Changes Coming to Michigan’s OST Standards

The Michigan Out-of-School Time (MOST) Standards have assisted schools and other organizations in developing high quality, comprehensive OST programs for children and youth in grades K-12 since their adoption by the state Board of Education in 2003. Every five years, the Department of Education initiates a new revision process, and today the standards are being updated once again beginning with a review by an “Action Team” comprised of members of the Michigan After-School Partnership’s Quality Committee. Kate Porter, MASP’s Quality Specialist, is a co-chair of the “Action Team” and discusses the review process so far, and what OST professionals can expect to see in upcoming months.

What do we need to know about the standards in a nutshell?

Kate: Since 2003, the standards have defined what high-quality programming looks like in this state, rooted in research and best practices concerning quality programs for school-age children and youth. It’s significant to note that Michigan was one of the first states in the country to adopt OST standards, and is one of the few states to set standards that are adopted and recognized by a State Board of Education.

Traditionally, the standards have focused around these key content areas: health and safety, human relations, program staffing, indoor and outdoor environment, program activities, administration and single purpose programs. They help drive, for example, how organizations hire and train staff, maintain staff ratios, create a safe and supportive environment for students, ensure timely emergency planning, provide proper indoor and outdoor facilities, deliver age-appropriate activities, and administrative decisions are data-driven.

How is MASP involved in updating and revising the MOST standards and what happens next?

Kate: The Michigan After-School Partnership has been responsible for assembling the group - representing a broad and diverse range of providers engaged in afterschool at the local level, researchers and stakeholders – to gather front-line experiences from the field. Since October 2019, the team has been digging into the current standard practices and procedures section by section, considering them against the latest research and practices, applying findings to best inform revision-making decisions. Upon approval from MDE, MASP will then seek feedback from a broader audience of stakeholders and will issue a final report to be disseminated. Ultimately, the potential revisions help guide the afterschool field and create high quality programs for kids and families.
Can you offer an example of where the next standards will reflect the new realities of the afterschool field today?

Kate: A big point of discussion has been around program staffing, in part because the field has been struggling to find professionals for these positions. In reviewing the standards, we wanted to make sure that program staff are trained and educated to represent high-quality programs, making sure they have child development and youth experiences. Down the road, we want to help ensure that colleges offer degreed programs in afterschool youth development. We have the CDA (Child Development Associate) degree which is focused around early childhood development, and serves as a pipeline to the field. But that’s not specific to afterschool program and youth development. We also want to grow the profession that allows more professionals who choose to work with school-age students to have the opportunity to work toward a MiSAYD (Michigan School-Age Youth Development) certificate. We’ve been working hard to partner with certain colleges to ensure this credential is seen and valued so that afterschool is viewed as a professional career, and a pipeline to a great career, just like early childhood.

How can those in the field learn more about what’s on the horizon in the revision process?

Kate: Attending the Michigan After-School Spring Conference on May 14-15 will offer an opportunity to hear more about the standards and how the process is evolving. Professionals and stakeholders should also look to future articles about the revisions in upcoming MASP e-bulletins, and may send us questions to kate.porter@uwmich.org.

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