



# **The SAGE Encyclopedia of Out-of-School Learning**

## **After-School Standards**

Contributors: Stephanie B. Wilkerson & Carol M. Haden

Edited by: Kylie Pepler

Book Title: The SAGE Encyclopedia of Out-of-School Learning

Chapter Title: "After-School Standards"

Pub. Date: 2017

Access Date: April 25, 2017

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Inc.

City: Thousand Oaks,

Print ISBN: 9781483385211

Online ISBN: 9781483385198

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483385198.n14>

Print pages: 23-25

©2017 SAGE Publications, Inc.. All Rights Reserved.

This PDF has been generated from SAGE Knowledge. Please note that the pagination of the online version will vary from the pagination of the print book.

Standards for after-school and other out-of-school time (OST) programs articulate the goals and best practices that providers can follow when developing and implementing programs. Standards are not a curriculum but rather a set of guidelines intended to promote high-quality programs that will result in positive student outcomes. Standards unify the field by defining the knowledge and competencies for effective practice and providing a common language across programs. Standards typically are independent of when participation occurs and, therefore, apply to services that happen before school, after school, on weekends, and during school breaks, holidays, and summer. This entry describes how different organizations define after-school standards and competencies and offers considerations for program providers in achieving standards.

## Standards and Core Knowledge and Competencies

The National AfterSchool Association (NAA) and Council on Accreditation have both developed sets of standards aimed at improving the quality of programming for children and youth in after-school and out-of-school learning environments. This section presents the standards each of these organizations has contributed to the field and describes common themes across statewide standards.

### NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies

In 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) awarded the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) a research grant to examine best practices in providing high-quality services in OST learning environments. The study resulted in evidence-based recommendations that guided the NAA's development of the core knowledge and competencies. The NAA (2011) defines *core knowledge* as referring to "topics describing the knowledge needed by professionals to work effectively with school-age children and youth," and *competencies* as "concrete, observable, and achievable; they establish standards of practice that strengthen the profession" (p. 3).

The NAA created the core knowledge and competencies in an effort to bring consensus to the existing, yet disparate, standards and competency frameworks developed independently by several states. In collaboration with NIOST, the Florida Afterschool Network, and Pennsylvania Key, the NAA conducted a crosswalk of 17 state frameworks that focus on standards and competencies for professionals offering services to youth between 5 and 18 years of age. The crosswalk involved a comparative examination across state frameworks to identify common standards, competencies, and areas of emphasis. As a result, the NAA's core knowledge and competencies represent the commonalities across many states within the field. The NAA used the Kansas/Missouri framework as a model for the NAA's core knowledge and competencies because many states referred to this framework in developing their own.

The resulting Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals provides the field with an agreed-on set of guidelines for developing the capacity of practitioners to provide high-quality services to school-age children and youth. The core knowledge and competencies offer a framework for planning coursework and credentialing for practitioners in institutions of higher education. They can also be used to guide after-school and OST professionals, administrators, and trainers in making decisions about program planning and monitoring, goal setting, and professional development. For families, school personnel, and others not directly involved with the provision of services, the core knowledge and competencies serve to build understanding and appreciation of what

knowledge and skills are required of after-school and OST professionals.

The core knowledge and competencies are organized into 10 content areas, and within each area, the NAA specifies five levels of professional practice (i.e., entry, developing, proficient, advanced, and mastery) that develop over time. [Table 1](#) presents the 10 content areas and their respective competencies.

**Table 1 Content Areas and Associated Competency Statements**

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Competency Statement</i>
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 in order 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

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

*Source:* Stephanie B. Wilkerson, using information from National AfterSchool Association (2011).

### **NAA Core Competencies for After-School Trainers**

Following the development of the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals and with funding from the Mott Foundation, the NAA established quality standards for trainers of after-school practitioners. The core competencies are based on research of existing competencies for trainers and vetted by professionals and leading organizations in the after-school field. As a result, they represent the essential and priority competencies trainers must have to provide high-quality professional development opportunities to after-school practitioners. Trainers can use the core competencies to guide the development of their trainings and reflect on their own practice. After-school program

supervisors or state training systems can use them to identify, evaluate, and approve quality trainers. The set of core competencies are organized into nine categories with indicators of mastery for after-school trainers. Table 2 presents each category and a brief description of its core competency.

**Table 2 Core Competencies for Trainers of After-School Practitioners**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Core Competency for Trainers</i>
1. Training design	Exhibits knowledge of effective training design
2. Professionalism and ethics	Adheres to professional practices
	Demonstrates a responsibility to others
	Demonstrates a responsibility to the profession
3. Facilitation skills	Exhibits effective facilitation skills
4. Delivery methods	Utilizes effective delivery methods
5. Presentation skills	Demonstrates effective presentation skills
6. Transfer of training	Promotes transfer of knowledge and skills to participants
7. Learning environment	Creates an optimal physical, intellectual, and emotional environment
8. Equity and diversity	Ensures that equity and diversity are considered in training sessions
9. Evaluation	Utilizes evaluation as part of the training process

*Source:* Stephanie B. Wilkerson, using information from National AfterSchool Association (2013).

### **NAA Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (NAA HEPA) Standards**

In the same year the NAA developed the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals, it adopted the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards based on recommendations from the NIOST study funded by the RWJF in 2011. The quality standards are in response to concerns about increases in childhood obesity and chronic disease and the promise that OST programs hold for improving the nutritional and physical activity outcomes for children. OST programs are well positioned to provide children with healthy snacks, meals, beverages, and physical activity, and as such, the quality standards provide a list of best practices that OST programs can implement.

The standards are based on published research findings, although there is limited evidence of their effectiveness. However, as part of their study on HEPA standards, Jean Wiecha, Michelle Barnes, and Georgia Hall found that large organizations that provide after-school programming for youth, including Y USA, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, National Recreation and Park Association, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America, are integrating the standards into their programs. The study also found that many states are adapting the standards, thus increasing the potential reach of these standards to millions of children in OST settings.

There are 11 NAA HEPA quality standards that define HEPA best practices. These standards are organized by six categories presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 Best Practices in Health and Physical Activity in After-School Programs**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Core Competency for Trainers</i>
Content and quality	Healthy eating: Serve foods and drinks that promote lifelong health. Physical activity: Youth obtain at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day.
Staff training	Healthy eating: Staff learn about evidence-based content on healthy eating. Physical activity: Staff learn about evidence-based content on physical activity.
Nutrition education curriculum	Healthy eating: Education materials presented to children are evidence-based, do not promote a particular agenda, and are delivered by qualified personnel.
Social support	Healthy eating: Programs foster a social environment with positive relationships that support children eating healthy foods. Physical activity: Programs foster a social environment with positive relationships that support children in enjoying and participating in physical activity.
Program support	Healthy eating: Infrastructure supports healthy eating through management and budgeting practices. Physical activity: Infrastructure supports physical activity through management and budgeting practices.
Environmental support	Healthy eating: The physical environment supports healthy eating. Physical activity: The physical environment supports physical activity.

*Source:* Stephanie B. Wilkerson, using information from Wiecha, Hall, Gannett, and Roth (2011).

#### **Council on Accreditation: After-School and Youth Development Programs**

The NAA HEPA standards and Core Knowledge and Competencies informed the Council on Accreditation's development of the content for their After School and Youth Development standards for OST programs. These standards are intended to apply to children and youth between 5 and 18 years of age who participate in any OST learning environment. When appropriate, standards clarify how they might apply to children of a particular age. The standards cover social, educational, and physical activities; the development of positive adult and peer relationships; and safe learning environments. They also focus on connections with communities and families to strengthen the ability of programs to respond to the needs of the community in supporting local children and youth. Table 4 presents a clustering of the topics for the 17 standards.

**Table 4 Council on Accreditation After School and Youth Development Standards**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Core Competency for Trainers</i>
Program management	CYD-AYD 1: Outreach and program accessibility
	CYD-AYD 2: Program mission and philosophy
	CYD-AYD 3: Registration and orientation
	CYD-AYD 13: Safety
	CYD-AYD 16: Supervision
	CYD-AYD 17: Protecting the rights of children and youth and their families
	CYD-AYD 4: Building healthy relationships between children and youth and adults
Relationships	CYD-AYD 5: Promoting positive behavior and healthy peer relationships
	CYD-AYD 6: Programming and activities
Programming	CYD-AYD 7: Academic programming
	CYD-AYD 9: Outdoor environment
Environment	CYD-AYD 10: Nutrition and physical fitness
	CYD-AYD 10: Nutrition and physical fitness
Health	CYD-AYD 11: Specialized sports and fitness programming
	CYD-AYD 12: Health and wellness
	CYD-AYD 14: Family connections
Family and community	CYD-AYD 15: Community involvement and partnerships

*Source:* Stephanie B. Wilkerson, using information from Council on Accreditation (2016).

### State After-School Standards

Several statewide after-school networks took various approaches involving task forces or stakeholders in developing state-level standards. Many of these cite the NAA core knowledge and competencies and HEPA standards as a source for the development of statewide standards. Looking across states, the following are common themes among state standards:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment
- Engaging families and communities in program planning and delivery
- Providing inclusive, welcoming, and equitable programming that develops knowledge and skills for school and life
- Valuing diversity and respect for all, valuing cultural competency, and having a diverse staff that is reflective of the community served
- Fostering positive and supportive relationships between adults and youth and among youth participants
- Hiring high-quality staff and administrators and providing opportunities for staff and administrator professional learning

- Incorporating policies and practices that promote continuous improvement
- Providing opportunities for active, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate learning
- Giving youth a voice in program planning
- Fostering community partnerships and involvement
- Setting a clear mission and goals
- Practicing sound fiscal management

### Considerations for Achieving Standards

Implementing practices that result in achieving standards will require varying levels of planning, expertise, and resources depending on the standard. Some standards, such as giving youth a voice in their learning, might be easily adopted with minimal to no cost. Other standards, such as connecting with communities and families, will require additional resources for outreach activities, materials, and needs sensing. Training or retraining OST professionals will require additional time and expense. Meeting standards related to providing youth and children with high-quality food, beverages, and curricula will have cost and budget implications.

Programs should identify and prioritize standards based on their ability to accomplish them over time as opposed to all at once. OST providers can also seek access to the supporting documents and resources offered by organizations such as NAA and NIOST. Additionally, some of the HEPA standards might conflict with extant regulations for federal nutritional programs or licensing, and programs should remain in compliance with their current regulations.

**See also** [Professional Development in Out-of-School Learning](#); [Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation](#); [Program Evaluation](#); [Program Quality in Youth Sport and Physical Activity](#)

Stephanie B. Wilkerson Carol M. Haden  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483385198.n14>  
10.4135/9781483385198.n14

#### Further Readings

- Council on Accreditation. (2016). Standards for child and youth development programs. Retrieved from <http://coanet.org/standard/cyd-ayd/>
- National AfterSchool Association. (2011). Core knowledge and competencies for afterschool and youth development professionals. McLean, VA: Author.
- National AfterSchool Association. (2013). Core competencies for afterschool trainers. Washington, DC: Author.
- Wiecha, J., Barnes, M., & Hall, G. (2015). Monitoring the uptake of National AfterSchool Association physical activity standards: Final report. San Diego, CA: Active Living Research.
- Wiecha, J., Hall, G., Gannett, E., & Roth, B. (2011). National AfterSchool Association standards for healthy eating and physical activity. Retrieved from <http://www.niost.org/Standards-and-Guidelines/national-afterschool-association-standards-for-healthy-eating-and-physical-activity-in-out-of-school-time-programs>