

# Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs

Elementary School

2nd Edition



For

Florida Afterschool Network

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## RECOGNITION

The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) Board of Directors would like to recognize and thank the following organizations and agencies for their input, advice and recommendations in the development of the *Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs*:

- Boys and Girls Clubs of Florida
- Children's Forum
- Children's Services Councils of Florida
- Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida
- Florida After School Alliance
- Florida Department of Children and Families/Child Care Licensing Office
- Florida Department of Education/21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Florida's Office of Early Learning
- Hillsborough County Public Schools
- National Afterschool Association
- YMCAs
- City and County Parks and Recreation Departments
- Local Early Learning Coalitions
- Local School Systems
- Public and Private Afterschool Practitioners

Workshops were held statewide during the development of the Standards, and many of the recommendations received from participants were incorporated into the final document.

FAN's Board of Directors would also like to thank the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for their continued support and encouragement.

The work, energy and commitment of all participants truly make this document epitomize the term **"quality."**

## ENDORSEMENTS

The *Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs* has been endorsed by:

- Association of Early Learning Coalitions
- Children's Forum
- Children's Services Councils of Florida
- Department of Children and Families
- Florida After School Alliance
- Florida Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs
- Florida's Office of Early Learning
- Hillsborough County Public Schools
- Roundtable of St. Lucie County
- United Ways of Florida
- YMCAs of Florida



# FLORIDA STANDARDS FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

The *Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs* define the core principles and best practices that lead to the delivery of quality programming for children and youth in afterschool programs. The Standards provide a framework for the development of a caring, dynamic, stimulating and safe afterschool environment for children and youth. Research-based outcomes for such afterschool programs include: children and youth who are connected and engaged; parents who feel their children are safe and secure; and families who have a sense of pride and ownership of the program.

The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN), which led the development of the Standards, recognizes that each afterschool program is unique with varying missions and philosophies, and that they serve wide and diverse populations, ethnicities, age ranges, interests and values. The Standards are not intended to dictate policy and practice. They are intended to suggest and offer a strong foundation for quality programming.

The standards are organized in seven (7) categories.

- Administration and Organization
- Program Management and Staff
- Communication and Interaction
- Program Structure and Activities
- Health, Safety and Nutrition
- Program Environment
- Family and Community Involvement

Each of the seven categories begins with a guiding principle that defines the intent of the category, followed by the quality standards which indicate quality afterschool programming. The standards are broad-based, allowing for, encouraging and celebrating the uniqueness of each program.

As part of the development process, FAN recognized the value of obtaining input from those who directly provide afterschool services. Five (5) regional workshops were held and over 60 practitioners attended. Each proposed standard was discussed and revisions to initial drafts were made. Because the review process involved thorough input and deliberation, FAN is convinced that the standards represent the best thinking in the field and clearly outline what a quality program looks like.

Implementation is voluntary. FAN hopes the standards are of such value that programs will want to implement some or all of the standards. FAN envisions parents and guardians utilizing the document as a guide or tool when selecting an afterschool program for their children.



## ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

### Guiding Principle:

Provide a solid framework for afterschool programming; state a mission, philosophy, and goals.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program has a written mission statement based on its philosophy and goals.
2. The program involves children and youth, families and staff in planning and implementing suitable activities that are consistent with the program's mission statement.
3. The program has established written goals that are measurable, aligned with the mission statement and help the program achieve sustainability.
4. The program has established written policies and procedures for families, staff and volunteers.
5. The program has established sound fiscal and business practices to ensure continued and sustained program operations.
6. The program collects written feedback through surveys, parent conferences and/or other forms of communication.
7. The program has implemented a written evaluation system to determine whether its mission and goals are being achieved.
8. The program has developed relationships with community and business leaders to ensure program enhancement and sustainability.



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## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

### Guiding Principle:

Employ qualified administrative and direct care/instructional staff who are focused on the needs of children and youth, families and fellow staff.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program documents the daily arrival and departure of individual children and youth. Children and youth are released only to authorized persons designated by parent(s) or guardian(s) in writing.
2. The program provides direct supervision at all times. The Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) recognizes that staff-to-child/staff-to-youth ratios vary according to ages, abilities and the type and complexity of activities being presented. FAN recommends the program maintains a minimum ratio of one (1) direct service staff member for every twenty (20) children and/or youth.
3. The program implements a written training plan based upon the Florida Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners. The training plan ensures staff participates in a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of relevant training per year.
4. The program has written job descriptions and personnel policies, as well as program policies and a parent handbook that further explain staff roles. The program provides annual written evaluations for all staff.
5. The program has written documentation that staff and volunteers comply with all state regulated background screening and fingerprinting requirements as well as drug testing regulations and program policies.
6. The program conducts monthly staff meetings with agendas and documented staff attendance.

## COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

### Guiding Principle:

Provide ways to foster and enhance the communication and interactions among children and youth, families and staff.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program encourages appropriate verbal, non-verbal and written communication in a professional manner.
2. Staff engage with all children and youth in positive and respectful ways through listening, acceptance and appreciation, and they help children and youth develop a sense of belonging.
3. As role models for children and youth, staff engage other staff in an appropriate and professional manner.
4. Staff respond appropriately to the individual needs of children and youth, recognizing their special interests, feelings, abilities and cultures. Staff understand, celebrate and reflect diversity.
5. Staff encourage children and youth to take initiative, make choices, be responsible and take on challenging tasks and activities.
6. Staff communicate and reinforce clear limits and rules. Positive techniques are used to guide the behavior of children and youth by setting appropriate limits and encouraging children to choose positive behaviors.
7. Staff interact with children and youth using various approaches to help them learn to think for themselves, develop problem solving skills and improve language skills through frequent conversation. Staff encourages children and youth to resolve their own conflicts.
8. Staff provide opportunities for children and youth, families and other staff to interact with each other in positive ways.
9. Program administration communicates appropriately with all staff and volunteers.





## PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES

### Guiding Principle:

Emphasize developmentally appropriate social, recreational, and educational opportunities.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program offers developmentally appropriate activities that reflect the mission and goals of the program.
2. The program posts a daily schedule that is flexible and contains transitions that help children and youth move smoothly from one activity to another.
3. The program allows children to choose their own activities from a daily schedule that offers both indoor and outdoor activities and variety of social, recreational, and educational opportunities.
4. The program offers enrichment opportunities in core academic areas as well as in cultural arts and technology.
5. The program offers scheduled time in an appropriate environment for academic support or homework assistance.
6. The program provides planned daily recreation, sports, or fitness activities.
7. The program includes a sufficient amount of materials and equipment that are developmentally appropriate, accessible and in good working order.
8. The program makes reasonable accommodations to the program environment and schedule so that children and youth with special needs may participate.
9. When on field trips, all precautions are taken to ensure the safety of children and youth including additional staff supervision as necessary. The program has written policies and procedures to transport children safely; it complies with all legal requirements for vehicles and drivers.

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## HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

### Guiding Principle:

Provide developmentally appropriate environments that protect and enhance the safety, health and nutrition of children and youth.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program has written health, safety and nutrition policies available to families.
2. The program establishes policies and procedures to comply with established laws for the documentation and notification of suspected abuse, neglect, and physical, verbal and sexual harassment.
3. The program has a written and accessible emergency management plan, which includes up-to-date, relevant contact information for everyone involved with the program.
4. The program has staff certified in CPR and First Aid available and accessible to the children and youth at all times.
5. The program has a written medical policy, which includes, at a minimum, a plan to ensure medication is provided in the original container, maintained in appropriately secured storage, and dispensed as prescribed by a physician with parent(s) written authorization.
6. Children and youth are separated at the first sign of illness and supervised by staff who take proper health precautions. Parents are notified when appropriate.
7. The program implements daily safety inspections and has procedures in place for dealing with hazardous conditions and equipment. Hazards are remedied in a timely manner.
8. Staff model, teach, and promote proper health, nutrition, safety and hygiene practices. Frequent hand washing is encouraged, especially after using the bathroom and immediately prior to snacks and meals.
9. The program encourages healthy food options by promoting nutritional snacks, drinks and meals. Drinking water is readily available at all times.



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## PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT

### Guiding Principle:

Provide safe developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor environments.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program environment provides dedicated usable safe space for all activities during hours of operation.
2. The space is arranged to be conducive for simultaneous social, recreational and educational activities.
3. There is adequate and convenient storage space for equipment, materials and the personal possessions of children, youth and staff.

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### Guiding Principle:

Provide opportunities for family involvement and public/private partnerships.

### Quality Standards:

1. The program develops, implements and maintains a current plans for family and community involvement. The plans include regularly scheduled activities for participation.
2. Families are welcomed within established policy guidelines.
3. The program supports families by linking them with individuals, organizations, and agencies for community resources.
4. The program provides a variety of communication offerings including newsletters, notes electronic media, and/or bulletin boards.



## GLOSSARY

**Afterschool Programs:** Safe learning environments for children and youth during their out-of-school time. Includes before and after school, full day summer and holiday programs.

**Children and Youth:** The *Florida Standards for Quality Afterschool Programs* were developed for programs that serve children and youth of elementary school grade levels.

**Community:** Commonly refers to the county, city, town or neighborhood in which a program is located. A quality afterschool program links with individuals, organizations and agencies in its community.

**Competencies:** The knowledge, skills and abilities an individual or organization possesses. Quality afterschool programs provide staff training that integrates theory with best practices, and knowledge is gained to support the performance of specific skills.

**Core Academic Areas:** Includes language arts, reading, math, science and social studies.

**Curriculum:** A program's social, recreational and educational activities. In a quality afterschool program, the curriculum is designed to support learning, development and growth. Curriculum may include arts and crafts, music, recreation, tutoring and homework assistance. Program curriculum is determined by the overall philosophy, mission and the needs of enrolled children.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP):** Commonly refers to how a program responds to the individual differences of children and youth. In a quality afterschool program, everything it does is age appropriate, individually appropriate and culturally appropriate for all enrolled children.

**Direct Service Staff:** Staff who provide ongoing and direct supervision, instruction and care to children and youth.

**Family:** Family is defined differently for individual children and youth. Staff and administration need to be aware of the diversity of family dynamics represented in their program. Family may include children and adults living in the child's home, adults who are responsible for the care and well-being of the child, parents who may not live in the same household as the child and the child's legal guardian.

**Level II Screening:** Security background investigations of staff including, but not limited to, fingerprinting for statewide criminal and juvenile records checks through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), federal criminal records checks through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and may include local records checks through local law enforcement agencies. Section 435.04, Florida Statutes, outlines in detail the full Level II screening requirements.

**Out-of-School Time (OST):** Any time that a child is not in school, including before and after school, weekends, and holiday/summer recesses.

**Program Environment:** The space where the program activities take place, both indoors and outdoors. How well a program utilizes its environment impacts the quality of the activities and care provided.

**Philosophy:** Commonly refers to the program's stated principles and beliefs. The program bases its policies and practices on its philosophy.

**Quality Standards:** A set of indicators used to measure excellence.

**Relevant Training:** Training designed for specific classes of positions dedicated to improving job performance skills.

**Special Needs:** The individual differences of children and youth, be they physical, behavioral, medical, emotional or cognitive.

**Technology:** Organizations, equipment and systems that allow us to control and adapt to our environment. Quality afterschool programs embrace technology and use it to improve the lives of children.

**Volunteer:** An individual who assists the program without pay. In a quality program, volunteers are under direct and constant supervision by program personnel.



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