

Alabama Afterschool Quality Standards



PREPARED BY
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ABOUT THE STANDARDS

Developed in collaboration with the **Alabama Department of Human Resources (ALDHR)** and the **Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)**, the Alabama Afterschool Quality Standards are designed to provide clear guidance to school-aged Afterschool and Summer School programs for quality implementation.

Alabama's Standards are grounded in national research and best practices in both the youth development and educational fields.

The **Alabama Afterschool Quality Standards** are voluntary statewide programmatic standards that may serve as the following:

- A framework of clear expectation for all stakeholders
- A guide to inform statewide decision-making, to direct professional development focus areas, and to garner support in both advocacy and funding
- A guide for program providers to assess their own program sites and organizations to help determine what they are doing well and/or needs improvement
- A guide for parents, families, youth, and educational professionals to identify quality programming
- A guide for school principals and district superintendents to reinforce and advance educational priorities
- A guide for Daycare and Childcare Centers' supervisory and programmatic staff regarding differentiated oversight for 'school-aged' children





ABOUT AFTERSCHOOL

The term “Afterschool” is often used interchangeably with “Out-of-School” time (OST). Out-of-School time refers to Youth Development programming that occurs beyond the traditional school day – including before school, Afterschool, holidays, weekends, and summers. Programs are structured and offer a wide range of learning and enrichment activities that promote academic, artistic, physical, social and emotional development for all participating children and youth.

Decades of extensive research have shown that regular and consistent participation in quality OST programs can help advance the social and emotional development of youth; enhance their academic achievement; promote their own positive self-identity; improve school attendance; and heighten constructive behavioral outcomes.

Quality is the key to such success! The process toward quality must be an ongoing systemic approach of both self-assessment and external review. A dual methodology must be employed to ensure continual accountability and progressive improvement.

INTENTIONAL PROGRESS

The Alabama Quality Standards are not designed to be the definitive answer to 'all things Afterschool,' but a driving force toward continual improvement.

Therefore, the components are designed to be brief and succinct, highlighting the critical areas of effectiveness that are supported through vast research and substantial resources for each.

The Standards are divided into 8 separate components with an additional STEM disciplines engagement addendum.

Each component is comprised of multiple elements that either 'are or are not' at standard. If areas of opportunity are identified, a plan of action to address deficiencies should be articulated.

As a guide for continual and ongoing advancement, the Standards should serve as a guide or pathway toward programmatic stability that enhances, enriches, and cultivates a child's progressive learning experiences.





WHY QUALITY?

Other than the obvious answer – Alabama’s children deserve our best – programs that choose to utilize and adhere to the Alabama Afterschool Quality Standards in the pursuit of continual improvement will be awarded the Afterschool Seal of Pledge to Quality. *

The Badge of Approval recognizes a program’s quest for learning and standards of excellence that may then be publicized to the local community for communication and marketing of the program’s endeavor toward quality.

To attain the recognition, programs must observe the following:

- Embrace the process of ongoing self-assessment while utilizing the Standards
- Allow for the process of external review
- Receive the sanctioning of the Alabama Expanded Learning Alliance (AELA) with the corresponding vetting of the ALDHR and the ALSDE.

AFTERSCHOOL QUALITY STANDARDS

STANDARD 1: Environmental Safety, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Healthy Lifestyle Initiatives

STANDARD 2: Staff and Youth Relationships

STANDARD 3: Youth Participation, Learning, and Engagement

STANDARD 4: Family and Community Partnerships

STANDARD 5: Programming and Alignment with Regular School Day Learning

STANDARD 6: Administration and Organizational Development

STANDARD 7: Staffing and Professional Development

STANDARD 8: Evaluation for Continuous Quality Improvement

