ENGAGING AFTERSCHOOL:
UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF AFTERSCHOOL EDUCATORS TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVE PROGRAM QUALITY

by

Christina Norton Joe

An education leadership portfolio submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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Christina Norton Joe

Approved: _____
Steven Amendum, Ph.D.
Director of the School of Education

Approved: _____
Rena Hallam, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Development

Approved: _____
Gary T. Henry, Ph.D.
Interim Vice Provost and Dean for the Graduate College

I certify that I have read this education leadership portfolio and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as an education leadership portfolio for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Signed: _____

Sarah Curtiss, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of education leadership portfolio

I certify that I have read this education leadership portfolio and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as an education leadership portfolio for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Signed: _____

Stephanie Kotch-Jester, Ed.D.
Member of education leadership portfolio committee

I certify that I have read this education leadership portfolio and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as an education leadership portfolio for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Signed: _____

Jacqueline Wilson, Ed.D.
Member of education leadership portfolio committee

I certify that I have read this education leadership portfolio and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as an education leadership portfolio for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Signed: _____

Rena Hallam, Ph.D.
Member of education leadership portfolio committee

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ABSTRACT

This Educational Leadership Portfolio (ELP) documents my examination of the needs of afterschool educators in Delaware, using a qualitative approach and the support they need to implement high quality afterschool programs for children and families. Afterschool programs are an essential service that spans the time before and after the school day ends. Families need safe, supervised, and enriching spaces where their children have opportunities to learn new skills, work on homework, and make new friends. The hours children spend in afterschool programs can positively impact development and learning. Considering this, many programs are embarking on a quality improvement journey. This journey can include guidance from the states' quality improvement system and includes professional learning opportunities and quality improvement specialist support.

Afterschool programs in Delaware participating in the quality improvement journey need individualized support and professional learning opportunities to increase their knowledge which in turn increases the quality of the programs in which they work. The reality is that many afterschool educators are faced with many challenges. These challenges include lack of afterschool program specific learning experiences, training, and access. The quality improvement and professional development system is currently designed to support early childhood educators and does not adequately provide support to afterschool educators that is targeted to specific needs of afterschool. This ELP examines data from afterschool educators, the quality improvement staff that support them and school principals.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Afterschool programs have been in existence for over 100 years, as environments that provide adult supervision, activities, and safe spaces for children when school is not in session. Housed in schools, community centers, childcare centers and home-based care providers, program administrators and staff face numerous challenges; access to dedicated space; lack of resources; staffing shortages, and opportunities for professional development. Despite these challenges, research has shown that high quality afterschool programs have positive effects on child/youth development outcomes (Leos-Urbel, 2013, Vandell, 2013; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). These programs have the potential to positively impact youth developmental outcomes and academics.

Nationally, it is estimated that over seven million children participate in some type of afterschool program daily, and an additional twenty-five million children would participate in a program if accessible. Low-income children from Black and Latino families (over 55%) have a harder time accessing programs (Afterschool Alliance 2020). According to research from the National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST, 2009), children who participate in quality afterschool programs have better outcomes than children who do not. High quality programs enhance and enrich the lives of children and youth, by offering activities and experiences that are

developmentally appropriate, effective staff practices to guide and support, and partner with communities and schools.

In the United States, millions of dollars have been spent to support childcare quality initiatives. These initiatives focus on program management, the program environment and curriculum, staff qualifications, and family engagement. Many of these initiatives encourage afterschool programs to participate; however, few specifically target the unique challenges and needs of afterschool to support quality improvement. The supports provided to afterschool educators often lacks access to appropriate resources and professional development specific to the afterschool context. These initiatives employ staff that may not have experience working with afterschool programs and frequently fall short in providing services and supports that effectively improve afterschool program quality. Essentially the initiatives are designed for early childhood programs with afterschool programs facing a one-size fits all approach.

In Delaware, children and families have a similar experience. Each day about 16,000 (11%) children participate in an afterschool program; approximately 62,000 (47%) ; or four more children would participate in a program if made available, for every child currently in a program (Delaware Afterschool Network, 2021). Until recently, afterschool programs in Delaware interested in participating in the state's quality improvement system (QIS) had limited access. Afterschool educators' experience was different from their early childhood counterparts. The QIS was not as robust in its services for afterschool as it was for early childhood programs. In revision, the QIS has an opportunity to be inclusive of and responsive to the needs of all programs.

The focus of this ELP was to collect data to inform and recommend supports to address the unique challenges encountered by afterschool programs. Specifically, literature on the effects of afterschool on youth development outcomes and characteristics and practices of high-quality programs will be reviewed. In addition, afterschool administrators, staff, quality technical assistants, and principal partners were surveyed to define the needs of programs. The approach taken for this Educational Leadership Portfolio (ELP) was to use data to inform policy and practice recommendations and to design resources and tools for use by afterschool staff and individuals that support these programs.

This ELP is organized into six chapters. The introduction and five chapters, followed by references, and appendices of the artifacts created. Chapter 2 describes the organizational context where the problem addressed exists and my role in the organization. Chapter 3 discusses the improvement strategies used to inform and improve the organization. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the improvement strategies. Chapter 5 is a reflection on the results of improvement efforts, and Chapter 6 is reflections on my leadership development. The appendices provide artifacts that were designed to address the problem of practice.

Chapter 2

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) was created in response to a growing demand for an early education and school age professional development system. DIEEC is located at the University of Delaware, in the College of Education and Human Development, in the Human Development and Family Sciences department. Our Mission, Vision, and Core Principles are outlined in Table 1.

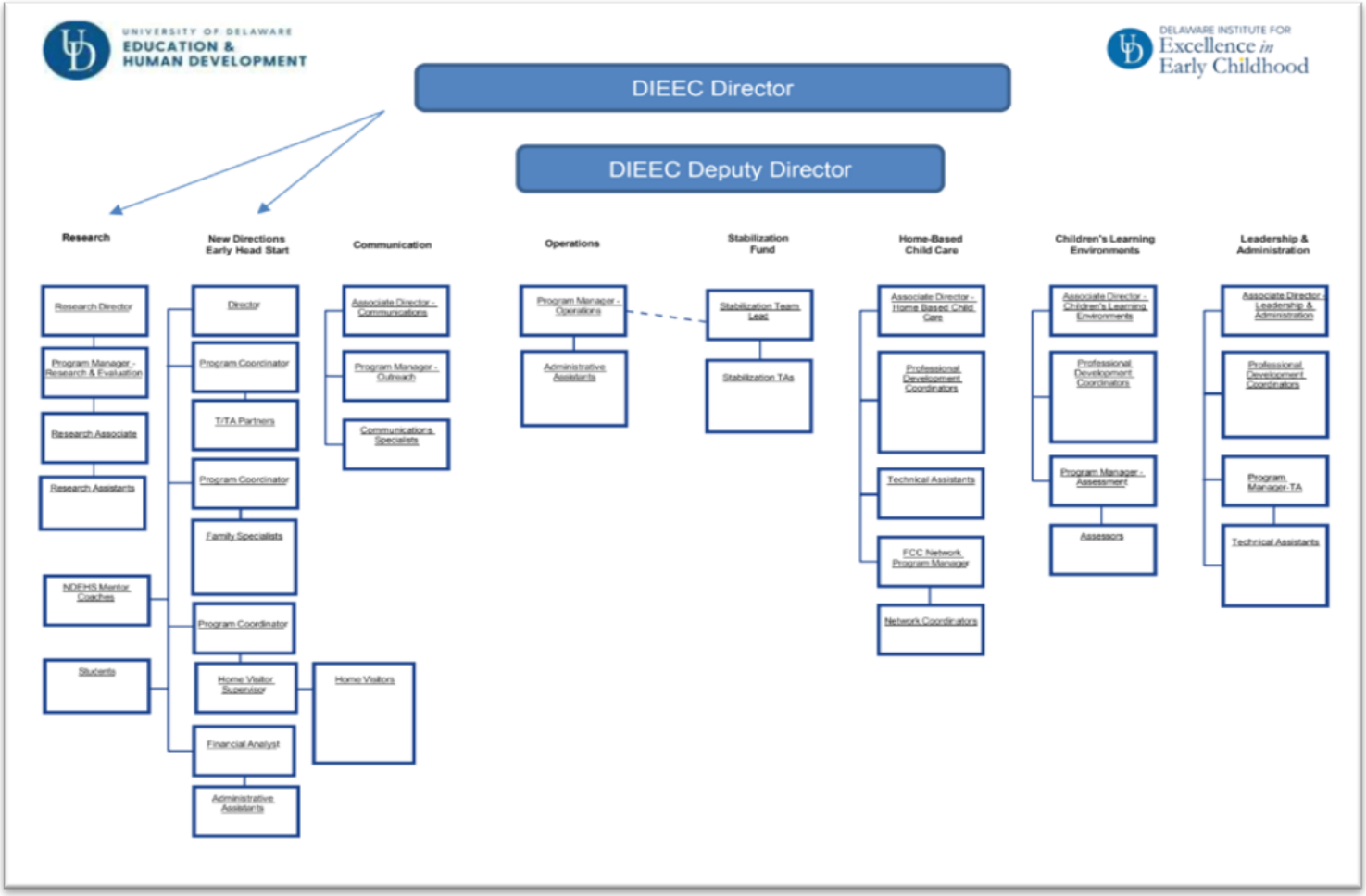
Table 1 Table 1 DIEEC's Mission Vision, and Core Principles

Mission	The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood improves the lives of young children and their families by providing exemplary services for the early childhood community. We conduct research that helps to advance equity and promotes high-quality education in early childhood.
Vision	By carrying out our work locally and in different state contexts, we will be nationally recognized as a leader in improving experiences for young children, their families, and the workforce.
Core Principles	Our core principles for vision include: • Partnership with community and government • Workforce • Communications • Developing and demonstrating new models of service integration to promote equity • Applying implementation science principles • Conducting policy relevant research in real-world contexts

Our staff includes over seventy individuals, including a director, who serves as the Principal Investigator (PI), a Deputy Director, who supervises the Quality Improvement, Professional Development, a Research Director and an Early Head Start

Director. Each director manages the daily operations in their units which include program managers, program coordinators, technical assistants, coaches, administrative assistants, family service workers, family advocates, family/child specialists, and research assistants. See Figure 1.

Figure 1 DIEEC Organization Chart



DIEEC provides professional learning opportunities and program quality improvement support to early childhood and afterschool educators and is dedicated to maximizing the healthy growth and development of Delaware's children by supporting quality early childhood and educational programming for all children, their families and their communities. In partnership with both public and private stakeholders, the DIEEC works to create and sustain a responsive, data driven system for enhancing the professional knowledge and skills of those who work with children from birth through age twelve.

DIEEC provides a framework for continuous quality improvement and a professional development registry to link early childhood and afterschool educators to professional learning experiences and technical assistance. The DIEEC creates, coordinates, and delivers these experiences to meet the needs of a diverse workforce. In Delaware, the childcare sector includes about 6,000 individuals who work in a variety of early childhood and afterschool environments. These settings include public schools, public and private center-based programs, and home-based childcare.

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood strives to improve the quality of early childhood education and afterschool programs throughout the state of Delaware and beyond by providing exemplary professional development and program-level support to all sectors of the early care and education community. In addition, DIEEC conducts policy-relevant research that helps to advance equity,

promote the early childhood workforce, and enhance the lives of young children and their families.

Role in the Organization

I have worked with DIEEC since September of 2013, initially hired to work on the Delaware Stars project (Stars), a quality and improvement system which is an approach to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early childhood and school age programs, as a Program Coordinator for Technical Assistance. Prior to joining the staff at UD, I worked for Children and Families First (CFF). CFF was created in 1884, by a group of members of the Wilmington community working to help families in need. It has grown to a statewide organization that provides programs to support children and families. The mission of CFF is to strengthen Delaware's families by delivering an innovative and effective continuum of community-based social services state-wide. Delaware Stars, the state's quality rating and improvement system, and the professional development system were some of the early childhood services provided to early childhood and afterschool professionals in the state before transitioning to the DIEEC at the University of Delaware in 2010.

In December 2019, I transitioned to the role of Research Associate and became part of the research team. In this role, I work across the various projects of DIEEC, including but not limited to Professional Development, New Directions Early Head Start, and Delaware Stars, now Quality Improvement. My day-to-day responsibilities include supervising undergraduate research assistants, who support DIEEC's work. In addition, I distribute, analyze and create reports for our professional learning and

technical assistant staff to inform their work, and support the work of our various projects by conducting research, gathering data and creating surveys to support our internal quality improvement efforts.

My role as Research Associate has heightened my awareness of challenges faced by professionals in the field of early education and afterschool. Shifting from working with direct service to research and evaluation, and collecting and analyzing data, has solidified the importance of using data to inform practice. Data empowers staff with information to support decision making and helps with evaluating services to ensure that the services offered to programs are responsive, high-quality, and effective.

In the fall of 2020, I was invited to participate on the School Age (SA) Revision team. The goal of this team was to revise the current afterschool standards, identify key practices, and create pathways to support quality programs. The team was given the directive to look at afterschool in a way that acknowledges and honors their unique strengths" (DIEEC Deputy Director, 2020). This solidified my interest in the problem of the lack of quality improvement and professional development opportunities for the afterschool educators.

The SA revision team spent the last two months of 2020 using research in the field, from reputable sources such as the Council on Accreditation Out of School Time (COA), National Institute Out of School Time (NIOST), and the National Afterschool Association (NAA), to identify standards and key practices of quality afterschool. Information gathered from these sources was used to create an accountability document that cross walked information on afterschool quality standards that was the

foundation for building out key school age practices in the areas of business practices, professional growth, relationships (children, families and community), promoting children's learning, and playful learning environments that would guide our revision work and that would eventually be submitted to the Office of Early Learning (OEL) for approval.

In early 2021, to further inform our work on key practices, the SA revision team conducted a series of four focus groups with after school program leadership and frontline staff. During the focus groups it was evident that after school leaders and staff felt isolated in carrying out their work. They expressed feelings of disconnect, thought that the system lacked targeted afterschool content, were unable to access workshops that were available at times that were convenient to afterschool staff, and lacked opportunities to connect with individuals and other programs doing similar work. (see Appendix F).

These findings indicate that DIEEC's Professional Development and Quality Improvement teams should reimagine and re-envision trainings, resources, and quality supports for afterschool only programs to ensure that all of Delaware's children have access to high quality after school programming that aligns with research from the National Afterschool Association and Council for Accreditation.

The research is clear (see Appendix A,). High quality afterschool programming is possible if implementation is intentional. To be intentional in its support of afterschool programs, DIEEC must define what quality afterschool looks like. In addition to developing standards and key practices, it will be important for DIEEC to

develop supports that are specific to after school, with quality coaches who have extensive knowledge and specialize in afterschool programming. These initial steps will build the foundation to have relevant support to guide quality improvement efforts for after school practitioners.

Statement of the Problem

While working with Stars, I observed first-hand the limitations of our QRIS system in providing support to afterschool programs to make sustainable change. A significant limitation in the QRIS was a 2014 policy that was instituted to prohibit additional afterschool-only programs from participation, due to the funding streams. The fifty programs that were participating were able to continue their journey, but this left the remaining programs, which serve hundreds of school age children, to guide their own quality improvement efforts, outside of the rating system and without access to resources outside of the rating system and without access to resources.

Another limitation that impacts supports for afterschool educators includes preparation and prior experience of quality improvement technical assistance staff. Afterschool programs, particularly school age only programs, face unique challenges. It is difficult to understand the challenges if one has never worked or observed the daily programming of afterschool. This, coupled with few professional experiences targeted to afterschool professionals, lack of resources (financial and other), lack of tools to support curriculum, program self- assessments, and understanding what effective afterschool practice is, all contribute to the desert of support. Finally, knowledge of the research and policy on afterschool, and familiarity of evidence-based

practice in afterschool makes it almost impossible to create sustainable change in after school programs' quality improvement efforts.

By acknowledging these limitations and challenges, we need to address the needs of afterschool educators and increase the level and type of quality improvement and professional learning opportunities and support available to afterschool educators engaging with DIEEC and participating in the quality improvement system.

The QRIS revision can be used as an opportunity to create a system that provides a variety of effective supports to all educators participating. This ELP focuses on the problem of the lack of sufficient quality improvement and professional development that supports afterschool educators that is targeted-specific to the afterschool context in Delaware.

Chapter 3

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

The revision of Delaware's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and subsequently the early childhood professional development system, provided the space to examine the supports provided to early childhood education and afterschool programs. Since its inception, the QRIS focused its support on early educators and afterschool programs and educators did not receive the same level of support, nor did the system provide specific targeted support to afterschool programs. Professional learning experiences and quality improvement supports were geared toward early childhood leaders and educators. Afterschool was an afterthought. The improvement goals of the ELP are (1) To examine afterschool research to define characteristics of quality programs for use in the development of supports for afterschool educators and quality improvement staff who guide improvement efforts. (2) To conduct a needs assessment of afterschool educators, quality improvement staff and principal partners to understand afterschool in Delaware and (3) To develop resources and tools targeted to the needs of afterschool educators using data obtained from the literature review, focus groups, surveys and interviews.

To accomplish these three improvement goals, the following improvement strategies were implemented:

Improvement Goal 1: To examine after school research to define characteristics of quality programs to use in the development of supports for afterschool professionals

and to DIEEC staff who guide improvement efforts. The strategies to achieve this goal include:

1. Conduct a review of literature to define the characteristics of high-quality programs and the benefits these provide to children and youth and their families.

2. Participation in the SA Revision Workgroup resulted in defining standards and key practices for quality afterschool programs. Products of this team were the Focus Groups Analysis, where we collected data from after school program educators that resulted in themes that were of greatest interest to practitioners and the presentation (see Appendix I, Artifact 9) to the team to inform decision-making about after school.

Improvement Goal 2: To conduct a needs assessment to understand the needs of afterschool educators, principal partners and quality improvement staff.

The strategies to achieve this goal:

1. Conduct afterschool program leadership and educator focus groups to discuss their successes and challenges in the quality improvement system.

2. Survey the quality improvement staff to determine what they need to build their knowledge of afterschool and to provide exemplary services to after school professionals and propose a service delivery model specific to afterschool.

3. Survey afterschool educators in Delaware to collect information about their programs, and their needs to provide quality programming.

4. Interview principals to determine their thoughts on the current state of afterschool and the types of partnerships they have with programs in their schools and use this information to inform content for improvement and support.

Improvement Goal 3: To develop resources and tools targeted to the needs of afterschool using data obtained from the needs assessment (surveys, focus groups and interviews) and the literature review.

The strategies to achieve this goal:

1. Create reports to share results from the focus groups, surveys and interviews.
2. Create a list of curricula for afterschool programs that includes information about the goals of the curriculum, cost and appropriate age groups.
3. Develop a resource for after-school programs to use when deciding which program assessment or observation tool to use to collect information to improve.
4. Develop a tool to support discussion of the importance of afterschool.

Presentation of the Artifacts

The following artifacts were developed to meet the goals:

1. **Literature Review** (Appendix A, Artifact 1). The literature review provides an overview of the problem of practice; the gap in providing targeted professional learning experiences and quality improvement supports for afterschool educators. It focuses first on defining quality afterschool, followed by identifying benefits and challenges programs and staff face and concludes

with the importance of partnerships. The purpose of the literature review was to understand quality afterschool, identify gaps, and use the information to inform the artifacts.

2. **Logic Model: Revised** (Appendix B, Artifact 2) . The purpose of this document was to propose an updated service delivery model that specifies targeted support for afterschool educators. The document provides a visual of the recommended inputs, outputs and activities to support afterschool programs participating in the quality improvement system.

3. **Afterschool Educator Survey** (Appendix C, Artifact 3). The purpose of this survey was to collect information from afterschool educators in Delaware to understand their experiences working in the field. The results of this survey were used to provide recommendations for supporting the afterschool workforce.

4. **Quality Improvement Staff Survey** (Appendix D, Artifact 4) This survey was designed to collect information from DIEEC staff about their comfort level providing support to afterschool programs and staff. It was designed to inform professional learning experiences and support for organization staff.

5. **School Principal Interviews**. (Appendix E, Artifact 5) This artifact was included after a suggestion by a committee member about the importance of partnering with schools and the potential for afterschool partnerships to impact school improvement plans.

6. **Afterschool Leadership & Educator Focus Groups**.(Appendix F, Artifact 6) This artifact was the result of my participation in DIEEC's School Age Workgroup. This workgroup was created during the revision of the quality improvement system in Delaware to examine the research on effective practice in afterschool and to make recommendations for afterschool programs who participate.

7. **Survey Tools**. (Appendix G, Artifacts 7,8,9,10) This artifact includes the questionnaires for the two Qualtrics surveys (afterschool educators and quality improvement staff), principal interview questions, and the afterschool leadership and educator focus group questions.

8. **Assessment Tools Document**.(Appendix H, Artifact 11) The purpose of this document was to use the research on effective afterschool programs to create a resource for quality improvement staff and afterschool educators. This resource includes information for individuals to make informed decisions about tools to support assessment of their programs to improve quality.

9. **School Age Curriculum Document** (Appendix I, Artifact 12). The purpose of this document was to provide information for afterschool educators on developmentally appropriate school age curriculum to support afterschool professionals in choosing developmentally appropriate curriculum for youth. The document provides information about each curriculum including name, use, developer, website, and cost, if applicable.

9. **School Age Stakeholder Video Transcript** (Appendix J, Artifact 13) The purpose of the video is to create opportunities for stakeholders to have conversations about the benefits of school age childcare and to provide research based information about afterschool.

10. **ELP Proposal Document** (Appendix I, Artifact 14)

Chapter 4

RESULTS OF THE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

This chapter discusses the results of the strategies implemented to address the goals of this ELP. The first goal of this ELP was to examine afterschool research to define quality afterschool. This examination included learning about the characteristics of effective staff practice and participation in the school-age workgroup. The workgroup was created during the revision of the quality improvement system to provide recommendations to the Office of Early Learning (OEL) for standards and key practices, specific to afterschool programs. The second goal was to conduct a needs assessment and to collect data to understand the needs of afterschool professionals and the quality improvement and professional learning staff who support them. This data collected from surveys, interviews and focus groups was used to inform targeted professional learning experiences and support for afterschool professionals. The third goal was to develop resources to support afterschool staff, using the information gathered from the assessment and literature review. The first resources identified as important to the quality improvement work were the curriculum/curriculum frameworks and program observation and assessment documents.

Through this process of data collection and inquiry I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of afterschool educators in Delaware. I was also able to support DIEEC by sharing data and providing information to guide their work with afterschool educators. I became a champion for afterschool.

Strategies to support improvement goal 1: Literature Review (*Appendix A, Artifact 1)*

To define afterschool, I created a literature matrix, to help with organization and narrowing the focus followed by conducting a literature review. The University of Delaware databases were searched to identify articles published between 1998 and 2022. The databases searched included ProQuest, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The keywords "afterschool," "afterschool programs," "school age childcare," quality afterschool programs," "out-of-school time" and "afterschool research" were used to locate relevant sources. The research on afterschool was limited and much of what was found was more than ten years old. It became clear that the quality of literature and the benefits of afterschool surged in the early 1990s and again in the early 2000s. Literature that met the criteria I established included empirical research, practice briefs, and journal articles narrowed down to include only those that featured discussions of quality, staffing, benefits and challenges, and finally partnerships. This strategy provided evidence of the importance of afterschool and the impact quality programs can have on children and families.

Results

Afterschool is a general term to describe programs that provide services to children when school is not in session. These programs may be known as Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs), Before and Afterschool Enrichment (BASE), School Age Child Care (SACC), and other similar terms. Often community or school-based, programs offer services to children and families that are structured, supervised by

adults, and offer a variety of activities that are helpful to families, such as homework time, and of interest to children, such as arts and crafts. The literature review provided insight into the afterschool field and broadened my knowledge of afterschool, specifically on characteristics of quality programs and effective practice. The literature supported my study in identifying the challenges faced by programs and that quality is important across all stages of child development. It supported my efforts by providing context to the state of afterschool and identifying key characteristics of quality programs. Huang and Dietel (2011) describe 5 components that build a quality program, 1. Clear goals; 2. Experienced leadership, 3. Staff that work well with others, 4. Alignment with the school day, 5. formative and summative evaluations.

The products created because of my participation in the school age workgroup included a presentation sharing data collected from holding focus groups, access to the research on high-quality afterschool to enhance my knowledge of the field of afterschool, and identification of key practices that support quality programming. As a result, the workgroup submitted recommendations to the Office of Early Learning (OEL) for standards and key practices, specific to afterschool programs to guide the quality improvement process.

The second goal was to use data to understand the needs of afterschool educators, quality improvement staff and principal partners.

Strategies to support improvement goal 2: Focus Groups, Afterschool Educator and Quality Improvement Staff Surveys, and Principal Interviews, Logic Model

(Appendix B, Artifact 2, Appendix C, Artifact 3, Appendix D, Artifact 4, Appendix E, Artifact 5, Appendix F, Artifact 6, and Appendix G, Artifacts, 7,8,9,10).

The second strategy included designing a variety of measures to collect data from stakeholders. The purpose of this strategy was to engage afterschool professionals, school principals and quality improvement staff in activities to provide data on their work with afterschool. It is pertinent to include stakeholders in the discussion of quality. To create an inclusive, responsive system for information from individuals working in afterschool is necessary. Understanding how afterschool educators define quality, engage with our staff and participate in our systems is integral.

The data collected from the focus groups was most helpful to inform the School Age Workgroup. This group used the themes and other information provided by participants to facilitate discussion about the direction of the revision and the recommendations. The team was comprised of representatives from quality support, professional learning, and our leadership and the data collected was instrumental in opening conversations across teams. Increased dialogue and collaboration resulted, with representatives taking information back to inform the work of their teams. As an example, learning about professional learning opportunities targeted to afterschool.

Results

The focus groups, interviews and surveys were designed to assess the needs of afterschool educators (add artifact number). The data collected was analyzed and used to inform targeted professional learning experiences and supports for afterschool

professionals. The findings from the focus groups suggest that participants had a variety of visions of quality that included nurturing, building relationships, and the importance of having quality staff implementing the program. Funding, although mentioned throughout the discussion did not articulate into a top concern for afterschool educators.

The findings of the afterschool educator survey gave a glimpse of the perspectives of afterschool educators in Delaware. Educators shared challenges, such as lack of adequate space, and lack of qualified staff, and suggested suggest staffing should be addressed to support them in creating quality programs for children. An Afterschool Alliance report (2020) found cost and access to be a barrier to participation for children in greatest need of afterschool programs. This is consistent with the experiences of the survey respondents. Furthermore, Huang, et. al. (2014) found that staff experience and training enhance the afterschool experience for participating children. Respondents to this survey indicated that staffing is crucial to the success of a program. However, it was unclear how afterschool staff defined partnerships. The survey asked about community partnerships. In retrospect, however, it would have been beneficial to have included the definition of partnerships and to ask for examples.

As Anthony & Morra (2016) explain, partnerships should be communicated and agreed upon, with expectations defined. To effectively partner, a clear definition of what it means to partner, along with expectations that correspond to quality should

be communicated to afterschool educators. A clear definition of partnerships in this survey would have provided supporting context. Without this, it was difficult to decipher the meaning of several of the responses.

The results of the QI staff survey suggest that staff can benefit from additional professional learning opportunities and context specific to the unique needs of after-school educators. Overall, staff feel confident in their ability to perform their role, however; opportunities to improve their knowledge and the types of targeted support for after-school professionals are welcomed. An area of focus that relates to literature on quality afterschool programming is partnerships. Partnerships with schools and the community are integral to implementation of quality programming, relevance, and sustainability. It was interesting that providing support for challenging behavior was seen as a strength for quality improvement staff and was a need for afterschool educators. It is also interesting that staff mentioned it was difficult to engage in afterschool programs although a variety of strategies were being utilized, such as community of practice, targeted professional learning opportunities and more. The logic model was developed prior to conducting the quality improvement staff survey. Given that quality improvement staff felt it was difficult to engage afterschool educators in the quality improvement journey this document is useful to begin conversations about the support available and the quality improvement process.

Lastly, the principal interviews collected information to support the development of resources and supports to implement and enhance relationships between the afterschool program and the school. It was clear that much work needs to

be accomplished in this area. Having a relationship and partnering with schools provides benefits to both the school and the program. 75% of respondents shared they are not involved with the afterschool program. It would be in the best interest to explore this further and to create opportunities for afterschool program leaders and staff to participate in learning and content that provides information and strategies for building these partnerships. 75% of principals indicated that facility usage was how they engaged with programs. This is an opportunity to build afterschool staff capacity in this area through community of practices and other professional learning opportunities.

The third goal was to use data to develop resources and tools targeted to the needs of afterschool educators.

Strategies to support improvement goal 3: Curriculum & Assessment Documents, (*Appendix H, Artifact 11 and Appendix I, Artifact 12*)

The third strategy was to use the information and results collected from the artifacts to create tools for use by afterschool educators and quality improvement staff.

There are few tools provided by the DIEEC designed for use by afterschool programs. Specifically, the literature insists that programs that engage in quality improvement have access to resources and tools that guide and support their work. The first two resources identified as important to the quality improvement work were the curriculum/curriculum frameworks and program observation and assessment documents.

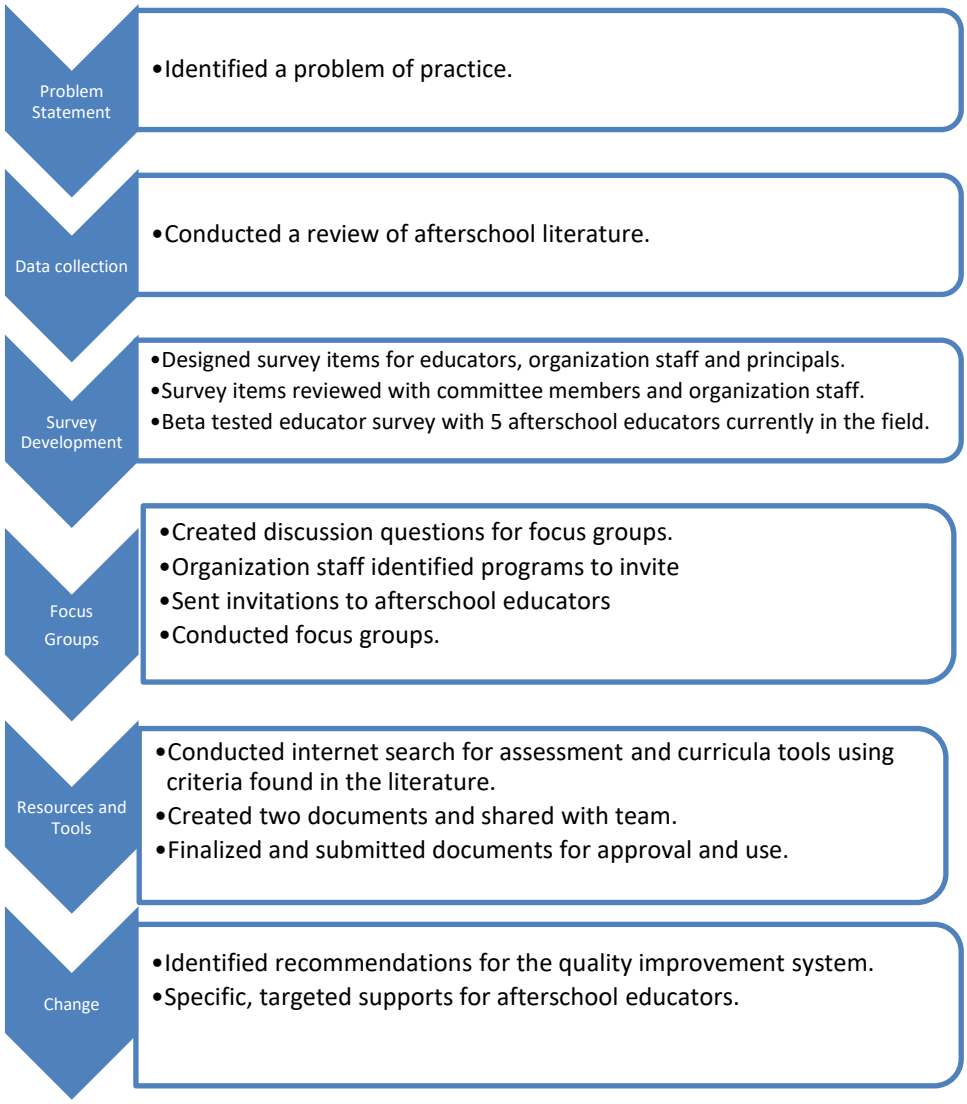
Results

The resources and tools introduced above were shared with the SA revision workgroup. The curriculum and assessment tools have been shared with the quality improvement team and were designed as resources to support the key practice, and standard implements a research-based, comprehensive curriculum individualized through use of curriculum-based developmental assessment.

Final Thoughts

My role as research associate is to support the work of our project teams. The support I provide takes on many forms, from conducting literature reviews, creating and distributing surveys, analyzing survey data, to creating reports. The rationale behind these strategies was to inform and begin to design a library of resources and tools to be used to support quality improvement goals and engagement of afterschool programs. These tools provide information to support the needs of afterschool educators specific to the context of afterschool programs. Through this process (see Figure 2) of data collection and inquiry I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of afterschool educators in Delaware. I was also able to support DIEEC by collecting and disseminating data, using this data to create tools to inform their work with afterschool educators. I am a champion for afterschool.

Figure 1 Process Flow Chart


Problem Statement
•Identified a problem of practice.
Data collection
•Conducted a review of afterschool literature.
Survey Development
•Designed survey items for educators, organization staff and principals.
•Survey items reviewed with committee members and organization staff.
•Beta tested educator survey with 5 afterschool educators currently in the field.
Focus Groups
•Created discussion questions for focus groups.
•Organization staff identified programs to invite
•Sent invitations to afterschool educators
•Conducted focus groups.
Resources and Tools
•Conducted internet search for assessment and curricula tools using criteria found in the literature.
•Created two documents and shared with team.
•Finalized and submitted documents for approval and use.
Change
•Identified recommendations for the quality improvement system.
•Specific, targeted supports for afterschool educators.

Chapter 5

REFLECTIONS ON IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

The goal of this Educational Leadership Portfolio (ELP) was to provide and use data to make recommendations for improvement and enhanced support for afterschool program educators in Delaware. The initial goal was to improve the support specific to programs participating in the quality improvement system (QIS). However, the focus grew to include all afterschool program educators with the expansion of the QIS in Delaware. This chapter reflects the improvement efforts and discusses the impact of the strategies used to inform and impact the problem. Reflections on the strategies used and the artifacts produced will be presented. In addition, the status of the improvement goals will be discussed along with recommendations and the next steps.

A qualitative approach was used to collect data to inform and support the goals of this ELP. There were several successes and challenges during the process. First, the successes will be discussed, followed by some challenges. The major success of this ELP was the collection of data specific to afterschool educators. Often afterschool is included as part of the early childhood education or childcare field. The survey and focus groups targeted afterschool educators and designed using afterschool literature. These strategies elicited a better understanding of the afterschool context specific to Delaware. They also inspired recommendations targeted to the needs of afterschool educators to effectively plan and implement quality afterschool programs and

environments. Another success of this ELP was that it engaged quality improvement and professional development staff in the process. The data collected from the survey and participation on the school age workgroup was used to inform professional development plans, tools, and supports. Also, this project included input from afterschool program leaders, educators and staff themselves and the principals with whom they work. Including afterschool staff and stakeholders is critical to building a system that has participant buy and that works.

Next, there will be a brief discussion of the challenges. An overarching challenge to the implementation of strategies was the pandemic. Strategies had to pivot to accommodate limitations and restrictions in response to the restrictions in place during the pandemic. These unforeseen challenges uncovered additional areas in need of improvement. Along with addressing the problem of enhancing professional learning experiences and other quality improvement supports available to afterschool programs it became clear that we needed pivot to provide supports virtually. This coupled with collecting data from the field to provide a variety of supports to meet the needs of afterschool educators who faced new challenges as the need to provide virtual learning environments for the children in their programs to attend school and support academics.

Improvement Goal 1: To examine afterschool research to define characteristics of quality programs to use in the development of supports for afterschool professionals and for DIEEC staff who guide improvement efforts.

Strategy 1: Literature Review and School Age Workgroup Participation

The literature review was critical to the development of this ELP. As I reflect on the importance of this strategy, this artifact was the foundation on which the ELP was built. The research on afterschool supported the development of surveys, focus groups, and principal interviews. Understanding indicators of quality afterschool, the role staff and partners play was integral to survey design and interpretation of the results. The afterschool profession continues to grow, as does the research. However, the validity and generalizability of studies is a challenge. Afterschool has a variety of names, a variety of goals and vision dependent on the stakeholder. The literature review provided a deeper understanding of afterschool, specifically the implementation of quality programs and their importance. The biggest takeaway from the literature was the importance of quality programs. To have a positive impact on academics, attendance and youth development programs must be high-quality. High quality programs include well-trained, diverse, and responsive staff, structured and engaging activities, along with an emphasis on social-emotional learning. In addition, the literature emphasized that quality programs must have systems in place to assess their

quality and outcomes, with input from children, staff, leadership, and other stakeholders, such as principals and the community.

In the fall of 2020, I was invited to participate on the School Age (SA) Revision team. The goal of this team was to revise the current afterschool standards, identify key practices, and create pathways to support quality programs. The team was given the directive to look at afterschool in a way that acknowledges and honors their unique strengths" (DIEEC Deputy Director, 2020). This solidified my interest in the problem of the lack of quality improvement and professional learning opportunities for the afterschool educators thus enhancing the development of my ELP. My ELP supported the work of the school age revision team, as my role in research is to provide data to support the work of our units. Time was spent researching quality afterschool using sources such as the Council on Accreditation: Out of School Time (COA), The National Institute Out of School Time (NIOST), and the National Afterschool Association (NAA) to inform standards and key practices of quality afterschool programs. The information gathered from these sources, along with the data collected for my ELP allowed me to have a better understanding of the needs of Delaware's afterschool educators.

Improvement Goal 2*:* Use data to understand the needs of afterschool educators, quality improvement staff and principal partners.

Strategy 2: Focus Groups, Surveys, and Interviews

Seeking input from afterschool educators was essential to improving the quality of programs. Providing the space for afterschool professionals to share their experiences with professional learning and to give input to the quality improvement system was essential to buy-in and participation. Afterschool professionals communicated their challenges working in programs. Leaders identified staffing and space as immediate challenges to be addressed. Afterschool educators defined areas that would contribute to their success. There were twelve themes identified targeted for further discussion and mirrored in the research (see Appendix). Co-facilitating the focus groups and presenting the data to the School Age Workgroup was a rewarding experience. This solidified the importance of using research to inform decisions and the impact of moving from research to practice. The afterschool educator survey immediately identified an area for improvement. The Professional Development (PD) registry. The pd registry was used to create a distribution list of individuals working in afterschool. The information was limited. The registry had not been updated consistently. Self-reporting roles and employment made it difficult to know if the request to participate was reaching afterschool professionals. If I were to use this strategy again, I would address how to define the sample and look at the survey design to address items for clarity. I would also streamline the questionnaire items to those focused on the goal and research question and encourage higher response rates. In addition, instead of distributing a survey to the QI staff, I would conduct a focus group

or semi-structured interviews using a purposive sample of only staff who are currently working with afterschool programs. This would be a better use of resources and follow-up and for clarifying questions and responses introduced to enrich the information collected.

Reflecting on the principal interviews, the number of participants and the timing of the interviews was a detriment to participation. IRB approval was not received until mid-summer, with interviews scheduled for August. I believe this impacted participation. I would also revise the process used to conduct the interviews. If I were to do this again, I would send the questions ahead of time. I would also expand the introduction to the interview, define afterschool in the context of my research, and provide a glossary of terms and their definitions to inform the conversation.

Improvement Goal 3: Use data to develop resources and tools to targeted to the needs of afterschool educators support afterschool programs in their quality improvement efforts.

Strategy 3:Resources and Tools for Afterschool

One of my responsibilities as a research associate is to provide recommendations and support for the development of tools to support quality improvement. My interest and experience working with afterschool led to the request to create a list of afterschool curriculum and assessments. The curriculum and

assessment tools were designed to be a resource to use with programs leadership to inform the discussion when planning quality improvements. The tools have been finalized and shared with appropriate team members to be used during quality improvement conversations. The logic model developed as a result of my coursework in program planning and evaluation was a useful tool to visualize the support available to educators and was a conversation starter with the leadership team as the services delivered by DIEEC were thought about systematically.

It is important to understand that the DIEEC is a responsive research organization that has processes in place to continuously improve. The school-age revision workgroup was a strategy to address afterschool programs and became instrumental in advocating for quality indicators and key practices in the new QI system. Professional learning experiences specific to afterschool professionals have been introduced, communities of practice exclusive to afterschool have been piloted, and the team has used data analysis and feedback to inform practice. The work on this ELP has prompted some recommendations at various system levels:

1. The quality improvement system (QIS) announced that all programs, including licensed afterschool programs, are now eligible to participate in (Prior to the revision, afterschool programs, were prohibited from participating.) Given this, DIEEC should recruit staff who have expertise in afterschool content and train all professional development and quality

improvement staff to provide support that is targeted and specific to the needs of afterschool educators.

2. A professional registry should be designed that can pull reports specific to employment, experience, and professional role. This registry should include periodic notifications for educators to update their information, at minimum annually.

3. The DIEECs website should include information targeted to afterschool educators. Currently the website is catered to early childhood and home-based educators, there should be a link, or other method for afterschool educators to click and be routed to resources, tools, and professional learning opportunities specific to them. This will make them feel valued and make it more efficient for them to locate information needed.

4. Use data to expand professional learning experiences on afterschool topics, such as, challenging behaviors, quality environments, play for youth, youth development and more. Current topics are limited and include partnering with schools, building relationships with schools, and character building. Continuing to take a deeper dive into these topics to advance afterschool educators knowledge.

5. Seek opportunities to celebrate the unique space that is afterschool, i.e., school age educator of the year, school age conference, and more.

6. Collect data specific to afterschool. Examples of data to begin collecting include, number of afterschool educators, number of afterschool programs and type of programs. This data should be used to inform decision-making for the quality improvement system and shared with stakeholders and the afterschool community.

7. Invite the Delaware Afterschool Network and the Afterschool Initiative Learning Task Force to partner with the quality improvement system to expand and explore their reach within the afterschool community.

8. Seek opportunities to bring afterschool leadership and educators together to enhance their community and professional growth.

9. Create professional learning opportunities that involve partnerships with public schools and afterschool program educators so they can build relationships to support the youth they provide services to.

10. Support the development of partnerships for afterschool educators with public schools to share resources and support youth development and learning.

These recommendations are the beginning of continued conversations and work to develop a comprehensive system that spans pre-natal through young adulthood. To do this the afterschool workforce needs support. Our quality improvement system can be the first step to making a difference, through the professional learning opportunities and quality supports developed to improve the quality of afterschool programs.

Chapter 6

REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

I enrolled in my first course in the Fall of 2014, as a continuing education student. My dream has always been to earn a doctorate. This journey began as I was facing one of the most difficult times in my life, losing my father to cancer and working in a role where I was struggling. I struggled to connect with my team and effectively communicate expectations. I was unable to define the type of leader I wanted to be, however; the team was not experiencing the best of me, nor did they know who I was as a leader or what we would be capable of if we worked cohesively. Reflecting on this now, I think the combination of losing a parent and acclimating to a new work environment made me feel lost and unprepared for the responsibilities of leading our team.

My first course was EDUC 846 Collection and Analysis Data course. I had several goals, the first was to decide if pursuing another degree was something I could accomplish. The second was to learn something new to impact my work and develop new skills. This class was informative, and I was able to apply what I learned in my day-to-day work.

In the spring 2015, I enrolled in EDUC 827 Analysis of Secondary Data for Decision Making. The learning experiences in this course helped me to think intentionally about how to use data to inform my work with others, including my team and the work

of the team. . It solidified my desire to apply to the EdD program. While completing courses for the degree, we were tasked to identify a topic of interest to pursue for the ELP. I was unsure of what I wanted to pursue for my final topic. As a result, most of my artifacts were developed after having completed the coursework. I share this because this experience led to my ELPs' focus on afterschool programs. Quality afterschool programming has been a part of my work experience for over 15 years, which includes my role with DIEEC, where I try my best to advocate for afterschool.

Skill as a Scholar

A result of my tenure in the doctoral program is that I have developed skills that make me a better consumer of research and a better researcher. In EDUC 828 Research in Education Decision Making we were taught to read articles and journals for content and to analyze the strengths of studies. We practiced how to skim articles for areas that would help us to decide if a study was worthy to be used as evidence in decision making. This experience and other learning experiences encountered during the program made it clear how valuable research is.

I am able to successfully navigate the expectations and requirements of my role due to the skills I built in the program. I have become better at communication, both verbal and written. I have a deeper understanding of the importance of data and how to effectively analyze data to support organizational improvements.

I continue to develop my ability in creating questions and inquiry that lead to the development of effective and responsive services to the individuals our organization serves.

Skill as a Problem Solver

The process of identifying a problem, conducting research and collecting data, has transformed me as a professional. Prior to going through this ELP, I did not fully understand the importance of leading with an inquiry stance. Having been a program director for over 20 years, it was not until I was working at the University and taking coursework that I truly applied what I learned. My role leading the technical assistant team was one of the most challenging I had ever experienced. There were days that I left the office in tears or frustrated to the point of wanting to resign. There were two courses that helped me to create a new narrative, EDUC 890 Leadership Theory and Research and EDUC 891 Organization Problem Analysis/Planning in Education, these courses supported my development as a problem solver. I have become more proficient at identifying the cause and understanding the effects of not addressing problems and working collaboratively to find a solution. I am more proficient at identifying a problem and using data to assess where our efforts need to focus to improve outcomes. I have developed a voice of inquiry and use this approach to gather information.

Skill as a Partner

There are many stakeholders involved in our work. DIEEC works with the Office of Early Learning (OEL), Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL), childcare professionals, families, and other organizations interested in early childhood. I believe our organization excels in communicating pertinent information that allows these organizations to complete their work. In addition, communication must be timely and accurate. This directly impacts my work, and I strive to make decisions around my work quickly and change directions when necessary to meet the needs of our partners.

As a partner, I want the experience individuals have with DIEEC to be positive. I strive to be responsive and to ground myself in understanding what support and information is needed for everyone we serve.

I grew as a professional during my doctoral journey. I learned to become confident in my abilities, and I learned to say no, when necessary to position myself to do my best work. I hope that my work on this ELP continues to drive the conversation about the importance of afterschool specific to afterschool in Delaware that has a lasting impact on the educators, children and families we serve.

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Appendix A

Artifact 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Afterschool programs support children and families by providing a safe and supervised learning environment when school is not in session. These programs have the potential to positively impact youth development, function as a complement to the school day, and support social and emotional development.

This literature review will define afterschool, examine research on afterschool programs and summarize the history, benefits and challenges of programs.

Afterschool programs provide safe and supervised environments for children when school is not in session. These programs have the potential to positively complement the school day, enhance youth development, and support social and emotional development. Quality programs provide the most benefits. According to the Afterschool Alliance (2014) over 10 million children and youth participate in an afterschool program daily and the need for programs continues to grow.

Methods

A systematic review of literature was conducted to identify articles published from 1998 through 2022. The research on afterschool was beginning to pick up momentum during the late 1990s and therefore chosen as a starting point. The following databases were searched: ProQuest, JSTOR, ERIC, and Google School, using keywords: “afterschool programs,” “after-school,” “school age childcare,” “quality afterschool programs,” “out-of-school time,” and “afterschool research.” This

search was broad to locate any relevant articles, papers, or research on the topic of afterschool.

The data and information on afterschool with the specific features of being community-based was outdated and limited. Eligible studies and papers were narrowed down to those which included discussions of quality, outcomes, features and are references in this review.

Defining Afterschool

Afterschool programs, also known as Out-of-School-Time (OST), Extended Care (EC), School Age Care or School Age Child Care (SAC or SACC), Before and Afterschool Enrichment (BASE) and Extended Learning (EL), programs provide services to children and families in the hours afterschool. These programs are school or community based organizations that offer a structured, adult supervised space a variety of activities of interest to the children while parents are working (National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) 2021).

There are numerous variations in the types of programs available to families. For the purpose of this review references to afterschool programs are defined as out of school time programs that engage school age children and youth in developmentally appropriate, social, educational, and recreational activities selected based on needs, interests, and abilities, to promote positive relationships with adults and peers in an environment that is safe, physically and emotionally. Program hours may occur before and/or afterschool and during school vacations. They may be operated by a variety of organizations; schools, community and faith based. These programs may use a variety

of terms to describe their services afterschool, SACC (School Age Child Care), and BASE (Before and Afterschool Enrichment) (Council on Accreditation, 2021).

History of Afterschool

Afterschool programs came into existence in the late 1890's to provide a safe place for children to be supervised after the school day ended. The shift from using child labor and both parents working created a need for this service. To keep children protected from the dangers of being unsupervised for long hours. Engaging in delinquent behavior and activities. The first afterschool programs originated in the late 19th century in response to a growing need for children to have safe spaces with adult supervision to go to after the school day ended. These programs were known as clubs. Clubs were designed to provide protection, supervision, prevention and recently, enrichment for children when not in school (Halpern, 2002, Afterschool Alliance, 2018).

In the late 20th century interest in afterschool grew. The number of programs increased in response to families in need of care for their children while at work, children in need of academic support, and as prevention programs.

Historically, afterschool programs came into existence, as "clubs' ' during the 19th century, in response to a need to keep children engaged in and under adult supervision. During this time, children were required to attend school, instead of work, which resulted in an increase of children being unsupervised afterschool, engaging in inappropriate and delinquent behavior and activity. These programs were created to

provide protection, supervision, prevention and enrichment when children were not in school (Halpern, 2002; Afterschool Alliance, 2018).

Purpose/Goals of programs

The goals and purpose of afterschool programs continue to evolve. Safe, supervised engaging spaces for children to socialize with peers, build skills, explore interests and learn something new, relax, complete homework. More recently programs are designed to promote health and well-being and promote positive youth development, and support academics (Fukkink & Boogard, 2020, Halpern 2002, Kremer, et. al., 2015, Kane, 2004).

Initially the purpose of afterschool was clear, a service for parents and families, which evolved into a place for children to have adult supervision in the hours after, eventually including before, school to prevent delinquent and risky behaviors, to provide protection, and enrichment. Currently many programs are ambitious in their design to promote well-being and positive youth development. (Fukkink & Booguard, 2020; Halpern, 2003).

Challenges

The debate on the role of academics in afterschool endures, with individuals who believe afterschool should not have any academic activities and others who see afterschool as an opportunity to help struggling students improve. Halpern, a renowned afterschool researchers shares this thought on the role of academics in programs:

> "School related problems should not disrupt afterschool programs from providing opportunities and creating relationships critical to meeting the developmental needs of children and youth (p.137). (Halpern, 2000).

Kremer, et.al, 2015, explored the purpose of programs, and found that program design, implementation, and evaluation is key. Expectations for programs to affect various child and youth outcomes without intentional programs in place are detrimental. Design and evaluation of programs can positively or negatively affect outcomes and predict the potential and benefits of programs.

Recently, afterschool programs have been targeted to include tutoring and academics. This trend overlooks the purpose and goals of afterschool. Afterschool is a space where children who may not feel successful during the traditional school day can find success in the variety of activities and experiences based on children's interests giving them the potential to excel at something new or enjoyable (Philp & Gill, 2020, Philp, 2022).

Staffing shortages are common in afterschool programs. Due to the part-time nature of the field, recruitment, retention and quality of the workforce are prevalent. Afterschool environments are often in shared spaces which may limit the number and type of activities that are provided to children (Sheldon and Hopkins, 2008).

Benefits of Afterschool/ Importance of Quality Programs

High quality afterschool programs have the potential to positively benefit children/youth, parents, and the community. Research supports the claim that children who participate in high-quality afterschool programs have better outcomes than those who attend low quality programs. In fact, low quality programs have the potential to

harm children and youths' psychological development. Programs can have lasting effects on the children and youth they serve. High-quality programs may have positive effects on youth, especially those identified as high-risk. Opportunities to increase engagement, reduce the achievement gap and motivate children/youth to learn outside of school support positive child outcomes (Durlak & Weissburg, 2007; McComb & Little, 2003)

Research has found effective programs are ones that implement academic, enrichment, cultural and recreational activities and content to guide learning to engage youth. Programs that use this approach have demonstrated this design combined with intentional planning to meet the needs of the community are most effective.

Programs that include goal setting and strong management; high quality staff and volunteers, low staff to student ratios and group size; focus on health, safety and nutrition, partnerships with community-based organizations; strong involvement with families in program development, implementation and improvement; coordinated learning with the school day; linkage between teachers and afterschool staff; and a process for regular evaluation of process for program improvement (Granger, Durlak, Yohalem & Reisner, 2007; Hall & Gruber, 2007; Little, 2007).

In a study to determine if afterschool programs were associated with low-income children's social and academic functioning, Posner and Vandell (1994) found evidence of positive effects for children attending these programs. Effects included better grades, school conduct, peer relations and emotional adjustment. Vance, F

(2010) Barriers to quality include high turnover, inadequate compensation and benefits limited advancement opportunities and unstable funding.

Table 2 Nine Components of High Quality Afterschool Programs

High Quality Programs have		
Clear goals and strong management	Health, safety and nutrition policies and procedures	Coordination with school day
Qualified staff and volunteers	Partnerships with community-based, juvenile justice, law enforcement and youth organizations	Linkages between school day and afterschool staff
Low child-staff ratios	Family Engagement and Involvement	Process for regular evaluation and program improvement

*adapted from Siaca, J.L. (2010) High Impact Afterschool for All.

It has been found to positively affect youth development outcomes; programs must be high quality and the experiences provided must also be of quality. High quality programs have identified goals, consistent leadership and staff who participate in on-going training, and the program collects data on goal attainment (Huang and Dietal, 2011, Afterschool Matters, 2009). Quality programs positively affect student work habits, time on task, and positive interactions with peers (Kataoka & Vandell, 2013). In addition, programs can support healthy youth development by connecting with school staff.

Discussion

Literature on afterschool programs is limited and the research base fragmented. There is a lack of agreement on intended outcomes for programs. Research on afterschool programs is clear to strengthen afterschool programs support must focus on program effectiveness and achievement of program goals (Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2009, Durlak Weissberg & Pahan, 2010, Zief, et. al. 2006.

Researchers have explored reasons some programs have a positive impact while others do not. Granger (2008) found that evidence-based programs focusing on specific social and personal skills that implemented sequential learning activities targeted to develop skill and have youth actively involved had better results. Programs were found to be influenced by internal and external factors, programs are interconnected. SAFE features show significant effects on outcomes (Sequential, active, focused, explicit) (Granger 2008, Granger 2010).

In contrast, Greene, et. al. (2013) found engagement to be a critical factor with positive outcomes, with participation linked to identity exploration gains in human and social capital and connections between youth, schools and their communities.

Twenty years of research has linked high quality programs to gains in psychological and educational adjustment, self-esteem, high-school completion, and civic participation in adulthood.

Hall and Gruber's (2007) research suggests what students do afterschool has as much to do with their success as what they do during the school day. Program quality is the key to positive outcomes. Quality afterschool programs improve feelings of self-esteem, self-confidence, grades, attitudes, achievement test scores, and reduce problem

behaviors. Researchers also found students that participate in afterschool programs had significantly higher reading achievement and were rated by teachers as having greater success than students who did not (Huang and Dietal, 2011) .

Afterschool programs continue to be a necessity for families, especially for those where the adults work outside of the home. Prevention, protection, enrichment continue to drive this need. (Halpern, 2003). Pierce, Bolt, Vandell, 2010, "afterschool programs may be uniquely positioned to provide children with an outlet for pursuing a variety of activities that support their development."

Fukkink & Booguard (2020) in their study of afterschool programs found experts, parents, staff at afterschool programs should focus on relaxation and recreation and provide foundation for children's social, physical and creative development. A broad range of activities and materials should be available for various age groups and staff should engage with youth in a sensitive and responsive way. Goals of the program should incorporate the needs, interests and wants of children. A hybrid model of education and care reveals different levels of quality components of programs.

Recommendations

Afterschool professionals should promote and support research studies on afterschool programs, with a focus on effectiveness, and impact youth development. Research should target program attributes that enhance learning, however, provide justification that protects the unique space and possibilities of afterschool programs, to prevent them from becoming an extension of school. Future research must focus on

how positive youth development is promoted to inform practice and professional development opportunities for afterschool staff.

It is critical to encourage studies which focus on the benefits of school-age quality, engagement, and impact on social emotional and youth development as delivered by this specific program type, including effective practice research and program effectiveness (Brown-Cross, Gottfredson, Wilson, Roric &Connell, 2010).

This literature review highlights the fact that the research on afterschool programs is still limited. In the studies that exist, the limitations make it difficult to pinpoint what program design is most effective. The research does allow researchers to conclude characteristics and components that when combined designate a program as high-quality.

Conclusion

Afterschool programs are built on the promise of opportunity and possibility. Programs should embrace this foundation and advocate for resources, funding and support to highlight their value. Programs must protect the space that is afterschool and articulate to stakeholders that academics is not the goal but a welcomed outcome: "increasing focus on academics in afterschool programs overlooks the potential for such spaces to support populations of students who are most likely to disengage from traditional schooling." p.19 (Halpern, 2000)

This review focused on school-age childcare or afterschool programs that provide a variety of activities and supervision to children who attend school during the

day. The research is clear, afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to provide children and youth with experiences and activities that support development and skill building (Pierre, Bolt, Vandell, 2010; Smith, et. al., 2014).

The benefits of afterschool programs expanding research in the field as it relates to supporting program staff and the environment with research supporting the fact that having high quality staff who are able to build relationships with children and their families and communities, are most crucial when talking about quality.

Most recently, with the novel coronavirus pandemic many afterschool programs have embraced the opportunity to support families, schools and the community by implementing learning centers that allow parents to work, and children to attend school remotely meeting a need and lessening the burden on families. As we look to the future, the focus should be to attract, retain, and train quality staff.

In conclusion, research provides evidence that actual programs of quality can positively impact youth learning and development. Program organization, structure, staff and peer relationships, along with providing a variety of activities, all contribute to program quality. Systems of greater accountability, and an increase in partnerships, to purposefully implement programs should happen. (Hirsh, et.al., 2010).

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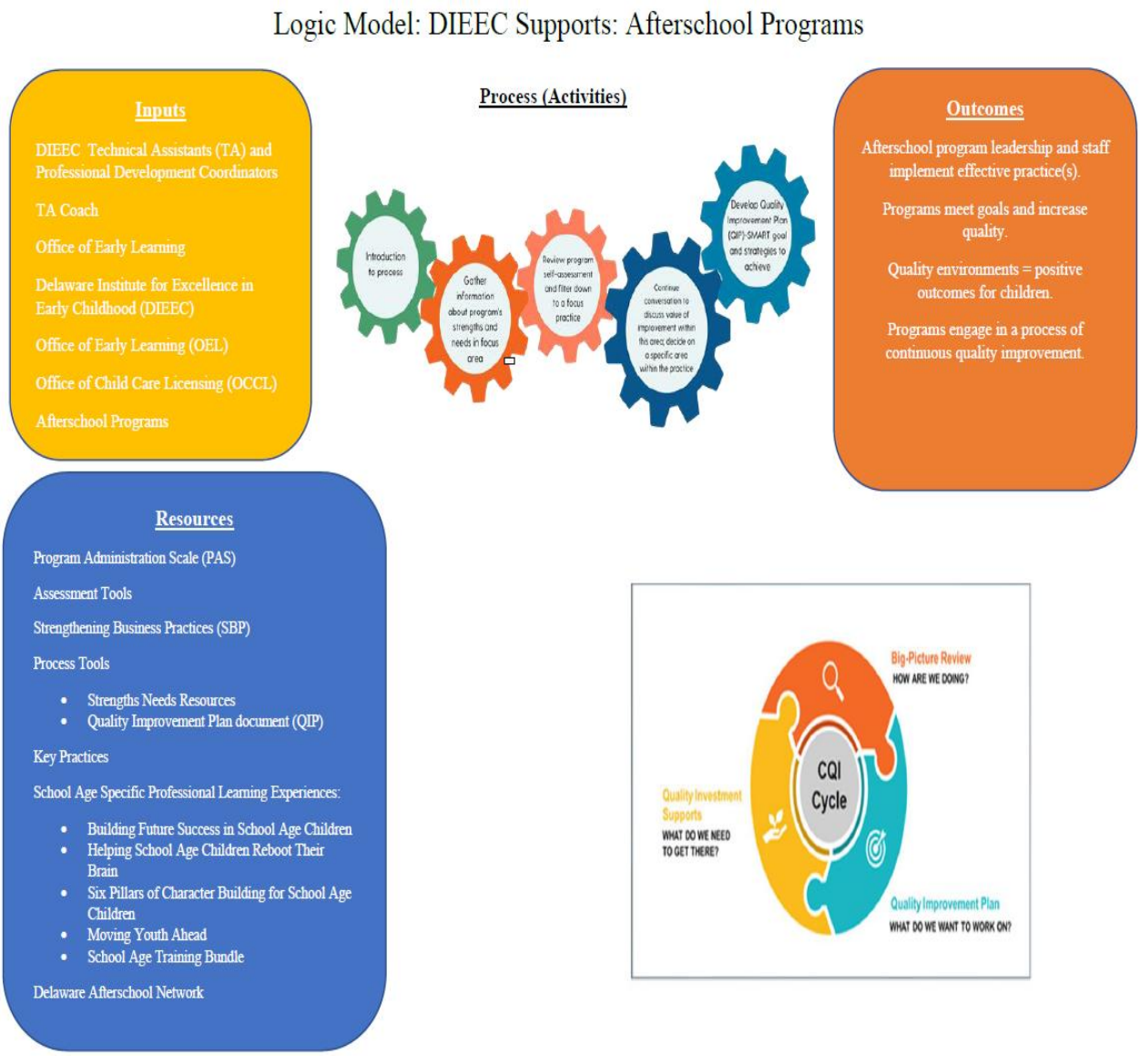
Appendix B

Artifact 2: REVISED LOGIC MODEL



Appendix C

Artifact 3: AFTERSCHOOL EDUCATOR SURVEY

Positive staff-child relationships, understanding youth development, and knowledge of effective practice is key to the implementation of a quality after school programs (Huang, et.al., 2014; St. Clair & Stone, 2016). Positive staff-child relationships include the interactions between the staff and children that are warm, supportive and encouraging. Understanding youth development includes staff having developmentally appropriate expectations to support both social-emotional and physical development. Effective practice for afterschool considers the activities, routines and structure of the program that is inviting to children and youth.

Given the role of program staff in afterschool programming quality, I developed a survey to better understand the significant role staff plays in determining a program's quality specific to the Delaware context.

In the summer of 2022, the Qualtrics survey was distributed via email to professionals who identified their roles in the childcare professional development registry as school-age which indicates that they are an afterschool. The professional development registry is the system in Delaware that tracks professional learning experiences for individuals in childcare. The survey was designed to identify the types of programs offered, how staff define quality and the challenges afterschool educators face and to collect information that could be used to develop supports.

Survey questions were developed based on the literature that defines afterschool quality and my experience working in the field. Drafted questions were reviewed by content experts and revised. The survey was linked to Qualtrics.

Research Design

The survey included both open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The questions were designed to collect data from afterschool educators about their programs as well as provide a space for them to share their thoughts and beliefs about their workplaces. In doing so, the survey was intended to assist in uncovering emerging themes and content areas from afterschool educators that may be considered for professional learning opportunities and/or further study on afterschool programs and staff in Delaware.

Participants

Purposive sampling (Sharma, 2017) was used to identify individuals working in the afterschool field. Individuals were invited to participate via email. Respondents who clicked on the survey link and participated in the survey implied consent. A total of 130 respondents started the survey and 36 respondents completed the survey. The data shown is for individuals who finished the survey. Table 3 outlines the respondent's setting, role, and the number of years employed at the program when taking the survey as well as the number of years working with children and youth in general.

Table 3 After school educator's role, staff and setting.

Item	Response	N	Percentage
Type of Setting	School building	14	39
	Community Building	14	39
	Other	4	11
	Child Care Center	4	11
Role	Intern	3	9
	Site Assistant	8	23
	Site Coordinator	6	17
	Program Administrator	8	23
	Other	10	28
Years Employed at current program	Less than one year	8	22
	1-5 years	24	67
	6-10 years	2	5
	10-15 years	0	0
	16-20 years	1	3
	20 plus years	1	3
Years working with children and youth	Less than one year	3	8
	1 -5 years	10	28
	6-10 years	6	17
	11-15 years	6	17
	16 to 20 years	3	8
	20 plus years	8	22

Data Source and Data Collection Procedures

Using descriptive coding which is a process of identifying the main topic of a passage of data and allows for data to be categorized and tabulated (Saldaña, 2021). A 30-item questionnaire was created and distributed using Qualtrics. Afterschool staff were invited to complete the survey through an email which provided a link and described the survey as part of research on afterschool programs in Delaware. The first section of the survey included questions that respondents were asked to choose from a definitive set of responses. These questions included inquiries into the program in which respondents worked and demographics. The second section used open-ended

questions to collect information about staff experience, program goals, strengths, and areas for improvement. The subsequent section was a mix of questions to help gain a better understanding of the processes and expectations of the program. The survey questions can be found in the Appendix G.

Analysis

First, the data was exported from Qualtrics into an Excel spreadsheet. It was then manually cleaned with any personal or identifying information redacted. The cleaned dataset was reviewed and open-ended questions were manually coded into themes. To finalize themes the open-ended questions were reviewed multiple times, coded and recoded. Finally, a report with visual representations was created to support analysis.

Limitations

This study was limited because the information regarding role in the professional development (PD) registry is self-reported, and there is not a process for individuals to update or verify the information is correct, so it is possible potential participants were missed and others included although they may not work in school age programs or are no longer working in the field. The second limitation is the small response rate poses a barrier. The survey was distributed to over 1300 individuals; however, only 130 started the survey, with 36 completing the entire survey. This response rate (2%) makes it difficult to generalize responses. The third limitation is a gap in how individuals define afterschool. In retrospect, providing a definition of afterschool in the context that was being explored may have impacted an individual's decision to participate in the survey. The fourth limitation is the survey design. To

reduce potential fatigue, there should have been fewer survey items. Due to lack of interpretability or misunderstandings, several items should have been eliminated from the questionnaire, presented in a different order, or the question rewritten to provide context and to clarify the intent of the question for participants.

Last, the survey questions could have been presented using predetermined codes based on the literature review or framed more closely around the key questions. Future research on afterschool programs should collect data specific to the role of afterschool educators or the specific program. For example, questions might vary based upon the participant's status, as an administrator, site lead or assistant.

Findings

Demographic Information

The first set of questions collected demographic information from the respondents. 51% (18) of respondents work in New Castle County, 20% (7) in Kent, and 23 % (8) in Sussex. 6% (2) of respondents selected Other, with one respondent sharing Newark as a response. See Figure 3 for a breakdown of responses. Additionally, 78% (28) of respondents worked in a school or community-building setting, (see Figure 4), with 66% having been employed for 5 years or less, (see Figure 5).

In addition to setting and length of employment, the survey asked for participant's roles and educational experience. 22 of 35 (63%) respondents listed their roles as program administrator, site assistant, or site coordinator. These titles

correspond with school age staff titles in childcare licensing (see Figure 5). 10 (28%) of respondents indicated they had obtained a bachelor's degree and 22% had some college courses (see Figure 6). This is important to note as the literature indicates staff who have obtained college degrees or have more training can directly influence the quality of the program.

Figure 3 What county is your program located? (n=35)

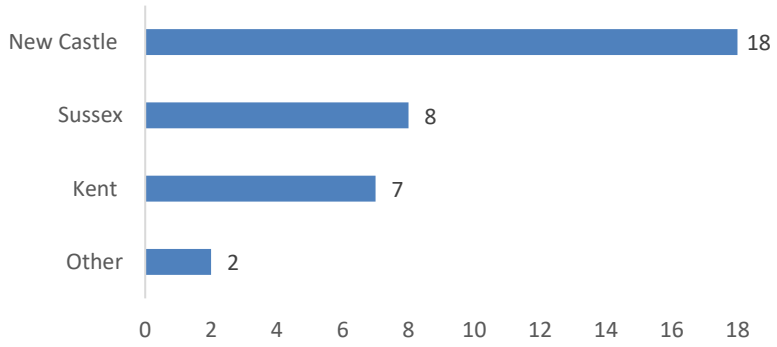


Figure 4 What type of setting? (n=36)

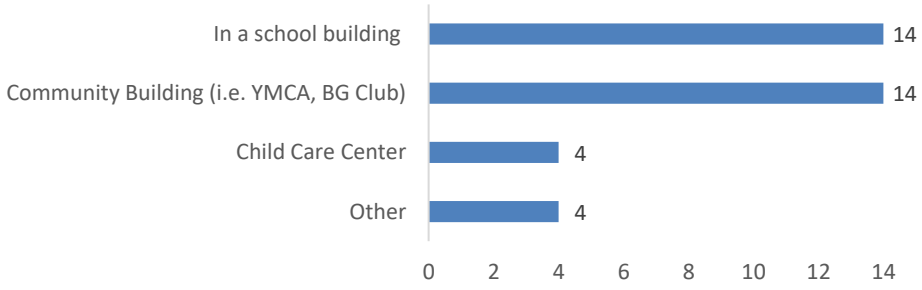


Figure 5 What is your role? (n=35)

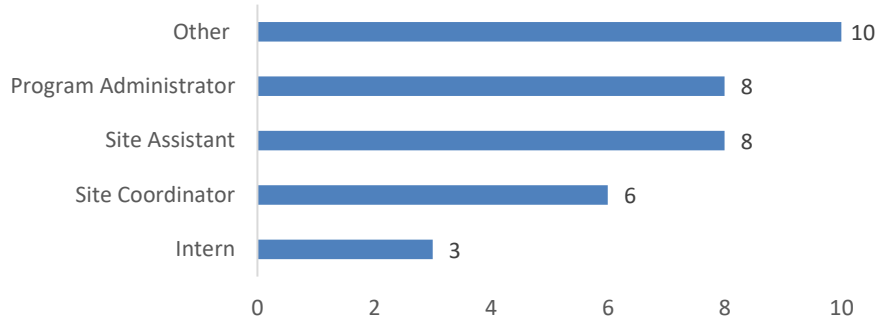


Figure 6 How long have you been employed at your current program?

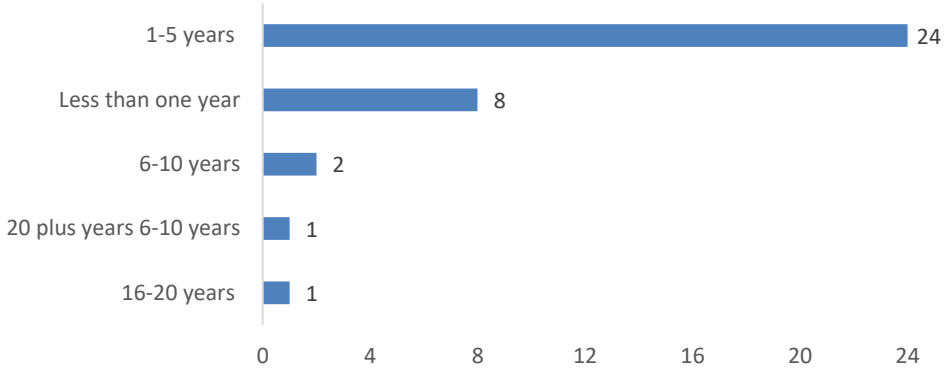


Figure 7 How long have you worked with children and youth?

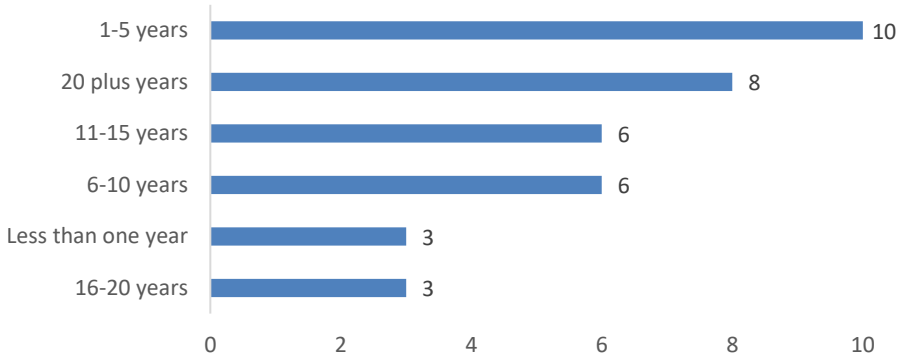


Figure 8 What is your highest level of education?

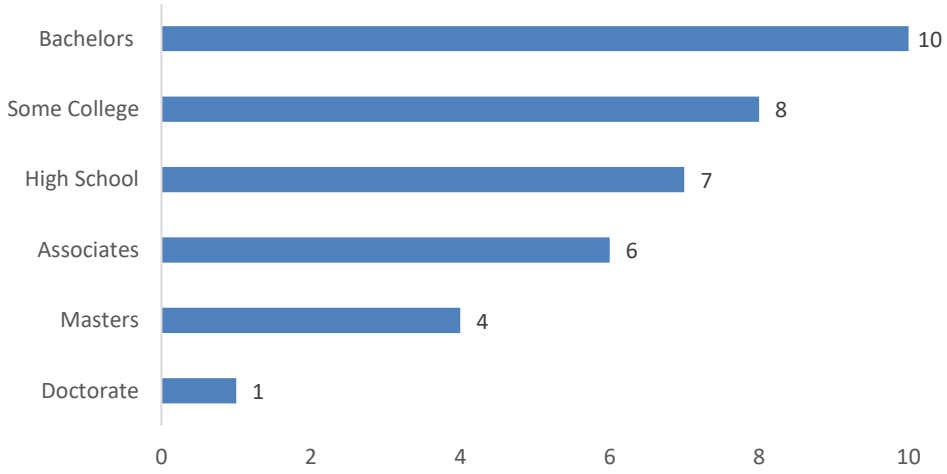
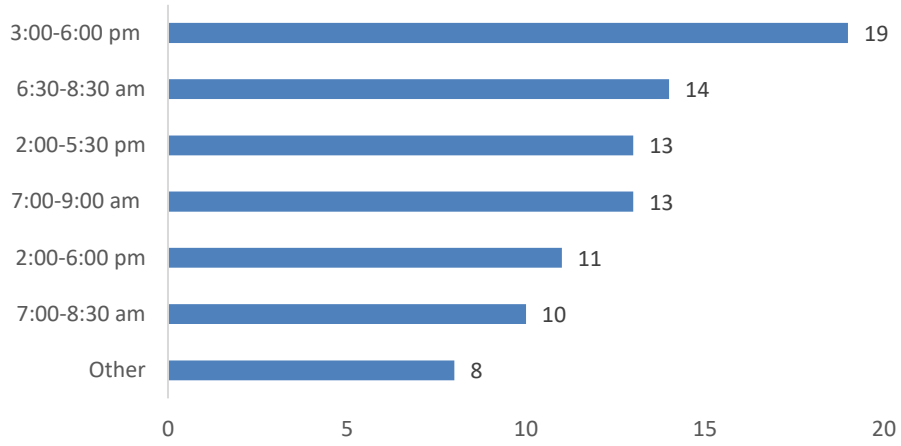


Figure 9 What hours does your program operate?



The next section reports findings from the open-ended questions as they relate to the key questions. The responses indicate the importance for afterschool educators as it relates to the program mission and goals, challenges faced by staff, needs to implement an effective program, and how the program partners with the school and community.

A clear mission and goals statement can support program quality (Huang, 2013, Jordan, et. al., 2009), therefore; the questionnaire included items for respondents to identify and share their program's mission and goals. When asked, 7 of 27 (26%) stated the goal of their program was to provide safe, secure and preventative spaces for children; meanwhile, 18% described enrichment, empowerment and fun and happy spaces were afterschool educator goals. It was surprising that youth development and building future leaders were reported only once for 4% of respondents.

It was equally interesting that academic support was reported as a goal for two (7%) of respondents. The literature indicates that afterschool has the potential to have a positive impact on academics, however, overall programs did not report that academics were a primary focus.

Definition of Quality

Survey responses defining quality centered around three major themes: 1) relationships, 2) staff, and 3) activities. This is consistent with the literature which describes organization, staff, partnerships, relationships, and variety of activities to be among the chief indicators of quality (Huang, et.al., 2014).

One respondent shared their vision of quality: "A quality program to me is having the right staff members that work with the children. They need to engage with them and be available not just for school assistance but for the more common socio-emotional connections that are truly needed for students to feel valued, cared for, and seen. I think personally that is the most important part of what we do here." Another respondent described quality as: "The children have an opportunity to explore new things that interest them. In addition, they get to participate in activities that they do have a passion and interest in. I think it also includes getting to develop relationships with caring adults."

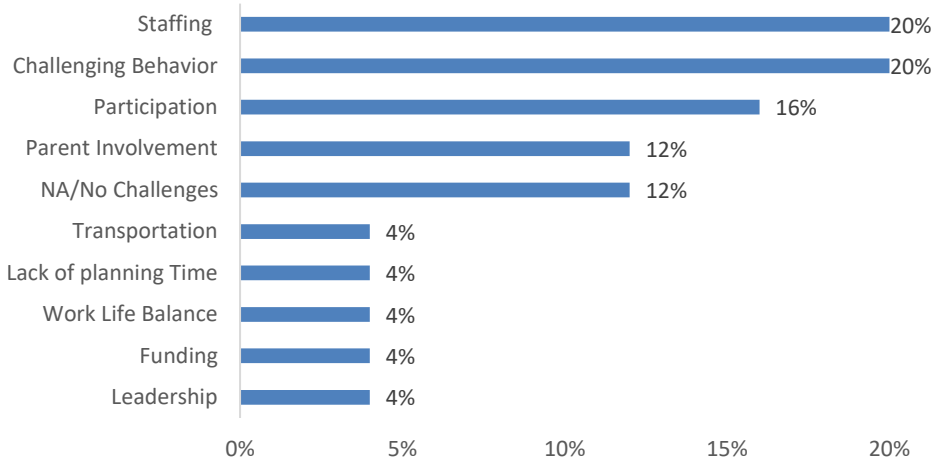
As the findings suggest staff and their abilities to connect with and facilitate interactions among children are the foundation that builds quality, the current childcare workforce crisis can be detrimental to the quality of the program. The shortage of quality afterschool educators must be addressed to support programs, children and families.

Challenges

The top three challenges respondents listed were a) lack of trained/quality staff, b) student behaviors, and c) student engagement and participation. One respondent indicated primary challenges to be the lack of training for dealing with students with behavior issues and not following schedules. Other responses included

poor management, lack of planning time, parental involvement, space and funding. This is valuable information to inform support for afterschool educators.

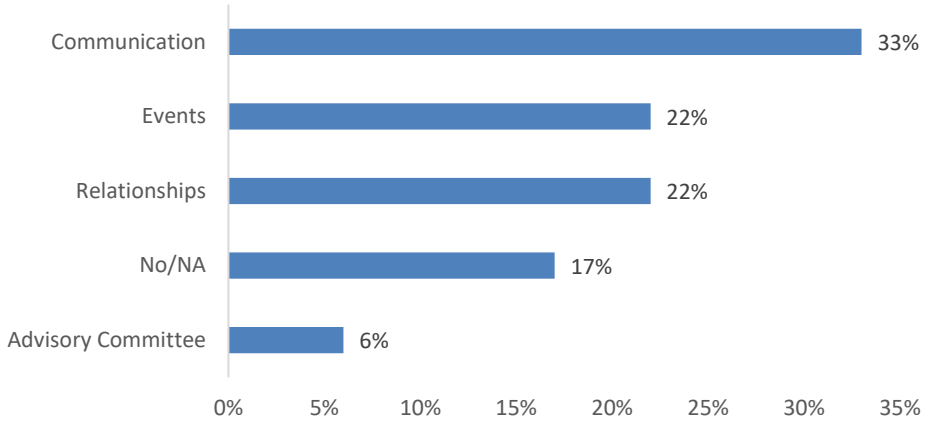
Figure 10 Challenges faced working in afterschool



Partnerships

Partnerships with the school and community provide numerous benefits to afterschool programs and may include access to space, professional learning opportunities, and the possibility of additional funding (Little, 2013). The survey items relating to partnerships with the school and community was coded and are presented as seven strategies afterschool educators use to partner with schools and the community: (1) Communication/Contact (i.e., newsletters), (2) Advisory Committee, (3) Tutoring, (4) Monthly Events, (5) Memorandum of Understanding, (6) Family/Community Engagement Specialist, and (7) Relationships.

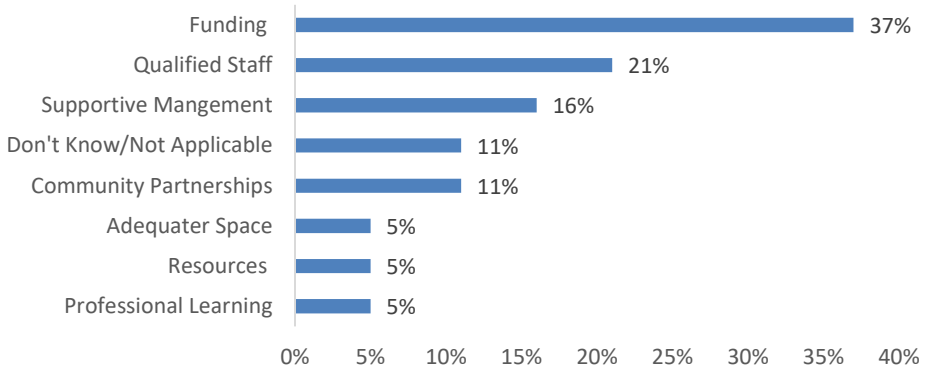
Figure 11 How do you partner with schools? The community?



Supports Needed for Effective Program Implementation

The survey included items to collect information about support after school educators felt they needed to run an effective program. Only 19 of 36 (53%) respondents replied to this item. Quality staff, funding (supplies), and strong leadership were top responses. Other respondents cited professional development, parent involvement and partnerships. Additionally, physical space and administrative software for billing and communication were also mentioned. See Figure 12.

Figure 12. Support needed to run an effective afterschool program



Discussion of Findings

The results of the survey provide a picture into the perspectives of afterschool educators in Delaware. The findings, such as lack of adequate space, and lack of qualified staff, suggest staffing and funding should be addressed to support creating quality afterschool programs for children. An Afterschool Alliance report (2020) found cost and access to be a barrier to participation for children in greatest need of afterschool programs. The respondents who participated in this survey were consistent with sharing funding as a challenge, however; staffing and challenging behaviors were at the top of the list. This mirrors findings from Huang, et. al. (2014) which states staff experience and training enhance the afterschool experience for participating children. Respondents to this survey indicated that staffing is crucial to the success of a program.

Partnerships with schools and communities plays a significant role in determining the longevity and quality of a program. It is unclear how afterschool educators define partnerships. The survey asked respondents how they partner with schools and the community. Communication (33%) was listed as the number one way they partner, followed by events. It is unknown if the communication is reciprocal or

if the events were merely invitations to participate. In retrospect, it would have been beneficial to have included a definition of partnerships in this context and to ask for examples, to determine if the methods used to partner would met the criteria. As Anthony & Morra (2016) explain, partnerships should be communicated and agreed upon, with expectations defined. To effectively partner, a clear definition of what it means to partner, along with expectations that correspond to quality should be communicated to afterschool educators. A clear definition of partnerships in this survey would have provided supporting context. Without this, it was difficult to decipher the meaning of several of the responses. For example, one response "by staying in contact with schools and families" was coded as communication; however, specific examples may have influenced the coding.

The results of this survey can only be generalized due to the small sample size, however; it provides a glimpse into the perspectives of afterschool educators that work in Delaware. The afterschool literature indicates the diversity of programs, the populations they serve and their purpose. Afterschool in Delaware is just as diverse with programs that provide enrichment activities that are specialized to include music, academics and child care for working parents. Each program has distinct mission, vision and goals, which are the foundation for which their programs provide services to children and families. It is clear from the survey that afterschool educators desire to make an impact on children, to influence positive youth development and support safe and secure environments, however; face challenges that may prohibit them from implementing quality programs.

As one of the respondents shared, "I think that the school age component of early childhood gets frequently overlooked because they are in fact at school most of

the day. But for me, I have these kids on holidays, in-service days, all summer, and in the morning and afternoon daily. That's a pretty large chunk of time. I feel as though there really isn't a lot of support for us few school age programs that would benefit from additional resources and even guidance during the process for things like STARS. It's almost like if it's not a community program (such as Boys and Girls Club) that you almost aren't recognized as a program. I feel like I'm floating in my own little bubble some days and just hope I'm making it all work."

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Appendix D

Artifact 4: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STAFF SURVEY

Professional development activities impact quality on many levels from youth development outcomes, retention of the workforce, participation, and engagement of program participant (HFRP, 2004; Huang & Cho, 2010). In the context of DIEEC, technical assistants and professional development coordinators (PDCs), provide services that enhance professional learning and implementation of effective practice through their knowledge of adult learning principles, professional experiences working in and with programs, content knowledge, and the approach used to support the process of continuous quality improvement. The roles of technical assistant and PD instructor are integral to support afterschool professionals who are just entering the field and those who have been in the field for years, at multiple skill levels. Research has found professional development to be effective when it is individualized and designed to meet afterschool program needs (Bradshaw, 2015), therefore; DIEEC has designed professional learning opportunities focused on delivering content, followed by coaching and reflection.

To learn more about the experience, expertise, and confidence of DIEEC technical assistants and professional development coordinators and their provision of services to afterschool educators, a survey was developed and distributed via Qualtrics. This survey was developed to complement a survey of afterschool educators to refine the services and experiences of those who participate in DIEEC professional

learning. The afterschool educator program survey, (see Appendix G), was designed to collect specific information about afterschool programs and educators to target the specific needs of the professional field in Delaware. This survey, QI Staff Survey, was unique in that it was designed to collect information specific to individuals providing support to afterschool program educators. It included items that inquired about staff confidence in providing support to afterschool programs and content areas. Participants were asked to share their strengths and areas they would like to improve. The survey included an open-ended item for staff to share additional feedback.

Research Design

The survey developed included multiple-choice and open-ended questions to collect data from DIEEC staff about their work with afterschool educators and their feelings and comfort level providing afterschool content support. The intent of the survey was to learn about areas of potential growth and possible content to be considered for professional learning opportunities for quality improvement staff. This survey was designed to complement (Artifact C), the Afterschool Program Educator Survey. This survey was similar in design. It included multiple-choice and open-ended questions to collect information to guide the development of professional learning experiences and supports for afterschool educators. Each survey was intended to uncover emerging themes to inform quality improvement efforts from the services available to afterschool educators to the practices they use to plan and implement their programs.

Participants and Recruitment

All quality improvement staff whose role was technical assistant or professional development instructor were invited via email to participate in a 15-minute survey about their work with afterschool programs. There was a total of sixteen respondents for a response rate of 80% and 6 (38%) respondents who were currently working with afterschool programs. Table 4 includes the respondents experience level, programs they work with and whether they are currently working with afterschool programs.

Table Quality Improvement Staff Participants and Demographics

Item	Response	N	Percentage
Years working with afterschool programs	None	2	13
	1-5 years	5	31
	5-10 years	0	0
	10-15 years	3	19
	15-20 years	1	6
	20 years or more	1	6
Currently working with afterschool programs	Yes	6	38
	No	10	62
Program types working with	School Age only	1	6
	Early Childhood with a School Age program	4	27
	Unanswered	10	67

Data Source and Data Collection Procedures

A 13-item survey was created and distributed using Qualtrics, Table 4. (see Appendix G for the full set of survey questions). An email was sent to DIEEC staff who work

directly with early childhood and afterschool professionals inviting them to participate. Consent was given electronically by clicking on the link and participating in the survey. There was a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions. At survey close, the results were analyzed and a report was created.

Table 5 Quality Improvement Staff Survey Questions

Survey Items
1. Do you currently work with afterschool programs?
2. Which programs do you work with?
3. Years of experience working with afterschool programs?
4. How do you define a quality afterschool program? What does it look like? How do you know if a program is a high-quality program?
5. How confident are you supporting afterschool programs?
6. What are your strengths in supporting afterschool programs?
7. What are some challenges you face when working with afterschool programs?
8. What are content areas you feel you need the most support around?
9. List three areas you would like to improve in working with afterschool programs/professionals.
10. How do you support programs in creating community/school partnerships?
11. What support(s) do you need to effectively support quality improvement (s) with afterschool programs and professionals?
12. Is there any additional information you would like to share?

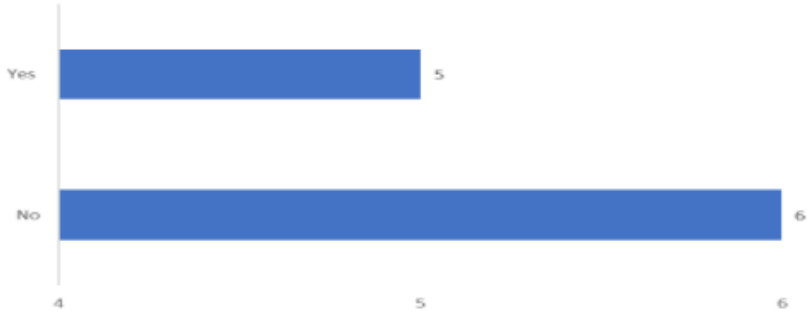
Analysis

First, the survey responses were exported from Qualtrics into an Excel Spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was manually cleaned with any identifying information redacted. Each item of the data was reviewed, and open-ended questions were coded into themes. The codes were reviewed multiple times, recoded and refined. The last step was a report that included visual representation of the data. creation of a report with visual representations.

Findings

There were sixteen responses to the survey, with afterschool programs, see Figure 13

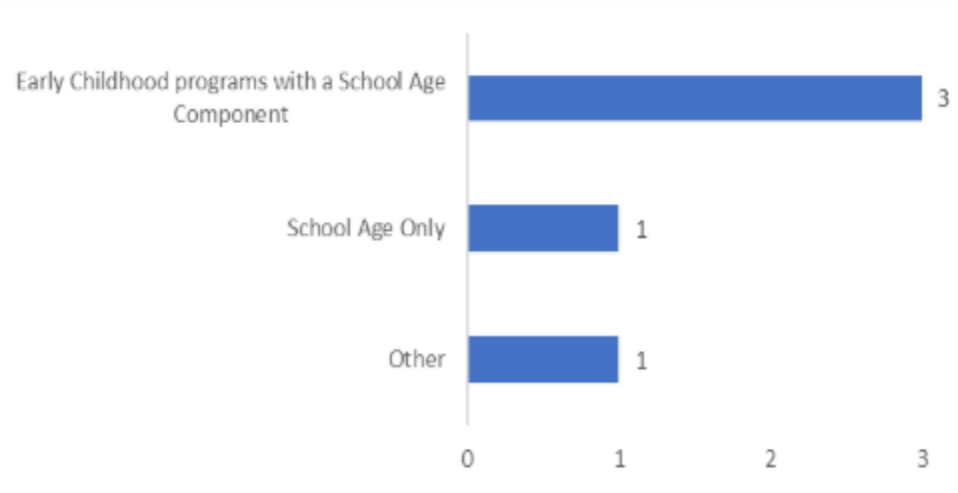
Figure 13. Do you currently work with afterschool programs?



Staff who responded to the survey worked with a variety of afterschool program types. Six survey participants indicated they did not work with afterschool programs. Three out of the five respondents indicated they work with afterschool programs that are part of an early childhood program. One respondent indicated they

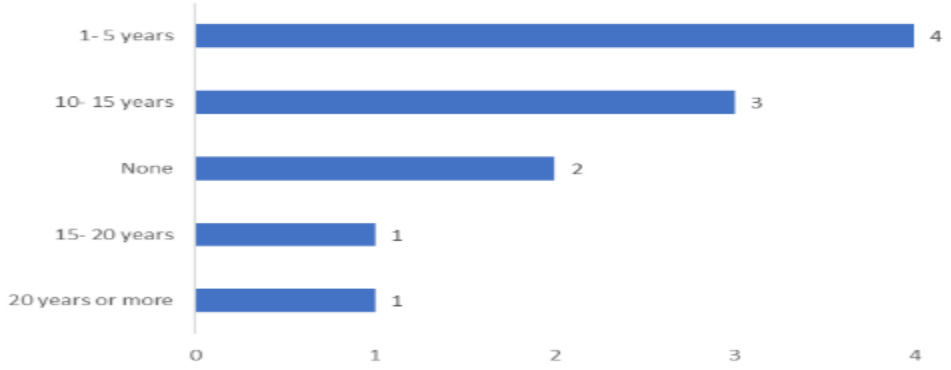
worked with both early childhood education and one respondent indicated that they worked with school age (afterschool) only programs, see Figure 14.4.

Figure 14 Which programs do you work with?



Most QI staff 44% (n = 3) that respondent to this question indicated they had 5 years or less experience working with afterschool programs compared to 12% (n=2) having 15 years or more, see Figure 15.

Figure 15 Years of experience working with afterschool programs.

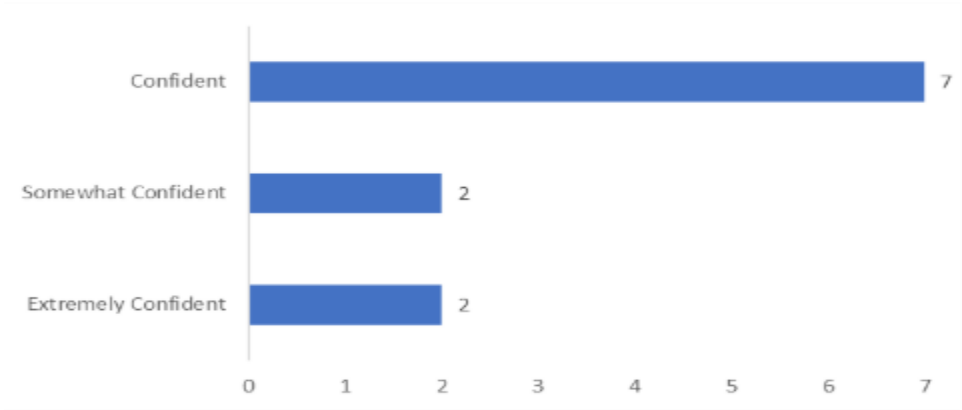


The next item asked a series of questions for respondents to share their definition of a quality afterschool program, and what it looks like. It included a question for respondents to share how they would identify a high-quality program. Most staff, 83% (n=10) identified quality as including a variety of activities followed by a tie with a warm welcoming environment at 42% (n=5) and responsive and engaging. Homework support was last at 8% (n=1).

Figure 16 How do you define a quality afterschool program? What does it look like? How do you know if a program is a high-quality program?

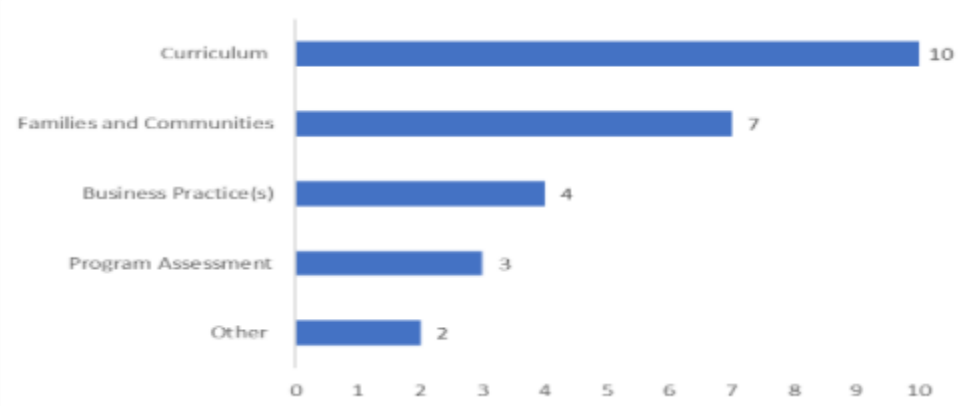
Respondents to the survey were confident in the support they provide to afterschool programs. 81% (n=9) rated themselves as extremely confident to confident. Eighteen percent (n=2) said they were somewhat confident.

Figure 17 How confident are you supporting afterschool programs?



Quality improvement staff felt most confident providing support around curriculum, families and community and business practices. Other responses included reflective practice and support around social emotional development. See Figure 18.

Figure 18 What content areas do you feel most confident providing support?



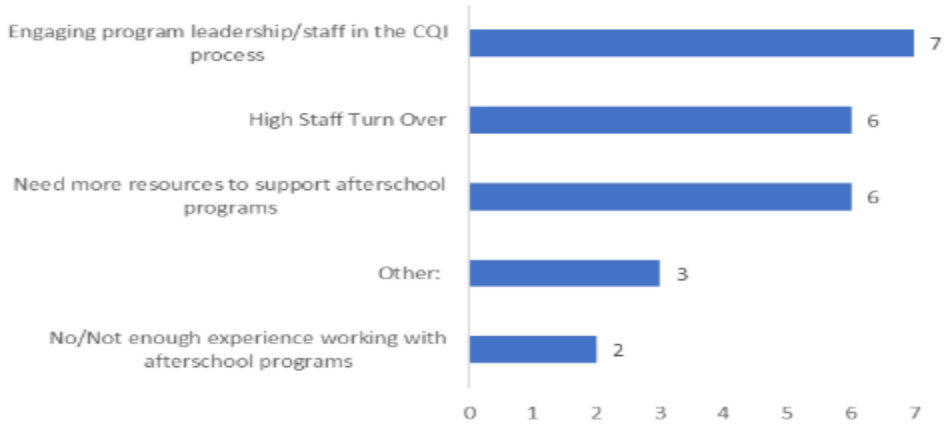
Respondents of the survey highlighted developmentally appropriate practices and creating engaging learning environments, both at 33% (n=4) as a strength in supporting afterschool programs. A close second was family and community engagement support at 25% (n=3).

Figure 19 What are your strengths in supporting afterschool programs?

Respondents indicated that curriculum (63%) The greatest challenge respondents shared was engaging program leadership/staff in the CQI process (67%),

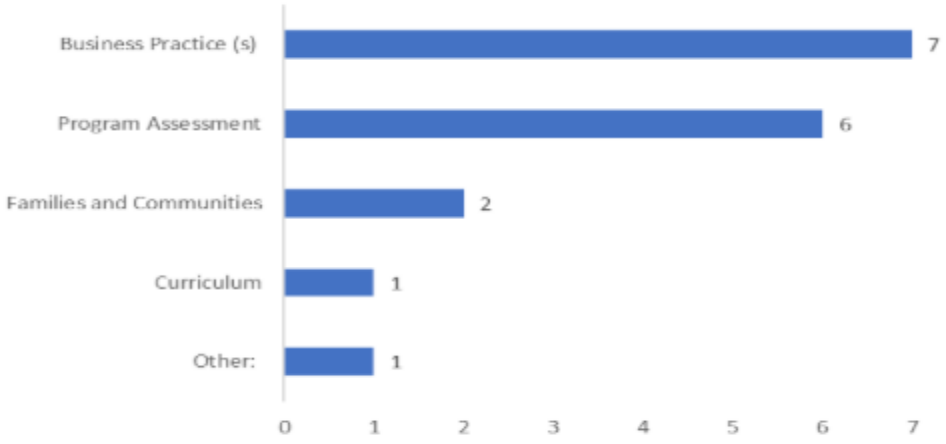
followed by the need for more resources (58%) and high staff turnover (58%). See Figure 20.

Figure 20 What are some challenges you face when working with afterschool programs?



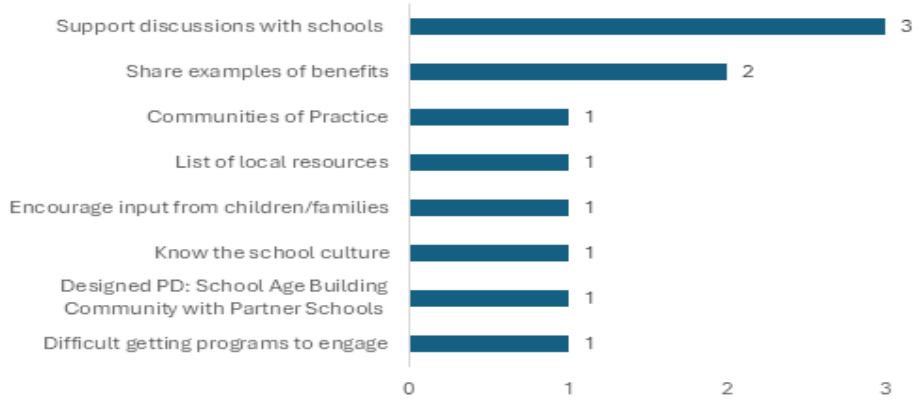
Content areas respondents felt they needed most support around include business practices, 58% (n=7) and program assessment, 50% (n=6). See Figure 21.

Figure 21 What are content areas you feel you need the most support around?



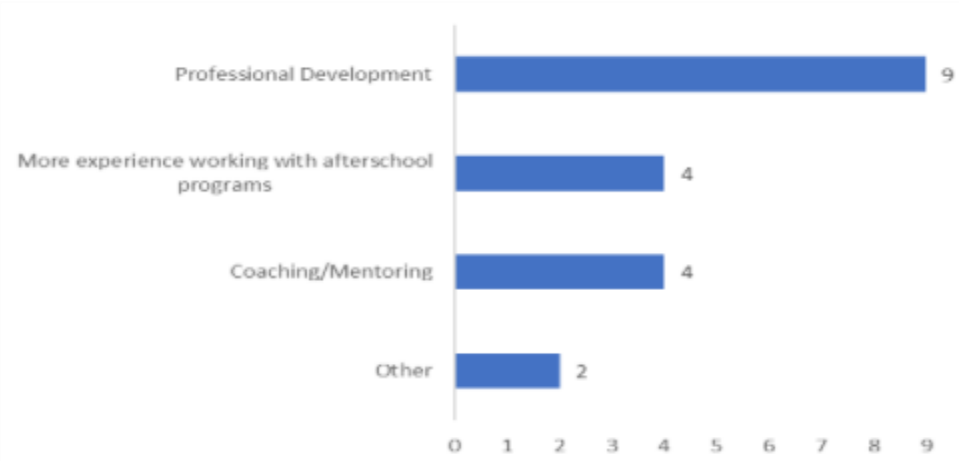
Respondents to the survey shared a variety of ways they support afterschool programs in creating community partnerships. These include supporting discussions with schools, sharing examples of the benefits of partnerships to designing a professional learning workshop dedicated to building partnerships for afterschool programs. See Figure 22.

Figure 22 How do you support programs in creating community partnerships?



In response to what is needed to effectively support quality improvements, 83% of staff indicated professional development as the top need, followed by coaching/mentoring at 42%.

Figure 23 What support(s) do you need to effectively support quality improvement (s) with afterschool programs and professionals?



The final survey question was open-ended with the intent of gathering information from staff that may not have been answered in the survey. There were four responses. Seventy-five percent (75%) shared their thanks, with one respondent commenting: “Thank you for this work- it is important and always doesn’t have a clear space.” and 25% indicating the need for more “train the trainer” type professional development for afterschool professionals.

Conclusion

The results of the survey suggest that QI improvement staff can benefit from additional professional learning opportunities and context specific to the unique needs

of after-school educators. Overall, staff feel confident in their ability to perform their role, however; opportunities to improve their knowledge and the types of targeted support for after-school professionals are welcomed. An area of focus that relates to literature on quality afterschool programming is partnerships. Partnerships with schools and the community are integral to implementation of quality programming, relevance, and sustainability. It is interesting that providing support for challenging behavior was seen as a strength for quality improvement staff and was a need for afterschool educators. It is also interesting that staff mentioned it was difficult to engage in afterschool programs although a variety of strategies were being utilized, such as community of practice, targeted professional learning opportunities and more.

Limitations

This study had limitations. The first limitation was the design of the survey itself. The survey was distributed to all DIEEC staff whose role was listed as technical assistant or professional development coordinator on the organization chart. The questionnaire asked about experience working with afterschool educators. It would have been a benefit to inquire about the role of each respondent to have a clearer understanding of how they provide support to afterschool educators. In addition, there were items in the questionnaire that could have been further developed, such as asking about the types of support they provide to individuals, be it coaching, delivering professional learning workshops, or providing resources. This would add to the information collected from afterschool educators about the support they receive.

Overall, this would generate a clearer picture of the unique space that is afterschool and to gain a better understanding of the needs of respondents.

Additional research is needed to determine support needed for quality improvement staff to improve their services to afterschool programs that is consistent, targeted and individualized to the afterschool context.

Appendix E

Artifact 5: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWS

Introduction

An estimated 76% of afterschool programs are located in public school buildings, and there is evidence that supports the importance of having an effective relationship with the school principal as this can contribute to the successful implementation and overall quality of a program (Anthony & Morra, 2016; Wong, 2008). Guided by this understanding it is important to investigate the relationship between afterschool program staff and school principals. Therefore, the goal of this artifact was to collect information specific to the context of Delaware school principals and their interactions with afterschool educators. Interviews with school principals were designed to understand the relationships that exist between schools and afterschool programs. The intent of the findings was to inform topics for professional learning experiences to be developed to support afterschool programs to leverage partnerships with principals and schools that may impact the quality of their programs.

Research Design

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to interview school principals that had afterschool programs located in their school building. Verbal consent to participate and record the interview was obtained at the onset of the discussion. There were eleven questions designed to guide the discussion with school principals about their experiences working with afterschool program educators, see Table 1. Initial contact with participants was made via email. Interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length and were conducted and recorded on Zoom. Interview recordings

were downloaded and transcribed. Final transcripts were reviewed and coded to uncover themes.

Table 6 Principal Interview Discussion Questions

Interview Questions
What has been your experience with afterschool programs? How have you worked with afterschool programs?
What are the benefits of afterschool programs? Are there specific examples that you would like to share?
What challenges have your experienced? Are there specific examples you would like to share?
What are your impressions about the quality of afterschool care?
What are your expectations for afterschool programs in your building/school? How do you envision this happening?
How is the school involved/engaged with the afterschool program? Please share examples.
How is communication between the program, the school, school staff, etc.? What type of communication works best for you? Your staff? What would be ideal?
What is your vision when working with programs?
How can/how does the afterschool program support your work?
How are you currently partnering with afterschool programs in or near your school? If there was a partnership available to you with any of the following organizations, would you participate/engage? How? Boys and Girls, University of Delaware, 4-H, Lions Club, Community Agencies?
Is there anything additional you would like to share regarding your experience working with afterschool programs?

Participants

A referral sampling strategy was used to recruit elementary-level school principals who were selected based on their interactions with the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL). Participants were contacted via email and from this

email invitation four school principals agreed to participate in the interview for a response rate of 40%.

Table 7 Principal Participant Demographics

Principal	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Years in Education
Principal A	Female	Black	25-30 years
Principal B	Female	White	25-30 years
Principal C	Female	White	More than 30 years
Principal D	Female	White	Unknown

Data Source and Administration

Interviews were conducted in August 2022 using a semi-structured protocol with eleven open-ended questions. Interview questions were designed to encourage in-depth discussion of principals' thoughts, interactions, and understandings of the afterschool programs housed in their buildings. Prior to finalizing the questions, they were reviewed by a content expert with experience working with afterschool and school improvement. The last interview question asked participants if there was anything additional they had to share. This was designed to give participants an opportunity to share additional thoughts about their afterschool program experiences. The full set of questions can be found in Appendix G, Artifact 9.

Analysis

After conducting the interviews, each transcript was reviewed for accuracy and then coded. The responses for each research question were analyzed and grouped together if the information was repetitive or similar. A qualitative methodology was used that included a mix of deductive and inductive coding. Deductively, four codes were predetermined based on the literature on afterschool programs and partnerships

with schools: value, communication, vision, and relationships. Transcripts were reviewed multiple times to refine the codes and to look for relationships (Barbour, 2019).

Findings

Eleven questions guided the discussion with school principals about their interactions with afterschool programs housed in their buildings. Responses were coded by topic. The three topics were: Principal Engagement with Afterschool Programs, Impressions about Program Quality, and Partnerships between Schools and Programs.

Principal Engagement with Afterschool Programs

I sought to establish the respondents' engagement with afterschool programs in two dimensions: current or previous connections and communication. In general, there is little to no communication between the afterschool program and the school (75%). One (25%) principal indicated they had in-person meetings with the program.

Principals and afterschool programs were not involved in each other's work, other than shared space. 75% of respondents shared that they are not involved with the afterschool program and 75% shared that facility usage was how they engaged.

Table 8 Engagement with afterschool programs.

Code	N	Quote
Principals' Connection with Afterschool Programs		
Not a lot.	1	"We have an off-site program that uses our facility. It is convenient for families."
Contract with local childcare to provide aftercare.	1	
Program in my building	3	

School sends students to the program in a neighboring school building.	1	
The principal worked in an afterschool tutoring program.	1	
School Engagement with the afterschool program		
Not Involved	3	"They just use our facility."
Facility Usage (uses school space)	3	
Communication between the ASP and school.		
In-person, face-to-face.	1	"Would like better communication from the afterschool program with the school."
Very little.	2	
None	1	

Impressions about the Quality of Afterschool

The second topic discussed were the principals' thoughts about the benefits of afterschool and the overall quality of the programs they experienced. Principals outlined the benefits of programs. Responses included being convenient, safe spaces for children and families and supporting social-emotional development to exposure to physical activities and organized sports. One principal (25%) commented that programs can support social-emotional development. For quality programs principals shared that having the right staff in place is important (50%). Two principals (50%) indicated that their impression of quality varied dependent on previous experience with the program. See Table 9.

Table 9 Impressions of Afterschool

Code	N	Quote
Principals perceived benefits of afterschool programs.		
Convenient for families.	1	"It's convenient for families, there's less transition for students after a long day."
Less transition when in a school building.	1	
Children may have existing friendships.	1	
Safe place while parents' work	1	
Support social emotional development.	1	
Physical Activities/Organized sports	1	
Impressions about the quality of afterschool care.		
Staffing	2	"We have a lot of concerns (with the program in the building). There are some inconsistencies. …" "They don't have people that are trained to actually work with our students, the way we'd like them to be."
Varies on the center/program	2	
Baby Sitting	1	

Question 3 was designed to explore the challenges principals experienced with programs operating in their buildings. 75% of respondents shared that the structure of the program and behavior issues were the most common challenges, followed by a lack of consistency in staff and expectations (50%).

Table 10 Challenges principals have experienced with afterschool programs in their building.

Code	N	Quote
Supervision	1	"We have been so lucky to have some really great staff who are running it, but when you have someone who, you know maybe doesn't understand the needs of the kids or the developmental levels or even working with kids with disabilities, it becomes a little more challenging" "They had a lot of talk. I don't think they had the skills necessary to control the behavior."
Not Developmentally Appropriate	1	
Structure	3	
Behavior Issues	3	
Space	1	
Follow Through	1	
Consistency	2	

Question five was designed to have the principals share their expectations for afterschool programs located in their building. Principals wanted the afterschool program to align with the school's mission and vision (75%) and that staff should have the expertise to manage behaviors (75%). However, communication between the principal and afterschool staff was a barrier and that program staff may not have knowledge of this expectation.

Table 11 Expectations for afterschool programs in their building/school.

Code	N	Quote
Align with the school's mission and vision.	3	"What happens in aftercare needs to be dealt with by the aftercare staff, it's two-fold because number one I don't want to take away their authority."
Consistent	2	
Handles behaviors	3	
Safe/Supervised	1	

Afterschool educators and principals can support a shared vision. Question 8 asked the principals to share their vision in their work with afterschool programs. Two principals (50%) indicated it would benefit the program and the school if they could

meet with program staff to set expectations at the beginning of the school year, followed by check-ins throughout the year. 25% indicated that they would welcome having access to the communications that programs share with parents, along with having interactions with program staff and collaboration. Principals shared several strategies afterschool programs could use to support their work and vision in collaborations. Table 12. includes the strategies principals valued.

Table 12 Vision in working with afterschool programs.

Code	N	Quote
Expectations are set at the beginning of the year.	2	"Our families are happy, our staff are happy, and we are talking and communicating."
Check-ins throughout the year.	2	
Share communications with schools that they share with families.	1	
Interactions with program staff.	1	
Collaboration	1	
Afterschool program supports principals work		
Code	N	Quote
Meets the needs of families.	2	"Well, I mean, my work is to meet the needs of families, so we have families who feel better about their children not having a lot of transitions."
Model appropriate behaviors for children.	1	
Social-Emotional Skills.	1	

50% of respondents shared that afterschool programs support their work by meeting the families' needs and 25% mentioned modeling appropriate behaviors for children and helping support social emotional skill development.

Responding to Question 10, 50% of respondents indicated they partnered with afterschool by inviting them to activities and by having them use the facility. One principal, (25%) shared they are not partnering with the afterschool program.

Table 13 Additional information about principals experiences working with afterschool programs.

Code	N	Quote
Afterschool programs need additional PD and resources.	1	(To improve quality) ..” Continue professional development for their staff. Also, we need more males working in programs, I’d love to see more resources for programs. “
Staff quality is important	1	

Conclusion

School principals play an integral role in the successful implementation of a quality afterschool program. Principals can rally with programs to secure dedicated space, additional resources and partnerships that benefit the program and the school. The principals interviewed indicated the benefits of programs for children and families. This supports the afterschool literature that programs benefit children in many ways, including social-emotional development, physical activities, and academics

Principals mentioned the structure of the program, how behavior issues are handled and consistency in staffing and staff quality were challenges they faced when working with principals. Afterschool quality is impacted by staffing and structure.

Children's behavior can be the direct result of inconsistent staff, expectations, and program structure and implementation.

Having a relationship and partnering with schools provides benefits to both the school and the program. 75% of respondents shared they are not involved with the afterschool program. It would be in the best interest to explore this further and to create opportunities for afterschool program leaders and staff to participate in learning and content that provides information and strategies for building these partnerships. 75% of principals indicated that facility usage was how they engaged with programs. This is an opportunity to build afterschool staff capacity to communicate and engage in conversations about the benefits of partnerships with schools.

There were several limitations in this study. The first limitation is the small sample size of four principals. It is difficult to generalize the data collected. Twelve principals were invited to participate, however; only 4 responded to the request. The second limitation is that there may not have been a shared understanding between the researcher and the school principals and the types of afterschool programs that were part of the study. It would have been a benefit to describe in detail the types of programs that were going to be discussed during the initial invitation. A third limitation was the interview questions. There were several questions that may have elicited deeper understanding of the relationship had a clear definition been shared. For example, the question that inquiries about partnerships. The intent of this question was to learn about all the ways the school and afterschool program benefit from shared services. The responses indicated that there were little to no partnerships formed. This question may have provided a deeper understanding if the definition of partnerships was provided. A fourth limitation was researcher bias. Having over 30 years of

experience working in afterschool may have influenced how questions were delivered and interpreted.

Despite these limitations this study provided insight into the work that can be accomplished thorough collaboration and partnerships. Generally principals want to work with afterschool educators to support a shared vision. Time is a factor, along with having clear expectations of the roles and responsibilities for the afterschool staff and building principals.

Appendix F

Artifact 6: AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM LEADERS AND EDUCATORS FOCUS GROUPS

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is an organization that provides professional learning opportunities and implements Delaware's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The purpose of QRIS is to increase the quality of early childhood education and school age (afterschool) programs in the state.

During the revision of the QRIS, the DIEEC developed strategies to engage early childhood stakeholders in the process to meet the goals identified by the state Office of Early Learning (OEL). The OEL challenged DIEEC to meet the following goals:

- Align program ratings with factors that improve and sustain child, family, workforce, and program outcomes.
- Identify and use multiple indicators of program quality.
- Consistently incorporate a model of continuous quality improvement (CQI).
- Weave equity and inclusion throughout the new system.
- Design program and provider supports that meet the needs of all programs.
- Further align early childhood systems in Delaware.

One strategy to meet the fifth goal, to design programs and educator support that meets the needs of all programs, was the School Age Workgroup. The Director of

DIEEC selected staff to participate in the Workgroup that had experience working with afterschool programs, through technical assistance, assessment and prior experience working in afterschool. I was asked to participate in the workgroup, having over 30 years of experience working as a multi-site afterschool program leader, technical assistant, and interested in afterschool research.

An outcome of the workgroup was to engage afterschool leaders and educators in designing a system that would be cognizant of their unique needs. This resulted in DIEEC hosting four focus groups with afterschool program leaders and educators who work in Delaware licensed childcare programs. Two sessions were held in January 2021, with afterschool program leaders and two sessions in February 2021, with afterschool educators. Individuals were chosen to participate by nomination of their QRIS technical assistant, school age childcare program affiliation and position (role). Participant characteristics are described in Table 13.

Methods

Invitations to participate in the focus groups were emailed to participants who were chosen to participate, which met specific criteria. These criteria included having participated in the QRIS, having experience working with quality improvement and currently working in afterschool. The invitation included the date of each meeting, the purpose, and goals for the meeting. Five questions and an ice breaker were developed and shared with the invitation. It was requested participants choose a specific date to attend and reflect on the questions in preparation. Prior to the scheduled date, reminder

emails were sent to those who registered. Table 14 provides demographic information for each of the four focus groups.

Table 14 Focus Group Participant Demographics

Focus Group	Gender	Program Type	Role(s)
1	1 male, 5 female(s)	School Age Only, Community Center, Center-based with School Age	Administrator, Director, Unknown
2	3 female(s)	School Age Only	Director of Compliance, Director, Assistant Director of Compliance
3	1 male, 3 female(s)	School Age Only	Site Coordinator, Site Director
4	5 female(s)	School Age Only	Unit Director, Site Director

The focus group discussions were to collect information from afterschool program leaders and educators to inform the revision. Each question had a specific focus and intent. Discussion questions can be found in Table 15.

Table 15 Focus Group Discussion Questions

Questions	Focus
Icebreaker: What are your hopes for what children will gain from their experience(s) in your program?	The "why" leaders and educators work with children and families.
1. How would you describe a quality afterschool program? What does a quality afterschool program look like?	To define quality and quality programs by individuals working in the field.

2. What areas of your program would you like to improve? What are your main barriers to improving quality?	Understand the barriers and areas that may be challenging to inform the system.
3. What does equity look like to you? What would "success" look like if we were promoting equitable services and meeting the needs of each child and family?	To determine how programs are currently providing equitable services.
4. How has Delaware Stars helped you meet your goals? How has it helped with quality improvement? What challenges did you encounter?	Understand where we are and how we can improve the system.
5. How could Delaware Stars support your program differently? What specific feedback would you like us to have as we move forward with revising for school age programs?	Define what supports afterschool educators need to be successful

The first round of focus groups were individuals whose role was leadership, and the second round of focus groups were individuals whose role was providing direct services to children and youth. were specifically for individuals in a leadership role.

Analysis

The focus groups were conducted over a two-month period. Each session was an hour long. Sessions were conducted via Zoom due to Covid restrictions. The discussion was captured electronically, using a sticky note application. The sticky notes were cleaned, clarified, and reviewed manually to code into themes. I refined the themes and was supported in this process by a research assistant

Initially, seven themes were identified from the data. Responses were analyzed for key words and concepts and organized into the following themes: Relationship,

Professional Development, Technical Assistance, Activities, Staff, Assessment, and Environment. In subsequent reviews of the data sub-categories were identified, experiences, system, space, resources, and access. Based on the frequency of the themes, it was decided that they should be categorized into main themes. This also resulted in a combination of themes and renaming categories to the final 12 themes, as seen in Table 16.

Table 16 Themes that emerged

1. Relationships/Connections
2. Professional Development
3. Technical Assistance
4. Activities/Experiences
5. Staffing(Experience/Expectations)
6. System
7. Space/Environment
8. Quality
9. Engagement
10. Resources
11. Access
12. Other

Findings

The focus groups touched on six main areas (one area for each interview question): Hopes, Quality, Barriers and Areas of Improvement, Equity, Impressions of QIRS, and Ideas for Improvement.

Hopes

"*My hope is for children in my program to have positive relationships with adults and peers and exposure to culture and activities they weren't able to in the school and their community."*

This quote is the foundation to build and implement quality afterschool programs. Relationships and a variety of experiences build skills and help children learn something new as well as enhance learning. Afterschool programs are places for discovery, learning a new skill and developing lasting relationships.

Designed to encourage participants to reflect on their "why ", the icebreaker generated a list that learn something new and learn who they were was mentioned by participants with the greatest frequency. Prepared for the future, to meet children's needs, and prevention were mentioned with the least frequency. Four out of 18 respondents expressed that they wanted children in their program to learn something new and for the children to learn who they are. Three out of 18 indicated they wanted children to become lifelong learners and to build positive relationships. For example, one program leader said, "My hope is that we can introduce them to experiences and

topics that will be something that motivates them to search out more information on their own." This statement is the mission and goals for the majority of afterschool programs, where childcare is provided to support families, whose parents are at work, while the program supports and enhances learning in a context different from the school day. Table 17 summarizes each of the hopes shared by participants.

Table 17 Ice Breaker: What are your hopes for what children will gain from their experiences in your program?

Code	Frequency
Lifelong Learning	3
To meet children's needs	1
Practical Life Skills	2
Learn something new	4
Developmentally Appropriate Environments	1
Prepared for the future	1
Sense of Security	1
Build Positive Relationships	3
Drug Prevention	1
Learn who they are	4

Quality

"A quality afterschool program is nurturing and productive. The students would learn how to self-regulate their feelings and thoughts from the day (with meditations, relax time), it would include structured time for homework help, followed by

play/socializing. The measurement would be the consistency of practice, mastery of self-management and social-emotional skills."

The afterschool literature defines quality afterschool programs as having a focus on the children. Programs are safe spaces where children have access to a variety of experiences, such as art and science, to build skills and curiosity. (add citation). This participant describes her program as nurturing and productive, and one that includes social and emotional learning.

The first question describe a quality afterschool program sought to establish the participants' understanding and definition of quality. Staff and partnerships were mentioned with the most frequency with four each from the 18 participants. Quality programs include having positive relationships with adults and peers. These programs have adults who are supportive and support the children to navigate their feelings and interactions with others. Table 18 shares the primary codes and frequency of responses discussed.

Table 18 How would you describe a quality afterschool program? What does a quality afterschool program look like?

Code	Frequency
Relationships	3
Quality Staff	4
Nurturing	1
Supports social-emotional development	1
Homework Help	2
Consistent	2

Partnerships	4
Project Based Learning	1
Variety of Activities	1
Enrichment	6
Community of Learners	1
Engagement	2
Diversity	1
Health and Safety	3
Organized and child focused	2

Barriers and Areas of Improvement

"*Staff are not qualified, not having the experience expected that meet the job description-blank slate. Some staff have education but no experience working with children-other end of the spectrum-have experience but not education."*

This quote sets the stage for many of the barriers faced by after school programs. To be successful, program staff need educational expertise and experience working with children, and it can be hard to hire people with this combination of skills. Programs may provide before and after school care, however; they may not provide staff with full-time hours or benefits. This impacts the pool of individuals to choose from and retention. To learn more about afterschool spaces, the second question asked the group to discuss areas the program would like to improve. It also inquired about the main barriers to making improvements. Five out of 18 participants indicated they would like to improve staffing, followed by access to quality professional development opportunities. See Table 19 for information about the barriers.

Staffing is only one of many barriers that were shared. Another barrier expressed by participants was space. During the pandemic, technological challenges became evident. For afterschool programs in school buildings, shared space presented its own challenges that impact services provided to children. For example, one participant shared, “Schools are not entirely in the know of what we do in our programs.” This participant felt that the public schools whose children and families they provide services for are not aware of all of the wonderful things that happen in afterschool. Quality afterschool programs are places where children thrive. Furthermore, as one participant shared, limited space to implement the program along with strict quality standards, it made it even more challenging to meet the requirements: “School site buildings are shared spaces-things are out of your control, but you are still expected to meet QRIS standards.”

Table 19 What areas of your program would you like to improve? What are your main barriers to improving quality?

Improve:

Code	Frequency
Variety of activities offered	1
Access for families	1
Collaborations with schools	1
Access to quality professional development	4
Technology	1
Staff Skills	5
Relationships with schools	1
Family Involvement	1

Support for challenging behaviors	1
Professionalize the field	1

Barriers:

Code	Frequency
Space	4
Technology	2
Participation	2
Lack of knowledge of afterschool	1
Staffing	5
Funding	2
Compensation	1

Equity

"Help families plan for alternative means to meet their needs if it's beyond the scope of the program staff."

This quote from an afterschool leader describes their vision of success in promoting equitable services. This leader felt it was their responsibility to connect families and children to resources if they were not able to adequately support the need.

The third question introduced the concept of equity. From the responses, participants defined equity as having access to space, quality staff, and resources. Success in providing equitable services included accommodations (17%) and access (17%). 5% of participants identified skilled staff as a success. See Table 19 for the

distribution of codes related to equity. The following quote shares how programs may differ within the same organization.

"Working in many schools and having students at all different levels with the same grade level, our staff feel that they may not be reaching everyone equally."

Providing equitable services was described as a challenge, even within the same organization. See Table 20.

Table 20 What does equity look like to you? What would "success" look like if we were promoting equitable services and meeting the needs of each child and family?

Code	Frequency
Consistency among multiple sites	1
Access	3
Social relevance	1
Screenings at enrollment	1
Skilled staff	1
Availability of wraparound services	2
Management	1
Helping families meet needs	2
Accommodations	3
Connections with schools	1
Space	1
Financial options	1

Impressions of QRIS

"*Make the QRIS system as more of an ongoing experience, help staff to understand that."*

The quote above is from a front-line staff member. This individual saw value in the quality improvement system and wanted to see it as a continuous experience and more work to support staff understanding.

The fourth question was designed to determine how the program felt about the QRIS supported program goals and asked participants to share any challenges the system presented. Table 20 includes the codes and frequency of responses. Technical assistance was shared by 33% of the participants as helping the program to meet goals, followed by professional development at 22%. Participants found technical assistance to be helpful in navigating the quality improvement system. They felt TAs to be helpful and responsive to questions. This participant summarized their experience working with technical assistance,

> "*Hands on TA, readily available, came to staff meetings, go into classrooms to support in room arrangements and offering resources. Responsive with answers*."

There were a few ideas that emerged from the discussion, including staffing. To implement a quality program, it is important to have the right staff in place. Program leaders were experiencing challenges due to a lack of qualified staff, access to quality professional development, and high staff turnover. This impacted their ability to meet requirements and their quality improvement efforts and experience.

Table 21 How has Delaware Stars helped you meet your goals? How has Stars helped with quality improvement? What challenges did you encounter?

Code	Frequency
Professional Development	4
"Supports that mirror school supports"	1
Space	3
Technical Assistance	6
Turnover	2
Standards	3
Continuous Quality Improvement	1
Funding	1
Build Learners	1

Ideas for QRIS Improvement

"*Quality assured trainings have been exhausted. Other options would be useful, plus getting other options QA'd is challenging and takes too much time."*

Afterschool educators are looking for additional professional learning opportunities to support their growth and development as a professional working in afterschool. This individual welcomes the opportunity for the system to explore additional ways to support learning.

The last discussion question was included to ensure that participants had an opportunity to share their thoughts about the revision and items that should be included as part of the process. Participants felt that the current system was rigid and lacked adequate communication (17%), respectively. Professional development was mentioned in several contexts, from the need for Spanish speaking options, "Professional Development-More Spanish speaking options! So much of our staff is

dominant in Spanish and have a lot of passion to improve as teachers. They struggle with the trainings that are offered." to afterschool specific, community of practices and additional professional learning opportunities (see Table 22).

At the time of the revision, the quality improvement system included a lengthy list of requirements in four different areas. This was in addition to having an assessment to rate program quality. This participant summarized her experience with meeting quality improvement requirements as being rigid and not providing space to celebrate other areas where the program excels at providing services to children and families: "We want to be able to celebrate other really good things we do that may not "fit" with the list of quality indicators from Stars-too rigid"

Table 22 How could Delaware Stars support your program differently? What specific feedback would you like us to have as we move forward with revising for school-age (afterschool) programs?

Code	Frequency
Spanish speaking PD options	1
Family Engagement	1
School Age specific events	1
Credentials	1
Less rigid	3
Additional PD	1
Communication	3
Community of Practice	1
Incentives	1
Funding opportunities	1

Conclusion

This study found that afterschool leaders and educators had big hopes and dreams for the children in their programs. 22% of participants said that their programs were designed to foster a love of learning and to introduce children to new experiences. Participants articulated visions of quality that included nurturing, building relationships, and having quality staff. This point of view was woven into the responses about what quality looks like. Enrichment, partnerships, and quality staff were most often mentioned, and this was not surprising. Afterschool research provides evidence that quality programs focus on skill building, community partnerships and relationships children have with staff (Pierce, et. al, 2010).

Afterschool programs offer limited hours because they operate before and after the school day ends. This led to a major challenge, finding quality staff. Hiring and training staff is difficult in this climate of low wages and high turnover rates. In addition, finding staff with experience and knowledge of youth development, equipped to handle challenging behaviors, was seen as barriers to improvement.

It was interesting that funding mentioned several times throughout the discussion was not a top concern. It may be that this is the status quo; therefore, other priorities were mentioned that could be controlled and addressed with greater ease.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The first limitation was the discussion questions. The five questions include several parts. In retrospect, it may have been beneficial to ask the parts as separate questions. The second limitation was the small

sample of participants. There are over 50 afterschool programs that participated in QRIS. The focus groups included the thoughts and experiences of 18 participants, which makes it difficult to generalize the information collected. A third limitation is my own bias having experience as a participant, program leaders and quality improvement support specialist. These experiences may have influenced my interpretation of the discussion. A fourth limitation was that this focus group was held during the pandemic. This may have influenced responses from participants as the pandemic created many challenges for programs.

The results of the discussion created a space for DIEEC to build supports specific to afterschool programs in Delaware. In addition, to create a system that is responsive to the needs of participants it is important to understand why staff have chosen to work in afterschool and to address barriers and challenges that they face in their day-to-day experiences. Quality improvement systems should not be designed as one size fits all.

REFERENCES

Pierce, K. M., Bolt, D. M., & Vandell, D. L. (2010). Specific features of after-school program quality: Associations with children's functioning in middle childhood. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 45*(3), 381-393.

Appendix G

SURVEY TOOLS

Artifact 7: Afterschool Educator Survey

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to collect information from afterschool program practitioners about the program in which they work, and their thoughts about the quality and support needed to run an effective program. The information collected will be shared with Quality Improvement staff to inform program services.

Process: Afterschool program staff who have attended DIEEC professional development will be recruited to participate. The survey will be distributed via email using the Qualtrics survey application. The survey will be open for a minimum of two weeks to allow time for completion.

Questions:

1. Program Location (County, in School, Community Building, Child Care Center)
2. Number of Participants
3. Role of respondent: Site Leader, Site Coordinator, Site Assistant, Intern, other:
4. How long have you been at your current program?
5. How long have you worked in school-age childcare?
6. Highest Level of Education: High School, Some College, Associate, Bachelors, Master's Other:
7. Hours of the program:
8. Mission/Goals of the program:
9. Number of Staff

10. Please describe your program
11. Tell us how newly hired staff are trained. What topics are covered?
12. How do you define quality in a school-age program? What does it look like? What is involved?
13. If you could change three things about your program, what would they be?
14. What are three strengths of your program?
15. What three areas would you like to improve?
16. What tools do you use to assess the effectiveness of your program?
17. Tell us about your curriculum? What are the goals of your curriculum?
18. What is your daily schedule?
19. Do you provide care on holidays? Inclement weather?
20. How many hours of training do you attend each year?
21. How do you involve families? School staff?
22. What activities are offered daily? Monthly?
23. How do you determine you have met your program goals?
24. Who engages in the planning process?
25. How do you partner with schools and families?
26. Do you provide homework help? Tell us what this looks like.
27. What is your philosophy of afterschool programming?
28. What are your biggest challenges?
29. What support do you need to run an effective afterschool program?
30. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Artifact 8: QI Staff Survey Questions

Thank you for the support you provide to the workforce. We are interested in learning how we can support your work with afterschool programs. Please take a few minutes to respond to the following questions.
Audience: All DIEEC Technical Assistants and Program Coordinators

1. a. Do you currently work with afterschool programs?
   Yes
   No

   b. Which program do you work with?

   School Age Only
   Early Education with a school age component
   Both

2. How many years of experience do you have working with afterschool programs?
   None
   1-5 years
   5-10 years
   10-15 years
   15- 20 years
   20 years or more

3. How do you define a quality afterschool program? What does it look like? How do you know if a program is a quality program?

4. How confident are you supporting afterschool programs?
   Extremely Confident
   Confident
   Somewhat Confident
   Not confident

5. .What are your strengths in supporting afterschool programs?

What are some challenges you face when working with afterschool programs? Check all that apply.

No/Not enough experience working with afterschool programs
High Staff Turn-over
Engaging program leadership/staff in the CQI process
Other:

7. What are content areas you feel most confident in providing support? Check all that apply.

Curriculum
Business Practice(s)
Families and Communities
Assessment
Other:

8. What are content areas you feel you need the most support around? Check all that apply.

Curriculum
Business Practice(s)
Families and Communities
Assessment
Other:

9. How do you support programs in creating community partnerships?

10 .What support(s) do you need to effectively support quality improvement(s) with afterschool programs and professionals? Check all that apply.

Professional Development
Coaching Mentoring
More experience working with this program type
Other:

11. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Artifact 9:Principal Interview/Discussion Questions

Purpose: To interview elementary school principals to collect information about the benefits of partnering with afterschool programs.
Participants: Recruit 6-10 principals minimum. With support of DASL Lead.
Process: By invitation, a sample of principals will be invited to participate on a Zoom call. Using the Consent to Participate form (Appendix B) review during introduction and get verbal consent from the principal to participate.
About 60 minutes, with details sent in the initial email that outlines the process.

Questions:

1. What has been your experience with afterschool programs? How have you worked with ASPs?
2. What are the benefits of ASPs? Are there specific examples that you would like to share?
3. What challenges have you experienced? Are there specific examples that you would like to share?
4. What are our impressions about the quality of afterschool care?
5. What are your expectations for afterschool programs in your building/school? How do you envision this happening?
6. How is the school involved/engaged with the afterschool program? Please share examples.
7. How is communication between the ASP, school, school staff, etc.? What type of communication works best for you? Your staff? What would be ideal?
8. What is your vision when working with programs?
9. How can/ how does the afterschool programs support your work?
10. How are you currently partnering with afterschool programs in or near your school? If there was a partnership available to you with any of the following organizations? Would you participate/engage? How?
    1. Boys and Girls? University of Delaware? 4-H? Lions Club? Community agencies?
11. Is there anything additional you would like to share regarding your experience working with afterschool programs?

Artifact 10: Afterschool Leadership and Educator Focus Group Questions

Icebreaker: What are your hopes for what children will gain from their experience(s) in your program?

1. How would you describe a quality afterschool program? What does a quality afterschool program look like?

2. What areas of your program would you like to improve? What are your main barriers to improving quality?

3. What does equity look like to you? What would "success" look like if we were promoting equitable services and meeting the needs of each child and family?

4. How has Delaware Stars helped you to meet your goals? How has it helped with quality improvement? What challenges did you encounter?

5. How could Delaware Stars support your program differently? What specific feedback would you like us to have as we move forward with revising for school age programs?

Appendix H

Artifact 11: SCHOOL AGE CURRICULUM LIST

Curriculum in afterschool can be defined as any activity or experience that has been planned for children to participate in. It guides staff to implement experiences that are of interest to children and supports them in learning new skills. Curriculum is essential as it supports attainment of the vision, mission, and goals of programs. The purpose of this tool is to provide a resource for afterschool programs to explore curricula that is available for use with afterschool youth and to inform decision-making if the curriculum will meet some or all of the needs of their program goals.

Name of Curriculum	Developer	Year	Website	Description	Cost
Out of School Nutrition and Physical Activity (OSNAP)	Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center	2013	http://osnap.org/	Preventative. Children ages 5–12. Healthy environments for children.	Free
Afterschool Universe	NASA	2006	https://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/educators/programs/au/	Science curriculum – downloadable materials.	Free
Power Hour Curriculum	Boys and Girls Clubs of America	2016	https://www.bgca.org/programs/programs-power-hour-curriculum	Ages 6–18. Homework support, tutoring, and technology activities. Specifically	B&G Clubs only

				for B&G Clubs.	
SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids) Afterschool	National Institutes of Health	1989 (rev. 2019)	https://sparkpe.org/about-spark	Wellness curriculum for afterschool programs. Activities focused on cooperation, culture, fitness, and more.	Varies
CATCH – Coordinated Approach to Child Health Curriculum	CATCH Global Foundation	2014	https://catchinfo.org/programs/after-school/	Nutrition and physical activity curriculum.	Cost
Kidz Science	Collaborative Classroom	2009	https://powerofdiscovery.org/afterschool-kidzscience	Science curriculum kits for grades 3–5, designed for afterschool programs.	Cost
Kidz Math	Collaborative Classroom	2009	https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/programs/afterschool-kidzmath/	Math for grades K–6. Aligned with NCTM standards.	Cost
Afterschool Math Plus	FHI Foundation	2011	https://www.fhi360.org/resource/after-school-math-plus	Evidence-based real-world math activities for grades 3–8. Includes identity developmen	Varies

				t, careers, family involvement, disability inclusion.	
Afterschool Science Plus	FHI Foundation	2011	https://www.fhi360.org/resource/after-school-science-plus	Inquiry-based science program for students ages 6–14.	Varies
APEX Science	Frost Science	2017	https://www.frostscience.org/stem-professionals/apex-science/	Eight thematic units with four lessons each (Bird's Eye View, Water Works, The Sun, Our Star, etc.).	Some free; varies
Bird Sleuth K–12	Cornell Lab K–12 Education	2011	https://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/	Science/nature curriculum for grades 3–8.	Free + some paid
Engineering Adventures	Museum of Science Boston	—	https://www.eie.org/stem-curricula/engineering-grades-prek-8/engineering-adventures	Afterschool STEM program for grades 3–5.	Cost
Links to Learning: A Curriculum Planning Guide for	National Institute on Out of School Time, Wellesley	2005	https://www.amazon.com/Links-Learning-Curriculum-Planning-After-School/dp/0917505190	Helps afterschool practitioners plan well-balanced programs.	Cost

After-School Programs	Centers for Women			Focus on seven key learning areas.	
School Age Child Care Curriculum Framework	YMCA of the USA & National Institute on Out of School Time	—	Only available to YMCA programs.	Curriculum framework for YMCA programs to enhance learning and development.	Cost
Afterschool Training Toolkit	National Center for Quality Afterschool – American Institutes for Research	2008	https://sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/	Research-based lesson plans, videos, and resources for academics in afterschool. Free downloads; guides purchasable.	Free / optional cost

Appendix I

Artifact 12: SCHOOL AGE ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Assessments are important tools for programs to provide data that can assist program staff to identify children's needs, progress toward program goals. The information collected can be used to improve program quality and determine if the program is meeting their goals. This list is to be used as a reference when selecting an assessment tool.

Name of Tool	Developer	Year	Website	Use	Cost
Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS) • Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes-Staff and Teacher Survey (SAYO-S & T) • Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes-Youth Survey (SAYO-Y) • The Assessment of Program Practices	National Institute for Out of School Time (NIOST)	2004	https://www.niost.org/afterschool-program-assessment-system-apas	To help afterschool programs improve program quality and reach their desired outcome for children and youth in grades K-8.	Free to use the tools. Training required and data analysis are fee-based.

Tool - Observation and Program Questionnaire (APT-O & Q)					
Youth Program Quality Assessment (Y-PQA)	Forum for Youth Investment - High Scope Educational Research Foundation	2005	http://cypq.org/assessment	Instrument designed to measure youth program quality and identify staff training needs. For children in grades 4-12.	Free to download the tools.
School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SA-PQA)	Forum for Youth Investment - High Scope Educational Research Foundation	2005	http://cypq.org/assessment	Instrument designed to measure school-age program quality. For use with children in grades K-6.	Free to download the tools.
School Age Care Environment Rating Scale - Updated (SACERS-U)	Harms, T., Jacobs, E.V., & White, D. R.	2014	https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/development-sacers-u	Tool designed to assess programs for children ages 5–12 during their time out of school.	Cost for book $17.95.
After School	California	2007	https://www.afterschoolnetwork.o	Intended for self-	Free download.

Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA)	Afterschool Network (CAN)		rg/sites/main/files/file-attachments/qsatool_0.pdf?1416422642	assessment to support programs in discussing program quality and continuous improvement.	
Toolkit for Evaluating Positive Youth Development	The Colorado Trust and National Research Center, Inc.	2005	https://www.coloradotrust.org/sites/default/files/ASIToolkitJun04.pdf	Toolkit provides evaluation and tracking forms to measure youth outcomes for grades 4-9. Administered to youth.	Free
Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA)	The New York State Network for Youth Success	2017	https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/qsa/	For afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs to assess program quality and create action plans for continuous improvement.	Free
Out-of-School Time (OST) Observation	Policy Studies Associates, Inc.	2008	https://www.policystudies.com/out-of-school-time	Collects observation data about quality of activities. Revised in	Free

Instrument • Out-of-School Time				2021 for virtual programs. Contact: Christina Russell (202) 939-5340 or crussell@policystudies.com	
After-School Environment Scale	Rosenthal, R. & Vandell, D. L.	1996	https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/After-School-Environment-Scale-1.pdf	36- item survey used to assess the psychosocial climate in after-school programs. For use with children in grades 3, 4 and 5.	Free
Youth and Program Strengths Survey (YAPS)	Search Institute	2016	https://www.search-institute.org/surveys/choosing-a-survey/yaps/	For use by programs with youth in grades 6-12, it measures youth 135experience in afterschool programs	Cost. Site report $300 min. based on the number of users.
Program and Activity Assessment Tool (PAAT)	Youth and Adult Leaders for Program Excellen	2004	http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/n/n_yalpe-workbook.pdf	Designed to help programs assess how the learning 135experience promoted	Unknown. Permission needed to use and distribute tool. Contact: lcamino@wisc.edu or

	ce, Community Youth Connection			positive youth development	rszeldin@wis.edu
Exemplary Practices in Afterschool Program Development	Center for Collaborative Solutions and the Community Network for Youth Development	2004	https://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/exemplarypractices_quality_assessment.pdf	Tool developed to support programs tracking progress in their programs helping them to achieve higher levels of quality.	Unknown.
Assessing School-Age Quality (ASQ)	National Institute on Out-of-School-Time	2011	https://niost.org/ASQ/asq	To support programs/others to improve program quality. Can be used as a self-assessment, at the state level or accreditation. It can be used with other data collection tools.	Cost. $20 for the guide $75 per site.

Appendix J

Artifact 13: STAKEHOLDER VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

High Quality School Age Program Matter

Introduction: This video was created to be used by school age childcare and afterschool programs to have conversations with families, schools, partners, and other stakeholders to begin a dialogue or to continue the dialogue about the importance of afterschool and quality.

Video Transcript:

Slide 1: Hello, the purpose of this learning module is to define afterschool programs and to bring awareness to the importance of high-quality programs for children. This is a first attempt in a series to begin conversations to improve quality. The title of this e-learning module is afterschool programs quality matters.

Slide 2: The goals to define afterschool programs to share the benefits of after school programs to explore characteristics of high-quality programs and to provide information to continue the conversation.

Slide 3: You may ask yourself what is afterschool? You may have heard the terms; afterschool, out- of- school time, SACC, After the Bell, 21st century Learning Center, all of these are terms for afterschool programs.

Slide 4: what's unique about after school programs is that they serve children and youth in grades K through 12 the activities they provide occur outside of regular school hours and during school vacations and holidays they provide a broad range of focus such as art and academics it's important to know that over 10 million children are severed by afterschool programs annually however there is a great need for access for families.

Slide 5: Afterschool programs provide many benefits to children and youth families and the community.

Slide 6: Programs can improve classroom behavior, improve school attendance, create a sense of belonging, improve social skills, build confidence and provide academic support , in addition to providing an environment that is safe and supervised by strong adult leads.

Slide 7: Quote: “It is our children who bring us together today. Every child brought into the world should have plenty of opportunities to succeed.” – William S. White

Slide 8: Yes, quality matters in addition to the benefits shared earlier, high quality programs play an integral role in supporting youth development academically, socially and emotionally particularly for students identified as at risk.

Slide 9: Characteristics high quality programs include, helping youth develop strong positive relationships with adults, build on the strengths of children and youth, provide creative engaging and challenging activities, and provide youth opportunities to develop decision making and leadership skills.

Slide 10: Quote “ The most effective afterschool programs reflect the needs of the young people they serve…” – William S. White

Slide 11: We need to continue the conversation specifically to after school programs. This module introduced after school discussed the benefits and characteristics of high-quality programs. We need to continue the conversation and answer the following questions: how can we support high quality after school and what resources are needed.

Slide 12: I want to leave you with this quote from Rahm Emanuel, former White House Chief of Staff “ Access to afterschool programming is a win-win for our children; it is shown to both increase academic progress and reduce violence..”

Slide 13: Thank you

Slide 14: Credits:

Photo: School Age Children Playing: familyeducation.com

White, W.S., (2005) Afterschool programs: Giving hope and help to all our children.

https://youth.gov/youth-topics/aftersxhool-programs

https://understood.org

Video created using Adobe Spark. 2020.

Appendix K

Artifact 14: ELP PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

Overview

Quality in child care programs has been the focus of conversations in the field for over 30 years and will likely remain a priority as research continues to define the benefits of high- quality child care for children and their families. It is critically important that these conversations include afterschool programs.

Afterschool programs provide child care for children and youth in the hours that school is not in session. These programs are offered at schools, community centers, parks and recreation, child care centers and home-based care. These programs are integral to families who work because they offer safe, nurturing spaces for children when school is out. The children are under the supervision of responsible adults and provide opportunities for children to develop and grow.

Nationally, it is estimated that over seven million children participate in some type of afterschool program daily, and an additional twenty- five million children would participate in a program if accessible. Low-income children from Black and Latino families (55%) have a harder time accessing programs (America After 3PM, 2020).

According to research from the National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST), children who participate in quality afterschool programs have better

outcomes than children who do not. High quality programs enhance and enrich the lives of children and youth, by offering activities and experiences that are developmentally appropriate, effective staff practices to guide and support, and partner with communities and schools.

In the United States, millions of dollars have been spent to support quality initiatives, focused on enhanced programming, program environment and curriculum, qualifications of staff working in programs that serve children birth to age five. Many of these initiatives allow afterschool programs to participate, few are specifically targeted to meet the unique challenges and needs of afterschool and often lack the expertise to offer services and supports to effectively improve the quality of these programs.

For Delaware's children and families, a similar story exists. Daily, over 16,000 (11%) children participate in an afterschool program, approximately 62,000 (47%) more children would participate if a program were made available to them. (Delaware Afterschool Network, 2021).

Afterschool programs in Delaware interested in improving quality, have be unable to participate in Delaware Stars (Stars), the states' quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).

A 2014 policy prohibited new afterschool only programs from participating. The priority and targets for federal funding was early education and shifted the priority. Due to this, the system was unable to accommodate additional afterschool programs, halting applications and new participating programs. Support for

afterschool programs wanting to engage in quality improvements needed to accomplish this without supports from the QRIS. The result is that there are only about 50 afterschool only programs that participate in Stars, who have access to supports that include technical assistance and tiered funding.

Delaware Stars, currently in revision, has prioritized changes to the system that are promising to afterschool programs. Team members were identified from a pool of programs administrators, quality improvement and professional development staff along with other stakeholders. Each team have a specific focus; family child care, center-based or school age programs. Members of the team members were tasked with looking at the current research base,

practitioner feedback, national standards, and other resources, to make informed decisions about recommendations for key practices and standards of quality.

The focus of this ELP is to recommend supports that address the unique challenges of afterschool programs in Delaware as they embark on a journey of quality improvement and to support the QRIS in developing a system that is responsive to afterschool programs and partners with them to create opportunities to improve the quality of the experiences for the children and families who participate.

Specifically, research on afterschool quality and effective practice will be examined along with the data collected from the School Age Revision workgroup to design resources and tools targeted to the needs of afterschool professionals. In addition, conversations around the research, effective tools, and resources to be used

with DIEEC staff to improve their knowledge on afterschool practice and build partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders with an interest in afterschool, i.e., Delaware Afterschool Network, community-based organizations, and schools.

Organizational Context

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) was created in response to a growing demand for early education and school age professional development system. DIEEC is located at the University of Delaware, in the College of Education and Human Development, in the Human Development and Family Sciences department. Our Mission, Vision and Core Principles are outlined in Table .

Table 16 DIEEC's Mission, Vision and Core Principles

Mission	The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood improves the lives of young children and their families by providing exemplary services for the early childhood community. We conduct research that helps to advance equity and promotes high-quality education in early childhood.
Vision	By carrying out our work locally and in different state contexts, we will be nationally recognized as a leader in improving experiences for young children, their families, and the workforce.
Core Principles	Our core principles for vision include: • Partnership with community and government

	• Workforce • Communications • Developing and demonstrating new models of service integration to promote equity • Applying implementation science principles • Conducting policy relevant research in real-world contexts

Our staff of over seventy individuals includes the DIEEC Director, who supervises the Stars, Professional Development, Research and Early Head Start Directors. Each director manages staff in their units which include, program managers, program coordinators, technical assistants, coaches, administrative assistants, family service workers, family advocates, family/child specialists, and research assistants.

Our staff serve early education and school age professionals, early education centers, family child care and school age programs, and the children and families who participate in these programs.

Organizational Role

I have worked with the Delaware Institute for Excellence (DIEEC) at the University of Delaware (UD), since September 1, 2013, initially hired to work on the Delaware Stars (Stars) project as a Program Coordinator for Technical Assistance. Prior to joining the staff at UD, I worked for Children and Families First (CFF) on the Stars project in various roles before it moved to the University and DIEEC in 2010.

In December 2019, I transitioned to the role of Research Associate. In this role, I work across the various projects of DIEEC; including but not limited to, Professional Development, New Directions Early Head Start, and Delaware Stars. My role as Research Associate has heightened my awareness of challenges faced by professionals in the field of early education and afterschool. Shifting from working with direct service to research and evaluation, collecting and analyzing data has solidified the importance of using data to inform practice. Data empowers staff with information to support decision making and helps with evaluating services to ensure that the services offered to programs are responsive, high-quality, and effective.

While working with Stars, I observed first-hand the limitations of our QRIS system, in providing support to Afterschool programs to make sustainable change. A significant limitation in the QRIS is that since 2014, a policy was instituted to prohibit additional afterschool programs from participating, due to the funding streams. Other limitations include preparation and experiences of technical assistant staff to support the unique challenges faced by these programs, few professional experiences targeted to individuals working in afterschool, lack of resources and tools to support program self- assessments, understanding what effective afterschool practice is, knowledge of the research and policy on afterschool, and familiarity of evidence-based practice in afterschool.

Problem Statement

There is a need to increase the level and type of quality improvement supports for afterschool programs participating in Stars. Currently, in revision, Stars can use

this as an opportunity to create a system that provides a variety of effective supports to all programs participating in QRIS, especially afterschool programs.

In the fall of 2020, I was asked to participate on the School Age (SA) Revision team. The goal of this team was to revise the current afterschool standards, identify key practices, and create pathways. The team was encouraged to look at afterschool in a way, "that acknowledges and honors their unique strengths."

My participation on the team, and my interest and investment in afterschool programs, experience as a technical assistant, and Afterschool Program Director, has guided my belief that afterschool programs experience unique challenges, unlike those experienced by center-based or family child care programs and should have professional development and quality improvement supports tailored specifically to their individual needs.

The challenges faced by afterschool programs include limited funding streams, lack of access to space that allows programs to grow participation, and carrying out program activities, restrictive environments that prohibit implementation of program offerings, and workforce challenges with it being difficult to find qualified staff, willing to work during program hours, and child participation.

In January and February 2021, the SA revision team conducted a series of four focus groups with afterschool program leadership and frontline staff. During the focus groups it was evident, that afterschool leaders and staff felt isolated in carrying out their work. Feelings of disconnect, the system lacking targeted afterschool content, access to workshops that were available at times that were convenient to afterschool

staff and finally lack of opportunities to connect with individuals and other programs doing similar work. (See Artifact 10.)

During this revision, DIEEC's Professional Development Project and Delaware Stars should reimagine and re-envision trainings, resources, and quality supports for afterschool only programs to ensure that all of Delaware's children have access to high quality afterschool programming based on research from the National Afterschool Association and Council for Accreditation.

The research is clear. (See Artifact 1.) High quality afterschool is possible if implementation is intentional. To be intentional in its support of afterschool programs, DIEEC must define what quality in afterschool looks like. In addition, to standards and key practices, it will be important for DIEEC to develop supports that are specific to afterschool, with quality coaches who have extensive knowledge and specialize in afterschool programming. It is important to review and subsequently update the school age competencies that were developed over 10 years ago. These initial steps will build the foundation to have relevant supports to guide quality improvement efforts for afterschool practitioners.

Collaboration between DIEECs units has been a welcomed consequence of the Stars redesign. Professional Development Instructors and Technical Assistants have been working together to discuss how to enhance afterschool supports. Afterschool programs with support from an enhanced and responsive system can provide benefits to staff and children with amazing outcomes for social emotional and academic success.

Improvement Goal

The review of the literature on the benefits of afterschool programs, the support provided by our organization, and my interest in afterschool has encouraged me to push my agenda to advocate and stress all Delaware's children should have access to high-quality child care programs, including afterschool. Access to high-quality programs has the most benefits for children who live in high-need, high-risk areas to support positive outcomes. Research shows that children who participate in high quality programs are more likely to graduate high school, less likely to be incarcerated, and less likely to participate in recreational drug use. Working collaboratively and building relationships between the "system" and the "field" will create opportunities to build a stronger knowledge base for practitioners and provide data to create resources and tools that can enhance quality supports.

The goals of my project include increasing interest in Afterschool in Delaware's QRIS to support healthy youth development; advocate to reverse policies that prohibits new afterschool only programs from participating in QRIS by presenting data on the benefits of afterschool; use data from the SA Revision team to develop resources targeted to Afterschool leaders and staff; provide information on effective afterschool practice to DIEEC staff.

Table 22 Description of Proposed Artifacts

Improvement Goal: Afterschool Tools and Resources for program leadership and staff, DIEEC staff							
	Artifact	Type	Audience	Description	Action Steps	Timeline	Status

1.	Logic Model: Recommended	Chart	Committee, DIEEC staff, stakeholders	The recommended logic model will describe the activities, inputs and outputs for afterschool program participating in quality improvement.	QRIS is currently in process of revision of the system. This document based on research of effective practice and support to inform support of afterschool programs.	Fall 2021	Currently in revision.
2.	School Age Childcare in Delaware: Research Brief	Research Brief	DIEEC staff, stakeholders, Afterschool program staff	This document will provide information about the state of afterschool in Delaware	Using data collected as part of this ELP, and data from the QRIS create a research brief for inclusion on DIEEC's website	Winter 2022	Not complete

3.	School Age Revision Focus Group Data Analysis Report	Report	School Age Workgroup; QRIS Leadership	Report written using the data from the SA Focus Groups. Included in the report is a list of themes on types of support afterschool programs communicated as needs.	Data was analyzed and coded into themes, which were communicated to the SA workgroup, next step is to decide which themes can be addressed by creation of tools, infographic, training, etc.	Spring 2021	Data analysis report is written, complete.
4.	Afterschool Curriculum/Frameworks	Tool document	DIEEC Staff, Afterschool Programs	List of research-based curriculum and curriculum frameworks for use by afterschool programs	Researched evidence-based curriculum/curriculum frameworks for afterschool programs, information compiled into a document with details such as cost, age groups, etc. Initial document shared with program manager and Advisor.	Fall 2020	Complete

5.	Afterschool Program Assessments	Tool document	DIEEC Staff, Afterschool Programs	List of evidence-research based assessment tools for use with afterschool program improvement	Researched research based, valid tools to be shared in document for use in quality improvement efforts. Document created. Shared	Fall 2020	Complete

					with program manager and advisor.		
6.	Video: School Age Child Care	Video	Stakeholders, Community Partners	Purpose of video is to create an opportunity for dialogue about the benefits of afterschool	Video created as part of coursework for eLearning.	Spring 2020	Complete
Improvement Goal: Afterschool Research							
7.	Focus Group(s): School Age Program Leadership and Staff	Focus Group: Data Collection	Afterschool staff, DIEEC staff and leadership, system	Focus group to collection information to inform and collect feedback on QRIS revision.	Developed discussion questions. Collect data and transcribed	Spring 2021	Complete

8.	PowerPoint: SA Focus Group Feedback	PowerPoint Presentation	SA Revision Workgroup	Share patterns/themes that emerged from the focus groups	Create a presentation to share following the SA Focus groups with the SA Revision Workgroup and DIEEC Leadership	Summer 2021	Complete
9.	Literature Review: Benefits of Afterschool Programs	Literature Review	Committee	Purpose of the literature review is to examine the research on afterschool.	Create a review of the most recent research on afterschool programs: definition, challenges, benefits, etc.	Fall 2021	In revision
Improvement Goal: Needs Assessments							
10.	DIEEC Staff Needs Assessment	Survey	DIEEC Frontline Staff	Conduct a survey to address the strengths, needs and areas of	Draft of survey complete. Submit IRB	Spring 2022	Incomplete

				improvement on afterschool content, and level of comfort in service delivery	Need support of advisor.		
11.	Afterschool Program Leadership/Staff Survey	Survey	DIEEC staff, stakeholders, Afterschool program staff	Conduct a survey to collect information about the needs of staff working in the afterschool field	Draft of survey complete Need support of advisor Submit IRB approval	Spring 2022	Incomplete

Artifact Narratives

Description of Planned Artifacts

Artifact 1: Logic Model-Recommended: The original logic model was developed as part of the course requirement for Program Evaluation (EDUC863). A recommended logic model will use the data collected to describe the activities, inputs and outputs for programs participating in quality improvement efforts.

Artifact 2: Afterschool (School Age Care) in Delaware: Research Brief: This document will provide information to afterschool practitioners about the state of afterschool in Delaware.

Artifact 3: School Age Revision Focus Group Data Analysis Report: Report written using data from the SA Focus Groups. Included in the report is a list of themes on the types of support afterschool programs participating in the QRIS shared as needs.

Artifact 4: Afterschool Curriculum Frameworks: List of effective research-based afterschool curriculum and curriculum frameworks compiled to share with afterschool programs.

Artifact 5: Afterschool Program Assessments: List of evidence-research based assessment tools for use by afterschool programs to improve their program.

Artifact 6: Video: School Age Child Care: Video created to introduce stakeholders to afterschool programs, how they are beneficial to children and families and to generate discussion for support.

Artifact 7: Focus Group(s): School Age Program Leadership and Staff- Focus group to collect information and feedback about the needs of programs and QRIS revision.

Artifact 8: PowerPoint: SA Focus Group Feedback: PowerPoint used as a visual to share feedback from the focus groups with the SA Revision team. Patterns/Themes that emerged were highlighted.

Artifact 9: Literature Review: Benefits of Afterschool Programs: Literature review to examine the research on afterschool programs and the benefits of high-quality programs.

Artifact 10: DIEEC Staff Needs Assessment: Conduct a needs assessment to address the strengths, needs and areas to target on afterschool content, and level of comfort working with this program type.

Artifact 11: Afterschool Program Leadership/Staff Survey: Conduct a survey to collect information from afterschool programs on needs to improve programs and supports for staff in the field.

REFERENCES

Afterschool Alliance. (2020). *America After* 3PM:https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/

Delaware Afterschool Network. (2019). Retrieved from: https://deasn.org/.

National Institute for Out-of-School-Time. (2010).

Appendix L

IRB EXEMPT LETTER

Institutional Review Board
210H Hullihen Hall
Newark, DE 19716
Phone: 302-831-2137
Fax: 302-831-2828

DATE: July 14, 2022

TO: Christina Joe
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1882886-1] Afterschool Programs: Quality, Improvements and Supports SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 14, 2022

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category *2(i)*

Thank you for your New Project submission to the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (UD IRB). According to the pertinent regulations, the UD IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT from most federal policy requirements for the protection of human subjects. The privacy of subjects and the confidentiality of participants must be safeguarded as prescribed in the reviewed protocol form.

This exempt determination is valid for the research study as described by the documents in this submission. Proposed revisions to previously approved procedures and documents that may affect this exempt determination must be reviewed and approved by this office prior to initiation. The UD amendment form must be used to request the review of changes that may substantially change the study design or data collected.

Unanticipated problems and serious adverse events involving risk to participants must be reported to this office in a timely fashion according with the UD requirements for reportable events.

A copy of this correspondence will be kept on file by our office. If you have any questions, please contact the UD IRB Office at (302) 831-2137 or via email at hsrb-research@udel.edu. Please include the study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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