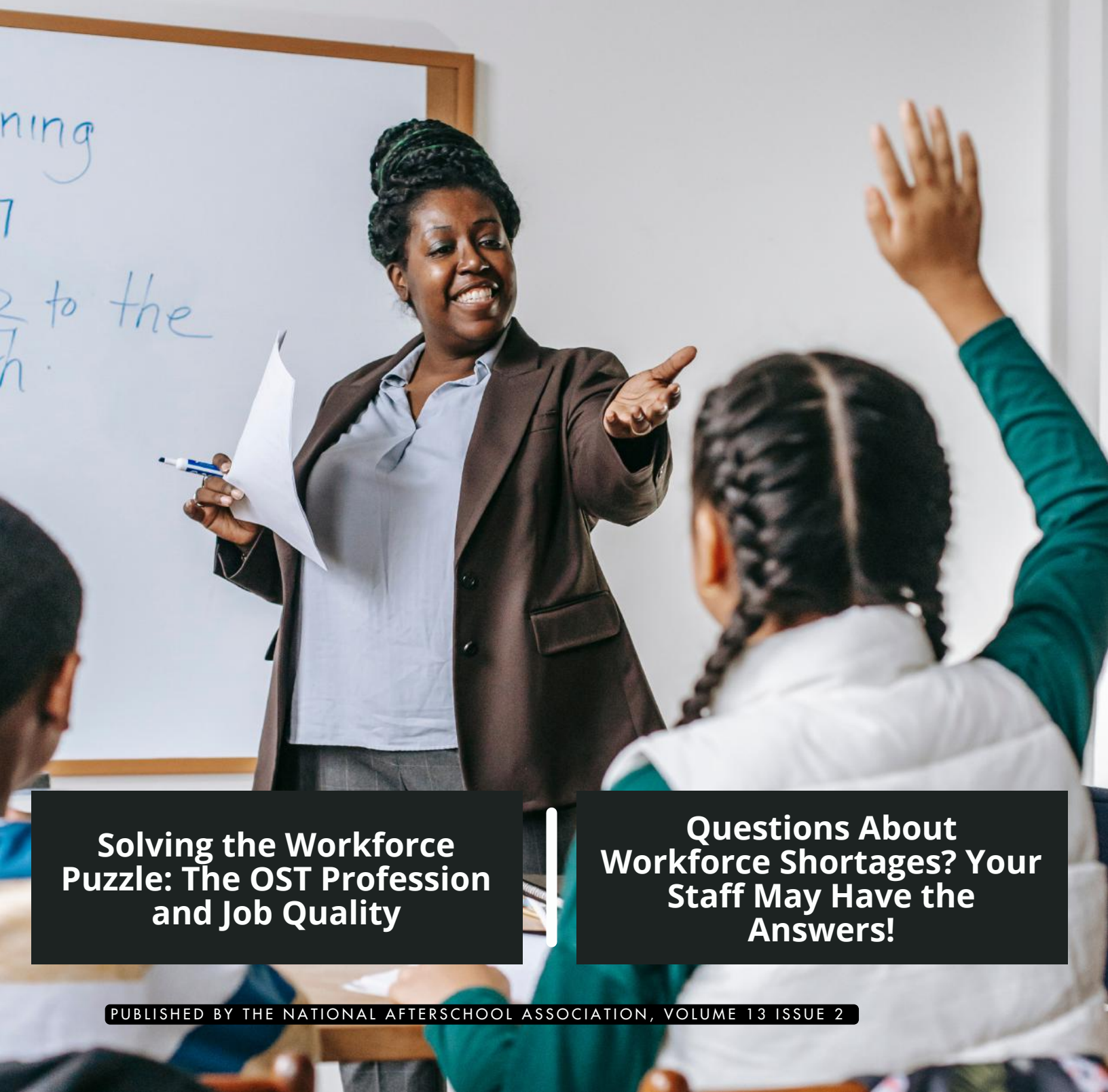


AfterSchool

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Today



**Solving the Workforce
Puzzle: The OST Profession
and Job Quality**

**Questions About
Workforce Shortages? Your
Staff May Have the
Answers!**

LOOKING TO DESIGN BETTER, BIGGER, MORE EQUITABLE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS?



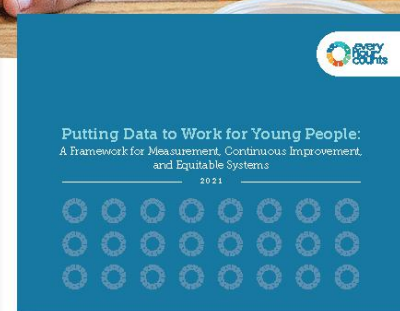
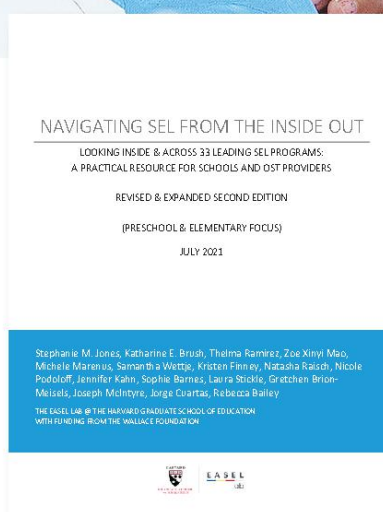
THESE FREE RESOURCES CAN HELP.

Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out

Update to popular guide on social & emotional learning programs offers new information on 33 programs for practitioners both in and out of school.

Putting Data to Work for Young People: A Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement, and Equitable Systems

This tool and guidebook can help people assess afterschool systems, the programs within them and youth outcomes—in the interest of informing system improvements.



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Today

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HEIDI HAM

Chief Operating Officer
National AfterSchool Association

In my 25-year OST career, I've often heard that our field needs professionalizing. I view all who work in OST as professionals, so I'm curious about what people mean when they comment about professionalization. I have spent hours searching for answers.

What have I learned? I've learned that caregiving workforces—such as early childhood education, elementary teaching, and OST—are composed of women, including a high percentage of women of color. These workforces have always struggled for professional recognition. I've learned that many definitions of professionalization require higher levels of education but don't include lived experience. Ultimately I've learned that being identified as a “profession” is a social construct with vague definitions that reinforce racism, sexism, and classism.

So now, instead of asking what makes a profession, we are asking different questions. Do we reject the social construct that's a moving target, define our identity and value, and advocate from that position? Or do we continue to expect our workforce to jump through hoops trying to put arrows in the elusive bullseye of a profession defined by others?

If we did the latter, would it even matter? To build on the metaphor, if we continue our current approach, will change come, or will we end up with empty quivers and broken arrows at the feet of the people who hold the most power?

Our answer? As the professional membership organization for our field, NAA's role is to define the components of our identity as a knowledgeable and skilled workforce providing essential services and opportunities.

AND

Promoting workforce advocacy. This approach is a shift, but not impossible if we work together. This issue of AfterSchool Today highlights current field efforts showing progress and promising practices in building a future that values OST and provides professionals with job quality commensurate with their contributions and impact.

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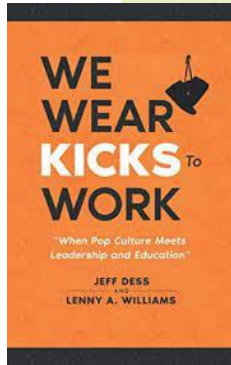


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WHAT AFTERSCHOOL IS READING

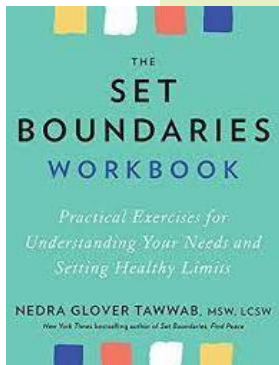


WE WEAR KICKS TO WORK: WHEN POP CULTURE MEETS LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION

By Jeff Dess and Lenny A. Williams

Connections with others have never been more important. *We Wear Kicks to Work* shares nontraditional ways of creating opportunities for impactful relationships in school, work, and life. The book invites the reader to consider the new culturally responsive norms we create as educators and leaders in our settings to spark change. By considering real transformation in antiquated systems in schools and out-of-school time spaces, reversing the loudest voices in the room, and learning what it means to be true leaders, we can empower our youth and colleagues. Building on interests and strengths makes experiences much more meaningful. Reading *We Wear Kicks to Work* moved me to use current cultural references and ideas to connect differently with those who hold our future in their hands in their Jordans.

Reviewed by: Katie Jacob, Director of Communications, PRIME TIME PALM BEACH COUNTY



THE SET BOUNDARIES WORKBOOK: PRACTICAL EXERCISE FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEEDS AND SETTING HEALTHY LIMITS

By Nedra Glover Tawwab

This book is titled a “workbook” for a reason! It truly is a collection of practical exercises for understanding your needs and setting healthy boundaries, with plenty of instructions given along the way and an ample knowledge base to give the reader a proper understanding of the concepts. The author does a great job of setting the stage by starting the book with guidelines in which she outlines some very specific suggestions on how to go about reading the book. As a result, I felt I had the necessary tools to get the most out of it. It covers all aspects of boundaries and is an exceptionally comprehensive and in-depth workbook that will get you to understand boundaries, create them and truly implement them!

Reviewed by: Joanna Dominguez, MA

WHAT AFTERSCHOOL IS READING



DESIGN FOR BELONGING: HOW TO BUILD INCLUSION AND COLLABORATION IN YOUR COMMUNITIES

By Susie Wise

With today's pandemics, tragedies, and hybrid working, people feel alone and isolated. Creating places of safety and belonging is more important than ever. Design for Belonging guides increased collaboration and inclusion in various spaces. The book shares exercises, frameworks, scripts, and examples highlighting the powerful synergy of togetherness. Through a roadmap for inclusivity and belonging, the author challenges readers to act, choosing to design for belonging and create sustainable change. Additional resources and bibliography sections invite people to dig deeper, making Designing for Belonging an excellent resource for any afterschool leader.

Reviewed by: Denise M. Joseph, Management Program Analyst with the U.S. Department of Education and Founder and Executive Director of YouthPowerment, Inc



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PAY TO STAY: AN INITIATIVE OF THE MADISON-AREA OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME NETWORK

The youth development workforce crisis is bubbling to unsustainable levels, and the workforce is finally at the forefront of conversations. As systems-builders and organizational leaders, it is exciting to imagine large-scale solutions to workforce issues. Sometimes it seems impossibly daunting, but when you talk directly to youth workers, the problem (and answer) is apparent.



Madison-area Out-of-School Time (MOST), an intermediary based in Madison, Wisconsin, is an unprecedented collaboration between the City of Madison, Dane County, Madison Metropolitan School District, and over 45 Madison-area youth-serving organizations. In 2021, MOST committed to listening to voices in the field and increasing youth worker retention.

When asked directly, Madison youth workers stressed the importance of compensation, work environment, and supervision quality, aligning with the NAA Job Quality Design Framework. Survey results indicated that along with the ability to make an impact and good people and culture, higher wages and benefits would keep youth workers in their positions and in the field longer. The primary problem impacting retention in the OST workforce according to youth workers? Low compensation.



For twelve months, MOST experimented with providing 129 direct service workers cash assistance of between \$100 and \$3,000 through

- The MOST Outstanding Youth Worker Awards
- Professional Development Participation Stipends (in addition to paid training time)
- Subject Matter Expert Contracts
- End-of-the-Year Bonuses

Throughout the experiment, MOST collected data about the impact of additional compensation on youth worker retention. Not surprisingly, more significant stipends led to better outcomes, but even the lower dollar amounts made people feel seen and valued. Of the youth workers who received cash awards, 93% felt more valued, and 68% said they were more likely to stay. And they did! Six to twelve months later, 82-88% remained in their positions. The data also indicated that 89% of those who received additional compensation wanted to stay in the profession

One year, 129 youth workers, and nearly \$50,000 later, MOST learned that with additional compensation:

1. People feel more valued and seen.
2. People say they are more likely to stay in their positions.
3. People remain in their jobs longer.

The experiment's data directly opposes prominent field myths and mindsets. It shows that youth workers do not have to be a temporary workforce. Almost nobody--only 11%--wants to leave, but people can't afford to live on current levels of compensation. This engaged workforce wants to stay; we must find ways to pay them what they're worth.

We owe it to the field to focus on a solution for the workforce crisis; in this case, the data is clear. If you're a funder or organization that wants to test this theory, give youth workers more money and see what happens.



Contributed by Nathan Beck, Madison-area Out-of-School Time Coordinator

MORE THAN A PAYCHECK - CALIFORNIA TEACHING FELLOWS FOUNDATION PRIORITIZES AFTERSCHOOL STAFF WELL-BEING

In the destructive wake of COVID-19, we have all experienced waves of loss, instability, fear, and uncertainty. From students to teachers and parents to afterschool providers, it is impossible to count the cost of the emotional toll of the pandemic. The devastating impact of the pandemic illuminated the challenges the California Teaching Fellows Foundation (CTFF) afterschool staff (Teaching Fellows) face daily, including access to critical mental health and support services.

Fortunately, CTFF already had the Dream Initiative program in place. The Dream Initiative offers support services to meet the moment. CTFF's philosophy has always been if our Teaching Fellows are expected to provide social-emotional role modeling for the students they serve, this should also be offered to our Teaching Fellows. It's quite simple. Our Teaching Fellows are MENTORS.

CTFF's CEO, Mike Snell, began to dream of how to support Teaching Fellow tutors in 2016 with more than professional development. After reading the book *The Dream Manager* by Matthew Kelly, he knew that Teaching Fellows have stories and struggles that keep them from succeeding in school, work, and life. A subsequent survey of all 1,000 employees at the time fortified his hunch—they needed financial, academic, career, and social-emotional support. With that input, he invested in designing a personal development solution called The Dream Initiative.

At the heart of the Dream Initiative are Life Coaches, who elevate the support services by identifying the current staff needs, which helps inform what resources are needed. Self-development is a valuable investment, so by investing in the Teaching Fellows who serve afterschool programs through one-on-one (1:1) coaching, CTFF opens the door for positive growth as a Foundation. When Teaching Fellows are linked to a Life Coach, they are provided with tools to discover



"I gained a genuine person who gave me much comfort, encouragement, and direction. I feel much more mature, motivated, and inspired now because [My Coach] is very honest and caring. I also gained direction and now know what to do in certain situations."
- Teaching Fellow who participated in life coaching

"This program has opened the doors to new opportunities that at one point seemed impossible. I now feel confident that I will be the first in my family to graduate from a 4-year college." - First-generation college student Amelia Medrano.



their why, learn how to visualize and identify SMART goals, connected to support resources, linked with a mentor in their dream career field, and actively practice prioritization techniques to understand self-improvement better so they can go from surviving to thriving. With each investment, Teaching Fellows improve their skills, relationships, and confidence. Our goal is to help next-generation leaders achieve their goals with a greater sense of well-being.

To take services to the next level, the inaugural First-Generation College Student Leadership Program was launched in 2022. This program is designed to meet the unique needs of Teaching Fellows who identify as first-generation college students. Life coaching is integrated into this program. To learn more about this program, [click here](#).

Through the initial survey, Teaching Fellows expressed financial and transportation hardship. Another component of the Dream Initiative is the Care Fund. For Teaching Fellows struggling with the challenges of daily living and, at times, in more serious circumstances, the Care Fund allows them the opportunity to apply for support. This support could come in the form of supplies, monetary/gift cards, clothing, etc., provided to those who express their needs by applying. Funding for this program is made possible through generous donations in the community. To learn more about the stories of impact through this program, check out the annual [Care Fund Newsletter](#).

The Dream Initiative is designed to help Teaching Fellows believe and achieve their goals while making a difference in the world. Through free services and resources, the Dream Initiative enhances each individual's potential. Whether in a crisis like a pandemic or amid life's stressors, this program lets employees know that they are unique, they are not alone, and there are people with resources to help!

About California Teaching Fellows Foundation (CTFF): CTFF employs nearly 2,000 college students and community members in six counties to serve more than 30,000 K-12 students with supplemental classroom, afterschool, and summer program instruction, tutoring, and mentorship. Teaching Fellows live and serve in rural and urban communities in the heart of California's Central San Joaquin Valley and are mostly first-generation college students.



*Contributed by: Haylie Taylor,
Learning & Development
Coordinator, California Teaching
Fellows Foundation*



*Contributed by: Malia Villarreal,
Public & Strategic Development
Manager at California Teaching
Fellows Foundation*

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YP PERSPECTIVE ON JOB QUALITY

Young professionals (YPs) are the future of the OST workforce, so it's even more critical that the profession provides them with high job quality. Angelica Portillo, NAA's Director of Advocacy and Workforce Initiatives, recently interviewed two past Next Generation of AfterSchool Leaders honorees about job quality. Here is what they said:

Can you share some job quality examples from your own career? Have there been job positions that were missing components that made you leave? On the flip side, are there issues related to job quality that contributed to your success?

The two that stand out to me are the lack of a strong sense of opportunity and voice in my first role. I was able to build opportunities for myself outside of my organization through that role. Still, within the organization, I did not feel an interest or path for career development or advancing skills, nor much by way of financial incentive or leveling that I could attain. It was also my experience that my voice was not valued as I hoped it would be to help inform improvement efforts. I think both of these elements contributed to my interest in moving on.

I feel fortunate that throughout my past nine years at IAN, I can say that I see an investment in some way that reflects all of the pillars in the Job Design Framework. These haven't all happened consistently over time. Still, I know that my career success and stability is in part owed to an organization that has invested in me as a professional and has worked to improve elements of job quality for its employees. I feel empowered and invested in. If I had to call out one specific area, I think I'd call out opportunity. I've been fortunate in my current organization to have leaders who highly invest in developing the professionals they employ.

-Bri Gaston-Bell





How can seasoned OST leaders support the advancement of young professionals in their careers?

One of my favorite quotes is from John Maxwell, “Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flowcharts. Is it about one life influencing another.” Leadership is complicated. It can be extremely beneficial or detrimental if not intentionally driven and handled with care. The OST field is still growing and constantly changing as we live in unforeseen times. As a young professional (YP) in this field, I have learned that approach means everything. Support from OST leaders gives a YP an advantage professionally and personally. First, being validated by someone you look up to and depend on is a great feeling and a confidence booster. Also, developing additional skills from OST leaders will advance your career in ways that can not always be achieved as a fresh face. When supporting YPs, it’s important that leaders are intentional, uplifting, and encouraging. These small gestures or gems eventually add up to something bigger. Taking what is already set in stone and works and adding new ideas or perspectives will enhance the field and help it flourish tremendously.

-Mariah Steele

In the song “Take a Chance on Me” by ABBA, there’s a consistent rhythm of background vocals singing, “take a chance, take a chance.” I feel that beat in my heart whenever I have an idea or an opinion. Part of being young is the fear that you don’t know enough to say what you think or that your ideas are insignificant. That is why providing professional spaces that are relaxed enough to allow for open thought and responsive enough to act on shared ideas is so important. In neutral spaces, where power dynamics are diluted, there is more freedom for learning and understanding. And fun! Entering the professional world can be intimidating, so having fun once in a while doesn’t hurt. As a young professional, I need safe spaces to grow and think, a strong support system, and a community that will share in my joy. It’s not a one-time thing; it’s about ongoing relationships with people who will take a chance on me.

-Hannah Howard



ISSUE

INFLUENCING STAKEHOLDERS TO INCREASE OST JOB QUALITY

In partnership with State Affiliates, the National AfterSchool Association has fostered positive youth outcomes by supporting, developing, and advocating for OST professionals and leaders for over thirty years. Staff recruitment and retention challenges remain the most significant barrier in the Out-of-School Time field. It is time for a comprehensive overhaul of job quality. Guaranteeing job quality creates workforce stability, allowing OST professionals to deliver high-quality programs that ultimately lead to positive youth outcomes.

While we work on policies and funding to increase program access for kids, and as we fight for equity for young people and communities, we must ensure that people in the OST profession have the job quality necessary for this essential work.

First, engage all stakeholders in understanding the elements of job quality and its impact on the workforce. Beyond that, here are specific suggestions for actions key stakeholders can take to support job quality:

Grantmakers

- Educate current and potential grantees about job quality
- Incentivize job quality by awarding grants to programs that demonstrate efforts to address job quality
- Provide financial rewards for organizations and programs that show progress in increasing job quality for their employees
- Implement strategies to increase the flexible use of grant funds or designate a percentage of funding for staff wages and other job quality elements

State Education Agencies

- Provide job quality training for current and potential grantees.
- Conduct an equitable pay analysis to understand the needs and impacts of job quality
- Adjust the amounts awarded to publicly funded afterschool programs. Increase the per-student rate, giving programs additional funding to recruit staff and increase wages.
- Write job quality into funding requirements.
- Incentivize job quality by awarding grants to programs that demonstrate efforts to address job quality
- Implement strategies to increase the flexible use of grant funds for staff wages and other job quality elements
- Require job quality reporting and reflections as part of program evaluations.



- Adopt NAA's Core Knowledge Skills and Competencies to ensure compensation commensurate with experience, expertise, and/or skill achievement and professional recognition

State Child Care Agencies

- Provide job quality training for current and potential grantees
- Incentivize job quality by providing additional funding for staff wages and other job quality
- Include elements of job quality in program licensing standards.
- Evaluate childcare reimbursement rates to determine their role in preventing wage increases and address them accordingly.
- Recognize NAA's Core Knowledge Skills and Competencies as the framework for a broad-scale system that provides access to competency-based OST training and education.

State and Local Elected Officials

- Understand the impact of program quality and the relationship between skilled staff and youth outcomes
- Conduct an equitable pay analysis to understand the needs and impacts of job quality
- Implement strategies to increase the use of program funds for staff wages and other elements of job quality
- Celebrate OST professionals, recognizing their value and contributions. Declare the last whole week in April, Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week.

The list above is just the beginning. Many of the strategies are universal and applicable in discussions with other stakeholders, such as:

- Organizational Leadership and Boards
- Chambers of Commerce and Business Leaders
- Education Associations
- 21CCLC Administrators
- Workforce Development Commissions and Related Groups

Achieving job quality will take rethinking compensation, making benefits more accessible, and creating clear opportunities for advancement. The afterschool and youth development sector can be a leader in bringing equity to hiring and workplace practices. Expanding the number of good jobs in our field - and improving the quality of many existing ones - must be a central goal of our work to support positive outcomes for young people and equitable opportunities for all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOB QUALITY AND WHY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FUNDERS SHOULD SUPPORT IT



There are nearly twice as many job openings as unemployed people in the US, but 53M workers have trouble making ends meet. Women, young people, and workers of color dominate the lowest-paying sectors. We don't have a shortage of jobs; we have a shortage of good jobs that provide basic stability and pathways to economic mobility.

As we rebuild from the pandemic, public and private funders can address this crisis and transform our economy. Together, we can align cross-sector leaders behind a shared definition of good jobs, a shared understanding of how good jobs support working people, business resilience, and a healthy economy. We can invest in better job quality data that sheds light on worker experience because we can't fix what we don't measure. And we can take bold steps to build good jobs and equity standards into grants, contracts, and incentives, to create and support millions of jobs that sustain and uplift working people and their families.



Contributed by: Jenny Weissbound, The Families and Workers Fund

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PROFILE

REJUVENATION AND CELEBRATION OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FIELD LEADERS OF COLOR

Too few leaders prioritize creating ways to restore, rest, and celebrate. In a sector intensely focused on the well-being of others and bound by a scarcity mindset, it is hard for us to invest time or money in ourselves. However, investment is critical to ongoing work supporting thriving communities. Especially since the past several years navigating COVID-19 and racial reckoning has been particularly exhausting, overwhelming, and heartbreaking for leaders of color.

In 2020, Youth Development Executives of King County's (YDEKC) team read Transformational Capacity Building, a report by leaders affiliated with Ranier Valley Corps. One strategy for nonprofits of color called out to us: "Invest in the inner well-being and growth of leaders." YDEKC, as a coalition committed to building the capacity of King County's youth development field, challenged ourselves to be more intentional about centering well-being in our programs and supporting member organizations to do the same, especially for staff of color. And from there, the Thriving Leaders of Color Fund was born.

The Fund aimed to distribute \$100,000 in one-time investments for projects supporting members to "advance, rejuvenate, and celebrate leaders of color." We knew this funding that organizations could use in responsive ways to support folks of color within youth-serving nonprofits was unusual. Thirty-nine organizations submitted applications requesting \$556,011 in funds, illustrating the value and the critical need for activities supporting our field's people of color.



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The proposals received were affirming, and the creative ways organizations sought to uplift leaders of color were inspiring! The decision-making for awardees was challenging, but with clear criteria and a volunteer group of leaders of color from our staff and membership, we were excited to award grants to seven organizations. You can learn more about their projects here.

Through this process, we learned the following:

1. By centering leaders of color as decision-makers in the grant-making process, we aligned our Fund operations with the grant goals. Review Committee members saw their participation as a growth opportunity to become more familiar with grantmaking processes and proposals. Committee members found the project ideas described in the proposals inspiring and energizing.
2. Our original draft design proposed funding organizations led by people of color with a focus on support for Executive Directors. Our members encouraged us to revise our definition of “leader” to support people of color leading at different organizational levels. They advised us to expand our reach to all youth-serving nonprofits, emphasizing that people of color working within white-led organizations also benefit from projects supporting their advancement, rejuvenation, and celebration.

With organizations including the BIPOC ED Coalition of Washington State leading the way, we hope our collective efforts inspire others to intentionally invest in leaders of color for the wellness and development of individuals who are passionate about youth development and the health and sustainability of our organizations. This article draws from publications found at www.ydekc.org.



*Contributed by Anne Arias, Director of Programs and Partnerships,
Youth Development Executives of King County*

QUESTIONS ABOUT WORKFORCE SHORTAGES? YOUR STAFF MAY HAVE THE ANSWERS!

Workforce shortages continue to change the landscape of the youth development field. Out-of-school time teams may not only struggle to maintain their staff-to-youth ratios sustainably, but they may also find that staff shortages may impact program quality and enrollment. We understand the problem, but who has the answers?

One might turn to peers or human resources professionals when seeking these answers. While this is a great start, consulting with other experts - including current staff - is very informative.

In 2022, the San Francisco Beacon Initiative's (SFBI) network faced unprecedented recruitment and retention challenges. When tasked with addressing these challenges, SFBI's workforce development team knew that to find out more about job quality, the sustainability of the field, and possible solutions to our network's recruitment and retention challenges, we needed to go straight to the source: our direct service staff.





Through surveys distributed in May 2022, we found:

- 64% of our staff are in the transitional aged youth (TAY, ages 18-24) group
- 69% of our team have been in their role for a year or less
- 33% of our team are former program participants

We also asked the following questions to understand our network's needs better:

- What do staff look for in their workplace?
- What keeps them working at their Beacon sites?
- Why do their colleagues leave the youth work field?

Through focus groups, we found that staff:

- Seek room to grow and clear pathways to the next step in their career
- Stay at their current site because of the family-like atmosphere and team culture of loyalty and transparency
- Believe their colleagues leave their roles for better-paying opportunities outside the field

We concluded that the staff value a sense of community and want to connect more deeply with their organization. They consider pay, trust, transparent communication, and a professional investment equally important when considering a future career at their site and in the youth work field. With this knowledge, our team seeks additional funding for recruitment and retention, including hourly pay rates, merit increases, and referral bonuses. In addition, professional development and technical assistance resources, providing specific training pathways for new staff and staff who have expressed interest in preparing for the next step in their career, are now more of a priority.

As we continue to work toward the sustainability of the youth development workforce, we must remember to not only value staff for their service to young people, but also include their voices in decisions that affect their longevity in the field. No one person has the answers to creating a thriving workforce. All of us—including direct service staff—can work toward solutions to ensure a viable future for our profession.



Contributed by: AJ Frigiliana, 2019 Next Gen Honoree, Workforce Development Manager with the San Francisco Beacon Initiative

Community partners can play an essential role in supporting district-led programs and in many places are well-integrated with the district and its systems of support for summer learning.

*Supporting Quality in Summer Learning:
How Districts Plan, Develop, and Implement Programs*

Wallace 

NEWS YOU CAN USE

SUPPORTING QUALITY IN SUMMER LEARNING: HOW DISTRICTS PLAN, DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS

Research tells us that school district-led summer learning programs can play a vital role in supporting students academically and providing them with enriching activities they may not otherwise experience. But how do they do it? *Supporting Quality in Summer Learning: How Districts Plan, Develop and Implement Programs*, a new Wallace-sponsored report by the Education Development Center, sheds light on the complex array of policies, procedures, and resources that go into the design and operation of these programs. The report explores topics such as program focus and goals, community partnerships, professional development, family engagement, and funding streams.

Strong district-community partnerships can support successful programs, the researchers conclude, but they emphasize that districts often find it difficult to form mutually beneficial relationships and communicate effectively with community-based organizations. The authors suggest that states could use federal COVID aid to bolster these partnerships and invest in other areas of need, including transportation and staffing.

The authors reached their conclusions by drawing on existing evidence and the perspectives of 92 policymakers and professionals—including district representatives and community partners; staff from 21st Century Community Learning Center state offices; and other state-level stakeholders, including state afterschool networks, involved in the design, implementation, and funding of district-led summer learning programs. The authors say that future research could benefit the field by further exploring the dynamics between districts and community-based organizations; priorities for professional development; and evidence-based approaches to engaging parents and families, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, who often face language and cultural barriers to enrolling their children in summer programs.



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TAKE THE POWER OF US SURVEY!

Millions of staff and volunteers work with young people every day in the many settings where youth play, learn, and grow outside of the school day. Yet, we have little collective information about this essential workforce. We want to know more about those who are still in the youth development fields and those who left so that we can explore, define, and elevate this collective workforce and their work with youth. Youth-serving staff and volunteers are invited to take the Power of Us Workforce Survey. This first-of-its-kind study seeks to know and understand more about the experiences of and pathways into the youth development workforce. The data from the survey can help to inform policy, practice, and further research to better support the workforce. We also invite individuals to be part of the Power of Us campaign. In sharing your story with the campaign, you can help others SEE themselves as part of the workforce and understand why they, too, should take the survey. Learn more at: <http://powerofusurvey.org>



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ADVOCATING FOR THE AFTERSCHOOL WORKFORCE IN ILLINOIS

The afterschool workforce in Illinois, and across the nation, is facing an unprecedented staffing crisis. ACT Now's Crisis in Afterschool Workforce Event gathered panelists for an engaging conversation on how to address this issue.

To kick things off, ACT Now shared results from the OST field survey, which gathered responses from over 120 program administrators, site coordinators, school administrators, and frontline workers. Survey results pointed to more than 60% of respondents earning a salary below \$45,000, with almost 70% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Fifty percent (50%) of individuals indicated that they have to supplement their income, having few pathways for mobility within their job.

With factors such as compensation and burnout, providers are leaving the workforce at an alarming scale. The pandemic has undoubtedly made these jobs harder due to mental health issues, family health concerns, exposure to illness, job loss, and burnout. Teresa Dothard-Campbell, program director for Lights ON for Afterschool at East Moline School District 37, shared an African proverb that states, "a child that is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth." Dothard-Campbell added that this is where "we're at in the OST community." This is the tipping point for the OST field, but where do we go from here?



**In reflecting on the
recommendations shared,
State Senator Cristina
Pacione-Zayas [D-20] shared,
"What I'm hearing is the need
to be able to embed
professional learning and
development for individuals,
provide tuition incentive and
reimbursement, and mental
and behavioral health
interventions for the
workers."**



During the event, ACT Now shared recommendations to better support staff, including

- more advanced communication about grant competitions and continuations for programs to reassure staff about sustainability,
- increased funding for greater compensation, salary guidelines in Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) to ensure liveable wages,
- requiring plans to address staff mental health needs in grant awards,
- training on how to create a culture of support in programs,
- increased investment in the future employment pipeline for afterschool, and
- loan repayment and tuition support for the afterschool workforce.

Panelists shared their recommendations for moving the OST field and workforce forward:

- Jeffrey Aranowski, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and Dana Kelly, Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), talked about the importance of partnership and leveraging existing funding opportunities to support youth and communities across the state.
- Michael Holmes, from Black Community Provider Network (BCPN), shared the importance of ensuring that programs are based in the community and reflective of the identities and needs of youth. Holmes elevated how crucial it is for youth to know their own power and voice.

Now, it is up to ACT Now and its members to continue to work alongside state legislators and agencies to provide substantive change and support for afterschool professionals in Illinois. Together, ACT Now aims to ensure that the state pours into those the OST community and others who provide comprehensive wraparound services to youth so this is not a continued conversation five-to-ten years down the line.

Panel Questions

For Teresa, Maricela, and Michael:

How has the **pandemic changed the workforce**? What challenges do you see now?



Panel Questions

For Senator Pacione-Zayas, DHS, and ISBE:

In reflecting on the recommendations we shared, what is **one promising practice** that **policy makers or programs can follow** moving forward?



Contributed by: Jasmin Flores (she/her), ACT Now Policy and Communications Intern, and Emma Spencer (she/her), Policy and Communications Manager at ACT Now

SCALING UP THE AFTERSCHOOL WORKFORCE, ONE LEADER AT A TIME

Every afternoon and all day during the summer, enriching programs are operating across our cities and towns, in rural areas and in urban, providing youth with new opportunities, hands-on, engaged learning, and a safe place to be while their caregivers work. Who keeps all these programs running? The out-of-school-time workforce is 850,000 members strong. When people think of educators, they do not always think of afterschool and summer educators. Yet, individuals dedicate themselves to this valuable career path because they realize the importance of these summer and afterschool hours in the development of our youth.

In South Carolina, at the Riley Institute at Furman University, we've had the great honor of receiving ESSER funds to develop a ten-month, intensive, and unique leadership program for afterschool and summer learning professionals. Called South Carolina Afterschool Leaders Empowered, or SCALE, the program is designed to help directors enhance and improve their leadership abilities so that they can return to their home sites with new skills, tools, and competencies to improve program quality and access. To develop the curriculum and facilitate the work, the Riley Institute is partnering with the Smarter Learning Group, a leader in out-of-school time advocacy and programming.



Twenty leaders were accepted into the inaugural year of the program, which began in February. The curriculum began with a one-week in-person experience on Furman's campus that covered growing as leaders, deepening relationships to impact change, strengthening communication and funding efforts, and building capacity for high-quality practices. Following the in-person convening, fellows returned home and began implementing a capstone project focused on quality, capacity, and sustainability.

In July, seven months into their fellowship, the cohort traveled to Maryland for its first-ever SCALE learning journey. On this hands-on trip, they observed summer programs implementing best practices, experienced the benefits of arts integration, learned about partnership development, explored assessment methods, and examined intentional hiring and training practices.

Throughout the SCALE fellowship, we learned from our fellows just how hard staffing has been and therefore dedicated a good bit of time exploring hiring practices and staff development. High-quality programming will bring more students in and keep them there, but sites will still struggle to provide the best services if they don't have well-developed staff. While on the learning journey, fellows were inspired by seeing how programs had attracted and retained staff in the face of nationwide shortages and other pandemic-related challenges. In fact, 80 percent of SCALE Fellows are incorporating new professional development strategies, staff voice and choice, and standardized operating processes into their work because of the fellowship.

In terms of practical strategies for enhancing the afterschool workforce, SCALE fellows are tapping into some of the same tools that make a positive difference in our students. The SCALE fellows have created interview questions to establish the value of this work from the very first contact and to dig into applicants' skills and motivations. Our leaders are amplifying their staff members' voices with self-assessments and feedback tools. They are creating shared value systems through activities that discover staff "sparks" and remind them of their "why." Several fellows have implemented multi-day professional development events, regular team meetings with creative challenges to try new techniques, and even weekly newsletters filled with tips directly related to self-assessment topics. Regardless of the tool, the fellows have begun to think intentionally about staffing, even if that means deferring hiring until the "right" candidate comes along. They are finding that their staff are more engaged and satisfied when they have a voice and understand the value of their contributions.

Big picture, it's critical to think of the afterschool and summer workforce as an official career pathway and to treat it as a field of work. Through opportunities for growth and development, we can professionalize our field in new ways. SCALE is a testament to that. It's critical that we "SCALE up" our leaders so that they, in turn, will lift up their teams.



Contributed by: Cathy Stevens, Director of Afterschool and Summer Learning Initiatives, and Amy Keely, Director of South Carolina Afterschool Leaders Empowered (SCALE) at the Riley Institute at Furman University.



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ONE LEADER'S CAREER PATH

I currently serve as Vice President of Engagement for Indiana Afterschool Network (IAN)

My career path unintentionally and incrementally transitioned me into the OST world. When public policy issues facing the education sector presented an environment in which I felt I was unlikely to thrive, I shifted my undergrad focus from Secondary Education to pursuing law school so I could influence policy-shaping legislation. After accepting a position with the U.S. Senate, that pursuit was put on hold. Though hoping to get a little bit of congressional experience, then pursue law school, I stayed with the Senate for an amazing seven-year ride. It allowed me to understand my state's issues better and connect with diverse people. While learning about OST-related issues, I directed a statewide summit for high school students committed to community service, transitioning the program to youth-developed and -run and realizing our greatest increase in participants' racial and ethnic diversity.

Immediately after the Senate, I accepted a position with my local mayor's office. Again, I was allowed to better understand the issues facing the residents I served. While learning about my city's diverse OST sector, I helped found a countywide youth summit for middle school students to help them develop and leverage their voices to affect public policy. I eventually represented the administration on a communitywide task force facilitated by our local YMCA.

My first lived experience within the field came when our YMCA joined other Indiana Ys to form the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs, for whom I served as its first staff. The OST sector was critical to our work of reducing childhood obesity through changes to policies, systems, and environments, so the role connected me to IAN. Loving IAN's work and perceiving alignment with my YMCA role, I eventually served on its board of directors. In the meantime, I transitioned to serving an evolving YMCA Alliance as its VP of Public Policy & Alliance Initiatives and directing its Youth and Government program. While my YMCA



experience helped me understand the OST sector's efforts to strive for quality programs and increased investment in youth development professionals, my IAN affiliation helped me understand quality standards and avenues for investment in our professionals.

When I was ready for a new challenge facing a broader audience, IAN was asking itself how it could better facilitate reciprocal engagement with Indiana's OST field. Its answer led to the establishment of an Engagement Team. With a career's worth of engagement experience, insights into the OST field, and an understanding of how engagement efforts could be leveraged for proactive grassroots and collective advocacy, I decided to throw my hat into the ring to lead that team.

Job quality has been a consistent guardrail in my OST career journey. Midway through my career, I decided any position I accepted would allow me to marry my passions with my vocation while not taking my presence from my family. With these guides, I have been afforded incredible opportunities. I look forward to seeing where they take me.



Contributed by: Brent Wake, Vice President of Engagement, Indiana Afterschool Network

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SOLVING THE WORKFORCE PUZZLE: THE OST PROFESSION AND JOB QUALITY



As the professional membership organization for those who work with or for youth in OST, NAA is moving forward, defining the components of our profession's identity as a knowledgeable and skilled workforce providing essential services and opportunities. In addition, we're promoting workforce advocacy through our Thriving OST Workforce Initiative.

NAA and the OST profession have the following to define the identity of those who work and for young people in OST:

1. The Code of Ethics outlines the core principles and beliefs that guide OST professionals' conduct in daily work and when ethical dilemmas occur.
2. The Core Knowledge Skills and Competencies (CKSCs) and Self-Reflection Tools outline what professionals who work with and for youth in OST need to know and show. The CKSCs describe the dispositions, knowledge, skills, and competencies individuals need to provide quality OST programs that support the development of young people and advance equity.
3. The Proclamation on Profession is a promise to the OST profession and acknowledgment that the work of OST professionals matters.

These items that help define the identity of OST professions also set the foundation for creating a thriving OST workforce.

The Quality Connection

Data and experience show that quality OST programs staffed with knowledgeable and skilled professionals result in positive youth outcomes. Investments in OST continue to grow; however, access to programs remains an issue. Challenges with staff recruitment and retention create program waiting lists and leave young people without program access, a long-standing problem. Without workforce stability, programs can't provide youth with the unique experiences and support they need—and deserve—outside the school day. Fortunately, this is a solvable puzzle. Investments in job quality can stabilize the workforce.

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What is Job Quality?

There is no single definition of job quality; overall, job quality depends on factors such as pay, benefits, schedule, working environment, agency, respect, and other components all humans value. Similar to OST programs, jobs can be at various levels of quality. Based on job quality indicators, afterschool positions generally fall lower on the quality spectrum. When addressing recruitment and retention challenges, the focus tends to be on pay. While higher wages will help solve the recruitment and retention issue (as OST workers need to make thriving wages and have good benefits), job quality is much more than that.

Designing Quality Jobs

Quality jobs need intentional design. In doing this work, we relied upon the Job Design Framework from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. This framework ensures that we design high-quality, equitable employment opportunities and provide the necessary tools to develop and sustain the workforce. Those in OST often discuss preparing youth as the workforce of tomorrow. We shouldn't tout this as a benefit of OST without taking care of our own first. We should be just as concerned about building our afterschool workforce for today and beyond.

The Big Picture

Creating a thriving OST workforce prioritizes job quality, which makes our workforce stable and enables afterschool professionals to deliver high-quality programs that lead to positive youth outcomes. Our goal is to empower organizations—with the support of policymakers, funders, systems-builders, and others—to design OST jobs with equity and inclusion and inspire a culture where employees, and subsequently young people, thrive. Putting the pieces of a quality job together ensures that the workplace has a culture of strong relationships, respect, and belonging.

OST professionals make quality afterschool programs happen, and they deserve job quality commensurate with their contributions and impact. To ensure access to quality afterschool programs—or afterschool programs at all—NAA, through its Thriving OST Workforce Initiative, asserts that job quality for OST professionals must be a focal point.

Call to action

It starts with you. [Take the Pledge to the Profession](#) and receive the Pledge Action Guide. Act now to show your support in taking the necessary steps to create quality jobs, ensuring that we build a strong, valued profession - a thriving workforce - that benefits kids, families, and communities.



Contributed by: Angelica Portillo, Director of Advocacy and Workforce Initiatives, National AfterSchool Association