

NORTH CAROLINA AFTERSCHOOL PROFESSIONAL CORE COMPETENCIES

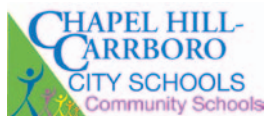


NC Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs • Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
Community Schools • Communities in Schools of NC • Durham Public
Schools • NC AfterSchool Coalition • NC Center for Afterschool
Programs • NC Community College System • NC Child Care Commission
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NC Department of Health and Human Services–Division of Social Services
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The North Carolina Afterschool Professional Core Competencies provide a framework of the knowledge and skills needed in eight content areas of professional development in the field of afterschool programming. They address the wide variety of skills and abilities necessary to work with afterschool-age children and youth. The competencies are based on the following beliefs:

- Competent, well-trained professionals are the key to quality afterschool programming.
- Competencies can be used to establish standards for employment and job performance.
- Individual competencies are considered emergent, developing over time with experience.
- Competencies are cumulative and together create a continuum for professional development for the afterschool workforce.

The core competencies are based on research and categorized according to five levels of skills necessary to provide quality programming. The skill levels establish a continuum from beginning workforce skills (Level 1) to an advanced level of skill which includes academic preparation (Level 5). Professionals progress from one level to another through a combination of formal study and practical experience. Depending on a professional's role, setting, or experience, he or she may have skills at varying levels in the different areas.^{50, 51, 52}

COMPETENCY LEVELS

LEVEL 1: Includes the knowledge and skills expected of a professional new to the field with minimal specialized training and/or education. A level 1 professional can be considered new staff with limited to no background in the youth development field. Possible positions may be volunteers (adult or teen), episodic volunteers, or staff.

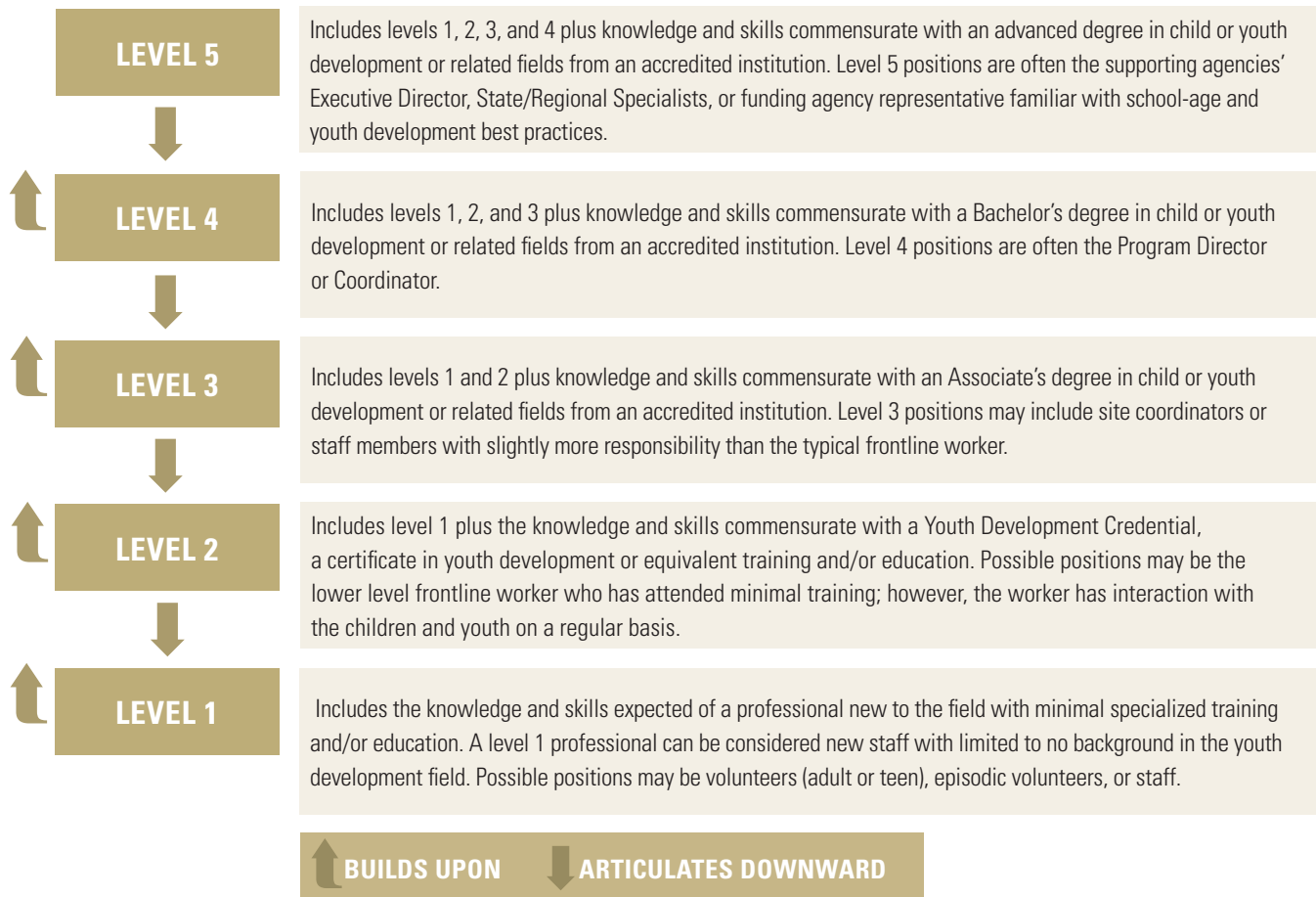
LEVEL 2: Includes level 1 plus the knowledge and skills commensurate with a Youth Development Credential, a certificate in youth development or equivalent training and/or education. Possible positions may be the lower level frontline worker who has attended minimal training; however, the worker has interaction with the children and youth on a regular basis.

LEVEL 3: Includes levels 1 and 2 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an Associate's degree in child or youth development or related fields from an accredited institution. Level 3 positions may include site coordinators or staff members with slightly more responsibility than the typical frontline worker.

LEVEL 4: Includes levels 1, 2, and 3 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with a Bachelor's degree in child or youth development or related fields from an accredited institution. Level 4 positions are often the Program Director or Coordinator.

LEVEL 5: Includes levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an advanced degree in child or youth development or related fields from an accredited institution. Level 5 positions are often the supporting agencies' Executive Director, State/Regional Specialists, or funding agency representative familiar with school-age and youth development best practices.

COMPETENCY LEVEL VISUAL



CONTENT AREAS

The competencies are broken down into eight content areas:

I: CHILD/YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

II: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND CURRICULUM

- Creating the Learning Environment and General Curriculum
- Promoting Physical Development
- Promoting Cognitive Development
- Promoting Communication Skills
- Promoting Social Development
- Promoting Creative Expression

III: CHILD/YOUTH OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

IV: FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES

- Relationships with Families
- Connections with Schools
- Use of Community Resources

V: HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

- Knowledge of Regulations
- Environmental Safety
- Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles
- Responding to Health Needs of Youth

VI: INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Providing Individual Guidance
- Enhancing Group Experiences

VII: PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Personnel Management
- Financial Management

VIII: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

- Displaying Professionalism in Practice
- Ongoing Professional Growth
- Leadership and Advocacy

Professionals from various agencies collaborated to develop this set of core competencies to serve as the foundation for the North Carolina Afterschool Professional Development System. The collaborative group's goal is to establish a set of standards that support quality care and the professionalization of the child and youth development field. Core competencies define what professionals need to know and be able to do to provide quality afterschool programming. They serve as the foundation for decisions and practices of professionals and establish a set of standards that support professionalization of the youth development field. As professionals increase their knowledge and skills, they improve the services they provide to children, youth and their families. It is anticipated that continued research in the field of afterschool programming will refine these competencies even further. ^{50, 51, 52}

WAYS TO USE THE COMPETENCIES

ROLE	SUGGESTED USE
Group Leaders, Youth Workers, Youth Development Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assess level of knowledge and skill in each of the eight content areas ■ Identify specific professional development needs (<i>e.g.</i>, training and/or education)
Directors, Program Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specify training and/or education requirements for position descriptions ■ Develop staff professional development plans and policies ■ Establish a salary scale based on professional development levels ■ Guide the development and implementation of staff evaluations
Families, Communities, Public Education (K-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Articulate expectations of staff working with children and youth
Trainers, Training Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan and organize training and/or education opportunities ■ Promote training and/or education opportunities
Higher Education Faculty, Staff, and Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coordinate and design course content to facilitate transfer and articulation agreements ■ Assess current program content to determine course development
Federal, State, and Local Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and implement policies that will enhance professionalism in the field
Professional Development Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create the framework for a professional development system that provides access to competency-based training and/or education, links compensation commensurate with training and/or educational achievements, and supports professional recognition

KEEP IN MIND...

These core competencies serve to provide a framework of the knowledge and skills needed for afterschool professionals. They focus solely on the professional development of high quality staff, and do not include specific program standards. The standards and regulations of a program's funding or licensing agency or the NC Center for Afterschool Programs' Standards of Excellence may be used for identifying standards of a high quality program.

Best practices recommend appropriate supervision of the planning and implementation of these competencies. The NC Afterschool Professional Development Work Group understands that not all programs will employ staff persons at each level. Agencies should exercise discretion in making adjustments to suit the needs of their respective afterschool programs. With that in mind, some adjustments to consider are:

- Some lower level staff will need to incorporate skills and abilities identified at higher staffing levels. For example, while listed as a Level 5 staff skill, a Level 4 person may be identified as the appropriate person to conduct staff training.
- All higher level staff may be called on as mentors to those staff at lower levels – for supervision and assistance in building the skills necessary to meet a Level's requirements.

In this document, "all youth" refers to all youth, including those with special needs and English language learners.

Wherever curriculum is listed and where appropriate, the NC Afterschool Professional Development Work Group recommends linking to the NC Standard Course of Study.²¹

Staff at all levels should practice confidentiality when working with children and youth.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

AFTERSCHOOL – A general term used to describe an array of safe, structured programs that provide children and youth ages kindergarten through high school with a range of supervised activities intentionally designed to encourage learning and development, outside of the typical school day. Can include before, after, intersession and summer programs. **NOTE: throughout this document, the terms “afterschool” and “school-age” are used interchangeably.**

ACADEMIC SUPPORT – programs and/or practices designed to enhance students’ understanding of instructional material presented with the ultimate goal of improving student performance.

ACTIVE LISTENING – continuous and interactive process of listening carefully and giving feedback (verbal and nonverbal) to the speaker, in order to facilitate productive communication.

ADULT-DIRECTED – programs, lessons and/or activities that are developed and led by a teacher and based on curricular or teaching objectives.

AGE-APPROPRIATE – suitable to the chronological age range and developmental characteristics of a specific group of children and youth.

ALL YOUTH – in this document, “all youth” refers to all youth, including those with special needs and English Language Learners.

ASSETS – developmental assets; the framework of experiences and opportunities that children and youth need to grow into healthy, responsible adults.

BEST PRACTICE – a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result.

CURRICULUM – a set of courses, lessons, and/or activities constituting an area of specialization.

DIVERSITY – composed of distinct or unlike elements or qualities; the acceptance or promotion of different cultures, applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place (*i.e.*, organizations, schools, neighborhoods).

ETHICS – a theory or system of moral values; the discipline of dealing with good and bad with moral duty and obligation.

EVALUATION – the systematic collection, analysis and reporting of information about a program to assist in decision-making.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION – a forum of questions used to promote dialogue, also known as a subjective question. It requires the participant to answer in his/her own words and usually begins with “who,” “where,” “what,” “why,” and/or “how”.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – bodily movement of any type. It may include recreational activities such as games and sports, or daily activities such as walking and climbing stairs.

PROFESSIONALS – can refer to staff of afterschool, out-of-school time, summer learning, and school-age programs.

PROGRAM MISSION – describes the central purpose of the program or organization.

RISK FACTORS – can include, but are not limited to, health, poverty, socio-economic, and nutrition.

RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES – process of determining the maximum acceptable level of overall risk; assessing potential risks to determine level of risk present; and, if excessive, developing a strategy to reduce risk, so that level of risk is reduced to an acceptable level. Strategies may involve putting new policies into place, or adapting current policies and/or practices.

YOUTH-DIRECTED – programs, lessons and/or activities that are driven by student interest and designed with input from students.

CONTENT AREA I

CHILD/YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Children and youth develop in a systematic way, and it is important to recognize the difference between stage development and individual development. Knowledge of the predictable stages of growth and development of children is essential. Additionally, understanding that differences in age, gender, race and ethnic background, socio-economic class, language and abilities, including special needs, impacts individual growth and development. Professionals create learning environments that support all children/youth through respectful consideration of their individual differences.^{17, 26, 33, 40, 50, 51, 52}

LEVEL 1

- a** Demonstrates awareness of the basic stages of youth development.³³
- b** Demonstrates understanding that youth learn and develop through experience.³³
- c** Demonstrates awareness of cultural and environmental factors and the effects those factors may have on behavior and development.³³
- d** Responds positively, through actions, to the individual needs of all youth.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a** Demonstrates knowledge of specific physical, cognitive, social, and emotional stages of youth development.¹⁹
- b** Demonstrates understanding of youth development frameworks pertaining to positive youth outcomes (e.g., 40 Developmental Assets, Positive Youth Development).^{12, 21, 23}
- c** Demonstrates knowledge of differences in youth and the ways in which those differences impact their needs and participation in the program.⁴⁹
- d** Identifies the various ways in which youth learn and adapts experiences to the individual/group needs of youth.¹⁹
- e** Identifies risk factors, delays, or behaviors that may indicate a need for special services or program adaptations.⁴⁹

LEVEL 3

- a** Demonstrates knowledge of current theories and ongoing research related to family and youth development.^{12, 33}
- b** Integrates information on growth, development, and learning styles of individuals and applies it to youth in group settings.¹⁹
- c** Creates environments and experiences that value, affirm, and respect cultural/linguistic diversity.¹⁹
- d** Employs practices that support an inclusive philosophy.⁸
- e** Utilizes appropriate resources to include the family, and makes program adaptations for all youth.¹⁹

LEVEL 4

- a** Applies major theories of youth development to program planning and management to include physical, cognitive, social and emotional differences.⁸
- b** Shares information with families about the general principles of child/youth growth and development.⁸
- c** Ensures that the program's policies and practices reflect an inclusive philosophy.⁶

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to child/youth growth and development.²⁷
- b** Explores and applies multiple approaches to youth development programs and outcomes.¹⁹

CONTENT AREA II

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND CURRICULUM

CONTENT AREA

INCLUDES:

- Creating the Learning Environment and General Curriculum
- Promoting Physical Development
- Promoting Cognitive Development
- Promoting Communication Skills
- Promoting Social Development
- Promoting Creative Expression

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Professionals have the responsibility of creating an environment that fosters growth and development in the youth they serve. The capacity to establish and maintain a safe, nurturing environment is essential for all youth development professionals to possess. Within each component of the learning environment and the curriculum content area, professionals should be able to create a program in which a developmentally appropriate curriculum can be developed, delivered, and sustained.^{4,16,17,22,23,36,49}

For the purpose of this content area, academic support is defined as programs and/or practices designed to enhance students' understanding of instructional material presented with the ultimate goal of improving student performance.

The NC Afterschool Professional Development Group recommends that the NC Standard Course of Study be referenced for additional information concerning promoting academic development. The Group also recommends using the Move More North Carolina: Recommended Standards for After-School Physical Activity for additional information concerning promoting physical development.

Creating the Learning Environment and General Curriculum

LEVEL 1

- a Supports a positive, safe, and inclusive environment.¹⁹
- b Follows appropriate program structure including a daily schedule and routine.^{21, 22}
- c Supports and encourages youth participation in a variety of activities.^{6,14,23,32}
- d Demonstrates understanding of the importance of youth involvement in the planning process.^{6,23,54}
- e Demonstrates recognition of the importance of connections between what is learned in school and other experiences.²²
- f Provides active and quiet, youth-directed and adult-directed, individual and group, indoor and outdoor activities.⁸
- g Arranges effective and appropriate activity areas.⁸
- h Uses materials that demonstrate acceptance of race, gender, culture, family, language, and special needs.⁸
- i experimentation, exploration, and simulations.⁴⁹
- d Involves youth in developing activities and learning experiences.^{6,54}
- e Involves youth in discussions of concepts learned in and out of school.²²

LEVEL 2

- a Selects materials appropriate to the developmental levels of all youth.⁴⁹
- b Maintains and monitors daily schedule.^{21,23,49}
- c Actively involves youth in a variety of developmentally appropriate activities that facilitate fun and promote learning through

LEVEL 3

- a Plans and adapts activities to make them appropriate for the developmental levels of all youth.⁴⁹
- b Implements a curriculum and learning environment using innovative materials, technologies, choices and decision-making, which incorporates experimentation, exploration, simulation, and play

as a context for enhancing development and active learning.^{6,13,36,41}

- c** Plans activities that provide opportunities for youth to develop internal and external assets.⁸
- d** Creates opportunities for youth involvement in program planning and evaluation.⁶
- e** Uses appropriate materials, technologies, activities and strategies in an integrated curriculum that includes arts, recreation, fitness, academic support, life skills, and personal growth and development.⁴⁹
- f** Considers the physical environment when developing the curriculum.⁸
- g** Identifies and provides materials that expose youth to a variety of ethnic backgrounds.⁸
- h** Identifies assets and risk factors that may impact the success of youth.⁴⁹

LEVEL 4

- a** Plans learning environments for all youth.⁶
- b** Develops a curriculum and learning environment using innovative materials, technologies, choices, and decision-making, which incorporates experimentation, exploration, simulation, and play as a context for enhancing development and active learning.^{6,13,36,41}
- c** Modifies the curriculum in order to build on the interests and needs of youth.^{6,41,45}
- d** Develops strategies that allow youth to participate

in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.⁶

- e** Plans, uses, and evaluates appropriate materials, technologies, activities, and strategies in an integrated program that includes all program components.⁴⁹
- f** Ensures that the environment facilitates learning in all curricular areas, including arts, recreation and fitness, academic support, life skills, personal growth and development, and technology.⁶
- g** Informs others, including families, about the importance of adult-youth and peer interactions in all curricular areas.⁸
- h** Collaborates with other agencies to maximize opportunities for youth.²⁷

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to the design of curriculum and environment.²⁷
- b** Collaborates with other agencies to research and communicate information about learning environments and curriculum.⁶
- c** Communicates major theories, research, and issues relevant to family and youth development.²⁷
- d** Ensures that program activities include opportunities for youth to develop internal and external assets.⁸

Promoting Physical Development

LEVEL 1

- a** Facilitates a variety of physical activities that meet the interests, development, and skill levels of youth.⁵
- b** Interacts with and engages youth while providing group supervision during physical activities.⁴⁷
- c** Provides an opportunity for both structured and unstructured play.^{4,7,16,28,37,40}

LEVEL 2

- a** Supports all youth as they participate in physical activities.⁴⁷
- b** Uses a variety of equipment, activities, and opportunities to promote physical health and fitness.⁵

- c** Provides a variety of indoor and outdoor physical activities, including structured, unstructured, staff-directed, and youth-directed.⁴⁷

LEVEL 3

- a** Adapts physical health and fitness activities for youth with special needs.⁴⁷
- b** Demonstrates understanding of the importance of physical activity.⁴⁷
- c** Incorporates physical activities into all curricular areas, using the Move More NC: Recommended Standards for After-School Physical Activity.^{26,47}
- d** Provides an environment that is conducive to exploring and developing a variety of physical skills.^{26,47}

LEVEL 4

- a** Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of physical development activities for all youth.⁴⁷
- b** Articulates the importance and demonstrates the methods of integrating health and fitness activities into all curricular areas.⁴⁷
- c** Ensures implementation of health and fitness activities for youth.⁴⁷

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to promoting physical development.⁴⁷
- b** Advocates for policies and practices that promote the physical development of youth.^{26,47}

Promoting Cognitive Development

LEVEL 1

- a** Facilitates a variety of cognitive and other enrichment activities that meet different interest and skill levels.⁸
- b** Encourages youth to ask questions for understanding and actively listens to the responses given.⁸
- c** Actively interacts with youth during cognitive experiences.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a** Includes all youth in cognitive activities.⁸
- b** Asks youth relevant open-ended questions to extend their learning.⁸
- c** Engages in cognitive activities with youth while maintaining a supervisory role.⁸
- d** Encourages the cognitive development of youth through experimentation, exploration, simulation, and play.⁴⁹
- e** Provides a variety of activities and opportunities that encourage exploration and problem solving appropriate for the different developmental levels of youth.¹⁴
- f** Leads age-appropriate arts, literary, math, science, technology, and nature exploration in a manner that engages youth and builds on their interests.²⁷
- g** Follows the program's philosophy on homework assistance.⁸
- h** Facilitates learning opportunities that reflect diverse cultures, especially those representative of the program's community.⁸
- i** Uses a variety of cognitive activities, including formal, informal, staff-directed, youth-directed, and instructional.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a** Adapts cognitive activities for all youth.⁸
- b** Revisits learning activities with youth so they can reflect and build on previous learning to develop and refine thinking skills.²⁷
- c** Engages all youth in problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.⁴⁹
- d** Guides youth in arts, math, science, technology, and nature exploration activities in response to their interests.²⁷
- e** Incorporates cognitive activities into all curricular areas (*e.g.*, recreation and fitness, academic support, life skills, personal growth and development).²⁷
- f** Provides a learning environment that is conducive to the exploration and development of cognitive skills.²⁷
- g** Designs learning opportunities that reflect diverse cultures, especially those representative of the program's community.⁴⁹

LEVEL 4

- a** Plans, evaluates, and modifies activities/ curriculum to encourage the cognitive growth of all youth.²⁷
- b** Varies program strategies to correspond to multiple learning styles.⁴⁹
- c** Plans and develops youth problem-solving and critical-thinking activities.⁸
- d** Evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of cognitive activities for groups and individuals.⁴⁹
- e** Articulates the importance and demonstrates the methods of integrating cognitive activities into all curricular areas.⁴⁹

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to promoting cognitive development.²⁷
- b Collaborates with other agencies to research

and communicate information on cognitive development.²⁷

- c Provides training to staff on integrating cognitive activities into all curricular areas.²⁷

Promoting Communication Skills

LEVEL 1

- a Demonstrates understanding that youth communicate in a variety of ways.⁸
- b Models active listening and verbal skills.⁸
- c Communicates appropriately and respectfully.⁸
- d Stimulates conversation with and between youth.⁸

- c Implements communication experiences and activities based on the needs of youth.¹⁴
- d Incorporates communication skills into all curricular areas (*e.g.*, arts, recreation and fitness, academic support, life skills, personal growth and development).²⁷

LEVEL 2

- a Encourages the active participation of all youth in communication activities.²⁷
- b Offers a variety of communication opportunities that meet individual interests and skill levels.⁸
- c Expands own and youths' vocabularies through a variety of ways.⁸
- d Encourages youth to use appropriate verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings.⁸
- e Demonstrates awareness of barriers in communication and responds appropriately.⁸
- f Provides an environment that is conducive to the exploration and development of communication skills.¹⁴

LEVEL 4

- a Plans and evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of communication activities.³⁰
- b Collaborates with language specialists to adapt and modify interactions with youth based on their individual communication skills.⁸

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to emerging trends in language acquisition, development, and literacy.²⁷
- b Collaborates with other agencies to research and share information on communication development.⁸
- c Advocates for policies and practices that promote the communication development of youth.²⁷
- d Provides training to staff on integrating communication development activities into all curricular areas.⁹

LEVEL 3

- a Adapts communication activities for all youth.²⁷
- b Offers programming opportunities for youth to learn effective communication skills.⁸

Promoting Social Development

LEVEL 1

- a Treats youth as individuals, respecting their own strengths and needs and encouraging mutual respect.⁴⁷
- b Provides an environment that is conducive to the exploration and development of social skills.⁸

- c Demonstrates an understanding that periods of stress and transition may affect youth's social development.⁴⁹
- d Engages youth in positive, supportive conversations and interactions.^{8,16,45}

LEVEL 2

- a** Helps youth learn to communicate and get along with others in a safe and inclusive environment.¹²
- b** Promotes and encourages youth to exhibit empathy and mutual respect for the rights and possessions of others.¹⁸
- c** Guides youth through periods of stress and transition.²⁴
- d** Encourages youth to perceive events and experiences in their lives as opportunities for growth.⁹
- e** Provides many opportunities for youth to learn cooperation through games and activities.⁸
- f** Supports youth in developing awareness both as an individual and as a valued member of a family and ethnic or social group.⁴⁷
- g** Models awareness and sensitivity to diverse cultural values and expectations.⁴⁷
- h** Models recognition and expression of feelings.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a** Adapts social activities to meet the needs of all youth.⁸
- b** Facilitates youth participation in curriculum implementation and evaluation.¹¹
- c** Incorporates social activities into all curricular areas (*e.g.*, arts, recreation and fitness, academic support, life skills, personal growth and development).¹¹
- d** Facilitates youth participation in problem-solving in a social setting.¹¹
- e** Guides youth in responding appropriately to a variety of social settings.¹¹
- f** Intervenes appropriately to help the social development of youth.⁸

Promoting Creative Expression

LEVEL 1

- a** Encourages the process of creating as well as the end product.⁹
- b** Encourages individuality.²
- c** Accepts cultural differences that may affect the ways in which youth express individual creativity.²

- g** Implements strategies that encourage character education, which includes respect for self and others, responsibility, integrity, self-discipline, leadership and citizenship.³¹

LEVEL 4

- a** Identifies and assesses youth social skills and provides appropriate activities to address their needs.¹⁸
- b** Provides a meaningful curriculum that emphasizes social skills and relationships, including friendships.¹²
- c** Plans and evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of social activities for groups and individuals.¹⁸
- d** Develops strategies that encourage character education, which includes respect for self and others, responsibility, integrity, self-discipline, leadership and citizenship.³¹

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to promoting social development.⁴⁹
- b** Collaborates with other agencies to research and communicate information on social development of youth.⁸
- c** Advocates for policies and practices that promote the social development of youth.²⁷
- d** Evaluates the quality and effectiveness of curriculum, activities, and opportunities that support the social development of youth.⁴⁹
- e** Provides training to staff on integrating social development activities and skills into all curricular activities.⁹

LEVEL 2

- a** Uses technology to support creative expression.⁸
- b** Ensures time for spontaneous activities.⁸
- c** Provides materials for unstructured, self-directed activities.⁸
- d** Models and encourages creativity through the arts.⁸

- e Provides activities to promote creative expression.⁸
- f Provides opportunities that encourage youth to experiment with sound, rhythm, movement, language, materials, space, and ideas in individual ways.⁹
- i Introduces youth to creative and aesthetic experiences in their community.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a Adapts creative activities for youth with special needs.²
- b Ensures that all youth have access to opportunities that allow for individual creative expression.²
- c Implements curriculum and experiences to promote the creative expression of all youth.⁸
- d Involves youth in the development and implementation of creative and aesthetic activities.⁸
- e Demonstrates awareness of and uses the community as a resource for creative experiences.⁸
- f Incorporates creative activities into all curricular areas.²⁷
- g Provides an environment where youth feel free to explore and develop their creative skills.²
- h Provides time, space, and materials to support each youth's creative development.⁸

LEVEL 4

- a Demonstrates leadership in establishing partnerships with organizations in the community that stimulate creative and aesthetic experiences for youth.²
- b Encourages and integrates creative expression throughout curriculum.²
- c Shows respect for creative expression through various methods of presentation (*e.g.*, display, performances, publishing, creating portfolios).²
- d Advocates for the importance of youth representing their thoughts, feelings, and ideas through creative outlets.²
- e Evaluates the appropriateness of creative and aesthetic experiences for groups and individuals.²⁷
- f Ensures integration of creative activities into all curricular areas.⁸
- g Articulates the impact of creative activities on youth.²

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to promoting creative experiences.²⁷
- b Collaborates with other agencies to research and communicate information on creative development.²
- c Identifies and invites specialists to incorporate the arts into the curriculum.²
- d Provides training to staff on integrating creative activities into all curricular areas.³⁰



CONTENT AREA III

CHILD/YOUTH OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Professionals consistently utilize communication, interaction, and observation to assist in the understanding of children and their behaviors. Good observational techniques will allow staff to know how a child is progressing socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Quality professionals combine observation and assessment to develop strategies that produce positive youth outcomes for all children.³⁴

LEVEL 1

- a** Demonstrates understanding that youth develop at their own pace.⁴⁹
- b** Demonstrates understanding of how positive youth experiences lead to positive youth outcomes.⁴⁹
- c** Assists with collection of information about youth behaviors.⁴⁹
- d** Maintains confidentiality regarding observation and assessment information.⁸
- e** Demonstrates knowledge of environmental factors that may place youth at risk.⁴⁹
- f** Shares concerns about behavior and environmental factors with supervisor.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a** Demonstrates an awareness and understanding of stages of youth development.⁴⁹
- b** Utilizes various strategies to get to know each youth as an individual, including his or her strengths, needs, interests, family, and life situation.³⁴
- c** Uses age-appropriate expectations as the basis for observation of youth behaviors.⁴⁹
- d** Follows appropriate procedures for observing and assessing youth (*e.g.*, remaining objective, asking open-ended and non-judgmental questions).⁴⁹
- e** Communicates observations in written and oral form to supervisor.²⁵

LEVEL 3

- a** Implements accommodations based on the range of development and skills among youth.⁸
- b** Continually observes youth, analyzes and evaluates, and implements findings.⁴⁹
- c** Collects and organizes information to measure

youth outcomes (*e.g.*, using samples of a youth's work, completing skill lists, recording anecdotal notes).⁴⁹

- d** Interprets and incorporates observation and assessment information into program plans to meet group and individual needs.⁴⁹
- e** Engages youth, families, and program and school staff in the ongoing assessment process.⁸
- f** Demonstrates understanding of the role of risk factors on youth development (*e.g.*, poverty, nutrition, health).^{22,49}

LEVEL 4

- a** Communicates observations with staff, educators, youth, and families in a clear and supportive manner, while maintaining confidentiality.⁴⁹
- b** Selects and plans appropriate assessments relevant to positive youth outcomes.⁹
- c** Works cooperatively with assessment, school, and health care teams to provide appropriate programming for youth with special needs.⁴⁹
- d** Provides referrals to organizations in the community as appropriate.⁹

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to assessment.⁴⁹
- b** Communicates major research and issues relevant to observation and assessment with stakeholders.⁴⁹
- c** Establishes criteria, procedures, and documentation methods for observation, assessment, and accommodation.⁴⁹
- d** Provides training to staff on observation and assessment skills.²¹

CONTENT AREA IV

FAMILIES, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

CONTENT AREA INCLUDES:

- Relationships with Families
- Connection with Schools
- Use of Community Resources

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Afterschool professionals are a vital support to the youth and surrounding communities they serve. The professional should have the capacity to include family, school, and the community in each youth's learning experience. Each professional should demonstrate the ability to communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders and provide guidance to parents and families to increase positive youth outcomes. By engaging schools and communities in program efforts, additional resources and support will become available, creating a vested interest in the success of the youth and the program.^{20, 32, 41}

Relationships with Families

LEVEL 1

- a Respects the role of the family as central to the development of youth.^{6,34}
- b Establishes positive communication and relationships with families.^{23,34}
- c Demonstrates understanding of diverse family structures.³⁴
- d Maintains confidentiality.⁸
- e Uses inclusive language that is respectful of all family types.⁶

LEVEL 2

- a Creates and maintains open, friendly, and cooperative relations with families and communicates with them on a regular basis.⁶
- b Encourages family members to participate in program activities.³⁴
- c Supports cultural differences and diverse family structures.³⁴
- d Demonstrates an understanding that families influence youths' abilities and interests.³⁴
- e Provides opportunities for families to share skills, talents, and cultural backgrounds.⁸
- f Supports the relationships of youth with their families.^{33, 34}
- g Demonstrates an awareness of the stress factors that affect families.²⁷
- h Communicates with families about program goals and activities.⁶

LEVEL 3

- a Communicates with families about the progress and development of their youth.²⁷
- b Partners with families in addressing developmental and behavioral issues of youth.²⁷
- c Ensures that family and community diversity and cultures are reflected in all aspects of the program.⁶
- d Works effectively with families from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.⁶
- e Provides families with appropriate referrals to community resources.⁶
- f Plans and conducts family meetings and conferences.⁶
- g Uses effective conflict resolution techniques with families.⁶
- h When appropriate, involves family members as decision makers in the program planning.^{6,41}
- i Builds on families' strengths and creates opportunities for continual family involvement.³³
- j Utilizes available resources to encourage family involvement.³⁰
- k Encourages family members to support youth in completing school assignments.^{36,41}

LEVEL 4

- a Shares knowledge of child/youth growth and development with families.⁹

- b** Facilitates and models a strengths-based, family –centered approach.³⁴
- c** Makes program adjustments based on cultural and structural differences of families.²⁰
- d** Demonstrates awareness of Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and supports implementation of the IEP, as it relates to program policies.⁶
- e** Creates opportunities for families and youth to be actively involved in program and policy development.³⁴
- f** Creates and facilitates opportunities for the

development of social and support networks between families.³⁴

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to family systems.⁶
- b** Reviews the effectiveness of family involvement activities and recommends changes as needed.¹⁰

Connection with Schools

*** Please note this section applies to School-Based and Community-Based Programs that are interested in greater alignment with the school day. The Afterschool Professional Development Work Group recognizes that not all afterschool programs have the philosophy, resources, or access to school records and personnel. Afterschool programs may elect to have formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or informal relationships with schools that permit access to teacher input and data systems for afterschool program planning. All afterschool programs are advised to adhere to guidelines provided by their respective funders. As such, this section is an optional resource for select programs.*

LEVEL 1

- a** Demonstrates recognition of the importance of connecting schools with the afterschool program to improve academic performance.⁴¹
- b** Supports in-school learning and development.^{22,36}

LEVEL 2

- a** Relates school content to real life experiences.^{17,41}
- b** Reinforces concepts taught in school through hands-on experiences.^{17,36,41}
- c** Demonstrates awareness of the NC Standard Course of Study.⁴¹

LEVEL 3

- a** Aligns curriculum to school content on a frequent basis.³⁶
- b** Communicates to schools the activities and

services that are available to afterschool participants.³⁶

- c** Identifies students most in need of afterschool services.³⁶
- d** Fosters information sharing about students' progress between teachers and applicable program staff.³⁶
- e** Ensures program staff participation in school leadership teams.^{36,41}
- f** Identifies ways to improve youth transitioning from one level of school to another.³⁶
- g** Links field trips to the NC Standard Course of Study.⁴¹
- h** Uses the NC Standard Course of Study when planning enrichment activities for children.⁴¹

LEVEL 4

- a** Collaborates with schools to contribute to school culture through exhibitions and performances.³⁶
- b** Seeks opportunities to engage school staff in afterschool program activities.^{22,36}
- c** Where applicable, hires staff who support the program's educational philosophy and mission.^{36,41}
- d** Acts as a liaison between the school and afterschool program.⁴¹
- e** Uses school data to track student performance for improving afterschool services in accordance with school policy.⁴⁰
- f** Seeks school expertise as needed that might lend itself to program improvements.^{22,36}
- g** Seeks in-kind resources from school administration to support programming.³⁶

- h** Engages school partners to participate on the program's board, when applicable.⁴¹
- i** Coordinates services among partners and builds relationships with school staff.⁴¹

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to demonstrating the impact of services on student performance.²⁷

- b** Seeks and develops partnerships with all levels of school staff, including district partners and superintendents.⁴¹
- c** Uses data to evaluate program outcomes of a selected program philosophy at all sites.⁴⁰

Use of Community Resources

LEVEL 1

- a** Demonstrates understanding of the importance of community resources that support and assist youth and families.²⁴
- b** Works cooperatively and appropriately with volunteers and partners.^{6,17}

LEVEL 2

- a** Assists families in identifying community resources specific to their needs.⁶
- b** Demonstrates understanding of the larger community context in which youth and families live.²⁷

LEVEL 3

- a** Uses community resources to expand program offerings.³⁰

- b** Builds effective working relationships with families, community partners, and volunteers.⁶
- c** Supports families in obtaining clear and understandable information on special needs, developmental concerns, and legal and financial issues.²⁷

LEVEL 4

- a** Develops relationships with community partners and provides youth and families with resource information.⁶
- b** Promotes public awareness and collaborates with community partners to meet the needs of youth and families.⁶
- c** Connects families with community resources on special needs, development concerns, and legal and financial issues.²⁷
- d** Implements and supports volunteer programs, as needed.^{6,17}

LEVEL 5

- a** Works to develop community partnerships to expand or enhance resources for youth, families, and the program.¹⁴
- b** Represents the youth development field in collaborative community endeavors.²⁷
- c** Develops a volunteer management system as needed.⁸
- d** Networks with professionals in the field of youth development and other related fields.²⁷
- e** Develops and implements strategies to strengthen community relationships through a greater understanding and engagement of staff, youth, families, and community stakeholders.⁶



CONTENT AREA V

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

CONTENT AREA INCLUDES:

- Knowledge of Regulations
- Environmental Safety
- Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles
- Responding to the Health Needs of Youth

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

All youth need to feel safe and cared for. One of the primary responsibilities of the professional is to ensure that a sense of security is instilled in the youth they serve. Quality professionals are expected to demonstrate competency in the areas of program requirements and regulations, personal health, environmental safety and nutrition. Knowledge in these areas goes beyond serving a healthy snack to keeping kids safe and promoting healthy lifestyles.^{9, 23}

Knowledge of Regulations

*Be sure to follow the regulations of your licensing or funding agency according to their standards and policies.

LEVEL 1

- a Demonstrates understanding of and follows regulations or policies regarding health and safety, including emergency, illness, and injury procedures.⁴⁸
- b Adheres to program policies for arrival and dismissal procedures.⁴⁸
- c Demonstrates knowledge of basic first-aid.⁴⁸
- d Uses emergency supplies and equipment as needed.⁸
- e Participates in crisis plans and drills (e.g., fire, tornado, earthquake, and lockdown, etc...).⁸
- f Follows supervision policies and ratio requirements to ensure safety of youth.^{22, 48}
- g Follows safety regulations and policies regarding all youth.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a Uses diagrams, pictures, and words understood by youth and adults to post instructions for emergency procedures.⁸
- b Identifies problems regarding supervision and staff/child ratios and reports to supervisor.^{27, 48}
- c Completes basic first-aid and CPR certification.⁴⁸
- d Assists with and involves youth in health and safety assessments.⁸
- e Follows required procedure for reporting child abuse and neglect.^{8, 27}

LEVEL 3

- a Adheres to regulations and laws pertaining to youth and families.²⁷
- b Ensures adherence to regulations and policies regarding health and safety.⁴⁸
- c Documents and reports emergency, illness, and injury incidents.⁸
- d Informs others of emergency, illness, and injury procedures.⁸
- e Monitors safety equipment, (i.e., smoke detectors or fire extinguishers).⁸
- f Maintains emergency supplies and equipment.⁸

LEVEL 4

- a Articulates regulations and laws pertaining to youth and families to staff.²⁷
- b Designs policies and procedures to address health and safety issues.²⁷
- c Encourages youth and families to practice health and safety procedures.²⁷
- d Develops and/or documents contingency plans to meet supervision, health, and ratio requirements in all situations.⁸
- e Ensures that safety equipment, (i.e., smoke detectors or fire extinguishers), is in place and operable.⁸
- f Assesses how regulations and policies affect the quality of the program.⁴⁹

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to health and safety.^{8,49}
- b Collaborates with organizations in the community to ensure that health and safety regulations are followed.³⁰

- c Analyzes and corrects deficiencies found in supervision, health, and safety assessments.^{8,49}
- d Provides training to staff on health, safety, nutrition, and emergency preparedness policies and procedures.³⁰

Environmental Safety

LEVEL 1

- a Maintains and encourages safety in all areas, both indoors and outdoors.⁶
- b Uses safe materials and equipment for activities.⁸
- c Actively supervises and interacts with youth.⁶
- d Reports unsafe conditions to supervisor.³⁰
- e Enforces safety precautions and rules consistently.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a Adapts the indoor and outdoor environments to maximize the independence of all youth.⁸
- b Communicates to youth the appropriate safe use of equipment and materials to prevent and reduce injuries.¹⁹
- c Teaches safety precautions and rules to youth.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a Assesses and monitors safe environments, both indoors and outdoors.¹⁹
- b Monitors all equipment for safety.⁸
- c Provides opportunities for youth to assess program and facility environments, where applicable.¹⁹

- d Provides opportunities for youth to help improve program and facility environments, where applicable.⁶
- e Shares up-to-date safety information and resources with families.²⁷

LEVEL 4

- a Creates safe environments, both in and outdoors.¹⁹
- b Advocates for program and facility safety.²⁷
- c Reviews and revises policies and procedures for program and facility safety.¹⁹
- d Implements safety improvements.⁹

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to program and facility safety.⁸
- b Participates in organizations in the community to develop and implement strategies for improving program and facility safety.¹⁹
- c Identifies opportunities to enhance program and facility safety improvements.⁹

Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles *For those programs serving food

LEVEL 1

- a Practices safe food handling and follows general sanitation practices.⁴⁸
- b Monitors the eating habits of youth to encourage a healthy diet.¹⁹
- c Demonstrates understanding of health hazards in meals (*e.g.*, allergies, choking) and takes steps to prevent dangerous situations.¹⁹
- d Models and encourages healthy behavior.⁴³

LEVEL 2

- a Serves healthy meals and snacks in a pleasant environment.⁶
- b Leads activities related to nutrition and cooking experiences.²⁷
- c Communicates with youth and families about nutritional needs and preferences.¹⁹

LEVEL 2

- a Serves healthy meals and snacks in a pleasant environment.⁶
- b Leads activities related to nutrition and cooking experiences.²⁷
- c Communicates with youth and families about nutritional needs and preferences.¹⁹

LEVEL 3

- a Identifies and responds to nutritional needs, including food allergies.¹⁹
- b Plans, implements, and evaluates curricular activities and menus for nutritional purposes.⁸
- c Ensures inclusion of food from various cultures.⁸
- d Involves youth in planned activities related to nutrition and cooking experiences.¹⁹

LEVEL 4

- a Ensures that the staff knows how to respond if a youth experiences an allergic reaction to food.¹⁹
- b Designs, evaluates, and modifies curricular activities that address nutrition and healthy lifestyles.^{19,27}
- c Assesses the program's nutrition plan and adapts practices accordingly.¹⁹

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to nutrition.⁴⁹
- b Collaborates with community groups to identify nutritional issues or concerns.²⁷
- c Advocates for policies and procedures that affect the nutritional welfare of the community.⁶

Responding to the Health Needs of Youth

LEVEL 1

- a Models and provides directions on sanitary behaviors.⁸
- b Helps youth practice appropriate hand-washing techniques.⁴⁸
- c Ensures that safe restroom and personal hygiene procedures are followed.⁸
- d Follows universal safety precautions.⁸
- e Follows appropriate procedures for responding to youths' injuries.⁸
- f Observes youth daily and follows policies and procedures regarding signs of illness and suspected signs of abuse and neglect and reports to supervisor.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a Promotes sanitary behaviors and provides an environment contributing to good health and the prevention of illness.⁸
- b Provides resource information to youth and families about healthy bodies, healthy lifestyles, and a healthy environment.²⁷
- c Leads activities to address health needs of youth.⁸
- d Observes the effects of stress and trauma on youth and communicates to supervisor.²⁷

- e Follows instructions for administration of medicine, and approved medical treatments, including related documentation.⁸
- f Observes youth and reports to supervisor any signs of illness and suspected signs of abuse and neglect.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a Assesses sanitary environments, both indoors and outdoors.⁸
- b Identifies resource information for youth and families about healthy bodies, healthy lifestyles, and a healthy environment.²⁷
- c Plans activities to address health needs of youth.⁸
- d Plans activities that teach youth techniques to deal with stress and develop resiliency.²⁷
- e Educates youth, families, and staff in recognizing and reporting abuse and neglect.²⁷
- f Ensures all staff are following policies and procedures regarding signs of illness, and signs of suspected abuse and neglect, according to NC law.⁸

LEVEL 4

- a Ensures staff models and provides directions on sanitary behaviors.⁸

- b** Designs and implements curriculum activities that emphasize healthy bodies, healthy lifestyles, and a healthy environment.²⁷
- c** Designs and documents sanitation policies and procedures.⁸
- d** Works with health care professionals in the community to ensure that the needs of youth are met.⁸
- e** Establishes program policies and procedures for the documentation and notification of suspected abuse and neglect.²⁷

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to the health needs of all youth.⁴⁹
- b** Collaborates with community groups to identify health issues or concerns.⁸
- c** Ensures facilities are up to health standards and regulations.⁹
- d** Provides training to staff on laws, policies, and procedures regarding abuse and neglect.^{8,27}



CONTENT AREA VI

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

CONTENT AREA INCLUDES:

- Providing Individual Guidance
- Enhancing Group Experiences

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Professionals are expected to engage in positive interactions with the children and youth they serve. They should understand the long-term impacts of the relationships that grow from their actions. Professionals need to be prepared to help guide positive individual and group behaviors and engage youth in their programs.^{16,22,32,54}

Providing Individual Guidance

LEVEL 1

- a** Welcomes and engages all youth in daily conversation that is in a positive, warm, and nurturing manner.⁴⁹
- b** Models recognition and expressions of feelings by responding appropriately to youth.⁴⁹
- c** Models positive behavior and uses positive behavior guidance.¹⁴
- d** Addresses specific problem situations or behaviors without labeling youth.⁴⁹

LEVEL 2

- a** Establishes an environment that fosters trust, respect, cooperation and appropriate behavior.⁴⁹
- b** Responds to youths' inappropriate and challenging behaviors in a positive manner. Helps youth to use effective problem solving and appropriate conflict resolution strategies. Uses encouragement to motivate youth.¹⁹
- c** Demonstrates awareness of and utilizes direct and indirect guidance methods used with children.¹⁹
- d** Provides an environment that helps each youth know, accept, and take pride in himself or herself and develop a sense of independence.²⁹
- e** Helps youth appropriately communicate and get along with others.⁹
- f** Builds trusting relationships with youth, providing physical and emotional security.¹⁴
- g** Helps youth develop skills to manage stress and change.²⁷

LEVEL 3

- a** Demonstrates realistic expectations about youths' attention spans, interests, social abilities, and physical needs.⁸
- b** Facilitates youth participation in establishing program goals and group rules.⁴⁷
- c** Identifies and implements strategies that involve youth in establishing behavior guidelines and logical consequences.⁴⁷
- d** Selects guidance practices based on youths' personalities and levels of development.⁴⁷
- e** Demonstrates understanding of reasons for the behavioral issues of individuals and responds appropriately.¹⁹
- f** Incorporates knowledge of youth culture to plan activities and engage youth.¹⁴
- g** Communicates with families regarding daily behavior and expectations for youth and develops cooperative strategies to manage problems.⁸
- h** Implements the principles of intervention and conflict resolution in youth activities.⁴⁹

LEVEL 4

- a** Adapts the learning environment and curriculum to minimize potentially disruptive behaviors.⁴⁹
- b** Uses observation and assessment to develop individual guidance plans, using relevant professionals for support.⁹
- c** Works with families to develop age-appropriate behavior expectations for youth.⁸

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to individual guidance.⁹
- b Involves families, youth, and staff in developing written policies for effective youth guidance and discipline.⁴⁷

- c Develops a plan and evaluates ways to help families foster positive interactions and provide guidance to youth.⁸
- d Evaluates strategies to help families develop age-appropriate behavior expectations for youth.⁸
- e Provides training to staff and volunteers regarding appropriate guidance strategies.³⁰

Enhancing Group Experiences

LEVEL 1

- a Demonstrates awareness of age-specific group dynamics.⁸
- b Promotes positive peer interactions through a variety of youth activities.^{17,36,54}
- c Uses prepared and flexible plans for all activities.¹⁵
- d Leads activities in a positive, relaxed, and pleasant atmosphere.⁸
- e Maintains direct supervision of youth to ensure participation at all times.⁸
- f Assists youth in handling daily routines, transitions and unexpected changes.¹⁵
- g Demonstrates understanding of the need to be organized and flexible when working with youth.¹⁵

LEVEL 2

- a Establishes a positive environment focused on exploration and interaction.⁴⁹
- b Builds trusting relationships with youth.⁴⁹
- c Encourages youth in setting rules and behavior expectations.⁴⁷
- d Encourages youth in planning and leading activities that promote supportive and cooperative relationships.⁸
- e Use group management techniques in establishing an environment that promotes positive behavior.⁴⁹
- f Anticipates and defuses disruptive behavior.¹⁰
- g Demonstrates recognition of individual abilities and uses guidance techniques accordingly.¹⁰

LEVEL 3

- a Provides experiences that engage youth and respond to their interests.⁴⁷
- b Promotes positive communication and problem solving among youth.⁴⁹
- c Involves youth in setting rules and behavior expectations.⁴⁷
- d Involves youth in planning and leading activities that promote supportive and cooperative relationships.⁸
- e Adapts group experiences to ensure that all youth are engaged.⁸

LEVEL 4

- a Uses observation, youth input and other assessment techniques to improve group experiences.¹⁰
- b Integrates youth of all abilities into the group, using appropriate instructional and guidance procedures.⁸
- c Designs program activities that sustain participation of youth.⁴⁹

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to group experiences.⁴⁷
- b Develops activities that foster cooperative group skills that focus on negotiating, compromising, and problem solving.⁴⁷
- c Provides training to staff regarding age-appropriate group management techniques.³⁰

CONTENT AREA VII

PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CONTENT AREA INCLUDES:

- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Personnel Management
- Financial Management

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Professionals should actively participate in the program planning, delivery and evaluation processes. These processes include a supportive infrastructure that maximizes youth interest and participation. Program development, implementation and management are essential elements in reaching targeted program outcomes.^{7, 32, 41}

Program Planning and Evaluation

LEVEL 1

- a Demonstrates understanding of the program's mission and philosophy.⁸
- b Maintains appropriate records.⁶
- c Demonstrates understanding of the importance of involving youth in the planning and evaluation process.⁶
- d Complies with program policies and standards.⁸
- e Contributes to the program team.⁶

LEVEL 2

- a Supports the program's mission.^{8,32}
- b Organizes, plans, maintains accurate records, and communicates effectively.⁶
- c Involves youth in developing and evaluating program activities and experiences.⁶
- d Implements goals and objectives for activities.⁶
- e Uses appropriate equipment, materials, and resources.⁴⁹
- f Participates in program planning, evaluation, and goal setting.⁴⁹
- g Provides recommendations for policy and procedure changes.⁴⁹

LEVEL 3

- a Demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between daily practices and the program's philosophy.³
- b Plans and implements family orientations and activities.⁸
- c Provides opportunities for youth feedback in program planning and evaluation.⁴⁹

- d Implements program policies and procedures to ensure quality programming.⁸
- e Selects appropriate equipment, materials and resources for the program.⁴⁹
- f Conducts program observations and reports to a supervisor.⁶
- g Demonstrates understanding of the importance of and gathers information for program evaluation.⁶
- h Assists in program evaluation.⁶
- i Manages program resources effectively.⁶

LEVEL 4

- a Applies knowledge of federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, and professional standards to provide a healthy, safe, and effective program for youth.⁸
- b Designs and facilitates strategic planning and goal-setting activities that involve staff, youth, families, and the community.⁶
- c Facilitates the development of youth leadership in planning and evaluating the program.⁸
- d Designs and develops program policies and procedures to ensure quality programming.⁸
- e Designs and develops curriculum framework for the program based on the program's mission.⁴⁹
- f Identifies and implements appropriate program evaluation tools.⁴⁹
- g Incorporates programming that integrates and compliments curriculum, as appropriate.^{6,22,36}
- h Manages the program in a way that minimizes risk in achieving program outcomes.⁶

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to program planning and evaluation.⁸
- b Develops and implements a marketing plan to promote the program in the community.⁶
- c Ensures that the program respects and reflects the diversity of the community.⁸
- d Identifies and anticipates risk-management issues and develops strategies to address them.⁶
- e Promotes and builds relationships between school day and afterschool programs.^{6,22,36}
- f Provides policy recommendations to sponsoring agency.⁸
- g Works effectively with board members and advisory groups.⁸

Personnel Management

LEVEL 1

- a Demonstrates understanding of and adheres to program's personnel policies and procedures.²⁷
- b Works effectively with peers, support staff, volunteers, and supervisors.⁶

LEVEL 2

- a Incorporates principles of teamwork into interactions with staff and workers.⁶

LEVEL 3

- a Works to strengthen the program's team of staff, administrators, and volunteers.⁶
- b Facilitates communication among staff and administrators.¹⁹

LEVEL 4

- a Recruits, screens, trains, supervises, and evaluates staff and volunteers.⁶
- b Plans and implements professional development plans as part of the performance review for staff and volunteers.²⁷

- c Implements a recognition and retention program for staff and volunteers.⁶
- d Supervises interns, apprentices, and practicum students.³⁰
- e Provides professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers.^{6,30}

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, practices, and legal aspects relevant to personnel management.²⁷
- b Develops and evaluates staff recruitment, selection, and retention procedures.⁶
- c Develops a recognition and retention program for staff and volunteers.⁶
- d Designs and utilizes staff job descriptions, evaluation forms, and personnel policies and procedures.⁶
- e Uses youth feedback in the process of evaluating staff and volunteers.⁸
- f Provides strong leadership and visionary direction.¹⁹

Financial Management

LEVEL 1

- a Follows the program's financial policies and procedures.¹⁹

LEVEL 2

- a Utilizes commonly accepted business practices as established by the program.⁶
- b Uses resources and materials efficiently within program budget.⁶

LEVEL 3

- a Assists in planning program budget.⁶
- b Conducts and maintains the supplies, materials, and equipment inventories.⁸
- c Purchases supplies and equipment that supports program mission.⁶

LEVEL 4

- a Develops the program's fiscal policies and procedures.⁶

- b** Plans, analyzes, and maintains program budget.⁶
- c** Communicates the program's budget and financial status to stakeholders.⁸
- d** When appropriate, involves staff and youth in developing the program's financial strategies and priorities.⁶

LEVEL 5

- a** Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, practices, and

legal aspects relevant to financial management.⁸

- b** Develops and implements a business plan.⁶
- c** Ensures that the budget reflects the program's mission and goals.⁸
- d** Develops a marketing and sustainability plan.⁸
- e** Seeks and obtains additional program funds.⁶



CONTENT AREA VIII

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

CONTENT AREA INCLUDES:

- Displaying Professionalism in Practice
- Ongoing Professional Growth
- Leadership and Advocacy

DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION:

Professionals should demonstrate their commitment through actions and behaviors that exercise a high level of ethical conduct and due diligence in providing quality care and education for children and youth. Through modeling positive behaviors and exposure to continuous professional growth opportunities that increase personal knowledge, professionals will be able to implement best practices while enhancing their careers as youth development professionals. For purposes of this section, ethics is defined as a theory or system of moral values that coincide with generally accepted code of ethics practices of the afterschool program.^{8, 27}

Displaying Professionalism in Practice

LEVEL 1

- a Meets program's performance expectations as outlined in job description.^{9,30}
- b Enjoys working with youth and models a positive attitude.¹⁸
- c Exhibits good hygiene and a neat personal appearance.²⁷
- d Demonstrates good work habits to include working independently or as a team member.²⁷
- e Supports and complies with policies and procedures in accordance with the organization's mission.⁸
- f Demonstrates understanding of personal growth and performance improvement.⁶
- g Demonstrates awareness and knowledge of professional ethics to include areas of youth development and confidentiality.²⁷
- h Demonstrates knowledge of and commits to the program's mission, philosophy and goals.⁸
- i Demonstrates respect for self and others.²⁷

LEVEL 2

- a Demonstrates the ability to establish boundaries while balancing demands of personal and professional commitments.⁸
- b Uses effective problem-solving skills.²⁷
- c Encourages team collaboration among staff and volunteers.²⁷
- d Promotes quality in programs for youth.²⁷

- e Demonstrates a commitment to professional ethics.²⁷
- f Seeks feedback on performance.²⁷

LEVEL 3

- a Demonstrates knowledge of current trends in the field of youth development.²⁷
- b Promotes professional ethics in practice and theory, and addresses issues of unethical behavior among staff and volunteers.²⁷
- c Participates in the decision-making progress to ensure accepted professional standards are evident in the delivery of youth curricula and activities.²⁷
- d Identifies and implements strategies for creating and maintaining a professional and healthy work environment for staff and volunteers.⁸

LEVEL 4

- a Participates in group problem solving of program issues.⁸
- b Articulates a personal philosophy of education based on knowledge of child/youth growth and development and best practices.⁸
- c Designs a variety of strategies to include team building and recognition activities to increase staff and volunteer morale, improve work performance, increase staff retention, and support a healthy work environment.⁸
- d Evaluates current trends in the field of youth development and revises practices as appropriate.⁸

LEVEL 5

- a Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories, research, policies, and practices relevant to professional development trends.²⁷
- b Initiates and mediates group problem solving.⁸
- c Advocates for the implementation of current professional development practices, policies, and research relevant to child, youth, and family development.²⁷
- d Revises professional development practices according to current practices and research.⁸

Ongoing Professional Growth

LEVEL 1

- a Participates in professional development opportunities.^{8,17,18,32}
- b Accepts advice and feedback to improve practice.²⁷
- c Sets goals to improve skills and abilities in the field of youth development.²⁷

LEVEL 2

- a Pursues professional development opportunities to improve practice.¹⁹
- b Builds personal and professional competence for the benefit of youth and families.⁹
- c Evaluates own performance and sets goals to increase skills and abilities in the field of youth development.²⁷
- d Demonstrates awareness of professional resources.⁹
- e Applies knowledge of best practices.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a Uses professional resources to improve practice.¹⁹
- b Develops and carries out a personal professional development plan.⁸

- c Works toward credentials, degrees, and/or program accreditation.²⁷
- d Actively participates in professional associations and builds professional relationships.²⁷

LEVEL 4

- a Designs professional development opportunities for staff.⁸
- b Articulates a professional value system and implements ongoing professional self-reflection.²⁷
- c Identifies and works toward professional career goals.²⁷
- d Promotes professional growth of others in the afterschool field.⁸

LEVEL 5

- a Explores models of professional development and assesses and creates opportunities to promote others' professional growth.⁸
- b Disseminates knowledge at local, state, regional, and national seminars.²⁷
- c Uses knowledge to shape practices and policies that positively influence the profession.²⁷

Leadership and Advocacy

LEVEL 1

- a Models professional behavior and leadership qualities.⁴⁹
- b Demonstrates understanding of the importance of providing youth with leadership opportunities.⁸

LEVEL 2

- a Actively participates in activities that support the youth development field.⁹
- b Collaborates with staff and families to assist youth in leadership and advocacy roles.⁸

LEVEL 3

- a Demonstrates understanding of community needs that affect youth and communicates those needs to a supervisor.¹⁵
- b Demonstrates knowledge of advocacy issues concerning afterschool programming and youth development that impact service delivery.⁹
- c Initiates problem solving and conflict resolution for the program and staff.⁶
- d Participates in activities or projects sponsored by professional associations, boards, task forces, and/or committees.⁴⁹

LEVEL 4

- a** Promotes best practices in youth development with families, administrators, colleagues, and the community to address matters regarding afterschool programming and services.⁶
- b** Explains how government policies affect family and youth development.²⁷
- c** Serves on professional associations, boards, task forces, or committees and collaborates with various agencies to address community needs.⁴⁹
- d** Creates opportunities for youth to serve in leadership roles.⁹
- c** Provides a work culture that fosters staff initiative in solving problems and resolving conflicts.²⁷
- d** Holds a leadership position in professional associations, boards, task forces, or committees.⁹
- e** Advocates for accessible, affordable, safe, and quality afterschool programs for children and youth in accordance with federal and state mandates when appropriate.⁹
- f** Advocates for youth and families.²⁷
- g** Describes the legislative process, including legal and advocacy issues, that impacts youth and their families and communicates this information to others.⁸

LEVEL 5

- a** Serves as a spokesperson to the community and media about youth development.⁸
- b** Develops and carries out an advocacy plan.²⁷
- h** Designs and shares curriculum with others.⁹
- i** Provides instruction and guidance on designing curricula with others in the afterschool profession.⁹



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NORTH CAROLINA AFTERSCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORK GROUP

The NC Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP), in partnership with NCSU 4-H Youth Development and the NC AfterSchool Coalition (NC ASC), has been leading a statewide collaboration since September 2008 to create a professional development system that will motivate afterschool staff to increase their level of education, and in turn, the level of quality care they provide. Eighteen state and local organizations serve on the Afterschool Professional Development work group, including representation from the major public and private afterschool providers, state agencies, afterschool member associations, community college system, and the early childhood movement.

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Focus Groups were held October 2009 – March 2010. The purpose of these groups was to introduce the competencies to different afterschool stakeholders and gather initial public feedback. Participants were instructed to identify what they liked about the Core Competencies, what could be improved, and what barriers for implementation that they perceived. These focus groups provided formative information that was used to further develop the competencies and will continue to guide the development of resources and trainings to support the competencies.

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CONSENSUS PANEL MEMBERS

On May 13, 2010, a consensus panel was held to discuss the Professional Core Competencies further, with a wide variety of afterschool stakeholders. Much like the focus groups, the consensus panel was used to further develop the competencies. The panel also discussed what supports would be needed to put the competencies into place and how the competencies will be used by individual programs.

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EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Professionals, external to the process of developing the competencies, were asked to review and provide feedback on a draft of the document. They were asked to review based on their expertise, professional opinion, and organizational knowledge to determine if the competencies were appropriate, feasible, and achievable. The feedback from this review was incorporated into the final document.

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