**Introduction**

The Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) is a sponsored initiative of Arkansas State University Childhood Services and is a network of Out-of-School Time (OST) programs and youth development professionals from across the state. The mission of AOSN is to ensure that children and youth ages 5-19 have safe, healthy and enriching learning experiences during the out-of-school time hours. AOSN seeks to provide opportunities and supports to program leaders and policy makers as they work to strengthen and expand the OST field. AOSN recognizes that building and sustaining an infrastructure of quality programs is essential to providing access to high quality, age-appropriate OST opportunities.

Formulating an operational definition of OST Program Quality is also essential to strengthening programs at the point-of-service (POS).  Current research suggests that quality programs develop and implement intentional strategies for providing comprehensive educational and developmental learning opportunities (Peterson, T. K. 2013).   According to the Afterschool Alliance’s 2012 publication entitled *Principles of Effective Expanded Learning Programs: A Vision Built on the Afterschool Approach*, those intentional strategies and practices include: School-Community Partnerships, Engaged Learning, Family Engagement, Intentional Programming, Diverse and Prepared Staff, Participation and Access, Safety, Health, & Wellness, and Ongoing Assessment & Evaluation.

**The Standards:**

The Arkansas Standards for Out-of-School Time Program Quality have been established from a set of critical components which indicate program quality, including:

* Safe and Appropriate Program Environments and Facilities
* Ongoing Training and Staff Development
* Program Monitoring and Evaluation
* Positive Youth Development
* Youth Engagement
* Learning to Achieve
* Sustainability Planning

Each of the above components begins with a standard that further defines the intent of the component followed by quality indicators. The quality indicators collectively serve as the measure of the correlating standard.

Taken as a whole, the previous measures described underscore the growing evidence base and the correlation between high quality programs and positive youth outcomes. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that sustained participation in well-structured, well-implemented programs help children and youth attain the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the 21st Century (Little, 2009).

**SAFE AND APPROPRIATE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTS AND FACILITIES**

The most important aspect of any child or youth-serving program is that it be safe and developmentally appropriate for participants. This means ensuring that the program environment includes sufficient space, supervision and security. Facilities should be clean and the physical components such as the furniture, space and supplies are developmentally and age appropriate for participants. Additionally, proper staff-child ratios should be in place and staff should provide a welcoming and supportive environment for participants.

**STANDARD: Quality programs provide a safe, healthy, and appropriate learning environment for all participants.**

1. The program provides a safe, clean, stimulating, welcoming and supportive environment for participants.
2. The program’s indoor space and furniture (when applicable) meets the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs of participants.
3. The program’s outdoor space (when applicable) is large enough, appropriately equipped, and safe to allow participants to be active and independent.
4. The program implements, practices and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.
5. Appropriate emergency supplies and procedures are present/posted in plain view.
6. Adequate security for the program is utilized.
7. Program staff supervise participants to ensure their safety.
8. The program serves food and drinks that meet the requirements as outlined by the National School Lunch Program or the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
9. The program develops and manages effective arrival and dismissal procedures and plans for safe travel home.
10. The program documents that all staff and volunteers working with participants have passed a child abuse and neglect screening and a criminal records check for crimes that pose a threat to the well-being of youth and families.
11. The program ensures that at least one staff member trained in CPR and First Aid is present at all times.
12. The program’s space meets the planning and storage needs of participants and staff.
13. Program staff utilize positive guidance and discipline techniques appropriately and consistently for participant behavior.

* Positive reinforcement for correct behavior is utilized.
* Desirable behavior expectations are clearly communicated and consistently followed.

1. The program is aware of, records, and informs staff of special needs of participants.
   * When a participant with special needs is enrolled, staff receive training related to the special need when necessary.
   * Ratios are re-evaluated to see if any adjustments are needed.
   * Staff work with participants, families, and other identified community resources to support existent Individual Education Plan (IEP), non-IEP needs and Academic Improvement Plans (AIP) when applicable.
2. The program establishes and follows a schedule that is shared with all staff, participants, and their families.
   * Transitions are orderly, efficient, and minimal in duration.
   * There is an appropriate amount of time for all activities.
   * The daily schedule is flexible enough to provide adaptability but structured enough to provide predictability for the participants.
   * The daily schedule is posted and followed.
3. The program maintains staff-to-participant ratio as per current state Minimum Licensing Requirements for Out-of-School Time Facilities.
4. Ratios are adjusted to provide adequate supervision during higher risk activities (ex. field trips, swimming, etc.).

**ONGOING TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Out-of-School Time programs should intentionally recruit and hire staff that reflect the diversity of youth served and who also understand their developmental and cultural needs.

Program administrators should consistently offer support and professional development opportunities to staff in line with Minimum Licensing Requirements for OST Facilities so that they are adequately prepared to provide support to youth and families involved in the program.

**STANDARD: A quality program recruits, hires and trains diverse staff members who value each participant, understand their developmental needs, and work closely with families, school partners and staff.**

1. The program has an infrastructure for staff support.
2. The program provides positive working conditions where staff are treated with   respect and as professionals.
   * Staff are provided adequate supervision.
   * Staff are provided opportunities for advancement.
   * Regular staff meetings are conducted.
3. Each staff member has a written individual professional development plan.
   * The written professional development plan meets the specific needs of each individual staff member.
   * Plans address the core programmatic content areas, including Positive Child/Youth Development Strategies, Appropriate Guidance and Discipline Techniques, Child/Youth Growth and Development; Learning Environments and Curriculum; Child/Youth Observation and Assessment; Interactions with Children and Youth; Youth Engagement; Cultural Competency and Responsiveness; Family, School, and Community Relationships; Safety, Health and Wellness Practices; Program Planning and Development; Professional Development and Leadership.
4. Staff are provided professional development consistent with Minimum Licensing Requirements for Out-of-School Time Facilities.
5. The program has a process for recruiting, retaining, and managing staff.
6. The program recruits, hires, and develops staff who reflect the diversity and culture(s) of the community.
7. Staff understand diversity, as well as the developmental and cultural needs of the participants served.
8. Staff have access to professional development resources such as conferences, workshops, online trainings, and professional affiliations.

**PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Every program should have a system for measuring outcomes in order to strengthen and improve the quality of programming. This includes the regular evaluation of both staff and participants through thorough data collection methods and management practices.  Program staff should have an eye towards continuous quality improvement by using data collected to assess and evaluate program practices and offerings.

**STANDARD: A quality program has a system for measuring outcomes and using the information collected for on-going program planning, improvement, and evaluation.**

1.      The program conducts regular assessments and evaluations.

* The program has measurable goals aligned with the organization, its missions and   needs of participants.
* The program includes outreach to stakeholders in the design and implementation of program evaluations.
* The program has an internal method for assessing program activities.
* The program uses findings from evaluations for continuous program improvement.

2.      The program conducts regular staff evaluations.

* The program utilizes an internal method for assessing staff performance.

3.      The program conducts regular participant evaluation and assessment.

* + The program uses quantitative data to measure participants’ progress towards stated goals.
  + The program utilizes an internal evaluation method for assessing participant engagement and participation.
  + Data collection methods to include regularly conducted focus groups, surveys, and evaluations with the participants and families.
  + The program identifies a formal process to include youth voice when accessing program planning, implementation and staff/peer relationships.

**POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

Program activities should be designed to support the overall enrichment of participants, including their physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative needs. This includes the incorporation of policy, practices and activities that promote inclusion of all youth with regard to diversity and cultural backgrounds.

The program and its staff should aim to provide a respectful, safe and supportive environment where participants feel comfortable and in which they can thrive.  Activities should be intentionally focused on meeting the goals and needs of participants in a developmentally appropriate manner as well as providing challenging opportunities for youth to learn new skills and pursue new talents.

**STANDARD: A quality program provides a well-rounded variety of activities and opportunities that support the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative growth and development of all participants.**

1.      The program addresses the cognitive, physical, social, emotional and creative needs of the participants.

* + Activities are age and skill level appropriate for participants.
  + Activity content addresses specific developmental domains.
  + Offers project-based, experiential activities that promote creativity and youth self-expression.
* Youth participate in short and long term projects.

2.      Participants receive recognition for their achievements and participation.

* The program recognizes individual and group accomplishments.
* Opportunities for recognition are planned and scheduled on a regular basis.
* Recognition of individual achievement occurs formally and informally.
* The program provides space for participants to display examples of their work.
* The program provides opportunities for youth to make formal presentations of their work, i.e. plays, poetry readings, art shows, talent shows, etc.

3.      The program’s activities and projects promote diversity in culture, religion, ethnicity, ability, etc.

* + Policies and practices prohibit bias of any kind.
  + Program content and activities are representatives of the cultures of the participants.
  + Program activities and structure are adaptable for different levels of ability.
  + Displays in the program are reflective of the varying ages, cultures, and abilities of the program participants.

4.      The program provides a supportive, caring environment.

* + The staff offers verbal encouragement to the participants during the course of an activity.
  + Staff uses respectful voice tone.
  + Staff is engaged in activities with the participants.
  + Staff observes and monitors youth participation.
  + Positive guidance practices are used.
  + Staff model appropriate respect for all cultures, ages, and abilities.
  + Activities promote team work amongst participants.
  + Staff encourage youth to manage feelings and resolve conflicts appropriately.

5. Participants have opportunities for ongoing engagement in creative arts programming that:

* are intentional and standards based;
* are age-appropriate and engage students' interests;
* develop skills and vocabulary;
* are taught by trained staff or in partnership with an artist or arts organization;
* make time and space available for sustained, real-world, hands-on work;
* make connections to other subjects;
* utilize a process of creating, presenting, and reflecting;
* include public demonstrations of work that engage families and community;
* are supported by ongoing planning, assessment, and resource development.

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

Youth should be provided ‘voice and choice’ opportunities by taking an active role in the design and planning of program activities that promote teamwork and communication as well as conflict resolution and problem-solving skills. This will help establish a learning environment that is interesting and applicable to their lives and the world they live in and which will consequently make learning more meaningful to the youth.

Participants should engage in hands-on learning, including service learning and projects that involve science, math, engineering, literacy, technology and the arts as components as well as activities that allow them to explore college and career opportunities.

**STANDARD:  A quality program provides the opportunities for youth to have a voice in programming and participate in planning, exercise choice, reflection, and engage in a variety of offerings such as service learning and experiential learning as well as youth development opportunities.**

1. Participants are provided with a variety of engagement strategies.

* There are opportunities for participation in physical play, creative arts, hands-on learning, academically embedded activities, etc.
* Program content and activities are inclusive of different learning styles.
* There are opportunities for peer mentoring.
* Activities are conducted that involve the whole family and community.

2.      Participants have the opportunity to exercise voice and choice in regards to program offerings:

* + The program provides intentional opportunities for participants to assist with program planning.
  + The feedback of participants is incorporated into the program.
  + Participants are allowed input into the implementation of positive guidance and disciplinary practices.

3. Youth and staff share responsibilities on program governing bodies (e.g. boards, advisory panels, standing committees, task forces) and both youth and staff are provided training in this.

4.      Activity content and structure has an intentional reflection process

5.      Opportunities for Youth Voice in the development of personal responsibility, self-direction, and leadership throughout the program.

6.      Participants work on self-directed projects.

7.      Participants have the opportunity to make content choices.

8.      Participants have the opportunity to plan and conduct activities.

9.      Participants have leadership roles throughout the program.

10.  The program’s policies and engagement strategies support participant leadership development.

11.  Participants have the opportunity to form special clubs/groups within the program.

12. Program allows participants to set individual goals.

13.  Participants have the opportunity to plan and participate in community service.

**LEARNING TO ACHIEVE**

In advancement of the Common Core, student achievement and the need to develop critical thinking skills in math and literacy, the *Learning to Achieve* standardhighlights the need for programs to place an intentional focus on guiding youth in the acquisition of important 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, communication, innovation, interpersonal and analytical skills and a broader understanding of global issues and ethics.

Out-of-School Time programs are powerful because of their capacity to focus on soft skill development and encourage the development of personal and social skills. Programs that place emphasis on SAFE development, i.e. **S**tep by step training of staff, **A**ctive forms of learning that help youth practice new skills, **F**ocused time on developing these new skills and **E**xplicitly defining the skills that youth need to enhance are able to contribute to the holistic development of youth and have various positive impacts on them such as improved behavior and school attendance, a decrease in dropout rates and drug use, as well as an increase in test scores and grades.

**Standard: A quality program offers meaningful and relevant learning experiences that allow participants to become engaged in ways that meet their developmental and cognitive needs as well as help them build social skills, critical thinking skills and the development of new talents.**

1.      The program offers high quality activities that are school-linked.

* + Promising/best practices are shared with staff.
  + The program has a method or access to provide academic support to participants.
  + The program establishes strong links to the school day, incorporating programming that integrates and complements curriculum and academic activities but which is not a replication of school day instruction.
  + The Arkansas Common Core Curriculum Frameworks are used as a resource when developing program activities and opportunities.
  + The program maintains ongoing communication with school personnel.

2. The program activities provide opportunities to build skills in the areas of:

* Reasoning and problem solving skills; critical thinking, understanding relationships and drawing conclusions.
* A progression of skill levels within activities.
* The development and mastery of new skills.
* Connections of academics math and other subjects with real-world scenarios and applications.
* Communication; creativity and innovation; collaboration, contextual learning, and information, technology and media literacy skills.
* Curricula provides structured learning opportunities in core subject matter that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Key topics are likely to include English language arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.
* Fosters an effective learning environment for all participants, for example, by ensuring that participants are able to study individually or in small groups without disruption
* Helps children and youth develop learning skills by exploring their ideas and challenging their thinking, for example, by encouraging them to be questioning, helping them develop good study skills, and promoting problem solving approaches.
* Uses formal and informal activities to stimulate curiosity and enhance learning.
* Engages participants in project-based activities and group discussions and
* Introduces them to cultural, educational, and technological resources to help them explore opportunities that will enrich their lives.

3. The program promotes activities that involve the acquisition of life skills such as leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity and responsibility, people skills, self-direction and civic responsibility.

4. Organization has established mechanisms (e.g. regular school-linked coordination) for helping parents connect with their child’s learning.

5. Several program offerings provide explicit, deliberate, intentional, targeted opportunities for youth to consider future pursuits including college, career, and/or lifestyle (e.g. apprenticeships, activities to consider future dreams and goals, etc.)

**SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING**

It is important to consider not only what goes into a program to makes its initial implementation a success, but also what should be done to support its future viability. This consists of having a financial management and volunteer recruitment plan in place in order to guarantee program sustainability, while including family members and community stakeholders in long-term program planning and decision making.

OST programs should consistently make an effort to strengthen relationships with families as well as community organizations. Forging partnerships with organizations that share similar goals can allow programs to enhance services and quality by leveraging and sharing resources such as staff, volunteers, facilities, program activities and training opportunities.

**STANDARD:   A quality program has a coherent vision/mission that includes strong partnerships with communities and families in order to achieve and sustain program goals and growth.**

1. The program has an appropriate organizational structure.
2. The program has a written resource development plan that builds sustainability.
3. Program directors involve key community stakeholders, board of directors, staff, families and youth in long-term planning, fiscal management, and decision-making.
4. The program has a long-range plan for sustaining itself, identifying a process for recruiting, retaining, and managing staff and volunteers.
5. The program maintains relationships with advocates for program quality and availability.
6. Program directors pursue new opportunities for community members to lend support by way of in-kind donations of space and materials, financial support, and partnership agreements, etc.
7. The program coordinates staff development activities with those of school and community partners.
8. The program has written policies and procedures for fiscal management, including an annual fiscal audit.
9. Program has a written financial plan/budget with a plan to review budget at regular intervals and adjust as needed.

10. The program has identified community partners to secure funding as necessary.

11. The program seeks opportunities to share information and access to community resources with participants’ families, including educational experiences.

12. The program removes barriers to parent participation (e.g. scheduling based around parents’ availability, allowing siblings to participate with parents, providing at-home opportunities for parents unable to help during program hours, etc.).

13. The program creates a community learning environment where program activities are linked to real-life/real-world applications.

14. Program has a written mission and goals that can be readily shared with families and community partners.

15. Program has an established written organizational communication plan that encourages regular contact with families identifying ~~specific~~ time frames and appropriate modes of communication.

16. The program encourages participants to recruit others to the program, i.e. other youth, families, and community members to attend program activities.

17. Participants and families are involved in marketing and outreach for the program.

**The Journey to Quality: Background**

In the fall of 2005 and early 2006, the Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) began the process of reviewing and compiling best practice research in the field of OST program quality. The AOSN Quality Standards Committee was tasked with reviewing the research and identifying valid instruments that were being used as assessment tools across a broad range of OST programs. The work of supporting programs to meet the demands for higher quality programming and the growing awareness within the state of the importance of program quality in sustaining positive youth outcomes has yielded significant policy changes. The first edition entitled The *Arkansas Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs* was released in 2007.

In 2008 the Governor’s Task Force on Best Practices for Afterschool and Summer Programs released its landmark study on afterschool and summer programs entitled *Enriching Arkansas Children’s Lives Through High-Quality Out-of- School Time Activities*. The report’s recommendations focused on the foundational elements needed to ensure that a state-wide system of programs would be of high quality and that these programs would be strengthened by clearer guidelines and standards. As a result, three key actions were taken to improve the quality of programs. In 2008 the Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool (YPQA) was piloted in Arkansas as a means of assessing point-of-service quality and was adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education’s 21st CCLC Programs in 2010 as the internal and external assessment tool. In 2009 the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education implemented a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) that included a School-Age Component. The YPQA assessment was included within the QRIS framework as one of the options for OST providers to use to fulfill the administrative and program assessment requirements. In addition, in 2009 the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education began the work of drafting the stand-alone Minimum Licensing Requirements for OST Facilities.

As the demand for higher quality programs increases, so does the need for greater access to these programs on a statewide basis. In 2011, the Positive Youth Development Grant Program Act {166} was passed by the Arkansas General Assembly as enabling legislation to establish a state-funded system of high quality OST Youth Development programs. The funding will also require programs to adhere to Minimum Licensing Requirements for OST Facilities and quality standards. The 2013 legislative session resulted in the passage of Act 1230, but did not result in any actual appropriation.

AOSN recognizes that each out-of-school time program is unique with varying missions, philosophies, serving wide and diverse populations, age ranges, interests and values. The standards are intended to be flexible enough to apply to a wide variety of program types but concrete enough to offer some elements that, while adaptable, must be addressed by any program, regardless of the ages served, program type, or overall goal. The standards are intended to suggest and offer a strong foundation for quality programming that embraces the belief that quality should be the standard for all ages, communities, and programs.

Since the 2007 release of the Arkansas Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs, there have been significant advances in youth policy and OST research at the state and national level that requires interpretation and codification into a set of reasonable and relevant standards for the myriad of programs represented in the OST field. This 2014 version, the *Arkansas Standards for Out-of-School Time Program Quality*, recognizes the progression of the field and provides greater alignment within the standards and these new developments.

During the course of the creation of the *Arkansas Standards for Out of School Time Program Quality*, the Quality Standards Committee used the following core commitments to help define the principles and practices that lead to the delivery of quality programming for children and youth during out-of- school time (OST).

It is our hope that an adherence to these **Core Commitments** will further advance the following outcomes within programs:

* Meet the developmental needs of children and youth for the first two decades of their lives.
* Take a positive, asset-based approach to child and youth development.
* Ensure access for all to high-quality developmental opportunities.
* Create and support youth/adult partnerships in non-school opportunities.
* Require accountability at program, community, and state levels.
* Support out-of-school time opportunities through a combination of family, provider, and public contributions. (**(Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time, 2005)**

**Dosage and Cost Model**

A variety of research points to the recommendation that, at a minimum, afterschool programs be held four days a week, three consecutive hours a day to ensure quality and achieve sustainable outcomes for participants. Summer-only programs should be held a minimum of six hours daily and five days a week for six weeks in order to achieve the greatest benefits for participants. The dosage for year-round programs will be slightly different, but aim to provide a minimum of 160 hours of summer programming (Combs, Augustine et. al, 2011).

The Wallace Foundation has conducted research in the area of quality OST program costs through *The Finance Project and Public/Private Ventures (P/VP)*.  The intention of this study was to provide information on what average out-of-school time programming costs might be in order to guide policymakers, program administrators as well as potential funders and provide them with a cost framework to help plan for program expansion or sustainability within their communities.  The average costs listed below reflect implementation costs only.

**Average annual cost for programs serving elementary and middle school children may be calculated using the following equation\*:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **School-year programs** | **Summer programs** |
| $7 x # of slots x # of days operating = total annual cost  *Ex: A program serving 70 children x $7 = $490 x 175 days = $85,750 annually*  (total cost range/slot was $3-$9) | $4 x # of slots x # of days operating = total annual cost  *Ex: 70 slots x $4= $280 x 40 days = $11,200*  (total cost range/slot was $2-$5) |

**Equation to calculate the average cost for programs serving teens\*:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **School-year programs** | **Summer programs** |
| $10 x # of slots x # of days operating = total annual cost  *Ex: A program serving 70 youth x $10 = $700 x 175 days = $122,500 annually*  (total cost range/slot was $4-$12) | $8 x # of slots x # of days operating = total annual cost  *Ex: 70 x $8 = $560 x 40 days = $22,400*  (total cost range/slot was $3-$12) |

*\*Does not include start-up or planning costs.*

The greatest costs for OST programs is reflected in staff salaries, which typically equate to over half of the total program costs. Costs vary from program to program depending on a variety of factors, including program location and hours, staffing, as well as the types of services offered.

In addition to this cost framework, a  helpful tool called the ‘cost calculator’ was created by The Wallace Foundation to help programs get a better idea of what their specific program costs might be based on the size of their staff, number of children served, staff qualifications, program location and focus. This cost calculator can be accessed at www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality.

**Future Action**

As the field of out-of-school time continues to evolve, so will the program practices and elements of quality that produce positive youth outcomes. These standards are intended to serve as a starting point by which afterschool programs in Arkansas can leverage quality improvement efforts by providing a common language of quality for program administrators, frontline staff, legislators, families, community leaders, etc. to discuss the program components associated with a quality afterschool program. As part of these discussions, the following actions need to be taken to ensure that the Arkansas Standards for Quality Out-of-School Time Programs are consistent with other quality measures that exist or are emerging in Arkansas:

* Crosswalk the Arkansas Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs with the youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) developed by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. This tool is currently being widely used by the Arkansas Department of Education with its 21st CCLC programs as an internal and external assessment tool and with various out of school time programs in Arkansas. It allows program staff (or external specialists) to conduct evidence-based research on programs via observation and interview methodologies. Notes, observations, and interview data are used as evidence to score items, and these item scores are combined to create an overall program quality profile.
* The formal adoption of the stand- alone Minimum Licensing   
  Requirements for OST Programs. A work group has drafted the OST licensing standards are they are being reviewed and public comments have been included in the current draft. Wide spread public engagement to solicit feedback is necessary as these requirements change to be more inclusive to the diversity of afterschool and summer programs in the state, subsequent modifications of these quality standards might need to occur.

**List of Terms:**

**Out-of-School Time (OST):** hours and days when children and youth, 5 to 19 years of age, participate in programs designed for them after school hours during the school year, and/or during daytime hours during summer break.

*Terms below are listed in alphabetical order*.

*\*Terms adapted from the Oregon Glossary of Terms*

**21st Century Skills:** This term refers to a collection of skills that youth need to better succeed in college and careers and related to the world around them. These skills are related to critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, as well as literacy in key subject areas such as math, science, information and technology.

**Administrator\*:** A person that supervises/oversees programs and personnel who work directly with children and youth. Administrators may also work directly with children and youth depending on the program structure.

**Arkansas Common Core State Standards:** The Arkansas Common Core State Standards are a framework of what K-12 grade students are expected to learn in English Language Arts and Mathematics. “The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.”

**Appropriate Guidance and Discipline Techniques** - Strategies that follow accepted developmentally appropriate practice and are designed to meet the needs of individual children and youth.  Guidance issues are managed with positive, helpful techniques, including prevention measures, which focus on developing self-control, recognizing and managing strong emotions, utilizing conflict resolution and developing collaborative plans that allow youth to participate in changing behaviors.    
  
**Best Practices\*:** A method for promoting high quality out-of-school time programming that is based on empirical research validating the positive impact such practices have on child and youth developmental outcomes.

**Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP):** US Department of Agriculture program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children participating in out-of-school programs, enabling child and youth participation for many low-income families.

**Child/ Youth Outcomes\*:** The expected social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative outcomes that children and youth who are participating in high quality programming exhibit as a result of engaging in program activities, lessons and other components.

**Collaboration:** In the field of Out-of-School Time, collaboration refers to the various connections that both community based and school based youth programs can make with other community and publicly funded organizations, museums, libraries, etc. to enhance learning opportunities and experiences for the participants in their programs, as well as leverage resources to improve access to and provide the highest quality services possible.

**Core Commitments:** The foundational values present in communities that embody the critical elements that should be present in high quality OST programs in order to ensure maximum positive impact on participants. These include the intentional design of programs to meet the developmental needs of youth, collaboration with other organizations to provide resources and opportunities, and the adherence to all federal, state, and/or local regulations related to OST programming requirements.

**Cultural Competency and Responsiveness** -  Respectfully integrating authentic cultural characteristics, experiences, beliefs and perspectives into the program while imbedding the belief that diversity is a benefit in all aspects of programming (standards, policies, practices and attitudes). Welcoming and seeking input from participants, the community and stakeholders to ensure stereotypes are avoided.

**Evidence-based Practices\*:** Standardized, replicable methods or processes based on scientific data that demonstrate such practices’ viability when it comes to improving outcomes for children and youth in OST programs.

**Experiential Learning**: Hands-on learning that allows individuals to ‘experience’ what they are taught so that they may more effectively observe, analyze and conceptualize key concepts.

**Families\*:** People included in a child or youth’s circle of influence and who are responsible their wellbeing.

**Frontline Staff/Staff\*:** Staff who work directly with children and youth in the administration of program activities.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP**): This is a plan or document that is individualized to the unique and specific educational needs of students who have disabilities and are receiving special education instruction through their school.

**Minimum Licensing Requirements for OST**: The minimum requirements, as stated and enforced by the state’s licensing agency, provide guidance to licensed care environments/programs serving school-aged children and youth to promote the overall safety, health, and well- being of the children and youth served.

**National School Lunch Program:** A meal program assisted by the federal government to provide low cost and/or free lunches to students in schools and residential child care facilities.

**Partners\*:** Other organizations (faith based or community-based), schools or agencies that collaborate with and/or contribute resources, staff and or monetary support to programs.

**Point of Service (POS):** Interactions and activities occurring at the program level within the program environment involving children and youth and staff.

**Positive Youth Development Grant Program Act {166}**: Enabling legislation enacted by the Arkansas General Assembly in 2011 authorizing the Arkansas Department of Education and the DHS- Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education to establish a state funded grant program to support quality OST programming.

**Program Volunteers\*:** Individuals who provide assistance to a program but do not receive monetary compensation.

**Project-based Learning:** Encourages learning and the development of critical thinking skills by presenting real-world problems in classroom settings. The teacher plays the role of facilitator, working with students to frame worthwhile questions, structuring meaningful tasks, coaching both knowledge development and social skills, and carefully assessing what students have learned from the experience

**Promising Practices:** Innovations in programming that have demonstrated through empirical and anecdotal evidence their effectiveness in producing a positive outcome.

**Quality Standards:** An evidence based set of guiding principles designed to define the essential elements of a quality OST program and to serve as a guide in continuous quality improvement and programmatic accountability.

**Quality Assessment Tool\*:** A written or computerized mechanism that is used to evaluate and assess certain aspects of OST programs activities and/or staff interactions with children and youth. These tools can be used in conjunction with ongoing quality improvement measures.

**Qualitative Evaluation\*:** A type of evaluation that involves the gathering of contextual data from a program in the form of narratives regarding participants’ experiences and/or reactions and feelings to certain aspects of programming.

**Quantitative Evaluation\*:** A type of evaluation that consists of gathering data in the form of numbers.

**Self-directed Projects:** Projects that are youth centered and are chosen based upon the participants interest and provide an opportunity for the learner to guide him or herself through the project independently with minimal or limited guidance and to determine the personal learning goals that are most relevant to him or her.

**Service Learning\***: A type of hands-on learning experience centered around community service and that involves activities and projects designed and carried out by the children and youth in a program. Participants learn more about a particular topic while better understanding academic subjects and engaging in critical thinking, team building and reflection activities.

**Stakeholders:** Any interest group or individual that has a vested interest in a particular cause or program and who aligns that interest in a way that supports the program.

**STEM:**Referstoan interdisciplinary approach to learning where rigorous academic concepts are coupled with real-world lessons as students apply science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in contexts that make connections between school, community, work, and the global enterprise enabling the development of STEM literacy and with it the ability to compete in the new economy.

**Sustainability:** A fiscal model that includes revenue and nonfinancial resources that meet the financial requirements to operate a program beyond short-term funding streams. An OST program is sustainable if it has sufficient resources to operate its activities over a period of time.

**USDA Summer Meals-Afterschool Snack Programs**: A U. S. Department of Agriculture program administered by state human services agencies to provide funding and resources to provide supplemental nutrition to children and youth in school and community settings during the out-of-school time hours.

**Youth:** Children between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age.

**Youth Development:** A process which prepares children and youth to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive Youth Development addressed the broader developmental needs of youth and focuses on asset building versus a deficit based model that focuses solely on problems and risk factors.

**Youth Development Institute:** The Arkansas Youth Development Institute is a series of online courses supported by the Arkansas Out of School Network and ASU Childhood Services and provides easily accessible, quality training on the core knowledge needed when working with youth.

**Youth Engagement**: The elements that allow children and youth to develop their interests and motivation over time in creative ways. Engagement can be displayed through a variety of methods such as behavioral, emotional, cognitive and vocational.

**Youth Voice:** Refers to the singular perspective of youth participants in designing, implementing, and operating programs with an intentional and structured policy and practice to include that perspective in decision making.

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**Out-of-School Time Research, Publication and other Resources:**

Afterschool Alliance [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/)

American Youth Policy Forum <http://www.aypf.org/programareas/afterschoolexpanded-learning>

Arkansas Out of School Network [www.aosn.org](http://www.aosn.org/)

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation [http://www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org/)

Child Trends [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org/)

Harvard Family Research Project  [http://www.hfrp.org](http://www.hfrp.org/)

Indiana Afterschool Network [http://www.indianaafterschool.org](http://www.indianaafterschool.org/)

National Afterschool Association [www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org/)

National Centers on Time and Learning [www.timeandlearning.org](http://www.timeandlearning.org/)

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network [www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/)

National Institute on Out-of-School Time [www.niost.org](http://www.niost.org/)

National School Lunch Program<http://www.fns.usda.gov/slp>

National Summer Learning Association [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org/)

Mott Afterschool Network  [http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net](http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/)

Out-of-School Time Resource Center[KHK14] <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/ostrc/doclibrary/pma/html>

The Afterschool Corporation [www.tascorp.org](http://www.tascorp.org/)

The Wallace Foundation [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/)

**Engaged Learning**

Council of Chief State School Officers [http://www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org/)

Iowa State University Extension & Outreach<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/explore/lifeskills>

Noyce Foundation [http://www.noycefdn.org](http://www.noycefdn.org/)

**Professional Development Resources & Opportunities**

ASU Division of Childcare Services [www.state.ar.us/childcare](http://www.state.ar.us/childcare)

Better Beginnings [http://www.arbetterbeginnings.com](http://www.arbetterbeginnings.com/)

Council on Accreditation (Standards Afterschool) [http://www.coaafterschool.org](http://www.coaafterschool.org/)

Traveling Arkansas’ Professional Pathways (TAPP) registry  <http://professionalregistry.astate.edu/registry.asp>

Youth Development Institute [www.aosn.org](http://www.aosn.org/)

**Sustainability Planning**

21st Century Community Learning Centers [www.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html)

Finance Project [www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org/)

The Wallace Foundation [www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality)

**Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art & Math (STREAM)**

National Endowment for the Arts

The 4H Council Foundation, Inc.<http://www.4-h.org/youthstem/> ,[KHK17]

North Dakota Science Teachers [http://www.ndsta.k12.nd.us](http://www.ndsta.k12.nd.us/)

Noyce Foundation<http://www.noycefdn.org/informalScience.php>

Michigan State University<https://www.msu.edu/~herrer48/portfolio/sparks.html>[KHK18] ,

<http://sparks.wiki.educ.msu.edu/>

**THE ARKANSAS OUT OF SCHOOL NETWORK**

The Arkansas out of School Network (AOSN) is an organized initiative that serves as a vehicle for bringing together policymakers, educators, childcare providers, youth development workers, program developers, advocates, parents and others interested in improving outcomes for children and youth through school-based/school-linked afterschool programs. AOSN provides a means to encourage local and state policymakers to invest additional resources wisely to expand quality afterschool opportunities to address particular needs to improve quality and sustainability. The Network also provides a means for joint planning, sharing of resources and best practices, building bridges to and between federal, state, and local afterschool initiatives and forging partnerships necessary for comprehensive statewide afterschool policies. AOSN is committed to creating safe, healthy, and enriching experiences for Arkansas youth during out of school times by helping to strengthen, expand and sustain Arkansas’s school-based and school=linked services to children and youth, ages 5-19, during out of school time.

To learn more about AOSN visit [www.aosn.org](http://www.aosn.org/).



**Partner Information:**

ASU/Childhood Services                      Arkansas Department of Education

1-870-972-3055                                  1-501-683-4497

1-888-429-1585                                  1-501-682-4475

[http://chs.astate.edu](http://chs.astate.edu/)                          [http://arkansased.org](http://arkansased.org/)

Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

1-501-682-9699

1-800-445-3316

<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare>

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| The Arkansas Standards for Out-of-School Time Program Quality are dedicated to the frontline staff, administrators and intermediaries who advance the afterschool profession while keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn and helping their working families. |