part of the determination to develop a credential, include implementation considerations, such as what entity is best positioned to implement, grow, and sustain a credential. ▪ Will (or how will) credentials be offered for or articulate into college credit or a degree? 	

<p>Career Pathways create a continuum of training, education, and TA (from consultants, coaches, mentors, career advisors, and others) to recognize and reward higher levels of preparation and master of practice to meet the diverse needs of the workforce.</p>		
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<p>Create a continuum of PD opportunities that link and build toward increased compensation and varied career opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider access issues that are unique for the SA workforce, including scheduling and location options. ▪ What communication and engagement vehicles are available or can be added to ensure that SA providers know about PD opportunities? ▪ Is there equity in stipends and scholarship dollars that are available for this segment of the workforce? 	
<p>Create a system of training opportunities that are linked and accumulate into continuing education units (CEUs) and/or college credit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the challenges for SA providers? ▪ What access does the SA workforce have to meaningful/relevant PD, especially credit-bearing coursework? ▪ How can training/coursework articulate to degrees and credentials to support movement along a career pathway? 	



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<p>Create flexible Associates and Bachelor level degree programs for the SA workforce. Options could include a multidisciplinary degree that prepares students for jobs in a range of settings (e.g. youth development, schools, residential settings for foster care mental health and juvenile justice, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What degrees are offered? ▪ Have there been surveys or assessment of higher education capacity to help assess need, as well as the potential of building on existing programs? ▪ Does the assessment include the potential to build a multidisciplinary degree, building on existing courses in early childhood, education, social work, recreation, etc.? ▪ What is the market for Associate and Bachelor level programs? Will having a multi-disciplinary approach help build sustainable enrollment? ▪ What degree programs will prepare students for full-time, well-compensated work? 	

Technical Assistance (TA) is the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by recipients. Mentoring, coaching, consultation, PD advising, and peer-to-peer TA are strategies that may be discrete processes or used as part of education and/or training programs. Most TA methods are relationship-based; they benefit from the building of positive, trusting, and respectful relationships. TA methods may be delivered by an individual or a team, to one individual or a group. (*Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary*. NAEYC and NACCRRRA, 2011.)

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Build and support SA TA capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will TA specialists work with the whole program, individual staff, or program leaders? Or are there multiple and combined approaches to using TA specialists? ▪ Will the TA focus on general program quality or on specific content (e.g., relationships, literacy or STEM, coordinating with families and schools)? ▪ What data needs to be collected on quality and effectiveness of TA? 	
Align TA with existing or emerging quality improvement systems and efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What TA approaches are most likely to impact quality improvement? ▪ How do we align TA efforts across sectors (Child Care, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, youth development)? ▪ How can TA qualifications, supports, and/or compensation be aligned with early learning guidelines, licensing requirements, QRIS, and related national criteria? 	



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<p>Create a plan for sustainability, including a plan to collect quality assurance data on effectiveness of TA specialists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What will it cost to implement an evidence-based model with fidelity? ▪ What funding is needed to sustain administration costs (outreach, assignments, training, supervision)? ▪ What compensation packages might impact recruitment and retention of TA specialists? Will there be levels of TA specialists? ▪ Consider building a multidisciplinary team, from SA and youth development, as well as social work, education, and the arts. 	

Embedding workforce compensation and positive workplace conditions into PDS requires examining both the available funding sources and packaging, staging, targeting and pro-rating of investments.		
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Develop scholarships and financial incentives for those who complete training, credentials, and degrees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What financial incentives will be most effective to ensure that the SA workforce has access to training, credentials, and degrees? ▪ Which training, credentials, and degrees best prepare students for full-time work and a living wage? 	
Use direct funds to support recruitment and compensation strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What compensation strategies best increase staff satisfaction and retention (e.g., more full-time positions, higher hourly wage, benefits such as health insurance, paid planning/training time, etc.)? ▪ What recruitment strategies could result in the most qualified and stable workforce? 	
Leverage partnerships to develop recruitment and compensation strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What strategies can be utilized to recruit staff into the field while receiving training or working on degrees (e.g., apprenticeships, partnerships with higher education, etc.)? ▪ What partnerships will help in creating full-time jobs by combining part-time afterschool positions with other part-time jobs like morning preschools, evening recreation programs, or part-time school positions? 	



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<p>Support or initiate a shared services model (i.e., a community-based partnership comprised of small businesses that share costs and deliver services).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could a shared service model offer savings to SA programs that could result in increased compensation and improved workforce conditions from streamlined administrative costs, a larger pool for benefits, shared costs for accounting, legal and insurance services, and shared PD costs? ▪ Are there existing models in the State/Territory? Are they showing positive results and data that could be built upon? 	



References

Dennehy, J., Gannett, E., & Robbins, R. (2006). *Setting the Stage for a Youth Development Associate Credential*. Houston, TX: Cornerstones For Kids.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA). (2011). *Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary*. Retrieved from: www.naeyc.org/GlossaryTraining_TA.pdf

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