



# Planning Considerations for Afterschool Professional Development

L. Daniele Bradshaw

Professional development is vital to the success of afterschool programs. Effective professional development enhances afterschool program quality by facilitating staff performance and knowledge; in addition, professional development is vital for improving student learning outcomes (Bouffard & Little, 2004; Hall & Surr, 2005; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Well-planned professional development also contributes to increased staff satisfaction and retention (Huang & Cho, 2010).

Some researchers have noted that professional development efforts may be more successful when they fit site context and needs (Joyce & Showers, 2002; King & Newmann, 2000; Shelton & Jones, 1996). Afterschool includes a wide variety of academic, arts, and recreational programs in a wide variety of settings. There are variations in schedules and program offerings. Staff members vary in backgrounds and professional

development experience (Hall & Surr, 2005). Because of these variations, afterschool professional development will be more successful if it is carefully planned and customized to site needs.

Afterschool program staff and leaders are usually well aware of the need for professional development, but they often experience a gap between intention and implementation. To address this issue, this article provides implementation guidelines that can help afterschool staff plan for effective professional development. It also suggests resources that can assist with planning efforts. The TEARS (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998) implementation framework described here can help afterschool professionals evaluate their professional development needs and plan staff training that fits the context of their program or site.

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**L. DANIELE BRADSHAW**, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the School of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA.. Her educational interests include afterschool programming and social studies.

## TEARS Factors for Planning Professional Development

The TEARS framework was originally defined by Leggett and Persichitte (1998) as a set of implementation factors for classroom educational technology. Based on a literature review and practitioner experience, they identified five implementation factors:

- Time
- Expertise
- Access
- Resources
- Support (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998, p. 33)

These implementation factors are comprehensive enough to be applied to many contexts, including afterschool professional development. They offer a simple, easy-to-remember framework that can make the task of planning for professional development less daunting. Although in practice all five factors are interrelated, dealing with each separately can help planners focus on what professional development is needed and what can work in their context.

### Time

Effective professional development requires time—a commodity that is often in short supply in afterschool programs. Afterschool staff need time to learn new skills, practices, procedures, or programs. Time is an essential condition for instruction, collaboration, and practice (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; Shelton & Jones, 1996). In addition to the actual training time, staff members need time for planning, practice, reflection, feedback, and collaboration (Bandy, Bowie, Burkhauser, & Metz, 2008; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Adequate time is especially important when staff need to become comfortable with a new initiative or process that stems from professional development (King & Newmann, 2000).

### Explore Forms of Professional Development

One suggestion based on Leggett & Persichitte's (1998) TEARS framework is to analyze different forms

of professional development to find creative ways to tackle the time problem. Hall and Gannett (2010) list a wide range of approaches to afterschool professional development: “single workshops, seminars, coaching, learning communities, technical assistance, professional networks, distance training, and higher education” (p. 14). Afterschool programs deal with high staff turnover and transition rates, in part because of low wages in some programs and unclear career pathways in the profession (Gannett, Mello, & Starr, 2009). As a result, program directors or others who want to facilitate professional development must research training approaches and plan well in advance for the necessary time requirements.

### Develop a Professional Development Schedule

Sustained scheduling provides opportunities for developing and planning student instruction (King & Newmann, 2000; Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; Shelton & Jones, 1996). It is important to schedule opportunities for sustained professional development. Planning a schedule helps to identify time requirements.

Afterschool program managers and site coordinators can look for options to add time. They can, for example, use approved substitutes or volunteers to cover classes during professional development times, plan professional development during evenings and summers, or incorporate professional development into existing meeting times (Watts & Castle, 1993). These options can be customized and applied to the particular afterschool setting, as needed.

One option that provides opportunities for collaboration is to schedule in-service work days (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; Raley, Grossman, & Walker, 2005; Watts & Castle, 1993) during the regular

afterschool hours on days when the students are not attending the program. In-service workdays provide a substantial block of time for reflection, discussion, and activities, without requiring staff members to work extra hours. In a school-based afterschool program, afterschool in-service days can be scheduled at the same time as school in-service days.

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A yearly professional development schedule (including summer options) helps afterschool staff members to plan and select their learning opportunities (Partnership for Afterschool Education [PASE] & Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 1999; Raley et al., 2005). Calendars maintained by intermediary organizations or statewide networks provide information on various professional development options and allow for long-term planning. For example, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) offers a comprehensive calendar of professional development opportunities organized by date, event, time, location, and county. Online professional development sessions are also included (NC CAP, 2014a). As another example, the California Afterschool Network's Training and Event calendar provides a variety of professional development opportunities for participants in California (California Afterschool Network, 2014). Afterschool managers can locate calendars of events available in their area and discuss the options with afterschool staff, giving staff members advance notice and the opportunity to provide their own input.

### **Expertise**

In planning for expertise, it is important to consider the specific knowledge requirements of the site and its staff (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998). Afterschool staff members should have opportunities to discuss which professional development models are appropriate for the program's needs. In determining the expertise needs, it is important to discuss site needs, collaboration models, and evaluation plans.

### **Base Training on Site Needs**

Input from staff members provides valuable information that can help managers customize professional development offerings (Huang & Cho, 2010; King & Newmann, 2000). Frontline staff members are directly involved with student learning goals, which should be a primary concern in planning professional development (Guskey, 2014; Joyce & Showers, 2002). If administrators seek staff input, the professional development is more apt to fit the program's context and needs. Through discussions, surveys, or interviews, managers can ask for input on potential planning issues, desired program changes, and student development goals (Huang & Cho, 2010). Identifying site needs helps to identify the necessary expertise for professional development.

For effective alignment of knowledge expertise, afterschool professional development can address school-

day curriculum and content linkages (Huang & Dietel, 2011). Afterschool programs that serve as partners to K–12 schools or districts can benefit from dialogue with K–12 staff on program purposes, activities, and vocabulary (PASE & C. S. Mott Foundation, 1999). With input from school partners, the afterschool curriculum and professional development can be aligned with school learning goals. Also, schools or other partners, such as businesses or community organizations, may provide valuable expertise by including afterschool staff in existing professional development initiatives (Huang & Cho, 2010; Raley et al., 2005).

External consultants can also expand professional development options by providing outside expertise and knowledge (King & Newmann, 2000). For example, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) provides professional development and assistance including on-site training with expert consultants. NIOST also offers the Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS), which can be used to identify needs for professional development (NIOST, 2014).

### **Encourage Staff Collaboration**

Professional development does not always have to come from the outside; staff members already have expertise to share. Professional development efforts benefit from staff participation, communication, reflection, and discussion (Bandy et al., 2008; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Shelton & Jones, 1996). In a collaborative environment, professional development participants gain knowledge by asking questions and exchanging ideas (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; King & Newmann, 2000; Lieberman, 1995). When staff members collaborate to train one another, the professional development is more likely to be relevant to site needs (Shelton & Jones, 1996).

Different training models offer different opportunities for collaboration. Regular mentoring, modeling, and evaluation sessions can become collaborative learning opportunities (Huang & Cho, 2010; Raley et al., 2005). In another example, an individual or a small group of staff members can learn about a topic and then share the information with others through an in-house training program. This approach not only reduces professional development costs but also allows staff members to share their interests and knowledge with their peers (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006; Huang & Cho, 2010). Intentional learning communities are another example of collaboration. In these groups, afterschool staff members collaborate to develop their own learning goals, research educational initiatives or practices, and facilitate one

another's knowledge development (Raley et al., 2005). Another option is to create teams of skilled staff members to become trainers (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006).

### Build Evaluation into the Planning

In planning for professional development, afterschool staff members should build evaluation into the process. They must know what they intend the professional development to achieve and how they will measure its effectiveness in order to determine what expertise they need to meet their goals. In the planning phases, facilitators can collaborate with participants to plan selected quality and evaluation measures (such as tests, observations, or rubrics) based on program goals and intended student outcomes; this planning also includes preliminary measures of the intended results (Bouffard & Little, 2004; Guskey, 2000, 2014; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

The evaluation process must be designed as a long-term and collaborative effort; it should not be reserved for the end of the professional development initiative (Bouffard & Little, 2004; Guskey, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002). All stakeholders in the professional development, from administrators and facilitators to participants, can use information from ongoing evaluations to examine and reflect on what the professional development is accomplishing and still needs to accomplish. Staff members also benefit from receiving regular feedback on their performance and student outcomes from the professional development (Bandy et al., 2008; Huang & Cho, 2010; Guskey, 2014). Ongoing evaluations provide information on current practices, current progress, future needs, and necessary adjustments (Huang & Cho, 2010; Guskey, 2000).

Evaluation resources are important in the planning stages. The University of Pennsylvania Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) Document Library webpage is one source for professional development evaluation resources (OSTRC, 2010a). Though the webpage is organized around the Philadelphia Out-of-School Time Staff Competencies and Content Areas, these research-based practices are relevant across the field (K. Okigbo, personal communication, June 17, 2014).

### Access

Afterschool staff members need access to professional development opportunities that are easily available to them. One way to facilitate access is through strategic partnerships. In planning access needs, afterschool staff members need to think of long-term follow-up issues. A long-term approach to access ensures professional development continuity.

### Seek Partnerships

Partners can provide enhanced access to professional development for afterschool programs. Partnerships can be formed with schools, community associations, colleges or universities, national organizations, businesses, funding entities, and more (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; PASE & C. S. Mott Foundation, 1999). Including afterschool staff in training sessions that are already offered by program partners reduces the cost of professional development (Raley et al., 2005). For assistance, afterschool leaders can consult the Afterschool Alliance's information on facilitating partnerships (Afterschool Alliance, n.d.c).

Partnerships with institutions of higher education can expand professional development offerings (Afterschool Alliance, 2007). For example, NC CAP collaborates with North Carolina State University and the NC Afterschool Professional Development Work Group to offer the NC CAP Leadership Institute. As part of this intensive professional

development opportunity, participants attend NC CAP's annual SYNERGY conference, along with seminars and workshops. Participants extend their learning by constructing an e-portfolio and participating in online meetings. On completing the program, participants receive continuing education credits (NC CAP, 2014b).

The Afterschool Alliance's Issue Brief No. 61 covers partnerships with STEM-rich institutions, which provide a potential source of professional development access (Afterschool Alliance, 2013).

### Plan for Follow-up

Long- and short-term plans should be developed (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998). It is important to plan for the proper long-term professional development

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access and assistance (Bandy et al., 2008; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Planning for long-term access supports the positive outcomes of professional development initiatives. For example, continued technical assistance can enhance professional development implementation (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Afterschool staff members need to be informed about ongoing resources that will support initial efforts, encourage changes in practice, and enhance student learning outcomes.

### Resources

In planning professional development, afterschool leaders must assess current resources and locate additional resources. Essential resources include financial support, specific teaching strategies, time, teaching materials, and technology (Guskey, 2014; Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; PASE & C. S. Mott Foundation, 1999; Shelton & Jones, 1996). Funding is one of the major factors for a resource analysis; therefore, a long-term planning approach is beneficial.

### Assess Available Resources

Afterschool program managers should research external resources to guide professional development. Knowledge based on research and theory is an essential consideration when choosing resources (Bandy et al., 2008; Bouffard & Little, 2004; PASE & C. S. Mott Foundation, 1999). External professional development resources from reputable entities are valuable for providing broad perspectives, research-based information, and knowledge that can be adapted to the particular afterschool site. As one example, program managers can explore options for comprehensive professional development systems (Dennehy, Gannett, & Robbins, 2006; Gannett et al., 2009; Hall, Yohalem, Tolman, & Wilson, 2003) like those offered by some statewide organizations. Also, credentialing programs facilitate professional recognition, training information, and skill development (Dennehy et al., 2006; Hall & Gannett, 2010; Gannett, et al., 2009).

State afterschool websites are a resource for locating external professional development resources. State websites may provide links and suggestions for recommended local, state, national, and international resources. The Afterschool Alliance also offers information on statewide afterschool networks and resources; it provides state-specific information including contacts, network

information, and state and other websites (Afterschool Alliance, n.d.a). Joining afterschool organizations and networks is another way program staff can access updated external resources. Websites like those of the NAA and NIOST provide external resource information.

The resources should be aligned with core competency standards for afterschool staff (Bouffard & Little, 2004; Starr, Yohalem, & Gannett, 2009). Core competencies help to define programming goals, which, in turn, clarify professional development goals. Core competencies can help in assessing the knowledge, values, and skills of the staff members, thus providing guidance on needs assessments and resource research (Astroth, Garza, & Taylor, 2004; Quinn, 2004; Vance, 2010). As one example of how core competencies can guide

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resource research, the University of Pennsylvania's OSTRC organizes its list of state and national websites around Philadelphia's OST Staff Competencies and Content Areas (OSTRC, 2010b). Similarly, the NAA professional development website provides information on the NAA Core Competencies, available webinars, and Talk Tuesday information (National Afterschool Association, n.d.).

Another resource to help with afterschool professional development planning comes from the American Institutes for Research (AIR, formerly Learning Points Associates). AIR's Beyond the Bell Toolkit helps expanded learning and afterschool staff members to develop and maintain high-quality programs. The Beyond the Bell Toolkit includes information on program management, design, delivery, partnerships and collaboration, evaluation, and program improvement. Each kit comes with email templates for communicating with principals and parents, sample professional development sessions, program job descriptions, program activity ideas, and more. While the toolkit may be used as a standalone resource, AIR also trains afterschool and expanded learning professionals on how to use it. Users can choose from a list of available trainings or contact AIR to customize a workshop or training session to meet specific needs (F. Lopez, personal communication, March 19, 2014; McElvain, Moroney, Devaney, Singer, & Newman, 2014).

Additional resource information is provided by the SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool, which offers professional development guides for site leaders (SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool, 2014)

and the Afterschool Training Toolkit (WGBH Educational Foundation & SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool, 2008). The toolkit includes lesson plans, videos, and other resources. SEDL also provides *A Resource Guide for Planning and Operating Afterschool Programs*, which provides information on afterschool programming and organizational development resources (Bagby, 2008).

One resource option that might help with the time limitations inherent in the current afterschool landscape is online professional development (PASE & C. S. Mott Foundation, 1999). Online professional development can provide consistent, high-quality training in a cost-effective way. Online professional development can also be used along with traditional training efforts for an integrated or “blended” training approach (Marquart, Rizzi, & Parikh, 2010). Online training helps with time flexibility in completing professional development requirements.

Online professional development modules developed by reputable intermediary organizations can help with the time factor, since the modules are already developed by the intermediary organizations and travel is not required. Another resource is the National Out-of-School Time Professional Development Center (OSTPD). Developed through a partnership among NAA, Child Care Aware, and Cypherworx, the OSTPD provides web-based professional development on a variety of relevant topics (Cypherworx, 2013). As an example of online STEM professional development resources geared toward out-of-school providers, the Click2SciencePD website provides information on online STEM professional development. Click2Science covers 20 skills that were cross-walked with Dimensions of Success, National 4-H standards, and others (Click2SciencePD, 2014; K. Lodi, personal communication, May 12, 2014). In another example, the Y4Y (You for Youth) website provides online professional development and online community information for all levels of 21st CCLC afterschool practitioners (You for Youth Project Team, 2010).

### **Assess Available Funding**

Funding limitations obviously affect the availability of resources for professional development. Planning in advance for long-term availability of funding is essential for sustained professional development. Financial planning should include the need for upgrades in materials, technology, hardware, software, and support (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; Shelton & Jones, 1996).

One source of financial resources is grants (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998). Afterschool programs looking to identify and apply for grants can consult the Afterschool

Alliance’s resources on funding and sustainability. The organization’s website includes writing tips, a funding database, and information on partnerships (Afterschool Alliance, n.d.b).

Professional development resources can be influenced by the availability of funding. For example, STEM education is being promoted in school and afterschool settings. Therefore, afterschool programs may want to pursue funding designated specifically for STEM professional development. If so, they should consult *Know Your Funders: A Guide to STEM Funding for Afterschool*, in which the Afterschool Alliance provides information on sources of STEM funding and tips for achieving grant-writing success (Afterschool Alliance, 2012).

### **Support**

Staff members benefit from administrative support (Leggett & Persichitte, 1998; Shelton & Jones, 1996). Support involves helping staff members to accept professional development initiatives and to view them positively. Staff members need information on conceptual theories and rationale that give purpose to the training (Bandy et al., 2008; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Afterschool administrators can also support professional development by joining in the professional development and by providing incentives.

### **Promote a Positive View of Professional Development**

One form of support involves providing professional development to all staff, including administrators and volunteers (Bandy et al., 2008; Huang & Dietel, 2011; Quinn, 2004). By participating with the staff, administrators can better support staff learning and understand staff needs (Bandy et al., 2008). Staff members should be able to see that administrators value the professional development and their participation in it. As supporters of professional development, afterschool administrators should provide leadership, address concerns, and procure resources. In addition, they should also participate in their own professional development that teaches them to support staff members and to develop their leadership knowledge and skills (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006).

### **Provide Incentives to Promote Participation**

Afterschool administrators can communicate with their staff members in order to ascertain what resources to use to promote participation in afterschool professional development. Incentives must be available and clearly articulated; also, staff members need to understand the benefits of participating in professional development (Hall

& Surr, 2005). Incentives can include positive recognition and rewards for efforts (Leggett & Perschitte, 1998; Shelton & Jones, 1996). Afterschool staff members may be interested in specific incentives such as certificates, degree programs, compensation, continuing education credits, and credentials (PASE & C. S. Mott Foundation, 1999). Assistance with professional requirements, such as certification credits, may make participation more attractive. Credentialing programs not only provide structured training levels but also offer career legitimacy that recognizes staff members' knowledge and skills. Credentialing programs can serve as incentives and assist in reducing staff turnover (Gannett et al., 2009).

### Why Professional Development Planning Matters

Afterschool programs have unique schedules, programs, and needs. Professional development should help afterschool staff members to address program needs and student learning needs. An intentional planning process can identify any areas that may assist or hinder professional development efforts, thereby ensuring that the professional development is of high quality.

Leggett and Perschitte's (1998) TEARS implementation factors provide a concise framework to guide multifaceted planning efforts. Each one of the factors supports the others, so all factors should be considered together. By addressing each of the TEARS factors, afterschool administrators and staff members can plan for professional development success.

Afterschool staff members can use this framework to conduct detailed, long-term professional development planning. The goal of such planning ultimately is to benefit the students in the program. The fact that staff preparedness affects student learning outcomes makes the process of planning afterschool professional development a worthwhile endeavor.

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