

Quality Standards in Afterschool: Talking Points

To help you with outreach to afterschool stakeholders, we have prepared talking points that define the quality standards, relay the role of quality standards in an afterschool system, and identify resources for the standards development process. These talking points are a companion to the *Planning Quality Standards Research Brief*. The research brief reviews research on the quality standards. Here, we distill the research into talking points that can be shared with a variety of afterschool stakeholders: policymakers, afterschool providers, districts, schools, families, and youth.

Defining Quality Standards

The following talking points can be used to define quality standards to multiple audiences. You may want to start the discussion with stakeholders by using one or more talking points so that stakeholders understand what you mean when you refer to quality standards.

- Quality standards represent best practices for how afterschool programs are structured and what instructional practices are used by practitioners working directly with youth.
- Quality standards are organized into broad program and staff practice areas, such as relationships, activities, and skill building. Indicators in each category provide in-depth descriptions of the best practices to be implemented.
- Quality standards combine both research and practice to advance strategies for managing high-quality afterschool programs and facilitating youth development through engaging activities.

The Importance of Quality Standards

The following talking points convey the role of quality standards in an afterschool system. You can use them to support your state's vision for an afterschool system and/or promote how afterschool providers will use the quality standards.

- Quality standards define what we want to see in a high-quality program. In high-quality programs, youth are more likely to experience a range of positive outcomes, such as academic improvement, social and emotional growth, and improved physical and mental well-being.
- Quality standards are a key element of an afterschool system. They provide a shared definition of and a common language for discussing quality. They also guide the measurement of youth outcomes and inform the afterschool policy agenda.
- As a statewide afterschool network, we are uniquely positioned to garner support for quality standards, bring together a broad coalition of afterschool stakeholders, and, if needed, lead the quality standards development process.

Getting Started With Quality Standards

This set of talking points shows stakeholders that significant resources can be used to develop a set of quality standards in your state.

- A recent scan of afterschool systems in all 50 states shows that 39 states have already developed quality standards, and five states are currently designing quality standards. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we can learn what worked well for these states. We have support through funding from the Mott Foundation to connect with other networks and access experts in the field.
- Existing research and a set of quality assessment tools teach us the core elements of a high-quality program. We can draw on these resources to build research-based quality standards that will work for your state.
- Quality standards must reflect the strengths and needs of afterschool providers across your state. The afterschool community is the best resource for ensuring that this happens.