Build Protective Factors to Support Staff, Students, and Families

Try New Strategies for Addressing Staff Shortages
What is Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week?

Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week is a time to recognize, appreciate and advocate for those who work with young people during out-of-school hours. The week is marked by celebrations and public relations efforts encouraging appreciation and support for all the afterschool professionals who make a profound difference in the lives of young people.

Afterschool Professionals Deserve Appreciation for all that they do to enhance education, promote physical and emotional health, provide a safe environment and expose youth to new experiences. We believe in you!

- An estimated 7.8 million children participate in afterschool programs each year in the U.S.
- An estimated 850,000 afterschool professionals are employed in the U.S.
- Afterschool professionals are dedicated to the field.

APRIL 24-28

Recognize, appreciate, and advocate for the #HeartOfAfterschool!
SPRING 2023

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Transformative Professional Learning: All Day Every Day

SPECIAL REPORT
2023 Next Generation of Afterschool Leaders

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A Place for Everyone: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in OUT-OF-SCHOOL Time Organizations

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Building Community Through Professional Development

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Managing Editor & Art Director
Madi Gregory

National AfterSchool Association Staff
Gina Warner
Chief Executive Officer

Heidi Ham
Chief Operating Officer

Angelica Portillo
Director of Advocacy and Workforce Initiatives

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Read more about the people, products and programs featured in this issue of AfterSchool Today

MORE: HELPFUL RESOURCES

From Voice in the Field:
Statistics

From Advancing the Profession:
Partnerships
https://uwswpa.org/non-profits/

From the Editor:
Programs
https://www.ayskids.org/

From the National AfterSchool Association:
NAA publishes fresh, new content every week covering a wide variety of topics related to the field of afterschool. In addition, NAA offers a variety of opportunities for virtual professional development (PD) through meaningful content, conversations, and connections.
https://naaweb.org/professional-development

Dylan Jude Harrell Community Center
https://www.djhcc.org/

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
https://www.k12northstar.org/

Unique Xpressions Ministries, Inc.
https://www.uniqueexpression.org/

Boys & Girls Clubs of Lower Bergen County
https://bgclbergen.org/

VOX ATL
https://voxatl.org/

The Forum for Youth Investment
https://forumfyi.org/

KinderCare Learning Companies
https://www.kc-learning.com/

National League of Cities
https://www.nlc.org/

University of Georgia Extension Georgia 4-H
https://extension.uga.edu/topic-areas/4-h-youth-development.html

Boston Debate League
https://www.bostondebate.org/

Harris County Department of Education
https://www.hcde-texas.org/

HTI Catalysts
https://hticatalysts.net/

Resources for Learning
http://www.resourcesforlearning.net/

Edna Martin Christian Center
https://ednamartincc.org/

Change Impact
https://www.changeimpact.net/

Heart & Hand Center
https://www.heartandhandcenter.org/

Horizon Savannah
https://www.horizonssavannah.org/

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services - Prevention and Early Intervention Division
https://www.dfps.texas.gov/prevention_and_early_intervention/

The Flourish Lab
https://theflourishlab.org/

Fairfax County Therapeutic Recreation Services
https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/therapeutic-recreation

Spark Decks
https://www.spark-decks.com/

Reloveution
https://www.truerloveution.com/

Westat
https://www.westat.com/

Connecticut Network for Children & Youth
https://ctncy.org/

Maine Mathematics & Science Alliance
https://mmsa.org/

Causenetic Podcast
https://www.ymcadallas.org/causenetic-podcast

Bayview Foundation
https://www.bayviewfoundation.org/
Belonging. It is an innate human need, and a foundational layer for both our mental and physical health. Belonging – just as we are – is strength through support and comfort in the knowledge that we are not alone. It’s being seen. Being heard. Being affirmed. Creating a sense of belonging doesn’t just happen; it requires carefully considering the unique experiences of the people around us – especially our young people.

Cultivating inclusion is a critical element of quality youth development programs. All young people should feel that they are welcome and recognized as human beings with strengths, potential, and aspirations. As an out-of-school time professional, you understand that youth need to know that they are cared for, have a sense of connection to others, and that their environment is safe... and yet, cracks continue to widen for marginalized youth as meaningful change buckles under the weight of ongoing inequity, racial biases, stigma, and lingering hardships caused by the pandemic.

Young people of color and their history, culture, and accomplishments often go unacknowledged by the adults and spaces shaping their everyday – just as young people in the LGBTQ+ community and their identity seldom go accepted, and those living with mental illness have their struggles go dismissed. Youth development workers can build strong relationships among disenfranchised young people by ensuring that youth can see themselves reflected in the people and places in their lives. And that, my OST friends – that is our charge.

By providing an emotionally and physically safe environment, Afterschool professionals allow youth to express their emotions and themselves. You give them the security and lend them the confidence to take risks and feel challenged and excited to try new things. By creating a culture of belonging for youth, families, and staff in our programs - we see, we hear, and we affirm each person’s contributions, power, and their resiliency – just as they are.

Within the pages of this edition, you will find the power of words, the impact of embracing ideas, and the path toward a fully inclusive approach so that we can better listen to what our young people have to say. This AfterSchool Today is a call to continually reinforce that they matter, and to ensure that our programs are designed to support them and help them thrive.

I, for one, cannot wait to see what you do next to move the needle of belonging forward this year!
Second Step® now equips out-of-school time (OST) providers with a new approach to social-emotional learning (SEL). Introducing Second Step® Out-of-School Time, a program designed especially for the OST space with tools and staff supports to make SEL simple and fun. Together, let's take research-based SEL to more parts of the day and help kids—and their communities—thrive.

Available in both English and Spanish!
BOOK REVIEWS

WHAT AFTERSCHOOL IS READING

PUSHING THE GENERATIONS FORWARD: FINDING YOUR PURPOSE THROUGH THE NEXT GENERATION
By Kwamane Harris.

Kwamane Harris’ Pushing the Generations Forward: Finding Your Purpose Through the Next Generation is a succinct and relevant guide for anybody working with at-risk youth in unconventional settings. Harris’ experience working in the OST field informs his ability to communicate the frustrations, hopes, and aspirations of professionals in finding work that is both meaningful and impactful. Giving back to your community requires accountability and a desire to push yourself and subsequently to push others – to do better and to envision success. Within these pages are ideas and motivation to address your own life experiences and challenges, to accept the failings of the past, and to forgive in order to move forward.

Reviewed by Patrick Holman-Hart, Promise Center Coordinator with the City of South Salt Lake

Need inspiration? Short on hope? This 79-page quick read by fellow first-generation college graduate Kwamane O. Harris, MBA, CPLC, provides practical advice for youth professionals weary in well-doing, older youth looking for direction, and anyone concerned about generational poverty, trauma, and society. Echoing a profound question by a Frederick Douglass impersonator, Harris asks, “Are you at the table or on the agenda?” Readers receive quality advice on increasing agency, overcoming obstacles, and finding purpose. Action-oriented, the author’s Sankofa Bird illustration captures the heart of “Pushing the Generations Forward” as this lesson from West African Akan people models the importance of learning from the past while advancing the next generation.

Reviewed by Rebecca Kelley, Head of Advocacy at Waterford.org

"It is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot." The West African concept of "Sankofa" teaches us that in order to understand our future, we must go back to examine our past.
We need a fundamental shift in our values—a pivot in how we think, act, work, and connect. Despite what we’ve been told, the most critical mainspring of social change isn’t coalition building or problem analysis. It’s healing: deep, whole, and systemic, inside and out.

THE FOUR PIVOTS: REIMAGINING JUSTICE, REIMAGINING OURSELVES
By Shawn Ginright

The Four Pivots, by author, professor, and activist Shawn Ginwright, is part exploration of the research of inclusionary practice, part how-to, and part story. Ginwright outlines Four Pivots: From Lens to Mirror, From Transactional to Transformative, From Problem to Possibility, and From Hustle to Flow. In each section, the author offers definitions to clarify the pivot and pulls you in with stories relevant to work in afterschool programs and in life. Thought-provoking questions are included in each section. While the content is complex and forced me to think about my words, practice, and place in the youth development work, the read was pleasurable, and the organization of the chapters and topics made it a fast read.

Reviewed by Alison Reis Khanna, Project Manager at Resources for Learning

In The Four Pivots, Dr. Shawn Ginwright continues to light the way for educators, youth workers, and families committed to building intersectional movement spaces. The text outlines the moves we must make to center community care if we confront inequality in all its complexity and make space for ourselves to heal from the intergenerational traumas of interlocking oppressions. The book is a must-read for anyone who considers themselves a youth advocate. It is a call to be vulnerable and double down on our humanizing pedagogies. Ginwright’s text equips us with powerful strategies to center reflection, truth, and belonging in order to imagine sites of possibility and abundance from within which our powers of care and creation can flow.

Reviewed by Dr. Elizabeth Bishop (@DrBishopDigital), Faculty of Youth Studies at the City University of New York
DEI DECONSTRUCTED
By Lily Zheng

Whether you lead an organization or participate in DEI efforts at any level, this thoroughly-researched guide explains what works - and what doesn’t - with improving organizational demographic composition, dismantling historical inequities, and building environments that meet individual needs.

Zheng connects data and experience to actionable frameworks. From outlining six types of power individuals hold within an organization (and how each type of power can affect change); to describing the individual roles; to giving an overview and history of DEI work, what is portrayed is not only illuminative - but also easily recognizable. For anyone looking to effectively make change, this combination of analysis and actions make DEI Deconstructed a truly invaluable roadmap to read and explore with your team.

Reviewed by Eva Jo Meyers, Co-founder of Spark Decks

A refreshingly pragmatic look at achieving DEI in organizations, Zheng provides an understandable introduction to DEI along with actionable strategies and techniques that can turn positive DEI “intentions” into positive measurable DEI “outcomes” that can lead to true change. The author provides hope that everyone can be a change-maker with varying roles and associated responsibilities that contribute to DEI movement. The reader will explore “movement” roles such as being an advocate, educator, or builder and how these informal roles align with one’s more formal role/position within an organization. With “takeaways”, reflective questions, and exercises at the end of each chapter, the only shortcoming of this book is that you will not want to put it down.

Reviewed by Jen Harris, Senior Consultant at The Forum for Youth Investment

The importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace cannot be understated. But when half-baked and under-developed strategies are implemented, they often do more harm than good, leading the very constituents they aim to support to dismiss DEI entirely.
THE CONFIDENT BODY
By Minna Taylor

The Confident Body reminds us to return to self for readily available tools. It helps us gain confidence through awareness of our bodies, breathing, and play. We’re invited to objectively observe our actions to gather the information that supports us in redirecting or releasing unconscious beliefs that are holding us back.

This is a timely read for leaders who are challenged by change management. We learn how leaders who embody confidence create welcoming, inclusive, safe, and supportive environments where teams thrive.

Readers can instantly apply what they’ve learned using the practical activities included in the book for authentic connection with self, or to facilitate confidence-building experiences for other adults and youth alike.

Reviewed by Monica Marie Jones, Facilitator, Coach & Consultant

When purchasing these titles or looking for others, consider supporting independent bookstores that are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color owned and operated. AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE BOOK CLUB
HTTPS://AALBC.COM/BOOKSTORES/LIST.PHP | BOOKSHOP
HTTPS://BOOKSHOP.ORG
Causenetic - being a person or thing that gives rise to a phenomenon that is dynamic or energizing. This podcast from the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas is billed as “discussion of community topics that are globally minded, and locally focused. This podcast gives listeners the opportunity to see a different perspective and connect to community issues.” Take a listen and you will find interesting, timely topics, short and easily digestible segments related to youth development and connected to the broader world, and wonderful energy!
Creating a Thriving Workforce

Get More Resources
Growing up in the 90s, I’ve watched more episodes of MTV’s Real World than I care to admit. The show was hailed for depicting relevant issues in young adulthood including prejudice, sexuality, politics, and more. For me, it was where I was introduced to the first openly gay person I saw represented on television.

Off screen, I knew only one openly gay person and have only one memory I’ve kept of him. My cousin Joel died of AIDS when I was 10, and when I think of him, I remember my family gathered around a table making a quilt square to commemorate his life.

Joel’s panel is one of 50,000 that make up the AIDS Memorial Quilt, but sometimes I imagine a different reality. One where Joel’s phone number is saved in my favorites, where I get to hear his coming out experience, and where I tell him mine.

This isn’t that story, but it is one that has stayed with me.

At 18, I was struggling to embrace my own sexuality and was sitting in a restaurant with my role model and mentor getting ready to tell him about it. Jim was the consistent, caring adult outside of my family I knew I could count on. He offered me my first job in the afterschool program he ran and inspired my love of this profession.
I tried to muster up the courage to share my struggles with him, but none surfaced. I began asking him “Would you rather?” questions as a segue, but one of Jim’s answers snuffed out the sentence I spent so much time crafting. “Nothing would be worse than your kid being gay?” Did I hear correctly? Yes. I. Did. In that moment, I lost more than words.

Imagine you have a balloon. Each time you say something encouraging to a young person, each time you acknowledge their potential, you are putting a little more air in the balloon, one breath at a time. Jim spent years slowly filling my balloon and in one moment, in one sentence, it burst. What words and actions do you fill into the balloons of each young person in your program every day? And what words and actions might be the pin that pops them, intentionally or unintentionally?

What keeps me in afterschool - at Camp Fire and as a proud board member of the National Afterschool Association - is the opportunity to create communities where young people feel fully seen with a sense of connection to their peers and to adults.

This magic doesn’t just appear; it’s carefully crafted through the actions and words of the professionals in this space.

I don’t think Jim remembers what he said that day. And I have never given him the grace and benefit to know why we never spoke again. We have both gone on -- living our separate lives -- with only me carrying the weight of his words for all these years.

Think of a young person in your life... a young person trying to be deeply, vulnerably, and fully seen by you. Think of the air you have tirelessly put into their balloon. And as you return home, watch for that pin, in your words and actions. Listen carefully and breathe deeply. By doing so, you will be affirming their existence and contribution to the world.
creating loving & unbiased hiring processes:

RELOVEUTION’S WORK TOWARD REVAMPING RECRUITMENT

In today’s job market, ample choices for potential employees mean that employers are competing to sweeten the pot of offer letter packages, but should they consider enhancing the recruitment process, too? Attracting enough quality talent to fill the high rate of OST job openings is a staffing challenge exacerbated by antiquated policies and unchecked biases. As people-centered organizations, hiring processes in 2023 are opportunities for youth-serving programs to readdress outdated practices and start walking the walk of truly equitable and inclusive work culture.

Reloveution is a national consulting and professional development services provider focused on building strong, sustainable, and healthy workplaces with heart-centered cultures. They recently sought to revamp their hiring procedures to embody love, compassion, equity, fairness, and a commitment to humanity. Through their experimental journey to redefine best practices, Reloveutionary made meaningful progress toward creating loving and unbiased, scalable hiring processes that can be implemented in all workplaces ready to 1) not be part of the problem; 2) be as equitable and unbiased as possible; and 3) model their values every step of the way.

If you are in a position where you have control over how hiring is done, Reloveution invites you to take what feels promising & leave what doesn’t.
**STEP 1: job description**

Be intentional and specific about the skills required for the role and which are most critical. Prioritize sharing what you need people to already know versus what you can teach, and how they are being evaluated throughout the process.

**STEP 2: blind application**

Design a two-step blind application process with an Identifier Form (resume content) and an Application Form (long-answer questions designed to be in lieu of a cover letter). This allows you to screen applications without knowing ANYTHING about a candidate besides what they wrote in their application answers.

**STEP 3: screening & selecting candidates**

Screen applications without looking at the identifier form. Interviewers have cultural, social, and experiential differences that influence their feelings and decisions about who meets the criteria, so have multiple people screening and evaluating applicants and consistently hold each other accountable for assumptions or prejudices.

**STEP 4: kind & intentional rejections**

The two biggest complaints from job searchers are that 1) they don't hear back from prospective employers, even after several interviews; and 2) they have no idea about why they were passed over and what they could have done differently. It's important to let applicants know and FEEL how much you appreciate their time, energy, and commitment by sharing high-level details, sincere gratitude, and feedback.

For people interviewed but not selected, add an offer of compensation for the time and energy they put into the interviewing process, and share opportunities to stay involved with the organization.
STEP 5: interviewing
Standardize the length of interviews, the questions asked, and the allotted time you are holding them to minimize bias and promote equity in hiring processes.

Focus on four major principles:
- Specific versus Ambiguous
- Relational versus Transactional
- Curious versus Judgmental
- Them-Centered versus Us-Centered

Give candidates several of the interview questions ahead of time, share expectations and hopes for the space, give space for questions throughout the time you share, and end by stating clear next steps and the timeline.

STEP 6: final offer
Personally call the selected candidate, immediately send an offer letter to review, grant the opportunity to ask questions, wait patiently and, if they accept, send a contract and a welcome gift before you start the onboarding process.
There were eight of us around the table. We were all part of a teacher support initiative working in partnership with a large school district and a university to improve teacher preparation. We were discussing a challenging situation and raising questions with no easy answers.

How do we lift up racial disparities in schools in a collaborative manner? What does collaboration look like between a district, a university, individual schools, and partners funded to work with them? What is our role as partners?

We hit a wall until someone said, “Let’s do a round.” We sat silently for a few minutes and then proceeded to move around the circle to share what was coming up for each of us in this tense moment. It was then I knew. If a group invests in tools that help foster deep listening and increase the ability to slow down and reflect before jumping to a solution, they can utilize those tools in times of uncertainty. This type of application exemplifies transformative learning—significant, powerful learning—that changes the learner in profound, long-lasting ways.

In that round, I shared the challenge of being the only African American on a team serving a predominantly African-American school system. Emotions and experiences were tangled up and had kept me quiet before now. The expected practice of my colleagues listening with no response gave me the courage to speak up.

I continue using protocols for solution-seeking, idea generation, and community-building. Colleagues often reach out to me to get help choosing the most suitable protocol. Even in that initial conversation, we began to get to the situation’s root.
The **core values and conditions** that are critical to creating a generative space for transformative learning are these:

**ONE**
Facilitators encourage everyone to share their ‘knowings’ with others as a way to pool collective knowledge.

**TWO**
Sharing both promising practices and consistent challenges helps us all problem-solve. It also creates connection and closeness when we see that we all have gifts to bring and challenges we’re facing.

**THREE**
Leave breathing space so that each participant is able to get what they need from their peers and the overall experience. Avoid the tendency to over-plan and use every ‘trick in the book’ in an effort to seek meaningful engagement from participants.

---

*Here are a few tools for your use as a facilitator of meaningful professional learning experiences - every day.*

**WIBYT - Write it before you talk**
It’s that simple. Offer a prompt or question and protect the quiet time for writing. Then talk.

**Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle**
Providing an immersive experience is an effective way to engage before planning and exploring resources. In a recent training, we asked staff to volunteer as the Snack Prep Team. Their job would be to prepare and present healthy snacks to their coworkers all day. We were ten minutes into making smoothies when a conversation ensued about planning to do this same activity with the youth. “Why hadn't we made smoothies with the youth before?” I said nothing. I didn’t need to. The transformation was evident.

**Good Old-Fashioned Team-Building & Connections**
Checking in on your community is essential. In regular meetings, offer a one-word check-in or a 30-second response to the question “What’s on top for you?” (personally or professionally). The chat feature and nametag changes in online meetings allow for connections that take very little time.
Gadgets, Gimmicks & Online Tools
Some of my favorite gadgets are manipulatives on the table. I’m amazed at how much a fidget toy can keep folk engaged - and off their devices. There are card decks that foster deep reflection and accountability. Computer applications such as Padlet and Jamboard facilitate sharing of resources and ideas. Kahoot, Mentimeter, Google Forms, and Poll Everywhere are tools for assessing knowledge, experience, or opinions - and putting our devices to good use!

Protocols
Protocols offer structured processes to support focused and productive conversations, build collective understanding, and engage in continuous improvement. I have included a protocol list to familiarize you with the techniques. Use what you can. Take it slowly and adjust to meet your audience.

Quality Prep Time
For a 1-hour meeting focused on professional development, expect to spend at least one-hour planning. From my experience, 3-4 hours spent planning for every hour of facilitation is an industry average.

In closing, pay attention to your transformative learning moments. It will help you foster those moments for others.
Advocating for LGBTQ+ young people can feel like one of these insurmountable tasks. The Trevor Project reports that in 2022 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, including 1 in 5 transgender and nonbinary youth, as a result of discrimination they faced in school, social gatherings, and at home. That is a staggering statistic.

However, equally as staggering, is the finding that when trans and nonbinary young people have their pronouns respected by the adults in their lives they report suicide attempts at half the rate of other trans and nonbinary youth. In a world of big complex problems, using the correct pronoun is something we can all do without a whole lot of effort. When you start to dig into what else LGBTQ+ youth need to feel safe and supported, it turns out most of that is pretty simple too.

**Not only is it simple, out-of-school organizations actually have a unique ability to change those statistics by creating inclusive organizations for all and prioritizing the well-being of their LGBTQ+ youth.**
In this country, youth are provided a variety of places to feel safe and included; it is often taken for granted that home, community, church, school, sports teams, etc. are places for youth to find safety. The truth is that for many LGBTQ+ youth these are spaces that have caused trauma. In 2022 the Trevor Project found that only 37% of LGBTQ+ youth identified home as an affirming space and only 55% felt affirmed at school. Schools are often barred from supporting LGBTQ+ youth because of discriminatory policies instituted by school boards or local governments. The safety of one’s home is dependent upon the beliefs of one’s parents. Out-of-school time organizations often do not have to adhere to the same discriminatory policies and can ensure they are only hiring staff that are accepting and then provide continued training on active inclusion.

One of the easiest things your organization can do is ensure the use of correct pronouns. While it can feel difficult, asking someone for their pronouns and trying your best to use the correct pronouns gets easier as you practice. If you make a mistake and use the wrong pronoun, you can simply apologize and move forward with the correct pronoun. The effort is impactful to the young person even when mistakes are made. The use of they/them pronouns to address a singular person also might feel uncomfortable at first but it is something that we regularly do in the English language. For example, if you walked up to a table at a restaurant and saw a jacket left by a previous customer you might say “oh look, someone left their jacket, I’m going to take it to lost and found for them.” Change can be uncomfortable, and adjusting pronoun usage may have some bumps in the road, but in the end, our effort has real potential to reduce suicidal thoughts in young people.
The lynchpin to creating an inclusive organization is ensuring your staff have received training specific to working with LGBTQ+ youth. Luckily, there are many fantastic resources that can help your organization with education:

1. The Trevor Project - Support Center Glossary
2. The Trevor Project - Guide to Being an Ally
3. GLSEN - Gender Affirming & Inclusive Athletics
4. The Safe Zone Project - Learn
5. Human Rights Campaign - Schools in Transition

Remember, it is impossible to know everyone’s pronouns just by looking at them; staff can model sharing their pronouns when they introduce themselves and make sure to provide the option to share pronouns when they ask young people to introduce themselves. Additionally, you can offer name tags that have a blank for names and a blank for pronouns. Lastly, you may have seen the term “preferred pronouns” used in the past but the definition of preferred is an adjective to describe something that someone likes better than something else. If they were preferred pronouns, it means that other pronouns are acceptable to use which is not the case.

Again, the youth development field faces big complex problems, but this is a solution with relatively low effort and extremely high impact.

The lynchpin to creating an inclusive organization is ensuring your staff have received training specific to working with LGBTQ+ youth. Luckily, there are many fantastic resources that can help your organization with education:
The NAAPCS, or National Afterschool Association Professional Credentialing System, is one example of a new way to demonstrate both competence in the field of facilitating STEM activities and to recognize afterschool professionals for your outstanding effort. Designed with educators and youth in mind, this ten part credentialing system highlights competency areas that exemplify excellent work in the field of STEM afterschool education. If you are an interested educator, you can apply and submit video-based evidence for any or all of the ten available badges. Plus, unlike some micro-credentials, NAAPCS has remained free so all can access it.

As an afterschool educator, you have a lot on your plate. All at once, you are relied on to provide programming that boosts youth achievement, lowers behavioral issues, and nurtures happier youth. And though the studies show your efforts are integral to student success, when was the last time you received due recognition? Professional development and accolades are few and far between, but there’s still hope.

Simple Verification of Results, Automatic Push into 21APR

With AfterSchool21, you can trust that your data transmits automatically into 21APR, freeing you to focus on students’ needs.

- Track mobile attendance and other program data
- Automatically generate 21APR reports, including outcomes for all 5 GPRA measures
Since 2015, ACRES, a project of Maine Mathematics & Science Alliance (MMSA), has offered free virtual professional development to afterschool educators. Fully online, their first cohort takes you through the interactive process of asking purposeful questions. Participants take part in a three session series to delve deeply into how to use questioning to better facilitate STEM activities. They also film their own work with youth for discussion and feedback with the group. Additional cohorts are available to advance your practice in areas such as Facilitating Engineering Practices, Elevating Youth Voice and Choice, and Nurturing STEM Identity and Making Career Connections.

So, why get these micro-credentials?
- You’re already doing amazing work with youth; get recognized for it!
- Quality educators lead to better programs which better support youth; these micro-credentials reinforce that work.
- Each badge highlights a specific skill set that is professionally relevant to your work.
- These micro-credentials are recognizable across different afterschool programs and in various settings.
- Quality work in afterschool programs doesn't have to be quantified purely by years of experience. You can access these micro-credentials at any point in your career.

To get started in the process of applying for micro-credentials:
- Begin with an ACRES cohort about Asking Purposeful Questions. Go to: https://www.acrescoaching.org/ FMI: acres@mmsa.org
- Then, apply for your first micro-credential!

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UNITING TO SUPPORT OST PROGRAMMING

We have known for years that out-of-school-time (OST) programming is critical to the health, well-being, and education of children in any community. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made it more clear than ever before. To maintain that critical resource, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania is committed to providing support for these opportunities across our footprint: Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland counties. At United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, we are dedicated to solving complex challenges facing families, such as combating learning loss and ensuring access to safe, affordable and educational OST programming. Together, we must focus on providing our region’s children with what they need to succeed: a safe place to learn, grow, have fun, and gain meaningful experiences that transform their lives.

United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania has improved access to high-quality summer programming that prepares children for the upcoming school year and beyond, focusing on topics such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), healthy physical activity, and social and emotional learning. In the summer of 2022 through “Welcome Back Summer”, foundations, corporate partners, and other philanthropic leaders in our region came together to expand access to summer programming through a streamlined funding process. United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania did this not just because it was the right thing to do, but because these programs support economic needs in our region, providing childcare so parents can work, making jobs available for a summer workforce to gain important skills, and expanding the number of children served by these programs.
A total of 29 summer programs served more than 4,700 children and youth in our five-county region, but many had waiting lists. That clearly demonstrated that they could have served more students had they had the funding and staff needed to expand their capacity.

Throughout the summer, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania asked program providers about their challenges. The providers responded that access to reliable, qualified staff was one of the biggest hurdles to providing the size and quality of programming they would like... a national problem that we were seeing in our own backyard.

In-depth interviews allowed us to hear about how hard it was to maintain staff-to-youth ratios, manage registration waitlists, get few or no applicants for positions, and grapple with disinterest in part-time positions. This prompted us to look deeper at the data and ask,

“What can we do? Not just for the summer, but for OST programs serving children and youth year-round?”

Our team determined that one of the best ways to work toward solving this complex challenge is participating in a community-based coalition shaping the OST workforce pipeline at the systems level. This coalition includes our county Department of Human Services, an Allegheny County OST intermediary organization, nonprofits that coordinate summer work for city youth, and representatives from the largest public school district in the county. The coalition has convened partners that speak to many different aspects of OST workforce issues and they bring different perspectives and sets of resources.

Discussions have focused on increasing salaries, offering more robust professional development, and shaping the narrative about this work to more accurately reflect its need and value. Experience gained through OST workforce jobs can easily be transferred to any myriad of jobs that require 21st century skills. Including competencies such as conflict resolution, program and budget management, teamwork, problem solving and more. Communicating this important narrative will be effective in attracting potential candidates and demonstrating how the OST pipeline leads to successful careers now and in the future.
As we prepare for the summer of 2023 United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania will continue to mobilize this regional coalition to attract and build the OST workforce. Group members aligned around the same vision for our region to ensure a better chance at helping providers find and hire staff to strengthen the capacity of “Welcome Back Summer 2023” programming, as well as afterschool programs that function year-round.

This collaborative truly embodies United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania’s priority of working in alliance with other leaders in our community to come up with solutions to complex challenges that support children and families in building for success in school and life. To learn more about our work around Building For Success in school and life, visit www.uwswpa.org

Ana Kay Yaghoubian
Director of Building for Success
United Way of Southwestern PA
When you hear the words “professional development”, what do you think of? If you imagine sitting in a classroom or listening endlessly to a monotone lecture, you’re not alone. When we surveyed our partners, they confirmed our worst fears – the most available PD is one-and-done workshops that don’t allow time for discussion, practice, and follow up.

We know it doesn’t have to be this way. In fact, PD can provide space and time for colleagues to learn and grow together as individuals and as a collective. We’ve trained over 35,000 professionals, learning a lot along the way. Here are five tips to build community through professional development.

**Be Prepared**
As a former Girl Scout, “be prepared” has been ingrained in me since childhood and couldn’t be more relevant than when it comes to PD! Having an intentional plan for both the content and the human elements of the session goes a long way. Is there time to connect? For meaningful discussion? For fun? Preparing answers to these questions will lay the foundation for an inclusive, joyful experience.

**Honor Authentic Voice**
In addition to norms like “one mic” and “stay engaged”, we recommend setting an expectation that everyone is invited to be themselves. This provides space to feel comfortable and engage with colleagues in a way that’s real. This is not the same as forcing participants to share things that are personal (hello, boundaries!) but it does signal that we recognize each other as whole people, not just as staff.

**Support Belonging**
In our self-paced training on Belonging and Engagement for youth, we draw on the TIES Center’s 10 Dimensions of Belonging. This framework suggests that, to feel like we belong, we need to be: Present, Invited, Welcomed, Known, Accepted, Involved, Supported, Heard, Befriended, and Needed. We think staff also need to feel these things during PD and everyday.
Find Flow
Think back to a time when you were so engaged in something, you lost track of time. You were in flow! This term was coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi to describe a state of being completely immersed in an activity or experience. If you want to build an engaged community during PD, offer opportunities for groups to work on a hands-on project or action plan.

Make it Social
Both kids and adults learn through observation, which is a key idea behind social learning theory. PD provides an opportunity to showcase staff and partners, and we recommend giving them time to model best practices for others to learn from. It’s also a great way to celebrate your team, which is sure to bring people together.

Blend it!
Technology provides endless opportunities for online learning, which is often done independently. Through our Change Up Learning platform, we often combine anytime, anywhere learning experiences with team discussions to unpack and extend what was learned in the virtual space. This approach borrows from the flipped classroom model, where information is learned independently and time spent together such as staff meetings is used for discussion and action planning.

At Change Impact, we’ve built a learning cycle to support youth-serving organizations and schools plan effective PD that centers and celebrates staff with self-paced courses, live discussions, practice exercises, and coaching sessions. At the heart of our work is a network of youth champions – people like you – who form our community committed to advancing ourselves to help kids thrive.

Jen Curry, Ed. D.
Chief Executive Officer
Change Impact
EXPAND STUDENTS’ ESTEEM
with hands-on robotics

Living and learning through “unprecedented times” has demonstrated the importance of preparing students to be adept in handling the unexpected and to feel empowered to tackle an uncertain future. Yet today many students aren’t getting enough opportunities to try new activities – especially activities that they, or their parent(s) and educator(s), may feel are out of their reach for any number of factors.

Community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to help young people with diverse backgrounds and abilities find activities that broaden their learning outside of the school day.

Throughout my career in youth development (at organizations like the United States Youth Soccer Association and GENYOUTH), I’ve seen just how far students can go when they are encouraged to try new things and are supported by an inclusive, welcoming community.

Engaging young people in active, hands-on learning is one of the models I’ve seen bring students great success. Robotics programs, like FIRST®, are proven to bolster their learning and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).
Using thrilling sports-like competitions, FIRST helps students discover their potential in STEM in ways textbooks never could. Through a suite of programs for PreK-12 (ages 4–18), FIRST participants build More Than Robots®.

They build self-confidence and sense of belonging, and develop life skills like creative problem-solving, leadership, and communication.

Through strategic efforts, FIRST makes rigorous (and fun) STEM learning opportunities available to more students each year. However, the reality is that there’s still an opportunity gap that needs to be closed.

Every kid deserves to recognize their worth and abilities. Together we can ensure that this generation of innovators and problem-solvers realizes their potential to help solve some of the world’s greatest challenges.

I encourage you to learn more about FIRST and how you can use robotics to empower young people to expand their STEM and, more importantly, expand their esteem.
Research shows that skilled staff are critical to afterschool program quality and program quality produces positive youth outcomes. The ACRES project (Afterschool Coaching for Reflective Educators in STEM) housed at MMSA is an award-winning professional development program committed to supporting the development of STEM facilitation skills -- including competency and confidence -- in afterschool educators. ACRES is the leading professional development provider feeding the NAA Professional Credentialing System (NAAPCS). The national award rate for these video-based micro-credentials is 92% for ACRES alumni. The NAAPCS, which currently includes 10 STEM micro-credential digital badges, recognizes individuals for developing skills that contribute to high-quality programs for young people. For information about the NAAPCS, read more at https://naaweb.org/naapcs.

If you want guided support on how to earn your NAA microcredentials, check out the ACRES STEM Facilitation Professional Development opportunities at https://acrescoaching.org.
High-quality out-of-school time programs play an important role in the lives of our nation’s young people by offering youth additional opportunities for positive experiences that support the development of important skills, attitudes, and behaviors. OST programs can be a key lever for community and local system leaders to help reverse longstanding inequities, but the lack of robust, comprehensive funding is often a barrier to program expansion and quality improvement efforts in:

1) Creating and Sustaining Equitable Conditions for Learning
2) Preparing for Program Delivery
3) Building and Aligning Ecosystems of Support

The Wallace Foundation’s federal funding stream guide identifies providers, districts, summer and afterschool intermediaries, municipal government leaders, and state government leaders OST organizations can access to support equitable access to high-quality programs. This tool distinguishes specific actions and considerations OST program leaders, school district officials, and local government agencies can keep in mind as they design summer and afterschool learning programs for young people.

Visit The Wallace Foundation to learn more.
I think I’m one of the lucky ones.

You know...those people who get to say they love going to work every day. The ones who cheerily walk into the office and greet their colleagues with “good morning” in Broadway fashion. The ones who look forward to weekly meetings because they get to spend time with their colleagues face-to-face.

Now, don’t get me wrong. In the past, I’ve caught several cases of the Monday Blues or Freedom Fridays (obsessing over the clock with wide eyes as the countdown from 4:50 pm agonizingly ticks to 5:00 pm). Still, in recent years, I have found a deeper intrinsic connection to my purpose of being an afterschool professional.

Four years ago, I joined a team of youth development professionals whose mission of strengthening, supporting, and sustaining after school programs and out-of-school activities resonated heavily with me. I wanted to influence people and enhance spaces in the Houston-area field, but what I have come to realize throughout my time with this team is what makes afterschool programming successful isn't the individual endeavors of just one person. It's the collective efforts of a connected community invested in outcomes for our children. It's the administrative assistants who process purchase orders. It's the managers who set strategic goals and the program staff who tutor in math and switch to dance when done. As integral as these moving pieces are to OST program operations, they are only part of the puzzle. Successful afterschool professionals know that one of the best investments is to partner with community organizations to provide supplemental services that enhance the overall student experience.

A viral 2009 Apple Store promotion sparked the solution to our service gap dilemma. We had well-trained staff with a high-quality curriculum, but pieces were still missing. We knew we couldn’t provide the types of services we wanted with just the resources we had. So instead of “there’s an app for that,” our response became “there’s a partner for that.”
Perhaps your students are interested in learning code, but you don't have someone who knows how to teach it. Maybe you're looking for a financial literacy expert to enhance your family programs. Or perhaps your building is at capacity, but you need additional space for high school volleyball lessons. There's a partner for that.

Community partnerships can increase the number of students receiving the needed comprehensive services while improving the community. Programs, schools, and community partners commit to working together intentionally and strategically to enhance existing services. The challenge and opportunity are for programs and community agencies to work together strategically toward shared outcomes. Not sure where to begin?

Creating an action plan is the best way to build and sustain these types of relationships.

**Take inventory of your community’s landscape.**
What services already exist? What partnerships have we had in the past? Who would be willing to partner?

**Evaluate service gaps and identify providers who could fill in.**
Perhaps a church can provide you with additional program space. Or the local chicken spot can donate gift cards for family events.

**Communicate your need and how the partnership can benefit both parties.**
Perhaps the local college provides volunteers for your event, and in turn, their students get service learning hours. Or a restaurant that donates food can place flyers and menus at your program location.

**Keep the lines of communication open.**
Share photos and videos of your event. Invite your partner to participate in programming with kids and families. Send regular program updates throughout the year.

Yes, afterschool programming is an incredible catalyst in driving students’ success. Afterschool teachers, curriculum, and other internal support are great; joining with community partners creates terrific opportunities to increase the program's impact, funding chances, and students' education. You. Us. All. Together We Shine. By building sustainable relationships for the whole child, we can become partners in their care after school and in life.

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Jasmine Castleberry
Manager, Harris County Department of Education
Member, NAA Emerging Leaders of Color
TRUE STORY

IN THIS TOGETHER

Over the years of working together, we have learned one thing... it ain't as easy as it looks! But, guess what? It's really not that difficult either. We aim to challenge what togetherness can look like in our work. Human togetherness means bringing two different people in partnership, moving forward toward the same destination at the same pace. We have, for the most part, been able to achieve this because we share the same values, vision and commitment.

Our Values & Vision

On the surface, we couldn't have been more different: Amy is white, Lana is black. Amy was born and raised in Denver. Lana was born and raised in the Washington, DC area. Amy was married with 3 kids. Lana was divorced with one child. And those are just a few obvious differences. Sometimes, the ability to connect can stop right there - at the obvious differences.

None of that impeded our ability to communicate and connect. Amy wore the same prescription lenses as Lana. In other words, we see the world similarly. We connected through our values and our vision for our impact in this world. Consider the last person you connected to in that way. When you said, “Finally! Someone who gets me.” The relief that accompanies that is priceless.

And here is the kicker... we feel an instant togetherness with people who share our lens to the world, regardless of (and sometimes even because of) their personal story, racial or ethnic background, geography, gender, ability, sexuality or other identities. Togetherness, in any environment, can extend beyond the obvious. That connection, what brings us together and keeps us together, is actually our values and vision.

Open minds grow.
**Our Commitment**

How committed are we? Our commitment is to work through whatever feels hard, even when it is an individual activity. Just because I don't like something doesn't mean that it's someone else's problem. When I can identify my own triggers and opportunities for growth, it helps my partner remain in partnership with me.

We have a process we have agreed to. Sometimes the hard moments need some space. We give those moments at least 24 hours and no more than 48 hours to marinate before addressing concerns with the other person.

But either way, when the tough conversation needs to happen, we have it in a way that honors the person we are talking to. That is the most important piece of our togetherness. Wait a sec... Actually, it is that we trust the heart and intentions of the other person. When you can believe in the intentions of the other person - then even when they miss the mark, you can move forward together.

‘In this together’ means different things to different folks. What works for us is sticking to these guiding principles:

**Look Inward**

Lana often says: “No one can push a button you don’t have”. When we start by identifying our own triggers and opportunities for growth we are able to show up more fully in the tough conversations.

**Allow SPACE for Difference**

Amy shares this story: “2020 was a tough year for this country. In response, Lana understandably chose to be in community with other Black people. I remember recognizing that she needed space from whiteness; that there was some pain that wasn’t for me to share. There are some spaces where my presence and my voice do not add value; and others where my voice is vital. It’s not personal.”

**Have the Hard Conversations**

It might be uncomfortable. Do it anyway. Always. When something feels hard, there is almost always growth on the other side.
Go Deep
From Amy: “I remember the moment I recognized my own tendencies toward performative or ‘box-checking’ diversity. Lana encouraged me to seek POC-led vendors. I made a quick decision to hire a PR company because of the one POC on their team (check!). I neglected to have any conversations about values, why we cared, or expectations around bringing diversity into our work or what the role of that one individual would be. To shorten the story, Lana and the other woman were left feeling devalued and unseen. When we live in the shallow, we miss the humanity.”

Humanity First
When we have a choice (and we ALWAYS do), we always choose the person over the work. If the decision will sacrifice the relationship and I say I value the relationship, then the decision is easier than I think.
The National AfterSchool Association’s 2023 Next Generation of Afterschool Leaders highlights 17 emerging young leaders who are afterschool champions and believers of the out-of-school time profession. The members of this cohort were selected by a committee appointed by NAA and each are working on designing programs, professional development opportunities, and more contributions that will shape the future of afterschool. These NextGen Leaders exhibit five exceptional qualities:

- They are active in the broader afterschool community
- They contribute in ways that have begun to influence beyond individual programs
- They lead efforts to elevate the afterschool field
- They demonstrate passion for the development of themselves and others
- They showcase persistence in their work to grow as leaders

Learn more about our latest honorees through their answers to:
- What are you most proud of regarding your contributions?
- What immediate impact have you seen from your efforts?
- What do you expect are the long-term, bigger-picture results of these efforts?
- What components of the job design framework are most important to you?

We hope you share in the excitement about these leaders and how their contributions are shaping the next generation of the OST profession.

"The National AfterSchool Association knows that strong afterschool leaders develop the skilled professionals and teams that operate strong organizations and deliver quality programs that result in positive youth outcomes. These emerging leaders will help shape the afterschool field and profession for years to come."

— Gina Warner, CEO, National AfterSchool Association
Assistant Director of Youth Programming, Partnerships, & Advocacy  |  Positive Youth Development Virgin Islands operated by Unique Xpression Ministries Inc.  |  St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

AJAYI A. PICKERING-HAYNES

I am most proud of the amazing team of youth development professionals and out-of-school time practitioners in the Virgin Islands whom I have the pleasure and responsibility of empowering and supporting as they work tirelessly to address some of the biggest academic and personal developmental challenges facing modern Virgin Islands youth.

I have seen the impact and influence of my advocacy, commitment, and purpose as an afterschool leader in our program’s strategy, approach, reach, and culture. A major focus of our collective effort has been to meaningfully involve and center youth, parents, and the wider community in the decision-making process. This is creating ownership of our program by the community it serves. I envision that our efforts with the Positive Youth Development Virgin Islands 21st CCLC site will propel our community to truly bring back the village in the long term.

I believe every individual comes to this work for a different reason valuing different job quality components, and those of us in positions of leadership and influence must get to know our team members on a personal level to ensure that their personal job quality needs are being met.

Program Manager  |  Horizons Savannah  |  Savannah, Georgia

ALEXANDRIA NICHOLSON

I am most proud of developing a cultural studies curriculum that allows youth to explore topics relevant to their histories and celebrate their cultures. I have a passion for service, and as the program manager for Horizon Savannah, I have the opportunity to support students academically and broaden their worldview through enrichment and exploration. We have partnered with two community schools to put quality literature with diverse characters in the hands of kindergarten and 1st-graders with our weekly Early Reading Book Club, and for that, I am proud, as well.

I hope that every Horizons student has the confidence to take a shot at their wildest dreams. Through representation and exploration, we will foster strong self-efficacy in the youth we serve. Our students will know they can accomplish whatever they can imagine. We will be there to support them every step of the way.

“Every child deserves a champion; an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best they can possibly be.” –Rita Pierson
CAROLINA MACHADO

I am most proud of my contribution to advancing positive youth development and youth-based programming across Texas through a social work lens. Elevating and humanizing our program to be informed in social justice, program quality, strategic partnerships, and aligned with policy practice, has allowed our program to be in communities where youth are allowed to amplify their voice, leadership, and partnership.

Being a first-generation student and professional, I never thought I would be able to have a significant impact in my state. Reflecting on my experience, I realize I have come full circle. My key contributions to our new grant cycle included reconsiderations to program components such as mentoring, youth voice and engagement, family engagement, post-high school readiness, quality framework (YPQA), and development of a Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA). Our programs are accessible, inclusive, diverse, and foster program quality and social justice aspects for all youth.

Finding funding and supporting 16 communities in Texas to strengthen positive youth development work has been my most incredible honor and impact. Over 17,000 youth are served on an annual basis through the program. The long-term goal of these efforts is ensuring youth and families' needs are met in their community and enabled to strive in their own environment. These youth will then be able to contribute, shape, and impact their communities.

I believe the most significant impact, however, is expanding prevention work. Being able to prioritize and implement frameworks such as the prevention and positive youth development frameworks, will have an even greater result for individuals, families, communities, and overall, the state and nation.

CHIRON X

I am most proud of taking the VOXATL facilitator training model (along with my co-facilitators) and turning it into something we can expand upon so that teens in different communities can have a chance to lead important conversations in their own communities and the adults in that community can support them in a way that uplifts what they have to say.

At my first conference, we led a workshop that was really intentional about introducing different forms of self-expression and we used palm pages for one of the activities. As we got into the activities, one participant said that there weren't many things she did for herself because she wasn't taught to put her needs first. We sat for a while and talked about all the small things she could do as a first step because starting can be daunting. There was a moment while we were talking that I could feel a positive shift in her attitude toward putting herself first sometimes; I hope she still does.

I hope to keep supporting the learning of adults who work directly with youth and I want to keep creating spaces where other young people feel heard. The project I'm working on now came from an organization's desire to hear from young people in a space that wasn't just surveys based on what they thought the most likely answer would be. As long as there is that need, I'll be there to support it in all the ways I can.
CLAIREE BRUNCKE
I am most proud of the team that we have built and the community partnerships we have developed. The people working with our kids everyday are kind, open-minded, loving, and willing to do the hard things necessary to make a difference in the lives of our young people. This team has brought perspective and connection that has allowed us to leverage community partners and truly be an organization that is by the community and for the community. I see kids get excited when our staff walk into their school or I run into them at the grocery store. This connection means these kids know they have adults they can trust, creating an immediate impact on their lives.

I believe we are strengthening the foundations of our community by building brave youth, which will mean fewer families in generational poverty in our area, more young people seeing success in their future, and continued growth and development in our community. I believe that youth and employee voices are vital to the work we are doing. To create programs that will serve young people, we must listen to young people. To create a sustainable future for youth-focused organizations (specifically nonprofits), we must listen to employees and advocate for systemic change to our “way of working”. Young professionals are doing the hard work in this area and valuing that work is vital to the success of our programs.

EMILIA AUTIN-HEFNER
I am most proud of being recognized for how I build intentional relationships, not only with the young people and families that Heart & Hand serves, but also with my team, school partners, volunteers, and community members. I believe that relationships are the heart of this work and I’m honored to be able to develop the types of relationships that I do by meeting individuals where they are. I have seen young people in my program develop leadership skills and find their voice. With intentional engagement around social and emotional learning, I’ve seen young people exhibit kindness towards each other, as well as themselves. They’re developing the skills needed to identify and manage their feelings and emotions.

I hope that the young people that come through Heart & Hand continue to develop and maintain the skills that they’re building to become active members in their community, wherever that may be. I expect that they’ll continue to use their voices and find ways to advocate for themselves and those they care about.

As someone who supervises young adults who work directly with young people, it’s very important to me that I am working to develop my team’s skills and support them in advancing their careers. Their engagement and participation in the work matter to me, and it’s important that they feel empowered and heard. I will always be an advocate for them, even (and especially) if it means supporting them through a tough conversation or decision.

“Every job is a self-portrait of the person who does it. Autograph your work with excellence.” -Unknown
EMILY YOUNG

I am most proud that my work in the afterschool space involves advocating for the importance of these programs to municipal government leaders and supporting them as they work to build and grow programs in their communities. Supporting these local leaders through our Afterschool Policy Advisor’s Network (APAN) – a group of 500+ municipal officials who believe in the importance of afterschool and summer programs – has been a privilege. I love introducing these city officials to the power of afterschool and summer learning programs and showing them how they can make a difference for children in their communities.

Policy work takes time, and supporting programs is challenging. I always remind myself to start small and celebrate every win. After APAN meetings, members always approach me saying how much they appreciate the space NLC has created: one where they can gain vital information, resources, and tools to support the OST programs in their communities.

I firmly believe in the life-changing power of afterschool. However, deep inequities exist regarding which young people have access to these vital programs. That’s why I am honored that NLC is joining the U.S. Department of Education and other national partners for the Engage Every Student initiative – a call to action to provide high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities to every young person. At NLC, I work to make this goal a reality by providing municipal leaders with the information they need to build, expand, and support OST programs.

I am often the youngest person in the room and being in a space where I feel empowered enough to share my ideas and perspective, and my contributions are valued, is something I do not take for granted.

JAMIE SCOTT

I am most proud of the strong relationships and networks that I’ve built as a professional youth worker. The relationships I’ve built have challenged me, encouraged me, and inspired my professional and personal growth. I have seen the efforts of my youth work and youth leadership create and grow local councils and professional learning communities focused on youth work. These councils and communities are growing quickly and are dedicated to breaking down silos in the field.

I truly believe that youth work is going to be more nationally recognized and highlighted as a career field. Youth workers are leading the charge in professional development to understand how to heal from our childhood traumas. We are dedicated to giving children experiences that they won’t have to heal from.

I genuinely loved (and love) the children in my community and now that I have had such great opportunities to develop and grow, I constantly share them with those who are even considering the field. With voice, there is something very empowering about being trusted to help steer the ship based on best practices and experiences. I now introduce myself as a life-long learner because of all of the opportunities available.
Training & Communications Specialist | Westat | Rockville, Maryland

KARIN WOLFE

I'm most proud of the work my organization does to provide support and resources to the Texas 21st CCLC grantees daily. I value using my previous experiences to assist my team with developing tools and sharing resources that directly impact the grantees and students. Providing training to the Texas 21st CCLC grantees and seeing the look of excitement as they prepare to take back new tools or resources to implement in their afterschool programs is incredibly rewarding. I love to think about the impact that this grant has on the lives of students and how we can play a role in it.

It’s important to me that I am part of an organization that supports my professional and personal growth, which includes providing reliable compensation and benefits, a sustainable work environment, and continuous opportunities for training and career development. Participation from my organization and leadership is extremely valuable to me because I know that I thrive under strong leadership that is invested in my own growth and products. I work harder when I know others see my vision and support my efforts to make my visions come to life. I know this is only the beginning of my career in this field and I hope to continue to grow within it professionally and personally.

Senior Government Relations Representative | KinderCare Learning Companies | Lake Oswego, Oregon

KELLY LATTERMAN

I am most proud of my support of our out-of-school time brand, Champions, and their rapid expansion, partnering with over 800 sites across the country. I continue to advocate for increased government funding for afterschool to help provide critical access and care for marginalized communities. With the advent of remote work, I now impact even more students through my government relations contributions with KinderCare Learning Companies. I am proud of the education efforts and resources I have deployed across the organization to promote advocacy, relationship building with elected officials, and a deeper understanding of government funding for afterschool.

Over the last year, I prioritized education and strategy work with our corporate and field teams and built external relationships to promote an elevation of the importance of afterschool by sharing their stories with policymakers to make changes and organize legislative visits to Champions sites. The long-term vision is for policymakers to understand that out-of-school time programs are an essential resource for all students. We need to capitalize on the bipartisan support for afterschool and increase the allowable and dedicated funding streams to these programs.

My team is also working to increase recognition, support, and career pathways for the dedicated program staff who serve children, families, and communities every day. The core elements of safety, sustainable pay, and respect come first and are central to the employee experience.

I want to make a difference and feel that my work is impactful, and my contributions are valued. A culture of improvement and participation gives employees agency and makes them proud to work for the organization.
**LINDSY WEAVER**

I am most proud to be recognized for this critical work our National Legislators have advocated for so strongly. As a life-long Alaskan and youth development advocate, I want to spotlight this field itself and the contributions from our state. I am proudly continuing the strong relationships with internal and external partners as well as exploring new partnerships to best support our staff, students, and families. Universities and Alaska Native Corporations are the key to our successful afterschool and summer programs; these contributions are notable because our team works together to continue building meaningful relationships within our community. My first and foremost goal has always been to carry on the intentional hard work done by my predecessor in our well-established 21st Century Program, while integrating my creative technology and marketing background to continue growing high-quality afterschool programs.

The impact has been shown through increased academic support for Special Education students in our programs. We have successfully braided additional funds and staff members into our programs, leading to highly connected services within the larger scope of our Student Support department. With contributions of food, supplies, resources, staff, and curriculum, this has helped grow program quality quickly and abundantly and has helped build sustainability for future programs. Just as youth voice and choice are foundational to our work with young people and quality programming, the ability to empower employees is at the heart of our district's strategic plan and my personal leadership philosophy.

**NANCENY FATOU FANNY**

I am most proud of my work within the community I grew up in by using my multiple perspectives and elements of my identity to help keep me rooted. I value having and building strong relationships with youth in the community and using those bonds to empower them and make each young person feel seen and heard by providing leadership and agency opportunities.

Executing high-quality programming that impacts youth positively and sets them up for long-term success and creating a safer space where they feel belonging is my calling. Enhancing program engagement and retention and building stronger community bonds increase youth employment within the larger community of Madison post-participation in our youth employment programs. When youth feel better prepared for their future, they are better able to maintain successful and healthy outcomes throughout their lives. Investing in young people within their community helps both thrive.

Investing adequately in youth workers’ salaries and benefits is essential to improve outcomes. People who are paid a thriving wage are more likely to stay longer in their roles and that helps create strong bonds between staff and those we serve. I believe high-quality staff with whom youth form positive relationships can better execute programming because youth feel motivated to be present and learn in programs that help them achieve successful outcomes.
QUADARIUS HARDY

I'm most proud that I have reached over 2,000 at-risk youth by creating opportunities to experience the essential elements of positive youth development: belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery. I have seen the growth of parent support and student involvement. The students are able to find themselves when they are around our organization. The involvement has made many young people come out of their shells and gives them a new insight at looking at life. I am proud to get to be a role model there to support them and put a smile on their face.

I have seen children be the first in their family to attend college or even join the military because of me and their Georgia 4-H Support. It is great to see kids be able to attend Project Achievement and give a public speaking demonstration because many have never done this before. Before taking over my programs, I have seen kids that had behavioral issues become prosperous children and continue to grow. I will always push them even when they want to give up, and will continue to stay in contact with my students and offer any help they need when they enter the real world.

Assistant Director of Afterschool Debate
| Boston Debate League | Boston, Massachusetts

RANNER FAUGUS

I am most proud of being able to support students in developing their critical thinking skills and their voice. The journey of finding your voice is a difficult one, and one that’s never quite finished. Helping the Boston Debate League reach more students to participate in debate fills me with pride. I have been able to help design a program that focuses on reaching young men of color. This program, though different from debate, aims to reach the young men where they’re at to support the students in honing their voice and giving them the tools of argumentation to advocate for themselves.

The long-term vision is simple - to see all young people in Boston engaged in critical discourse, informed by evidence, and empowered to lead. If we stay the course, adapt well to the ever-present friction that change to any system brings, we will continue to approach that goal. Though at times the gains can feel modest, given what we know our students face and will face in the “real world,” there’s encouragement in constant progress, and more importantly, there’s promise in knowing that I work with a group of people who are as equally committed to bringing about this vision.

“Great leaders harness personal courage, capture the hearts and minds of others and empower new leaders to make the world a better place.”

- Maxine Driscoll
SPECIAL REPORT

Therapeutic Recreation Branch Manager | Fairfax County Therapeutic Recreation Services | Fairfax, Virginia

REBEKAH STONE

I am most proud that I have been able to promote a culture where we as professionals are always learning and developing and are flexible to change upon receiving new information on how to serve youth and create a welcoming environment within our programming. Staying informed on best practices for out-of-school time programming ensures that the youth we are serving have access to the best services and can build meaningful relationships.

It is exciting to see my colleagues using the tools they have learned from conversational-based learning to help the youth be successful. Seeing my coworkers’ language and outlook change on how to be inclusive and welcoming is such a joy and encouragement.

My goal is that every youth who comes into one of our centers or programs walks in knowing that they are welcome, accepted, safe, and capable of success. I believe that with training, professional coaching, support, and opportunity - OST professionals can thrive within the field.

Quality & Engagement Coordinator | Connecticut Network for Children and Youth | Hartford, Connecticut

SHAWNA VIOLA WASHINGTON

I’m most proud of something that might seem small to most, but for me felt like a really big moment. Hearing from a director after my training that her staff enjoy my training offerings the most because I’m very relatable and make them feel comfortable enough to come out of their shell. Training is not something I’ve always felt confident in. I have a research background and the only real experience I’ve had with afterschool before being hired at the network was being a student in the program. So, to hear that both my expertise and my demeanor are valued is a tremendous and exciting accomplishment.

The training I conduct helps programs use the Mizzen App. Through these efforts, we learned that Connecticut participants on the app grew 210% between 2021 and 2022, which I think is some cool impact data. Building the Network’s capacity with mapping has already got state agencies asking us for help developing their own.

I’d like to increase engagement with our network in our state, both for professional development and advocacy opportunities. I think it’s our job to meet afterschool professionals where they are and provide the support they need by listening to the struggles they face day to day. Efforts that I’m contributing to now that will help get us there are continuing to expand our statewide afterschool database to ensure we know where programs are, and hosting focus groups with all levels of OST practitioners (both virtually and in person) to figure out what they need to continue to provide safe, high-quality, after school programming.

“A good teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others.”

- Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
TERESA C KERSEY

I am most proud that I was able to break the perpetual cycle of negative energy bringing down generation upon generation and that I am in the position to directly help the next generation have access to guidance, mentorship, information, and care that I lacked. Growing up as a first-generation multicultural person of color, I was faced with much adversity throughout my life.

I now have had the opportunity to gain skills in different roles during my time working for many 21st Century Programs. I believe my relatability allows me to connect with students on an extremely meaningful level. I have some of the same experiences and love to share the knowledge I gained with them. I want to be a positive influence and guide them in their journey to adulthood. If I can make it a little easier, I think I have succeeded.

The best interactions and guidance I’ve ever received, in any stage of life, were when I felt that the intention to guide and care was pure and without expectation; it was unconditional. My long-term wish is to use this open-minded approach to continuously learn and better the ways in which we can reach and positively influence the next generation of youth.
NATIONAL AfterSchool ASSOCIATION

NAA24 DALLAS

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