



Summary

In a Fall 2018 survey of national afterschool leaders, the National AfterSchool Association learned that most respondents felt that **developing a leadership pipeline in afterschool** was an urgent topic to discuss at the NAA19 Convention. NAA contracted with Development Without Limits (DWL) to structure the NAA19 leadership events, including framing the dialogue about funding and sustaining systems of professional development in afterschool. This memo summarizes the session and offers NAA's recommendations for next steps.

CREATING A CULTURE OF PROFESSIONALIZATION IN AFTERSCHOOL

Process

Nearly fifty national leaders in the afterschool field met as part of the NAA19 Convention in New York City, March 19, 2019, to discuss how we can create systems to fund and sustain professional development for leaders and staff. The intended outcome for this meeting was to identify key action steps that will help support the field in creating a unified message describing the benefits and needs to further the professionalization of the afterschool field.

Five sessions of roundtable discussions were held to address the questions around challenges, quality, leadership pipeline, best practices and needs to support professional development. In ten minute sessions, participants discussed and charted their responses to specific questions (see appendix) under each topic. For each round, they moved to a new topic and added points to the existing chart paper. The full group reconvened and elevated key takeaways and action steps.

Key Takeaways

The group discussion elicited the following highlights.

1

Afterschool needs to be acknowledged and promoted as a profession.

Participants felt that afterschool is still not universally recognized as a profession and therefore, does not garner the needed resources and structures for professionalization.

3

We need to create a culture change that prioritizes the professionalization of the field and professional development for staff and leaders.

Participants felt that developing key messages and a common language about professional development in afterschool would encourage funders to prioritize professional development and capacity building as well as support cross-sector professional development opportunities.

2

Professional development in afterschool should be pulled out as its own issue.

Much afterschool messaging addresses the need for afterschool programming for youth. Participants felt that the notions of afterschool staff, leadership and professionalization should have its own marketing and messaging strategies.

4

We need to ensure capacity of organizational leaders to move the professional development work forward.

The group acknowledged that the discussion of field professionalization has been going on for many years. They felt it was critical to ensure that there is broad support, ownership and stewardship across field leaders to continue to build the profession and support the professionals.

Key Action

To move forward with professionalizing the field and address the issues elevated in the key takeaways, NAA recommends this action as an overarching, unifying goal: **Generate a national messaging campaign that promotes professionalization of afterschool.**

Tasks



To accomplish the goal, participants generated a series of required tasks to precede a national messaging campaign:

Research

- Literature review of studies that define quality professional development and link quality professional development to high-quality practice, high-quality programming and positive youth outcomes.

Research that investigates:

- What kind of professional development systems create high-quality programs?
- What are the true costs of providing professional development to afterschool staff and leaders? What are the costs of not providing professional development to afterschool staff and leaders?

Roles of National Organizations

- An understanding of the roles and resources of national organizations to support professionalization of the field; also, identifying how national organizations collaborate and complement each other toward this broader goal. For example, what is the role of the National AfterSchool Association? What collateral (i.e., NAA professional trainer competencies, Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool Staff and NAA microcredentials) does the organization have or need to develop that would promote the profession and align with the organizational mission?

Promising Systems and Tactics

- Promising practices that showcase how systems

are creating, funding and supporting ongoing professional development and building a professional pipeline. Within this action, there is an opportunity to engage with local programs such as Prime Time Palm Beach County as well as state affiliates, statewide networks and 21st CCLC programs to inform our understanding of professional development systems that highlight leadership development.

- Recommendations on how afterschool staff and leaders are/want to be recognized for their professional development (i.e., credential, microcredential, CEU, etc.) at local, state and national levels.
- Clear action steps for program, organization and state levels to include and support professional development as part of their systems development.

Provide sample tactics such as:

- Creating individual professional development plans as part of onboarding process
- Create internal youth leadership pipelines where professional development is a career readiness program, developing youth into program staff.

Campaign Development and Management

- Development of a campaign and dissemination strategy to promote the message of afterschool professionalization.

To prepare for a national messaging campaign, we propose three next steps: formation of task groups, secure funding and curate existing resources.

Form Task Groups

Four task groups will be composed of NAA board members, other national intermediary leaders, researchers, state leaders and local leaders in the field. We expect many of the participants from this meeting would be interested in joining a task group. Task groups would be formed to accomplish the identified actions in the topics of Research, National Organizations' Roles, Promising Systems and Tactics, Campaign Development and Management.

Secure Funding

To truly move this work forward, there will need to be a project plan and project manager. While we would anticipate that task groups would function on a volunteer basis, funding support would be required to secure a project manager and the overall campaign development. Ideally, this person would be hired as soon as possible and task groups would be launched by Summer 2019 with the goal that the group would reconvene at NAA20 in Washington, DC with a draft messaging campaign.

Curate Existing Resources

Recognizing that the task group formation and funding steps may take time to unfold, an immediate action step is that National AfterSchool Association will curate their existing research and resources that support field professionalization and highlight on the NAA website.



What You Can Do Now

- 1. Join a task group.** Where can you contribute your expertise? [Contact NAA](#)
 - Conducting and Contributing to Research about Professionalizing AfterSchool
 - Identifying National Organizations' Roles
 - Identifying Promising Systems and Tactics
 - Messaging Campaign Development and Management
- 2. Provide strategic support and funding.** [Contact NAA](#) to discuss how you support these efforts.
- 3. Invite NAA to talk to your funders** about the critical importance of professional development for the after school workforce.
- 4. Share your resources.** What messages/materials do you use to gain support for professional development? [Share with us](#) so we can share with the field!

Appendix: Table Top Discussion Questions

Challenges creating a system of high quality, sustainable professional development

What systemic issues keep the afterschool profession from funding and sustaining professional development for staff and leaders?

What are the specific challenges to providing quality professional development for staff? For yourself and other leaders?

Professional development to build a leadership pipeline

What kind of professional development is needed to help build a leader pipeline?

How can professional development foster more diverse leadership?

What is quality professional development

What structures of professional development are successful for supporting program quality?

What is the role of credentials, certifications, digital badges, etc. in developing a system of high quality professional development?

What are best practices for funding professional development?

What strategies have you used or seen that have led to sustained PD funding?

What can we learn from outside of afterschool? Do you have knowledge of other fields and how they have valued and funded PD?

What is needed to build a system of high quality professional development

What would be your ideal scenario to ensure professional development is sustained and meaningful?

How do we advocate for a sustainable system?