



2011

After School Recreation Programs Work Force Development Strategy Backgrounder



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INTRODUCTION

Background

The after school movement for adolescents and youth has been largely ignored until recently. Historically, there has been a concentration on early childhood intervention by funders, post-secondary institutions, and correspondent after school programs.

The interest in after school programming in the United States was fuelled by federal funding under the Clinton administration in reaction to the poor academic performance of elementary school children. This funding provoked an interest in policy, research, evaluation and innovation in relation to after school programs. Non-profit, private, and public foundations such as Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Robert Bowne Foundation, the Harvard Family Research Project, and the After School Alliance became focused on after school hours. Asper (2009) suggests that the interest in after school programs “increased markedly following reports that juvenile crime peaked between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on school days” (p. 2). Later the issue of childhood obesity became a concern in United States provoking a further interest in after school programs as potential sites for increased physical activity and recreation for children and youth (Larsen, McMurray and Popkin, 2008; Siendontop, 2009).

In Canada, the interest in after school programs for adolescents and youth arose out of research on the long-term health care costs of childhood inactivity and obesity and also research focused on the “critical hours” (i.e., 2-6 p.m.). Quality after school programs were reported to decrease behavioural problems, increase self-esteem and self-efficacy, improve communication skills, and decrease levels of depression (Little, Wimer and Weiss, 2008).

Consistently, the research identifies the importance of having quality staff to achieve quality after school programming (Witt and Baker, 1997; Baker and Witt, 2000; Halpern, Barker and Mollard, 2000; Cale and Harris, 2006; Carruthers, 2006; Coleman, Geller, Rosenkranz and Dziewaltowski, 2008; Daud and Carruthers, 2008; Durlak and Weissberg, 2007; Lubans and Morgan, 2008; Watts, Witt, and King, 2008; Thompson, 2009; Asper 2009). Unfortunately, very few studies highlight the issues in achieving this human resources goal with the exception of Witt (2004) who identifies factors such as: the part-time nature of the work, the lack of quality staff, the amount and type of training required, and high turnover rate as impediments to program quality.

Issue

Although after school services are being developed across Canada, the question remains whether there will be an adequate work force to provide the quality programs, in particular, in recreational and physical education development.

This report examines the issues and barriers associated with labour force development in after school recreation programs and identifies the promising practices that may assist in addressing them.

Methodology

This report is based on a literature review of labour force development practices particularly in the area of after school programs, as well as an examination of the current training programs at post-secondary institutions for child care workers, and a review of the incentive system implemented in Alberta to support the labour market needs of early childhood development and child care workers and interviews with key informants.

Literature Review

A review of the peer-reviewed and grey literature was undertaken. The review started with the following search terms: labour market development, after school, labour policies, volunteer, paraprofessional, professional training, recreation and physical education. The search focused on literature produced in the last ten years in English and involved the following data bases: SportsDisc, ERIC, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts Plus, and Sociological Abstracts. The purpose of this review was to identify challenges and promising practices in labour force development in after school programs.

Post-secondary Programs

Interviews and a review of web-based information was completed on two Alberta-based post-secondary institutions to determine the degree of youth-focused content that is provided in child and youth care courses as well as other coursework that might prepare professionals for working in an after school setting.

Alberta Incentive Systems

A review of the Alberta Government's strategy to develop the labour force for out-of-school care was completed. Government documents and interviews with after school personnel informed this section.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders including service provider representatives (e.g., municipal recreation departments, the Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA), representatives from provincial departments involved in licensing out-of-school care services, and representatives involved in post-secondary institutes who are involved in training professionals who work in out-of-school and after school programs.

Outline of the Report

This report is divided into three sections:

Section I: Human Resources Challenges. Issues and challenges in staff recruitment, retention, and development as identified in the literature and by interviewees are summarized.

Section II: Promising Practices in Labour Force Development. Ten promising practices for the development of an after school labour force are outlined. These practices are based on the literature review and input from the interviewees. The implications of each promising practice for the development of a national after school labour development plan are considered.

Section III: Recommendations for Development of a National Strategy. Suggestions for future action and next steps in the development of a national after school labour development plan are outlined.



SECTION I: HUMAN RESOURCE CHALLENGES

Based on the interviews and the literature review a number of human resource challenges have been identified.

Part-time Employment

The hours of after school programs usually necessitates hiring part-time employees with the exception of the program coordinator. If the organization is large enough they may be able to offer employees full-time employment.

Recruiting Qualified Staff

Given the part-time nature of the employment many after school programs are reliant on post-secondary students, youth leaders who have been trained while they were participants in the after school program, and volunteers. Unfortunately, these personnel would not necessarily have the knowledge and skills to offer recreational and physical education programs to youth and adolescents.

Transitory Employment

One director noted that the work in after school programs is viewed not as a career but as transitory work. Employees do not view after school program employment as a potential stepping-stone to a sustainable career.

Low Wages

Unlicensed after school programs in Alberta are not able to pay their employees a competitive salary nor a benefit package. Licensed programs in Alberta receive an annual training allowance for their staff, top-up wages for each position, and funds to augment employee benefit costs.

High Turnover

Given the fact that the hours of employment are part-time, the wages are low, and the work is viewed as transitory there tends to be high staff turnover. The expense and the strain on program managers associated with constantly recruiting staff is extensive. One program manager noted she is “very aggressive” in her recruitment and retention strategies. She attends job fairs, goes constantly to colleges and universities and “hangs out in the lounge” to talk to potential students, and provides bonuses to staff if they are able to recruit new staff. Other managers rely on “word of mouth” and student placements.

Lack of Training Incentive

Staff employed in unlicensed after school programs do not have an incentive to complete training and education to enhance their skills. Staff do not receive an increase in salary nor do they receive monetary assistance to complete the courses.

Post-secondary Focus

According to interviewees, current training offered at post-secondary institutions in child and youth studies tends to focus on children 0-6 years of age. Students can complete practicum placements in facilities with older children but the focus of the program is on early education. Bow Valley College in Calgary, Alberta did develop a certificate course with an adolescent and youth focus but have not had sufficient enrolment, given the lack of incentive in the workplace, to complete the course. The courses are now offered in continuing education program.

Training Expense

The high turnover of staff necessitates after school programs to constantly train their staff in basic first aid, nutrient, program overview, and program specifics. Beighle, Beets, Erwin, Huberty, Moore, and Stellin (2010) noted that if an after school organization is to effectively promote physical activity, staff must be trained in principles of motivation, behaviour management, and appropriate activities. The expense of constant training is significant. Staff Perception of the Importance of Physical Activity A number of researchers have mentioned that the attitudes of staff in relation to physical activity and nutrient are critical for program success (Halpern, Deich, and Cohen, 2000; Witt, 2004; Huberty, Balluff, Beighle, Berg, and Sun, 2009). The interviewees did not express this concern.

Lack of Standardization

Unlicensed programs do not have program and staffing standards. The National Youth Development Learning Network, a coalition of youth-serving agencies who collectively service 40 million youth and employ 100,000 paid staff in the United States suggest that there is a need to develop standards for after school programs that address the context, content, and process of after school programs. They suggest that these standards would: establish clear guidance for excellence in the field, ensure staff have a foundational knowledge and skill in youth development, and communicate an organization's commitment to continuous personal and professional improvement which could ultimately result in a more competent and satisfied workforce.

Discussion

These issues identified above are not discrete items but rather they are interrelated. First and foremost, the nature of the work is a critical factor contributing to the human resource issues. The work is by definition part time, the wages are low, and the benefits are nonexistent. Although training programs are offered by the after school organization, these courses do not further any career aspirations the employee may hold. Given this situation, the labour pool that is attracted to this type of work is limited. After school programs are reliant on post-secondary students from a myriad of faculties. Their experiences are varied but usually do not involve working with youth. A limited number of these employees would have training in recreational and physical education. Students fill shifts when they are able to work. This is a generally a transitory workforce, requiring constant on-going training and supervision.

Large organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Club) can, by combining shifts between other services they offer, provide staff with full time hours and benefit packages so they are able to attract skilled employees who are committed to working for a longer period of time. Smaller organizations do not have this advantage.



Organizations in rural and remote communities are also at a disadvantage because they are not in close proximity to a post-secondary institution to access students as employees. They also experience a higher cost of living particularly in remote communities so a competitive wage becomes prohibitive. Finally, these organizations are competing with other employers in a significantly reduced employee pool.

Every interviewee felt that their ability to attract employees currently was not an issue. Each did acknowledge that a return to a “heated economy” in Alberta could increase the strain on these organizations to recruit employees.



SECTION II: PROMISING PRACTICES IN LABOUR FORCE DEVELOPMENT

A critical feature in determining the quality of a program or service is the skills, knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes of the personnel involved. Being able to recruit, develop, and retain quality personnel who are skilled in working with youth generally and who have the skills to support youth in recreational and physical activity pursuits is essential if after school programs are to realize the goal of providing quality services.

Unfortunately, studies focused on the development of an after school work force are limited in number and tend to be descriptive rather than experimental studies with control measures (e.g., examining the differences between programs implementing staff training with a program that does not). Given this, it is not possible to identify “best” or evidence-based practices in after school human resource development.

The literature review did however reveal ten “promising practices”; practices that seem to have the potential to positively impact the development of a sustainable and competent labour force. The literature suggests that if a labour force is to be developed for after school programs then the field needs to:

- Develop strategic partnerships that facilitate the placement of post-secondary students.
- Develop a credential program for after school programs and youth professionals.
- Develop partnerships with a variety of stakeholders.

- Develop web-based training programs.
- Develop learning communities and networks to reduce costs of training and increase exchange of information.
- Provide on-going workshops with face-to-face follow-up to facilitate knowledge transfer.
- Develop career paths and competitive compensation for after school personnel.
- Implement a surveillance system for labour market development strategies.
- Target policy influencers’ knowledge of the impact of physical activity programs, the labour force issues, and potential policy levers to address both.
- Develop a national after school agenda that focuses on physical education and nutrition.

The research supporting each of these promising practices is outlined in this section, along with additional observations related to the suggested practice. Implications for a national labour force development plan are considered for each suggested practice as well.

I. Develop strategic partnerships that facilitate the placement of post-secondary students.

Related Studies

- Two studies reported in the literature suggest that there may be post-secondary faculties (e.g., Education) that are having difficulty providing their students with practical experience and so they are turning to placement of their students in after school programs. The PEx3 Program (i.e., Prince Edward, physical education, promoting excellence) in Prince Edward, Virginia was developed because physical education teachers-in-training could not find a sufficient placements in traditional settings so they started using after school placements (Colvin, 2007). Spencer, Cox-Peterson and Crawford (2005) investigated in a qualitative study, “service-learning” of fifty-eight pre-service teachers in after school programs assisting with math, social studies, and science. Pre-service teachers worked in teams of three to four to plan and integrate the lesson plans. The experience afforded the pre-service teachers the opportunity to work with a group of students from different grade levels, have a low teacher-student ratio, teach in an after school program, and work as part of a team of teachers. These teachers expressed a positive reaction to the experience.
- Strategic partnerships with post-secondary institutions has been indicated in a number of studies as a strategy to improve all aspects of the after school program including labour force development (Huhman, Potter, Nolin, Piesse, Judkins, Banspach, and Wong, 2010).
- According to Halpern, Deich, and Cohen, (2000) in each of the three MOST cities (i.e., Chicago, Boston, and Seattle) local community colleges have developed an education and training curriculum for after school providers. As well, the states of Washington, Georgia, and Alabama were each providing funding to train providers for after school programs.
- The faculties of kinesiology, recreation, and physical education provide students with training in working with youth.
- The faculties of Social Work, Child and Youth Studies do not focus on working with youth, nor do they offer training in physical education or recreational strategies in their programs.
- The faculties of nursing, community medicine, and public health may be possible untapped sites for potential students.
- There may be a need to develop a strategic plan to work with post-secondary institutions to ensure good learning experiences for students and a guaranteed number of student placements.
- Creative scheduling between post-secondary institutions may afford the students the possibility of practical experience, employment and course scheduling that is practical for all involved.
- Reliance on post-secondary students is not a solution for organizations in rural or remote communities.
- Recruitment of sport development associations, hiring educational assistants, engaging teaching staff has been suggested by Clyne (2009), although it has been acknowledged this may prove to be a more expensive option.

Observations

- According to the interviewees, given the nature of the work (e.g., part time, low wages) a significant number of after school programs are dependent upon post-secondary students to fill staffing positions. Students either are placed as a part of a practicum course fulfillment and/or they work shifts when not attending classes.
- Interviewees report that after school programs generally rely on current employees’ or students’ personal networks for future recruitment of employees.
- There are a number of faculties which have not traditionally used after school sites as placements for practical experience that may find the site appropriate for student placements. These faculties include public health, education, community nursing, and community medicine. Exploring their interest and suitability may be warranted.



An examination of the summary of the SAYD curriculum indicates that there is a reference to physical education and recreational activities.

- Providing various faculties with information on working with youth and the importance of recreation and physical education in promoting healthy life-long development should be explored. This would require significant input from various stakeholders but would increase the chances of this information being integrated into post-secondary curriculums in faculties other than health and kinesiology.

2. Develop a credential program for after school programs and youth professionals.

Related Studies

- Credential programs define the types of training that result in a set of recognized skills and knowledge. "They can provide a clear and consistent path for professional development and offer recognition for individuals who demonstrate competence and skill. Research points to a strong association between high-quality programs and credentialed staff" (Gannett, Mello, and Starr, 2009, p. 1).
- Hall and Gannet (2010) report that credentialed programs have been shown to have significant positive impact on the quality of programming, the retention of staff, and general staff confidence.
- School-age Youth Development Credential (SAYD) is offered under the auspices of Achieve Boston, an initiative focused on quality after school programs. SAYD is a competency-based credential program which was piloted in 2007. This involved college-based courses, community-based training, and field work. Staff who participated received a one-time \$1,000 salary bonus.
- Gannett, Mello, and Starr (2009) provide a summary of the two long-term credentialing models (i.e., the Child Development Associate and the Military Child Care Act) used in the United States to demonstrate the impact of credential programs. They suggest that the consideration of the need for a credential program has evolved from the increased focus on student academic achievement, the growing public demand for after school programming, and the recent development of competencies and professional development systems developed in the States. The benefits of developing a credential are numerous including: the development of a common language between professionals, a development of standards within the field, a strategy to address the transitory nature of the staff, and increased staff competence and confidence. The potential barriers to developing a credential program are: funds for staff to complete the credential program and to provide them with a bonus or compensation upon completion, increased requirements may discourage people from coming into the field, and lack of perceived value for those staff who already carry some other form of credential.
- Youth Practitioner Apprenticeship Program (YDPA) is a national initiative developed by the US Department of Labor to provide an out-of-school time certificate for current and future youth workers. They use mentoring, direct instruction, and on-the-job training. The 4-H organization is very active in this initiative.
- Wages, Jackson, Bradshaw, Chang, and Estabrooks (2010) examined various marketing strategies to engage participants in a public health initiative. Although not staff recruitment it is instructive in highlighting the strategies for recruitment in rural versus urban settings. They found that interpersonal methods may be more effective in rural settings, which urban settings require a myriad of promotional methods because of competing demands for attention and prioritization.

Observations

- The Alberta Government provides \$500 per staff annually to licensed programs to fund staff development activities.
- Upon completion of an Alberta Government credential course, employees in a licensed program receive an increase in their salary.

- The Alberta Government credential programs are accessible for unlicensed after school programs (e.g., recreational programs, drop-in programs) although staff completing these courses in unlicensed programs do not have their salary increased through provincial funding.
- The Alberta Government credential programs focuses on early childhood development and child care. The program does not focus on adolescent and youth development nor on physical education and recreation, thereby limiting the courses applicability to after school programs.
- Bow Valley College in Calgary, Alberta developed a one-year out of school care certificate, specifically designed to enhance skills and knowledge for professionals working with 5 to 14 year old children. The program focuses on age appropriate activities as well as related operational and health and safety standards. The program developer/instructor indicated that this course has historically not been well ascribed to because there is no monetary incentive for professionals to complete it.
- A number of the large organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, YMCA) offer leadership programs to develop youth already involved in the program so that they can assume leadership positions as they age. In Alberta a person has to be older than 18 years to be able to work in a licensed after school program. It was noted by one interviewee that although the development of youth leaders is an appealing strategy, programs have to be careful not to have youth being supervised by other youth.
- Staff recruitment is an expensive and time consuming activity, finding strategies to reduce the costs of this activity would ease the burden on after school programs and allow them to shift their focus and resources to staff development and retention strategies.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- It will be necessary when exploring the development of a national labour force plan to identify avenues for potential funding for reimbursement of staff for course completion and achievement of credentials.

- The creation of a nationally-recognized credential program would increase the demand of courses similar to the Bow Valley College's out of school care certificate. Collaborating with Bow Valley College on ensuring that physical education, nutrient, and recreation best practices in after school programs is incorporated into the course work would be useful.

3. Develop partnerships with a variety of stakeholders.

Related Studies

- Barcelona and Bocarro (2004) studied the issue of collaboration between parks and recreation agencies and post-secondary institutions. Surveyed respondents included 307 practitioners and 174 faculty. The results indicated that 24 of the 31 areas of collaboration were rated at least "somewhat important" for the field of park and recreation. Collaboration on internships, pre-internships, and service learning were the most important areas, as was interaction at conferences and professional workshops. Using park and recreation agencies for field-based research, using practitioners as guest speakers in academic classes, offering/taking advantage of continuing education/ professional development opportunities at colleges and universities, and using the park and recreation agency to enhance teaching opportunities were also rated as important for the field.
- Beighle, Beets, Erwin, Huberty, Moore and Stellin (2010) provided an example of local universities that have graduate students in health promotion or physical education who could train staff as part of an internship, volunteer experience, or service learning. Partnerships with health organizations may also help with staff training.
- An intervention was designed to change both the instructional practices and the school environment to increase support for physical activity among girls. Intervention activities within a school were coordinated by a group of school personnel. University-based staff supported the LEAP Teams by providing workshops, demonstrations, on-site training, consultation, fluid institutional materials. Grade nine girls in South Carolina in the 24 schools who took part in the study, showed increased participation outside of school hours (Pate, Ward, Saunders, Felton, Dishman and Dowda, 2005).

- Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) is a program of the California Department of Public Health and the Public Health Institute.
- BC Ministry of Education partnered with BC Ministry of Health and the BC Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Arts to create Action Schools ! BC (AS!BC) with the purpose of developing a model that promoted collaboration and dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge across sectors. Manuals were developed and training sessions offered.

Observations

- Partnerships with post-secondary institutions, health organizations, government, NGOs and the private sector could facilitate quality training and other program and human resources development opportunities.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- Develop strategies to introduce into post-secondary curriculum materials to prepare students to work with youth, in particular in the areas of recreation and physical activities.

4. Develop web-based training programs.

Related Studies

- Kelly and Moran (2011), using an experimental design, evaluated the effectiveness of a web-based, interactive video assessment program on teaching pre-service physical education majors to assess the motor skill of kicking. Students benefited from tutorials, guided practice, and competency training options. Although this study was conducted to assess the use of web-based training, which proved to be successful, it is also informative to note that of the 71 participants, who were majoring in physical education, 68 percent of which were in either their fourth or fifth year of study: only 8.3 percent had any formal training in assessment, a little over 41 percent had 50 or less hours of teaching, almost 80 percent reported being comfortable or very comfortable using technology, and 65 percent reported a high or very high preference for learning new skills via the computer.
- A web-based user-centered site that includes multimedia learning modules is being developed for the 21st Learning Centres, which are after school programming that focus on academic learning but which also offers programs in recreation, technology education, counselling, and charter education. The project describes five modules that are being developed: working with youth, creating engaging environments, creating partnerships with schools, families, and communities, managing a 21st CCLC program, and leading program staff. The You for Youth Project Team (2010) surveyed staff working in these 21st Learning Centres for their input. Staff wanted to see examples of real life programs, they want to be able to connect with others doing similar work, and they wanted access to professional development that they can retrieve at any time.
- The U. S. Department of Education in 2009 examined on-line learning studies. This study noted that there are relatively few rigorous studies have been conducted with any group of learners, but they did conclude that:
 - Blends of online and face-to-face instruction tend to have stronger learning outcomes than face-to-face instruction alone.
 - Any script developed for online instruction should offer learners the chance to interact with each other by discussing critical questions.
 - Learning a complex body of knowledge requires a community of learners; online technologies can be used to expand and support such communities.
 - Video alone does not necessarily enhance learning. For video to produce learning results, it should be interactive—the learner must be able to control it. (You for Youth Project Team, 2010)
- Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) is a combination of web-based learning in the form of modules that students complete on their own followed by classroom-based training which has been used in the United States to train teachers and teacher assistants (Marquart, Jones Rizzi, and Parik, 2010). Site managers acknowledged that they benefited from webinars.

- Podcasting is being viewed as a useful, inexpensive, effortless, and flexible tool in distance learning. Long and Edwards (2010) argued that podcasts address the immobility that many students feel with some distance education courses that rely on narrated slide presentations, interact television, and discussion boards which require the learner to be in front of a computer or satellite classroom.
- The National After School Association Radio is an example of an after school related podcast. The website of the National After School Association has podcasts which they refer to as their “radio”. These podcasts started in 2007 as a program for parents, then in 2008 it expanded to educators and schools administrators.

Observations

- Websites, webinars and podcasts are a cost-effective and common tool used by post-secondary institutions, business, and community groups. They allow people to learn in a time frame that is acceptable to them.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- Developing a website for Canadian after school programs, applying the feedback gained from the studies described above as well as the feedback from Canadian providers may be a cost-effective strategy to develop the labour force.
- It may be also useful to create an inventory of current after school websites which feature physical education, recreation, and nutrition information and linking these to the after school website.

5. Develop learning communities and networks to reduce costs of training and increase exchange of information.

Related Studies

- Critical Friends Model is a partnership with post-secondary professionals for critical reflection (Fusco and Espine, 2010).

- Mozaffarian et.al (2010) in a controlled experimental design study examined the impact of a Learning Collaborative on the quality of snacks and beverages served in 14 YMCA after school programs in seven states. Standards adapted from the Harvard Health Prevention Research Centre were used by the programs. Three lessons were offered to facilitate expert-to-staff and staff-to-staff learning. Session managers attended all the sessions. Data collection sheets were maintained. Significant improvements were observed.
- Club Possible: Building Attitudes Today for an Active Tomorrow - Eight organizations from an urban area in the Midwestern states, as a result of a request from a funder, aligned their efforts to create a community-wide intervention in after school programs concentrating on physical activity and healthy eating for children (i.e., 5-12 years of age). The organizations were: a county health department, a university, a Visiting Nurse Association, and four after school providers (i.e., YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Camp Fire USA, and Girl Scouts). They did not use a strictly designed curriculum. They did provide an intensive staff training and an activities-based toolkit that provided site staff with instructions and guidelines about program implementation. The YMCA took the lead in offering 4 hour training sessions in their Healthy Lifestyles Principles program, to all participants and the university offered 8 hours of training in promoting physical activity. A graduate student met with each program once a month for a year to do follow-up after the training, to suggest program options, and to discuss evaluation strategies. The collaboration developed guidelines for staff participation and the environment.

- Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia After School Program is a three-way partnership between Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection – Regional Office, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board and the municipality, town or village. This partnership resulted in each partner contributing funds towards the salary of a program leader, hired by the municipality. The program leaders are made up of physical education teachers, educational assistants, high school and university students, parents and volunteers. Each school designed their programs, which ran usually two to three days per week with one to three hours per day in either the school or a community facility, at no cost to the participants. The elementary school students participate in a variety of non-competitive and non-traditional physical activities. Middle or high school students tend to participate in six-week sessions of yoga, kick boxing, ball room dancing or step class throughout the majority of the school year. HIVE FIVE® assessments were offered from the NS Health Promotion and Protection. (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/ipchls-spimmvs/bulletin/archives/e-bulletin-October2009-eng.php>)
- Action Schools! BC is a multi-phase, multi-disciplinary initiative targeting physical activity and healthy eating in elementary schools (grades four to seven). Action Schools! BC provides an Action Model for targeting the school environment and involves families, teachers, principals and school districts in creating and implementing comprehensive plans to provide more physical activity and healthy eating opportunities throughout the school day. The Action Model provides a tool for schools to create individualized Action Plans that contribute to the health of children, as well as the overall health and well-being of the school community (Action Schools! BC website)
- The After School Corporation (TASC) was established in 1998 to enhance the quality and availability of free after school programming for public school students in New York City and State. TASC provides grants, training, and technical assistance to non-profit organizations that have partnered with a public school. After school activities are school based, and all students in grades K–12 who are enrolled in the host school are eligible to participate. The TASC model mandates that a full-time site coordinator lead each project and participants attend regularly.

Observations

- The formation of ACE communities in Alberta may be strengthen the possibility of the development of after school networks among community organizations and the business community.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- A survey of after school program workers would determine their interest in forming collaborations or networks with others in their community.

6. Provide on-going workshops and offer face-to-face follow-up to facilitate knowledge transfer.

Related Studies

- BGC Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) is a school-based health promotion program targeting 3-5th grade students. It provides behaviourally-based classroom curricula, school environmental modifications related to food consumption, physical activity and tobacco use, and family-and home-based programs to complement in-school activities. It was adapted for after school programs in 16 Texas after school programs. The results indicated that the physical activity section of the program was easily adapted into the after school program but the five- module classroom curriculum was too cumbersome to implement in the after school setting (Kelder, Hoelscher, Barroso, Walker, Cribb, and Hu, 2005).
- A large-scale community-driven CATCH was also evaluated in a CATCH Kids Club in Ontario which involved the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club. (Sharpe, Forester and Mandigo, 2011). In 2008 the Ontario after school Strategy was instituted to support programs for children ages 6 to 12. The focus of the funding was on physical activity, healthy eating, and nutrition, as well as, wellness and personal health education. There were 330 after school sites across Ontario involved, which included 8,000 children. Leaders of programs indicated that CATCH expanded their activity repertoire and ability to adapt games to increase physical activity (p. S29). Leaders did not like that the participation of the children was mandatory in adult-lead programs but did feel that the initiative gave them more program options and ideas for children.

- It is recommended after the initial training, staff should receive booster trainings throughout their tenure in the program (Beighle, Beets, Erwin, Huberty, Moore and Stellan, 2010)
- Bouffard, and Little (2004) completed an evaluation of a Boston Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) program. MOST, a multi-year initiative, occurring in a number of cities in the United States, offers college-level courses, tuition subsidies, staff mentoring, on-site training, and other professional development activities. The study found that managers were able to transfer material to the out-of-school setting easier than direct service staff. These direct service staff were reluctant to register and complete college-level face time course work. They also faced financial constraints when completing the courses and often did not find that the successful completion of the course resulted in higher salaries.

Observations

- There are a considerable number of commercial and non-commercial physical education and recreation programs available (e.g., HIVE FIVE®, CATCH, Leading the Way, Weight of the World, Lifestyle Education for Activity Program (LEAP), On the Move, Moving to Inclusion). A number of these programs are design for younger children and for in-school use.
- It has been mentioned by two interviewees and has been acknowledged in a number of studies that given the high turnover of staff, the competing priorities in the workplace, and the challenge with workshop-to-workplace transfer of learnings it would be preferable to have a support coordinator. This person could provide follow-up on the application of new concepts into the workplace and provide advice on an on-going basis on issues, evaluation, and program implementation. The City of Calgary and the Northwest Territories after school initiatives each have this funded on-going position.
- The Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE) is an agency dedicated to providing technical assistance to the Early Learning and Care Service sector through provision of supporting quality and building capacity to those it serves.
- The Alberta Child Care Association is a non-profit, member-based society with a mission to strengthen and advance a unified early learning and child care profession in Alberta.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- It may be advantageous to create an inventory of these physical education and recreation programs. Information could be provided on the age range, the focus, and the cost of each program for the ease of potential after school program selection process.
- Given the feedback in one of the studies that direct staff want options for program delivery rather than curriculums it may also be worthwhile articulating the general principles and suggested activities and approaches that would underpin an after school program.
- Although ARCQE and the Alberta Child Care Association are focused on early learning there may be synergies that could be captured by working with them on the issue of labour force development.
- Large organizations providing after school services may want to consider how they can partner with other small organizations to offer staff training at a reduced cost.

7. Develop career paths and competitive compensation for after school personnel.

Related Studies

- Lack of a career path and low wages lead to high turnovers (Gannett, Mello, and Starr, 2009).
- Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder is a pilot project in Washington State being offered by the Economic Opportunity Institute. It uses public funds to increase salaries based on training, experience, and responsibility. Evaluation results indicate higher job retention, higher morale, and staff being more likely to complete higher education courses than those staff in centres without career ladders (Bouffard and Little, 2004).



- a professional registry that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field;
- career lattices and pathways that link roles, responsibilities, salary ranges;
- wage increases and incentives programs that include salary ranges commensurate with a professional's training, education, and experience; and,
- a quality rating system that informs consumers and funders about after school and youth development programs and helps programs identify areas for improvement and training

- The After School Corporation (TASC, 2009) proposed the following resolution:

Leaders in after school and workforce development should collaborate to create a system that clearly articulates the path from part-time entry-level work through core occupations in after school. Workers should be able to earn recognized credentials and higher wages through systems that link on-the-job training and credit-bearing courses. This system will both enhance the quality of programs and help trained workers build careers in after school and critically important related fields, such as teaching. (p. 1)

They also suggested that leaders in after school and workforce development should:

- Develop credit-bearing courses and degrees in youth development and after school, in partnership with colleges and universities;
- Articulate sequenced informal trainings across a range of topics and align them with formal training, so that all participation builds towards attainment of higher education degrees;
- Support staff development as an essential tool for program operation through public and private funding, and an essential element of state and federal policy as it applies to after school, including reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act;
- Develop common job titles and educational requirements across state lines;
- Collect data to demonstrate the connection between credit-bearing training and program quality; and,
- Collect data on wages and career advancement (p. 1).

- The Y4Y Project (2010), built on the work of Bowie and Bronte-Tinkew (2006, as cited in Gannett, Mello and Starr, 2009), to provide guidance in creating professional development systems. They suggest developing:
 - core competencies that define what staff need to know and do to work effectively with children and youth;
 - a training system, including links to higher education, that is grounded in the core competencies and responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce;
 - a trainer and trainer approval system that ensures the quality of both the content and the delivery of training;

Observations

- Developing a career path will be easier for large organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and programs offered by large municipalities. Some interviewees acknowledge that this is currently occurring in their organization on an informal basis. Small stand-alone organizations will be challenged to create career path strategies for their employees. The development of human resource networks with other similar programs, other community groups, and/or with business may be one option for addressing this issue.
- Adequate salaries, especially if credential training is implemented, will be an issue for many providers.
- The formation of ACE communities in Alberta may strengthen the development of after school networks among community organizations and the business community.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- It may be necessary to survey after school programs to determine their interest in forming collaborations or networks with others in their community.
- A number of the suggestions proposed by the Y4Y project for the development of a professional development system could be discussed with after school providers to determine their interest in pursuing them.

8. Implement a surveillance system for labour market development strategies.

Related Studies

- Timperio, Salmon, and Ball (2004) reviewed 28 studies reporting the effectiveness of programs focused on physical activity outcomes for children and adolescents. Fifteen studies focused on interventions in after school programs; ten for children and five for adolescents. Their reported mixed findings. Four of the ten interventions for children resulted in significant changes in physical activity, while three showed non-significant although higher changes in activity level. Two of the five programs for adolescents resulted in higher physical activity. Interventions which include family members had positive impacts, primarily on adolescent girls.

- Salmon, Booth, Phongsavan, Murphy, and Timperio (2007) reviewed 76 studies which reported on the effectiveness of interventions on physical activity outcomes for children and adolescents. Most interventions were delivered in school setting (57), nine were based in the family setting, six were situated in primary care, and four in community-or internet-based settings. They found that effective interventions in school included a focus on physical education, activity breaks, and family strategies. Interventions in family settings were not effective and that motivationally-tailored strategies and program delivery in the primary care setting was helpful for adolescents. They also noted that methodological flaws were common in the studies making evaluation difficult. In the studies they reviewed only two dealt with after school programs; one was showed to have positive outcomes, the other after school program did not.
- A framework for evaluation of professional development programs, developed by Guskey (2000), suggests the following should be monitored: participant's reactions, participants' learning, organizational support and change, participants' use of knowledge and skill, and student learning outcomes.
- The following are guidelines for the development of evaluation of professional development strategies:
 - plan the evaluation before the professional development starts
 - plan a timeline of evaluation
 - use "backward planning"
 - choose outcome indicators based on the goals of the program
 - collect data from the appropriate sources
 - access long-term outcomes
 - base professional development activities and evaluation on strong theory and research. (Kirkpatrick, 1998, as cited by Bouffard and Little, 2004)

Observations

- Evaluation of the labour market development plan would be warranted.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- The development of a proposed evaluation would strengthen the implementation of a labour force development plan for after school programs.

9. Target policy influencers' knowledge regarding the impact of physical activity programs, the labour force issues, and potential policy levers to address both.

Related Studies

- Lounsberry, McKenzie, Trost and Smith (2011) investigated why the adoption of evidence-based physical education programs had not yet occurred. Pairs of principals and PE teachers from 154 schools were used. Seventy-five adopters of evidence-based programs (e.g., SPARK, CATCH, and Planet Health) and 79 non-adopters schools from 34 states completed questionnaires identifying the facilitators and barriers to adoption including policy, satisfaction levels with current PE sessions, beliefs about adoption, barriers to PE implementation and stakeholder influences. The only difference between the two categories of schools was that a significant proportion of adopter schools had a gymnasium; they did not differ in student numbers, number of PE specialists, teacher background and training, annual budget or time devoted to PE class nor the PE class size.
- More teachers and principals in the adopter schools expressed a higher interest in learning about evidence-based physical education and reported using a specific curriculum. Interestingly more adopter teachers reported being very involved in program evaluation than non-adopted teachers. Principals in adopter schools felt three characteristics were very important before an evidence-based program would be adopted. The program had to have easy-to-follow lesson plans, help manage students, and be completed with minimal amounts of equipment. The authors concluded that efforts to increase principals' knowledge of PE programs was critical. They also argued that there is a need to target teachers and help them understand their role in influencing and communicating with their principal about the importance of evidence-based PE practices.
- McKinnon, Bowles and Trowbridge (2011) note that policy makers in the US can change laws and regulations to increase physical education for children in schools. They suggest that what is needed is to incorporate economic assessments into evaluations and information documents. "Establishing and maintaining connections with relevant local, state, and federal policy makers; explaining and elaborating on the health impacts of variables under policy makers' control; translating findings from scholarly publications to a form that is easily used by those unaccustomed to thinking in public health terms; improving surveillance efforts and methods of physical activity assessment; and rigorous evaluation of policy changes that affect physical activity" (p. S146) are all strategies they suggest in promoting policy change.
- Cox, Berends, Sallis, Marie St. John, McNeil, Gonzalez, and Agron (2011) examined the results of 2009 survey of California school governance leaders (i.e., school boards, superintendents, and senior administrators) on the barriers and opportunities to provide school-based physical activity and strategies to promote adoption of evidence-based policies. Although 90 percent of the 339 respondents recognized that physical activity positively impacted student academic and health outcomes, budget concerns, limited time, and competing priorities were identified as major barriers. The respondents indicated the following resources would be useful to them: training about policies and practices to improve physical activity (47%); case studies of other successful school districts (68%); cost benefit analysis of policies and practices (61%); research on the link between physical activity/ physical education and behavioural problems/violence prevention (55%); and, sample district physical activity and physical education policies (53%). Based on the results of this study the following documents were developed to influence policy makers: a research brief which summarizes survey findings and highlights board actions; two policy briefs that provides information about how school districts can engage in policy and program strategies to increase active transportation and a second one that provides strategies to develop joint use programs in collaboration with community groups; three fact sheet summarizing research on physical activity, highlighting cost-effective strategies and policy opportunities, outlines of policy and curriculum opportunities; and, three samples of board policies and administrative regulations that could support physical activity. These documents have been disseminated to 1000 school districts and follow-up training sessions have occurred in three regions.

- Sparling, Owen, Lambert, and Haskell (1999) reviewed campaigns for the promotion of physical activity in three countries (i.e., South Africa, Australia, and the United States). They concluded that the common themes between the three countries campaigns were: the development of a theory-driven research base, inclusion of behavioural and social scientists on multidisciplinary team, and advocacy for environmental changes that promote physical activity.
- Park, Chodzko-Zajko, Ory, Gleason-Senior, Bazzarre, and Mockenhaupt (2010) examined the impact of the National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Age 50 and Older (NB) on the policies, programs, and organizational culture of selected national organizations. The study was a qualitative research design including interviews with two staff from each organization and document reviews. They found that the NB resulted in changes in leaders, in organizational culture, policies, programs and individual and organizational behaviours. The coalition of national groups concerned with aging (i.e., National Institute on Aging, the National Council on Aging, the CDC, the American Geriatric Society, the ACSM, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) produced website, toolkits, publications, and other programs and products to promote older adults becoming more active. All the materials were targeted to influence the primary organizations not the individuals in the public. They also attempted to influence public policy at the local, state, and national level as it applied to the issue. They also used a unique strategy, in that they provided guidance not only on the ultimate target but also provided specific strategies to achieve these targets. They also provided funding for local community interventions. The study highlighted the importance of senior leadership commitment and support. “Organizational leaders are both aware of and responsive to external stimuli such as increased funding opportunities, increased national visibility, and an opportunity to partner with other “high status” organizations” (p. 437).

Observations

- Providing policy key influencers with sufficient information (e.g., economic case, case studies, policy positions) is a critical feature in the development of quality after school programs and the accompanying labour force development.

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- Discussions with service providers regarding the information and strategies they have used with key influencers would be an initial step in implementing this promising practice.

10. Develop a national after school agenda that focuses on physical education and nutrition.

Related Studies

- Bull, Bellew, Schoppe, and Bauman (2004) reviewed policies from selected countries (i.e., Australia, Brazil, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, Scotland) to assess the focus and content of existing or emerging policy on PA. Findings indicated a rapid increase in recent years in the number of countries engaged in the development of national policy and action on physical activity.
- A follow-up study on the Bull, Bellew, Schoppe, and Bauman’s study was completed by Bornstein, Pate, and Pratt (2009). These researchers found that five of the six national plans did not delineate clearly the roles and leadership responsibilities for implementing the plan, which may limit efforts to measure progress and evaluate the plan. These authors stressed the importance of evaluation to ensure implementation of the national plan and the quality of the programs developed as a result of the plan.

Observations

- Canada has a national plan and targets for activity levels for children, adolescents, and adults.
- In 2009 the Canadian federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity, and recreation committed to action to increase children’s activity levels. The after school period was identified as “an opportunity for government policy and program efforts targeting children and youth physical activity in partnership with non-government stakeholder” (cited in BC Recreation and Parks Association, 2010, p. 11).

Implications for National Labour Force Development

- Building on the momentum that the national plan has created, a national after school agenda focusing on physical activity and nutrient could be developed.



SECTION III: DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY

Across North America there are a significant number of children, adolescents, and youth involved in out-of-school time program. The positive social, emotional, academic, and health benefits of these programs have been documented. Equally documented is the importance of a well developed, stable, and competent work force to ensure the quality of the after school programs.

Throughout this background report a number of implications have been suggested for consideration towards the development of an after school labour force national strategy. Although appropriate management and supervision strategies contribute significantly to the recruitment, development, and retention of loyal employees, the nature of after school programs make these practices necessary but insufficient in addressing labour force issues. The issues these organizations face are structural and will therefore require a concerted effort of all stakeholders (e.g., government, associations, business, post-secondary institutions) to address them.

Given the review of the literature a number of promising practices have been identified. The Canadian political, governance, social, and legislative context is different from the United States, where a number of these practices are drawn. Further exploration and discussion with key informants across Canada is warranted to determine whether these promising practices are worthy of consideration and pursuit in supporting Canadian after school programs and their labour force development issues.

The input of current employees, post-secondary instructors, and employers across Canada would also inform the development of an action plan.

The Alberta Ministry of Child and Youth Services had provided an example of the types of programs that have been helpful in sustaining and developing a workforce. Using its incentive programs as a potential model or case study in discussions with policy influences in the other provinces and territories may prove to be useful.

This background report was completed to act as a foundation in the development of a national labour force development plan. Further has been completed on the development of this plan in *After School Recreation Programs Work Force Development Strategies* online at www.arpaonline.ca

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: AOSCAP QUALITY STANDARDS WITH INDICATORS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL-CARE PROGRAMS

Standard 1: Respectful relationships between children, staff, families and community exist to support positive outcomes for children.

Children thrive within families and communities that protect their health and safety, nurture and respect them and provide opportunities for involvement with caring adults. Warm, supportive and responsive interactions between adults and children help children feel safe and encourage a sense of self-worth. Children who feel secure and valued are more likely to get along well with others, develop self-control and be able to benefit from opportunities and experiences that foster learning and safe exploration of their environment.

I.1 Relationships between staff and children are supportive and respectful.

- Staff interactions and communication with children are positive and respectful.
- Staff identify opportunities to become engaged in the children's activities.
- Staff seek children's opinions and demonstrate interest in their perspectives.

I.2 Positive peer relationships are encouraged.

- Staff facilitate opportunities for children to work cooperatively with each other.
- Staff support children in expressing their feelings in respectful ways.
- Staff assist children to develop conflict resolution skills.

I.3 The program recognizes that families are the primary influence in their children's lives and works in partnership with them.

- The program responds to the diverse interests of children and families.
- An introduction to the out-of-school care program is offered to parents to help establish positive relationships between the program and the child's family.

I.4 The program seeks working relationships with schools and other organizations and services within the community.

- The program seeks to build relationships with the schools that the children attend in order to complement the programs and share information.
- The program initiates partnerships with other community agencies.
- The program provides opportunities for children to become involved in community projects, recreational activities and special events

Standard 2: Programming demonstrates a framework for activities by accommodating both planned and spontaneous experiences.

Program planning addresses all aspects of the child's developmental needs and provides a flexible, guiding framework for the time the child is in care.

2.1 Program planning complements the child's school and extra-curricular experiences.

- Staff have access to resources and planning time.
- Staff use the children's ideas as the focus for most planned activities.
- Staff plan off-site excursions with input from the children.
- The daily transitions into the program and out of the program are planned and consistent but allow for flexibility to meet individual needs.
- Children are included in discussions to ensure toys and equipment reflect their interests and abilities.

2.2 Children are involved in the decision-making process to increase confidence and social competencies.

- Children participate in the development of program planning, routines, and rules.

Standard 3: Activities are offered in an inclusive environment through opportunities and choices.

At the end of the school day, children need an opportunity to choose from a variety of activities that provide reprieve, rejuvenation and refreshment according to their individual interests.

3.1 A range of activities, including recreational activities, are offered to children in a safe, supportive environment.

- Staff invite children to become involved with new activities.
- Recreational activities are offered to promote the physical health and well being of children.

3.2 Staff provide resources and materials to support children's awareness and understanding of diversity of children's needs, abilities, backgrounds and interests.

- A variety of cultural and inclusive child care materials and literature are available and accessible by the children.
- Staff plan for opportunities to incorporate and celebrate the cultural heritage of the community of families they serve.
- Staff provide the children with opportunities to be sensitive to and celebrate individual differences and unique qualities.

Standard 4: The physical environment provides children with opportunities to explore new interests and physical activities in a safe, supportive setting.

Indoor and outdoor spaces provide opportunities for children to creatively explore their individual interests and have a change of pace from the school day.

4.1 The indoor environment is arranged to facilitate various types of activities, levels of activity and levels of interactions.

- The indoor space provides opportunity for children to creatively explore their individual interests.
- The program provides portable materials that are accessible to children for independent and/or group use.

- The use of computer, TV, video and gaming technology is limited, thoughtful and focused on intended program outcomes.
- A quiet area is available for children to read or complete their homework in addition to the areas that allow for messy or noisy activity.

4.2 The outdoor environment provides for a range of physical activities.

- The staff provide opportunities for a range of daily outdoor physical activities.
- The program provides a variety of recreational equipment to support physical activities appropriate to the season.

Standard 5: The administrative structure supports quality program delivery.

Within the context of the size and structure of the program, the management practices should consistently promote quality. Quality programming for children and their families is developed and maintained through clear communication, supported staff, continual review of practice, making changes and evaluating the effect of changes.

5.1 There is regular sharing of information among administration, staff, families, schools and applicable community organizations.

- There are planned, regular exchanges of information between administration and staff.
- All information exchanged is recorded consistently.

5.2 Policies and procedures are appropriate for the size of the program and are reviewed as the structure changes.

- Policies and procedures are based on knowledge of best practice and grounded in program philosophy.
- The program ensures that policies and practices reflect the diverse needs of the children and families it serves.
- Policies and procedures are clearly implemented in everyday practice.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWEES

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