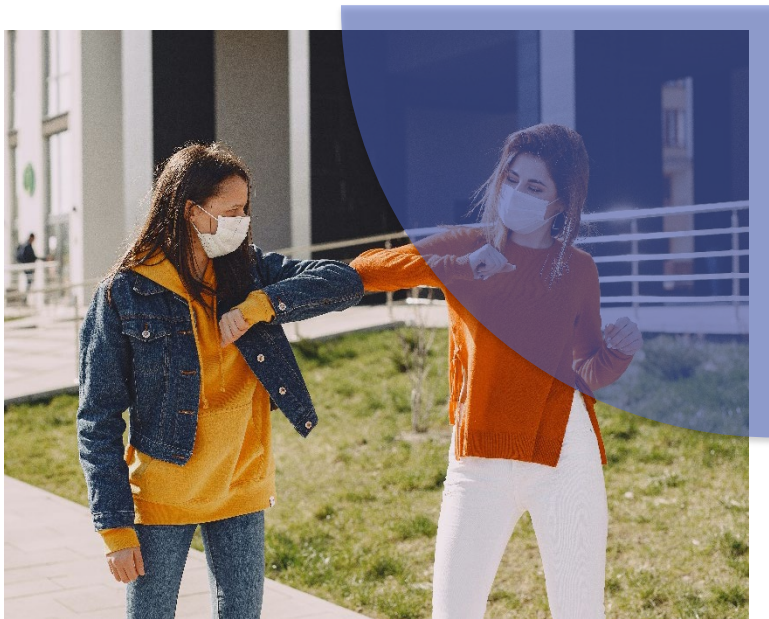


SELF-ASSESSMENT MANUAL



Guidance for Out-of-School Time Learning at a Distance



AUGUST 2020

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Available for download at:

www.miafterschool.org/quality-practices and www.qturngroup.com/ourtools/GOLD/

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Introduction

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and crisis, school and afterschool systems, like all other aspects of our lives, have been dramatically impacted. Young people and their families or other caregivers are, for the foreseeable future, spending the majority of their time in “out-of-school” time (OST) settings. “Learning at a Distance” has become the new normal for students who are engaging in virtual and non-virtual school and OST/summer programs in the absence of the “traditional” scenario.

There are critical needs both in the immediate crisis response and the structures required to transition to longer-term models and respond to the ramifications for our students over time. Many examples of responsive high-quality programming are happening as programs strive to continue providing positive relationships and relevant opportunities for students and their caregivers. Even though it feels like navigating uncharted waters, OST programs will continue to play a vital role in helping communities reopen and redesign safe, supportive experiences and relationships for young people.

The purpose of the resources described here is to provide (a) a quality lens through which to evaluate promising practices for learning at a distance and (b) a self-assessment tool for getting specific about what and where supports are needed.

As an aligned knowledge support, external resources elaborating on each standard have been compiled as a Database of Online Resources. These resources provide additional information and offer insight and best practice for educators participating in the design and implementation of distance learning practices.

Guidance for Out-of-School Time Learning at a Distance (GOLD) is a set of program standards and self-assessment questions for OST program managers and staff who are responsible for delivering OST services to young people in their new individual learning environments. The standards described in the GOLD apply to a diverse range of program delivery models, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and other community-based programs (e.g., school-age childcare, YMCA, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs). Objectives for the GOLD include:

- Help program managers and staff adjust their mental models for “point of service (POS) quality” located in the new individual learning environment;
- Disseminate promising practices for OST learning at a distance that harmonize with other field-level standards and competencies;
- Support OST leaders to assess program readiness and provide responsive training and technical assistance;
- Guide funders and intermediaries toward identification of systems-level supports for achieving high POS quality in the individual learning environment.

The GOLD standards include 4 domains, 10 standards, and 27 indicators. The self-assessment rubric requires approximately 1.5 hours to complete. Figure 1 shows four domains of optimal OST supports for young people’s development during circumstances of learning at a distance; that is, the OST practices that help produce optimal POS quality in the individual learning environment. These domains represent a whole-child approach to OST learning at a distance: By explicitly engaging family or caregiver strengths, assuring flexible supports, and sharing accurate information about the future (e.g., plans for school and OST in the coming months), the GOLD was specifically designed to address both the young person’s socio-emotional wellness and the conditions of academic learning. Although the content of the four domains is still evolving, we offer the following conceptual definitions:

I. Family- and Caregiver-Centered Engagement: Family- and caregiver-centered engagement is about shaping OST services to fit the needs, resources, and routines of young people and their family or other caregivers. During a crisis like COVID-19, many young people and caregivers experience hardship and require a primary focus on basic needs. Because these hardships fall disproportionately on communities that are already most at risk, an equity focus may require novel responses and new areas of emphasis.

II. Individual Learning Environment: The individual learning environment includes the resources, routines, and participants where the individual student is learning. For each individual student, non-virtual and virtual learning supports must be integrated as they are received from both the school day and OST programs – wherever the student is at. Successful connections to caregivers and students require reliable exchange of information and planning. Supporting each individual’s successful connectivity (e.g., access, tech, apps) may become part of the OST service.

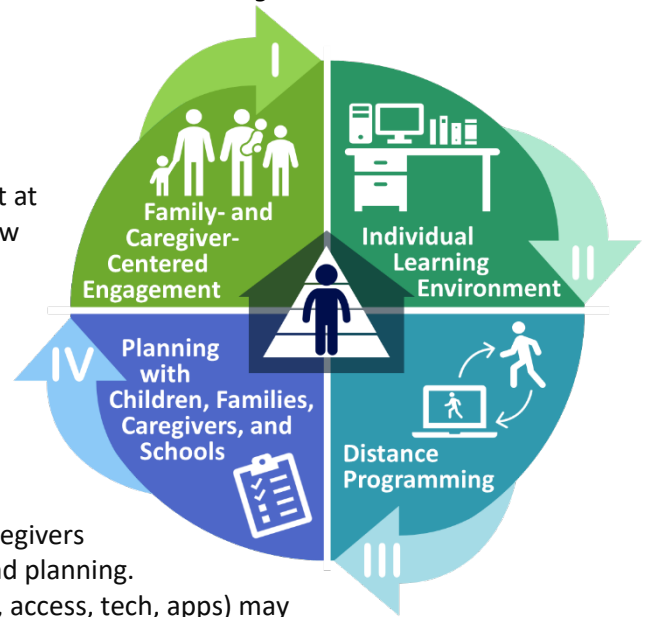
III. Distance Programming: High-quality distance programming blends virtual and material resources and methods to meet developmental needs and engage children, youth, and caregivers. Programs that focus on socio-emotional learning (SEL) skills will need to connect with young people via video or phone on a regular basis to achieve relational depth. The transition to a new type of school will be a challenge for both young people and their caregivers. OST programs may want to increase their focus on supporting school day learning and guiding caregivers to school day supports.

IV. Planning with Children, Families, Caregivers, and Schools: School districts are planning for resumption of in-person school programs. Changes to school day structure required to achieve social distancing (e.g., reduced cohorts, staggered schedules, temperature checks) or renewed shutdown (e.g., return to blended learning) will require integration between schools and OST services (e.g., afterschool, childcare, teen centers) around schedules, guidance to families and caregivers, maintenance of personally protective equipment, and check-ins with children.

The term *caregiver* is used throughout the GOLD in order to focus on the adults with whom the child is spending time. This can be a bit confusing because the term caregiver can also mean *custodial parent*, and the child may be spending time with one caregiver (e.g., neighbor) while another caregiver (i.e., custodial parent) works at a job. It is the adult or adults (i.e., caregivers) available to help children manage their individual learning environments, arrange connectivity, etc. that are the primary focus of the GOLD. We sometimes use the terms family and caregiver together where addressing children’s basic needs or referring to the custodial role and the familial supports that parents or other custodial caregivers provide.

The term *standard* describes broad types of child experience that should be standard for all children in afterschool services. Although developed from conversations with expert practitioners in Michigan, these ten standards reflect broad consensus in the fields of developmental science and policy evaluation.

Figure 1. Quality Wheel for Afterschool Learning at a Distance



Protocol for Self-Assessment

Prepare before starting the self-assessment rubric:



Have access to policy manuals, communication with parents/families, program and grantee calendars, and other official documentation or shared folders.



Set aside approximately 1.5 hours to go through the tool. We suggest going through the whole tool in one sitting. However, if that is not possible, we suggest completing one domain at a time.



The GOLD can be completed by program managers alone or with their staff.

Once you are ready to begin the self-assessment rubric, approach each indicator by following these four steps:

Step 1: Compare practices. Read through the indicator, identify each aspect of best practice described, and compare with local practices. Then, describe the local practices that align with the practices described in the indicator. *If you are having trouble picturing the indicator in action, consult the Promising Practice section (starting on page 9 of this manual).*

Step 2: Identify Written Policy. Locate and document exactly where the policies, tools and resources are that your site uses to guide practice and achieve high fidelity of this indicator. If someone new stepped into your role, could they execute the indicator with success based on what is written down?

- Are the practices defined by the indicator documented accurately?
- Are parts of the indicator located in different sources?

Step 3: Rate fidelity.

- If actual practices align with the indicator and are implemented for most children and families, select **Yes, for all children and families** (high fidelity).
- If the practice is definitely implemented sometimes but not consistently, or not well enough to be effective, or not to all of the children/families/caregivers who need it, select **Yes, for some children and families** (moderate fidelity).
- If the indicator is not currently in practice, or not a desired practice in this setting, **select No, not usually** (un-implementation).

Step 4: Rate Capacity and Technical Assistance. Does the site team have the internal capacity to implement the practice? Is technical assistance required? *These will only be shared in aggregate to inform future professional development and support.*

After you have completed the self-assessment:

1. Set goals for improvement.
 - Determine which indicators you want to focus on, and set action steps for improving practice or updating policy.

Figure 2. Diagram of Tool Instruction

| | |
|--|--|
| 1 Name/identify the local practice example(s) that align to this indicator: <input type="text"/> | What barriers are keeping you from implementing these practices? <input type="text"/> |
| 3 Is the practice currently being implemented with high fidelity ? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, for all children and families <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, for some children and families <input type="checkbox"/> No, not usually | 4 Does your team require training or technical assistance about how to implement this practice at high fidelity? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Standards and Indicators

I. Family- and Caregiver-Centered Engagement

Standard 1: Assess Needs and Advocate for Children, Families, and Caregivers

- 1. Shared Expectations.** Program staff communicate benefits of program participation to parents and primary caregivers and help co-create shared expectations for each child's engagement.
- 2. Information and Advocacy.** Program staff provide information and advocacy to support caregivers trying to meet basic needs (e.g., food, transit, housing, health, mental well-being) and connect with school (e.g., technology).
- 3. Hygiene and PPE.** Program staff provide critical health knowledge (e.g., how viruses spread, how to safely get physical activity) and share federal and local guidance for hygiene and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Standard 2: Use Family-Centered Approaches

- 4. Trauma Informed.** Program staff have training to understand the adverse experiences of children, caregivers, and communities (e.g., trauma informed) and design programming to optimize child and family or caregiver engagement.
- 5. Strengths-Based.** Program staff use a strengths-based and nonjudgmental (e.g., cultural agility) approach when virtually entering children's individual learning environments.
- 6. Equity Data.** Program staff strive to use objective data and information to address inequitable access and/or outcomes (e.g., access to technology, school performance, housing status).

II. Individual Learning Environment

Standard 3: Integrate with Family and Caregiver Resources, Routines, and Priorities

- 7. Multiple Connections.** Program staff offer multiple connections with children and caregivers using a variety of methods (e.g., "Afterschool Inbox," virtual programming), technologies (e.g., phone, internet video apps, email/text, mail), times, and languages.
- 8. Flexible Calendar.** Program staff use a flexible calendar of programming (e.g., virtual sessions, check-in calls, drop off packets) that balances the availability of children and caregivers with the capacities of program staff at specific sites.

Standard 4: Connect and Equip Workspace

- 9. Updated Information.** Program staff maintain updated contact information and communication preferences for each student and caregiver, including language, technology, and best times for program contact with children and/or caregivers.
- 10. Child-Centered Workspace.** Program staff coach children and caregivers to set up a workspace that is designed to support the student's learning needs and preferences (e.g., work surface, storage, lighting, sound, privacy).
- 11. Educational Supplies.** Program staff equip students with tools for learning, if they are not available in the individual's learning environment (e.g., markers, storage, electronic tablets).

Standard 5: Support Access to/through Technology

12. Virtual Access. Program staff provide tech/app recommendations and support caregivers' access to internet, tech, and apps, along with limited helpdesk support for program-selected tech/apps.

13. Online Safety and Supervision. Program staff provide cyber-safety training and have appropriate knowledge to assure children's and caregivers' safety and supervision when interacting online with program staff.

III. Distance Programming

Standard 6: Provide Safe Space and Responsive Practices

14. Social and Emotional Check-In. Program staff build individual relationships through regular check-ins with child (weekly) and caregiver (at entry and as necessary) to monitor well-being and reinforce the use of socio-emotional skills.

15. Modeling SEL Skills. Program staff intentionally model and promote children's use of socio-emotional skills (e.g., emotion management, teamwork, initiative, problem solving, empathy, responsibility) during distance programming.

16. Staff Wellness. Staff well-being practices (e.g., effective program design, multiple staff per offering, opportunities to debrief programming, feedback loops) are a foundation for high-quality instruction and student socio-emotional skill building.

Standard 7: Blend Learning

17. Content Options. Program staff include options for children to receive content that is (a) both non-virtual (e.g., packets) and virtual (e.g., online), (b) both guided and open-ended, and (c) both individual- and group-oriented.

18. School Day Alignment. Where possible, program staff intentionally emphasize alignment (e.g., content, time of day, workload, technology) with school day requirements for the enrolled child and other students in the individual's learning environment.

19. Opportunities for Fun. Program staff incorporate opportunities for fun (e.g., family SEL games, outdoor activities) and informal social interaction (e.g., supervised Zoom hangouts).

Standard 8: Support School Success

20. Connect Families and Caregivers with K-12 Services. Program staff support the family's or other caregiver's capacity to meet school day requirements and connect with K-12 services.

21. Instructional Partnership. Where possible, program staff communicate regularly with school day staff regarding each student's academic and SEL progress, individual education plan (IEP) status, or referral to services under multi-tiered systems of support.

22. Collaborative Leadership. Program leaders join school district planning sessions.

IV. Planning with Children, Families, Caregivers, and Schools

Standard 9: Provide Plans and Procedures for In-Person Out-of-School Time Services

23. Integrative Program Plans. Program staff develop a plan for delivery of in-person services that is (a) co-created with youth and caregivers; (b) integrated, to the extent possible, with school district schedules, policies, and protocols; and (c) includes, for example, temperature checks, small learning cohorts, staggered use of classrooms, and sanitizing surfaces.

24. Social Distancing and PPE Guidelines. Program staff are educated on federal and local social distancing guidelines (e.g., YMCA and CDC), and each site has posted routines and requirements for hygiene and use of PPE during the return to school and afterschool environments.

25. Acquire and Maintain Supplies. Program staff maintain a stock of cleaning materials and PPE, based on federal and local guidelines, for return to in-person services.

Standard 10: Plan Supports for Re-Entry to Schooling

26. Service Planning Partnership. Program staff are informed of, and collaborate with, local districts' planning for in-person schooling and the daily/weekly transitions between individual learning environments, school buildings, and afterschool programs.

27. Transitional Support. Program staff provide supports for students' preparation for, and socio-emotional well-being during, the transition back to in-person schooling and/or continued learning-at-a-distance in fall 2020.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How long will it take me to complete the self-assessment rubric?

Experience from the review process suggests that it will take approximately 1.5 hours to complete. The range of time required to complete the tool is dependent on the Site Manager's familiarity with site and grantee policies and procedures as well as the amount of detail provided in the responses. We suggest setting aside a 1.5-hour block to work through the entire assessment, without interruption. When conducted with a site staff team, more time may be required to achieve consensus scoring.

What if we have a policy that relates to one of the indicators but is not being implemented as it is written?

If a practice is written policy but not being implemented, the Site Manager should review with their team the policy as it is written and consider potential revisions to the practice. If the Site Manager and their team do not currently have the capacity to implement the written policy, they should discuss and document the resources necessary to successfully implement the policy.

What if the indicator describes practices we implement successfully, but these practices are not documented in a Policy Manual, Handbook, or other source?

Time to preserve that institutional knowledge! Formalize successful practices by creating written procedures for how and when to implement them. Remember, policy manuals and staff handbooks are not the only places where things get written down. A range of different sources can be used for documentation (e.g., curriculum activity plans, calendars, shared drives) if they are saved and accessible to staff.

If we need technical assistance to implement an indicator and/or update our policies to reflect it, what do I do and who do I reach out to?

Connect with your network leadership and they will be able to provide guidance and technical assistance. They may have resources to quickly help enact change, or they may suggest speaking with a consultant or other Project Manager to help think about the next steps.

What happens after I complete the self-assessment rubric?

The Site Manager should prioritize areas for improvement and set goals for their practice going forward. Perhaps there is an area that requires substantial effort and concentration, so the team will focus efforts there. Or, perhaps there are a few small tweaks that can be made simultaneously. Either way, Site Managers should use the results of the self-assessment rubric to organize and prioritize their own improvement plans.

Promising Practices from Michigan OST Programs

This section provides promising practices from experienced Site Managers for each GOLD indicator. These practices were drawn from interviews, and each practice represents a single description from a single Site Manager. Each promising practice is based on a Site Manager's verbal or written description of the policy and/or practice, from their Grantee, that exemplifies the GOLD indicator.

I. Family- and Caregiver-Centered Engagement

Standard 1: Assess Needs and Advocate for Children, Families, and Caregivers

1. Shared Expectations. Program staff communicate benefits of program participation to families and caregivers and help co-create shared expectations for each child's engagement.

The primary caregiver (e.g., mother) of each enrolled child completes a telephone survey to update contact information and receive permissions to engage with children digitally or via phone. They are also asked about the best means of contact, preferred digital platforms, comfort level receiving packages, preferred delivery options, child and personal SEL needs, and other impacts of learning at a distance and other Covid-19 pandemic conditions.

Program leaders reach out to caregivers with resources from the school districts, provide a recommendation list from OST program staff, and encourage children/caregivers to participate in virtual OST program offerings. Several different platforms (e.g., Remind, Google Classroom, and packets with multiple materials) are used to engage children and caregivers, plan, and set expectations for how children will participate.

Staff distribute to children and caregivers (a) boxes that include all materials needed for program activities and (b) "unboxing videos" that create interest and clarify how the boxed programming works. When caregivers have something in their hands that they can touch and see, it helps them understand the value of the OST program. The materials help caregivers set shared expectations. With the materials in front of them, caregivers and children are more likely to look at and respond to aligned online tools (e.g., Remind, Google Classroom, Class Dojo, the school website).

2. Information and Advocacy. Program staff provide information and advocacy to support families or other caregivers trying to meet basic needs (e.g., food, transit, housing, health, mental well-being) and connect with school (e.g., technology).

The primary caregiver survey includes questions about "other" needs that may be pressing for their individual learning environment. Caregivers are sent child self-care activities and materials (e.g., reflective journaling, mindfulness practices, positive affirmations). Caregivers are provided with the behavior charts used in the program that the children enjoy and are familiar with.

Given that school districts responded well to families' and children's basic needs, the OST program role is to coordinate with district efforts around basic needs so that parents are not overloaded with redundant calls and messages (e.g., calls and messages from school district and OST staff trying to assess communication preferences, inform about programming, etc.).

The OST program is connected to the school district and aware of all the district resources so that coordinators can relay relevant information (e.g., plans for mental health services).

3. Hygiene and PPE. Program staff provide critical health knowledge (e.g., how viruses spread, how to safely get physical activity) and share federal and local guidance for hygiene and personal protective equipment (PPE).

When delivering materials to caregivers, program staff engage children about how they are feeling and what to expect as they enter the program. Staff always intentionally model social distancing and the use of PPE for children and caregivers.

When staff get questions about the virus from students, they respect the role of the parent to teach their child but also talk about the things that are required. For example, students are required to do handwashing to stop the spreading of germs. Staff also give feedback to caregivers and connect caregivers with information on how to talk about the virus with children. This conversation provides an opportunity for education and connection with caregivers and children.

Staff are trained to use CDC tips for talking with children include:

- Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it.
- Reassure children that they are safe.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk.
- Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online.
- Provide information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.
- Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.
- If school is open, discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff.

Adapted from the online resource: CDC Guidelines: Talking to Children about COVID-19

Standard 2: Use Family-Centered Approaches

4. Trauma Informed. Program staff have training to understand the adverse experiences of children, caregivers, and communities (e.g., trauma informed) and design programming to optimize child and caregiver engagement.

Site Coordinators and support staff participate in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training and Darkness to Light's, Stewards of Children®, child sexual abuse prevention training. Many staff also watch movies, such as Paper Tigers, as a professional development experience during the shutdown.

The program has dedicated SEL specialists who work with sites to implement SEL curriculum and provide additional support and coaching. Staff are trained at the Weikart Center's SEL workshops.

Staff do check-ins with caregivers to see if there are resources within the community that they need and if they have access to those resources. When new CDC recommendations or school plans come out, staff also check-in to see if there is any hesitation or concern from caregivers. With this information, staff can follow-up with school partners to inform them about the reactions of the parents and how to frame programming to engage caregivers' immediate needs.

Program staff complete three foundational trainings: Using SEL to Examine and Address Biases, Ableism 101, and the Community Resiliency Model®.

5. Strengths-Based. Program staff use a strengths-based and nonjudgmental (e.g., cultural agility) approach when virtually entering children’s individual learning environments.

The program’s hiring process looks for staff who understand how to be strengths-based. Strengths-based organizational culture work is done during weekly group meetings to explore how staff are experiencing the pandemic, how children need to be supported, and how to create a safe, comforting space. This work is also about setting realistic expectations because staff are passionate; for example, affirming that staff are providing a valuable service by checking in with caregivers and children, even if this service cannot be the cure all.

Video meetings are routine; and, when uncomfortable events are observed, staff come together to reflect on how to address, prevent, and learn from challenges.

Program staff adapt practices they have been trained on to fit the new situation, but that does not mean that they always succeed on the first try. In the new situation, staff must spend more time talking about equity, about cultural agility. There is no other option than trying to take what was learned from previous trainings and modify it so that it applies to the new situation.

6. Equity Data. Program staff strive to collect and use objective data and information to address inequitable access and/or outcomes (e.g., access to technology, school performance, housing status).

Equitable access is addressed differently in each district served by the OST program. The districts are using 1-1 programming and have been able to get devices out to every student who wants one. The district and program collaborate to make sure that caregivers who do not have internet access get it, including purchasing hotspots. Information from district surveys (e.g., do children have scissors?) is used to determine what goes into the supply packs for homeless students, who are often living in motels.

The program surveys caregivers and supplies caregivers and children who need it with technology, refer caregivers to cheaper internet service, and put Wi-Fi in parks so that caregivers can access internet outdoors to get set up.

Staff estimate how long it takes to complete activities, on the computer and off, to meet the required 2.5 hours per day of programming time. Staff check back with each child to see how the activities went and a completed (or attempted) activity is assumed to be the originally estimated amount of time.

II. Individual Learning Environment

Standard 3: Integrate with Family and Caregiver Resources, Routines, and Priorities

7. Multiple Connections. Program staff offer multiple connections with children and caregivers using a variety of methods (e.g., “Afterschool Inbox,” virtual programming), technologies (e.g., phone, internet video apps, email/text, mail), times, and languages.

The OST program uses Seesaw to provide virtual programming and supplements this with activity packets delivered to students without internet access. Follow up phone calls and email/texts ensure the activities are understood and completed.

Programs provide caregivers and children with staff check-ins, remote learning, and virtual programming. Staff also try to engage caregivers and children in the language that they are most comfortable with when using text, Zoom, etc.

Program design provides:

- Online activities
- Communication via mail and postcards
- Home delivery of materials
- Daily live meets on video/phone
- Limited in-person, socially-distanced activities.

8. Flexible Calendar. Program staff use a flexible calendar of programming (e.g., virtual sessions, check-in calls, drop off packets) that balances the availability of children and caregivers with the capacities of program staff at specific sites.

The program’s virtual camps for secondary students are self-paced, non-virtual club activity kits, dropped off at homes. “Office Hours” and club connections are delivered via videoconferencing. Parent meetings are held via Zoom calls.

Program staff push back video call times an hour because children are sleeping in. We also let children know that if they need anything to contact program staff because we are family too, and that is how important they are. Site Managers should model that. If children’s faces are not seen during Zoom meetings, check in with them. If children want to talk in the middle of the day, get on a call or Zoom with them. Things are all in limbo, so program staff should be consistent.

Program staff adapt to staff’s and caregivers’ schedules because children often have siblings. Caregivers sometimes must pick and choose who is going to use the computer because programming for different children can sometimes be scheduled at the same time. We have individual learning environments where older students must prioritize credit recovery, which means that younger students cannot always participate in the virtual OST program. Staff also have their own children from elementary to high school. In response:

- Program times are staggered, with elementary earlier. Secondary students are sleeping in, so adolescent programming is offered later.
- Programming is asynchronous (e.g., programming is not all live, and there are activities that children can do on their own).
- Staff check in with caregivers weekly to learn what they want and talk about how to improve responsiveness to kids who are tired of sitting at computers. Parents are tired too.

Standard 4: Connect and Equip Workspace

9. Updated Information. Program staff maintain updated contact information and communication preferences for each student and caregiver, including language, technology, and best times for program contact with children and/or caregivers.

Program staff use Cityspan as an attendance tracker, which also houses contact information for each participant.

Licensing binders are kept up-to-date at each site. Caregivers are asked to update changes.

Program staff have strong relationships with the school principal. Program staff have access to school contact information, are on all school email chains, and can reach out to the secretary to check if a child's address or phone number has changed or if a child is temporarily staying at a different address.

10. Child-Centered Workspace. Program staff coach children and caregivers to set up a workspace that is designed to support the student's learning needs and preferences (e.g., work surface, storage, lighting, sound, privacy).

Staff are developing programming for caregivers that focuses on setting up an individual learning environment (e.g., expectations, routines, workspaces, supplies). The objective is to empower caregivers to be successful with children's learning at a distance.

During virtual meetings and phone calls with students, staff talk with students about the importance of setting up a space that is conducive to learning and makes them feel safe in mind and body.

The program sends home tips for setting up good learning environments for home learning (e.g., removing distractions, having comfortable seating, making sure that all materials needed are ready and available).

Program sites use a behavioral program called Start Books where the kids take ownership of activities delivered in a kit. The first box includes a parent packet for self-care and a child behavior chart for parent use at home.

11. Educational Supplies. Program staff equip children with tools for learning, if they are not available in the individual's learning environment (e.g., markers, storage, electronic tablets).

Activity boxes have all necessary materials for activities, often including eco-literacy content that requires children to be outside. All activity content is linked to virtual platforms that provide "unboxing" videos that generate a lot of interest. How to get those materials in front of people, on a platform that they are going to look at and respond to, is a constant challenge.

The district has made efforts to make sure that all students have devices at home to use for distance learning. The OST program purchases and packages supplies for the activities that have been put online, posts times for pick up, and makes home deliveries for caregivers that need it.

All sites send home supplies that are needed for any activity we ask students to complete (e.g., pencils, sharpeners, papers, markers, scissors, glue).

Standard 5: Support Access to/through Technology

12. Virtual Access. Program staff provide tech/app recommendations and support caregivers' access to internet, tech, and apps, along with limited helpdesk support for program-selected tech/apps.

Site coordinators created a "How to Use Google Classroom" for parents. The OST program has taken charge of the school district's efforts to obtain low-cost high-speed internet for caregivers with students in the district who do not have reliable access.

Program staff ask questions during phone calls with caregivers to ensure that they are able to access and use any apps that the school district or OST program is using, and technical assistance is given if there are issues with access.

13. Online Safety and Supervision. Program staff provide cyber-safety training and have appropriate knowledge to assure children's and caregivers' safety and supervision when interacting online with program staff.

Program staff take steps to make sure that all video meetings are as secure as possible and also that there is a policy in place to make sure there are two adults online with the students at all times.

When OST program A offers virtual club offerings that are joined by children enrolled at OST program B, staff members from program B must also join the club with their children so that students are never "alone" with adults they don't know.

The program created a Youth Safety Protocol that includes instructions to (1) secure all virtual instructional sessions with a password, (2) do not publicize the session, and (3) ensure all online programming links are only provided for intended participants and their parents or guardians.

Whenever possible, turn off private chat box options, screen sharing, whiteboards, file transfer features, and other features that allow participants to communicate in an unmonitored fashion (e.g., to prevent participants from sending pictures or other content over the in-meeting chat feature).

At least one adult should help monitor the chat box, Q&A, body language, and emotions of participants as well as what is going on in the background of the participants.

Deactivate screen sharing for all participants when the feature is not being used for an activity to prevent unauthorized interruptions.

Review these additional government resources to help keep youth safe online: [MSU - Ext Roadmap to a Virtual Program](#), [Protecting Kids Online](#), [Keeping Children Safe Online](#), and [Prevent Cyberbullying](#)

III. Distance Programming

Standard 6: Provide Safe Space and Responsive Practices

14. Socio-emotional Check-Ins. Program staff build individual relationships through regular check-ins with child (weekly) and caregiver (at entry and as necessary) to monitor well-being and reinforce the use of socio-emotional skills (SEL).

OST children are meeting twice weekly with a small group and weekly one-on-one with a mentor. Staff and mentors are trained on building SEL skills and use an SEL framework to check in and guide conversations with children and caregivers.

Program staff openly encourage the feeling that the children “belong” at the program and that the program is something in their life that is their own. We want it to look cool and be fun too. These two emphases – belonging and fun – are also very positive on staff morale in these difficult circumstances.

Program partners with Wings for Kids, which is a language and approach to help kids identify their SEL skills. Small group sessions start with “check-ins” using a Wings approach. “What emotional color are you today and why? What is the emotional temperature of the room?” At the end of the session, students do “check-outs” to see if the group ends with the same emotional tone. Staff track if someone is “red” coming in and frustrated going out so that they can do real-time follow-up with the caregiver.

15. Modeling Skills. Program staff explicitly and intentionally model and promote children’s use of socio-emotional skills (e.g., emotion management, teamwork, initiative, problem solving, empathy, responsibility) during distance programming.

SEL activities are intentionally put into each of our activity boxes. Two staff attend each virtual meeting to model skills while facilitating activities and conversations. Especially in the middle school groups, we model more delicate topics, like mental health. One of our summer programming box themes is Mother Nurture, which is focused on modeling SEL skills through social and environmental activism.

Staff talk with children about how we are all dealing with the feelings and emotions that we have right now, followed by lessons that revolve around healthy coping strategies.

Staff do a warm-up where staff and children pick a planet that has a color and emotion words. We say what planet we are and why. It is good for children because they can hear that even staff have hard days and are frustrated by not being able to socialize like we normally would or are sad because we also miss our friends.

16. Staff Wellness. Staff well-being practices (e.g., effective program design, multiple staff per offering, opportunities to debrief programming, feedback loops) are the foundation for high-quality instruction and student socio-emotional skill building.

The program culture is generally forward thinking and embraces staff well-being (we are a Holocracy management structure). During the shutdown, the team does weekly virtual check-ins and offers open office hours twice a week. Program staff embrace and develop collaboration skills pretty quickly and find ways to respond to the pandemic that are engaging for staff, don't require internet access, and maintain involvement in the decision-making process.

The Director of Learning does weekly individual check-ins with staff and reports to the Executive Director. The full group meets monthly. During the individual sessions, we do a check-in and check-out (i.e., Glowing and Growing) that helps facilitate the conversations but also models the behavior for working with the students. Glowing is what is exciting, and growing means an area of struggle where professional development is needed, or the item needs to be highlighted in a full group meeting. The team is very clear on decisions (e.g., about how to move forward, partnerships, or what fall is going to look like), so those are collaborative decisions. Staff come together to decide what makes sense, what is feasible, and what staff are hearing in their check-ins with children's caregivers and in their own personal families. It gives the staff a voice and ownership of what is happening.

Staff have paid time off, and feel supported to use it, within reason, when they need a break. Staff are working so hard, and this allows them to unplug and take time out. Site Managers also try to avoid micromanaging staff. Staff know the hours they need to do check-ins and group meetings and, otherwise, things can be flexible.

Going virtual was a turnoff to the program's outdoor and ecological focus. Staff decided socially distanced in-person meetings at the sites would be a good way for staff teams to connect. This is good for staff morale and eliminates some of the challenges of working remotely.

Standard 7: Blend Learning

17. Content Options. Program staff include options for children to receive content that is (a) both non-virtual (e.g., packets) and virtual (e.g., online), (b) both guided and open-ended, and (c) both individual- and group-oriented.

The program offers a subscription box style delivery, in person pick up, staff delivered, or through the mail. Each box has about \$30 of materials and 20 hours of activities. Most are self-directed, screen free, ecology based, and get kids outside. Virtual daily check-ins are offered at many sites. There is a dedicated Out-of-School-Time Facebook page, web page, and YouTube page. Digital content is linked to the physical materials delivered in the boxes and, in some cases, provided through a Google Classroom group.

Every day, program staff video-meet with children and update the Google Classroom so activities can be repeated with the caregiver or at a better time. The program also offers virtual field trips (e.g., to different museums) that caregivers/children can access and do the activities whenever. The material bags also have a ton of printed-out activities.

Staff choose materials that most students are likely to have at home. For example, when planning for papier-mâché, it can be made from flour and water, or glue and water, and newspaper or any kind of paper. We are always thinking of alternatives so that, hopefully, if they do not have the one, they will have the other. Staff do not want to suggest an activity that only one or two students can do.

18. School Day Alignment. Where possible, program staff intentionally emphasize alignment (e.g., content, time of day, workload, technology) with school day requirements for the enrolled child and other students in the individual learning environment.

Parents and students say they were overwhelmed and maxed out on screen time, so in addition to virtual homework help, the OST program design emphasizes outdoor screen-free activities and time for virtual social connection and hanging out. Program delivery times (in person and digital) are informed by parent and student input.

Each OST site's Google Classroom pages are synched with the school's Google Classroom pages, so there is never an overlap of a virtual club with a school-based event or meeting.

Program staff create a safe space for caregivers to talk about their relationships with the school districts. If a caregiver is struggling, program staff advocate on behalf of the caregivers. Then, as program leaders, they advocate for families or other caregivers at the state level. This includes cultural agility training for school day staff, providing equitable opportunities for all students and ensuring that schools are held accountable in their hiring process.

Online Resource: [*Resource for Staff Selection; Advocate for Families - 482 forward*](#)

The OST program design is integrated with school sites through formal partnerships with specific schools that have a need for literacy-focused program. The program gets teacher referrals based on assessments of children's need for literacy mentoring, and OST program staff are invited to grade-level meetings, request assessment scores, do our own assessments, and have the permission to transport children. Staff are primarily current school day teachers or others who have their certification.

19. Opportunities for Fun. Program staff incorporate opportunities for fun (e.g., family SEL games, outdoor activities) and informal social interaction (e.g., supervised Zoom hangouts).

The program design includes daily informal hangout times with the students to talk, share hobbies, play games using online game formats (e.g., Kahoot, Jackbox, or creating some things on our own), and play trivia via physical cards.

The program design includes supervised video hangouts, mini-games/engagement opportunities at delivery times, emphasis on fun creative outdoor activities with a lot of physical materials to accompany them. The program emphasizes hands-on tactile experiences despite learning at a distance.

The beginning and end of each program session includes peer social time to connect with friends in an informal way. Student voice drove the decision to include supervised informal time, and the students are now reaching out to each other to join so they can "hang out," which drives attendance in a positive way.

In the school, there was a group that really wanted a D&D game club, but not enough students wanted to do that. Now, staff and students have copied and shared D&D materials to generate interest, and there are enough students. They play on Fridays, on one of our video channels, and they play for hours.

Standard 8. Support School Success

20. Connect Families and Caregivers with K-12 Services. Program staff support family's or other caregiver's capacity to meet school day requirements and connect with K-12 services.

The OST program's secondary sites collaborate with schools in credit recovery, supporting students to complete assigned work and meet deadlines.

Parents are asked to share IEP, assessments, report cards, or other data from schools, so we can help understand children's needs and then provide them resources for where they need assistance. Fall planning is reframing how we reach caregivers, help them to advocate in a more high-quality way, and provide guidance on building a good routine and structure for the student's school day.

Caregivers are surveyed to learn about school and district struggles and to suggest tools to advocate for their own families and children within the school and district. There is so much professional development that needs to happen for school day teachers, and caregivers can advocate for more equitable opportunities for students.

21. Instructional Partnership. Where possible, program staff communicate regularly with school day staff regarding each student's academic and SEL progress, individual education plan (IEP) status, or referral to services under multi-tiered systems of support.

Some program sites are seeing staff from their respective school weekly, during distribution times, and having opportunities to do general check-ins. In instances where the program has reported to DHHS for a specific caregiver, we also notify the school administration.

Site Managers communicate with the school Culture and Climate Coaches about what managers learn when speaking with caregivers.

The summer program staff are school day teachers, so our partnership comes through staffing. The summer program is providing training to these teachers on inspiring change, trying to provide supports not only for students but for our staff as well. Staff are meeting as teams and collaborating on what may work best for summer programs and in the transition to the school year. Morale is still there because they love children, but many report that the situation is overwhelming.

22. Collaborative Leadership. Program leaders join school district planning sessions.

The associate director of the OST programs sits on the District Improvement Team for one school district where several of the program's OST program sites are located.

Program leaders reach out to school districts that they have partnered with in the past and ask them to join the OST re-opening committee. OST staff are seeking to learn how their program can help in the district's efforts to re-open. Additionally, OST staff are working to get teachers on the board, or a local advisor board, to provide insight on how OST programs can better understand and partner with educators. School day teachers are always willing to talk, are more open to resources, and have a better understanding of the pieces they need help with.

IV. Planning with Children, Families, Caregivers, and Schools

Provide Plans and Procedures for In-Person Out-of-School Time Services

23. Integrative Program Plan. Program staff develop a plan for delivery of in-person services that is (a) co-created with children and caregivers; (b) integrated, to the extent possible, with school district schedules, policies, and protocols; and (c) includes, for example, temperature checks, small learning cohorts, staggered use of classrooms, and sanitizing surfaces.

Note: At the time of this writing, many programs had begun to draft plans based on LARA and CDC guidelines, but most were also waiting to hear more about school district plans. We will improve these examples in the future.

Previously, there were four 3rd grade classrooms, and we got three children from one, four from another, and five from another; and, then, this whole group of children rotates rooms during the program with their grades. This will be difficult if the school is organized in cohorts, so we are considering models that serve a smaller number of kids, for a short number of weeks, then rotate groups, etc.

We are balancing guidelines and protocols, while serving fewer kids, whereas using virtual methods we can serve far more students. Staff are brainstorming these scenarios. Staff are considering using Google Live, where one staff is on the computer monitoring chat and two more staff are demonstrating an activity, and children can watch and interact. They can ask questions and be part of the actual program in real time. Our best engaging activities are our live programming rather than the activities we send to homes. We also record it and post it for later for those who could not attend.

24. Social Distancing and PPE Guidelines. Program staff are educated on federal and local social distancing guidelines (e.g., YMCA and CDC), and each site has posted routines and requirements for hygiene and use of PPE during the return to school and OST environments.

The district has put out guidelines on some of this. All staff are required to wear masks all day long. We already have hand sanitizer stations in every classroom. Additional sanitizer and hand washing stations are installed in the hallways because there is one bathroom in the building. Hand washing every two hours was recommended in the roadmap for return to school. This can be difficult for the building when there is only one bathroom, and it requires a lot of hand sanitizer and regularly reminding kids to use it. This is something that we did prior to COVID because of licensing. We have dinner right in the middle of programming, so children sanitize right after school, hand wash before snack, then do homework time and activities, and then handwash on the way to dinner. That routine will not change much when we do get back in person.

Online Resource: [**LARA: Child Care Staff PPE Training**](#)

Provide Plans and Procedures for In-Person Out-of-School Time Services

25. Acquire and Maintain Supplies. Program staff maintain a stock of cleaning materials and PPE, based on federal and local guidelines, for return to in-person services.

Our program is a member of the Regional Chamber, which identified a local group that has disposable masks and negotiates reduced prices so that members can benefit from that contract.

Right now, we have one-month worth of supplies, and the recommendation is four months. The cleaning supply cost is much larger, and we have been writing that into the grants and trying to move the funds around. We are not providing transportation right now because we cannot socially distance, so we have moved our transportation funds to cleaning supplies. We are being diligent about including cleaning supplies in every grant that we write. The program lead is including the cost of cleaning supplies in grants as program supplies and not general operating supplies, because the program would not be able to operate without it.

Online Resource: [**MDE Cares Act Funding Resource; Michigan PPE contacts with local emergency coordinators**](#)

26. Service Planning Partnership. Program staff are informed of, and collaborate with, local districts' planning for in-person schooling and the daily/weekly transitions between individual learning environments, school buildings, and OST programs.

The Executive Director is planning with building principals for different ways of partnering. Buildings with similar populations have opportunities to share live virtual programming and collaborate in ways that were not possible with in-person programming at different buildings. We can find strengths within certain people and share. Planning will need to include all other schools and their plans. OST programs serving similar populations (e.g., grades 3-5) might look different from the programs delivered to different populations (e.g., high school).

We serve 12 schools in three different districts, so planning with district staff is critical. Districts are offering full virtual learning at a distance for parents who are not comfortable with sending students to in-person programming. The OST programs will keep them as enrolled, but they will not be in the building, meaning perhaps 80% of the OST children will be virtual. An OST program may, for example, serve 8 students online and 10 in person at the same or different times, depending school schedules.

27. Transitional Support. Program staff provide supports for students' preparation for, and socio-emotional well-being during, the transition back to in-person schooling and/or continued learning-at-a-distance in fall 2020.

The district has a strong support structure in each building and as a district model, including the OST programs, to supports students and caregivers. The school district is starting with two weeks of half-day trainings for school and OST staff on SEL supports for the transition back to school. Most of our support staff got Mental Health First Aid training to help recognize struggling students and connect them to help. Recognizing we are not the experts, we connect them to professionals (e.g. the in-school social worker, a clinician, a coordinator who's entire job is to connect caregivers to resources, and a DHHS representative who is in the building two days a week to link with caregivers).

Online Resource: [**mentalhealthfirstaid.org**](#)

We have addressed how we interact and connect with each other as the adults and professionals in the building. Of course, we all are struggling with anxiety about coming into a building that we are not sure is entirely safe.

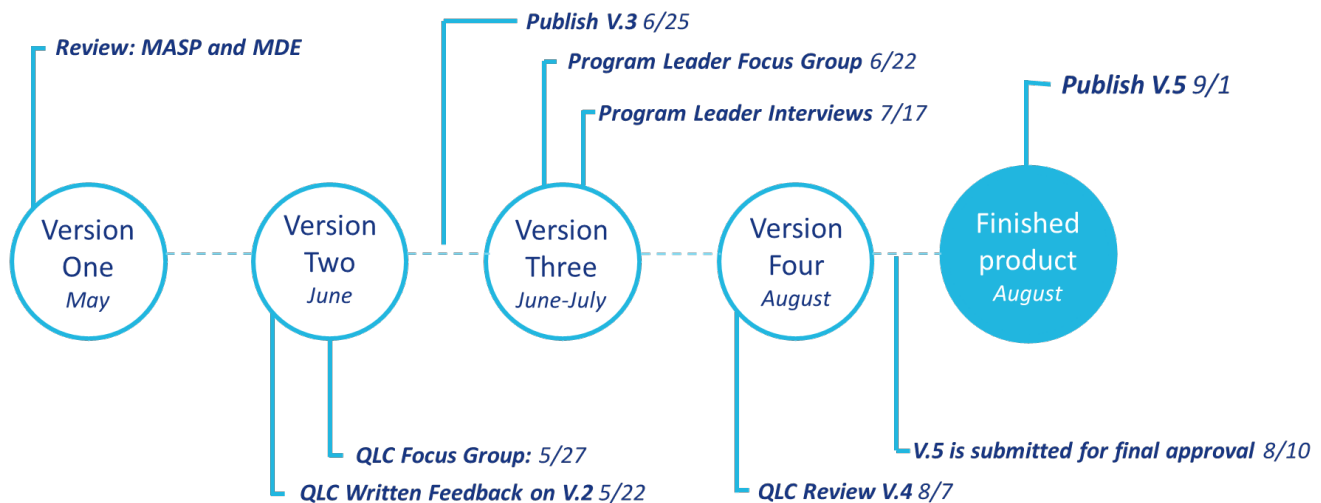
Appendix 1: Method for Developing the GOLD

The GOLD was produced using qualitative methodology and with expert practitioners representing rural, urban, 21st CCLC, community-based, and licensed school-age childcare. For version one, expert practitioners were interviewed about practices and challenges developed while learning at a distance, and relevant literature was reviewed. From the interviews and review of literature, initial codes (domains, standards, indicators) were developed. For version two, reviewers completed an online survey with sections of GOLD content; they reviewed indicator fit and provided open-ended responses. These responses are then collated, and reviewers joined a video-conference focus group to work toward consensus of meaning and language for each indicator.

For version three, we used the same method of individual review and group consensus – but, this time, with program leaders from around the state – to produce multiple narrative examples for each indicator; that is, best practices as described by Michigan OST program leaders. Finally, for version four, all prior reviewers were invited to provide a final round of review and feedback.

The implementation timeline for the four rounds of revision is provided in Figure 2. Version 5 of the GOLD is included in this document.

Figure 3. GOLD Project Timeline



Appendix 2: Reviewers and Contributors

In order to assure that this guidance is directly applicable to real OST settings, expert practitioners participated in every step of the development process. Contributors include:

Michigan After-School Partnership (MASP), Quality Leadership Committee:

Mary Sutton, MASP

Kate Porter, MASP

Lorraine Thoreson, Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

Stacy Sipes, MDE

Debra Barrett, Michigan State University Extension 4-H Youth Development

Meg Blinkiewicz, Kalamazoo Youth Development Network

Shuna K. Hayward, Connect Detroit

Donald Neal, Wayne State University

Patricia Wagner, Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services

James Yake, Genesee Intermediate School District

Michigan Afterschool Program Managers:

Lizzy McCloud, Monroe Family YMCA

Kim Johnson and Sara Plachta Elliott, Youth Development Resource Center

Will Spotts, Eastern Michigan University, Bright Futures, 21st Century Community Learning Center

Andrea Meyer, Center 4 Success

Larry Manley Jr., Battle Creek Public Schools

Eric Mockerman, T.E.A.M. 21

Laurie Rivetto, Wayne County MSU Extension

Brenda Weck, Highfields

Mariah Bosquez, Urban Neighborhood Initiatives

Lori Harvey and Amy Derrer, Communities In Schools of Northwest Michigan

Nicole Heffinger, SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers

Aimee Phillips, Carrie Blanchard, Zach Treder, Sam Castle, Ellen Magro, Tracy Henry, Jackie Malin, Angie Ortiz, Laurie Tabit, Toni Baurer, Lori Hackett, Jaron Houston, Bill McClain, Linda Hill, Genesee Intermediate School District, Bridges to Success, 21st Century Community Learning Center

Others:

Lisa Lindeman, Impact Illustrated

Terri Slaughter, Yder Strategy Group

Suzette Harvey, Prime Time Palm Beach County

Celine Provini, Prime Time Palm Beach County

Mark Jensen, Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA)

Erika Bigelow, LARA

Michelle Richard, LARA

The photos featured on the cover are by August de Richelieu (top-left), Gustavo Fring (top-right), Ketut Subiyanto (bottom-left), and The Michigan After-School Partnership (bottom-right).