

Recommendations to Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System (BLOCS)

August 2016

Sustaining the Quality Improvement System

The recent *Youth Program Quality Intervention Report* produced for Building Louisville's Out-of-School Time Coordinated System provides detailed descriptions of performance and overall findings for the afterschool quality improvement system (QIS). This memo supplements the report by offering recommendations to support expansion of the quality improvement work through strengthening the professional learning community around quality, scaffolding sites into greater ownership of the process and communicating both past successes and the vision for growth to stakeholders.

Strategic Recommendations

The strategic recommendations are broken into two levels, QIS and Community, where:

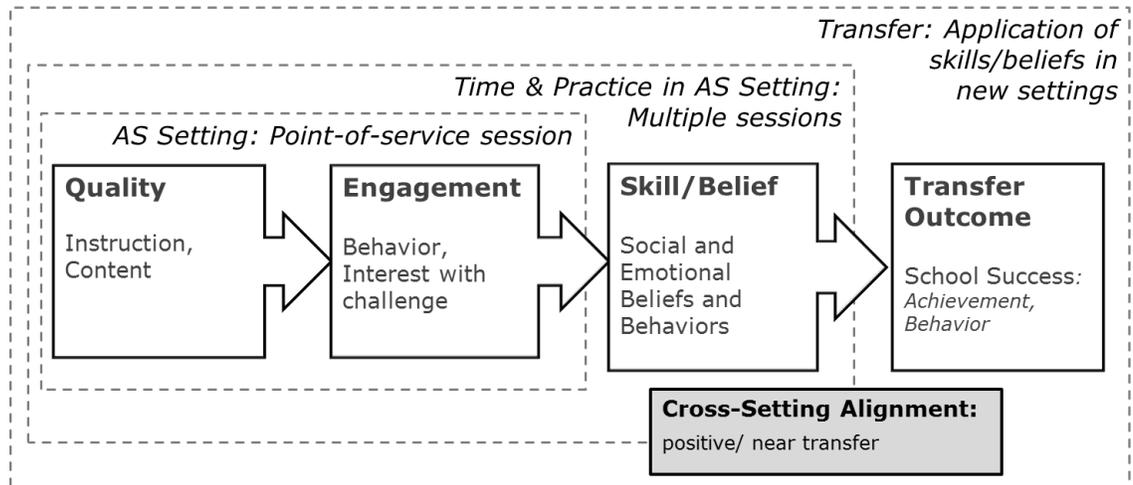
- The QIS recommendations target practical changes around implementation of YPQI, such as data collection and design, professional development and learning communities, site engagement and supports provided.
- The Community recommendations look at the overall picture and the relationship of the QIS to the larger community and system's goals.

QIS

- **Continue to strengthen the professional learning community of participating sites through the following strategies:**
 - Engage in community-wide or cohort-wide goal setting to both keep goals alive throughout the year and allow sites working on similar goals to share strategies and support each other.
 - This can happen at the fall Kickoff meeting, PQA Basics, Planning with Data and other events that bring QIS participants together.
 - Share the YPQI report to drive goal setting around common low-scoring items and/or items selected for improvement plans. For example, items in the Planning, Reflection Leadership scales were frequently low scoring and frequently selected for improvement.
 - Continue to offer Quality Coaching workshops for participating managers. Combine the quality coaching workshops with structured learning community meetings, follow-up coaching meetings or other supports to help hold managers accountable to practicing this skill with staff.
 - Continue to model for sites how to write effective goals and increase supports for sites to implement those goals. Emphasize goal progress check-ins as a coaching support.
 - Continue to offer Youth Work Methods Workshops and set a goal of higher staff participation in the workshops. Access to additional training or coaching was frequently requested by both staff and managers in the open-ended survey responses.
 - Broaden professional development opportunities beyond Youth Work Methods workshops to support improvement in the areas that staff and managers identified as priority, specifically cultural competency, STEM and connections to family and community.
 - Offer interested sites the opportunity to use STEM PQA to measure STEM program quality or the PQA Form B to measure family, school and community connections.
 - Offer the SEL Methods workshops in the spring as planned, and emphasize the connection between the SEL content, specifically Empathy, and cultural competency when recruiting staff to participate.

- **Increase program self-sufficiency by pushing managers to take greater ownership of the quality improvement work.** The success of the project during the pilot year can be connected to the amount of hands-on support provided to sites. Moving forward, it will be important to empower site managers to take on greater responsibilities and leadership roles in order to free up time and resources for the network to support new or struggling sites. In addition to using the professional learning community to grow manager’s skills and confidence, some strategies to support this could include:
 - Engaging program managers to take ownership of the quality work at their sites through:
 - Holding sites accountable to data collection expectations (including youth and parent data);
 - Ensuring all staff are involved in self assessment, program improvement planning, and implementing quality improvements; Creating space for staff to set personal performance goals around quality; and
 - Setting up specific and actionable program improvement plans that include seeking buy-in or supports from administrators.
 - Using the Weikart Center’s menu of core & supplemental services, plus the Leveling Definitions for Coaches and adapt these to the BLOCS network as a way to define services and tiered supports – (e.g., name baseline, more intensive & most intensive based on practice and current capacity).
 - Using the leveling definitions to assign sites to different levels; include site lead experience, level of fidelity to YPQI, etc.
 - Sending at least one staff person to the Coaching for Continuous Improvement training for a more intensive look at the development of coaching supports for the network.
 - Committing to specific areas of focus for coaching each year to avoid overextending supports. For example, while the 2015-2016 intervention provided sites with intensive coaching around writing high quality improvement plans, the current year could focus on improvement plan implementation.
- **Connect Quality & Participation Data to Youth Outcomes.** Utilize a “quality-outcomes” design to evaluate youth skill growth by levels of exposure to high quality OST settings.
 - This requires the following data sources:
 - OST program IDs
 - OST quality ratings for multiple years, as measured by PQA External Assessments
 - Youth IDs (linked to site IDs)
 - Youth OST attendance
 - Youth SAYO data
 - Youth School Day data (grades, behavior suspension/expulsion, grade retention, achievement)
 - PQA and SAYO data would identify high and low quality settings. Then OST student IDs would be used to gather school day data for OST students in the high and low quality settings. Analyses would (i) test for differences in school day outcomes by (ii) students who participated frequently in (iii) high and low quality settings.
 - As preparation for these analyses, we subjected the Louisville PQA data to cluster analyses reported in Appendix C of the 2015-16 report. When the Data Committee is ready to move forward with an evaluation plan, Weikart Center will conduct a final round of cluster analyses to make recommendations for collection of the data listed above.
 - Use the QuEST model (Fig 1 below) to guide analysis of the youth outcome data, to stress that greater youth engagement in content will lead to the ultimate goal of youth being able to transfer the skills learned in OST programs to school day settings.

Figure 1: QuEST model



Community

- **When making the case to expand or sustain the work, name and communicate the strengths of the quality improvement work to date, which include:**
 - High levels of fidelity at scale combined with a commitment to low-stakes accountability. This feature distinguishes the Louisville YPQI from most other quality improvement systems, most of which have either a large scale intervention or high levels of fidelity but not both.
 - High levels of staff and manager satisfaction with the process.
 - High levels of site engagement in the quality improvement process as measured by completed self-assessments and improvement plans, as well as the alignment between improvement plans and low-scoring areas.
 - Coaching supports provided for improvement planning, which is the fulcrum of the quality improvement work.

- **Commit to a strategy for the growth of the QIS that includes re-engaging key community stakeholders.**
 - Use the Weikart Center’s Theory of Action (Fig. 2 below) to communicate existing successes as well as a way to identify gaps.
 - The Theory of Action is a helpful frame for communicating how these different elements interact, with staff engagement driving higher quality programming which drives greater youth engagement
 - Stress the connection between the QIS and other community goals, and articulate ways the quality improvement work can support those goals. For example, the YPQI can support local goals related to both public health and college readiness because of the key role of youth social emotional skill development in both of these areas of focus.
 - Engage stakeholders around the social emotional learning work, which can include inviting key stakeholders to the SEL Methods workshops in the spring, or hosting an additional Push Practice training or other SEL overview for an audience of external stakeholders.
 - Communicate the “quality to outcomes” framework early in the process of collecting youth outcome data to set the stage for success in this project by continuing to engage school district, funders, and other community partners.

• **Figure 2 YPQI Theory of Action**

