

A Network-Wide approach to Professional development: Introduction

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Professional Development is a powerful tool in the continuing process of Out-of-School Time (OST) program quality improvement. Through ongoing staff development, OST programs are better positioned to achieve key outcomes. Additionally, by developing and supporting staff, OST programs build strong relationships with their staff and reduce the frequency of disruptive turnover.

In the OST System funded by the City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS), a number of partnering agencies provide professional development (PD) – and support program staff in pursuing professional development – in a variety of ways. In this article, representatives from these partnering agencies discuss three different aspects of PD. These approaches to providing PD, when taken together, begin to form a holistic picture of the web of supports offered to providers in the OST System.

The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) is a partner agency of the OST System, and supports youth programs, and their staff, in a number of ways. Dr. Nancy

Peter, of the OSTRC, discusses the impact of PD as demonstrated by scholarly literature in the field of youth development. Additionally, Dr. Peter discusses one particular PD approach offered by the OSTRC: Peer Networking Meetings, which offer OST providers the opportunity to share their experiences and best practices with one another.

Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) is the intermediary to DHS for the OST System. PHMC monitors the OST System for compliance, and additionally, provides coaching and support to programs as they work to achieve the DHS-defined outcomes. This support takes many forms, including over 50 PD sessions per year on a variety of topics. Jason Schwalm and Kristen Coe, of PHMC, discuss the ways that PHMC is able to capitalize on its connections to the OST System to provide responsive, needs-based professional development. Lastly, Ariel Zander, of PHMC, further reviews the scholarly literature surrounding OST staff professional development, and notes that ongoing staff development shows promise in reducing the frequency of staff turnover.

It is important to note that PHMC is only one member of the OST System's PD workgroup, comprised of representatives of the many partnering agencies. This workgroup meets frequently to discuss the professional development needs of the OST System, and provides important guidance to the work of each, individual

partnering agency. Ultimately, professional development is a crucial part of the OST System, and the work of each partnering agency is indispensable to the robust system of supports.