Current Quality Improvement Efforts for School Age Programs in Michigan

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August 2014

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2864_07/14

Contents

Introduction

This report contains information based on data collected and analyzed by American Institutes for Research (AIR) as part of an effort to make recommendations for a School Age Design of Great Start to Quality, Michigan's tiered quality rating improvement system (QRIS). The purpose of this report is to present information about the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs in Michigan. A second report will present information about the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs nationally. Together, these reports will inform a final report of recommendations for a School Age Design of Great Start to Quality.

Background

In May 2014, Early Childhood Investment Corporation contracted with AIR to gather recommendations for the development of a School Age Design of Great Start to Quality. The collaborative project has three key objectives:

1) Develop a definition of school age with input from Michigan stakeholders

2) Review current quality improvement efforts in Michigan and nationally

3) Make recommendations to build a comprehensive QRIS for school age programming in Michigan.

This report will outline information collected from key stakeholders regarding the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs in Michigan.

Key Stakeholders

The project team invited key stakeholders to join an Advisory Committee for the project to ensure that final recommendations for a School Age Design of Great Start to Quality are responsive to the needs of the field. The Advisory Committee is made up of 26 key stakeholders in Michigan, representing program providers, key statewide representatives, and parents of school age children and youth. A full list of the Advisory Committee members can be found in Appendix A.

The project team hosted a kick-off meeting for the Advisory Committee on June 25, 2014 at The Investment Corporation's offices in Lansing (a call-in number was provided for participants who were unable to attend in person). At the two-hour meeting, AIR and The Investment Corporation presented background information, as well as the purpose of the current project; facilitated small group discussion regarding the definition of school age and facilitated large group discussion regarding the necessary elements to consider when developing a tiered QRIS for school age programs; and described next steps in terms of phone interviews and surveys.

As the project progresses, Advisory Committee members will review the first two reports and participate in a webinar to provide feedback and input about the recommendations that will be included in the final report. Additionally, a select group of Advisory Committee members will be contacted via phone to provide additional feedback about the recommendations.

Methods

The project team used a multimethod approach that included two components: (1) review of available quality improvement documents and (2) an online survey of direct service providers and organizations that support school age programs in Michigan. Each data source is described in the sections that follow.

Document Review

The project team reviewed documents related to the current school age quality improvement efforts in Michigan to better understand the history of these efforts. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Michigan State Board of Education (SBE), and Michigan AfterSchool Association have all led quality improvement efforts for programs serving school age children and youth in Michigan. The following sections provide information on the *Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality*, *Self-Assessment Checklist*, and the Michigan School-Age Youth Development Certificate and Credential.

Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality

Michigan first began quality improvement work when a committee formed from MDE and three school districts in 2001 was tasked with developing model standards for quality out-of-school (OST) time programming. The first edition of standards for OST programs in Michigan dates back to 2003 when the SBE adopted the *Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs in Michigan*. The standards were revisited in 2012 and updated to align with the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs* and *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten*. The title was changed to the *Michigan Out-of-School Time (MOST) Standards of Quality* and applied to programming for all school age children and youth from kindergarten entry through high school graduation. (Michigan State Board of Education, 2013)

The *MOST Standards of Quality* use the term OST "to fully describe before school, afterschool, times and days when there is no school due to teacher training, snow days, vacations and summer vacation" (Michigan State Board of Education, 2013 p. 3). The *MOST Standards of Quality* are intended to be used by any OST program, although it is noted that some single-purpose programs may not find the entire document relevant. The standards are based on research on program quality for school age children and youth. The standards are grouped under seven main components:

- Health and Safety

- Human Relationships

- Program Staffing

- Indoor and Outdoor Environment

- Program Activities

- Administration

- Single Purpose Programs

The standards may be used as a standalone document for school age programs that are striving to achieve and maintain quality programs. However, the *Self-Assessment Checklist* discussed below was developed for a more guided and collaborative process.

Self-Assessment Checklist

The *Self-Assessment Checklist* was developed as a companion to the *Model Standards for Out-of-School Time/After-School Programs in Michigan*, which were adopted in 2008 (an earlier iteration of the standards discussed in the previous section). The purpose of the *Self-Assessment Checklist* is to "assist schools and other organizations in developing high-quality, comprehensive out-of-school time programs" (Michigan Department of Education, p. i). The *Self-Assessment Checklist* is meant to be completed as a team, ensuring that all staff members are involved, as well as participating children and youth, families, and community partners.

For each quality standard in the document, individuals are asked to score whether the standard and indicators are "mastered" (present consistently at a high level of quality), "in place" (present some of the time or inconsistently), "planned" (not currently present, but plans are in place), or "n/a" (do not apply based on the type of program being rated). Based on individual ratings, participants of the process meet to discuss and reach a consensus on the ratings.

Based on the consensus scores, the group then chooses their top priorities for quality improvement and develops a Quality Action Plan (template included in the *Self-Assessment Checklist*). The Quality Action Plan details the goals that are set, challenges to meeting the goals, desired outcomes, action steps, the person responsible for each action step, and an action date for the group to check in about each action step. The group is supposed to monitor the Quality Action Plan to ensure that action steps are on track and to make adjustments as needed. (Michigan Department of Education)

Michigan School-Age Youth Development Certificate and Credential

The Michigan School-Age Youth Development Certificate and Credential was developed in an effort to further professionalize the field. According to information on the Michigan AfterSchool Association website, "the Michigan School-Age Youth Development (MiSAYD) Certificate and Credential is a professional development recognition system that is based on the National AfterSchool Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals." The certificate and credential are designed for anyone working with children and youth in OST programs, including afterschool, school-age care, and youth development practitioners; site supervisors; program directors; program staff; single purpose providers; and youth workers. (Michigan AfterSchool Association, 2014)

The certificate is the first step in the professional development recognition system, and is available to staff who have a basic understanding of the core competencies and at least six months experience working in an OST program. The credential expands upon skills and knowledge of the certificate and includes additional training and assessment.

Key stakeholders were sent information about the *MOST Standards of Quality,* the *Self-Assessment Checklist*, and the Michigan School-Age Youth Development Certificate and Credential.

Measure

AIR developed an online survey to gather information about current practices in Michigan for defining, assessing, and supporting the quality of school age/out-of-school time programs. The survey was developed in partnership based on information The Investment Corporation was interested in learning about the current quality improvement efforts in Michigan. AIR staff emailed a link to the survey to the 16 members of the Advisory Committee who had been identified to respond (programmatic and provider stakeholders). The survey consisted of 42 questions that were a mix of closed/forced-choice responses and open-ended responses. The survey was designed with a formula for "skip logic" in order to increase efficiency and avoid forcing respondents to answer questions where they had limited or no experience. As a result, the question bank for each respondent varied based on the way they answered the questions. A copy of the survey protocol is included in Appendix B.

The online survey collected information about the respondent's familiarity with the *Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality*, the Michigan School-Age Youth Development Certificate and Credential, the resources and supports available to them or that they provided, and feedback about their recommendation for a tiered QRIS for programs serving school age children and youth.

Data Analysis

AIR generated a comprehensive dataset using the survey responses from all 16 respondents. The project team checked for the validity of field values and removed system test records. Responses were segregated according to the skip logic embedded in the survey (shown in Appendix B). The project team used cross-tabulation analysis to glean information from survey respondents based on sub-groups. Due to the small size of the sample, statistical significance tests were not possible; however, the project team made an effort to check for meaningful differences between sub-groups.

Survey Respondent Characteristics

A total of 16 individuals completed the survey, representing a 100 percent completion rate. When asked *Do you provide direct services to children and youth?* nine (56 percent) answered yes, and seven (44 percent) answered no. Those who answered yes are referred to as "providers" in this report and those who answered no as "programmatic respondents." All respondents reported offering programs or supporting programs after school and during the summer, whereas 13 (81.3 percent) reported offering or supporting programs offered before school. Ten respondents (62.5 percent) offer part-day programming and nine (56.3 percent) offer full-day programming. Figure 1 shows responses for providers and programmatic respondents.

Figure 1. Service Scheduling for Providers and Programmatic Respondents
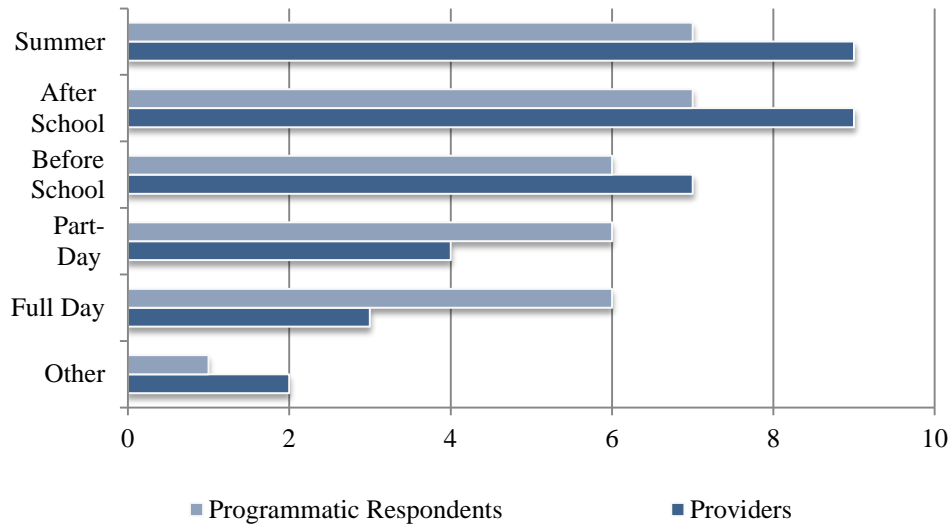
Survey respondents were asked if their programs, or the programs they work with, are licensed, license exempt, or a combination of both. Out of the 16 respondents, six (37.5 percent) work with or are licensed programs, two (12.5 percent) work with or are license-exempt programs, and eight (50 percent) work with or operate a combination of the two. Providers were more likely to run licensed programs (44 percent) and programmatic respondents were more likely to work with a combination of license and license exempt programs (71 percent).

Survey respondents were asked about the age of the children their organizations serve. Respondents indicated that their organizations most often serve *grade 4 through grade 8* (81 percent) and *high school* (88 percent). Figure 2 shows the age of children served by providers and programmatic respondents.

Figure 2: Age of Children Served by Providers and Programmatic Respondents (N)
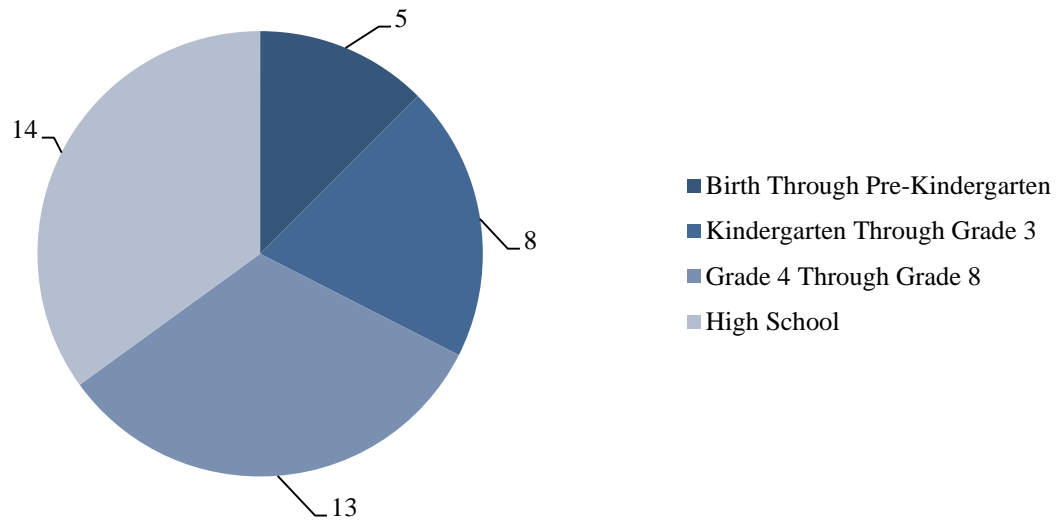
Note: (N=16) | Please note that the service types offered by providers were similar to the service types supported by programmatic respondents for each age category.

Providers were asked what type of programming their organization provides, and could choose more than one response option if their program offered multiple types of programming. Providers most frequently indicated that they offered *Academic Enrichment* (78 percent), *Recreational Activities* (78 percent), *Tutoring/Homework Assistance* (67 percent), *STEM Experiences* (67 percent), or *Character Education* (67 percent).

Programmatic respondents were asked about the purpose of their organization and could choose more than one response option. Programmatic respondents indicated that their organizations have a variety of purposes. *Program Quality Improvement* (85.7 percent) and *Professional Development* (71.4 percent) were the most frequently cited purposes; however, *Technical Assistance* (42.9 percent), *Training* (42.9 percent), *Public Awareness* (42.9 percent), and *Program Quality Assessment* (42.9 percent) were also relatively common purposes reported. In the context of the objectives of this report, it is also noteworthy that each organization that reported offering *Program Quality Assessment* services also offered *Program Quality Improvement* services.

Findings

As noted in the previous section, survey respondents answered a series of questions tailored to their specific role in their organization, beginning with whether or not they identified as being a direct service provider ("provider") or not ("programmatic"). Findings are presented for the full domain of respondents, except where otherwise noted based on differences in questions asked or if a noteworthy difference between the two groups was discovered. This section has four sub-sections: school age standards, school age certificates and credentials, professional development and technical assistance for school age programs, and additional information to consider.

School Age Standards

Survey results indicate that 15 of the 16 survey respondents were aware of the *MOST Standards of Quality* (one provider responded that they were unaware of the standards). Of the respondents who were aware of the standards, six are mandated to use them by their funders.

Support for Standards

Programmatic respondents indicated that they supported the use of the *MOST Standards of Quality* through *providing training*, *technical assistance*, *developing Quality Action Plans,* and *other* resources. For one respondent, *other* resources meant a link to the standards in the organization's technical assistance and consultation manuals. Another respondent indicated under *other* that the respondent's organization is working locally to develop a set of standards that are aligned with the Michigan standards and the National AfterSchool Association standards, but with a less "formal and regulatory" tone.

Of the providers, only two reported that they are not using any framework to understand and measure the quality of their programming. The majority of respondents reported using some framework to measure program quality; those not using the *MOST Standards of Quality* indicated the use of internally designed assessment tools (including site forms and evaluation tools), the *Iowa Life Skills Model*, *American Camping Association Camp Standards*, mentoring protocols, and the *Great Start to Quality's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System* as a framework to measure quality.

Use of *Self-Assessment Checklist*

Respondents who indicated they were mandated to use the *MOST Standards of Quality* were also aware of the *Self-Assessment Checklist*, although only two providers had completed a *Self-Assessment Checklist.* Moreover, of this sub-group that completed a *Self-Assessment Checklist*, only one provider reported subsequently developing a *Quality Action Plan*. Programmatic respondents indicated supporting programs in the use of the *Self-Assessment Checklist* through developing *Quality Action Plans*, and through providing *training*, *technical assistance*, and *other* services. A respondent described *other* as developing a shortened checklist tied to the respondent's organization's own quality standards (referenced above).

In sum, almost all survey respondents are aware of the *MOST Standards of Quality*; however, they are not mandated to use them, nor is there widespread use of the *Self-Assessment Checklist*

or Quality Action Plan among respondents. Survey respondents were next asked about the professional development recognition system in Michigan.

School Age Certificates and Credentials

Respondents were asked whether their programs, or the programs they support, were using the Michigan School-Age Youth Development (MiSAYD) Certificate and Credential professional development recognition system. A total of 10 respondents (four providers and six programmatic respondents) indicated use of or support for the MiSAYD Certificate and Credential. One respondent wrote that, while the respondent's organization supports the professional development recognition system, it is not mandated, and the respondent indicated that it might not be realistic. There was no additional information provided as to why it might not be realistic.

In answer to an open-ended question, *Based on your expertise, and knowledge of work to date in Michigan, what additional information should we consider that will help us to prepare the best possible recommendations for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for programs serving school age children and youth?* one respondent wanted to make sure that professional certifications are attached to comparable wages.

While there is awareness of the MiSAYD professional development recognition system in Michigan, it might be worthwhile to explore use of the system and to think more specifically about how it might tie into a tiered QRIS.

Professional Development and Technical Assistance for School Age Programs

Of particular interest to the project team was information about the professional development, training, technical assistance, and consultation that providers use for quality improvement and that programmatic respondents offer.

All survey respondents indicated that they either use quality improvement resources and supports (providers) or provide those resources and supports (programmatic respondents). Providers indicated taking advantage of *training resources* (including coaching, mentoring, and consultation); *technical assistance*, and *guidance documents*. Programmatic respondents indicated that their organizations offer *technical assistance*, *training*, and *guidance documents*. Additionally, programmatic respondents indicated that their organizations connect programs to other organizations for *training*, *technical assistance*, and *guidance documents*. The other organizations listed were Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, Michigan State University Office of Outreach, Michigan AfterSchool Partnership, Michigan AfterSchool Association, National AfterSchool Association, Great Start Connect website, and 4H.

Additional Information to Consider

The last two open-ended questions of the survey asked for additional information the project team should take into account when developing recommendations for a tiered QRIS for programs serving school age children and youth. Responses generally fell into five categories:

1. Funding – Respondents reported that funding has a big impact on the successful implementation of a tiered QRIS in Michigan. Specifically, respondents indicated that operating high-quality programs has costs associated with it, and funding should not deter programs that might otherwise be interested in pursuing involvement in the system.

2. Audience – Several respondents mentioned that the tiered QRIS should be relevant to all school age programs, including school-based and community-based organizations, child care, licensed or not, with or without large grants, and inclusive of programs through high school.

3. Alignment – Respondents were interested in the system aligning with work that has been accomplished in Michigan. There was also mention of ensuring that there is full integration of the birth-to-age-five and school age populations so that programs serving both would only need to navigate one system.

4. Staff time – Respondents raised concerns over staff in school age programs having the time needed for training.

5. Selecting the right tool – Respondents wanted to make time early in the process to choose a tool that measures multiple levels of the program (e.g., classroom to administration).

Conclusion and Next Steps

The purpose of this report is to present information about the current quality improvement efforts for school age programs in Michigan. The findings thus far show that there is knowledge and use of the *Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality* among the survey respondents. Additionally, programs are aware of and have used the accompanying *Self-Assessment Checklist.* Findings suggest that program providers all take advantage of training and technical assistance, and programmatic respondents offer training and technical assistance, while also referring programs to other organizations for additional support as needed. There are many different types of school age programs (e.g., child care centers, academic enrichment, recreation, tutoring, before school, after school, summer) as well as funding sources for those programs.

While findings indicate that there are many resources and supports throughout the state and the *MOST Standards of Quality* apply to all types of programs, there is currently no *system* of quality improvement for all programs serving school age children and youth. Additionally, there is some indication that the language of the standards could be revisited to ensure it is accessible to all program providers. Moreover, based on discussion at the Advisory Committee meeting and open-ended survey responses, key stakeholders are concerned about the alignment and viability, due to funding and staff time, of a tiered QRIS for school age programs.

The information provided in this report will help lay the groundwork for the final recommendations of this project. The project team will next explore how other states have included school age programs in their QRIS. The project team will also gather information on how other states have defined school age to inform the recommended definition of school age for Michigan.

References

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Michigan State Board of Education. (2013). *Michigan out-of-school time standards of quality*. Michigan Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MOST_SBE_APPROVED_031213_422342_7.pdf

Appendix A. Advisory Committee Members

Name	Organization/Role on Committee
Lila Andrews	Kid's Corner
Lori Buitendorp	Home-based provider
Carol Burns	Parent
Carla Chinavare	Wayne Metro Community Action Agency
Tonya Clevenger	Grand Rapids ELO Network/Kent 4C
Maria Cook	Parent
Angelina Garner	Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality
Kelly Garrison	Macomb School Age Care Director's Group
Pete Hutchison	U-M Flint
Richard Lower	Office of Great Start
Lynn Malinoff	Eastern Michigan University/Bright Futures
Colleen Nelson	Licensing
Sara Plachta Elliott	Detroit Youth Resource Center (Skillman)
MC Rothhorn	Parent
Mary Sutton	Michigan After School Partnership
John Taylor	Michigan Afterschool Association
Lorraine Thoreson	Office of Great Start
Sheila Smith	MSU Extension (4H)
Tami Smith	Parent
James Yake	Genesee ISD
Shelley Young	Child and Family Services of the UP

Appendix B. Survey of Providers and Programmatic Stakeholders

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. As you know, Early Childhood Investment Corporation has contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop recommendations for the development of a School Age Design of Great Start to Quality, Michigan's tiered quality rating improvement system for early care and education programs, including the Great Start Readiness Program, Head Start, and licensed child care centers and registered family and group homes. The Investment Corporation is leading the fielding of this survey because they hold a contract with the Michigan Department of Education – Office of Great Start to implement Great Start to Quality across Michigan.

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about current practices in Michigan for defining, assessing, and supporting the quality of school age/out-of-school time programs. AIR will analyze the results of the survey and use them to inform a report that will be submitted to The Investment Corporation and provided to the Michigan Department of Education – Office of Great Start.

We greatly appreciate you taking the time to respond to this survey and look forward to learning from your experience and expertise.

Reponses will not be reported by respondent, but instead will be compiled with other data that is being gathered to inform the report mentioned previously.

If you experience difficulty in completing the survey please contact Amanda DeFrancisco (adefrancisco@air.org) for technical issues or Jaime Singer (jsinger@air.org) for any other questions or issues related to this effort.

What is your name?

What organization are you representing?

Do you provide direct services to children and youth?
- Yes
- No

Yes, Direct Service Provider	No, Not Direct Service Provider
What is your role	Same
My organization provides: (select all that apply) • Academic Enrichment that complements the school curriculum • Tutoring/homework assistance • Single Purpose Programs • STEM experiences • Character education • Computer Technology • Recreational Activities, Sports or Fitness Activities • Fine Arts • Other	What is the purpose of your organization a. Funder b. Technical Assistance (Including Coaching and Mentoring) c. Training d. Professional Development e. Licensing f. Pre-service education g. Policy and Advocacy h. Public Awareness i. Research j. Program Quality assessment k. Program quality improvement
What age children and youth does your organization serve (select all that apply) a. Birth through pre-kindergarten b. Kindergarten through grade three c. Fourth grade through grade eight d. High School	What age children and youth does your organization serve (select all that apply) a. Birth through pre-kindergarten b. Kindergarten through grade three c. Fourth grade through grade eight d. High School
Is your program(s) • Licensed • License exempt • A combination of both (please explain)	Are the programs you work with a. Licensed b. License exempt c. A combination of both (please explain)
Do you offer programs that are (check all that apply) • Before School • After School • Part-day • Full-day • Summer • Other – Please explain	Do you support programs that are (check all that apply) • Before School • After School • Part-day • Full-day • Summer • Other – Please explain

The *Michigan Out of School Time Standards of Quality* were approved by the Michigan Board of Education in 2013. Are you aware of these standards?

- Yes
- No

Direct Service Provider **YES**	Direct Service Provider **NO**	Not Direct Service **Yes**	Not Direct Service **No**
Does your program's funder mandate the use of these standards? • Yes • No (ask Direct Service Provider **No** Questions)	Are your programs using the Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality, other quality standards, or another kind of framework to understand and measure the quality of your program(s)? • Yes (go to two) • No	Does your funder mandate the use of these standards? • Yes • No	Are the programs you support using other quality standards or another framework to understand and measure the quality of your program(s)? • Yes (go to two) • No

Michigan has developed a Self-Assessment Survey as a companion to the *Michigan Out-Of-School Time Standards of Quality*. Are you aware of this tool? **skip logic
• Yes (go to three)
• No (go to question 6)
	What are the standards or framework your program(s) uses to understand and measure quality?
	• Open
		Does your organization support the use of these standards?
		• Yes, (check all that apply)
		  i. Provide Training
		  ii. Provide Technical Assistance
		  iii. Support programs to complete a self-assessment of quality
		  iv. Funding tied to meeting the standards
		  v. Other
		• No (why not, please explain)
			What are the standards or framework your program(s) uses to understand and measure quality?
			• Open

Has your program(s) completed a Self-Assessment using this tool?
  • Yes (go to four)
  • No
	Is there anything about the standards or self-assessment that you would like to share with us that we have not asked? (open)	Michigan has developed a Self-Assessment Survey as a companion to the *Michigan Out-Of-School Time Standards of Quality*. Are you aware of this tool?
		  • Yes
		  • No (skip to last question)
			Is there anything about the standards or Self-Assessment that you would like to share with us that we have not asked? (open)

Has your program(s) developed a Quality Action Plan, based on a self-assessment of quality?
  • Yes
  • No
		Does your organization support the use of the Self-Assessment Survey?
		  • Yes, (if yes how)
		    i. Development of Quality Action Plans
		    ii. Provide training
		    iii. Provide technical assistance
		    iv. Other
		  • No (why not, please explain)	

Is there anything about the standards or self-assessment that you would like to share with us that we have not asked? (open)		Is there anything about the standards or self-assessment that you would like to share with us that we have not asked? (open)	

The Michigan School-Age Youth Development (MiSAYD) Certificate and Credential is a professional development recognition system that is based on the National After School Association Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals. (NAA Core Competencies). It has been designed for all staff working with children and youth in out-of-school time (OST) programs. Is your organization or are the programs you support using this system?

- Yes, why?
- No, why not?

Direct Service Provider	Not Direct Service Provider
Does your program use quality improvement resources and supports (ex: Coaching, guidance documents, technical assistance, etc.)? • Yes • No	Are you a provider of quality improvement resources and supports (ex: coaching, guidance documents, technical assistance, etc.)? • Yes • No
What organization provides these resources and supports for your program? (open)	What resources or supports do you provide? • Training (including, coaching, mentoring and/or consultation) • Technical Assistance • Guidance documents • Other, please explain
What resources or supports have you taken advantage of? • Training (Coaching, Mentoring and Consultation) • Technical Assistance • Guidance Documents • Other, please explain	Do you connect programs to organizations that provide quality improvement resource and supports? • Yes, what organizations and what do they provide • No
	If yes, What do they provide? ○ Training (coaching, mentoring and consultation) ○ Technical Assistance ○ Guidance Documents ○ Other, please explain

Based on your expertise, and knowledge of work to date in Michigan, what additional information should we consider that will help us to prepare the best possible recommendations for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for programs serving school age children and youth? (open)

Based on your expertise, and knowledge of work to date in other states, what additional information should we consider that will help us to prepare the best possible recommendations

for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for programs serving school age children and youth? (open)

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