Rationale for MA QRIS Draft Standards, August 2017

Afterschool / Out-of-School Time Programs

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| STANDARD 1: CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE |
| Criterion | Rationale |
| 1A. Curriculum: Program uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum that supports children in all learning domains. | Afterschool and youth development professionals provide critical supports for children, youth, and families by fostering positive growth through social interactions, stimulating physical environments, and enriching intellectual opportunities (**National Afterschool Association**, 2011).A recent review of afterschool and out-of-school-time research found that programs with appropriate content and pedagogy (relative to children’s needs and to program’s mission) that provide a variety of activities and opportunities for engagement fostered developmental outcomes in children (**Bodilly & Beckett**, 2005).**Durlak and Weissber**g’s (2007) meta-analysis of afterschool and out-of- school-time research notes that afterschool and out-of-school-time programs that provide: a sequenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives; active forms of learning; a program component on developing personal or social skills; and targeted programming related to specific academic, personal, or social skills were particularly salient characteristics in promoting youth development.  |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program has planned activities every day that incorporate youth voice and choice |
| Level 3 | Program develops an intentional curriculum plan |
| Level 4/5 | Program develops an intentional curriculum plan that reflects understanding and use of age/grade-specific EEC and DESE standards and guidelines; Program demonstrates effective use of: differentiated curriculum; or emergent curriculum; or specialized curriculum; or evidence-based general curriculum; or project-based learning |

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| 1B. Assessment: Program uses observation and documentation practices to document children’s development and progress. | As noted by the **National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA)**, a core competency for after school includes child/youth assessment. Specifically, the NSACA notes the need for afterschool and out-of-school-time educators to be able to understand and apply observation and assessment techniques and tools to the meet the needs of individual children in their care.As the **National Afterschool Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professional** (2011) indicates: “Systematic observations, documentation and other effective and appropriate assessment strategies in partnership with families and other professional serving the same children—positively impact the development and learning of children and youth.”  |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program uses observation practices to develop semi-annual progress notes for children |
| Level 3 | Program has a plan to regularly observe and document children’s progress according to program’s specialized focus |
| Level 4/5 | Program uses valid, reliable assessment tools to document children’s progress according to program’s mission and philosophy; Program shares assessment data with families |

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| 1C. Instructional Practice: Program uses strategies to engage and meet goals for diverse learners. | Research indicates that focused and intentional instructional strategies are important to fostering children’s outcomes in afterschool and out-of-school-time programming (**Goldsmith & Abreton**, 2008).It is also noted in the **NSACA** accreditation process that educator and programs should provide programming and interaction to meet the needs of children and youth.Additionally, research has documented the importance of programming content and approaches to meet the needs of children in order to effectively foster children’s outcomes (**Bodily & Becket**, 2005). |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program uses observation practices to identify domains of children’s growth |
| Level 3 | Program uses observations practices to set challenging, achievable learning goals for children |
| Level 4/5 | Program has continuous individual learning plans for children; Program differentiates instruction |

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| STANDARD 2: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS |
| Criterion | Rationale |
| 2A. Learning Environment: Program demonstrates a safe and healthy environment that fosters learning, exploration, and play. | Importantly, there is a growing body of research indicating that high quality afterschool programming is associated with better grades, work habits, task persistence, and social skills (**Vandell et al**., 2006).Recent reviews of research have also noted significant associations between high quality after school programs and youth’s feelings of self-esteem, attitudes towards school, school grades, and school behavior (**Durlak & Weisberg**, 2007).The School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) and the Assessment of Program Practices Tool (APT) are observation measures grounded in extensive research on best practices in the field for afterschool and out-of-school-time care (**Albrecht,** 1991**; Betsalel-Presser & Jacobs,** 1994**; Jacobs, et al,** 1991**; Vandell, Henderson & Wilson,** 1998**; Seligson &Allenson,** 1993) and have been field tested and validated measures of quality (**Harms, Jacobs, White,** 2014**; Tracy, Surr, Richer,** 2012).Similarly to QRIS measures, the **NSACA** and **National Afterschool Association (NAA)** accreditation calls for program policies and procedures to protect the safety of children and youth and program policies that protect and enhance the health of all children and youth. Accreditation processes also call for an indoor play space that meets the needs of children and allows for children to take initiative and explore interests, and an outdoor play space that meets children’s needs and allows for independent outdoor play. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) technical assistance consultation |
| Level 3 | SACERS reliable rater visit and Assessment of Program Practices Tool (APT) technical assistance consultation |
| Level 4/5 | SACERS reliable rater visit and APT observation |

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| STANDARD 2: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS |
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| 2B. Interactions: Program implements strategies that promote high-quality interactions. | Importantly, there is a growing body of research indicating that high quality afterschool programming is associated with better grades, work habits, task persistence and social skills (**Vandell et al**., 2006).Recent reviews of research have also noted significant associations between high quality after school programs and youth’s feelings of self-esteem, attitudes towards school, school grades, and school behavior (**Durlak & Weisberg**, 2007).The SACERS-R and APT are observation measures are grounded in extensive research on best practices in the field for afterschool and out-of-school-time care (**Albrecht,** 1991**; Betsalel-Presser & Jacobs,** 1994**; Jacobs, et al,** 1991**; Vandell, Henderson & Wilson,** 1998**; Seligson & Allenson,** 1993) and have been field tested and validated measures of quality (**Harms, Jacobs, White,** 2014**; Tracy, Surr, Richer,** 2012).The **NSACA** and **NAA** accreditation process has standards for interaction that parallel standards captured in the SACER-R and APT. These include: educators responding to children in a positive manner; educators promoting learning through interactions; educators using positive techniques to guide behavior and youth; and children being offered activity choices from a wide range of activity options.  |
| Indicator | Level 2 | SACERS technical assistance consultation |
| Level 3 | SACERS reliable rater visit and APT technical assistance consultation |
| Level 4/5 | SACERS reliable rater visit and APT observation |

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| STANDARD 3: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT |
| Criterion | Rationale |
| 3A. Family Engagement: Program communicates and partners with families. | Research has documented family engagement and supports as key components to high quality afterschool programs that foster children’s outcomes (**Metz, Goldsmith & Arbreton,** 2008**; Beckett, Hawken & Jacknowitz,** 2001). According to the **National Association of Afterschool** accreditation process, educators should support families’ involvement in the program including: allowing family members to visit, providing an orientation for new families, and encouraging families to provide input and to get involved in program events. Additionally, educators should share information with families to support the well-being of children and work with families as a team to set goals for each child. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program communicates monthly with families regarding program activities  |
| Level 3 | Program implements survey to determine how program can better support families |
| Level 4/5 | Program implements evidence-based family engagement assessment; Program encourages families to engage in enrichment activities that connect program activities to home; Program invites family participation in program decision-making |

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| STANDARD 3: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT |
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| 3B. Community Engagement: Program collaborates with community organizations to support children and families. | In a meta-analysis of program practices associated with positive youth outcome, “partnerships with community organizations and community contacts” was identified as a practice that supports outcomes (**Beckett et al**, 2001). **Bodilly & Beckett** (2005) conducted a study of literature on afterschool program quality and developed a list of nine afterschool quality domains that includes: integrated family and community partnerships.According to the **National Association of Afterschool** accreditationprocess, programs are required to create links to the community. Additionally, programs should provide information about community resources to meet the needs of children and their families and develop lists of community resources for reference. |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program provides information about community-based resources for children and families  |
| Level 3 | Program provides individualized referrals based on family survey for community-based resources to families and provides informal follow-up with families |
| Level 4/5 | Program uses community-based resources to enrich programming; Program collaborates with public schools |

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| STANDARD 4: PROFESSIONAL CULTURE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE |
| Criterion | Rationale |
| 4A. Professional Culture: Program policies encourage a professional work environment and program sustainability. | According to **NAA** accreditation standards, staff (paid, volunteer, and substitute) should be given: an orientation to the job before working with children and youth; written personnel policies that are reviewed with staff; and written program policies and procedures, including emergency procedures and confidentiality policies that are also reviewed with staff.Additionally, staff should be given ample time to discuss their concerns regarding the program.Additionally, NAA requires appropriate financial management of program supports the program’s goals; the management of recruitment and retention of program staff; and the involvement of staff, the program's board and families in planning.  |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program implements formal staff orientation that includes staff handbook, defined process of accountability, and clear outline of organizational structures, resources, and supervision |
| Level 3 | Program regularly conducts staff survey to gather feedback regarding job satisfaction, needed supports, monthly staff meeting, and orientation procedures |
| Level 4/5 | Program staff and administrators ensure program sustainability through regular examination of organizational practices and protocols |

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| 4B. Professional Development: Program uses quality supports and professional development to increase knowledge and competency. | Research has noted that stable, well-trained staff are important components of program quality (**Bodily & Beckett,** 2005**; Becket et al,** 2001).According to **NAA** accreditation, the training needs of the staff should be assessed and training provided by programs should be relevant to the needs and responsibilities of each staff member. Specifically, staff should receive training on: how to work with families; how to promote the safety, health, and nutrition of children; and how to set up program space and design activities to support program goals.Additionally, **NAA** notes that program directors and administrators should receive training in program management and staff supervision. |
| Indicator | Level 2a | Program administrator provides staff observation and guidance to promote practice and foster Career Lattice advancement |
| Level 2b | Program uses quality supports and professional development opportunities in response to ERS technical assistance consultation and internal observations |
| Level 3a | Program administrator provides regular feedback to staff based on observation of practice and staff Career Lattice goals |
| Level 3b | Program uses quality supports and professional development opportunities in response to ERS reliable rater visit, APT technical assistance consultation, and internal observations |
| Level 4a | Program administrator develops program-wide professional development plan to assist staff in advancing in the Career Lattice |
| Level 4b | Program uses quality supports and professional development opportunities in response to feedback from ERS/APT reliable rater visits and internal observations |
| Level 5 |  Program gives quality support and professional development to programs at Levels 1-4 to promote their advancement in the QRIS |

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| STANDARD 4: PROFESSIONAL CULTURE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE |
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| 4C. Reflective Practice: Program engages in process of continuous quality improvement. | The primary benefit of reflective practice for teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching style, and ultimately, greater effectiveness as a teacher (**Ferraro**, 2000). Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a process to ensure programs are systematically and intentionally improving services and increasing positive outcomes for the children and families they serve. CQI is a cyclical, data-driven process. A CQI environment is one in which data is collected and used to makes positive changes – even when things are going well – rather than waiting for something to go wrong and then fixing it. (**BUILD**, 2013).The work of **Becket et al**., (2001) noted the importance of frequent program assessments, clear program goals, and the on-going evaluation of program progress in promoting program quality and student outcomes.**Metz, Goldsmith & Aberton** (2008) also noted continuous quality improvement as an important dimension of quality, based on outcome research related to afterschool programs. Additionally, the NSACA calls for extensive self-study as part of a self-reflection process and continued use of data for program improvement in both the short and long term.  |
| Indicator | Level 2 | Program staff collaborate to develop Level 2 Continuous Quality Improvement Plan  |
| Level 3 | Program staff collaborate to develop Level 3 Continuous Quality Improvement Plan  |
| Level 4/5 | Program staff collaborate to develop Level 4/5 Continuous Quality Improvement Plan |

#  References

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