

# Wyoming 4-H contributes to assessment of out-of-school-time youth programs in state

## Situation:

Afterschool programs in communities exist through a number of funding models, generate a variety of outcomes, and operate in a multitude of physical and social environments. A clear, comprehensive picture of afterschool efforts does not exist. Concise data pertaining to afterschool could build capacity, ensure sustainability, and create consistency in outcomes. The 2010 Wyoming Afterschool Alliance study surveyed the quality and quantity of private and public afterschool programs in Wyoming. Partnering with the National Institute of Out of School Time (NIOST), a statewide evaluation and assessment system was designed.

Seventeen professionals, including three 4-H educators working in afterschool programming across the state, were trained as quality advisers (QA) to use the assessment tool and then were paired with programs to perform initial assessments. Representatives of programs across the state,

including two having direct association with 4-H, also applied to be pilot programs for the project. Data from initial assessments will be used to develop plans to improve programs.

Baseline data on the quality and effectiveness of 39 afterschool programs was collected via trained QA utilizing the assessment of program practices tool (APT). Data focused on assessing eight or nine, depending upon the number of school districts involved, afterschool youth outcomes, including behavior in the program/classroom, initiative, engagement in learning, relations with adults, relations with peers, problem solving, communication skills, homework, and academic performance (only teachers are included). NIOST compiled and analyzed data for specific recommendations to target areas for improvement. The Wyoming Afterschool Alliance prepared a report of the assessment and overview of Wyoming programs and is posted on its website at [wyafterschoolalliance.org](http://wyafterschoolalliance.org).



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## Impacts:

Impacts are far-reaching throughout all out-of-school-time youth development programs in Wyoming. A comprehensive picture of the state of out-of-school-time programs for Wyoming now exists showing the needs, challenges, and positive effects associated with out-of-school programs. Providers and communities are armed with data sets to share with stakeholders and funders and can use the data to develop improvement strategies for long-term, positive youth development.

Out-of-school programs throughout Wyoming can make continuous improvement in programs relating to afterschool youth outcomes by using the APT and the survey of afterschool youth outcomes tools provided by NIOST. Pairing trained QA with pilot afterschool programs should lead to collaborative relationships enabling programs to become more cohesive, better able to address needs, and enhance positive youth development outcomes across the state.

Specific to 4-H, participating educators identified the need for a similar

assessment partnership within the statewide 4-H program. Educators on the evaluations issue team have begun planning a partnership to create a similar evaluation system to address youth outcomes related to the eight essential elements of positive youth development embraced by the 4-H program:

- A positive relationship with a caring adult,
- An inclusive environment,
- A safe emotional and physical environment,

enhance positive youth development outcomes across the state

- Opportunity for mastery,
- Engagement in learning,
- Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future,
- Opportunity for self-determination, and
- Opportunity to value and practice service to others.

Educators hope the creation of evaluation tools and a training system will lead to 4-H volunteers using the tools to improve club function and positive youth development outcomes as related to the eight essential elements.