

SYNERGY Unites Afterschool Community, Unveils New Standards

Over 350 afterschool providers, community leaders, and elected officials attended NC CAP's annual statewide SYNERGY conference in Greensboro from April 29 – May 1. The event highlighted the release of new statewide standards for physical activity in afterschool programs, which were developed by the Move More Afterschool Collaborative led by the NC Division of Public Health.

North Carolina is the first state to release recommended standards for physical activity in afterschool programs. The voluntary guidelines offer ways for afterschool programs to incorporate more physical activity - a growing concern for the state that ranks fifth nationally in childhood obesity.

"Obesity is a community issue," said Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief of North Carolina Division of Public Health's Chronic Disease and Injury Section. "It's about young people in our state having opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating throughout the day. Parents, community leaders, afterschool providers and afterschool partners now have a set of standards they can use to create more physical activity opportunities in afterschool programs."

Keynote speakers endorsing the standards included Dr. Robert Schwartz, NC Pediatric Association and Wake Forest University, along with Heba Salama and Ed Brantley, NBC's *The Biggest Loser* Contestants.

"Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic," said Dr. Schwartz, in referencing the rising Type 2 diabetes rates in children. "Afterschool programs can help kids stay active and healthy."

The Move More Afterschool standards are available for download on the Effective Practices page of our website, under Evaluation and Standards.

Other conference events included a Youth Forum on Afterschool, featuring a panel of 11 children and youth from across the state. The youth shared with elected officials their vision of a high quality afterschool program and the importance of continuing afterschool support during these tough economic times.

The conference also featured over 30 workshops that addressed current challenges in the field and connected those working in, partnering with, or advocating for afterschool programs with the most recent research and tools. Other keynote speakers included Wendy Miller, Former NC Teacher of the Year, and LeVelle Moton, NC Central University Men's Basketball Assistant Coach and Boys & Girls Clubs Alumnus.

"It was very well planned, kept us motivated and energized," said one participant. "I enjoyed the variety of workshops"

SYNERGY is held in collaboration with the NC Department of Public Instruction, NC Department of Health and Human Services, NC Department of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, Boys & Girls Clubs, Communities in Schools of NC, and NCSU 4-H Youth Development.