

AFTERSCHOOL *news*



Online Professional Development for Out-of-School Programs

By Michael Toth

Professional Development can help build the foundation of a variety of expanded learning programs. Many afterschool, community school, SES (supplemental education services), summer learning, and other expanded learning professionals have had the opportunity to attend a conference or participate in a one-time training session that a hired consultant delivered to their afterschool program. As programs feel the pinch of the economic downturn, however, many afterschool professionals are turning to online training and have discovered its many benefits.

Financial Savings. Online professional development is usually much more cost-effective than traditional professional development because travel costs, consultant fees, or conference registration expenses are eliminated. In addition, program directors no longer have the burden of covering release time for staff to attend trainings.

Common Language and Consistency. Online courses provide consistency of professional development each time a staff member takes the course. This allows for a common language for instruction to develop and eliminates the risk of inconsistency from multiple trainers.

Relevant Activities. Quality online courses always include job-embedded activities where participants take newly acquired skills and knowledge into their instructional practice.

Sustainability. Providing consistent and ongoing professional development through online courses enables afterschool programs to sustain the common language and instructional gains over the years, even with staff turnover.

Accountability. Online courses allow afterschool leaders to monitor and support participants' progress and activities. Reports can also be generated for easy program evaluation documentation.

In response to the demand for affordable online professional development, the SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool and Learning Sciences International have collaborated in the development of the Virtual Academy for Afterschool. These engaging and interactive online courses are based on 5 years of research and offer afterschool programs affordable training options.

Michael Toth is CEO of Learning Sciences International, an e-learning company that specializes in professional development for educators.



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The SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.

www.sedl.org/afterschool



RECOMMENDED *resource*

VIRTUAL ACADEMY FOR AFTERSCHOOL

This interactive professional development resource includes five online courses for professionals in a variety of expanded learning settings. Each course includes links to help align afterschool to day-school learning, effective instructional strategies, guided practice in project planning, and evidence-based instruction models that keep students engaged.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/academy



"We are sure to build in some time to reflect and analyze how we've integrated [the toolkit] so far."

LAUTAUSCHA SHELL
21st CCLC program director

Kenosha Unified School District No. 1

KENOSHA, WISCONSIN

For the staff at the 21st CCLC afterschool programs of Kenosha Unified School District No. 1 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, professional development is an ongoing process. Leaders at Kenosha partner with community organizations, including the University of Wisconsin Extension, to make this possible. They also use the Afterschool Training Toolkit, a free, online resource developed by the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, to provide professional development to all afterschool staff. After initial needs-assessment and awareness-building activities, staff participated in an extensive professional development session. This included a breakout session for one of four content areas—math, literacy, science, and homework—where staff learned about the promising practices for that content area, reviewed a sample lesson from the toolkit, practiced writing a sample lesson, and, in some cases, presented their lesson to the group. Another professional development session is scheduled for April.

Lautauscha Shell, 21st CCLC program director, has suggestions for afterschool leaders who want to use the toolkit for professional development: "Be sure to review all parts and determine what fits your needs." Shell says they chose not to include technology and arts so they could focus on the content areas that supported their program goals and activities. Although staff are still learning about the toolkit, Shell feels that the afterschool programs have benefitted from using it. She adds, "We are sure to build in some time to reflect and analyze how we've integrated it so far. We are looking forward to taking the training on the road to other districts and counties if necessary."

IN YOUR *words*

What is the biggest obstacle to providing professional development in your afterschool program? (Select all that apply.)

- Cost
- Time limitations
- Variety of staff skills and experience
- Range of rolls in afterschool program
- Quality of professional development available
- Other

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200902.html.

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EVENTS *calendar*

The National Center for Quality Afterschool will offer pre-conference workshops at the conferences listed below. Workshops are funded by the C. S. Mott Foundation. Participants must register for workshops in advance.

April 1–4 National Afterschool Association 2009 Convention
Pre-Conference Session: What Works in Quality Afterschool Programs? (April 1)
Partner Networking Session (April 2)
www.naaconvention.org
NEW ORLEANS, LA

April 16–17 National Conference on Summer Learning
Pre-Conference Session: Extending Student Learning Beyond the School Day and Year (April 15)
www.summerlearning.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=105&Itemid=427
CHICAGO, IL

April 22–25 BOOST Conference
Pre-Conference Session: What Works in Quality Afterschool Programs? (April 22)
www.boostconference.org/registration.php
PALM SPRINGS, CA

For more events, visit our calendar at www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.

Newsletter available online at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords