

Afterschool and Youth Development Programs Support Common Core Implementation

By guest bloggers Danielle Baer, Emily Emerson, and Shannon Robinson

Intro: There is an emerging need for the afterschool and youth development field to support k-12 efforts to close the opportunity gap and improve student outcomes. School's Out Washington is responding to this need by developing strategies, tools and resources that advance out-of-school time programs as innovative partners in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Danielle Baer, Emily Emerson, and Shannon Robinson share how School's Out Washington has been supporting this work in Washington state.

While schools across the country have moved into the implementation stage when it comes to the [Common Core State Standards](#), other professionals working with youth seek a better understanding of what the Common Core is and how to support students in achieving success with the standards in place.

Afterschool and youth development (AYD) programs have a stake in the impact of Common Core implementation on everyday practice. Children and youth spend only 20% of their waking hours in school. How they spend the remaining 80% of their time has a significant impact on their success and well-being. Over a decade of research and evaluation shows that high-quality afterschool and youth development programs can make a difference and are directly linked to youth achievement of positive social, emotional, health, and academic gains.^{1 2}

Despite the controversy and ample news coverage of the Common Core, many people are still unaware of what the standards are and what they mean for students. A [poll](#) conducted in the spring of 2014 by [Ready Washington](#), a coalition of state and local education agencies, associations, and advocacy organizations that support college- and career-ready learning standards, showed that 56% of Washingtonians had no recognition of Common Core State Standards despite their adoption in 2011. This limited knowledge creates an important role for AYD providers. [According to the Forum for Youth Investment](#), school districts are already overwhelmed with implementation of the Common Core, so AYD field partners can offer support in a meaningful and informed way that does not add burden to already overtaxed districts.

In addition to providing experiential practice in math and English language arts, the AYD field has long supported the development of the [Habits of Mind](#), also called 21st-century skills, which encompass a range of skills that are critical in preparing young people for college and career readiness, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork. These types of skills are included in the Common Core State Standards' [mathematical practices](#) and [English language arts capacities](#). Focusing on the Habits of Mind and 21st-century skills is a youth development approach which research shows can effectively increase the academic skills required of the Common Core.^{3 4 5}

¹ National Institute on Out-of-School Time, Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College. (2008). *Making the Case: A 2008 Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time*.

² Vandell, D. L. & Reisner, E. & Pierce, C. (2007). *Outcomes linked to high quality afterschool programs: Longitudinal findings from the study of promising afterschool programs*. Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint, MI.

³ Council of Chief State School Officers. (2011). *Connecting High-Quality Expanded Learning Opportunities and the Common Core State Standards to Advance Student Success*. Retrieved from www.ccsso.org

Here are some strategies AYD providers can use to support Common Core implementation:

- Educate parents on Common Core and why these standards were created. Give our issue brief, “Building Washington Youth’s 21st Century Skills for Success,” to parents as a takeaway to support this process. See other parent outreach materials [here](#).
- Use the issue brief in an afterschool program staff meeting to enhance staff awareness of the Common Core and the specific ways AYD programs can support student success.
- Plan afterschool activities that intentionally link to school-day curriculum and incorporate Habits of Mind skills.
- Engage in [program quality improvement efforts](#) utilizing research-based tools proven to support programs with increasing positive staff-youth interaction and improving program outcomes.
- Provide school leadership and teachers with more knowledge and ideas around the [importance of community partnerships](#) in supporting implementation of the Common Core.
- Collaborate with school personnel for joint professional development efforts aligned with the Common Core.
- Inform local funders of the role of AYD in supporting students, particularly around the Common Core.

As more people working with youth become informed of the Common Core and how implementation impacts students both in and out of school, these tips, resources, and tools can help AYD programs communicate their role as a partner in addressing the achievement gap while providing fun, enriching, and engaging activities.

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⁴ The Forum for Youth Investment. (July 2012). *The Common Core Standards: What do they mean for Out-of-School time?* Retrieved from www.forumfyi.org.

⁵ Partnership for Children and Youth. (November 2013). *Getting a Head Start on the Common Core*. Retrieved from <http://summermatters2you.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Getting-a-Headstart-on-the-Common-Core.pdf>