

How to Talk to Parents and Families About Quality Standards

Why Quality Is Important

- Research shows that quality afterschool programs increase positive outcomes for youth. High-quality afterschool programs are linked to significant gains in test scores, improved work habits, and fewer behavior problems.
- It is not enough for communities to just have access to afterschool programs. Communities need access to consistent and high-quality programs that benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically.

How Quality Standards Can Help Parents and Families

- The Standards help parents to understand the key elements of high-quality programming and what quality programming looks like.
- The Standards can help parents in choosing a quality afterschool program for their children.
- Parents can use the Standards to advocate for the value of afterschool programming with funders, community leaders, and policymakers.
- Parents can also use the Standards to take a leadership role in advocating to their current afterschool program about how it can improve.

What is the Context Statewide

- Programs and organizations statewide have already begun endorsing the Standards like the United Way of Illinois, the Illinois Collaboration on Youth, the Illinois Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, and many others.
- These Standards were developed in partnership with providers around the state and the Illinois State Board of Education and the Department of Human Services.

Beginning to Use the Standards

- Parents should start by going online to assess the Standards and learn more about them. ACT Now offers trainings on the Standards and will offer webinars to foster general knowledge of the Standards.
- Parents can also use ACT Now's Reflection and Planning Guide to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses to open a dialogue with their programs and provide feedback about how to improve.
- Providers can recruit parents to participate in the evaluation process.
- To find Standards resources and more visit:
<http://www.actnowillinois.org/quality-standards/>.