

Youth Work Core Competencies

A Review of Existing Frameworks and Purposes

Developed for School's Out Washington
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Introduction

Skilled youth workers¹ are the key to delivering high quality programming for children and youth. Yet a range of barriers including limited infrastructure, low compensation, limited career pathways, unstable funding and high turnover make it difficult to develop a strong, stable pipeline of youth workers. Another important obstacle is the lack of a shared or recognized definition of what effective youth development practice entails. Articulating the core competencies that youth workers need to be effective is an important step in strengthening the quality and stability of the workforce.

Emerging research in the OST arena², as well as a more robust body of literature in early childhood education³, underscores the importance of professional development to strengthening the quality of services delivered to children and youth. Despite this evidence and despite the fact that many OST staff lack formal training in education, social work or related disciplines, the field lacks a systematic commitment or approach to professional development.

Core competencies articulate what it is that adults working with children and youth need to know and do in order to deliver high quality, developmental programming. Core competencies differ from (though relate to) program standards, in that standards focus on what *programs* need to do to provide effective services, while competencies focus explicitly on what *staff* need to know and do. Competencies should be concrete, research-based and achievable, establishing standards of *practice* that can serve as the basis for career development systems and policies that enhance quality and lead to increased recognition of those working in the field.

Core competencies can serve multiple purposes in relation to the ultimate goal of developing and supporting an effective workforce that positively influences the lives of children and youth. As the basis for career development systems, core competencies often serve as organizing frameworks for professional registries, training catalogues, and higher education coursework and degree programs. In the early childhood field and increasingly in youth related programming, core competencies can be connected to licensing regulations and embedded within Quality Rating and Improvement

¹ This report and the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition use the term “youth work” as an umbrella term to refer to those working in the after-school, school-age care, out-of-school time, youth development, recreation and youth services fields.

² Forum for Youth Investment. (2009, August). *Out-of-School Time Policy Commentary #15: Raising the Bar. Quality Improvement Systems for Youth Programs*. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

³ Arnett, J.L. (1989). Care givers in day care centers: Does training matter? *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 10: 541-552.

Systems (QRIS). At the organizational level, core competencies often serve as the basis for job descriptions, professional development planning, supervision, hiring, and career lattices.

From a more symbolic standpoint, core competencies can also as a unifying tool that brings related “sub-fields” such as school-age care, after-school, youth development, recreation and summer learning together under a common umbrella. By articulating what effective youth work practice looks like, core competencies can help those within and outside of our field(s) understand the unique role of youth work professionals and at the same time, the shared contributions that those working in a range of settings make to the lives of children and youth. See Figure 1 for a summary of how core competency frameworks are being used at different levels in the field to support effective practice.

Figure 1

Audience	Possible uses
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development goal-setting and planning • Tracking /documenting trainings and other professional development activities • Self-evaluation
Directors/ Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing, hiring, job descriptions, staff orientation/training, staff evaluation • Professional development goal setting and planning for director • Establishing salary scale based on educational achievement and/or demonstrated competency
Trainers, Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing framework for training opportunities and registry • Serve as an advocacy tool for designing programming and guiding policy (regulations, guidelines, quality rating, etc.)
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing framework for credentials, certificates and degree-granting programs

Core competencies for early childhood professionals have been used for these and other related purposes for decades. As more states and localities focus resources on ensuring systems of community supports are in place for school-age children and youth, particularly during the non-

school hours, we have seen a proliferation of core competency frameworks for staff working in school-age care, after-school and youth development settings.⁴

This increasing system building and attention to professional development, though fragmented, is a positive sign. Our hope is that this report can help inform the work of the myriad of organizations, community coalitions and government agencies that are now looking at developing core competency frameworks, by identifying similarities as well as difference across many of those already in use in the field.

In this Report

The frameworks we focus on in this report represent a subset of the multitude of core competency frameworks currently being used and developed in states and localities across the country. Given School's Out Washington's goals, this report intentionally focuses on frameworks that target professionals working with a wide range of children and youth (ages 5-18). With their broad focus, these frameworks have the potential to fulfill the unifying purpose discussed above. We also included in the review frameworks that are currently used by large groups of professionals working in the state of Washington, acknowledging that any new overarching statewide framework should build on what is currently in use. Those include Washington STARS, Washington School-Age Skills Standards, Military School-Age Competency Standards, National Collaboration for Youth, and the National 4-H Council.

The following is a list of the 14 sets of core competencies that were reviewed. Where possible, links to online versions of these frameworks are included with the summaries in section three.

- Indiana Youth Development Credential Core Competencies (IYD)
- Achieve Boston Competency Framework (Boston)
- Kansas/Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals (KS/MO)
- New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (NYC)
- Colorado School Age/Youth Development Core Knowledge & Standards (CO)
- Palm Beach County Core Competencies for After School Practitioners (Palm Beach)
- Rhode Island Core Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals, 2009 Draft (RI)

⁴ National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2006). *Setting the Stage for a Youth Development Associate Credential: A National Review of Professional Credentials for the Out-of-School Time Workforce*. Houston, TX: Cornerstones for Kids.

- North American Certification Project Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners (NACP)
- Mott Foundation Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators (Mott)
- National Collaboration for Youth Professional Development Competencies (NCY)
- 4-H Professional Research and Knowledge Base (4-H)
- Military School-Age Assessment System and Competency Standards (Military)
- Washington STARS (WA STARS)
- Washington School-Age Skill Standards (WA Skill Standards)

The next section of this report summarizes our analysis across the different frameworks, in terms of content, structure and purpose. Following the cross-cutting analysis, readers will find short descriptions of each of the 14 frameworks reviewed, including history and background of the framework along with an excerpt that shows a snapshot of its contents and how it is structured.

Cross-Cutting Analysis

In this section we compare the 14 competency frameworks listed above in terms of content, structure and system-level uses, summarizing similarities and differences in each of these three areas. While it is safe to say that the frameworks are more alike than they are different, some differences did emerge in our analyses. In general, core competency frameworks tend to differ more in terms of structure and purpose than they do in terms of content or how they characterize effective staff practice.

Content. Our analysis of the contents of the 14 frameworks focused on the broadest constructs or competency areas, referred to as “content areas” as well as the second level or sub-content areas. Though many frameworks include additional levels of detail, we did not include that level in our review. This was in part for the sake of efficiency but also an acknowledgement that items that only appear three levels down may not qualify as key components of the framework. In comparing the contents of the tools, we have identified “universal” content areas, which appear in all 14 frameworks, “common” content areas, which appear in eight or more of the frameworks, “less common” areas which appear in seven or fewer of the frameworks, and “outliers” – those content areas which appear in only one of the 14 frameworks reviewed. The following were the results:

Universal (appear in all 14 frameworks)

- Curriculum
- Professionalism

Common (appear in eight or more)

- Connecting with Families
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Child & Adolescent Development
- Cross-cultural Competence
- Guidance
- Professional Development
- Program Management
- Connecting with Communities
- Environment

Less Common (appear in seven or fewer)

- Child and Youth Assessment
- Communication with Youth
- Youth Empowerment
- Connecting with Schools

Outliers (appear in only one of the frameworks reviewed)

- Mental Health
- Workers as Community Resources
- Building Leadership and Advocacy
- Risk Management
- Volunteerism
- Organizational Alliances
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Personal Effectiveness
- Communication Strategies
- Preventing/Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
- Situation Analysis
- Support Each Child
- Ability to Work Well with Diverse Children & Youth

In Figure 2 we list each of the competency areas we identified, indicating the frequency with which each appears and the relevant frameworks. This will allow interested readers to compare how different organizations defined these areas at a more fine-grained level if interested.

Figure 2

Competency Area	Frequency	Frameworks
Curriculum	14 of 14	CO, Palm Beach, IYD, Boston, KS/MO, NYC, RI, WA STAR, WA Skill Standards, NACP, NCY, MOTT, Military, 4-H
Professionalism	14 of 14	CO, IYD, Boston, NYC, WA STAR, WA Skill Standards, NACP, NCY, Mott, Military, 4-H, KS/MO, RI, Palm Beach
Connecting with Families	12 of 14	CO, Palm Beach, IYD, Boston, KS/MO, RI, WA STAR, WA Skill Standards, NCY, Mott, Military, NACP
Health, Safety, and Nutrition	12 of 14	CO, Palm Beach, Boston, KS/MO, NYC, RI, WA STAR, WA Skill Standards, Military, IYD, NACP, Mott
Child and Adolescent Development	12 of 14	CO, Palm Beach, IYD, Boston, KS/MO, RI, NYC, WA STAR, NACP, NCY, 4-H
Cross-Cultural Competence	11 of 14	CO, Boston, NYC, WA STAR, NACP, NCY, 4-H, Palm Beach, IYD, RI, Mott
Guidance	10 of 14	CO, Boston, NYC, WA STAR, NCY, Military, Palm Beach, IYD, KS/MO, NACP
Professional Development	10 of 14	Palm Beach, Boston, KS/MO, RI, WA Skill Standards, Mott, CO, IYD, NYC, NACP
Program Management	9 of 14	CO, Palm Beach, Boston, KS/MO, RI, WA STAR, WA Skill Standards, Military, 4-H
Connecting with Communities	8 of 14	CO, Palm Beach, IYD, KS/MO, RI, NCY, WA Skills, 4-H
Environment	8 of 14	Palm Beach, IYD, Boston, KS/MO, Military, WA STAR, CO, NACP
Child and Youth Assessment	6 of 14	Palm Beach, KS/MO, WA STAR, IYD, NYC, NACP
Communication with Youth	5 of 14	Palm Beach, Boston, KS/MO, WA STAR, NACP
Youth Empowerment	4 of 14	NYC, NCY, 4-H, Mott
Connecting with Schools	2 of 14	RI, Boston

There is quite a bit of common content across the frameworks reviewed. The “universal” and “common” lists taken together (see box with combined list) represent enough common ground that states, communities or organizations that are interested in developing a set of core competencies need not start from scratch. However the scan does not point to consensus within the field about the full range of core competencies that are important to youth work.

Some content areas on the “outliers” list reflect unique aspects of whatever system or program the framework was developed for. For example, 4-H depends heavily on the use of volunteers, so it is critical that all 4-H professionals be proficient in volunteer management. Some of the outliers reflect things that other systems also consider critical but address elsewhere, in program standards or procedures manuals (e.g. preventing/reporting child abuse or neglect). More interesting than the outliers are the items in the “less common” category. Two of these three (communication with youth and youth empowerment) are key social processes that happen in programs and are skills that practitioners and researchers increasingly consider critical to quality practice. As competency frameworks often form the backbone of professional development systems, it is critically important that research on what is known about quality programming feeds directly into conversations about what staff need to know and do.⁵

Core Competencies for Youth Workers: Common Ground

- Curriculum
- Environment
- Child & Adolescent Development
- Cross-cultural Competence
- Guidance
- Connecting with Families
- Connecting with Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Professionalism
- Professional Development
- Program Management

These areas appear in a majority of core competency frameworks.

Structure. As noted earlier, most of the frameworks reviewed focus on staff working with 5-18 year olds. Frameworks typically include content and sub-content areas, with specific indicators that describe what competence looks like in each area. They often articulate different levels of mastery within each area, and some address attitudes and beliefs in addition to skills. Figure 3 summarizes how the different frameworks compare on these structural issues.

System-Level Uses. As noted earlier, core competency frameworks are used for a wide range of purposes at the individual and organizational levels. Given Washington’s systemic approach to career development and interest in specific policy applications, our review of how frameworks are currently used in the field focuses on system-level uses. Figure 4 summarizes the extent to which core competency frameworks have been explicitly linked to credentials, registries, licensing

⁵ Smith, C. and Akiva, T. (2008). Quality accountability: Improving fidelity of broad developmentally focused interventions. In Shinn, M. and Yoshikawa, H. (Eds.). *Toward Positive Youth Development*, Eds. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

regulations, and quality rating or quality rating and improvement systems. In many cases, creating strategic linkages like these is a goal that has not yet been achieved.

Figure 3: Comparing Competency Frameworks: Structure

Competency Framework	Age Group Emphasis	Mastery Levels	Detailed Indicators	Attitudes/ Beliefs
Indiana Youth Development Credential Core Competencies	5-18	No	Yes	No
Achieve Boston Competency Framework	Birth-18	No	No	No
Kansas & Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals	5-18	Yes: Levels 1 - 5	Yes	Yes
NYC Department of Youth & Community Development	6-18	No	Yes	Yes
Colorado School-Age/ Youth Development Core Knowledge & Standards	5-18	Yes: Basic and Advanced	Yes	No
Palm Beach County, FL Core Competencies for After-School Professionals	5-18	Yes: Entry Level & Levels 1-4	Yes	No
Rhode Island Core Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals	5-18	Yes: Levels 1-4	Yes	Yes
NACP Competencies for Professional Child & Youth Work Practitioners	5-21	No	Yes	Yes
Mott Foundation Core Competencies for After-School Professionals	5-18	Yes: Separate Supervisor Comps	Yes	No
National Collaboration for Youth Competencies	5-18	Yes: Separate Supervisor Area	Yes	No
4-H Professional and Research Knowledge Base	5-19	No	Yes	Yes
Military School-Age Competency Standards	6-12	No	Yes	No
Washington STARS	Birth - 12	No	No	No
Washington School-Age Skill Standards	5-12	No, focus on site directors	Yes	Yes

Figure 4: Comparing Competency Frameworks: Current System-Level Uses

Competency Framework	Link to Credential	Link to Registry	Link to QRIS or QRS	Link to Licensing
Indiana Youth Development Credential Core Competencies	Yes	No	No	No
Achieve Boston Competency Framework	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kansas & Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals	Yes	Yes	Yes	In proposed licensing regulations
NYC Department of Youth & Community Development	No	No	No	No
Colorado School-Age/ Youth Development Core Knowledge & Standards	Yes	No	No	No
Palm Beach County, FL Core Competencies for After-School Professionals	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rhode Island Competencies for Afterschool & Youth Development Professionals	No	No	No	No
NACP Competencies for Professional Child & Youth Work Practitioners	Yes	No	No	No
Mott Foundation Core Competencies for After-School Professionals	No	No	No	No
National Collaboration for Youth Competencies	No	No	No	No
4-H Professional and Research Knowledge Base	No	No	No	No
Military School-Age Competency Standards	Yes	No	No	No
Washington STARS	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington School-Age Skill Standards	Yes	Link to STARS, which links to registry	No	No

Core competencies for youth workers are just beginning to become embedded in policy, with formal linkages to things like licensing and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems still limited. However, as more attention and resources are directed toward ensuring high quality OST opportunities are available to children and youth, professional and career development efforts will evolve. Clearly articulating what staff working in such programs need to know and be able to do will become increasingly important.

Our analyses suggest that while a myriad of different organizations, coalitions and government agencies are going down the path of developing core competency frameworks, they are coalescing around a common set of topics, including:

- Curriculum
- Environment
- Child & Adolescent Development
- Cross-cultural Competence
- Guidance
- Connecting with Families
- Connecting with Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Professionalism
- Professional Development
- Program Management

States and communities need not start from scratch when tackling the question of core competencies. Many frameworks exist, including several that were intentionally designed to support staff who work with a wide range of ages. These frameworks have the potential to help link together professionals working in many settings including child care centers, after-school programs, summer camps, youth organizations and more. By articulating a shared vision for effective practice and building a collaborative approach to career development, a group of relatively small, relatively fragmented fields has the potential to collectively increase its visibility and strengthen overall services to children and youth.

Appendix: Individual Framework Summaries

Indiana Youth Development (IYD) Credential Core Competencies

Background

Indiana's core competencies are part of the Indiana Youth Development (IYD) Credential. The credential provides an opportunity for adults working with youth to gain professional recognition of job competence. The credential process was initiated by the Indiana School-Age Consortium (ISAC) in the fall of 2003. On January 1, 2007 ISAC became the Indiana YouthPRO Association (YouthPRO), an association that provides a professional organization for individuals and organizations working with school-age youth. The change in name is, in part, an outgrowth of the nation-wide trend to approach youth from the early years through adulthood, and, indeed, these competencies are intended to apply to those working with youth ages 5 to 18.

These core competencies are defined as best practices of skill and knowledge that can be utilized across many different types of child/youth care programs, and can provide a guide for post-secondary institutions in the development of courses for the child and youth development worker.

The state of Indiana does not currently license youth development programs, and has neither a registry, nor a QRIS. However, the state has a quality rating system for early childhood and does require these programs to be licensed. Youth development leaders in the state hope that someday the infrastructure supporting programming with older youth can "catch up," though plans are not currently in development. For more information about Indiana's core competencies, see www.indianayouthpro.org/iyd.htm.

Description of Framework

Indiana's core competencies are divided into 5 General Areas:

- Child/Youth Development
- Families and Communities
- Program/Service Environment
- Program Content/Curriculum
- Professionalism

Each General Area has several Competency Areas (a total of 16), which are further broken down into Functional Areas (each has from 1 to 5). Each Functional Area has several "Goal Statements /

Criteria for Assessment,” sometimes referred to as indicators by other states and organizations. Below is an example of the format of the document.

GENERAL AREA I: CHILD/YOUTH DEVELOPMENT		
COMPETENCY AREAS (16) with Description	FUNCTIONAL AREAS (32)	GOAL STATEMENT/CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT
<p>1. Knowledge of Child/Youth Development Learns practices, communicates and demonstrates an awareness of Child/Youth Development theory, principles and practices.</p>	<p>1. Understands Child/Youth Development</p>	<p>Has basic knowledge of how children/youth learn and develop in the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive domains.</p> <p>Has basic awareness of how atypical development affects learning, socialization and physical capabilities.</p> <p>Is able to articulate basic theory about children’s/youth’s physical, emotional, social and cognitive processes; peer group relations and sexuality; and risk and protective factors of youth development.</p> <p>Is familiar with and uses Developmental Assets for children and youth as a basis for program planning and evaluation.</p>

Achieve Boston Competency Framework

Background

Achieve Boston, a partnership of several local organizations, aims to help after-school and youth workers develop their professional skills and knowledge, advance their careers, and ultimately better serve children, youth, and families. The organization offers a training system which includes a competency framework. Recently this particular framework has been gaining traction in the community. The core competencies are designed to support professionals working with a wide range of ages (from 5-18), and link to other parts of Achieve Boston's own training system (a registry, career lattice, and professional development opportunities). This framework represents an integration of competencies for both after-school and youth work, and is used to drive the Department of Labor's P-21 Credential in partnership with an organization called Commonwealth Corps. For more information about Achieve Boston and their core competencies, see www.achievetoboston.org.

Description of Framework

The Achieve Boston competency framework includes 11 overall competency areas:

- Activities/Curriculum
- Building Caring Relationships/Behavior Guidance
- Child and Youth Development
- Safety/Health and Nutrition
- Cultural Competence
- Environment
- Families and Schools
- Professionalism
- Program Management
- Workers as Community Resources
- Building Leadership and Advocacy

Each of the above competency areas includes a brief description, and then is divided into particular topics. Inclusion and special needs are two issues that are addressed throughout the framework rather than through separate competency areas. Below is an example of the format of the competency areas and topics.

Activities/Curriculum

Activities and curriculum builds upon the importance of a well-balanced structure where activities promote life skills and enhance the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of all children and youth, including those with special needs.

- Developmentally-appropriate programming
- Balanced programming
- Science, literacy, games, art, math, and multicultural activities
- Team building and group dynamics
- Community service/service learning
- Physical fitness
- Encouraging youth participation
- Activity planning – webbing, themes, structuring activities, project-based learning
- Community resources
- Critical thinking
- Work-based learning

Kansas and Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals

Background

These core competencies were developed by the Opportunities in a Professional Education Network (OPEN) Initiative, the Missouri Afterschool Network (MASN) Quality Committee, and the Kansas Enrichment Network (KEN), building off the bi-state core competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals. Their collaborative process began in the fall of 2004, and resulted in the first edition of the core competencies in 2006. The core competencies serve as the foundation for the Kansas and Missouri career development systems. They are often used as a model by other states, in part because of the systemic links to other aspects of professional development.

Missouri does have a training registry and a QRIS. The core competencies are included as one of several relevant components of the QRIS process, and leaders in the state underscore that the core competencies are the foundation of their professional development system. Though the core competencies are not included in the current licensing regulations, they are included in the proposed revisions that are currently pending. For more detailed information about this framework, see www.openinitiative.org/content/pdfs/CoreCompetencies/YD-CoreCompetencies.pdf.

Description of Framework

This framework is organized around the following eight overall content areas:

- Child/Adolescent Growth and Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Child/Adolescent Observation and Assessment
- Families and Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Interactions with Children/Youth
- Program Planning and Development
- Professional Development and Leadership

Each includes a description of the knowledge and skills professionals need to work with youth and specifies ways in which professionals fully include youth from many ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as youth with special needs. The content areas are broken into

a total of 21 sub-areas, each with indicators. The indicators are divided by level, from 1-5. Levels establish a continuum from preliminary skills necessary to enter the field to an advanced level of academic preparation and varied experience and are defined as follows:

- Level 1: includes the knowledge and skills of a practitioner new to the youth development field, with minimal specialized training or education
- Level 2: includes level 1 plus the knowledge and skills commensurate with a Youth Development Credential, a certificate in youth development, or equivalent training/education
- Level 3: includes levels 1 and 2 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an associate's degree in child/adolescent development or related field.
- Level 4: includes levels 1, 2, and 3 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with a bachelor's degree in child/adolescent development or related fields
- Level 5: includes levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 plus knowledge and skills commensurate with an advanced degree in child/adolescent development or related fields.

The following excerpt shows how the core competencies are formatted:

Content Area I - Child/Adolescent Growth and Development

Child/Adolescent Growth and Development

Level 1

- a. Is aware of the basic stages of youth development.
- b. Is aware of youth development frameworks pertaining to positive youth outcomes (e.g., 40 Developmental Assets, Positive Youth Development).
- c. Recognizes that youth learn and develop through experience.
- d. Values different personalities in youth.
- e. Recognizes cultural and environmental factors and the effects those factors may have on behavior and development.
- f. Responds to the individual needs of youth, including those with special needs.

Level 2

- a. Describes specific physical, cognitive, social, and emotional stages of youth development.
- b. Recognizes differences in personalities and development in youth and the ways in which those differences impact their needs and participation in the program.
- c. Identifies the various ways in which youth learn and adapts experiences to the individual/group needs of youth.

- d. Identifies risk factors, delays, or disabilities that may indicate a need for special services or program adaptations.

Level 3

- a. Recognizes current theories and ongoing research related to family and youth development.
- b. Explains physical, cognitive, social, and emotional differences among youth.
- c. Creates environments and experiences that value, affirm, and respect cultural/linguistic diversity.
- d. Employs practices that support an inclusive philosophy.
- e. Utilizes appropriate resources and makes program adaptations for youth with special needs.

Level 4

- a. Applies major theories of family and youth development and establishes interrelationships across all curricular areas.
- b. Integrates information on growth, development, and learning styles of individuals and applies it to youth in group settings.
- c. Shares information with families about the general principles of child/adolescent growth and development.
- d. Ensures that the program's policies and practices reflect an inclusive philosophy.

Level 5

- a. Articulates, analyzes, evaluates, and/or applies current theories and research related to child/ adolescent growth and development.
- b. Researches and applies multiple approaches to youth developmental outcomes.

New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Core Competencies for Youth Work Professionals

Background

This set of core competencies was developed in 2008 by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) in collaboration with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), with support from the Wallace Foundation. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) was created in 1996 to provide the City of New York with high-quality youth and family programming. Its central task is administering available city, state, and federal funds to effective community-based organizations.

The Core Competencies for Youth Work Professionals were designed to raise the capacity of youth-serving organizations and staff to serve their participants more effectively. They are intended to be inclusive of youth workers who work with youth ages 6-18, in a variety of settings. For more information, see

www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/core_competencies_for_yw_professionals.pdf.

Description of Framework

The NYC DYCD Core Competencies are structured by eight core competency areas:

- Knowledge of the principles and practices of child and youth development and ability to use this knowledge to achieve the goals of the program
- Ability to comply with applicable safety and emergency requirements
- Ability to promote an inclusive, welcoming, and respectful environment that embraces diversity
- Ability to foster academic and non-academic skills and broaden participants horizons
- Ability to effectively implement curricula and program activities
- Ability to promote responsible and healthy decision-making among participants
- Ability to develop leadership, team-building and self-advocacy skills among participants
- Ability to behave professionally

Each area is followed by several corresponding indicators. Each core competency also includes additional Indicators that are specific to those working with middle and high school participants.

This unique feature is a creative solution to ensure the inclusion of the full spectrum of ages. Below is an example of how the core competencies are formatted:

1. Knowledge of the principles and practices of child and youth development and ability to use this knowledge to achieve the goals of the program

- a. Interacts positively with participants, individually and in groups, using strength-based approaches, respectful communication and affirmative techniques, such as developing trust, listening and engaging with participants.
- b. Offers maximum choice and voice and responds to priorities articulated by participants.
- c. Recognizes the necessity for assessment to determine whether program goals and participant outcomes are being achieved, and participates in data collection as required.
- d. Demonstrates basic knowledge of developmental milestones concerning the physical, emotional, cognitive and social development of children and youth.
- e. Meets requirements of government licensing and other relevant authorities such as New York State
- a. School-Age Child Care (SACC) regulations relating to staff training, qualifications, and supervision and Department of Education requirements relating to school-based after-school programs.
- f. Understands and can articulate the program mission.

Additional Indicators for Those Working with Middle and High School Participants

- g. Recognizes and understands current youth cultures, such as use of technologies, vocabulary, clothing and music.
- h. Demonstrates awareness of the centrality of identity formation among adolescents, encouraging expression of identity² and managing related tensions.

Colorado School Age/Youth Development Core Knowledge and Standards

Background

Colorado has been a leader in early childhood professional credentialing and later school age and youth professional credentialing. The Colorado Office of Professional Development (formerly known as the Colorado Early Childhood Credential Office) began awarding the school age and youth credential in January 2005. The credential is viewed as a model for the field.

The Colorado School Age and Youth Development Core Knowledge and Standards were developed by the Colorado Early Childhood Professional Credential Office, the Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory Council, and experts in the field as part of the Colorado School Age/Youth Development Credential and Career Lattice. They are built on the Early Childhood Credentialing System. The Core Knowledge and Standards apply to those who work with children and youth ages 5-18, and the credential includes alternative ways of meeting educational requirements. The hope is that this framework will encourage practitioners to meet standards, help retain workers, be a means to secure increased wages, and ultimately improve outcomes for youth.

Interesting to note is that the Colorado Office of Professional Development is housed at the Community College of Denver, facilitating the link to higher education. For more information see www.coloradoofficeofprofessionaldevelopment.org/

Description of Framework

The Colorado framework identifies 9 Core Knowledge Areas, including:

- Child and Adolescent Development
- Health, Nutrition, and Safety
- Appropriate Practices – Curriculum Development
- Guidance
- Family and Community Relationships
- Cultural and Individual Diversity
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision
- Mental Health

Each core knowledge area is broken down into several subcategories. A distinction is made for each subcategory between Professional Standard, Level – Basic and Professional Standard, Level – Advanced. Each subcategory includes “Focus areas of this core knowledge and suggested supporting activities,” equivalent to what some states refer to as indicators. Below is an example that shows the format of Colorado’s core knowledge:

Child and Adolescent Development

1.1. Child Development Theories and Methods of Research and Their Effects on Child and Adolescent Practices in America.

Professional Standard, Level- Basic:

Demonstrate knowledge of major historical and current child and adolescent theories and their effects on school age and youth development practices in America.

Professional Standard, Level- Advanced:

Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate guidelines for applying theories to professional practices.

Focus Areas of this Core Knowledge and Suggested Supporting Activities:

1.1.A. Terms, definitions, and principles.

- Define the following terms: theory, growth, development, maturation, cognitive development, motor development, sensory system, temperament, affective development.
- Define the basic principles of child and adolescent growth and development: direction growth, general to specific growth, variations in growth, optimal tendency in growth, sequential growth, brain development, and growth during critical periods.
- Describe the following growth factors: heredity and environment, nutrition, emotional state, gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status, health, and glandular functioning.

Palm Beach County, FL Core Competencies for After School Practitioners

Background

Palm Beach County's Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners were developed in 2008 by Palm Beach Community College (PBCC) and Prime Time, a non-profit, intermediary organization dedicated to quality school-age afterschool programs. The organizations have been working together to develop a Youth Development college credit certificate program, as well as an Associate's and Bachelor's level youth development program.

The Youth development credit programs were approved by the Florida Department of Education in 2009, and the first students in the program registered for courses at PBCC in August. Currently, the Human Services Youth Development Associate Degree articulates to the Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management offered at PBCC with other articulation discussions to be initiated with other four year institutions.

Description of Framework

Palm Beach County's competency framework is organized around eight Core Competency Areas of Focus, each of which is followed by several subcategories. The eight overarching areas include:

- Child/Youth Growth and Development
- Family and Community Relationships
- Program planning and Development
- Learning environment and Curriculum
- Interaction with Children/Youth
- Child/Youth Observation and Assessment
- Professional Development and Leadership
- Health, Safety and Nutrition

Indicators are listed for each, by level. There are five levels, which are cumulative in nature and progress from Entry Level to level four, outlining a continuum from preliminary skills to advanced and demonstrative of a higher level of professionalism. Below is an example of the format:

I. Child/Youth Growth and Development

Practitioners are able to:

- A. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Child/Youth Characteristics and Needs including Special Needs
- B. Demonstrate knowledge and Understanding of the Multiple Influences on Development and Learning
- C. Use Developmental Knowledge to Create Healthy, Respectful Supportive and Challenging Environments

A. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Child/Youth Characteristics and Needs including Special Needs

Entry Level:

- a) Generalize that children and youth have different temperaments, personalities and developmental rates
- b) Acknowledged special needs variations in children and youth

Level 1:

- a) Recognize and identify basic stages of child/youth development
- b) Respond to the individual needs of children and youth including those with special needs
- c) Identify individual personalities and temperaments of children and youth

Level 2:

- a) Distinguish among the different developmental domains
- b) Identify different temperaments and learning styles of children and youth
- c) Recognize typical and atypical development in children and youth
- d) Relate to individual personalities, temperaments and development of children and youth and understand the ways in which those differences impact their needs and participation
- e) Distinguish between the variations in ability and development of children and youth and provide special accommodations where necessary

Level 3:

- a) Describe individual children and youth relative to developmental characteristics typical of their developmental age and stage
- b) Observe, determine, and record risk factors, delays or differences in abilities which may indicate a need for special services
- c) Apply comprehensive knowledge of prominent child/youth development theories to planning & practice
- d) Share information with families about general principles of child and youth growth and development

Level 4:

- a) Analyze current developments in child/youth development, including new research, theory, and best practices
- b) Assess practitioners' interactions using knowledge of child development theories and research as a foundation for feedback
- c) Verify how major historical and current child development theories impact the afterschool field
- d) Recommend appropriate resources and services for children, youth and families with risk factors, delays and or disabilities

Rhode Island Core Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals (Draft)

Background

Rhode Island's Core Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals are currently in draft form, though a final version will be available soon. They are the foundation of Rhode Island's Harbor of Opportunities for Professional Excellence (HOPE) Initiative, which aims to build the state's career development system.

The basis for this document is the June 2003 draft version of the *HOPE Core Competencies and Career Lattice Levels for Early Care and Education, School Age and Youth Care Professionals*. The 2003 draft was created by stakeholders in an extensive, collaborative process. In 2007 a committee of representative stakeholders began to revise and update the June 2003 draft, incorporating information from newly developing and evolving initiatives in the state, as well as new developments nationally in early care and education and afterschool and youth development.

Though the new draft competency framework is not yet formally linked to a credential, registry, licensing regulations or QRIS, stakeholders in Rhode Island who have been involved in its development consider all of these to be future goals of the HOPE initiative. For more detailed information, see www.childspan.net/pdfs/ASYD_Core_Comps_June_2009.pdf.

Description of Framework

This set of core competencies includes 5 overall "domains" or content areas, each with a description. The domains include:

- Family, School, and Community Relationships
- Youth Development, Curriculum and Program Design
- Health, Safety, and Wellness
- Professional Growth and Leadership
- Administrator Competencies

Many domains also include subcategories, which are then further broken down into several more specific areas. Indicators, by level (1-4), are listed for each specific area. The levels are based on Bloom's Taxonomy; competencies become more complex across levels and reflect deeper and more critical reflection and practice. Levels are determined by formal education, credentials, training, and experience. Below is an example showing the format of this document:

Core Competency Domain 1:
FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Afterschool and youth development professionals must understand that in addition to participating in afterschool and youth development programming, children and youth inhabit and learn across a continuum of settings including in their homes with family, in schools and other learning environments during the school day, as well as in a multitude of additional settings in the community. Afterschool and youth development professionals must consider the whole ecology of children and youth’s lives and build on relationships across settings to promote optimal development for children, youth and families.

TOPIC	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES				
<i>Role of Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes, respects and supports the role of family as central to the development of children and youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invites family members to play an active role in their children’s education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shares knowledge of typical child/youth development with families and seeks relevant information from families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners with families in addressing developmental and behavioral needs of children/youth including children with special needs and exceptional learners. Encourages family participation in community advocacy, groups, boards, and school organizations.

North American Certification Project (NACP) Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners

Background

The North American Certification Project (NACP) is an international group brought together by the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) to address workforce issues. From 2000 – 2007, The NACP focused on the development of full professional certification. The credentialing program is intended to prepare workers across a very broad range of settings, including early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centers, day and residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs.

To develop these core competencies, which were compiled in 2001, NACP conducted an analysis of competencies drawn from 87 different sources. For more detailed information see www.acycp.org

Description of Framework

This set of competencies is organized into five “domains,” each of which includes a description or definition, then lists “foundational knowledge,” followed by specific competencies. Each competency has a list of “skills and knowledge.” The domains include:

- Professionalism
- Cultural and Human Diversity
- Applied Human Development
- Relationship and Communication
- Developmental Practice Methods

Below is an excerpt that illustrates the format of the document:

PROFESSIONALISM

Professional practitioners are generative and flexible; they are self-directed and have a high degree of personal initiative. Their performance is consistently reliable. They function effectively both independently and as a team member. Professional practitioners are knowledgeable about what constitutes a profession, and engage in professional and personal development and self-care. The professional practitioner is aware of the function of professional ethics and uses professional ethics to guide and enhance practice and advocates effectively for children youth families and the profession.

A. Foundational Knowledge

- History, structure, organization of Child and Youth Care Work.
- Resources and activities of CYC
- Current and emergent trends in society, services, and in CYC
- Structure and function of Codes of Ethics applicable to practice which includes the Code of Ethics and Standards for Practice of North American Child and Youth Care Professional (www.acycp.org)
- Accepted boundaries in professional practice
- Stress management and wellness practices
- Strategies to build a professional support network
- Significance of advocacy and an array of advocacy strategies
- Relevant laws, regulations, legal rights and licensing procedures governing practice

B. Professional Competencies

1. Awareness of the Profession

- a. access the professional literature
- b. access information about local and national professional activities (e.g., organizations, conferences, and certification).
- c. access information about and discuss the current professional issues and future trends and challenges in one's area of special interest.
- d. contribute to the ongoing development of the field

Further, an Appendix features a “three dimensional framework” for integrating attitudes, skills, and knowledge; a way of assessing advanced levels of practice. Quality practice is described as that which is performed across domains through five layers of context: *Self, Relationships, the Practice Milieu, the Organizational System, and Culture*. The authors suggest organizing competencies by context for practice: an entry level practitioner might demonstrate skills in only the first 3 contexts, while a professional level practitioner might demonstrate skills in all 5 contexts.

Mott Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators

Background

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation supports a national network of 38 statewide afterschool networks, with a mission to build partnerships and policies that are committed to the development and sustainability of quality afterschool programs. In 2007 the Foundation convened an Afterschool Professional/Staff Development Working Group that reviewed existing frameworks in the field and developed this set of guiding core competencies.

Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators was published as a working document in March 2009. Acknowledging the work done by many other states and organizations related to professional development, the Mott Foundation suggests the document be used as a guide to help program staff and supervisors improve their practice and program quality. For more information about the Core Competencies for Afterschool Educators, see www.afterschoolprofessional.info/.

Description of Framework

This framework includes the following five broad competency areas:

- Ability to relate to and work well with diverse children and youth
- Ability to facilitate participants' learning of new knowledge and skills
- Ability to respectfully engage the important adults in the participants' lives
- Commitment to one's own learning, skill building and professional development on the job
- Ability to effectively carry out program operations and policies to achieve program goals and meet needed requirements

Each competency area includes sub-competencies or "competency indicators." Below each indicator are examples of observable behaviors that could serve as evidence of how competencies might be demonstrated. Following the core competencies for afterschool educators, this document separately lists core competencies for afterschool *supervisors*. This is another approach to indicating levels of competency. These competencies include examples of observable behavior, but not sub-competencies.

In addition to outlining the core competencies, this document also focuses on how to use the core competencies for professional development to improve program quality (for example, making a professional development plan). Below is an example of the format of the document:

Ability to relate to and work well with diverse children and youth

Supports positive relationships between adults and program participants.

- Demonstrates knowledge of what is going on in participants' lives, neighborhoods and schools.
- Gives full attention to participants when they are speaking.
- When an individual participant is having a problem, staff pay attention and try to assist.

Supports positive relationships between participants.

- Teaches participants conflict resolution and negotiation strategies and gives opportunities to practice these skills.
- Incorporates team-building activities.
- Has knowledge and skills for designing an environment that promotes co-operative learning.

Promotes a sense of physical and emotional safety.

- Promotes positive behavior and discourages inappropriate behavior that can affect the feeling of safety.
- Enforces program rules fairly and consistently.
- Teaches and models conflict resolution techniques.

Promotes the meaningful engagement and leadership of the participants.

- Uses strong facilitation skills to encourage everyone's participation.
- Engages participants in decision-making and leadership opportunities.
- Engages participants in opportunities to provide service to others and improve the community.

Respects and honors cultural and human diversity.

- Promotes acceptance of and respect for diversity among participants (cultural, religious, gender, appearance, etc.).
- Affirms and respects each participant's culture, religion, home language and family values in all verbal and non-verbal exchanges.
- Uses materials that reflect the language, art, music, stories, and games from various cultural traditions.
- Intervenes to explicitly address negative stereotyping and discriminatory statements or practices when they occur.
- Ability to effectively carry out program operations and policies to achieve program goals and meet needed requirements

National Collaboration for Youth Professional Development Competencies

Background

The National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), a 40-year old organization, is a coalition of National Human Services Assembly member organizations with a significant interest in youth development. Their mission is to provide a united voice as advocates for youth to improve the conditions of young people in America, and to help young people reach their full potential. The National Collaboration for Youth is involved in policy, practice, and research.

In 2004, a task force comprised of NCY members developed a set of core competencies for entry-level youth workers that was endorsed by each of the members. The most recent version was updated in November of 2007. For more information, see [http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/images/b/b8/Competencies for Youth Workers.pdf](http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/images/b/b8/Competencies_for_Youth_Workers.pdf).

Description of Framework

This framework describes the knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed by youth workers for effective practice. It includes 5 core competencies for program staff, and one additional competency for supervisory staff:

- Youth Engagement
- Peer Interaction
- Supportive Environment
- Safe Environment
- Foundations
- Supervisory Staff: Program Management

Each competency has one or more sub-competencies. Below is a chart detailing the core competencies and corresponding sub-competencies:

Competencies	Sub-competencies
Youth Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involves and empowers youth
Peer Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitates positive peer environment for youth

Supportive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates and develops positive relationships with youth • Adapts, facilitates and evaluates age appropriate activities with and for the group • Interacts with and relates to youth in ways that support asset building
Safe Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies potential risk factors (in a program environment) and takes measures to reduce those risks
Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and applies basic child and adolescent development principles • Cares for, involves, and works with families and community • Demonstrates the attributes and qualities of a positive role model • Respects and honors cultural and human diversity • Works as part of a team and shows professionalism
Supervisory Staff: Program Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively supervises a team of youth workers Builds and maintains a continuous improvement process • Applies YD principles to organizational policies, procedures, and decisions

4-H Professional Research and Knowledge Base

Background

First developed in 1985 and updated extensively in 2004, the 4-H Professional Research and Knowledge Base (4HPRK) is considered a critical foundation for the 4-H youth development profession. The framework is a key resource for individuals preparing for a career in youth development and individuals entering the 4-H workforce specifically. Concrete uses of the 4HPRK include designing job descriptions and hiring new youth workers, designing training and learning experiences for 4-H educators and volunteer staff, and building individual learning plans or performance standards. In addition to helping the 4-H system focus on strategies critical to attracting, developing and retaining an outstanding, diverse workforce, the framework adds value to individual career development and the efforts of the 4-H professional association.

For more information or to review, see www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4-Hprkc_study_010605.pdf.

Description of Framework

The 4-H Professional Research and Knowledge Base framework is organized into six overarching categories, including:

- Youth Development
- Youth Program Development
- Volunteerism
- Equity, Access and Opportunity
- Partnerships
- Organizational Systems

For each broad category, the framework includes several different topics, and under each topic, several different components. For each component, specific indicators are included. The following excerpt shows just one topic within the broad area of equity, access and opportunity.

EQUITY, ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Interacting effectively and equitably with diverse individuals and building long-term relationships with diverse communities

TOPIC: SENSITIVITY**COMPONENT: Personal Readiness**

- Seeks out and explores commonalities and differences (expand comfort zone) beyond one's own race/ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.
- Is proud of one's own identity and encourages others to do the same.
- Committed to learning about and working with people from varying backgrounds.
- Builds relationships of trust, safety and mutual respect with the many different individuals and groups.
- Acknowledges "not knowing" when you don't understand
- Committed to lifelong learning of about diverse individuals, groups and communities.
- Exhibits Self-awareness including one's cultural/social identities, assumptions, values, norms, biases, preferences, experience of privilege and oppression, and how they shape one's worldview.
- Displays an awareness of their own communication, learning, and teaching styles; acceptance of others' styles, and willingness to learn new skills to bridge differences

COMPONENT: Dimensions of Diversity

- Is aware of and open to youth and volunteers who are diverse based on Primary Dimensions of Diversity (more permanent, impossible or hard o change) such as: Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Sexual Orientation, Age, Physical Differences and Abilities, Learning Differences and Abilities
- Is aware and open to youth and volunteers who are diverse based on Secondary Dimensions of Diversity such as: Religion and Belief Systems, Socioeconomic Status, Family Structure, Language, Geographic (urban, rural, suburban)
- Exhibits and awareness of varying levels of assimilation or acculturation within groups

Military School-Age Assessment System and Competency Standards

Background

The U.S. Department of Defense has a school-age professional development training program that has been used as a model by many states. Created under the Military Child Care Act of 1989, it was one of the earliest professional development systems for youth workers. The Military School-Age Assessment System Competency Standards are the backbone of a credentialing program, and as such provide standards for training, evaluation, and recognition of program assistants and providers based on their ability to meet the needs of this age group.

Description of Framework

The competency framework includes 13 “functional areas” that are organized into six overall “competency goals.” The functional areas track with specific training modules that staff must complete within 18 months of being hired. Competency goals include:

- To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment
- To advance physical and intellectual competence
- To support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance
- To establish positive and productive relationships with families
- To ensure well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs
- To maintain a commitment to professionalism

Each training module contains learning objectives that must be achieved before advancing to the next module. A written knowledge assessment by staff and an observation conducted by a trainer are included in the process. After completing all modules, staff can apply for the Military School Age Credential. Completion of training automatically results in increased compensation.

Below is more detail on the learning objectives associated with each individual “functional area.”

Training Modules	Learning Objectives
Module 1: Safe	Reduce risks to youth and responds quickly and appropriately to accidents/emergencies. Instructs youth in and encourages the practice of safe habits.
Module 2: Healthy	Manage environment to promote wellness. Instructs youth in and encourages good hygiene and nutrition.
Module 3: Out-of-School Environments	Implement schedules and routines that meet the needs of youth. Create environments that support a menu of activities and employ the use of developmentally appropriate materials and supplies.
Module 4: Physical	Use activities and equipment that stimulate physical development by demanding the use of fine and gross motor skills.
Module 5: Cognitive	Interact with youth. Create programming and environments that promote exploration.
Module 6: Communication	Provide opportunities for youth to practice communication skills. Interact with youth in ways that build communication skills.
Module 7: Creative	Interact with youth and manage environment in ways that nurture creative expression. Provide activities that encourage creative exploration.
Module 8: Self	Build positive and supportive relationships with youth. Plan activities that allow youth to be successful and appreciate and accept their individuality.
Module 9: Social	Develop the social skills of youth by encouraging youth to develop relationships with peers and teaching them to respect others.
Module 10: Guidance	Apply positive guidance techniques to set behavioral standards and foster self-discipline.
Module 11: Families	Regularly communicate with families Build supportive relationships with families that encourage program participation.
Module 12: Program Management	Follow program policies and procedures. Observes and records the growth and development of youth Works individually and as a team to ensure that the program meets the needs of youth.
Module 13: Professionalism	Conducts regular self assessments and pursues additional training opportunities. Acts in a professional manner.
Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect	Reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. Apply appropriate guidance strategies.
Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect	Recognize signs of child abuse and neglect Follow the policies and procedures for reporting

Washington STARS

Background

Washington STARS is a career development system designed to improve child care through basic and on-going training for child care providers. The Department of Early Learning is the regulatory authority for the Licensing Requirements and the administrator of the STARS Registry, a web-based database that tracks Provider Records. Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) is contracted to administer other components of the program including Information and Publicity, Training and Trainer Approval and the Scholarship Program. WAEYC also supports the work of the Stakeholders, an advisory group. For more information, see <https://apps2.del.wa.gov/stars/>.

Description of Framework

The STARS general competency areas are:

- Child Growth, Development and Learning
- Cultural and Individual Diversity
- Family Systems
- Communication
- Observation and Assessment
- Curriculum Development
- Child Growth, Development and Learning
- Environmental Design
- Child Guidance
- Health, Safety and Nutrition
- Professionalism
- Administration

Given the purposes of the STAR framework, the individual competency areas are not accompanied by more detailed breakdown of subcategories or indicators, though a brief narrative description is provided for each overall competency area.

Washington School-Age Skill Standards

Background

In the fall of 1996, members of the Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs launched a project to help close the gap between the preparation and qualifications early childhood staff and the higher level of competencies that the profession required. With support from a Federal School to Work grant, regional early childhood faculty began development of standards for lead early childhood teachers. In 1999, companion skill standards were developed for family child care providers, infant/toddler specialists, and **school-age care professionals**.

The consortium identified the major functions and related tasks of each job, conducted a survey of skills and qualities for validation purposes, developed performance indicators and wrote up scenarios depicting how skills are used by competent professionals. The standards generated through this project provided a framework for the development of curricula in the state's community colleges and community-based training programs. For more information, see: www.wa-skills.com/pdfs/early_child_dev/School%20Age/Schoolage.pdf.

Description of Framework

The Skill Standards framework is organized by seven "Critical Work Functions," including:

- Ensure a healthy and safe environment
- Support each child
- Develop and implement program/curriculum
- Support families
- Build community support and resources
- Develop and support staff
- Manage program operations

Each critical function included in the framework contains several key activities (across the seven work functions there are a total of 22 key activities). For each key activity, there are performance indicators which provide concrete criteria for assessment, technical knowledge (relevant skills, ability and tools) and relevant "employability skills" (foundational skills and personal qualities) that were developed based on the U.S. Labor Department's SCANS framework. A sample Key Activity is included below:

Critical Work Function: Ensure a Healthy and Safe Environment			
Key Activity	Performance Indicators	Technical Knowledge	Employability Skills
<p>Inspect, modify and document indoor and outdoor space and equipment to meet safety standards</p>	<p>A safety checklist is used to document the inspection and assessment of equipment and environments.</p> <p>Recommendations for repairs and replacements of unsafe equipment as well as for modifications to environments are routinely made.</p> <p>Repairs and modifications are followed-up in a timely manner to ensure that they have been completed to meet recognized safety standards.</p> <p>The site is continuously maintained throughout each day to eliminate safety hazards that arise from routine usage.</p>	<p>Knowledge of developmental needs of children.</p> <p>Knowledge of safety hazards in a school-age care environment.</p> <p>Ability to recognize/correct safety hazards.</p> <p>Ability to determine the safety of indoor/outdoor spaces relative to the age/abilities of children using the space.</p>	<p>Ability to select/obtain data/information relevant to the task.</p> <p>Ability to monitor safe/efficient utilization of materials.</p> <p>Ability to write simple documents and to record information accurately.</p> <p>Ability to examine information/data.</p> <p>Ability to analyze possible causes/reasons.</p> <p>Ability to devise and implement a plan of action.</p>