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This Research Brief is the fifth in a periodic series published by the National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (NCASE) to build awareness of research and promising practices in the field of school-age child care.

The goal of NCASE is to ensure that school-age children in families of low income have increased access to quality afterschool and summer learning experiences that contribute to their overall development and academic achievement. For more information, contact us at ncase@ecetta.info.

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Addressing Equity in Out-of-School Time

The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic coincide with increased attention to issues of racial injustice. Federal support, including funding is available to rebuild early childhood and out-of-school time (OST) care, to address inequities that have historically diminished opportunities for children and families.

On January 20, 2021, President Joseph A. Biden signed the executive order Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, which acknowledged equity issues exist in this country and provided the footing for practices and processes to be reevaluated and reestablished with an equity framework. According to the executive order, equity is the “consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals . . .”¹ Given that this brief will

specifically address equity and OST programs, we will also view equity as youth having “the tools, resources, and other supports they need to achieve desired outcomes.”²

OST programs represent enrichment opportunities outside of the school day, such as before and afterschool programs, summer programs, and other school breaks.

Research reveals that OST programs provide measurable benefits to youth and families, demonstrably improving academic

- 1 The White House. (2021, January 20). Executive order on advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>
- 2 Curry, S. (2017). Equity and inclusion: An action agenda for youth development professionals. *Afterschool Matters* 26: Fall. https://www.niosr.org/pdf/afterschoolmatters/asm_2017_fall/ASM_Fall2017.pdf

and developmental outcomes along with other results such as positive youth-adult relationships and social-emotional learning. These outcomes are visible in diverse environments from rural townships to city neighborhoods.

Given these successes, how is equity included within these OST programs? Equity occurs when organizations, programs, and people work intentionally to adopt fair, nonbiased practices. These efforts are undertaken to meet the needs of families and their children discretely but should also include the needs of the workforce and the community at large. These practices promote equitable access to resources and services to ensure positive experiences and outcomes. Without a focus on equity, opportunity gaps lead to disparities based on race, language, disabilities, income, and other factors for all parties involved.³

Access

The Wallace Foundation's publication *The Value of Out-of-School Time Programs* cites that high-income families will spend at least seven times more on OST programming for their children than lower-income families.⁴ The result is simply that children from families of low income, and others in traditionally under-resourced communities, often miss out on enrichment opportunities youth need. While there are many examples of how community-based organizations strive to meet the OST needs of a specific community, access remains an issue felt across the country. New funding options can support opportunities to increase access. Most recent U.S. stimulus funding package, the American Rescue Plan Act, provides \$500 billion across states, territories, and tribes that can be used in part for afterschool and summer programs.⁵ Increased funding paired with

equitable processes and practices for both families and providers can bring OST programming to communities, families, and, most importantly, youth in most need.

Experiences

OST—before/afterschool or summer programming—serves several purposes: child care, in the absence of parents or caregivers; academic remediation; academic enrichment; and extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, dance, or crafts). OST schedules reflect program goals and help determine the experiences offered/available to participants. Program experiences must be selected and planned with **all** participants in mind. In other words, they should be culturally relevant & responsive, and adaptable to individual needs. In OST, quality experiences are those that are complementary to how developmental needs are generally being met at home, in school, clubs, faith organizations and/or sports.

Outcomes

Programs must address the needs of youth with different experiences and backgrounds, which requires targeted investments and program design to produce equal *outcomes*. This is possible when outcomes are developed through an equity-minded process. Equity tools like the Wallace Foundation's [Putting Data to Work for Young People: A Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement, and Equitable Systems](#) can be used to assess program resources, goals, outputs, and outcomes and can assist programs, funders, and other stakeholders in keeping equity at the forefront.

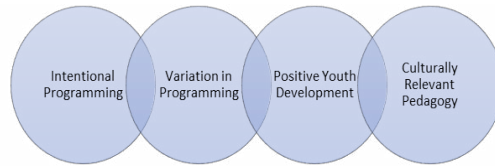
3 Children's Equity Project. (2021). *Advancing equity in early care and education systems*. <https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-06/CEP-equityARP-052821.pdf>

4 McCombs, J., Whitaker, A., & Yoo, P. (2017). *The value of out-of-school time programs*. Rand Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE267.html>

5 ACF (2021). Strategic Planning for American Rescue Plan Act CCDF Discretionary Supplemental Funds. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/strategic-planning-american-rescue-plan-act-ccdf-discretionary-supplemental-funds>

Youth

Figure 1: Key Factors in Equitable OST Programming



First and foremost, the way an organization, district, state/territory, tribe, etc. administers its OST programs makes the difference. According to a report by the Hanover Research Council, intentional programming and variation in programming can lead to equitable outcomes.⁶ Intentional programming references the need to plan toward the goals of the program and use a deliberate process to design, implement, and evaluate activities. Further, variation in programming refers to characteristics of a program, like participant age, interest, needs, and community characteristics. Therefore, a program willingly varies features/offerings to meet the intended needs of the program and all participants.

A key factor to fostering equitable experiences and outcomes for youth is the philosophy or principles to which an organization subscribes. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is defined as “voluntary education outside school hours aiming to promote generalized and positive development of assets such as bonding, resilience, social, emotional, cognitive, behavior or moral competence, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, belief in the future, recognition for positive behavior, opportunities for pro-social involvement and/or pro-social norms.”⁷

The incorporation of PYD can promote equitable youth outcomes and are important for state planners and practitioners to promote and adopt as practice.

Research reveals that youth who participate in OST programs that embody PYD principles have productive outcomes, including increased school attendance, social-emotional skill development, and improved academic performance.⁸ A racial equity perspective within PYD is supported by regular program assessment to make sure **all** youth engage with the principles.⁹ The principles alone provide a strong foundation to support equitable programming.

Another opportunity to promote equity in OST is through the use of culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy is defined as a participant-centered approach in which the unique cultural strengths of participants are identified and nurtured to promote achievement and a sense of well-being about the participant’s cultural place in the world.¹⁰ This pedagogical approach places youth participants at the center and can be applied across all disciplines and settings. It requires youth workers to acknowledge the cultural and social world of the participants, which means acceptance of different cultural orientations, practices, values, and lived experiences. This requires a highly skilled, culturally competent, and emotionally intelligent workforce.

Above figure 1 provides the broad concepts, below are considerations for system planners and practitioners to foster equitable experiences and outcomes for youth:

- » Include parents/families: gain cross-cultural skills necessary for successful exchange and collaboration.¹¹

6 Hanover Research Council. (2009). *Best Practices for Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs*. <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Best-Practices-for-Out-of-School-Time-OST-Programs-Arlington-Public-Schools.pdf>

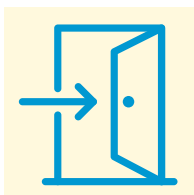
7 Youth.gov. (2021). *Key Principles of Positive Youth Development* Retrieved from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/key-principles-positive-youth-development>

8 Vandell, D. (2015). *Afterschool Programs: Fostering Youth Development AND Reducing Achievement Gaps* PPT Presentation. <http://expandinglearning.org/research/vandell/>

9 Child Trends (2020). *Embedding a Racial Equity Perspective in the Positive Youth Development Approach*. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GenWorkPYDracialequity_ChildTrends_April2020.pdf

10 Brown University. (2021). *Cultural Responsive Teaching* <https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/strategies-0/culturally-responsive-teaching-0>

11 Brown University.



ACCESS

- » Provide a variety of choices for youth-centered programming.¹²
- » Create an environment that encourages and embraces culture.¹³
- » Develop learning activities that are reflective of youth's backgrounds.¹⁴
- » Create an environment with genuine respect for youth and a belief in their capability.¹⁵
- » Use adults as facilitators of learning.¹⁶
- » Include youth as active agents: value and encourage youth to participate in design, delivery, and evaluation of the services and adult/youth partnerships.¹⁷
- » Provide instruction of leadership qualities.¹⁸
- » Encourage youth to contribute to their schools and broader communities through civic engagement/service and provide opportunities for them to connect to their community.¹⁹

See [Equity in Action: Tips for School-Age Child Care Providers](#)²⁰ for specific ideas and guidance on equitable practices.

Spotlight on Indiana Afterschool Network²¹

The Indiana Afterschool Network worked with diversity, equity, and inclusion and youth development experts, along with OST providers, to develop a special diversity, equity, and inclusion addition to the Indiana Afterschool Standards. This addition outlines best practices and recommendations specific to addressing the needs of diverse youth and offering quality, culturally responsive programming. It helps programs ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is at the center of program curricula

and practices as well as internal policies and practices. Also included in the Standards document is the Indiana Quality Program Self-Assessment, an online strengths-based self-assessment tool that enables youth programs to rate their performance based on the Indiana Afterschool Standards and Specialty Standards.

Family

Equitable experiences for families in OST involve right of entry or access, and family engagement. In the National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (NCASE) brief *The Demand for Both Coverage and Quality in Out-of-School Time*, parents shared their need for quality care that is affordable, reliable and supports workforce participation.²² Access to quality OST programming becomes focus, especially for low-income families. According to the 2020 America After 3PM report, there is an unmet demand for afterschool care, with almost 25 million youth lacking program options.²³ As discussed earlier in this brief, the issue of access can be addressed with increased funding for families, and with the incorporation of equitable, family-friendly service practices.

Still, OST programs and their funders must take note of the needs of the families they serve. This means connecting to families on an individual level and in the context of their community and the larger society. Here we can consider the application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (figure 2) and the family role in connection with youth, and other primary institutions, from the microsystem to

12 Brown University.

13 Brown University.

14 Brown University.

15 Brown University.

16 Brown University.

17 Youth.gov.

18 Youth.gov.

19 Youth.gov.

20 NCASE (2021). NCASE Equity in Action Tips for School-Age Child Care Providers. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/equity-action-tips-school-age-child-care-providers>.

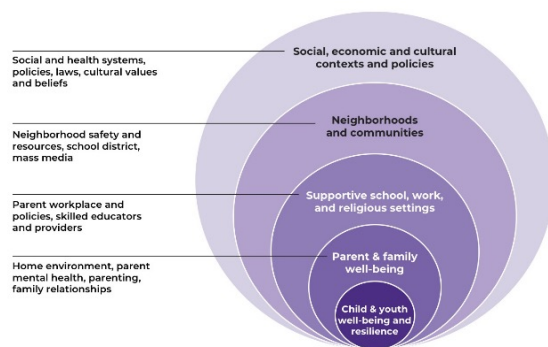
21 Indianaafterschool.org (2021). *Indiana Afterschool Standards and Specialty Standards: A Guide for High-Quality Programs Serving Youth in Out-of-School Time*. <https://www.indianaafterschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/IAN-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Standards.pdf>

22 National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2020). *The Demand for Both Coverage and Quality in Out-of-School Time*. https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/ncase-the-demand-both-coverage-quality-ost_508c.pdf

23 Afterschool Alliance. (2020). *America After 3PM Report*. <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2020/AA3PM-National-Report.pdf>

macro-system.²⁴ The important role of the family unit, no matter the structure, must be respected, and a healthy relationship forged, to ensure positive program outcomes for youth. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory reminds us of the critical function families play in how youth will fare over the course of their adolescent life.

Figure 2: Bio-ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory)



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How do programs maintain a connection with families? *Equitable family engagement* is the opportunity that programs and systems have to increase the level of involvement of families in their youths' education and school, improve the parent-youth relationship, and increase the quality of OST programming overall.²⁶ Consistently engaging families in the context of their culture and needs provides the foundation for respectful, reciprocal relationships. Programs can use tools like [BOSTnet's Engaging Families in Out-of-School Time Programs Toolkit](#) to assess their program for ways to increase family engagement via an equity lens. On a system level, states/territories and tribes use federal

funding sources like Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to encourage equitable family engagement strategies in child care programs through quality initiatives. Acceptable strategies should be meaningful engagement activities that do not characterize or treat specific family groups as deficient in their level of engagement or approach.²⁷

Spotlight on the Zuni Pueblo Nation of New Mexico

The efforts the [Zuni Pueblo CCDF program](#) in New Mexico takes to safeguard, yet share, the culture of the children, families, and community at large reflect many of the principles noted above. Bernadette Panteah, director of education and training, and Tiffany Nahohai, program specialist, share in an interview that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a language immersion curriculum was implemented within child care environments, including relative care. Children and youth hear, use, read and write Zuni throughout their time at the child care environment, from the time they enter until they leave. The use of English is little to none. Providers were recruited and encouraged to participate with incentives like higher reimbursement rates. It is important to note that most providers within this community are relatives, like grandmothers and aunts. This increased connection to families supports their interests and concerns with the intended outcome for the children and youth to be more engaged culturally.

Considerations for system planners and practitioners addressing equitable family engagement:

- » Reduce administrative burdens for receiving benefits.²⁸
- » Create opportunities to listen to families and engage them in decision-making.²⁹

24 Durlak, J., Mahoney, J., Bohnert, A., & Parente, M. (2010). *Developing and Improving After-School Programs to Enhance Youth's Personal Growth and Adjustment: A Special Issue of AJCP* <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%252Fs10464-010-9298-9>

25 University of Washington (2021). Center for Child & Family Well-Being. <https://ccfwb.uw.edu/about-us/the-bioecological-model/>

26 Jacques, C., & Villegas, A. (2018). *Strategies for Equitable Family Engagement*. State Support Network. https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/10/equitable_family_engag_508.pdf

27 Jacques & Villegas.

28 CLASP (2021). *Administrative Burdens Exacerbate Inequities and Must be Reduced*. <https://www.clasp.org/blog/administrative-burdens-exacerbate-inequities-and-must-be-reduced>

29 Critical Connections podcast (2021). *Giving Kids a Great Start in Michigan*. <https://critical-connections-from-build.simplecast.com/episodes/giving-kids-a-great-start-in-michigan>

- » Support immigrant families.³⁰
- » Create and carry out family engagement strategies.³¹

See [Equity in Action: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#) for specific ideas and guidance on equitable practices.³²

Workforce

In the NCASE brief *Strengthening, Supporting and Sustaining the Out-of-School Time Workforce*, the OST workforce is described as having “unique features as compared to those professionals who work with younger age groups.”³³ These features are categorized into groups: part-time with little professional preparation; full-time and highly educated; certified professionals like teachers, social workers, artists, and others who bring specific expertise; and summer program staff that is temporary but always a mixture of experience and expertise. A consistent, two-fold challenge is the recruitment and maintenance of qualified staff, a longstanding issue that has intensified during the pandemic. It is important that programs recruit, train, retain, and invest in competent, equity-minded staff.

Representatives from the National After-School Association and the University of Nebraska developed core knowledge and competence recommendations. These recommendations convey the importance of professionalizing the workforce via equitable access to high-quality professional development, with systems to recruit, retain, and advance the leadership of the profession. These systems promote a

cohesive and comprehensive workforce in diverse OST settings.³⁴ How can systems promote this ideal workforce? The Office of Child Care is maintaining the pulse of the child care field throughout the pandemic and has consequently provided [guidance](#) with high priority for states/territories and Tribes to stabilize the workforce with American Rescue Plan Act funding. This is extremely helpful for the OST workforce, as afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning opportunities are often cut because of the inability to finance staffing needs. Guidance for the child care stabilization funds from the Administration for Children & Families is unequivocally supportive of increasing compensation. “Raising the wages of child care staff is a central part of stabilizing the industry, and lead agencies are strongly encouraged to prioritize this use of funds.”³⁵ Increased funding can also support equity-focused recruitment and training of staff.

Considerations for system planners and practitioners addressing equity in the workforce:

- » Provide high-quality professional development, including workshops, coaching, and facilitated peer learning.³⁶
- » Address compensation.³⁷
- » Support immigrant providers.³⁸
- » Increase the diversity of the workforce, particularly at the leadership level.³⁹

30 CLASP. *Supporting Immigrant Providers and Families Through Child Care Relief Funds* (2021, August 11). <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/supporting-immigrant-providers-and-families-through-child-care-relief>.

31 *Every Hour Counts | A Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement, and Equitable Systems*. July 2021. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/framework-for-measurement-continuous-improvement-and-equitable-systems.aspx>

32 NCASE (2021). *Equity in Action: Tips for Parents and Caregivers*. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/equity-action-tips-parents-and-caregivers>

33 National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (2018). *Strengthening, Supporting and Sustaining the Out-of-School Time Workforce*. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ncase-resource-library/strengthening-supporting-and-sustaining-out-of-school-time-workforce>

34 Ham, H. (Winter, 2019). *Afterschool Workforce Focus: A Powerful Plan for Action*. *Afterschool Today*. <http://www.mydigipub.com/publication/?i=556036&p=32>

35 Administration of Children and Families. (2021). *ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Grants* <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/policy-guidance/ccdf-acf-im-2021-02>

36 *Every Hour Counts | A Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement, and Equitable Systems*. July 2021. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/framework-for-measurement-continuous-improvement-and-equitable-systems.aspx>

37 NAEYC. (2021, June). *Compensation Matters Most* https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/blog/compensation_matters_most.pdf

38 National Women’s Law Center (2021). *Immigrant Care Providers Have Been Ignored Far Too Long*. August 11 blog. [Immigrant Care Providers Have Been Ignored For Too Long | NWLC](https://www.nwlc.org/immigrant-care-providers-have-been-ignored-far-too-long)

39 CLASP. *Supporting Immigrant Providers and Families Through Child Care Relief Funds* (2021, August 11). <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/supporting-immigrant-providers-and-families-through-child-care-relief>

Spotlight on University of Minnesota Extension

The University of Minnesota Extension's *Practical Guide for Youth Work* aids youth development professionals, volunteers, parents, and caregivers in understanding and confronting racial injustice.⁴⁰ The guide provides a collection of information and resources organized to develop a mindset of responsibility through four sections:

1. Start with ourselves: know ourselves and how our identities, biases, and behaviors affect our engagement with others.
2. Engage with others: partner with others, including youth, to grow together into future leaders.
3. Address systemic change: to address racism beyond the interpersonal level, go beyond awareness to committing to action.
4. Contribute to community healing: explore resources to help communities and one another cope, learn, and recover in the aftermath of racist tragedies.⁴¹

Considerations for Next Steps

To create equitable OST spaces, programs and funders must be willing to assess all programmatic efforts with regard to access, experiences, and outcomes. This strategy should pave the way for a review and/or incorporation of equity-focused practices with youth participants, families, and program staff. Tools for OST leaders are useful supports in this process, such as the Afterschool Alliance's *Racial Equity & Anti-bias Tools for OST Programs & Youth Workers*, which provides resources to consider when addressing equity. In addition, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time's *Guidelines for Youth Outcome and*

Program Quality Data Collection: Pandemic and Virtual Learning provides questions to frame data collection with youth participants.

To address equity it is important that all parties involved in the program - youth participants, families, staff and community representatives be part of the process. Consistent feedback and a willingness to change leads to impactful continuous quality improvement.

Spotlight on California

California's 2019-2023 Expanded Learning Strategic Plan made recruiting and supporting the OST workforce a priority by developing a Workforce Strategy Committee to identify data collection needs and strategies as well as to learn from OST workforce representatives to better understand their needs.⁴² The first goal is to "Incentivize and attract a diverse Expanded Learning workforce through a flexible and accessible college-credit system." This approach addresses equity through access to education and training opportunities with an emphasis on collaborative partnerships. One of the key outputs of the Workforce Strategy Committee is the *Recommendations for the Development of a Diverse and Thriving Expanded Workforce* report, which was developed with extensive stakeholder engagement, including the California State Afterschool Network and the California School-Age Consortium.⁴³ The current Workforce Implementation Committee grew out of the *Recommendations* document and has spent the last 18 months implementing selected objectives from that document, again with broad and deep OST workforce stakeholder contribution.

40 University of Minnesota Extension (2020). *Understanding and Confronting Racial Injustice*. <https://extension.umn.edu/equity-culture-and-identity/understanding-and-confronting-racial-injustice>

41 University of Minnesota Extension.

42 California Department of Education (2021). Expanded Learning Division Strategic Plan 2.0. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ex/strategicplanimplement2.asp>

43 California Department of Education, Workforce Strategy Committee. (2020, February). Recommendations for the development of a diverse and thriving expanded learning workforce. <https://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/recommendations-development-diverse-and-thriving-expanded-learning-workforce>

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