

**New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community**  
 Essential Elements of Out-of-School Time Quality—2005

Essential Elements of Out-of-School Time Program Quality	Practitioners	Organizations	Implications for Policy-Makers and Funders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Safety:</b> <i>Children and youth feel safe physically and emotionally while they participate in program activities and travel to and from the program.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe activities (indoors and outdoors)</li> <li>• Get or deliver training to promote physical and emotional safety</li> <li>• Provide adequate adult supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe spaces (inside &amp; out)</li> <li>• Are deliberate with staff selection, training, supervision</li> <li>• Provide safe transportation; safe routes (coming and going)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund infrastructure (safe facilities and transportation)</li> <li>• Sustain funding for programs that work—beyond the typical 1 and 3 year cycles</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inclusion:</b> <i>Children and youth feel welcomed at the program, taking into account age, interests, abilities, family socio-economics, family dynamics and cultural values.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain respect</li> <li>• Value and celebrate diversity</li> <li>• Provide developmentally appropriate activities</li> <li>• Tap various interests, abilities; learning styles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide for extended hours</li> <li>• Provide a range of low/no cost programs</li> <li>• Locate programs for convenient access</li> <li>• Provide staff with on-going supervision, support, professional development , especially in areas of diversity and age-appropriate practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund extended hours of program operation</li> <li>• Fund range of sites and programs</li> <li>• Fund scholarships</li> <li>• Support knowledge &amp; skills re: diversity and youth development theory and practice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adult/Youth Partnerships:</b> <i>Youth and adults form authentic partnerships where shared leadership, decision-making, and planning are mutually valued.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a commitment to PYD</li> <li>• Learn, listen, and lead with youth</li> <li>• Build youth leadership skills</li> <li>• Set clear and mutually-agreeable boundaries</li> <li>• Serve as a role model who “walks the talk”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide professional development for youth/adult partnerships</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for youth participation &amp; leadership</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for youth internships and jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support training and technical assistance on PYD, youth-adult partnerships, and youth leadership</li> <li>• Recognize youth and adult as leaders and experts in the field</li> <li>• Fund youth employment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engaged Learning:</b> <i>Children and youth are actively engaged in interesting and challenging learning opportunities all the time.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide learning activities that are:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ age appropriate</li> <li>⇒ active, experiential, explorative</li> <li>⇒ support mastery of skills for life and work</li> <li>⇒ healthy &amp; holistic</li> <li>⇒ Personal and community relevant</li> <li>⇒ Flexible and Fun</li> <li>⇒ Continuous</li> <li>⇒ Meets child/youth learning needs</li> <li>⇒ Informed by youth</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet basic needs</li> <li>• Connect to community for additional learning support, especially connected to service, career-development, and civic engagement</li> <li>• Select qualified staff and provide on-going training and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support training and technical assistance opportunities for engaged learning theory &amp; practice</li> <li>• Support PYD connections to learning, service, career development, and civic engagement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Connectedness:</b> <i>The program connects young people to their community.</i>  <i>The community supports program connections to the broader youth development field</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have knowledge and respect for community values, culture, assets</li> <li>• Invite family and community participation</li> <li>• Invite collegial and collaborative peer relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embrace community input &amp; expertise</li> <li>• Involve family &amp; community in planning &amp; programming for PYD</li> <li>• Promote open and shared two-way communication</li> <li>• Identify and advocate (with others) for PYD policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support family involvement;</li> <li>• Support community-wide planning &amp; collaboration for PYD</li> <li>• Support local, regional and state-wide communication and support networks</li> <li>• Facilitate and support broad involvement in identifying policy issues and recommendations</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continuous Learning &amp; Improvement:</b> <i>Organizations are committed to and engaged in on-going efforts to improve their programs,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possess a personal commitment to listen and learn</li> <li>• Participate in continuous learning and improvement methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to a learning organization style that listens and learns, with implications for intentional reflection</li> <li>• Commit resources for continuous learning &amp; improvement, especially innovative methods</li> <li>• Assures coordinated evaluation and accountability processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to listen and learn</li> <li>• Support continuous learning and improvement of PYD programs, policies, and the field</li> <li>• Support action research as a viable methodology</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Involvement:</b> <i>Organizations are committed to engaging family members in the program planning and design processes, which includes incorporating family expertise in program delivery</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a learning space for family members to participate alongside children</li> <li>• Survey family members to find out how they can support programs</li> <li>• Engage parents in dialogue about how their children best learn</li> <li>• Provide training opportunities to families to help develop their skills so they can support delivery as desired and needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve family members in strategic planning processes</li> <li>• Give opportunity to family members to provide testimonials when seeking additional resources</li> <li>• Create a partnership with families so that families have a sense of ownership of programs that serve their children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunity for families to discuss out-of-school time concerns and to learn more about family support issues</li> <li>• Support family involvement</li> </ul>

Background:

The New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community administers and houses one of 31 national statewide afterschool networks in the country funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation. With further support from the NM Community Foundation the New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community has nurtured a growing out-of-school time network of youth development practitioners, state leaders, and policymakers—concerned about out-of-school quality opportunities. This network helped bring definition to out-of-school time and have supported a focus on quality practice to assure that NM youth are fully prepared for life and the workforce.

The New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community Afterschool Project, in partnership with the Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD), designed and facilitated a process to gather input from an initial eleven communities from across New Mexico. Beginning in Portales and ending in Albuquerque, we talked to over 200 people. The conversations will continue into 2006 as the New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community presents this draft discussion paper to more communities and individuals concerned about out-of-school time quality supports and opportunities for school-age youth. The conversations began with targeted questions and discussion on what:

- NM young people want and need in their out-of-school time
- Positive youth development means
- Quality supports look like (i.e., intermediary support, quality space, caring adult characteristics, provider needs and challenges)

Through an initial review of community input, a NMFYC and CNYD team compiled responses into the proposed seven essential elements of out-of-school time quality.