



10 CORE KNOWLEDGE CONTENT AREAS

**The Michigan Youth Development Associate
Certificate and Credential are based on the**

National AfterSchool Association

Core Knowledge, Skills and Competencies for Out of School Time Professionals

1. CHILD/YOUTH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Research indicates that the growth and development of young people are optimized when adults know and apply the fundamental principles of the science of learning and development (SOLD). Understanding the typical benchmarks for child and youth growth and development and individual and developmental variations, including cultural differences, family experiences, and special needs, enables the practitioner to develop healthy relationships with each young person, supporting their development and learning. It also allows the practitioner to design environments and activities that encompass developmentally and culturally responsive practices, provide accommodations as needed, establish foundations for future growth, and engage young people in building social skills and knowledge.

2. LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND CURRICULUM

Afterschool and youth development professionals provide critical supports for children, youth, and families by fostering growth through social interactions, relationships, stimulating physical environments, and enriching opportunities. Children and youth benefit from high-quality environments and experiences in many ways, including improved self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-control, enhanced communication between peers and within families, a genuine sense of purpose, a deeper understanding of diversity, and advancement in developmental outcomes and academic achievement.

3. CHILD/YOUTH OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Regular observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies including formative assessments—in partnership with families and other professionals serving the same children and youth—are critical to continuous improvement and can positively impact development and learning.

4. RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Relationships and interactions are of critical importance in positive child and youth development.

5. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, VOICE, AND CHOICE

Youth engagement is both a goal and a practice through which young people gain the knowledge and skills that support their ability to create change in their lives and the world they live in (Fletcher, 2010). Youth engagement includes fostering child and youth leadership and seeking out child and youth voices. Engagement is essential at all age levels but will look different depending on participants' ages and developmental stages.

6. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

OST professionals have regular opportunities to facilitate or hinder (in)equity. Practitioners uphold this responsibility through continued personal learning and understanding, disrupting biases and discrimination to the greatest extent possible, and developing programs, policies, and systems that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and supportive of those historically excluded.

7. FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Children and youth live and learn within a continuum of settings, including their homes, schools, and other learning environments during the school day, after school, and summer. Research indicates that successful OST programming depends on partnerships with families, schools, and communities built upon ongoing, interactive communication and a commitment to confidentiality.

8. SAFETY AND WELLNESS

The physical and emotional safety and wellness of children and youth are vital for fostering development in all areas. Children and youth can fully develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically when their health, safety, and nutritional needs are met. OST professionals—working in partnership with families, schools, and communities—have a crucial opportunity and responsibility to provide relationships, environments, and experiences for all children and youth to guide them on a pathway toward lifelong health and well-being.

9. PROGRAM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Developing a shared understanding with staff and families of regulations, applicable laws, policies, staff supervision, quality standards, and meeting regulations and standards is essential to quality environments for children and youth. Programs are stronger when management supports staff and serves as role models around professional development plans, building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, providing developmentally appropriate practices, and connecting with and utilizing resources.

10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Each professional in the OST field is a member of a larger community of professional practice. Practitioners understand that their profession originates from a core base of knowledge rooted in experience and research. Practitioners' behavior and actions must be grounded in a code of ethics and standards related to their practice. When each professional adopts the profession's responsibilities regarding ethical behavior, there is a positive impact on the profession.

The complete document can be found on the NAA website:

<http://naaweb.org/resources/core-competencies>

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