

**Building a Skilled and Stable Workforce: Results from an On-Line Survey of
Out-of-School Time Professionals**

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Prepared by

**Suzanne Le Menestrel, Ph.D.
AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research**

with

**Julie Dennehy
National Institute on Out-of-School Time**

Introduction

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and the Academy for Educational Development's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research (AED) fielded a survey of out-of-school time professionals as part of a project funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. This project is focused on building a skilled and stable out-of-school time workforce. As part of the project, NIOST and AED conducted a year-long process working with a national advisory committee of individuals from varied organizations in the public and private sectors. These included national associations, advocacy organizations, unions, universities, the military, private philanthropies, and youth organizations. Based on the results of our work with the national advisory committee, we developed three recommendations that will help us move toward building a skilled and stable workforce (National Institute on Out-of-School Time and the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 2003).

The purpose of this survey was to learn, from a practitioner perspective, some of the challenges and barriers that need to be overcome in order to build the out-of-school time workforce. We also wanted to learn what practitioners believe needs to be addressed in order to develop this workforce and how these impressions compare with the recommendations developed as a result of our work with the national advisory committee. These include:

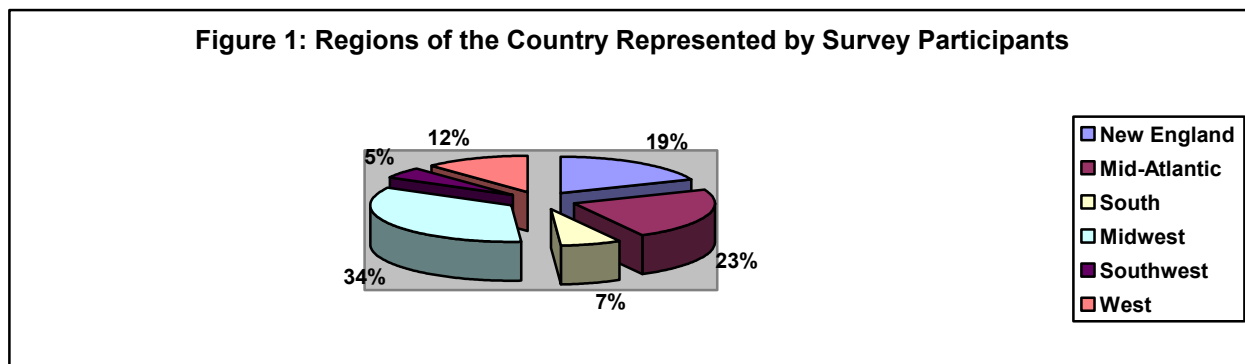
1. Determine a national set of standards for out-of-school time workers, create training and career development opportunities, and a set of compensation benchmarks.
2. Unite stakeholders at local, state, and national levels to advocate for the resources necessary to support high quality programs and a skilled and stable workforce.
3. Build on and replicate successful models like the U.S. Military Child and Youth Care Systems.

How Did We Collect the Data?

We designed a brief survey using SurveyMonkey, a Web-based interface, which allows respondents to enter their answers on-line. E-mail requests were sent to several established networks of intermediary organizations, including the members of the City Works project, managed by NIOST, and the Capacity Building Intermediary Learning Network, managed by AED. In addition, we sent e-mail notices about the survey to two electronic mailing lists, the Promising Practices in Afterschool (PPAS) Listserv, managed by AED, and the SAC-L (School-Age Care) Listserv. Data were collected during the months of June and July, 2003.

Who Completed the Survey?

Three hundred and fifty-one out-of-school time (OST) program staff completed the survey.¹ Respondents represent nearly all 50 states (see Figure 1). Sixty-four percent of the respondents are program directors or managers who do not work directly with children and/or youth on a daily basis; 16 percent are direct line staff who work directly with children and/or youth; and 20 percent have a combination of responsibilities, including managerial and direct service.



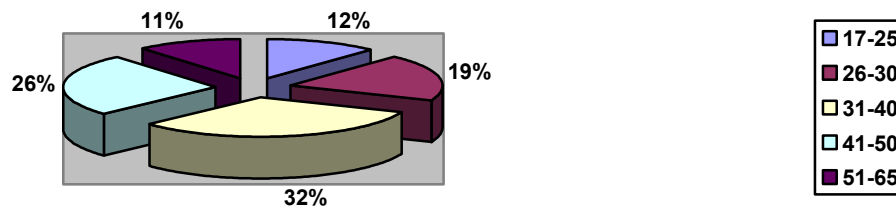
We asked OST staff what they call themselves when they tell people what their job is. Not surprisingly, the responses are as varied as the OST field itself. Titles include "outreach specialist," "program director," "SACC director," "program technician," "program coordinator," and "out of school hours resource officer," among many others. (See Appendix 1 for a listing of titles). "I call myself the School Age Coordinator," wrote one respondent. "When people give me a blank look because they don't understand, I say it's like daycare, but it's not. It's a place where children go to learn life skills and have fun!" More than three-quarters (77 percent) of the OST staff said they work with children, more than half (58 percent) work with teens, and more than half (56 percent) work with families. Only 11 percent said that they do not work with children, teens, or families.

The majority (70 percent) of these OST staff is white; 16 percent are African American. Eighty-seven percent are female, and more than three-quarters had completed at least a Bachelor's degree. Respondents range in age from 17 to 65, with an average age of 37 (see Figure 2). They have worked in their current position for an average of four

¹ For ease of use, we are referring to the many different types of programs (e.g., youth development, afterschool, etc.) as out-of-school time or OST programs. NIOST and AED define the OST workforce as "individuals employed as frontline workers and supervisory staff in an out-of-school time program that is engaged in promoting the overall development of school-aged children and youth ages 6 to 18." (National Institute on Out-of-School Time and the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 2003, pg. 1).

years. The majority (63 percent) of the OST staff said that their total household income before taxes was under \$50,000 last year.

Figure 2: Age of Survey Participants



The OST staff report working an average of 39 hours per week in their jobs (the fewest number of hours per week was four and the greatest was 70). Thirty-eight percent said they usually work more than 40 hours per week. Respondents hold an average of one job, though almost one out of three said they hold more than one job.

How Do OST Staff View the Field?

An overwhelming majority (96 percent) of OST staff believe that working in the OST field is a profession. However, only a little more than a third (38 percent) think that people outside of this field view it as a profession.

What Kinds of Challenges Do OST Staff Face?

We asked OST staff how challenging it is to accomplish things related to their professional development and career advancement. Here's what we learned:

- Nearly a quarter (21 percent) of OST staff believe that they are challenged "a great deal" to be able to attend trainings related to their job. Of those who said they are challenged a "great deal," 67 percent are managers; 18 percent are direct line staff; and 15 percent are managers and direct line staff;
- Nearly half (44 percent) of OST staff said they are challenged "a great deal" to make enough money to live on. Of those who are challenged "a great deal" to make enough money to live on, 55 percent are managers; 24 percent are managers and direct line staff; and 21 percent are direct line staff.
- A little more than a quarter (27 percent) of OST staff are challenged "a great deal" to be able to further their education. Of those who said they are challenged "a great deal," 61 percent are managers; 23 percent are managers and direct line staff; and 17 percent are direct line staff.
- About a third (34 percent) of staff are challenged "a great deal" to move up the job ladder in their current organization. Of those survey participants who said

they are challenged “a great deal” to move up the job ladder, 60 percent are managers; 23 percent are managers and direct line staff; and 18 percent are direct line staff.

What Kinds of Training and Continuing Education Opportunities Are OST Staff Interested in Pursuing?

OST staff indicated how likely they are to pursue a series of training and continuing education opportunities within the next year. In Table 1, we show the percentage of people who said they are “very likely” to enroll or participate in a variety of educational and training opportunities within the next year.

Table 1: Percentage of OST Staff Who Are Very Likely to Enroll in Educational and Training Opportunities, by Highest Level of Education Obtained

| | Less than an Associate’s Degree | Associate’s Degree | Bachelor’s Degree or Some Graduate Coursework |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Child Development Associate Certificate Program | 14% | 9% | — |
| School-Age Child Care Certificate Program | 22% | 31% | — |
| Youth Worker Certificate Program | 17% | 31% | — |
| Associate’s Degree program | 18% | — | — |
| Bachelor’s Degree Program | 29% | 60% | — |
| Graduate Degree Program | — | — | 37% |

What Kinds of Supports Do OST Staff Need to Pursue Training and Educational Opportunities?

We asked the respondents to indicate which kinds of supports they would need in order to pursue the aforementioned training and educational opportunities. Across the range

of training and educational opportunities, the most frequently mentioned supports, regardless of current educational background, are getting time off from the job to participate and financial aid or a scholarship to pay for the program. For those respondents with less than an Associate's degree, a large majority (nearly three-quarters in most cases) said that they would need financial aid in order to participate in the program or training opportunity. Similarly, among those OST staff with a Bachelor's degree or some graduate work, 83 percent said they would need financial aid or a scholarship to enroll in a graduate program.

What Does the Future Look Like for OST Staff?

When we asked how much longer they think they will be working in the OST field, a little more than half of the respondents (52 percent) said that they would be working in the field five or fewer years; more than a quarter (26 percent) believe they will work in the field for 10 or more years. For those staff who plan to stay in the field for five or fewer years, we asked what it would take to keep them in the field. The most frequently mentioned responses include an increase in salary, more funding for their programs, increased opportunities for career advancement, and an acknowledgement from the outside community that the OST field is a profession. As one program manager who planned to stay in the field less than five more years commented, "The field needs to begin to be seen and be paid as a professional field. If it cannot provide me with the income and the respect that I deserve, then I need to go to a field that does." Another manager who also works directly with children and youth and who planned to leave the field in less than five years wrote, "I would need assistance with furthering my education to meet national standards for a position I have held for 13 years. The lack of financial aid plus the push for a Bachelor's Degree in administrative/director positions could torpedo my entire 25-year career. Apparently after all these years, an AA is not enough."

We also asked respondents what they think needs to be in place in order to build a skilled and stable out-of-school time workforce. Again, money was one of the most important factors. Better benefits, including paid vacation and personal leave, health insurance, maternity leave, and other benefits, such as time off to attend classes or trainings, were also important factors. Better hours (more flexibility) and full-time hours were also important to the respondents. Training for staff was a frequently mentioned response to this question. "If employers want the best kind of program that they can have, they need to hire individuals who are truly committed to children--not just there to make a buck. In order for this to happen, I feel that education is one of the biggest tools that can be used to enhance the actual individuals who are being employed and the supervisory staff also," observed one OST staff person. Another OST staff person observed, "[There needs to be] opportunities to offer training for the gem that never knew they could work with children."

Similarly, staff said that there should be an increased awareness among the community and public at-large that OST professionals are not just babysitters. “[This field] needs to be treated like a profession, not as second-class twenty-somethings before they get a real job. Underneath that would include professional development, furthering education, training, etc.,” wrote one staff person. Others call for increased job security and credentialing of the OST workforce.

Summary

We note that this survey is limited, in that it is *not* representative of the entire OST workforce. Overall, the sample of participants is well-educated, though not affluent, and the majority is working in managerial positions. In addition, because the survey was Internet-based, it probably attracted a greater percentage of people with a reasonably high comfort level with technology, as well as access to a computer and the Internet. Nevertheless, the survey results give us an important snapshot into the lives of the OST workforce. The challenges and barriers that they report are the same as those reported by the national advisory committee with which we worked. In fact, the three recommendations developed from this national advisory committee work are supported by the results of this survey. As one respondent eloquently put it, “I feel strongly that the lack of a skilled and stable (particularly stable) out of school time workforce is related to the nature of the class system in the United States and the lack of status and therefore pay that is afforded to people who work in the human services fields. It is also related to the responsibility that is placed on families for their children's health and development; our cultural norms around privacy and private property and how that relates to the family.”

References

National Institute on Out-of-School Time and the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research (2003, March). Strategic plan: Building a skilled and stable out-of-school time workforce. Wellesley, MA: Author. (Available on the Internet at http://niost.org/about/stategic_plan_building_skilled.pdf)

Appendix 1: Job Titles: "What Do You Call Yourself When You Tell People What Your Job Is?"

| Direct Line Staff | Manager | Direct Line Staff and Manager |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Activity Specialist | Activity Leader | After School Club Director |
| Administrative Assistant | Administrator | After-school site coordinator |
| After School Program Staff | Advocate | Artist |
| Afterschool Care Provider | Afterschool Leader | Arts Director |
| After-school Instructor | AmeriCorps Coordinator | Assistant Center Director |
| Afterschool Program Social Worker | AmeriCorps Program Specialist | Assistant Director |
| Afterschool Teacher | Area Director | Assistant to the Program Manager |
| Assistant Director | Assistant Department Director | Associate Pastor |
| Assistant Group Leader | Assistant Director | Child Care Teacher/Director |
| Assistant Teacher | Assistant Program Director | Childcare manager |
| Camp Counselor | Assistant Youth Director | Co-director |
| Care Provider | Associate Director | Computer Consultant |
| Child Advocate | Associate Project Manager | Computer Lab Assistant |
| Child Care Worker | Camp Director | Coordinator |
| Clerk | Chief Learning Officer | Coordinator for youth programs |
| Coach | Child Care Coordinator | Coordinator of Technology Services |
| College Advisor | Child Care Director | County 4-H Agent |
| Computer Instructor | Childcare professional | Curriculum Designer |
| Computer Teacher | Children's Ministry Coordinator | Curriculum Developer |
| Coordinator | Church Pastor | Director |
| Counselor | Clinical Social Worker | Director of Children's Ministries and School-Age Enrichment Programming |
| Educator | Community Coordinator | Director of Education and Technology |
| Enrichment Specialist | Community Development Program Director | Educator |
| Facilitator | Community Education Coordinator | Enrichment Specialist |
| Group Leader | Community Education Specialist | Executive director |
| Guidance Mentor | Community Organizer | Extended Day Coordinator |
| Outreach Specialist | Computer Lab Coordinator | Facilitator of Positive Development |
| Outreach Worker | Consultant | Family Child Care Provider |
| Parent Liaison | Consulting and Training Coordinator | Mentor |
| Program Coordinator | Coordinator | Program Coordinator |
| Program Specialist | Development Director | Program Director |

| Direct Line Staff | Manager | Direct Line Staff and Manager |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Program Technician | Director | Program Specialist |
| Project Manager | Director of a Community School Initiative | Program Supervisor |
| School Advocate | Director of Child Care Services | Project Director |
| School Age Program Counselor | Director of Children's Ministries | School Age Care Provider |
| School to Work Case Manager | Director of Children's Programs | School Age Coordinator |
| Site Supervisor | Director of Education | School Age Professional |
| Substitute School Nurse | Director of Extended Services | School Age Program Coordinator |
| Teacher | Director of Finance | Service Coordinator |
| Teacher's Assistant | Director of Operations | Site Coordinator |
| Tutor | Director of Program Development | Site Director |
| Youth Counselor | Director of Programs | Site Supervisor |
| Youth Recreation Specialist | Director of Youth Services | Social Worker |
| Youth Service Assistant Coordinator | Education Director | Teacher |
| Youth Worker | Education Specialist | Tutor |
| | Educator | Youth Coordinator |
| | Executive Assistant | Youth Coordinator for Youth with Physical Disabilities |
| | Executive Director | Youth Development National Assistant |
| | Financial Assistant | Youth Development Specialist |
| | Fund-raiser | Youth Group Coach |
| | Grant Compliance Monitor | Youth Program Coordinator |
| | Grant writer | Youth Therapist |
| | Manager of Educational Services | Youth Worker |
| | Youth Development Counselor | |
| | Youth Program Director | |
| | Youth Leader | |
| | Youth Development Manager | |
| | Youth Development Professional | |
| | Youth Development Programs Director | |
| | Youth Director | |
| | Youth Minister | |
| | Materials Coordinator | |
| | Out of School Hours Resource Officer | |
| | Out-Of-School Time Operations Assistant | |
| | Out-Of-School Time Specialist | |
| | Parent Trainer | |

| Direct Line Staff | Manager | Direct Line Staff and Manager |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| | President | |
| | Principal | |
| | Program Administrator | |
| | Program Coordinator | |
| | Program Development Officer | |
| | Program Director | |
| | Program Evaluator | |
| | Program Manager | |
| | Program Officer | |
| | Program Quality Specialist | |
| | Program Supervisor | |
| | Project Director | |
| | Project Manager | |
| | Quality Enhancement Director | |
| | Recreation Coordinator | |
| | Recreation Supervisor | |
| | Regional Director | |
| | SACC Director | |
| | School Age Child Care Coordinator | |
| | School Age Child Care Director | |
| | School Age Coordinator | |
| | School Age Lead Technician | |
| | School Age Program Director | |
| | Secretary/Treasurer | |
| | Service Learning-Work Study Coordinator | |
| | Site Coordinator | |
| | Site Director | |
| | Site Manager | |
| | Site Supervisor | |
| | Social Worker | |
| | Statewide School-Age Coordinator | |
| | Superintendent | |
| | Supervisor | |
| | Teacher | |
| | Technology Center Coordinator | |
| | Trainer | |
| | Training Coordinator | |
| | Training Manager | |
| | Tutor | |
| | Youth and Teen Development Director | |
| | Youth Program Manager | |

| Direct Line Staff | Manager | Direct Line Staff and Manager |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Youth Program Specialist | |
| | Youth Programs Coordinator | |
| | Youth Specialist | |