Best Practices for Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs

Prepared for Arlington Public Schools

In this report, The Hanover Research Council examines best practices for out-of-school time (OST) programs. We provide an overview of key issues facing these programs, with a special emphasis on topics of professional development for OST staff and collaboration among school districts, nonprofits, and government.

Introduction

According to a 2008 publication by the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP), approximately 6.5 million students, kindergarten through 12th grade, are participating in Out-of-School Time (OST) programs across the nation. Also referred to as "after school," "school-age care," or "expanded learning opportunities," HFRP defines OST as encompassing "an array of safe, structured programs that provide children and youth ages kindergarten through high school with a range of supervised activities intentionally designed to encourage learning and development outside of the typical school day."[1]

Increased study of OST programming has revealed a number of benefits. Upon review of the current body of research and evaluations of OST programs, Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) found that OST programs contribute to the following outcomes:

Positive Outcomes Related to OST Programming	
Category	**Outcome**
Academic Outcomes	❖ Better attitudes toward school and higher educational aspirations ❖ Higher school attendance rates; less tardiness ❖ Less disciplinary action ❖ Lower dropout rates ❖ Better performance in school, as measured by achievement test scores and grades ❖ Greater on-time promotion ❖ Improved homework completion ❖ Engagement in learning
Social/Emotional Outcomes	❖ Decreased behavioral problems ❖ Improved social and communication skills and/or relationships ❖ Increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy ❖ Lower levels of depression and anxiety ❖ Development of initiative ❖ Improved feelings and attitudes toward self and school
Prevention Outcomes	❖ Avoidance of drug and alcohol use ❖ Decreased delinquency and violent behavior ❖ Increased knowledge of safe sex ❖ Avoidance of sexual activity ❖ Reduction in juvenile crime

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[1] Priscilla M. D. Little, Christopher Wimer, and Heather B. Weiss. "After School Programs in the 21st Century: Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve It." *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation.* No. 10. February 2008. p. 2. http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/after-school-programs-in-the-21st-century-their-potential-and-what-it-takes-to-achieve-it

Positive Outcomes Related to OST Programming	
Category	**Outcome**
Health and Wellness Outcomes	❖ Better food choices ❖ Increased physical activity ❖ Increased knowledge of nutrition and health practices ❖ Reduction in BMI ❖ Improved blood pressure ❖ Improved body image

Source: Little, Wimer, and Weiss, 2008.[2]

As the authors of the above HFRP publication conclude, it is clear that after-school or OST programs have "the *potential* to impact a range of positive learning and developmental outcomes."[3]   However, not all OST programs are successfully achieving these results.

In an effort to aid school districts in attaining such positive outcomes for their students, the following report synthesizes the wide array of literature surrounding best practices and key issues facing OST program development and delivery. In particular, the report primarily addresses the following points:

❖ Goal Setting
❖ Programming/Activities
❖ Sustained Participation
❖ Family Engagement
❖ Creating and Maintaining Strong Partnerships
❖ Professional Development

Note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of best practices in OST programs. Rather, the following discussion highlights major issues that appeared repeatedly throughout our review of the literature. Further, in response to Arlington Public Schools' request to include information on collaboration and professional development for OST staff, we devote two separate sections of the report to discuss these topics. The final section of the report provides profiles of high quality after-school programs that feature partnerships between school districts, nonprofits, and/ government agencies.

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

Key Issues in Developing and Maintaining High Quality OST Programs

Goal Setting

An After-School Summit hosted by the US Department of Education was held on June 5-6, 2003, at which educators, policy experts, and government officials discussed ways to improve and evaluate after-school programs. One of the main conclusions reached by the attendees was that in order to be successful, programs need to establish appropriate goals, identify relevant program elements, set desired outcomes, and create plans for evaluation. Following the summit, a group of researchers and program experts collaborated to produce a document that further articulates this "theory of change approach," and how it relates to after-school programming.[4] The document, titled "Framework for After-School Programs," was designed to act as a guide in aiding start-up and existing after-school programs in delivering high quality services.

In beginning our discussion of best practices for OST programming, we believe that it is helpful to provide a brief overview of this "theory of change." The following table is adapted from the "Framework for After-School Programs" document.

Developing a Theory of Change	
Step	**Description[5]**
Develop a logic model	A logic model summarizes the key elements of a program, identifies the rationale behind the elements, articulates desired short- and long-term outcomes and how they can be measured, and shows the cause-and-effect relationships between a program and its desired outcomes.
Identify program goals	This can occur in meetings or through surveys with program staff, school-day staff, parents, participants, community members, and funders to discuss the purposes and goals of after-school in the community
Select program elements necessary to achieve the program's goals	An existing program may make a list of current program elements and compare the two lists. Are there current elements that do not support the goal? How can programming be adjusted to align with newly identified goals?
Identify participant outcomes aligned with program goals and elements	Short-term outcomes are usually those that are attainable within a year and/or observable within the program. Long-term outcomes are usually assessed after one year and include outcomes observable in school, home, and community as well as in the program.

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[4] "Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs." C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice. May 2005. p. 1.
http://www.collaborativecommunications.com/assets/78_framework.pdf
[5] Descriptions of steps are taken verbatim from page 3 of "Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs."

Developing a Theory of Change	
Step	Description[5]
Identify and establish performance measures, sources of data, and methods of data collection to assess implementation and progress	Performance measures assess a program's progress on the implementation of strategies and activities.

Source: C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005.

While we revisit the issue of evaluation later in this section, with regard to setting goals and establishing outcomes, the summit attendees noted that "after-school programs can achieve a broad range of desired participant outcomes and that a successful program can meet some, while not all the possible outcomes at any one time."[6] On a similar note, in a synthesis of 10 years of after-school program research, Raley, Grossman, and Walker (2005) indicate that many OST programs attempt to achieve too many disparate goals and eventually find that they are unable to adequately fulfill any of them. The study suggests that after-school program administrators pose the question: "What can and do we want to achieve?"

Answering this question requires administrators to consider their available human and financial resources. As the authors explain:

> For example, while a program may want to both increase academic performance and promote civic engagement, it may have the resources to do only one of these well. Rather than trying to achieve both goals, it may be most effective to allocate limited resources to activities that promote decision-making skills through civic engagement and youth-advocacy projects. Similarly if a program has the resources to provide a safe haven, basic homework help, and a few recreational activities, it should choose a specific, achievable goal, such as improving social skills and teaching conflict management, rather than claim to increase academic performance.[7]

Once programs have set realistic, achievable goals, they can proceed to evaluate whether specific elements of programming are in line with those goals.

Programming/Activities

Intentional Programming

Building off of the discussion above, Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) note that many research studies have revealed that programs that are "explicitly focused and targeted

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Rebecca Raley, Jean Grossman, and Karen E. Walker. "Getting it Right: Strategies for After-School Success." Public/Private Ventures. September 2005. p. 3.
http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/190_publication.pdf

to specific outcomes" are more successful in promoting participant success. Among their evidence, the authors cite a meta-analysis of 73 after-school programs, conducted by Durlak and Weisberg (2007).[8] The study found that programs with *sequenced*, *active*, and *focused* characteristics promoted positive academic, prevention, and developmental outcomes. These programs employed "a *sequenced* set of activities designed to achieve skill development outcomes," "*active* forms of learning to help youth learn skills," and *focused* "program components devoted to developing personal or social skills."[9] Little, Wimer, and Weiss state that such findings suggest the need for programs to carefully design activities that will help achieve specific goals.[10]

With regard to intentional programming, the After-School Summit and the resulting framework document discussed earlier provided specific examples of goals, relevant program elements, and potential desired outcomes. A sample of these is reproduced in the table below. The table illustrates how programming can be *intentionally* targeted towards achieving program goals and desired outcomes. Readers should note that the framework document provides many more helpful examples of these components of program planning.[11]

Linking Goals, Program Elements, and Desired Outcomes		
Goal	**Sample Program Elements**	**Desired Outcomes (Short-Term/Long-Term)**
Improved literacy/ communication skills.	❖ Staff with basic knowledge, skills, and strategies that support and promote literacy ❖ Diverse language arts activities and projects ❖ Literacy rich environments (library visits, writing centers, computer labs) ❖ Family literacy support available to parents with their children (family reading nights)	❖ Participants read and write more (ST) ❖ Participants enjoy reading and talking about what they have read (ST) ❖ Participants show improved academic performance in subjects requiring reading comprehension and writing (LT) ❖ Participants use strategies such as rereading, questioning, and predicting to understand (LT)
Improved math skills	❖ Staff with knowledge, skills, and strategies to support and promote mathematical thinking and problem solving ❖ Opportunities to practice math skills through diverse activities and projects (math games, math problem of the day) ❖ Varied opportunities to use math skills in practical, enjoyable settings outside of the classroom (calculating cost of grocery items, estimating weights and distances)	❖ Participants enjoy math-based games and puzzles (ST) ❖ Participants use and express mathematical thinking (ST) ❖ Participants show improved academic performance in subjects that require math skills and thinking (LT) ❖ Participants increase use of math for complex problem-solving (LT)

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[8] R. Durlak and R. Weissberg. *The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills.* Chicago: CASEL. 2007. Cited in Little, Wimer, and Weiss, 2008. Op. cit.
[9] Little, Wimer, and Weiss, 2008. Op. cit. p. 8.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs." 2005. Op. cit.

Linking Goals, Program Elements, and Desired Outcomes		
Goal	Sample Program Elements	Desired Outcomes (Short-Term/Long-Term)
Improved social skills	❖ Hiring supportive staff and promoting supportive staff-participant interactions ❖ Classes on peer pressure, sportsmanship, conflict management, etc. ❖ Opportunities to use social skills in many different aspects of the program ❖ Opportunities to participate in activities that promote social skills, including teamwork and collaboration	❖ Participants improve interactions with program staff (ST) ❖ Participants exhibit fewer hostile, impulsive interactions in after-school program (ST) ❖ Participants are more involved with school and community (LT) ❖ Participants form friendships with peers (LT)

Source: C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005.

Variation in Programming

Another point raised in the OST literature deals with variation in programming. The After-School Corporation (TASC), a New York City nonprofit organization that funds OST programs, conducted an evaluation in which researchers identified 10 "high-performing after-school programs," based on academic gains of participants compared to nonparticipant peers. Upon identification of these programs, the study sought to highlight shared features regarding activities, staffing, and other program elements.[12]

Researchers noted that among the programs included in the review, all 10 featured a wide range of activities. As one site coordinator explained, "We're interested in exposure. We do not want to duplicate the day school."[13] While some explicitly academic activities (such as tutoring or homework help) were included, this strategy also called for the provision of enrichment activities such as dance, music, drama, and field trips. Such a holistic learning strategy was designed to "spark [participants'] interests and expand their vision."[14]

The use of varied programming can help students find new activities in which they might excel. High-performing TASC programs provided students with an opportunity to "master" new skills. With regard to drama, music, and dance, a project coordinator explained, "I think for kids who are not academically successful, [arts activities] are another area in which they can be successful."[15] The coordinator further noted that the learning processes associated with arts activities and academics are quite similar.

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[12] Jennifer Birmingham, Ellen M. Pechman, Christina A. Russell, and Monica Mielke. "Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation." Prepared for The After-School Corporation and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. November 2005. http://www.sedl.org/pubs/fam107/fam107.pdf
[13] Ibid., p. 5.
[14] Ibid., p. 6.
[15] Ibid. p. 8.

A specific example of this is provided elsewhere in the literature by Intermediate School 62 in Brooklyn, New York. The Church Avenue Merchants Block Association, Inc. (CAMBA) operates an after-school program in partnership with its host school that features activities such as computer, drama, African dance, hip-hop, poetry, and gym, in addition to academic assistance. In a focus group, students explained how they saw connections between learning fractions and learning African dance. One student noted, "For both, first the teacher explains, then she gives an example…and then we try."[16] In this sense, even activities that are not explicitly academic can complement school lessons.

Looking at enrichment activities from another angle, an article published in the National Institute on Out-of-School Time's *Afterschool Issues*, explained that school and OST programs can work towards the same goals, just taking different approaches. For example, an OST program may facilitate a trip to a park or zoo, providing an opportunity to observe wildlife that has been discussed in biology class, while a cooking lesson could incorporate math and science concepts and techniques.[17] Further, OST programs that feature enrichment activities such as art or field trips may be stepping in to fill a gap as schools cut back on these activities in the face of "the high-stakes outcomes-based test and assessment atmosphere."[18]

Sustained Participation

Connected to the issue of sparking student interest through varied programming, OST programs also face issues of attendance and retention. As researchers at the Harvard Family Research Project note, a number of studies have concluded that students "experience greater gains across a wide variety of outcomes if they participate with greater frequency (more days per week) in a more sustained manner (over a number of years)."[19] For example, in a follow-up study of elementary school students that had been involved in the Los Angeles' Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST) program for at least four years, longer participation was found to be significantly related to "positive achievement on standardized tests of mathematics, reading, and language arts," even when researchers controlled for "the influence of gender, ethnicity, income, and language status…"[20] These researchers also found that higher levels of participation in the program led to higher levels of subsequent school attendance.

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[16] Georgia Hall, "Connecting Schools and After-Schools within Citywide Initiatives." *Afterschool Issues*. Vol. 2. No. 3. May 2002. p. 2. http://www.niost.org/pdf/cross_cities_brief7.pdf

[17] Christina Malecka. "Finding Common Ground: School and Out-of-School Program Partnerships." *Afterschool Issues*. Vol. 2. No. 1. November 2001. p. 4. http://www.niost.org/pdf/cross_cities_brief4.pdf

[18] Georgia Hall, "Connecting Schools and After-Schools within Citywide Initiatives." *Afterschool Issues*. Vol. 2. No. 3. May 2002. p. 2. http://www.niost.org/pdf/cross_cities_brief7.pdf

[19] Little, Wimer, and Weiss, 2008. Op. cit., p. 6.

[20] "A Profile of the Evaluation of Los Angeles' Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST) Program." Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database, Harvard Family Research Project. December 6, 2001. http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/los-angeles-better-educated-students-for-tomorrow-la-s-best-program

Providing another example of the effects of sustained participation, in an assessment of Louisiana's 21st Century Community Learning Center Program, researchers found that 3rd and 5th graders who participated in the program for 30 days or more exhibited significantly higher academic growth on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills than nonparticipants. On the ITBS reading test, researchers found a slightly larger effect associated with "moderate attendance" (60 days) and an even stronger effect associated with "higher attendance" (90 days).[21]

Given the positive impact of sustained participation in OST programs, it is important for program administrators and partners to look for ways to keep students engaged and wanting to return to the program. This is particularly true for programs targeting older students (middle to high school), who typically display much lower after-school participation rates than younger students.[22]

On this topic, a study of five of Philadelphia's Beacon Centers (school-based community centers that include a range of after-school activities) sought to address the following questions:

- ❖ What conditions lead youth to want to attend an activity?
- ❖ What aspects of an after-school activity, such as the staff's behaviors and the activity's structure lead youth to be highly engaged?
- ❖ What conditions lead youth to feel they have learned in an activity?[23]

In order to investigate these questions, the researchers conducted youth and staff surveys, as well as on-site observations and staff interviews. The researchers concluded:

> Based on our quantitative analysis, the two most important things staff can do to increase engagement and learning are to effectively manage groups in ways that ensure youth feel respected by both adults and other youth, and to positively support the young people and their learning process. The better these tasks were done, the more deeply youth engaged and the more they felt they got out of activities.[24]

With regard to effectively managing groups, the researchers found that participants were more engaged when staff members set reasonable ground rules, provided ongoing, positive reinforcement, were consistent and fair in reinforcing their expectations, and remained firm but not harsh when participants broke ground rules.

[21] "A Profile of the Evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers – Louisiana." Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database, Harvard Family Research Project. June 1, 2006. http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/21st-century-community-learning-centers-louisiana
[22] Jean Grossman, Margo Campbell, and Becca Raley. "Quality Time After School: What Instructors Can Do to Enhance Learning." Public/Private Ventures. April 2007. p. 3.
http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/213_publication.pdf
[23] Ibid. p. 2.
[24] Ibid. p. 3.

Following such techniques would allow instructors to ensure that programs had enough structure to run well. This was true for all age groups.

In the same study, middle and high school students indicated that positive adult support made them more likely to attend an activity. Through on-site observations of the Beacon Centers, the researchers found that staff supported students emotionally "by forging trusting relationships somewhat similar to friendships or tutorships, learning about youth culture, allowing for informal socializing, and taking the time to talk with individual youth when special needs arose." Staff also provided effective instructional support through one-on-one instruction, challenging students to attempt new tasks, and providing balanced feedback (both positive reinforcement and critical assessments).[25]

The study also found that when staff encouraged cooperation between participants, youth reported higher levels of enjoyment of the activity and indicated that they were more likely to return. Participant input in shaping an activity was also linked to enjoyment, though the researchers did not find a direct correlation between participant perceptions of having a voice and their desire to attend an activity. However, as the researchers note, other studies have found that youth input strengthens engagement and enjoyment, both of which may lead to higher levels of participation.[26]

Family Engagement

In addition to providing services to students, many high quality OST programs offer activities for parents, including GED preparation, ESL tutoring, computer classes, and other forms of adult education. These programs also make an effort to maintain close contact with families, keeping them informed of their children's participation in the program's activities. For instance, the "Study of Promising After-School Programs" found that family engagement was a strong component of program quality. Out of a national sample of OST programs targeted towards elementary and middle school students, the study selected 35 high quality programs, based on an examination of published materials, expert recommendations, evaluation data, and on-site interviews and observations.[27] All of the programs included in the study featured staff members who paid attention to the needs of participants' families. When they had concerns about a participant, staff members would telephone or speak directly to the child's parents. Further, many of the programs held classes for

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[25] Ibid. p. 4.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Deborah Lowe Vandell, Elizabeth R. Reisner, and Kim M. Pierce. "Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs." Prepared by University of California, Irvine, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Policy Studies Associates, Inc. October 2007. p. 2. http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/Promising%20Programs%20FINAL.pdf

parents and/or other adult family members. Examples included English language assistance for immigrants or help dealing with community social services.[28]

Based on site evaluations and interview/focus groups of OST staff, teachers, principals, parents, and participants (ages 8 to 14) associated with the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in six states (Colorado, New York, Wisconsin, Minnesota, California, and Mississippi), researchers sought to determine promising practices that help support and engage families. Promising practices identified in the project included:

- ❖ Offering "youth-centered" activities in which families could participate, including field trips, parties, performances, and exhibits of children's work
  - o Examples of specific activities included family nights, craft nights, father-daughter/mother-son dances, trips to museums, camping, and building a community playground park
- ❖ Not only providing services for parents (such as ESL preparation, computer skills training, etc.) but allowing parents to provide input regarding what types of activities will be offered
- ❖ With regard to programming for children, collecting data through surveys or focus groups on parents' perceptions of program needs and satisfaction levels. Parents can also be invited to join advisory boards or to help with planning and evaluation.
- ❖ Hiring and developing staff responsible for communicating with parents and planning outreach activities
- ❖ Employing parents as staff or volunteers.[29]

Engaging family through OST programs can also facilitate better relationships between parents and their children's school. For example, the Transition to Success Pilot Project (TSPP) in Boston combined after-school activities for students with a range of services for families. The program targeted 3rd through 8th grade students that were the "most academically disadvantaged" in Boston Public Schools, as indicated by their performance on standardized tests. An evaluation of the program found that 75 percent of parents of TSPP participants "declared that the program helped them connect with their child's teachers and that their involvement in their child's school increased because of their child's involvement in this after school program."[30] Further, 80 percent of parents indicated that their child's participation in the program helped them to better understand their child's schoolwork.

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[28] Ibid, p. 63.
[29] "A Profile of the Evaluation of Family Participation in After-School Study." Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database, Harvard Family Research Project. October 25, 2006. http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/family-participation-in-after-school-study
[30] "A Profile of the Evaluation of Transition to Success Pilot Project." Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database, Harvard Family Research Project. May 13, 2004. http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/transition-to-success-pilot-project

Similar results were found in a national study of 4,400 middle school and 1,000 elementary school students participating in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.[31] In addition to offering after-school programming for youth, these centers provide activities such as parenting skills education programs, employment counseling, telecommunications and technology education programs, literacy education programs, and/or senior citizen programs. Parents of middle school students participating in the program were significantly more likely to volunteer at the school, attend open houses, or go to parent-teacher organization meetings at least three times a year. With regard to parents of elementary school participants, a higher percentage helped their children with homework at least three times a week. Further, a higher percentage of these parents asked their children about class work at least seven times over the past month.

Ongoing Evaluation

A number of the materials reviewed for this report emphasized the importance of continuously evaluating OST programs. As noted in our earlier discussion of the "Framework for After-School Programs," establishing performance measures will enable a program to assess its progress towards predetermined goals and the appropriateness of program elements designed to help achieve those goals. According to the framework, there are typically two types of performance measures. These include:

❖ Measures of effort – provide insight into what activities and other services are being offered in the program. Examples include: types and number of activities offered, level and intensity of the activities, and participant demographics.

❖ Measures of effect – reflect changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behavior of participants.[32]

The following table provides some examples of possible data sources and performance measures, related to different types of goals. These examples are drawn from the framework document.

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[31] "A Profile of the Evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers – National." Out-of-School Time Evaluation Database, Harvard Family Research Project. April 25, 2003. http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/21st-century-community-learning-centers-national
[32] "Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs." Op. cit., p. 4.

Elements of Ongoing Evaluation		
Goal	**Performance Measure**	**Data Source**
Improved literacy/ communication skills.	❖ Number/type of books checked out ❖ Number of books read ❖ Hours per week spent reading ❖ Grades/GPA ❖ Test scores on reading and related subjects ❖ Number and type of family literacy activities	❖ Reading logs ❖ Participant journals ❖ Family activity logs ❖ Standardized tests ❖ Report cards/school records ❖ Teacher/parent observations
Improved math skills	❖ Rating of improved understanding of math applications ❖ Grades ❖ Scores on math tests ❖ Homework completion rate	❖ Completed projects demonstrating practical applications of mathematical thinking and problem solving ❖ Observed or teacher-reported use of math skills ❖ Parent and participant reports of use of math skills
Improved social skills	❖ Reported increase in positive participant behavior and decrease in negative behavior ❖ Reported improvement of participant relationships with diverse sets of adults and peers ❖ Reported improvement of participant social communications skills ❖ Number/percent of participants involved in school- or community-based activities	❖ Interviews ❖ Observations ❖ Surveys ❖ Focus groups ❖ Behavioral assessments ❖ Records of disciplinary actions

Source: C.S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice. 2005.

Creating and Maintaining Strong Partnerships

The majority of OST programs reviewed for this report reflect partnerships between school districts, community-based organizations, and/or local government agencies. Such collaboration can help ensure high quality outcomes for youth participating in OST programs. The authors of a recent report from the "Study of Promising After-School Programs" emphasize that high-quality programs should extend across entire communities. Based on a two-year study of OST program quality, the authors conclude,

> When all parties with responsibilities for and interests in the welfare of youth, especially disadvantaged youth, unite to engage them in high-quality after-school experiences, they are more likely to succeed in promoting positive development for the largest number of youth at risk. Working alone, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and schools can offer only relatively narrow sets of choices, so youth and their families may look to less positive settings for youth to spend some or all of their after-school time. Working together, these same organizations can provide a wider array of opportunities for youth, especially disadvantaged youth, and hence ensure better outcomes for the overall population.[33]

In this section we describe important issues that arise in OST program partnerships, including difficulties faced by such collaborations and strategies for success. In particular, we discuss the following points:

- ❖ Collaborative Planning
- ❖ Clear Articulation of Goals and Responsibilities
- ❖ Ongoing Communication
- ❖ Aligning School Curriculum and OST Programming

Before proceeding we make one note with regard to the types of partnerships discussed below. As an article published by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time explains, relationships between school and other entities represent a wide range in terms of intensity. In some cases, schools may simply lease space to community-based organizations to independently run youth programs. On the other end of the spectrum, schools and community-based organizations may jointly commit to aligning educational goals and standards when planning and running OST programming. In our discussion below, we provide a greater focus on more intensive collaborations, where schools and their partners share responsibility for OST programming.

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[33] Elizabeth R. Reisner, et. al. "Charting the Benefits of High-Quality After-School Program Experiences." Policy Studies Associates, University of California-Irvine, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. March 2007. p. 1-2. http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/dat/promisingprograms1.pdf

Collaborative Planning

Both the National Collaboration for Youth and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time recommend collaborative strategic planning right from the start as a best practice in forming and maintaining OST program partnerships.[34] As the National Collaboration for Youth states, "Often partnerships get started because one party writes a grant proposal, gets a support letter from one or more collaborators, and the partners don't really begin working until 'the check is in the mail.'"[35] It is more effective for the leadership of partner organizations to begin the planning process early, allowing both sides to develop a vision for the partnership.

A good example of early collaborative planning is presented by the Fort Worth Independent School District's (FWISD) after-school program. In 1997, the Fort Worth City Council and FWISD agreed to support and promote city-school cooperation on the topic of after-school programming. A joint task force was created with representatives from FWISD, the City of Fort Worth, and two community partners, Our City Our Children and the Crime Prevention Resource Center. All representatives came from a high level within their organization and therefore had the authority to make decisions on their own – an important attribute of the planning process.

The task force set out to address the following questions:

- ❖ How would the different stakeholders collaborate?
- ❖ What would be the program emphasis – academic or recreational?
- ❖ Where would the program's administrative function be housed?
- ❖ Which populations would be targeted for service?
- ❖ How should costs be recovered?

The task force pursued three primary avenues in addressing these questions. First, research was conducted on the experiences of other citywide collaborations. Second, the group commissioned a survey of existing after-school programs in the area to assess the need for additional services in the Fort Worth area. This was supplemented with focus groups composed of school principals and students. Third, the task force sought to outline a structure of a joint venture between the City of Fort Worth and FWISD.

In addition to laying the groundwork for future after-school initiatives, the task force indicated that the need to "present their findings and recommendations to a larger

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[34] "Principles of Effective Partnerships." Partnerships for After-School Success, National Collaboration for Youth. February 2004. http://www.nydic.org/nydic/images/pdfs/PrincipEffectPartnersCBO.pdf and "Planning and Collaboration Strategies that Build Strong Citywide Afterschool Initiatives." *City Works*. Vol. 2. No. 1. April 2003. http://www.niost.org/pdf/CityWorksFtWorth.pdf
[35] Ibid.

group of their colleagues, served to bring the task force together around a shared responsibility and risk."[36] This built a level of trust among partners that would carry through to the later stages of program implementation. We discuss the resulting program, Fort Worth After School, in greater detail in our program profiles at the end of this report.

While not all partnerships will require large task forces, the example of FWISD displays the benefits of early planning and demonstrates some of the issues parties should consider before entering into an OST partnership.

Clear Articulation of Goals and Responsibilities

On a similar note, strong partnerships are formed and maintained when both parties see the benefits of their collaboration. With regard to OST programs, Priscilla Little of the Harvard Family Research Project comments that it is important for program providers and schools to "articulate the 'exchange of value' enabled by the linkage."[37] Both sides need to ask questions concerning how they will benefit from the collaboration; what the motivations at the institutional and individual levels for developing the relationship are; and more fundamentally, "will the whole be greater than the sum of the parts in terms of participant outcomes?"[38]

In order to answer these questions, both sides need to construct a joint statement of vision that recognizes the contributions each partner will make, what responsibilities will be shared, and what work will be done independently. Some partners will choose to make this a formal process. For example, the San Francisco Beacons Initiative in California created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that explains the expectations of the Beacons centers and their school partners.[39] A sample Memorandum of Understanding is provided on the National Collaboration for Youth website.[40] A formal MOU may be helpful in that as the partnership progresses, the document will serve as a reminder of what both parties originally intended to accomplish and how they decided to go about doing it. At the same time, partners should remain flexible, as they may discover new and more effective approaches towards collaboration as they move forward.

With regard to partnerships between schools and community-based organizations in particular, the National Collaboration for Youth also provides a checklist of typical

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Priscilla Little. "Promising Strategies for Connecting Out-of-School Time Programs to Schools: Learning What Works." *The Evaluation Exchange, Harvard Family Research Project*. Vol. 12, No. 1 & 2. Fall 2006. http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/building-and-evaluating-out-of-school-time-connections/promising-strategies-for-connecting-out-of-school-time-programs-to-schools-learning-what-works
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "Sample Memorandum of Understanding." Partnerships for After-School Success, National Collaboration for Youth. February 2004. http://www.nydic.org/nydic/images/pdfs/MemoUnderstanding%20CBO.pdf

responsibilities that these partners should consider. The checklist presents a set of tasks and notes that the partners should mark whether one is responsible for the task independently or if responsibility should be shared. This checklist is reproduced in the table below.[41]

Task	Responsibility		
	School	CBO	Shared
Provide space for after-school activities			
Inform classroom teachers that their classrooms will be used			
Provide supplies/materials for after-school programs			
Handle discipline issue that arise in after-school programs			
Communicate with parents about the content of after-school programs			
Recruit students for after-school programs			
Decide on the type of activities to be offered			
Hire and supervise staff of after-school programs			
Define the after-school staff's training needs			
Provide training for after-school staff			
Coordinate publicity			

Source: National Collaboration for Youth.

Ongoing Communication

In our review of the literature, ongoing and clear communication emerged as one of the most fundamental issues related to OST program partnerships. Communication can be formal or informal, ranging from calls from a principal to an OST program supervisor employed by a community-based organization to weekly staff meetings between program personnel and school staff.[42] The National Collaboration for Youth recommends that school and community partnerships maintain a "clear communication structure."[43] This involves creating regular opportunities for partners to openly discuss program issues, often taking the form of quarterly meetings, advisory councils/committees, retreats, or listservs.

With several community partners including the Oak Square YMCA, Boston College, Harvard University, the Joseph Smith Community Health Center, Children's Hospital, and the Brighton/Allston Mental Health Association, ongoing communication is particularly important to Gardner Extended Services School's after-school program. A representative of the school indicates that it has "instituted several mechanisms for facilitating intentional conversations and information-sharing

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[41] Note that this list was originally created by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. See: "Responsibility Checklist." Partnerships for After-School Success, National Collaboration for Youth. February 2004. http://www.nydic.org/nydic/images/pdfs/ResponsibChecklist%20CBO.pdf

[42] Malecka. 2001. Op. cit., p. 4.

[43] "School/Community Collaborations MATRIX." Partnerships for After-School Success, National Collaboration for Youth. February 2004. http://www.nydic.org/nydic/images/pdfs/CollabMatrixL_SEA.pdf

among staff and between staff and [the program's] partners."[44] One of these mechanisms, a school resource team, is composed of representatives from all partners. The team meets on a monthly basis to discuss implementation and coordination of OST activities and services. Another mechanism for communication is the use of Homework Completion Logs by after-school instructors. These logs provide a means of communicating with school day teachers about how specific students are progressing.

Similar to the idea of homework completion logs, some partnerships between schools and OST program providers endorse the sharing of student test scores, report cards, or teacher feedback. This allows school teachers and OST program staff to better tailor academic or tutoring programs to the unique needs of specific students.[45]

Strategies for Ongoing Communication	
Designating an academic liaison or "mentor teacher" to coordinate communication between school and OST personnel	Regular meetings between school and OST staff
Advisory councils consisting of representatives of all partners	Homework logs that allow OST staff to relay information to day school teachers about specific students
Informal communication such as a phone call from a principal to an OST program coordinator	OST program listservs

Some schools and OST program providers further their collaboration through the designation of a faculty or administrator liaison. For example, Intermediate School 62 has a "Mentor Teacher" who acts as a liaison between the school and its OST program partner, CAMBA. As the Mentor Teacher at IS 62 explained, she "will work with after-school teachers to prepare them to work with students."[46] The Mentor Teacher fulfills this task by demonstrating day school lessons, communicating day school teaching goals on a weekly basis, locating curriculum resources, and aiding after-school staff in setting goals for skill improvement. The Mentor Teacher can create a higher degree of consistency between the school day and after-school through his or her knowledge of procedures, policies, behavior expectations, and classroom management. He or she may also facilitate communication between school teachers and OST program staff concerning the needs of individual children. Further, the after-school site director, the Mentor Teacher, and the school principal at IS 62 meet regularly to assess needs and collaboratively set goals.

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[44] Julie Bott. "Linking School and After School: Strategies for Success." *The Evaluation Exchange*. Vol. 12. No. 1 & 2. Fall 2006. http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/building-and-evaluating-out-of-school-time-connections/linking-school-and-after-school-strategies-for-success

[45] Hall, 2002. Op. cit. p. 4.

[46] Ibid., p. 5.

Aligning School Curriculum and OST Programming

As mentioned earlier with regard to varied programming, many partnerships purposely seek to align school curriculum with OST programs. Some observers note that as the time for hands-on activities and field trips sponsored by schools is shrinking, largely due to increased emphasis on standardized test scores and other benchmarks, students are missing out on important experiential learning opportunities. OST programs are stepping in to fill this gap.

For programs that take place across a large number of sites, it may be necessary to decentralize decision-making, allowing individual schools to decide how to balance and align school and OST activities. This can be accomplished through the creation of site-based committees that may advise on how best to link programming. A site-based coordinator may also be tasked with managing day-to-day alignment of programming.

The alignment of curriculum with OST programming calls for particularly close cooperation between partners. The program coordinator at Gardner Extended Services School in Massachusetts created a Curriculum Development team for this purpose. She and other OST program staff worked closely with five school teachers to "create a comprehensive curriculum that is aligned with school day teaching and learning standards for each grade level."[47] The team designed templates for lesson plans and "month long unit topics for each grade level that were aligned to the school day curriculum calendar." These measures allowed the program to identify ways to complement school day learning and gain the support of school day staff.

The Dallas Independent School District provides a good example of how schools and community-based OST program providers can work together to align programming with school curriculum. With funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, Dallas schools offered their facilities at no cost to community-based organizations in return for running OST programs. However, the partnership between schools and CBOs does not end there. All of the Dallas 21st CCLC sites intentionally link OST programming to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Curriculum (TEKS), though individual host-schools may use their own discretion in deciding how to accomplish this.[48]

In order to guide this alignment, each site has two committees. First, a School Support Team, which includes school administrators, counselors, teachers, food service workers, transportation staff, custodial staff, and after-school site coordinators, is responsible for assisting with the coordination of school day and after-school programs. They help align OST programming to reading, math, and

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[47] "Promising Practices in Afterschool Program and School Partnerships." *After School Issues.* Vol. 3. No. 1. February 2007. p. 3.
[48] Malecka, 2001. Op. cit.

science, as well as coordinate facility use between school and OST personnel. Second, a Site Advisory Council composed of OST program staff, school teachers, representatives of community organizations, other members of the community, and parents, oversee and advise the program on issues concerning what the community wants for its students.

Best Practices in OST Professional Development

Professional development is particularly important to OST programs largely due to the wide variety of backgrounds of staff members. Many OST staff members do not have pre-service training and programs do not typically mandate specific credentials or degrees. Thus, it is wise for OST programs to provide staff members with a range of professional development opportunities.[49]

OST professional development affects program quality on two levels. First, research has shown that professional development can have a positive impact on youth outcomes. For example, studies of early childhood education have linked the quality of daycare children receive with the educational attainment of staff and staff participation in training workshops. Daycare quality is linked to positive social and cognitive outcomes for children.[50] Further, a study of education reform demonstrated that elementary school students performed higher in math and reading assessments if their instructors had participated in and given high ratings to a professional development program.[51]

On a second level, professional development may "impact the sustainability of the youth development workforce."[52] OST program staff who have been provided with the opportunity to sharpen their skills and abilities may exhibit higher levels of confidence and satisfaction in relation to their jobs. As Bouffard and Little (2004) note, such outcomes can lead to higher staff retention and lower staff turnover.

Professional development can come in a variety of forms. The following table presents a range of professional development activities. We discuss a selection of these activities and related issues in greater detail below.

Types of Professional Development	
Onsite Training	Workshops
Conferences	Formal Education
Technical Assistance	Access to a Resource Center
Peer Mentoring	Electronic Listserv
Professional Associations	Network Meetings

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[49] Suzanne Bouffard and Priscilla M. D. Little. "Promoting Quality Through Professional Development: A Framework for Evaluation." *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation.* No. 8. August 2004. http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/promoting-quality-through-professional-development-a-framework-for-evaluation

[50] NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. "Nonmaternal Care and Family Factors in Early Development: An Overview of the NICHD Study of Early Child Care." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology.* No. 2. 2001 and D. J. Norris. "Quality of Care Offered by Providers with Differential Patterns of Workshop Participation." *Child & Youth Care Forum.* No. 30. 2001. Cited in Bouffard and Little, 2004.

[51] Westat and Policy Studies Associates. "The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance (LESCP) in Title 1 Schools. Final Report, Volume 2: Technical Report." Prepared for US Department of Education. 2001. Cited in Bouffard and Little.

[52] Bouffard and Little. 2004. Op. cit., p. 3.

Types of Professional Development	
Supervision	Internships/Apprenticeships
Observations/Shadowing	Grant Proposal Review
Staff Meetings	Advocacy Groups
Brown Bag Lunches	Newsletters
Online Discussion Boards	New-Staff Orientation/Pre-Service Training

Source: Out-of-School Time Resource Center[53] and Harvard Family Research Project.[54]

Workshops

According to recent research by the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) at the University of Pennsylvania, the majority of OST programs rely on workshops as their primary venue of professional development.[55]   The OSTRC has further identified two basic types of OST workshops: those that focus on content transferred directly to students (e.g., hands-on science) and those that focus on "theoretical/contextual/reference information (such as positive youth development and cultural sensitivity)."[56]

Regardless of the type, the OSTRC recommends that all professional development workshops should incorporate the following set of research-based elements, displayed in the table below.

OSTRC "Basic Ingredients" of Professional Development Workshops
❖ Provide a comfortable learning environment in order to ensure participant attentiveness and engagement.
❖ Provide respectful learning environments where participant needs, opinions, backgrounds, and cultures are respected.
❖ Incorporate participant backgrounds – adult learners have much to share from their diverse and practical experiences
❖ Include opportunities for self-direction and self-reflection by allowing participants to set their own learning objectives, assimilate new information at their own pace, and plan for how they will use that information
❖ Encourage real-life applications by incorporating state standards, discussing school district curriculum, and allowing participants to develop their own application strategies
❖ Facilitate active involvement by including hands-on activities and opportunities for participants to learn from one another

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[53] "Professional Development." Out-of-School Time Resource Center, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice. http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/research/documents/ProfessionalDevelopment_000.pdf
[54] Bouffard and Little, 2004. Op. cit., p. 2.
[55] "Promising Practices in Out-of-School Time Professional Development." Out-of-School time Resource Center, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice. December 2007. p. 3.
http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/research/documents/PromisingPracticesinOut-of-SchoolTimeProfessionalDevelopment.pdf
[56] "Out-of-School Time Professional Development Workshops: An Evaluation Framework." Out-of-School time Resource Center, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice.
http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/research/documents/Out-of-SchoolTimeProfessionalDevelopmentWorkshops-AnEvaluationFramework.pdf

OSTRC "Basic Ingredients" of Professional Development Workshops
❖ Promote teamwork through small-group activities and/or encourage teams of participants to work together after the training session
❖ Address different learning styles by incorporating various activities, media, and formats

Source: OSTRC.[57]

Staff Meetings

Regular staff meetings (for example, weekly or biweekly) can serve as an ongoing source of professional development. In addition to addressing any administrative issues that may arise, these meetings allow participants to identify and discuss problems that they have encountered and receive constructive feedback from their colleagues.

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time suggests that participants come to each staff meeting with a specific problem or issue to share with the rest of the group. The meeting can then be used to have staff members work together to identify possible solutions to the problem or devise ways of incorporating new ideas into the program. Another activity that could be integrated into staff meetings is to conduct role playing that engages participants in small group discussions. These groups can then share ideas about what could be done in a hypothetical situation.[58]

A third, less common staff development activity that can be integrated into meetings concerns intentional learning communities. Such activities call for the creation of "monthly learning goals." Directors and front-line staff identify best practices that they will attempt to integrate into their jobs. At staff meetings, they can share these goals, assess their progress, and obtain feedback from each other.[59]

As noted in our discussion of training evaluations below, staff meetings may facilitate the further creation of new staff development opportunities. Staff meetings provide a venue for program administrators and front-line staff to discuss training needs. In some cases, program administrators may directly ask staff about their strengths and weaknesses. Issues raised in these meetings may offer helpful information for devising future training activities.

Mentoring

Mentorships enable less experienced staff to receive focused support from colleagues with more experience. Mentoring is particularly helpful in that it allows the opportunity for more experienced staff to "impart the intangibles of youth work in

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[57] Ibid. p. 2-3.
[58] "Training." National Institute on Out-of-School Time. 2000.
http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/files/legacy/filemanager/download/learns/3.training.pdf
[59] Raley, Grossman, and Walker. 2005. Op. cit., p. 32.

ways that might only be superficially covered in trainings."[60]   Similar to staff meetings, these mentorships also provide an ongoing source of professional development but in a much more personalized format.

Technical Assistance

Some OST programs bring in external consultants to address specific issues with individuals or groups of staff. The Out-of-School Time Resource Center notes that such training can be coordinated with workshops or implemented in isolation.[61]

For example, TASC offers training to administrative and front-line staff at its sponsored sites through the Partnership for After School Education (PASE).[62] PASE provides a variety of professional development services including technical assistance and workshops. Common topics covered by PASE trainers include behavior and group management, curriculum and program development, developmentally appropriate practices, working with special needs children, conflict resolution and violence prevention, and establishing partnerships between schools and community-based organizations. The PASE website indicates that all development programs begin with a needs assessment, after which the organization will customize training and technical assistance to address identified needs.[63]

Resource Centers

Another helpful and potentially cost-effective method of professional development is to offer staff resource centers. These centers could include books on teaching academic subjects and guidelines for educational games or other activities. When planning new activities or reviewing lessons that did not work out as planned, staff members may consult these materials.[64]

Offering an interesting example of a resource center in practice, Fort Worth After School (included in our profiles below) maintains a collection of "promising practices." In putting together the collection, OST program site supervisors were asked to submit their best practices used throughout the year. Available on the Fort Worth After School website, the collection is intended to serve as a resource for OST program staff looking for "a variety of new programming ideas for all age groups."[65] The collection is organized by school level (elementary, middle, and high school), as

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[60] Ibid.
[61] "Promising Practices in Out-of-School Time Professional Development." Op. cit.
[62] "Training and Supervising After-School Staff: A Resource Brief." 2000. p. 1.
http://www.tascorp.org/files/1422_file_training_supervise_brief_09012000.pdf
[63] "PASE Site-Based Professional Development." PASE.
http://www.pasesetter.com/documents/pdf/PASE%20Site-based%20PD.pdf
[64] "Training and Supervising After-School Staff: A Resource Brief." 2000. Op. cit., p. 3.
[65] "Promising Practices 2008-2009." Fort Worth ISD.
http://www.fwisd.org/fwas/Documents/Promising%20Practices%20Final%2009-10.pdf

well as by term (fall, spring, and summer). Topics covered include: academic enrichment, fine arts, games, life skills, physical activity, youth development, incentives, technology, community service, and family events, among others.

Fort Worth After School's website includes two other notable resources. First, a collection of "Internet Resources" includes information on supplies/kits, websites for students, websites for teachers, and college preparation websites. Each entry provides a link and a brief description of the resource.[66] Second, the website offers a handbook titled, "2009-2010 Community Resources." The handbook offers a listing of "Full & Partial Service Providers, and Free & Nominal Fee agencies that provide programming in their field of expertise."[67] It also offers sections on field trips, family services, and companies that have made donations to Fort Worth After School programs.

Finding Time for Training and Group Planning

Finding time for training and planning can be difficult. One TASC-sponsored program, operated by the Children's Aid Society and hosted by PS 152 in Manhattan found a creative way of finding time for such activities. Once a week, the program would have students work on large group arts-and-crafts projects, expanding beyond its typical 10:1 student-teacher ratio. This would free up some instructors to meet in small groups to develop lesson plans for the upcoming week. These groups would be organized by grade level so that instructors could share ideas on addressing the needs of specific age groups through creative activities. Parents and teachers could also use this time to suggest ideas for activities that reflect students' interests at home or complement lessons being taught in school.[68]

Other programs may set aside in-service days or schedule group training and meetings at the start or end of a term/session.[69]

Evaluation of Professional Development Activities

Similar to our earlier discussion of evaluating OST programs, it is important to assess the value of specific professional development activities and programs. While many OST program providers believe it is difficult to find the time for such assessments, as Bouffard and Little note, "evaluation is a critical part of the professional development process because it identifies which program elements are (or are not) successful, which ultimately leads to the creation of more effective and efficient programs."[70]

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[66] "Internet Resources 2009-2010." Fort Worth ISD.
http://www.fwisd.org/fwas/Documents/WebResources%2009-10.pdf
[67] 2009-2010 Community Resources." Fort Worth ISD.
http://www.fwisd.org/fwas/Documents/CommunityResources%2009-10.pdf
[68] "Training and Supervising After-School Staff: A Resource Brief." Op. cit.
[69] Raley, Grossman, and Walker, 2005. Op. cit., p. 31.
[70] Bouffard and Little, 2004. Op. cit., p. 4.

While we will not go into great detail with regard to evaluations of professional development programs here, we briefly present a framework for evaluation that has been identified as a strong model for assessing many types of professional development programs (not just OST). Kirkpatrick's (1998) framework for evaluating training programs and activities includes four levels of evaluation: participant reaction to the training; participants' learning of information and practices covered in the training; the transfer of this new knowledge into practice; and the results of the training for key stakeholders.[71] A summary of this four-level framework and how it would apply to OST programs is presented in the table below.

Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Evaluation Framework and its Application to OST	
Level	Applied to OST Programs
Reaction	Feedback from OST staff about training needs and satisfaction
Learning	OST staff members' knowledge of best practices
Transfer	The practices used by OST staff
Results	Positive developmental outcomes for youth, families, and communities

Source: Bouffard and Little, 2004.[72]

Given the ultimate desired results of professional development – better outcomes for participants, families, and the community – evaluations of professional development can be tied into broader evaluations of OST programs.

Topics for Professional Development Activities

Specific topics for professional development programs or activities will certainly depend on the various needs of OST programs and staff members. Nevertheless, Raley, Grossman, and Walker (2005) note, "While state licensing requirements often mandate training in CPR, first aid and child-abuse prevention, research has found that training in child development, curriculum planning, and group management are most valuable for enhancing the daily work of instructors."[73] Training in fundraising, staff management techniques, and partnership development are typical topics requested by program directors.

Gathering staff input on what topics should be addressed in professional development represents another means of identifying training needs. The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) at the University of Pennsylvania recommends that program administrators gather staff input through a variety of methods including: paper or online surveys, focus groups, and individual or group meetings. The OSTRC further notes that meetings "may be formal or informal and

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[71] D. L. Kirkpatrick. *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels.* San Francisco: Berret-Koehler. 1998. Cited in Bouffard and Little, 2004. Op. cit.
[72] Bouffard and Little, 2004. Op. cit., p. 4.
[73] Raley, Grossman, and Walker. 2005. Op. cit., 31.

take the form of designated staff development sessions, retreats, and forthright conversations between staff and supervisors."[74]

A third way of determining what topics training should cover is to think carefully about what staff members need to know to perform their jobs well. One resource that may aid in this process is a set of core competencies for youth workers, established by the National Collaboration for Youth. The set is based on similar lists of competencies developed by other agencies and applies to full-time and part-time, front-line youth development staff.[75]

National Collaboration for Youth – Youth Development Competencies
1. Understands and applies basic child and adolescent development principles
❖ Understands ages and stages of child development
❖ Applies fundamentals of positive youth development
❖ Takes into consideration trends and issues that affect children and youth
2. Communicates and develops positive relationships with youth
❖ Listens in a non-judgmental way
❖ Uses the language of respect
❖ Exhibits concern for the well being of others and interest in the feelings and experiences of others
3. Adapts, facilitates and evaluates age appropriate activities with and for the group
❖ Relates to and engages the group
❖ Initiates, sustains, and nurtures group interactions and relationships through completion of an ongoing project or activity
❖ Teaches and models effective problem solving and conflict negotiation
4. Respects and honors cultural and human diversity
❖ Exhibits an awareness of commonalities and differences among youth of diverse backgrounds and shows respect for those of different talents, abilities, sexual orientation, and faith
❖ Builds on diversity among and between individuals to strengthen the program community, and the community at large
❖ Serves as a role model for the principles of inclusion and tolerance
5. Involves and empowers youth
❖ Actively consults and involves youth to encourage youth to contribute to programs and to the communities in which they live
❖ Organizes and facilitates youth leadership development activities
6. Identifies potential risk factors (in a program environment) and takes measures to reduce those risks
❖ Identifies basic risk and protective factors in youth development
❖ Designs and monitors emotionally and physically safe program environments, interactions, and activities for youth and intervenes when safety demands it

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[74] "Promising Practices in Out-of-School Time Professional Development." Op. cit.
[75] "National Collaboration for Youth Publications." National Youth Development Information Center.
http://www.nydic.org/nydic/library/publications/ncypubs.htm

National Collaboration for Youth – Youth Development Competencies
❖ Identifies potential issues (and possible signs and symptoms) with youth that require intervention or referral (e.g., suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, child abuse, violent tendencies, eating disorders, obesity, sexually transmitted diseases)
7. Cares for, involves, and works with families and community
❖ Understands and cares about youth and their families
❖ Actively engages family members in program and community initiatives
❖ Understands the greater community context in which youth and families live
❖ Communicates effectively with youth and their families – one-to-one communication as well as in group settings
8. Works as part of a team and shows professionalism
❖ Articulates a personal "vision" of youth development work (to co-workers, volunteers, and participants) and expresses current and potential contributions to that vision
❖ Adheres to ethical conduct and professionalism at all times (confidentiality, honoring appropriate boundaries)
❖ Acts in a timely, appropriate, and responsible manner
❖ Is accountable, through work in teams and independently by accepting and delegating responsibility
❖ Displays commitment to the mission of the agency
9. Demonstrates the attributes and qualities of a positive role model
❖ Models, demonstrates, and teaches positive values like caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility
❖ Incorporates wellness practices into personal lifestyle
❖ Practices stress management and stress reduction
10. Interacts with and relates to youth in ways that support asset building
❖ Challenges and develops values and attitudes of youth in a supportive manner
❖ Designs program activities, structure, and collaborations that show evidence of asset building

Source: National Collaboration for Youth.[76]

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[76] "Youth Development Worker Competencies." National Collaboration for Youth. January 2004.
http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/Competencies.pdf

Examples of Quality OST Programs

While we have mentioned a variety of specific OST programs operating throughout the United States in this report, we selected five programs for further analysis. These programs have been highlighted in the literature as high quality and all feature collaboration between schools, community-based organizations, and/or government agencies. In the following profiles, we examine the relationships between these program partners, as well as provide information on the services they offer. Where further information was available, we also discuss how these programs exemplify some of the best practices described in previous sections of this report.

Fort Worth After School – Fort Worth Independent School District

In 2000, the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) partnered with the City of Fort Worth (CFW) to create a jointly funded after-school program, offered at 52 sites. By 2001, the Fort Worth ISD received federal funds through the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Program to add after-school programs to six middle schools. When the federal funding ended in 2003-2004, programming was offered at three of the original 21st CCLC sites, while financial support was provided by the Texas Education Agency to fund an additional five schools.

Fort Worth After School again received additional funding from the 21st CCLC program and by 2008-09, was operating after-school programs at 85 FWISD elementary (52), middle (23), and high schools (10). According to the FWISD website, the operations and programming at these sites is dependent on the type of funding received. For example, at the 45 sites currently funded through FWISD and the City of Fort Worth (FWISD/CFW), programs run after school four days a week until 6pm. At a few sites, "parent-pay and free programs are offered at the school sites on Fridays."[77] Otherwise, all programs are free to participants. Fort Worth After School employs a director and two program coordinators (each responsible for half of the participating schools) to oversee daily operations, while a site supervisor manages the program at each school. Students at the FWISD/CFW sites are provided with time to complete homework with assistance from staff and a snack. Each school offers additional programming in at least three of the following five areas: "(i) academic enrichment/tutoring/homework help, (ii) recreation/youth development, (iii) fine arts, (iv) service learning, and (v) technology tools/skills."[78]

According to the Fort Worth After School 2007-2008 Evaluation Report, 60 percent of the FWISD/CFW sites are operated by their host schools, while the rest have community-based organizations (CBOs) directing the programs. The CBOs include

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[77] "Programming." Fort Worth ISD. http://www.fwisd.org/fwas/Pages/programming.aspx
[78] Ibid.

City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services, Camp Fire, Clayton Y.E.S!, Communities in Schools, Knowledge Learning Corporation, and the YMCA.[79]

The other 40 sites feature the 21st CCLC program and operate five days per week (with some also open on Saturdays). Programs based at elementary and high schools are open after school until 6 or 6:30pm. Middle schools feature a morning session from 8 to 9am and an afternoon session until 6:30pm. Daily operations are overseen by the Fort Worth After School director and six program coordinators. In addition to programs similar to those offered at FWISD/CFW sites (tutoring, fine arts, technology tools, etc.), 21st CCLC sites offer programs for parents and adult family members, including family literacy, ESL, and GED instruction, among others.

Unlike the majority of FWISD/CFW sites, all 21st CCLC sites have a CBO partner (the same CBOs as mentioned above). In order to facilitate cooperation between the CBO and the host school, each school employs an academic liaison who works with the CBO's site supervisor to recruit students and staff. These individuals also work together to develop programming, while taking into account suggestions from principals, teachers, students, and parents.[80]

Providing a model of some of the best practices discussed earlier in this report, Fort Worth After School incorporates comprehensive evaluations into its programming. For example, in 2007-08, the program collected data from surveys, observations of program sites, an attendance database, and academic and school data maintained by FWISD Accountability and Data Quality. Through these evaluations, Fort Worth After School has found that participants have higher school attendance rates than non-participants, and individuals who have participated in the program for two years have better attendance records than those who have only participated for one year. Another outcome uncovered through the evaluation process is a positive relationship between the number of days a student has attended the program and passing the math section of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test. Finally, surveys of classroom teachers found that students who were performing poorly in a number of academic/behavioral areas (turning homework in on time, participating in class, and attending class), displayed strong improvements after attending the program.[81]

LINC Before and After School Program – Kansas City, Missouri School District

The Local INvestment Commission (LINC) Before and After School Program serves more than 4,500 students at 45 schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD).[82] LINC functions as a "community based human services collaborative,"

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[79] "Fort Worth After School 2007-2008 Evaluation Report." Fort Worth ISD. August 2008.
http://www.fwisd.org/fwas/Documents/2007-08_execsummary.pdf
[80] "Programming." Fort Worth ISD. Op. cit.
[81] "Fort Worth After School 2007-2008 Evaluation Report." Op. cit.
[82] "Out-of-School Time." LINC. 2007. http://www.kclinc.org/our-education-pg.aspx?id=250

consisting of "neighborhood, civic, labor, and business leaders with an aim to improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Kansas city, and Jackson, Missouri.[83]

KCMSD originally operated the program, offering it to families for free using state school desegregation funds. However, as the funding for the program dried up in the late 1990s, LINC and other community members, business leaders, and non-profits created a task force to find a way to preserve the program. The task force constructed a strategy in which the program could draw on public funding such as TANF, Title I and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, as well as private sources and small fees from participating families.[84]

LINC took over responsibilities for the Before and After School Program in 1999, making it a part of its Caring Communities Initiative. The initiative seeks to transform schools into "community service hubs and gives citizens the power to determine what types of services they need." Representing an incremental process, each hub provides a before and after school program, while the initiative seeks to add additional services such as social workers and health care facilities.

Providing a strong example of collaboration between the OST program, schools, and communities, each Caring Communities site features a "Site Based Council." The councils are organized and managed by a site coordinator who is responsible for the before and after school program in addition to other services offered on location. The coordinator recruits community members including neighborhood residents, business owners, and service providers to serve on the Council. The Council typically meets monthly to "raise concerns and draw up action agendas that range from eliminating the presence of drug dealers to improving community health."[85]

With regard to the Before and After School Program in particular, LINC partners with multiple entities in the Kansas City area. As a part of its role in the partnership, KCMSD offers use of its facilities, as well as covering insurance, maintenance, and security costs. The district also makes available Title I funds to the program.

LINC takes an innovative approach to improving its OST programs and developing program staff. The organization entered a "training partnership" with Francis Child Development Institute. Under the agreement, the institute would conduct staff training for 2-3 hours a month at each program site, in addition to group training and leadership development sessions at multiple sites. The organization also partners with YouthNet, a youth worker training and professional development organization

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[83] Georgia Hall. "Community Participation and Partnership in a Citywide Before and After School Initiative." *Promising Practices in Afterschool.* November 2003. http://www.niost.org/pdf/KansasCity.pdf
[84] Note that Hall (2003) describes the cost of the program to participants in terms of "a sliding scale fee structure," while the LINC website states that the cost is $10 per year. See: "Out-of-School Time." LINC. 2007. Op. cit.
[85] Hall, 2003. Op. cit., p. 2.

operating in the Kansas City area. In order to support program quality improvement, the organization would conduct drop-in site visits every fall and unannounced quality assessments each spring. LINC would coordinate a "quality improvement planning session" for each site to review the results of these assessments and devise ways to improve its services.[86]

PrimeTime Extended Day Program – San Diego Unified School District

Formerly known as "6 to 6," the PrimeTime Extended Day program serves elementary and middle school students by offering structured activities including art, music, athletics, and cooperative team-building games before and after school. The program is offered at 132 schools across the city and serves over 20,000 students annually.[87]

PrimeTime represents collaboration between a wide variety of entities, including community partners such as Bayview Charities, Center for Community Solutions, Harmonium, San Diego State University Research Foundation, Social Advocates for Youth, Union of Pan Asian Communities, and YMCA of San Diego. In an earlier description of the program, it was noted that Harmonium Children's Services, Social Advocates for Youth, and the YMCA of San Diego County acted as the main community-based organizations (CBOs) responsible for providing the OST programming. The program maintained a sub-contract with each CBO, specifying "the scope of services, period of performance, budget and allowable expenditures, staffing requirements, program content, funding procedures, etc. to which all programs funded by the city must ascribe."[88]

The program provides examples of a number of the best practices discussed earlier in this report. First, each PrimeTime site features a low student to staff ratio (15:1 for elementary level and 20:1 for middle level), allowing more time for small group interaction. Ensuring broad access, the program is free to families at participating schools, though enrollment is based on need and compliance with the program's attendance policy due to demand exceeding supply. The program further seeks to engage families by providing monthly newsletters and a calendar of activities and events. The program also openly welcomes parent/guardian involvement in program activities.

Providing an example of the importance of sustained participation – a best practice described earlier in the report – students are expected to attend the program "everyday for the full range of program hours."[89] Students may participate in the

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[86] Ibid., p. 3.
[87] "PrimeTime Extended Day Program." San Diego Unified School District.
http://old.sandi.net/extended_learning/primetime/brochure.pdf
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

before and/or after school portions of the program. The before school program operates for a minimum of an hour and a half, while the after school program lasts until at least 6 pm every day.

The program seeks to strike a balance between academic and recreational activities. For an hour to an hour and a half each day the program includes academic support in the areas of reading, writing, speech, math, and science. According to the program's brochure, principals at each school work with program leaders and community partners to "identify credentialed teachers and to ensure that activities complement the regular day school curriculum."[90] Participants also engage in a variety of recreational activities, such as learning how to play musical instruments, dance, writing and performing plays, athletics, and educational games.

An interesting and unique element of the program was featured in an article published by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) in 2003. Before sole responsibility of the program was transferred to the San Diego School District in 2007,[91] the program represented an even more complex partnership of service providers, local government, and school districts. Then working under the name of "6 to 6," the program operated as a collaboration between "the City of San Diego's Community and Economic Development Department, the San Diego Unified School District, eight smaller districts that serve schools within the City's boundaries, and 15 local community-based organizations (CBOs)."[92] In order to improve coordination between these entities, the program employed two staff members – Program Monitor and Program Analyst. The Program Monitor would observe program sites to ensure compliance with contractual agreements between program providers and the city. This individual would also act to support training and technical assistance needs of program sites that were discovered during the monitoring process. The Program Monitor would inform providers of training sessions and work to shape future trainings to address program and provider needs. At the time of the article's publication, "6 to 6" monitors had held up to nine in-service trainings per year for program providers.

The Program Monitor and Analyst were also tasked with visiting each school site twice a year (at a minimum) and conducting evaluations of staffing, safety, programming, facilities, equipment/supplies, academic structure, and school collaboration. These individuals would also conduct annual satisfaction surveys of school principals, staff, parents, and the wider community. Hall (2003) describes the benefits of this staffing strategy as follows:

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[90] Ibid.

[91] "Community and Economic Development." *City of San Diego Annual Fiscal Year 2008 Budget*. p. 135.
http://www.sandiego.gov/fm/annual/pdf/fy08/17v2commandecodev.pdf

[92] Georgia Hall. "Creating Infrastructure that Supports Program Improvement and Capacity Building." *Promising Practices in Citywide Afterschool Initiatives*. May 2003. http://www.niost.org/pdf/SanDiego.pdf

> Implementing a program monitoring strategy and infrastructure addresses several crucial challenges facing San Diego "6 to 6." Essentially, individual program staff straddle three centers of authority and accountability: the school, the city, and the CBO's that employ them. The program monitoring system allows for formal and clear communication between the three entities in regards to program quality and expectations. Not only is there agreement on the expectation, but there is a standard process and procedure for notification of perceived deficits and improvement planning.[93]

Thus, the former "6 to 6" program offered a good example of how an OST program can sustain a complex partnership between multiple CBOs, school districts, and local government. Further, as noted above, the PrimeTime program now exemplifies a number of other best practices including maintaining low student to staff ratios, ensuring sustained participation, and engaging families, among others.

Alignment Initiative – Seattle Public Schools

In 2001, Seattle Public Schools sought to bolster student achievement of academic standards through closer collaboration with OST programs. As a part of its Alignment Initiative, the district mandated closer association between school and OST programs, offering the program providers rent-free lease agreements in return for their cooperation.[94] The district described this alignment in the following manner:

> Alignment means that out-of-school-time activities purposefully complement work in schools, improving the ability of students to meet learning standards. Accomplishing this requires a partnership in which before- and after-school programs, schools, and community organizations work together to improve student learning. Alignment is important because it ensures that children's needs are met at every level – emotional and physical as well as academic.[95]

The district goes on to state that alignment does not mean duplication of what happens during the regular school day. OST programs are intended to "emphasize play as well as academics, helping children experience success in new ways and develop as well-rounded individuals."[96]

Even the planning of this initiative is a prime example of the collaboration between schools, OST programs, local government, and non-profits. The district formed the Learning Partners Group to advise the initiative. This group brought together representatives of the district, Seattle Human Services Division, local child care

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Hall, 2002. Op. cit., p. 6.
[95] "Out-of-School-Time Learning." Office for Community Learning, Seattle Public Schools.
http://www.seattleschools.org/area/ocl/comalign.html
[96] Ibid.

providers, Seattle City Office for Education, and School's Out Washington (a statewide organization seeking to improve access to and quality of after-school programs).[97] The group developed a set of criteria under which school-OST partnerships would be formed. These criteria are provided in the table below. Note that many of these points reflect best practices discussed in previous sections of this report.

Seattle Public Schools – Criteria for OST Provider/School Alignment
❖ The school and provider engage in activities that mutually promote programs and services and model effective partnerships that support the integration of the core school day and OST program
❖ The school and provider coordinate program planning and curriculum to ensure alignment between activities and learning standards and communicate to support children's learning
❖ The school and provider coordinate and communicate to support children's acquisition of developmental assets
❖ The school and provider develop and adhere to a plan for shared use of key partnership resources such as facilities/space, curriculum, staff, volunteers, equipment, technology, and transportation
❖ The school and provider share pertinent information and communicate regularly about individual needs; a shared approach to issues related to behavior management, family engagement, child health and safety is used
❖ The school and provider actively participate in district designated professional development opportunities
❖ The school and provider share access to emergency materials and have a shared approach to emergency procedures
❖ A mechanism is present to assure that parents, families, and the broader community can meaningfully shape the alignment process
❖ The school and provider jointly develop an approach for ensuring that culturally relevant and anti-biased learning strategies are utilized.
❖ The provider develops a plan for reinvesting rent savings in staffing (wages and benefits), training, materials, facility improvements, or other efforts that enhance program delivery to children and families.

Source: Hall, 2009.

The district provides two good examples of alignment in practice. First, the district describes a third grade science teacher instructing students on rainforest ecosystems. When the students attend their OST program that day, an OST staff member helps students build a model of a rain forest or creates a play about rainforest wildlife. Another example focuses on a middle school group that learns to change the oil in a car as an OST activity. The learning process might include students conducting research on the internet about how the car works, writing instructions, distributing responsibilities among group members, figuring out how much oil is needed, reading

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[97] "School's Out Washington." http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org/

the dipstick, and cleaning up afterwards. As the district states, "All the skills they need for the project are reflected in school learning standards."[98]

The Alignment Initiative has resulted in closer collaboration between Seattle Public Schools and a variety of OST program providers, including the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, Olympic View Kids' Club, TOPS Kids' Company, and many local community centers, among others.[99]

CAMBA Kids After-School Project – Brooklyn PS/IS 25

Selected as one of the "high-performing after-school programs" in TASC's 2005 follow-up evaluation of its programs,[100] the CAMBA Kids After-School Project serves kindergarten through 8th graders at Brooklyn's PS/IS 25 in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Operating since 2000, the program features many of the same best practices described with regard to the other programs profiled in this report.

First, the program offers a balanced selection of academic, recreational, and artistic activities. Academic activities include homework help, science projects, and library time, as well as selected activities from the Developmental Studies Center's *KidzLit* and *KidzMath* and the Scholastic Publishers' *Math and Reading Laboratories.* Activities on the recreational or artistic side include playing musical instruments (such as drums or recorders), dance, basketball, self-portraits, collages, and masks. The program also includes developmental activities such as a peer dialogue for older students called YouthLink. The dialogue is directed by a social worker and deals with difficult topics such as gang affiliation or drug use.

Other best practices exemplified by this program relate to communication. Project staff keep in close contact with day-school personnel including the "principal, teachers, custodians, cafeteria staff, and security guards."[101] The site coordinator even meets with the principal of the school on a bi-weekly basis and serves on the school's leadership team. Further, the librarian and the mathematics coach working at PS/IS 25 during the school day also work part-time with the program to help design academic enrichment activities in order to provide greater continuity with school lessons.

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[98] "Out-of-School-Time Learning." Office for Community Learning, Seattle Public Schools.
http://www.seattleschools.org/area/ocl/comalign.html
[99] "Afterschool Programs in Seattle Public Schools." Seattle Public Schools. April 23, 2009.
http://www.seattleschools.org/area/ocl/pdf/ostprograms2.pdf
[100] Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, and Mielke. 2005. Op. cit. p. 60.
[101] Ibid.

Conclusion – Summary of Key Findings

The following is a summary of key points addressed in this report.

- ❖ OST program administrators should set realistic, achievable goals
- ❖ Programming should be intentionally targeted towards achieving specific outcomes linked to program goals
- ❖ Programs should feature a variety of activities that provide participants the opportunity to master new skills
- ❖ Programming should complement but not duplicate school curriculum
- ❖ OST programs should work to ensure sustained participation among students, as youth experience greater gains when they participate more frequently and for longer periods of time. This can be achieved by ensuring that youth feel respected by staff and their peers, and positively supported by staff
- ❖ Programs can offer additional services to adults such as GED or ESL training to encourage family engagement. Programs can also provide "youth-centered" activities in which family may participate (family nights, community service, etc.)
- ❖ OST program partners should join in strategic planning early on to consider issues such as program emphasis, target audience, and cost recovery
- ❖ On a similar note, program partners should clearly articulate goals and responsibilities. This can be formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties.
- ❖ Partners should maintain a clear communication structure that facilitates open discussion among partners on a regular basis
- ❖ Professional development can be accomplished through a variety of means including workshops, technical assistance, peer mentoring, and orientations
- ❖ Staff resource centers, offering a collection of guidelines on teaching, curriculum development, and other issues, provide a cost-effective means of professional development
- ❖ Research indicates that training in child development, group management, and curriculum planning are among the most valuable topics of professional development for front-line OST staff, while fundraising, staff management techniques, and partnership development are typical topics requested by program directors.
- ❖ Examining core competencies and gathering staff input are also valuable ways of identifying topics of professional development

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