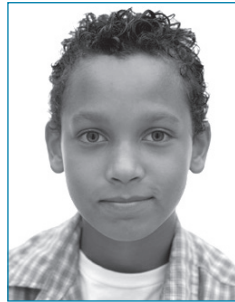
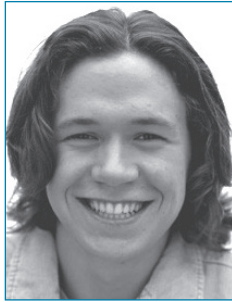


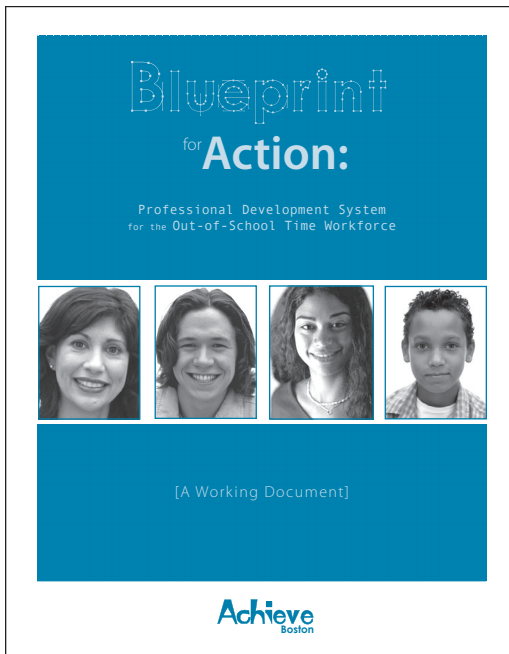
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blueprint for Action:

Professional Development System
for the Out-of-School Time Workforce



[A Working Document]



For a copy of the full Blueprint

go to

www.achieveboston.org

or contact

(781) 283-2547

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and McLean Hospital

Sylvia Clark

Director of Child Care Resources

YMCA of Greater Boston

Wanted

Out-of-School Time Group Leader. Hours 2-6 pm daily, full-time during summers and school vacations (8am-6pm). Qualifications: high school graduate, prefer some college in education, early childhood, recreation or related field; two years experience working with children and youth in group setting. Must be energetic, hardworking, well organized, team player, mature, responsible, creative, an excellent communicator, committed to children and the community, willing to make at least a one-year commitment. Responsibilities include: planning and implementing a full-year after-school program for 40 children and youth ages 5-16 years, including homework and academic assistance; sports and recreation; and creative arts instruction; documenting and assessing learning outcomes; building links with community agencies; communicating with school personnel and parents. Salary \$8.00 - 8.50 per hour depending on experience. Benefits: no health insurance available.

Executive Summary

The Key to Quality: Professional Development and the Workforce

Families, teachers, and policymakers have turned increasingly to after-school and youth programs to provide critical educational, recreational, and mentoring experiences that foster positive child and youth development. High-quality after-school and youth programs improve academic success, promote children's healthy overall development, encourage leadership, actively support and strengthen families, and garner and coordinate community resources.ⁱ

Research shows that a skilled, stable, and motivated workforce is a key determinant of quality programming.ⁱⁱ Despite the demonstrated value of high-quality programs, staff development and retention lags in programs across the field. Low wages, poor working conditions, program isolation, and a lack of professional networking and advancement opportunities contribute to an annual staff turnover rate that was reported in 2001 at 49% among Boston's after-school programs.ⁱⁱⁱ

To realize the full potential of out-of-school time (OST), staff must be consistent, well trained, and well compensated. After-school and youth workers need access to comprehensive training and educational opportunities that enable them to strengthen their skills, improve their job performance, and develop their knowledge base. Higher levels of training and education should result in greater job responsibility and increased compensation while allowing staff to advance along a chosen career path.

In Boston, there are numerous examples of innovative training and professional development initiatives. Achieve Boston has designed a system that builds on and weaves together these often disparate training efforts by creating a coherent system of support for OST practitioners while improving services to young people.

National research outlines a well designed professional development system as having each of the following interrelated components:

- > **Core Competencies** that define what staff need to know and do to work effectively with children and youth.
- > A **Training System** that is grounded in the core competencies and is responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce.
- > A **Training and Trainer Approval System** that ensures the quality of both the content and delivery of training.
- > A **Professional Registry** that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field.
- > **Career Lattice and Pathways** that link roles, responsibilities, and salary ranges.^{iv}

Each component of the system as it applies to Boston and Massachusetts is explained in detail in the **Blueprint for Action**, summarized here, and available on the web at www.achievetoboston.org.

Some system components, such as the Training System, are specific to the city of Boston and will remain focused on Boston's after-school and youth workers. Other components, such as the Core Competencies, Professional Registry, and Career Lattice and Pathways, are best implemented at the state level; for these components, Achieve will link to existing statewide initiatives. Achieve Boston will lead the work for the city of Boston. The Massachusetts School Age Coalition, in its role as a statewide organization, will lead the statewide system-building initiatives in partnership with the Office of Child Care Services, the other members of Achieve Boston, and the Massachusetts Professional Development Council. Part of Achieve Boston's role in the statewide system will be to expand the statewide efforts to encompass youth work.

Valuing Our Diverse Field

Achieve Boston seeks to develop a professional development system that spans the worlds of after-school and youth work – two traditionally separate fields.^v During the past two years, Achieve Boston engaged various stakeholders representing a diverse range of youth-serving agencies by involving them in numerous focus groups, Advisory and Working Group Meetings, presentations, phone surveys, and meetings such as the Practitioners Forum, Boston Directors' Roundtable, and the Higher Education Roundtable. These stakeholders have shaped this document and will play a critical role in the implementation of the Blueprint Recommendations.

Professional development experiences are most successful when they respond to an individual's background, experiences, and the current context of his/her role. Achieve Boston is committed to creating a professional development system that is broad-based, accessible, and responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce.

Summary of Recommendations

To develop a fully integrated professional development system for the out-of-school time workforce, Achieve Boston has outlined the following goals and recommendations for each system component to be implemented over the next three to five years:

“Professional development experiences are most successful when they respond to an individual’s background, experiences, and the current context of his/her role. Achieve Boston is committed to creating a professional development system that is broad-based, accessible, and responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce.”

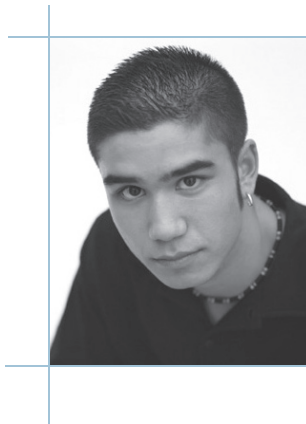
*“core competencies... clearly define what
practitioners need to know and do”*

CORE COMPETENCIES:

A comprehensive set of core competencies and indicators is available for after-school and youth workers that clearly define what practitioners need to know and do, and what it means to be competent in any given skill area. The competencies can be widely used as an overall tool by the entire field, or separately for after-school and youth workers, depending on specific program needs.

To accomplish this goal Achieve Boston will:

- > Convene committees to update the current school-age competencies and indicators, and to develop indicators of competence for youth work.
- > Establish comprehensive Out-of-School Time Core Competencies with school-age and youth worker indicators that can be used to measure staff competence.
- > Work with researchers to develop evaluative criteria, methods, and measurement tools to assess staff competence. Methods and tools for evaluating knowledge and skills will respect different learning styles, and may include such things as writing samples, video, observations with feedback and reflection, written or verbal testing, creation of portfolios, and/or interviews.



“ensures that training counts for something”

TRAINING SYSTEM:

A system of training that builds the core competencies of participants, ensures that training “counts for something,” and results in improved program quality is available and accessible to a diverse workforce.

To accomplish this goal Achieve Boston will:

- > Develop a national Youth Development Associate (YDA) credential program that is piloted in Boston.
- > Explore strategies to increase practitioner compensation, such as T.E.A.C.H.® or WAGE\$, which tie training and education to increased salaries.
- > Provide ongoing and enhanced support at the community, program, and individual levels so that practitioners can effectively navigate and benefit from the professional development system.

“This is really fantastic. I never knew that there were so many other organizations providing training for after-school providers and youth workers in Boston! I would love to talk more with some of the training providers who are here to see if there are ways we can work together to develop sequenced training or training modules that will better meet the needs of staff.”

-Training Provider who attended the Achieve Boston
Training Provider Orientation

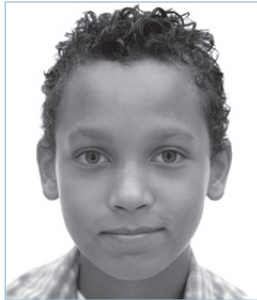
“ensures that quality training is available”

TRAINING/TRAINER APPROVAL SYSTEM:

Quality OST training and trainers are identified and approved by an independent entity to ensure that quality training based on the core competencies is available to OST practitioners.

To accomplish this goal Achieve Boston will:

- > Establish a process, similar to the one used to award Continuing Education Units (CEUs), to identify and approve high-quality training and trainers based on the OST Core Competencies.
- > Support the development of trainers who are out-of-school time practitioners by developing a process to improve trainer skills and knowledge in competency areas; encourage the development of practitioner-trainers; and provide training to current and potential trainers.



Training/Trainer Approval System

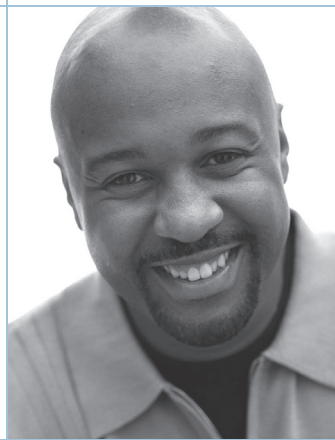
“allows practitioners to track their education, training, and professional experience”

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRY:

A statewide professional registry is established that allows practitioners to track their education, training, and professional experience.

To accomplish this goal Achieve Boston will:

- > Convene a Registry Advisory Group and work with Achieve Boston's Managing Partners, and the Massachusetts School-Age Coalition, to develop a statewide registry that serves all out-of-school time professionals.
- > Conduct a comprehensive, statewide workforce study that provides an accurate profile of the out-of-school workforce, including educational qualifications, wages and benefits, tenure, and workplace settings.



Professional Registry

*“after-school and youth workers are able
to chart a course for their careers”*

CAREER LATTICE & PATHWAYS:

A system is established that defines the amount and kind of training, education, and experience required to work in specific roles, recommended salary ranges for these roles, and career pathways so that after-school and youth workers are able to chart a course for their careers.

To accomplish this goal Achieve Boston will:

- > Build on current efforts to articulate a coordinated statewide career lattice that identifies knowledge, experience, and skills needed, as well as recommended levels of compensation, for each position or role within an afterschool or youth program.

“usually when I get back to my site on Fridays, the first thing my staff asks me for is their pay-check. Last week, the first thing they did when I got back was hand me the reference form that needed to be filled out for the training scholarship application. They are really excited.”

-Coordinator of Boston
Community Center site
in Dorchester

Career Lattice & Pathways



A Vision for the Future

Throughout the recommendations described above and in detail in the **Blueprint for Action** at www.achievetoboston.org Achieve Boston has outlined strategies for developing a comprehensive professional development system that supports after-school and youth workers throughout Boston and Massachusetts.

Achieve Boston envisions a future in which out-of-school time programs, regardless of mission, size, model, or location, are staffed by dedicated and creative individuals of all ages and backgrounds who have access to and take advantage of a range of education and training opportunities that meet their needs. Programs value staff that are skilled to work with diverse populations and understand the issues of Boston's diverse neighborhoods. Staff are supported in their workplaces to increase their knowledge, develop their skills, and improve their practice. Staff are supported by system-wide structures, enabling them to advance along their individual career paths while being well compensated in both full- and part-time jobs with benefits. Staff are recognized and rewarded both at their workplaces and by the larger society for their commitment to bettering our communities through out-of-school time programming. Finally, these well trained and compensated staff offer high-quality, challenging, engaging, and rewarding opportunities for children and youth.

With the implementation of a comprehensive professional development system the above scenario would be well within reach. Clarity of vision, belief in its possibility, and a willingness to work toward it collaboratively are at the heart of Achieve Boston's efforts to make this Blueprint for Action a reality.

Endnotes

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v. For the purposes of this document, Achieve Boston has developed working definitions for the following words: after-school and youth programs, out-of-school time, school-age provider and youth worker. These terms are often used interchangeably, but are rarely interpreted in the same way. Also, the term practitioner is used throughout this document to be inclusive of after-school, school-age providers and youth workers.