

April - June 2023

## Spotlight on the Standards

Afterschool Quality Standards



**Standard 7:  
Staffing and  
Professional  
Development**

Hiring and retaining quality staff is an ongoing challenge for afterschool and childcare programs, but efforts to do so are essential. Several years ago, the National Afterschool Partnership (NAP) studied 53 high-functioning 21st CCLC afterschool programs with diverse demographics and concluded that the availability of positive adult role models is one of the most important factors in determining student

success in out-of-school-time programs. That remains true today.

### Using Professional Development to Enhance Staff Retention

by Denise Huang and Jamie Cho

Types of professional development that can increase feelings of competency among staff while bolstering motivation and a sense of belonging in the program:

- Orientation for new staff and the opportunity to shadow a veteran staff member
- Program-specific trainings (i.e. literacy programs, conflict resolution classes, science and technology programs)
- Formal professional development catered to the needs of employees
- Day-to-day professional development in the form of mentoring and coaching, staff meetings, and open dialogue

Strategies that can help retain higher quality staff:

- Hiring staff who have passion, respect, and concrete skills for working with young people
- Aligning staff skills with tasks
- Making training substantive and accessible: offering day-to-day staff development
- Monitoring program quality

[Read the full article](#)

## Social and Emotional Learning



### Explaining SEL to Parents

by Erik Ofgang

- Establish lines of communication to discuss SEL and more. Focus on what it means to create a supportive climate founded on relationships and belonging.
- Explain SEL to parents and how it will help their children. Leave out the educational jargon and discuss what the specific skills are and how your program promotes them.
- Share what SEL provides students. Show parents how you are preparing children with life skills that go hand-in-hand with academic learning.
- Remind parents why SEL is so important now. Help them understand the need to create a safe and positive environment in which kids feel like they belong and are connected.

[Read the full article](#)



## Health and Wellness



### Rocking and Rolling. Fresh Air, Fun, and Exploration: Why Outdoor Play is Essential for Healthy Development

by Kathy Kinsner

Spring has sprung! Take advantage of comfortable temperatures and enjoy some outside time with students and colleagues! This article from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) explains several benefits of outdoor play and why it is worth the time and effort.

- It invites children to learn science.
- It creates opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.
- It promotes physical health.
- It invites new contexts for learning.
- It promotes better sleep.
- It gives children a chance to take appropriate risks.
- It may lead to better learning outcomes once children return to other activities.
- It supports STEM skills.
- It anchors children to the real world.

[Read the full article](#)

## STEM ACTIVITIES

### Using Gardening to Promote STEM

Kaplan Learning Center

"There's a reason school and classroom gardens have been growing in popularity -

### Gardening - An Outdoor STEM Activity for All Ages

Pitsco Education

This article provides helpful tips for planning your garden and gathering supplies. Be sure to check out the links at the bottom for additional

gardening works exceptionally well as a comprehensive hands-on learning tool, especially for STEM-related topics."

[Read the full article](#)

tips and activity ideas!

[Read the full article](#)



## Staff Support Amplify the Effectiveness of Your Summer Team through Intentional Team Building

Summer is just around the corner! While plans are being made for effectively engaging children during summer programs and activities, remember to take time to build relationships between the teachers and staff who will be leading those programs. Fostering a positive culture among summer staff is sure to lead to increased collaboration, more trust, better communication, and overall program success. Here are a few of our favorites!



**Human Skis** - Teams stand on two long pieces of duct tape, sticky side up, and work together to move across the room to the finish line.



**Hula Hoop Pass** - With everyone holding hands, pass a hula hoop around the circle as quickly as possible without breaking handholds. Try to beat the previous time or add a second hula hoop going the opposite direction if you dare!



**No-Hands Cup Stacking Challenge** - Work in teams of four to stack plastic cups into a pyramid using only strings tied to a rubber band - no hands allowed!

**Grab Bag Skits** - Each team gets a paper bag filled with random, unrelated items. After a little planning time, teams present short skits that incorporate all of the items in the bag.

**Team Mural** - Enjoy bonding time together as the entire group gets creative.

[Click here for more team building ideas!](#)



### Gardening Grants for Educators



#### Lots of Compassion Grant

- Sponsored by Kids Gardening and Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day
- In 2023, 10 grantees will receive \$20,000 each to transform a vacant lot into a garden.
- Application period: April 14 - June 2

#### Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Program

- Sponsored by Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, Ltd.
- Grants range from \$100 to \$500 for funding a native garden or habitat for hands-on learning.
- Application period: July 15 - November 15

## Free Professional Development Offerings

We would love to see you at one of our face-to-face or virtual training sessions!

Click the link below to access our calendar of scheduled professional development sessions and to register for the ones that interest you.



[Online PD Calendar](#)

Don't see what you are looking for?

[Contact us](#) to request a specific training topic or date. We want to meet your needs!

