

**Moving from Afterschool  
Training to the Workplace  
The Second Year of the  
Palm Beach County  
Afterschool Educator  
Certificate Program**

**Stephen Baker  
Lauren Johnson  
Konrad Turski  
Tracey Lockaby  
Kathleen Daley  
Susan Klumpner**

**2012**

youth development

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Tracey Lockaby, Kathleen  
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# Introduction, Overview, and Background

The effects of professional development on practitioners and their workplaces is an important concern in the afterschool field. Professional development offers the promise of improving staff quality, satisfaction, and retention. But the effects of professional development instruction are filtered first through practitioners' individual motivations and capacities, and later through their employers' organizational practices, ongoing opportunities for knowledge reinforcement, and evolving career choices. Each of these can affect the work satisfaction, performance, and tenure of practitioners, as well as the application of their training to the afterschool field. Given the value of trained, experienced practitioners in the afterschool field, understanding more about the influences of these factors is a valuable step in understanding the broader potential and limitations of any given professional development approach.

Some of the general guidelines for how to structure professional development to increase its impact have been identified in earlier research. Studies have demonstrated that training can increase learning most effectively when it is ongoing rather than a one-time event (AED, 2002; Weiss, 2005), is hands-on and relates to staff's actual work with youth (Surr, 2001), is connected to an underlying theory or rationale for the practice being taught, and is provided in a setting perceived as safe for trying new approaches (Metz, Burkhauser and Bowie, 2009). Beginning in the fall of 2009, Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc. (Prime Time) piloted a training program called the Palm Beach County Afterschool Educator Certificate (PBC-AEC) that was intended to reflect these kinds of "best practices."

Chapin Hall's study from the first year of implementation concluded that PBC-AEC was structured and operated in ways that were fundamentally consistent with these general guidelines. Moreover, survey results from the pilot year of the study showed high levels of practitioner satisfaction with the PBC-AEC



curriculum. What was less clear from early program implementation, however, was how training would shape and be shaped by practitioners' organizations and the larger context that influences practitioners' subsequent decisions about whether to deepen or lessen their commitment to the afterschool field.

Year two of PBC-AEC implementation, the focus of this report, provided an opportunity to bring into sharper focus the specific learning taking place during training; the ways in which classroom training was being supported or hindered over time by the practitioners' organizations; and other dynamics that influenced practitioners' decisions about their ongoing interest in formal training, education, and remaining in the afterschool field itself.

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## **Key Findings and Overview of This Report**

This report is the second in a series of three planned reports documenting the implementation, evolution, and measurable effects of the Palm Beach County Afterschool Educator Certificate program. Key findings from this study are presented here briefly, organized by the research question guiding this second-year study.

- Analysis of the knowledge assessment scores indicates that PBC-AEC training produced statistically significant gains in practitioner understanding of seven distinct test topics. These gains were both statistically significant, and exceeded an internal program threshold for practitioners' level of learning.
- PBC-AEC graduates who were surveyed between 12 and 18 months after completing training reported a range of ways in which their organizations support the use of PBC-AEC training. These include using course materials, restructuring internal meetings, and linking the Quality Improvement System (QIS) tasks and PBC-AEC training. Staff at some programs identified two key organizational impediments to implementing PBC-AEC concepts. First, some existing program curriculum is highly structured, and it is difficult to incorporate some key ideas from PBC-AEC training (e.g., youth-led activities, voice and choice). Second, the structure of afterschool time typically emphasizes academic and structured activities such as homework help or reading programs earlier in afterschool sessions. Opportunities for youth leadership activities appear to be most common later in afterschool time, when many youth have already been picked up by their parents. Analysis of survey results indicates that directors are significantly less likely than frontline practitioners to cite impediments to applying PBC-AEC training in their workplace. Results also suggest that a higher level of participation by colleagues from the same afterschool program can facilitate the application of PBC-AEC material. These results, however, are suggestive and statistically insignificant in the current sample size.

- PBC-AEC graduates report using the full range of knowledge and skills taught in PBC-AEC. There are some patterns to the content that is most highly valued, but participants express strong satisfaction with all of the components.
- PBC-AEC graduates who were surveyed between 12 and 18 months after completing training were all still in the afterschool field, and all but one was in the same job as at the time of training. The group of graduates who completed the survey is likely not representative of the entire PBC-AEC cohort, nor of afterschool practitioners in general. Nonetheless, open-ended survey responses from these individuals identify specific ways in which practitioners' connections to and interests in the afterschool field have deepened. Given the high levels of satisfaction and perceived impacts from the larger sample of PBC-AEC course participants, we believe the basic mechanisms creating this sense of connection to the field among the subgroup from which we collected data—increasing a sense of mastery, a better sense of career options, greater satisfaction with work—are likely to apply to many others who completed training.

This report is organized into four sections. First, we describe how Prime Time has been structured as an organization to support high quality afterschool programs in Palm Beach County, provide examples of how the more recent PBC-AEC initiative overlaps with existing Prime Time work, and describe the PBC-AEC program and its evolution during the first two years of implementation. We provide a brief overview of research questions and methods for this study and then present findings organized by four clusters of research questions. We conclude with a summary and questions that we believe are important to continuing the implementation and evolution of the PBC-AEC effort.

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## **Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc.: Brief History and Context**

Our first-year report on PBC-AEC provided a detailed description of the history of the organization leading this program, Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc., and located the PBC-AEC within Prime Time's own organizational structure and larger goals (Baker, Lockaby, Guterman, Daley, & Klumpner, 2011). Formally incorporated as a nonprofit in 2001, Prime Time is an intermediary organization that serves afterschool programs and practitioners, and provides supports and resources intended to improve program quality and positively affect school-age youth. With support from the Children's Services Council (CSC) of Palm Beach County and private foundations, Prime Time currently partners with key afterschool stakeholders, including the School District of Palm Beach County, the Department of Parks and Recreation, Palm Beach Health Department, Palm Beach State College, various municipalities, and others with interest in school-aged youth in the county. The current mission of the organization is to "ensure that afterschool programs are of high quality in terms of delivery, practice, and standards."

Prime Time activities are organized under three areas of work: quality improvement, professional development, and community engagement and supports. Table 1 identifies key elements of these three areas. PBC-AEC activities draw primarily upon resources organized under Prime Time's quality improvement and professional development areas; however, all three areas of work support the goals of greater practitioner knowledge and attachment to the afterschool field that are also the shared priorities of the PBC-AEC program. As indicated in Table 1, the PBC-AEC can be thought of as a specific effort, recently developed, that builds upon and integrates substantially with Prime Time's existing professional development curriculum, the practitioner population it serves, and its intended goal to increase practitioner knowledge, program and organization quality, and practitioner attachment to the afterschool field over the longer term. As such, the PBC-AEC program is best understood as one aspect of the much larger, long-standing and holistic quality improvement efforts undertaken by Prime Time.

**Table 1. Prime Time Three Areas of Work and Overlap with PBC-AEC**

	<b>Quality Improvement</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>Community Engagement and Supports</b>
<i>Key programs and activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Improvement System (QIS) provides external assessment, and planning, implementation and self-assessment support</li> <li>• Staff at QIS programs eligible for wage supplements</li> <li>• QIS programs eligible to accept subsidized youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PBC-AEC</li> <li>• Articulated degree pathway from training to associates and bachelor degree</li> <li>• Individual non-credit trainings</li> <li>• Scholarships for training and education</li> <li>• Specification of afterschool practitioner “core competencies”</li> <li>• Professional development progress linked to WAGES and supplement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programming enhancements provided to individual afterschool programs from outside agencies with specific content or expertise (e.g., zoo)</li> <li>• Networking events available to all afterschool practitioners</li> <li>• Initiatives to increase public awareness of afterschool programs and importance</li> </ul>
<i>Primary target population</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 113 after school programs in QIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Palm Beach County afterschool practitioners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afterschool practitioners</li> <li>• Parents and broader population</li> </ul>
<i>Recent changes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created three categories for QIS participants, with increasing levels of program responsibility for maintaining quality over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During summer 2010, PBC-AEC was approved as alternate curriculum to be used for School Age Professional Certification (SAPC)</li> <li>• Starting in Year 3 (fall 2011): new prerequisite of 40-hour certificate; eligible for staff credential upon completion; professional portfolios required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of pilot group of enhancement providers in a modified version of QIS curriculum</li> </ul>
<i>Key overlap with PBC-AEC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QIS assessment based upon High/Scope concepts taught in PBC-AEC</li> <li>• Most of the PBC-AEC participants to date have been at organizations participating in the QIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PBC-AEC designed and led by Prime Time professional development staff</li> <li>• Approximately 45% of PBC-AEC curriculum is also offered as separate trainings</li> <li>• Prime Time career advisor prioritized support to PBC-AEC graduates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking and training events, like PBC-AEC, intended to connect individuals to others in the afterschool field, create a sense of belonging and awareness of opportunities, and increase practice knowledge</li> </ul>

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# Palm Beach County Afterschool Educator Certificate Program

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## PBC-AEC Description and Goals

As indicated in Table 1, the PBC-AEC overlaps and integrates in substantial ways with other activities organized through Prime Time. At the heart of the PBC-AEC is coursework organized around content that is directly linked to Palm Beach County’s “Core Competencies for Afterschool Practitioners” and the Palm Beach County Program Quality Assessment (PBC-PQA). The training provides frontline and supervisory staff from afterschool organizations opportunities to engage in hands-on practical applications of youth development practices and principles. The training is intended to teach important competencies in knowledge, skills, and practice and ultimately result in new career trajectories for participants. Specifically, this training is intended to have an impact on several short-term and longer-term goals of the PBC-AEC:

- increase the afterschool practitioner’s *knowledge* about how to provide quality offerings
- increase the afterschool practitioner’s *ability* (level of skill) to provide quality offerings
- increase how long practitioners stay in their current jobs
- increase how long practitioners stay in the afterschool field
- increase practitioners’ pursuit of higher education

The PBC-AEC has been in operation for two years, referred to in this report as “Pilot Year 1” and “Pilot Year 2.” These names reflect Prime Time’s characterization of this initiative’s continuing developmental nature. Eight cohorts of participants have completed training to date. Table 2 details the time each cohort spent in training.

**Table 2. PBC-AEC Training Cohorts during the First Two Years of Implementation**

<b>Program Year</b>	<b>Training Cohort</b>	<b>Cohort date</b>
Pilot Year 1	1	Sep 2009–Dec 2009
	2	Feb 2010–May 2010
	3	Feb 2010–May 2010
	4	May 2010–July 2010
Pilot Year 2	5	Sep 2010–Dec 2010
	6	Sep 2010–Dec 2010
	7	Jan 2011–April 2011
	8	Jan 2011–April 2011

During the first two years of operation, there have been several important changes to the curriculum, ancillary supports, and the selection of training participants. During the first year, the training program was lengthened between the fall 2009 and spring 2010 sessions, and the training was extended to a summer cohort targeted at school-based programs. The immediate context for the PBC-AEC program changed during the second year with the addition of a career advisor at Prime Time, who began visiting programs and working with individual staff on their performance and professional development. Initially, the career advisor prioritized working with graduates of the PBC-AEC training. At the end of the second year, in the summer of 2011, the role was narrowed to focus exclusively on connecting practitioners with future training and educational opportunities. After a period of several months offering a broad range of developmental and practice supports, the career advisor stopped observing practitioners and providing feedback to individual staff on their implementation of the lessons taught in PBC-AEC.

During the spring and summer of 2011, Prime Time worked to get the PBC-AEC curriculum approved by the Florida Department of Education as meeting the qualifications of the School Age Professional Certificate (SAPC). Beginning in fall 2011 (Year 3), staff who wanted to enroll in PBC-AEC curriculum must do so within the SAPC framework. This requires either the prior completion of the 40-hour youth development certificate or testing out of this prerequisite prior to starting SAPC. The curriculum now includes more extensive professional portfolio requirements. In addition, the post-training assessment process for SAPC graduates mandates workplace observations of training participants by assessors from Palm Beach State College. In the past, individual PBC-AEC participants were not assessed in their workplaces as a condition of completing training.

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# Focus and Research Questions for 2010-2011 Evaluation

For the period of October 2010–September 2011, Prime Time asked Chapin Hall to prioritize research on a subset of the five overall goals identified by Prime Time at the program’s outset and noted earlier in this report. These revised research goals were influenced by several factors:

- The availability of a successfully piloted assessment tool for measuring gains in key knowledge areas among training participants, and an interest in using this data to assess program effectiveness.
- Increased interest among Prime Time staff in understanding the organizational-level dynamics and influences of PBC-AEC, not just the individual-level experiences of training participants. Chapin Hall’s research findings from the pilot year indicated concerns among many training participants that barriers existed to the successful implementation of PBC-AEC training back at their workplace.
- A recognition that the implementation of the career advisor role in the second pilot year would not be as far along as initially expected. In addition to providing follow-up support to training participants, one of the planned roles for the career advisor was to provide grounded feedback to Prime Time on how well PBC-AEC graduates were able to implement the concepts in the course back in their workplace.

Prime Time staff also started to consider the work and evaluation of PBC-AEC within a model of professional development evaluation developed by Thomas Guskey that identifies five critical levels of learning in educational professional development efforts (Guskey, 2000). These five levels range from the assessment of training participants’ experiences (Level 1) to an assessment of how training ultimately affects training participants’ own students (Level 5). Research in the second pilot year prioritizes Guskey’s Levels 2, 3, and 4. Although they are distinct from Guskey’s five-level model, Prime Time was also interested in understanding more about PBC-AEC participants’ choices that affect PBC-AEC’s longer-term outcome goals, including decisions about staying with current employers and in the afterschool field, and pursuing higher education.

These varied interests were the basis of a plan for research guided by four clusters of research questions:

1. Does the PBC-AEC help increase knowledge among participants in the 2010-2011 PBC-AEC, as evidenced by paper-and-pencil assessments? (Guskey's Level 2)
2. What are the organizational issues that support or hinder the use of PBC-AEC skills in afterschool programs? (Guskey's Level 3)
3. What knowledge and skills from the PBC-AEC do participants report using in their work? (Guskey's Level 4)
4. What have been the experiences of participants from the pilot year cohort in remaining in their job or the afterschool field, or pursuing higher education? What are their current thoughts or plans about these long-term outcomes? What role do they ascribe to PBC-AEC and other factors in explaining these decisions and outcomes?

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## **Research Methods, Data Collection, and Analysis**

This study relies upon both primary and secondary data sources, and several complementary data collection and analysis activities. Table 3 below provides an overview of research protocols, data collection activities, and data analysis.

For quantitative data, we adopted a variety of analytic procedures, including generating descriptive data and using ordinary least squares, logistic regression, and nonparametric analyses to compare differences within our data. For qualitative data, our typical progression of analysis began with a recorded event (e.g., an interview, a follow-up survey or a focus group), followed by an initial summary of key points drawn from notes. Recordings were transcribed by Chapin Hall researchers, and these transcriptions were segmented into textual units (e.g., sentences or paragraphs) that corresponded to either pre-existing research questions (deductive analysis) or to unanticipated concepts (inductive analysis). Finally, these textual units were coded in a qualitative analysis program, Atlas.ti, with a specific set of codes distilled from the preliminary coding process, the study's research questions, and conceptual categories identified in Guskey's writings.



**Table 3. Overview of research methods, data collection and analysis**

<b>Key data sources</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Data collection</b>	<b>Qualitative analysis</b>	<b>Quantitative analysis</b>
Prime Time pretest/posttest of knowledge measures	Survey of 7 PBC-AEC course areas	December 2010 (some course areas) and April 2011	N/A	Prime Time initial analysis; Chapin Hall data cleaning and confirmatory analysis  Differences among cohorts in pretest and posttest scores
Chapin Hall in-class surveys	Primarily close-ended survey on initial participation, satisfaction, perceived value	December 2010 and April 2011	Short responses, no formal analysis completed	Descriptive data for combined Year 1 and Year 2 data ( $N = 215$ )  Additional analysis of associations among items
Focus Groups	14 questions (e.g., status of implementing PBC-AEC); demographic data	December 2010 and April 2011	Transcribed, coded, analyzed	Comparison of focus group demographics to larger class cohort
Follow-up survey of 2009-2010 participants	Follow-up survey with customized questions, and open- and closed-ended questions	13 completed February – July 2011	13 interviews transcribed, coded, and analyzed	Descriptive data  Comparison of views in 2011 to views of cohort from which drawn
Prime Time staff	Interviews covering 6 themes for PBC-AEC instructors; career advisor implementation practices	Two instructors (February and July 2011); career advisor (August 2011)	Transcribed, analyzed for program description and context	N/A
Case study	Follow-up survey, interviews, site observations	Three site visits: December 2010 and April 7 and 29, 2011  Substantial overlap with follow-up survey sample; 10 individuals from non-school site; 6 from school site.	Transcribed, coded, and analyzed	For individuals also in the follow-up survey sample: descriptive data and comparison of 2011 views to views of original cohort from which drawn

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# Study Findings

The four clusters of research questions are used to frame our presentation of findings below, blending multiple data sources where possible to answer these questions.

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## **Research Question 1: Does the PBC-AEC increase knowledge among participants in 2010-2011 cohorts?**

Chapin Hall's analysis of knowledge gains is based upon exams that Prime Time staff administered to select cohorts before and after the PBC-AEC training curriculum. To provide the context for these findings, we review other studies that traced the effect of professional development programs on increased knowledge among participants. Next, we review our work in validating the PBC-AEC knowledge assessment results dataset in light of prior analyses conducted on this dataset. Finally, we present analysis suggesting robust increases in test scores associated with participation in the PBC-AEC program.

### **Prior Studies on Professional Development and Knowledge Gains: A brief overview**

Guskey (2000) defines the cognitive goals of professional development as those motivating “participants’ understanding of the content they teach, the theory and rationale behind new ideas or innovations, the practices necessary for successful implementation, the procedures involved in making appropriate learner or contextual adaptations, and the expected outcomes” (124-5). Typically, Guskey argues, measuring the attainment of such goals can be accomplished through a combination of exams, evaluation forms, interviews, personal learning logs, and case studies.

The literature on knowledge gains from professional development among afterschool practitioners is meager, but many of the dynamics of professional development are similar to school-day teacher professional development. Guskey’s conceptualization of professional development is based upon this population, and some of the research on teachers is also helpful in considering afterschool practitioner

professional development. Borko's (2004) review of the research on teacher professional development concludes that intensive professional development programs increase teacher knowledge when teachers engage in *explicit, concentrated subject learning* (see Neale, Smith, & Johnson, 1990; Smith & Neale, 1991; Schifter & Simon, 1992). This gives teachers extensive knowledge of specific content areas, which in turn leads to increased youth knowledge and understanding (see Anderson, 1989; Ball, 1990; Borko & Putnam, 1996; McDiarmid, Ball, & Anderson, 1989). In this regard, however, there may be important differences between certified school-day teacher professional development and PBC-AEC afterschool practitioner professional development. Intense subject learning is not the basis of instruction in PBC-AEC, where practitioners are taught a common set of procedures for *how* to work with youth, distinct from any area of practitioner subject learning (e.g., music, art, or sports). Borko also found that research has highlighted the importance of teachers' *comprehension of student learning and thinking processes* (see Schifter & Fosnot, 1993), which is an important aspect of the PBC-AEC curriculum. Professional development programs that focus on these two areas of teacher learning also affect *instructional practices* and further improve student learning (see Franke, Carpenter, Levi, & Fennema, 2001).

In one recent application of this approach, Garet et al. (2001) directly assessed the effect of professional development on knowledge gains in a 1997–1998 posttraining study of 1,027 mathematics and science teachers participating in a professional development program. Overall, the study found that professional development positively impacts teaching in the science and mathematics field, but stressed the need for content teaching over mere “process and delivery systems” (936). The results of the survey suggest that the duration of the professional development program, as well its focus on content knowledge and active learning, were all positively related to “enhanced knowledge and skills” among the teachers undergoing training.

Not all studies conclude that professional development results directly in practitioner learning. In a series of case studies, Rosebery and Warren concluded that curriculum-based teaching often failed to produce a real change in practitioner beliefs about the value of the curricula they are being trained in (Warren & Rosebery, 1995; Warren & Rosebery, 1996; Rosebery, 1998). When the training was modified to allow a greater level of practitioner interaction and discourse, however, participants demonstrated higher levels of shared knowledge development, though the knowledge gained remained difficult to codify. Warren and Rosebery (1995) concluded that “construction of shared meaning does not happen in an orderly, linear progression ... [r]ather, it has a more mobile, mutable, improvisational character” (10-11).

This finding is validated in an overview of the professional development field conducted by Wilson and Berne (1999). According to the authors, “[d]espite researchers’ best intentions, it is still difficult ... to know what the participants learned in many ... professional development projects” (195). In administering

tests of the material, researchers can ascertain cognition of taught concepts; however, a broader understanding of changes in beliefs, attitudes about learning, and perspectives towards students may prove a more difficult task. Thus, it may be easier to measure changes in factual knowledge than assess whether training recipients have the necessary attitudes and beliefs to put these facts into practice.

As suggested by this brief review, the expected knowledge gains from professional development are affected by the content and dynamics of the training setting. Professional development that focuses on learning specific content that is to be taught later to youth is important in influencing youth outcomes, but learning content itself may not be sufficient to effectively transfer learning. Professional development participants also benefit when they are able to explore and confirm the value of what they are learning.

### **Data Validation and Review**

For this study, Chapin Hall validated and analyzed a dataset that contained the results of seven knowledge assessment exams conducted before and after PBC-AEC training. Subjects included the 118 practitioners participating in cohorts 5 through 8 (September 2010 to April 2011). According to Prime Time staff, in order to prevent practitioner fatigue, exams were staggered so not all cohorts undertook every pre- and post-training exam.

Chapin Hall researchers performed cleanup, validation, and transformation of the provided dataset, including tests for consistency in exam scores. When inconsistencies were detected (e.g., groups of test scores that deviated unexpectedly across cohorts), the information was shared with Prime Time, which subsequently corrected the affected data. The process of formulating control variables was aided by Prime Time's provision of additional demographic information. Control variables included in the final analysis were cohort number, gender, education level, and whether the practitioner is a director at their afterschool program. Our analysis of exam results included cohort controls in order to mitigate differences among the makeup of the cohort participants.

Prime Time's initial analysis of knowledge gains indicated increases in scores between the pretest administered prior to the start of a training component, and the posttest administered at its conclusion. This analysis was extended by Chapin Hall by introducing other data as controls and focusing on the meaning of changes in scores around important thresholds. Some methods of testing differences in score gains do not distinguish between, for example, a score increase from 0 to 20 percent correct and an increase from 60 to 80 percent correct. Those methods may not be desirable because they do not indicate whether the gains raise scores to a level of critical mastery. Accordingly, Chapin Hall settled on a threshold-based method of analysis and, through consultation with Prime Time, selected two thresholds: 60 percent (passing) and 80 percent (proficiency).

## Study Methodology and Results

Chapin Hall ran an analysis testing if practitioners' scores following the completion of the program component exceeded the 60 and 80 percent thresholds when controlling for various demographic characteristics. Table 4 presents the probability of practitioners' exceeding the thresholds when using the control variables. Since the study design did not include a control group of practitioners (i.e., a group not undertaking training), we randomly divided the 118 practitioners in the study and used the pre-training scores for one half and the post-training scores for the other half. We used this random division to avoid the potential of autocorrelation from the reuse of identical observations for pre- and post-assessment scores. We also wanted to avoid the possibility that estimates of pre- and posttest scores may be correlated due to individual characteristics. Our confidence intervals were generated using a bootstrap procedure, a technique that does not make any assumptions about the distribution of the data.

**Table 4. Predicted Probability of Exceeding Exam Threshold before and after PBC-AEC Training<sup>a</sup>**

		60 Percent Threshold		80 Percent Threshold	
Exam 1	Without Training (Control)	34.7 (16.8, 44.4)	Significant at 5% Level	7.3 (2.1, 13.8)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	69.6 (60.6, 87.8)		42.1 (27.7, 63.0)	
Exam 2	Without Training (Control)	19.6 (13.6, 31.1)	Significant at 5% Level	0.0 (0.0, 0.0)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	83.1 (70.3, 93.2)		49.0 (34.6, 67.9)	
Exam 3	Without Training (Control)	75.1 (59.5, 93.3)	Not Significant at 5% Level	11.7 (3.0, 20.0)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	93.8 (89.9, 100.0)		68.1 (54.0, 76.4)	
Exam 4	Without Training (Control)	27.6 (16.9, 47.8)	Significant at 5% Level	6.4 (0.0, 14.1)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	95.2 (85.1, 100.0)		76.1 (51.3, 83.1)	
Exam 5	Without Training (Control)	21.3 (9.9, 34.4)	Significant at 5% Level	0.0 (0.0, 0.0)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	87.8 (78.1, 97.6)		68.6 (57.2, 74.6)	
Exam 6	Without Training (Control)	2.9 (0.0, 9.1)	Significant at 5% Level	3.0 (0.0, 8.9)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	85.3 (77.3, 95.9)		64.5 (49.1, 79.5)	
Exam 7	Without Training (Control)	0.0 (0.0, 0.0)	Significant at 5% Level	0.0 (0.0, 0.0)	Significant at 5% Level
	After Training	59.5 (43.1, 74.0)		16.3 (8.9, 25.0)	

<sup>a</sup> The data in this table use interval bands of 5% confidence. The controls used for the group without training were cohort membership, age, education level, and directorship status.

The results of the logistic regression analysis using the 60 and 80 percent thresholds suggest that PBC-AEC has a significant and important effect on improving practitioner performance on the seven knowledge assessment exams administered by Prime Time. For example, when a 60 percent threshold to measure “passing” is used for Exam 1, 69.6 percent of practitioners who undertook PBC-AEC training passed. By contrast, just 34.7 percent of practitioners whose pretest scores were used passed the 60 percent threshold. In other words, a much larger proportion of participants was able to pass the 60 percent threshold after completing the training component. Since the 5 percent confidence intervals before and after the training do not overlap, we conclude that the probability of scoring higher than 60 percent on Exam 1 is significantly higher after training. Similar results were obtained for the 80% threshold for this and other exams. Exam 3 did not show any significant increase at the 5 percent level in performance attributable to PBC-AEC training when applying a 60 percent threshold. This appears to be because approximately three-fourths of training participants were already able to answer 60% of the pre-test

questions correctly—a much larger proportion than for other exams. Thus, those who completed training were significantly more likely to achieve the threshold of learning (80% correct) that was identified by PBC-AEC staff as a meaningful measure of accomplishment.

Validation of the results was completed using a standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression (not shown) with an analogous random-assignment control group setup. The results of the OLS regression confirm the results from the approach above. In particular, the presence of PBC-AEC training plays a significant and positive role in improving exam results on each knowledge assessment test at both the 1 and 5 percent significance levels.

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## **Research Question 2: What are the organizational issues that hinder and support the use of PBC-AEC skills in afterschool programs?**

### **Prior Studies on Organizational Barriers and Facilitators to the Transfer of Training to Workplace: A brief overview**

Those with interest in the role of professional development programs in practitioner learning also must work with challenges that emerge when practitioners try to apply what they have learned in a professional development setting. Guskey (2000), in an overview of organizational support structures, highlights ten such structures that can influence the success of professional development efforts. These include organization policies, resources, and support from colleagues, principals, and higher-level administrators. Guskey emphasizes *organization culture* as a potential obstacle to the successful implementation of professional development efforts, as cultures tend to reject or accept slowly attempts at structural change. Success, then, is contingent upon professional development efforts recognizing and adapting to the variable contexts and settings of educational organizations.

A number of studies have emphasized how collaboration and cooperation among practitioners facilitate application of skills acquired in training. In one comparative study, Penuel, Frank, and Krause (2006) argue that the development of social capital and communication among practitioners is related to the success of implementation. Similarly, Little (1993) found that the participation of entire schools in a program can motivate and facilitate effective implementation when teachers return to the classroom.

In a recent study, Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher (2007) supplement these findings with results that stress the interactions among personal professional development goals, school district goals, and the particular professional development curriculum. Based on an assessment of 454 teachers conducted in 2004, the study suggests that creating professional development programs that align with practitioner's perceptions and objectives is a significant predictor of "protocol use and preparation for student inquiry" (951).

### **Organizational factors that support or hinder implementation**

Chapin Hall collected comprehensive, anonymous post-training survey data from more than 90 percent of practitioners participating in the PBC-AEC program during its first two years. Results from these surveys reveal varying degrees of satisfaction with training and sensitivity toward potential predictors of program implementation. As indicated in Table 5, more than 80 percent of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that participating in PBC-AEC alongside others from their program improved learning during and after the program. An overwhelming majority of participants indicated that support from and promotion of training by colleagues and directors influenced their decision to participate. However, barriers to attending PBC-AEC were reported by over 30 percent of participants.

**Table 5. Survey Findings from Years 1 and Year 2**

Having others from my program in the PBC-AEC at the same time...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
...helped me learn the course material	2% 5	10% 22	51% 110	33% 70	4% 8
...helped reinforce my learning while at work	1% 2	6% 13	42% 90	47% 102	4% 8
...helped me learn from my co-workers	1% 3	4% 8	39% 83	53% 113	4% 8

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
<b>Views upon completing program:</b>					
Attending PBC-AEC with others from my agency was a good idea	1% 2	1% 3	23% 50	72% 154	3% 6
In general, having multiple staff from the same agency attend AEC together is a good idea	1% 1	1% 1	22% 48	76% 163	1% 2
Having one's supervisor in PBC-AEC training at the same time is a good idea	2% 5	4% 9	38% 82	49% 105	7% 14
Having one's peers from the same agency taking PBC-AEC training at the same time is a good idea	1% 2	1% 2	34% 72	62% 134	2% 5
I learned a lot during this training from individuals I work with at my agency/school	1% 2	5% 10	39% 83	54% 116	2% 4
My supervisor or program administrator encouraged me to participate	1% 3	4% 9	47% 102	41% 89	6% 12
My co-workers influenced my decision to participate	8% 18	21% 45	44% 94	20% 43	7% 15
I had to overcome challenging barriers to be able to participate in PBC-AEC training.	16% 35	47% 101	26% 56	8% 18	2% 5

Importance of Factors related to practitioner Organizations when Considering whether to Remain in the Afterschool Field:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Whether my program has sufficient resources for programming	1% 1	5% 11	28% 60	64% 137	3% 6
Opportunity for advancement	1% 1	4% 9	15% 32	78% 168	2% 5
Having a clear path for professional development	2% 4	6% 13	21% 45	69% 148	2% 5

Sample consists of the 215 AEC participants, except when not all cohorts were surveyed for a particular question.

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In each cell, the top number represents the percent of respondents who chose that answer and the bottom number represents the total number of respondents who chose that answer.

## Study Data Processing, Methodology, and Results

A multinomial logistic regression was undertaken to predict the probability of a practitioner agreeing with a series of Likert-type scale responses to three specific statements that were solid measures of this second research question:



1. “Having others from my program in the PBC-AEC at the same time helped me to learn the course materials.”
2. “My current employer makes it easy to use what I have learned in this training.”
3. “My current employer has existing policies or practices that make it difficult to use what I learned in this training”

To facilitate analysis, categories that had very few responses were broadened to include responses from categories above or below. In particular, due to overwhelmingly positive responses to statements two and three, responses to these questions were merged into just two categories: *Strongly Agreeing/Disagreeing* and *Not Strongly Agreeing/Disagreeing*. With only two categories, the multinomial logistic regression was collapsed into a simpler logistic regression form for these two questions.

Controls included in the analysis were selected through in-house consultation and reference to studies stressing the importance of group and director participation in training programs. Results, presented in Table 6 below, were controlled for gender, director status, whether practitioner worked 30 or more hours, and whether the practitioner had a college education at the time of training.

**Table 6. Predicted Probability of Agreeing with Statement “Having others from my program in the PBC-AEC at the same time helped me to learn the course materials”<sup>a</sup>**

	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Not Director	11.3% (6.4%, 16.9%)	53.4% (44.5%, 61.0%)	35.2% (27.6%, 43.8%)
Director	14.8% (3.4%, 30.0%)	40.7% (22.2%, 60.0%)	44.4% (25.0%, 65.2%)
Female	11.6% (6.4%, 17.6%)	51.0% (41.3%, 59.0%)	37.4% (29.3%, 45.9%)
Male	13.3% (2.7%, 26.1%)	53.3% (35.7%, 71.0%)	33.3% (17.4%, 51.9%)
Under 30 Hrs Worked	10.0% (3.3%, 17.7%)	60.0% (47.8%, 71.4%)	30.0% (18.7%, 41.4%)
Over 30 Hrs Worked	13.2% (6.8%, 20.5%)	45.4% (34.8%, 55.1%)	41.4% (31.8%, 51.9%)
No College Education	7.9% (3.4%, 13.1%)	54.4% (44.8%, 63.3%)	37.7% (28.9%, 47.2%)
College Education	20.0% (10.2%, 31.0%)	45.4% (31.8%, 58.7%)	34.6% (22.6%, 48.2%)
< 1 Year Experience in Afterschool Field	13.4% (3.0%, 25.2%)	47.2% (30.8%, 64.1%)	39.4% (24.7%, 56.2%)
>1 Year Experience	11.5% (6.6%, 17.1%)	52.7% (43.4%, 61.1%)	35.9% (28.2%, 44.3%)
Does not intend to leave in next year	11.5% (6.4%, 17.6%)	50.6% (41.0%, 58.6%)	37.9% (30.1%, 46.7%)
Intends to leave in next year	13.8% (3.1%, 27.3%)	55.2% (35.7%, 74.2%)	31.0% (14.3%, 50.0%)
5 or Fewer Colleagues Participating in Training	9.1% (3.1%, 16.3%)	54.5% (41.1%, 66.7%)	36.4% (24.4%, 49.3%)
6 - 10 Colleagues Participating in Training	12.0% (6.5%, 18.3%)	50.8% (41.2%, 58.6%)	37.2% (29.5%, 45.4%)
> 10 Colleagues Participating in Training	14.1% (7.1%, 23.1%)	49.5% (37.3%, 61.2%)	36.4% (25.8%, 48.4%)

<sup>a</sup> 5% Confidence Interval Bands

The results of this analysis do not show statistically significant differences across the subgroups in Table 6; however, certain trends may be suggestive. For example, practitioners with a college education or higher appear to be more than twice as likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement than are practitioners without a college education. Responses to this question suggest that staff with less formal education may perceive greater benefit from attending with colleagues from their program than those with a college education. These results do not differ statistically, however, so we cannot make strong conclusions about the factors influencing preference for PBC-AEC participation of colleagues.

Table 7, below, gauges the probability of practitioners strongly agreeing with the statement that their employers support application of PBC-AEC training. Directors appear more inclined to agree with this statement, as do practitioners who work more than 30 hours a week. Other factors, including gender, education level, and desire to remain in the field, do not appear to differ appreciably in their effect. As before, no conclusive statistical differences are observed.

**Table 7. Predicted Probability of Strongly Agreeing with Statement “My current employer makes it easy to use what I have learned in this training”<sup>a</sup>**

	Do Not Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Not Director	46.2% (33.4%, 56.4%)	53.8% (43.6%, 66.6%)
Director	25.0% (0.0%, 50.0%)	75.0% (50.0%, 100.0%)
Female	43.7% (30.2%, 57.2%)	56.3% (42.8%, 69.8%)
Male	41.2% (18.2%, 66.7%)	58.8% (33.3%, 81.8%)
Under 30 Hrs Worked	52.9% (37.2%, 67.6%)	47.1% (32.4%, 62.8%)
Over 30 Hrs Worked	35.4% (19.1%, 50.8%)	64.6% (49.2%, 80.9%)
No College Education	43.1% (30.8%, 54.7%)	56.9% (45.3%, 69.2%)
College Education	43.5% (25.9%, 65.2%)	56.5% (34.8%, 74.1%)
< 1 Year Experience in Afterschool Field	36.4% (10.0%, 66.7%)	63.6% (33.3%, 90.0%)
>1 Year Experience	44.2% (32.6%, 55.3%)	55.8% (44.7%, 67.4%)
Does not intend to leave in next year	42.6% (30.9%, 54.8%)	57.4% (45.2%, 69.1%)
Intends to leave in next year	45.4% (23.1%, 72.7%)	54.6% (27.3%, 76.9%)
5 or Fewer Colleagues Participating in Training	39.3% (22.0%, 60.2%)	60.7% (39.8%, 78.0%)
6 - 10 Colleagues Participating in Training	43.5% (31.0%, 54.8%)	56.5% (45.2%, 69.0%)
> 10 Colleagues Participating in Training	45.0% (30.2%, 58.8%)	55.0% (41.2%, 69.8%)

<sup>a</sup> 5% Confidence Interval Bands; Results restricted to Cohorts 5-8

Table 8 reveals a consistent, but not statistically significant, trend suggesting that a greater amount of experience and more hours worked with an afterschool program is consistent with a perception of reduced policy barriers to implementation. As before, directors report substantially fewer barriers to implementation than do frontline practitioners; in this case, however, the result is statistically significant (i.e., the values in the confidence intervals do not overlap between these two groups). Given the critical influence of program directors over how front-line staff do their work, it is encouraging that program directors are relatively hopeful about the possibilities of using PBC-AEC. At the same time, front-line practitioners’ relatively higher concerns about implementing PBC-AEC may represent specific concrete challenges that are not shared by program directors.

**Table 8. Predicted Probability of Strongly Disagreeing with statement “My current employer has existing policies or practices that make it difficult to use what I learned in this training”<sup>a</sup>**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Do Not Strongly Disagree</b>
Not Director	34.0% (23.4%, 44.9%)	66.0% (55.1%, 76.6%)
Director	83.3% (57.2%, 100.0%)	16.7% (0.0%, 42.8%)
Female	42.2% (31.3%, 54.2%)	57.8% (45.8%, 68.7%)
Male	35.3% (11.8%, 57.1%)	64.7% (42.9%, 88.2%)
Under 30 Hrs Worked	29.5% (14.8%, 45.1%)	70.5% (54.9%, 85.2%)
Over 30 Hrs Worked	50.0% (36.7%, 64.1%)	50.0% (35.9%, 63.3%)
No College Education	37.1% (25.5%, 49.8%)	62.9% (50.2%, 74.5%)
College Education	48.3% (30.4%, 65.6%)	51.7% (34.4%, 69.6%)
< 1 Year Experience in Afterschool Field	29.7% (0.0%, 61.0%)	70.3% (39.0%, 100.0%)
>1 Year Experience	42.4% (32.2%, 54.3%)	57.6% (45.7%, 67.8%)
Does not intend to leave in next year	43.0% (32.4%, 54.8%)	57.0% (45.2%, 67.6%)
Intends to leave in next year	32.8% (12.0%, 56.2%)	67.2% (43.8%, 88.0%)
5 or Fewer Colleagues Participating in Training	37.0% (18.9%, 57.0%)	63.0% (43.0%, 81.1%)
6 - 10 Colleagues Participating in Training	38.3% (26.2%, 51.5%)	61.7% (48.5%, 73.8%)
> 10 Colleagues Participating in Training	44.7% (31.3%, 60.0%)	55.3% (40.0%, 68.7%)

<sup>a</sup> 5% Confidence Interval Bands; Results restricted to Cohorts 5-8

## Follow-up Survey Findings

Follow-up surveys with staff who completed training in Pilot Year 1 (2009-2010) provided a complementary view of this survey data. Some of the staff who completed a follow-up survey were located at two organizations where we sought to interview all current staff, including some who had not participated in PBC-AEC training in Year 1. We referred to these organizations as “case study” sites, and they provided an opportunity to understand the place of PBC-AEC within the larger afterschool setting. In the section below, we identify findings drawn from both of these data collection approaches.

### Organizational factors of support or hindrance regarding implementation: Qualitative Data

We presented survey findings in this report using existing categories from the survey instrument, but in analyzing and reporting qualitative data, we started with categories identified by Thomas Guskey. Guskey outlined ten elements of organization support and change that guided our analysis of participant interviews, identified in Table 9 below. From these ten, we used five broad categories to organize participant responses about organizational factors that support or hinder implementing the lessons taught in PBC-AEC: organization structure, resources, colleagues, program directors, and broader context.

**Table 9. Overlap between Guskey's Level 3 Framework and Chapin Hall Categories of Analysis**

		Chapin Hall Coding Categories				
	<b>Aspect</b>	Organization structure	Resources	Colleagues	Program director	Broader context
Guskey's Aspects of Organization Support and Change	Organization policies	<b>X</b>				
	Resources		<b>X</b>			
	Protection from intrusion	<b>X</b>				
	Openness to experimentation & alleviation of fears			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
	Collegial support			<b>X</b>		
	Program director leadership & support				<b>X</b>	
	Principal leadership & support					<b>X</b>
	Higher-level administrator leadership & support					<b>X</b>
	Recognition of success				<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
	Provision of time	<b>X</b>				

## **Organization structure**

Many organization policies and structures were identified as supports for implementing PBC-AEC concepts. Some directors and frontline workers reported that the structure of staff meetings was changed to reflect PBC-AEC practices. These changes include utilizing activities in meetings such as icebreakers and energizers. Staff meetings were also a forum for brainstorming with directors and frontline workers about ways to improve program quality. Directors indicated that the PBC-AEC encouraged them to increase staff involvement in scheduling and planning activities, utilizing voice and choice concepts at an organizational level.

There were a variety of different scheduling policies used by afterschool programs, shaped in part by the existing curricula used at the programs. Some agency program schedules were described as rigidly planned but not a barrier to implementing ideas from PBC-AEC training, while other schedules limited workers' ability to effectively utilize PBC-AEC practices and skills. Some frontline workers seemed to operate effectively with a high level of structure that consistently ensured PBC-AEC practices were utilized throughout the program schedule. Other agencies struggled to effectively manage mandated curricula. According to directors and frontline workers, existing mandated curricula could be time consuming and hinder their ability to use PBC-AEC practices. Some practitioners worried that mandated curricula limited the amount of free play that could be integrated into the schedule, something often requested by the youth. Some agencies had more flexible schedules because the agency did not have a formal commitment to a specific curriculum. Perhaps not surprisingly, these sites rarely reported scheduling as a barrier to implementation of PBC-AEC practices and skills.

## **Resources**

Access to resources shaped adaptation of the PBC-AEC directly, and may have had indirect effects as well. Most of the practitioners interviewed indicated that they continued to use the PBC-AEC take home materials, a strong measure of how the training was being applied afterwards. Some used the materials when creating lesson plans in order to find new and different activities to use at their site. Others used the materials to "review" or "refresh" their memories about various lessons and information learned during the PBC-AEC training. Take home materials also played a role in internal training sessions. Some program directors used the materials during staff meetings to retrain and motivate their staff to continue implementing PBC-AEC practices and skills. As one director said:

Being a part of the AEC and having that material with you, if there are any questions that staff has we can always refer back to that and use that as a tool to improve the program.

Frontline workers would also use the take home materials when providing one-on-one instruction to colleagues who had not attended PBC-AEC training. PBC-AEC take home materials were also used by programs to help practitioners work towards Quality Improvement System (QIS) improvement plan goals.

There were other resource impacts on the programs where PBC-AEC graduates worked, though the link to PBC-AEC implementation was indirect. Some directors noted other Prime Time resources, including enhancement programs and the lending library, were beneficial to their programs. Enhancements offered opportunities for youth to be exposed to different forms of play, such as music and dance. These programs, and the lending library, were a great resource to programs that struggled with decreases in funding.

Another issue, raised by school-based programs, was space and facilities.. Not having permanent rooms or designated spaces for school-based afterschool programs proved to be a challenge for some practitioners. This hindered their ability to engage in long-term youth projects and create bulletin boards with material specific to the afterschool program; both of these practices can reinforce participant ownership and leadership.

### **Colleagues**

Collegial support was an important contributor to curriculum implementation. Frontline workers said that attending PBC-AEC training with the majority of colleagues at their agency helped them become a more cohesive group and improved support and communication. Frontline workers benefitted from exchanging information with their colleagues such as sharing implementation experiences and asking for or giving advice on how best to implement PBC-AEC practices. Some practitioners expressed that staff was more “on the same page” since participating in PBC-AEC, and that this collegial support had endured since the staff attended PBC-AEC training. Directors perceived performance gaps among PBC-AEC trained staff and non-trained staff, with implications for implementing good practices. As one director stated:

It’s just a night and day difference between someone who has gone through and [someone who] hasn't gone through it. They take more ownership in the program.

Not all practitioners described collegial support at their agency. Some practitioners felt that only having a portion of the frontline workers trained at their agency was a barrier to consistent implementation of PBC-AEC practices. In programs with high staff turnover, some directors struggled to make sure that all their staff had participated in the PBC-AEC over time, which created barriers to cohesion and practice consistency among the staff. However, directors and frontline staff indicated that this could be mitigated by informal training, such as giving a presentation on PBC-AEC or offering continued support to non-trained staff.

Two frontline workers described a model of successful exchange between a PBC-AEC trained worker and a worker who had not been trained. As described by the trained practitioner, “When I went to the class I would come back...the same day...and tell her everything I learned.” This frontline practitioner stated that she saw herself as a resource for the all of the staff, both trained and untrained: “I’m like one of the go-to people for everybody because I’ve been there the longest, so a lot of people come to me and I’m happy to share.” She offered one-on-one support to other staff members and often used the take-home materials as a way to do this.

### **Program directors**

Many of the frontline workers described their program directors as supportive and enthusiastic about utilizing PBC-AEC skills and information in practice. Most directors attended PBC-AEC along with their staff, and directors and frontline workers agreed that was beneficial in ensuring everyone was “on the same page.” Many reported that this opened up a line of communication with their director that had not previously existed, and encouraged frontline staff to feel more comfortable addressing problems or presenting ideas to their program directors. This also led to planning and scheduling becoming more of a group effort, with directors granting frontline workers more opportunities (or in some cases complete discretion) to develop lesson plans. Directors and frontline workers also reported that PBC-AEC seemed to motivate directors to become more proactive about improving program quality.

### **Broader context**

Although the research question guiding this area of inquiry focused upon organizational issues, Guskey (2000) notes (and our respondents identified) the importance of broader contextual factors and their consequences for their organization and practices. The influences that are a part of the broader context include Prime Time (e.g., QIS), school administration, larger collegial networks, and parents.

### **Prime Time**

In addition to the support provided by Prime Time resources of enhancement programs and the lending library, practitioners often expressed a strong bond with specific Prime Time staff members, including PBC-AEC instructors, quality advisors, and the career advisor, which motivated them to use PBC-AEC practices and improve their programs. As one director said:

*I think they really care. You could really sense that they care. You get that feeling just by talking to them, when you see them, run into them at different events. They remember you, they ask how your family is, how your program is going.*

Practitioners at QIS-participating sites found QIS to be an additional source of support in utilizing PBC-AEC practices and skills because they described the close links between QIS and PBC-AEC. QIS served to reinforce the lessons and practices learned from the PBC-AEC, and the lessons and practices were

often used to meet program goals created by program staff in concert with quality advisors. As one director explained:

The same type of outcomes that you're expecting with PBC-AEC, [the quality advisors are] expecting from our assessment and from our program. So they're aligned. And so when she helps me do good on my assessment—my advisor—she's actually helping me make sure I have the AEC in there.

### **School administration**

Some school district programs described barriers to implementation of PBC-AEC practices because of the time constraints created by the school district's academic or curricular requirements. Several directors from school district program sites, however, described scenarios where their school site, or specifically their principal, became increasingly supportive of the afterschool practitioners' priorities for scheduling and curricula requirements. While some of the schools required specific curricula be used in the afterschool setting, schools' administrators sometimes offered program directors more discretion to design or select the programs, which in turn gave program directors the flexibility to integrate PBC-AEC practices into the schedule. One director described one example of changes following her participation in PBC-AEC:

...the kids were tired of so much academics because we had the math initiative, the science initiative, we had ALEI, and then we had the art initiative. And the kids didn't have any choice [in] what they were doing. That's what the principal chose...and it was just too much...This year we have more freedom since we don't have to do exactly what the district or my principal chose.

There were, however, some practitioners in school district sites that perceived barriers to PBC-AEC implementation due to school administration policies, including mandated afterschool curriculum. Other policies deterred one program director from being able to fully implement the Youth Advisory Council, because as she stated, "you can't actually have students making all the decisions because we have to follow guidelines."

### **Broader collegial network**

Directors and frontline workers alike expressed the advantages of forming professional network connections during PBC-AEC. Practitioners, following training, were able to reach out to colleagues at other agencies to share ideas, knowledge, and experiences. As one frontline worker explained:

I think the people that you meet during the training, some of them leave a long-term impact on you. Even if it's three or four times a year you call them up and say, "Hey, what are you doing? What's new? What's new at your place?"

Practitioners were able to maintain these professional relationships in part through Prime Time networking events as well as other Prime Time trainings.



## **Parents**

Some practitioners voiced concerns about parent-related challenges that hindered their integration of PBC-AEC practices and skills. Attendance was the chief concern, which included inconsistent youth attendance and early pickup from the program. Some frontline workers pointed out that because the number of attending youth was unpredictable on a day-to-day basis, activities that they had previously planned for their group on any given day might no longer be possible because attendance was low. Similar limitations on applying the PBC-AEC training occurred when youth were picked up early by their parents. If activities influenced by PBC-AEC were planned for the latter part of the afternoon—when staff reported the greatest opportunity for incorporating PBC-AEC principles—youth who were picked up shortly after scheduled homework help sessions were unable to participate.

One director attributed this pattern of attendance to low levels of “parent buy-in” and the misconception that her afterschool programs was more of an “aftercare” or “babysitting” service. This director said she responded to this barrier by informing youth’s parents of the professional development activities that she and her staff are engaged in. Used in this way, professional development was not just a benefit to individual practitioners, but a support to the organization in reframing to parents what afterschool programming is about. Conversely, one frontline worker shared that she does not experience attendance issues because the youth in her group have made a point to ask their parents not pick them up until the end of the day at 6:00 PM.

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## **What Knowledge and Skills from PBC-AEC do Participants Report Using in Their Work?**

### **Interview Findings**

Chapin Hall staff analyzed follow-up survey responses linked to specific lessons and topics in the PBC-AEC training curriculum. The examples provided in Table 10 represent a broad selection of survey responses of both directors and frontline workers from many different programs.

**Table 10. Reported use of PBC-AEC Knowledge and Skills**

PBC-AEC Curriculum Component	Open-ended Survey Response Example(s)	Closed-ended Survey Response Example(s)
Bringing Yourself to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I have a lot of things going on in my life and it’s so easy to bring them to work with you but I’ve learned more....I’m just trying to be more positive and try to listen more and be a better person.”</li> <li>• “I think the most important [AEC practice] is working together as a team...”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working as a team is a skill that practitioners appreciate even before training concludes, as evidenced by the fact that nearly 90 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that participating with practitioners from their program helped them “reinforce [...] learning while at work.”</li> <li>• At the same time, Bringing Yourself to Work was reported as both the most difficult component (23 percent of practitioners) and the one practitioners found least valuable for their work (16 percent).</li> </ul>
High/Scope: Building Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The things that stand out to me the most is, the major things, is now building community. I think it’s very, very important to have a solid base for the kids to start on and it helps them. I have very few discipline problems.”</li> <li>• Practitioners often cited using icebreakers and energizers. Popular group games included a rose and thorn, famous duos and trios, and two truths and a lie.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High/Scope was cited as program that 21 percent of practitioners would recommend to other afterschool practitioners—more than any other program.</li> </ul>
High/Scope: Structure & Clear Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Now that it’s more structured they’re able to do games and activities that are safe for the kids and it doesn’t really cause conflict with the kids.”</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Scaffolding for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “But once you break it down to them, show them that this is something everyone can do, it’s worth breaking it down to them and showing them that...it’s not that hard because if you only do this instead of looking at the whole problem of the situation, it’s easy and it’s understandable for all kids to do. So it helps them a lot.”</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Active Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners reported engaging in hands-on activities and reflection with youth.</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Reframing Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “But when [youth] come in the office and there is an issue, a discrepancy between them, I try to find out both sides of the story and then try to have them work it out. Whereas before I would either call a parent or send home a note or something.”</li> </ul>	

High/Scope: Ask-Listen-Encourage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I added more open-ended questions instead of just asking them direct yes or no questions, so that they can express how they feel or [I] get more feedback from them through those questions.”</li> <li>• Practitioners also reported being more empathic toward youth and using more effective methods of praise.</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Cooperative Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners found the cooperative learning component to be useful and grouping strategies were mentioned as being used by the majority of respondents.</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Planning & Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I like to do a lot of child-led activities, I like the children to be able to come up with their own things and do those with each other. Like I might give them a contest and then they have to figure out what they want to do with that.”</li> <li>• Practitioners often mentioned including reflection periods at the end of activities. One director stated that reflection is something she “appreciates more” since participating in PBC-AEC training.</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Voice and Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And I think with that way [Voice and Choice is] more helpful for the kids because they feel that they have some kind of ownership of the program so they’re willing to do more to help and I think it was a big improvement with our program.”</li> <li>• Voice and Choice was often cited as being used in regular practice. Many programs also integrated a Youth Advisory Council into their program.</li> </ul>	
High/Scope: Homework Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners reported utilizing PBC-AEC homework help strategies such as dividing youth into groups by subject and providing alternative tasks available for youth without homework.</li> </ul>	
Content Areas (Science, Math, Literacy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some practitioners reported using activities from the specific content material presented in PBC-AEC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Science activities such as Dancing Raisins</li> <li>○ Read aloud strategies</li> <li>○ Hands-on math activities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion, Relationships, and Play was cited by 34 percent of practitioners as the easiest PBC-AEC program – more than any other component of training.</li> </ul>
Theories & Strategies of Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some practitioners described presenting youth with new methods of play, using their imaginations, and getting “down to their level.”</li> </ul>	
Inclusion in Afterschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some practitioners found this component of PBC-AEC helped them better engage youth with developmental disabilities such as ADD and autism.</li> </ul>	
Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some practitioners, especially program directors, reported having better relationships with parents after integrating Family Engagement practices into their work.</li> </ul>	

### **Knowledge or skills found to be particularly useful or important**

Follow-up survey participants were also asked questions about specific PBC-AEC lessons or practices they found to be particularly helpful or important. These questions included:

- Which PBC-AEC lessons, if any, have you found most useful at your specific agency given the structure and schedule of your site?
- Are there PBC-AEC lessons or content that is less helpful to an agency like yours?
- What's the most important change you've made in how you work with kids, or the most important practice you've added, as a result of participation in the PBC-AEC?

Analysis of the qualitative data shows that participants found many elements of the High/Scope curriculum to be “useful” or “helpful” in their work with youth, including Cooperative Learning and Building Community, and Voice and Choice.

Tellingly, most participants, when asked to identify lessons or content that was less helpful, responded that there was not anything they could identify. Some also said that not all PBC-AEC practices or skills will be useful at all times during the day, so, for example, “you just have to find where they're helpful.” Others said they find some practices to be more helpful, for example, depending on the specific group of youth. As one frontline worker said:

*I think overall, everything works for everyone differently. You just have to learn how to implement it in the way that works best for that person.*

Voice and Choice was most often cited as the most important practice practitioners have added since participating in PBC-AEC. As one frontline worker described it, implementing Voice and Choice with her group allowed her to build strong relationships with the youth that had been absent previously.

Findings from the survey administered to PBC-AEC cohorts 1-8 are presented below (see Table 11). A number of survey questions provide insight into the participants' attitudes of specific PBC-AEC curriculum components.

- The top three components identified as being “the one most valuable to my own work practices” were Inclusion, Relationships and Play (23%); High/Scope (18%); and Youth Leadership (18%).
- The top three components identified as having “the biggest positive impact on my knowledge of afterschool practices” were High/Scope (25%); Inclusion, Relationships and Play (15%); and Academics (14%).
- The top three components identified as those that “inspired me the most to want to learn more” were Inclusion, Relationships, and Play (21%); Youth Leadership (19%); and High/Scope (16%).

- No components were identified by a majority of respondents as “least valuable to my work,” with participants most often responding with “not applicable” (51%).

These findings are consistent, with High/Scope and Youth Leadership both represented as “valuable,” “useful,” or “important” practices in afterschool practitioners’ work. The finding that practitioners struggle to find any specific components or practices to be less “valuable” or “helpful” is consistent across both quantitative and qualitative data findings.

**Table 11.Views of Individual Courses Taught in the Program**

	High Scope	Youth Leadership	BYTW	Inclusion, Relationships, and Play	Academics	Family Engagement	Core Competencies	N/A
<b>Combined Cohorts</b>								
I would recommend this one component most to others in the afterschool field	21%	17%	7%	27%	8%	9%	4%	5%
	46	36	16	59	18	20	9	11
This one component was the one most valuable to my own work practices	18%	18%	8%	23%	12%	9%	2%	11%
	38	38	18	49	26	19	4	23
This component inspired me the most to want to learn more	16%	19%	5%	21%	10%	10%	8%	12%
	35	40	10	45	22	21	17	25
This component had the biggest positive impact on my attitude about my work	12%	16%	19%	23%	6%	11%	5%	10%
	26	34	40	49	12	23	10	21
This component had the biggest positive impact on my knowledge of afterschool practices	25%	12%	7%	15%	14%	9%	7%	11%
	54	25	14	32	31	19	16	24
This component was the easiest one for me	10%	10%	12%	32%	10%	14%	5%	7%
	21	22	25	69	21	30	11	16
This component was the most difficult for me	12%	12%	14%	1%	11%	13%	12%	26%
	25	25	30	2	23	29	26	55
Less teaching time should be devoted to this one component	7%	3%	13%	7%	7%	6%	6%	50%
	16	7	28	14	16	13	13	108
This component was the least valuable to my work	8%	4%	10%	4%	6%	10%	7%	51%
	17	9	22	8	12	21	15	110
More teaching time should be devoted to this one component	7%	14%	6%	16%	19%	10%	7%	21%
	15	30	12	35	41	21	16	45

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## **What Have Been the Experiences of Participants from the Pilot Year Cohort in Remaining in Their Job or the Field, or Pursuing Higher Education?**

### **Prior Studies on Afterschool Staff Retention: A brief review**

Staff turnover in the afterschool field is widely acknowledged as a challenge (Halpern, Spielberger, & Robb, 2001; Watson & Jaffe, 1990; INCRE and NIOST, 2005), and especially detrimental to the quality of relations between staff and youth. There are a number of studies that speak to the direct effects of professional development upon retention in the afterschool field. A 2000 study on afterschool programs by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, for example, concluded that “[practitioner] training is critical to retention of quality staff members and volunteers” (44). Likewise, a recent study by Huang et al., centered on 53 afterschool programs in Indiana, Florida, Texas, and California, found professional development played an important role in promoting both staff recruitment and retention (2010). Other research conducted on retention has identified a range of additional contributing factors that are believed to work in concert with informal and formal professional development opportunities, including hiring practices, alignment of staff skills with work tasks, and program quality monitoring (Raley, Grossman, & Walker, 2005).

For other possible factors influencing practitioner retention, we have drawn upon research of school-day teacher retention. In a 2005 study of California public school teachers, for example, inadequate professional development opportunities for teachers was one of several factors leading to high rates of teacher turnover. Other factors included poor working conditions, scarcity of resources, low parent involvement, and overcrowded classrooms (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). Similarly, a number of studies have concluded that a variety of professional development opportunities for new teachers, such as induction and mentoring programs, can improve teacher retention rates (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

The effect of compensation on retention remains a focus of existing research. In a meta-analysis study of certified teachers in the public schools, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) argued that there exists ample evidence “suggest[ing] that teacher salaries were positively associated with retention” (192). At the same time, others have argued that other factors may ultimately play a larger role; for example, Yee (1990) argued that supportive work environments outweigh compensation in supporting staff retention.

One critical determinant of retention is likely how long the practitioner was already in the field prior to starting training. Guarino et al. (2006) identified a “U-shaped” trend in which greater attrition among teachers occurs near the beginning and end of careers. As Guarino argues, this may be the result of new

entrants to the labor market having a lower tolerance for difficult working conditions as they try out employment options. At the same time, late-career practitioners tend to exhibit attrition (i.e., leaving the field) attributable to retirement. The resulting trend line—in which mid-career practitioners exhibit the lowest likelihood of attrition in the near term—is a consistent theme in the literature (see Guarino et al., 2006; Murnane, 1984; Singer & Willet, 1988).

Schlechty and Vance found that high levels of practitioner ability also increased attrition (1981). The presence of “general” skills—including any acquired through PBC-AEC training that may apply to other careers—may increase job market flexibility for practitioners, potentially increasing the likelihood that a practitioner will “get up and go” when a better opportunity presents itself (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993, 6). Thus, professional development is one of many factors that affect retention, and the ability to transfer skills taught in professional development to other roles and jobs further influences the effect of professional development on job retention.

### **Follow-up Survey Findings**

Follow-up surveys were conducted with 19 practitioners from the first year of the PBC-AEC training program. Some questions from the original post-training survey were repeated in order to understand practitioner perspectives in the period following training. Although the follow-up survey population may not be representative of the larger population of afterschool practitioners, or even the training cohorts sampled initially, the results suggest increasingly favorable perceptions of PBC-AEC training over the course of the year following training.<sup>1</sup> For example, follow-up survey participants exhibited more positive responses across a range of indicators, including likelihood of remaining on the job and commitment to the afterschool field.

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<sup>1</sup> One limitation of conducting the in-class survey anonymously is that we have no way to know whether the responses of those in our follow up sample differed from their peers at the time of the initial survey. We are only able to demonstrate that the group who provided feedback a year later had generally more positive responses than the already very positive responses of the Year 1 cohort as a whole.



**Table 12. Comparison of Year 1 responses and Year 2 follow-up responses (among Year 1 participants)**

	Initial Survey					Follow-up Survey				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
PBC-AEC was not worth the time I invested	57%	29%	2%	10%	3%	84%	11%	0%	5%	0%
	63	32	2	11	3	16	2	0	1	0
Overall, I was very satisfied with PBC-AEC training	0%	2%	16%	81%	1%	0%	0%	16%	84%	0%
	0	2	18	90	1	0	0	3	16	0
I am planning to leave my job in the next year	44%	40%	10%	3%	4%	68%	26%	0%	5%	0%
	49	44	11	3	4	13	5	0	1	0
Having one's supervisor in PBC-AEC training at the same time is a good idea	2%	5%	41%	50%	3%	0%	0%	26%	74%	0%
	2	5	45	55	3	0	0	5	14	0
PBC-AEC changed my thinking to make me more likely to stay in the afterschool field	6%	20%	41%	27%	5%	0%	11%	28%	61%	0%
	7	22	46	30	6	0	2	5	11	0
I'm staying in the youth work field only until something better comes along	27%	34%	21%	9%	9%	32%	32%	5%	5%	26%
	30	38	23	10	10	6	6	1	1	5

## Interview Findings

Follow-up survey participants' thoughts and plans about remaining in their job or field were diverse and often described in highly conditional language. Approximately one year after completing training, many practitioners were weighing multiple options as they imagined their work and career in the coming few years.

## Participant experiences and goals

Guided by PBC-AEC goals for long-term effects, we asked PBC-AEC participants their thoughts about staying in their current jobs as well as the afterschool field overall. Of the 20 follow-up survey participants, all were still currently working in the afterschool field and only one practitioner had left her previous position at an agency to fill a similar position at another agency. Though a relatively small and perhaps unrepresentative sample, those we contacted during the period of 12–18 months following training demonstrated very high levels of retention in the same job, and no attrition from the field.

Most practitioners said they did not have any immediate plans to leave their current jobs, although a few frontline workers said they hoped to remain employed by their agency until they finished their higher education degree, at which time they would begin pursuing a career outside of the afterschool field. Other frontline workers expressed an interest in applying for supervisor positions at other agencies, and one

stated her interest in leaving her agency, which she described as high performing, in order to assist other afterschool programs in quality improvement efforts.

Most practitioners also expressed an interest in remaining in the afterschool field. A portion of these responses came from program directors that had been in the field for years and considered afterschool programming their profession. Other respondents included frontline workers who had less experience in the field but aspired to remain in the field and become program directors, assistant program directors, or employees of Prime Time. Of those who stated they do not plan to remain in the field, some planned to enter education fields or other “helping professions” such as social work or nursing. Some of these practitioners also described the possibility of returning to the afterschool field after working in their other chosen professional fields for a period of time.

Higher education plans and goals among participants largely consisted of individuals pursuing Prime Time-supported credit and noncredit pathways, with many practitioners pursuing or planning to pursue the A.S. degree in Human Services at Palm Beach State College. Others were working towards education or other, unrelated degrees. A number of practitioners also expressed their interest in participating in additional training opportunities through Prime Time and the school district.

### **The role of PBC-AEC and other factors**

When discussing these long-term outcomes, practitioners mentioned a number of influences, including their participation in PBC-AEC. PBC-AEC has influenced practitioners to both want to stay at their agencies and stay in the field. Some factors that contributed to this influence include a sense of the growing professionalization of the field and an improved work environment. Practitioners described a stronger connection to the afterschool setting as their profession; they felt a greater sense of belonging in a professional field partly due to connections they made by networking with other practitioners during PBC-AEC training. PBC-AEC increased practitioners’ knowledge of opportunities available to them—both educationally and professionally. Some also reframed their perception of what they do after completing PBC-AEC:

I think a lot of people, our staff, we got more encouraged with the Afterschool Educator. That we’re not just counselors, we’re educators, and we’re actually making a difference in these kids’ lives.

Practitioners reported feeling more “confident” and “organized” when working with their youth groups following the PBC-AEC training. PBC-AEC practices and skills introduced more “structure” into the afterschool setting which in turn made their jobs “easier” and more enjoyable. For example, improved youth behavior management skills resulted in less frustration when working with youth.

Factors that were cited as barriers to remaining in the field include the absence of advancement opportunities within their current afterschool agency or the field and the lack of full-time, higher paying positions within the afterschool field. As one frontline worker said:

As far as afterschool, I don't think there are any permanent, full-time positions that I can take to actually support myself.

This view was also expressed by a director who has observed this with her own staff in the past:

I've had my staff in place for 5 years, which is very unheard of in this field. It's just one of those things that they got older and they needed more money and unfortunately we can't give raises and they can only work 20 hours per week.

Some practitioners who previously aspired to pursue education degrees in order to become school-day teachers, however, were motivated by PBC-AEC to pursue higher education degrees and careers to prepare them for the afterschool field. One practitioner stated:

I feel that the kids are being tested too much—they are learning, but they're learning in a straightforward scheduled way. But in afterschool, you have an hour to teach the kids a lesson. There's different ways that they can learn the material, but in a fun, active [way], being able to get up, move around the classroom, meet with different people. That's why I changed.

For practitioners like this, PBC-AEC training pushed them to make a more informed choice about teaching opportunities that felt qualitatively different. Others, however, felt PBC-AEC had reinforced an existing desire to become school-day teachers and some practitioners remain committed to pursuing non-education related degrees such as nursing.

Many practitioners who are pursuing higher education degrees related to the afterschool field are doing so through the Prime Time's formal academic pathways and were motivated to do so partly because of the Prime Time scholarships available. Prime Time staff is also often cited as an important influencing factor in practitioners' future plans and goals. One director stated that Prime Time has given her staff "a sense of purpose" and frontline workers often referred to Prime Time staff as "supportive" and "helpful" and expressed a connection to Prime Time's mission of advancing the professionalization of the afterschool field.

For others who planned to remain in the afterschool field prior to PBC-AEC, the program reinforced their plans to pursue afterschool-related careers and motivated them to pursue higher education degrees, particularly through Prime Time's formal academic pathways. One participant said:

It really motivated me to start [the A.S. degree in Human Services]. And that's how I started, honestly, because I had no intentions of going to school....But because of the Afterschool Educator I got more motivated...

Together, these quantitative and qualitative data hint at the valuable role of PBC-AEC in helping participants understand their existing job and role in a new way, think about how that job is linked to other possible opportunities in the afterschool field, and reflect in a more informed way what it means to choose to be in the afterschool field or a different, often related, area of work. In most cases among those we surveyed, PBC-AEC strengthened their sense of resolve to stay in the afterschool field, return to it, or find some way to blend afterschool activities with some other interest. At the same time, practitioners identified key structural features of the workplace and field that require real sacrifices among those who hope to continue working in the field. For frontline workers, staying in the field typically feels like it requires obtaining one of the few program director jobs or continuing to work part-time at a fixed wage with few or no benefits.

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# Refining the Program

The findings from this study of the second year of PBC-AEC implementation identify several important program developments and accomplishments. PBC-AEC increases the knowledge of training participants on a range of topics relevant to core practitioner competencies, as measured by a series of pre- and posttest measures. Also, the many positive reports from PBC-AEC participants highlight the ways in which afterschool programs are making accommodations to support the changes in practice encouraged by PBC-AEC training. Some of the credit for organizational support goes to the PBC-AEC training itself, which specifically expects programs to rethink policies and practices to support what is being taught in PBC-AEC. Organizational culture and context are very important in supporting the implementation of PBC-AEC training, and as other research suggests, retaining staff in the longer term. Youth-serving organizations are critical partners supporting the application PBC-AEC training, and those organizations that have participated during the first two years have been, on the whole, supportive of PBC-AEC learning.

Regarding the application of specific knowledge and skills, practitioners report multiple examples of how they are using each of the individual training components. Indeed, many of those surveyed have a difficult time identifying components they would consider “least valuable” or ones they would not recommend. Finally, a vast majority of the individuals we surveyed between 12 and 18 months after participating in training are still in the same job they held during training, none have left the afterschool field, and many described either a deepening commitment to the afterschool field or changing their plans to embark on a career in the afterschool field.

Drawing upon the data collection and findings from the second year of implementation, many of which have been highlighted already, we identify below a few questions for Prime Time as it continues to refine the PBC-AEC program.

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## Questions Going Forward

### **How can PBC-AEC expand expectations for organizational changes that happen during the course of training?**

As Guskey notes, existing organizational culture slows down or prevents new ideas or practices identified in training from being enacted. In this sense, PBC-AEC has an advantage over some other professional development efforts, since part of the training already includes specific homework assignments that expect change not just from individual practitioners, but also from the organizations where they work. These include such things as changing the staffing patterns for meeting parents during pick-up times, adding a public “feelings” board for each staff person to update when arriving at work, and updating or creating new written policies. Staff are explicitly asked to try out what they are learning while still attending training, so that at the conclusion of ten weeks of coursework both the individual participant and the program have been adapting to PBC-AEC expectations. Given the importance of this dynamic in preparing the organization to sustain individual learning, we encourage Prime Time to look for additional opportunities to include these organizational-level changes within the training curriculum.

### **Can training be structured to emphasize a “train the trainer” approach?**

PBC-AEC training is not typically provided to everyone from an agency at the same time, and program directors identified clear gaps between the capacities of staff who have been in training and those who have not. Practitioners reported instances where individuals in training are being proactive in passing along what they are learning to staff not in training, and we wonder whether there are ways to structure this kind of interaction. This may be especially important if the makeup of training cohorts changes under the SAPC-AEC approach going forward so that fewer staff from any one agency are attending at any one time.

It is also interesting to ponder what kind of influence new internal training responsibilities would have on individuals’ retention of what they learned. These new responsibilities could affect the successful implementation of PBC-AEC knowledge and skills in practice. It seems likely that a teaching or training role would also improve or reinforce the use of PBC-AEC practices for the person serving as the trainer.

### **How does PBC-AEC change how participants experience subsequent training?**

Assessing the impact of PBC-AEC on participation in additional training is not among the current research priorities, but several individuals in our sample spoke about the importance of PBC-AEC in shaping their subsequent experiences with other afterschool trainings. For example, the PBC-AEC experience raised expectations for how enjoyable training could be, and generated frustration with less

engaging training. Staff also spoke about the impact of these opportunities upon their sense of their work and the profession.

**What is the meaning of any association between participating in PBC-AEC and obtaining higher education?**

One of the challenges in assessing subsequent formal educational involvement among PBC-AEC participants is that the purposes of that education may not be connected to the afterschool field. In one interview we conducted, an individual was inspired by PBC-AEC to decide to commit to the afterschool field until retirement—but wanted to obtain a Bachelor’s degree as a contingency for use outside of the afterschool field. In that instance, formal education was not in support pursuing a career in the afterschool field. We heard similar things from others working in the afterschool field, who make no direct connection between their work in afterschool and the post-secondary degree they are earning while working. One example is afterschool practitioners working toward degrees as certified teachers.

**How can Prime Time capture both the changes in how well PBC-AEC participants are able to do their existing tasks, which is one measure of an improvement in quality, and also changes in their responsibilities or roles?**

PBC-AEC was frequently described by participants as changing how frontline staff and program directors spend their time. For example, frontline staff resolved challenges with youth participants themselves much more often, rather than turning to the program director to solve these problems. This change may reflect both a new kind of appreciation among program directors for the capabilities of their staff and willingness to let them take responsibility, and a new confidence among frontline staff in their own capabilities. In any case, we are intrigued by what is possible when program directors are freed up from “putting out fires,” and what it means for their capacity to perform other important managerial and administrative tasks.

**What are the implications of differences among program directors and frontline staff as PBC-AEC makes the transition to SAPC-AEC?**

Our analysis of survey data indicates that program directors and frontline staff have different perceptions of the difficulty implementing what is learned in PBC-AEC and the value of attending PBC-AEC with coworkers. Two other groups with different perceptions of this difficulty are those who have a college education and those who do not. Those who are program directors or have a college education report being more optimistic about implementing what is learned, and less reliant on coworkers. As the PBC-AEC becomes the SAPC-AEC, it will be interesting to see whether the higher threshold for participation will change the dynamic present in the first two years of implementation, and how the distribution of individuals and roles in the program going forward will align with their perceptions and interest. Are

there opportunities for the new mandated observations of SAPC-AEC graduates to contribute to an understanding of the value of training?

The change from PBC-AEC to SAPC-AEC includes a requirement that those graduating must be observed at work and evaluated. One situation worth examining is whether and how this new assessment can help inform the curriculum and be considered as a possible measure of PBC-AEC training?

### **What is the need for stipends and financial support going forward?**

Financial incentives may be important for attracting staff who know little about the training. However, with the ongoing high levels of satisfaction among participants, the pool of individuals who know little about PBC-AEC training appears to be diminishing. The stipend may be less critical in attracting participants because PBC-AEC has a growing number of supporters, including program directors who say they plan to require it of staff. Also, as PBC-AEC becomes SAPC-AEC, there are additional certification benefits available to those who complete the course.

### **What are possible implications of implementation study findings in considering measuring youth-level effects of the PBC-AEC?**

As we noted earlier, given the way the daily afterschool schedule is arranged, concepts from the PBC-AEC training may be most feasibly applied during the last hour of afterschool, when practitioners have greater flexibility in how to work with youth. Youth who are picked up early from these programs may be less exposed to the principles taught in PBC-AEC.

Another implication of the implementation study is that PBC-AEC training with individuals may have different results for different organizations. This depends on how organizations deal with such issues as supervisor support and expectations, how the PBC-AEC ideas and practices are incorporated into the program's structure and operations, the degree to which principals support program directors' choices, how PBC-AEC practices are weaved into the existing program curricula, and staff turnover. These organization-level conditions are likely to affect youth as well, so it is important to examine organization-level characteristics as well as the effect of individual participation.

### **What are the limitations of the PBC-PQA external assessment process for programs that have extensively adopted the lessons and philosophies taught in the PBC-AEC?**

One characteristic of PBC-AEC training is its flexibility; participants are reminded that they “know their kids” better than anyone, and that they can figure out what works best for their program. At the same time, staff in PBC-AEC from programs participating in the Quality Improvement System (QIS)—the vast majority of PBC-AEC participants—are having the quality of their programs assessed using a standardized PBC-PQA. We heard several stories of instances where staff believed the QIS assessment



process was not capturing either the full quality of the program's implementation, or defined a high rating in a way that was too simplified. For example, we heard about one instance where the assessment requirement was to observe a staff person asking a youth to help another member of the group, and at this particular organization youth already learned that this was part of the culture, and did it without being asked. The organizational practices missed the letter of the law—and the maximum points on the assessment—but seemed to capture its spirit.

In our earliest research on the QIS program, we also heard concerns from programs about the assessment process. Those concerns were typically that the assessment happened on a day when a key staff was not present, or where there were other deficiencies of the program that made the assessment seem unfair. The concerns we heard about in our most recent conversations are of a different type. Staff believe they are doing good work, and that good work is not always effectively captured by external assessors because of limitations in the assessment system. Given the concerns about the assessment system, we must ask if the PBC-AEC training unintentionally puts its participants at a disadvantage. In other words, when people are trained to solve problems creatively, do their solutions exceed expectations in a way that the assessor cannot capture? If this is the case, is a new way of measuring program quality called for?

**What are the expected effects of the PBC-AEC training, as can be reasonably measured, when the program is integrated so closely with other Prime Time supports of similar or identical goals?**

We raised this question in the first year, and as evaluators it remains on our mind. What are the best ways to conceptualize the PBC-AEC effort? Evaluations may be best accomplished when the effect of an intervention can be isolated, but programs may operate best when they are integrated. In this second year of study, our appreciation for how connected the PBC-AEC is with the other work of Prime Time has only deepened. Stepping back from our narrow role in understanding the PBC-AEC initiative, we believe this is a testament to the vision and practices of Prime Time as a whole to continue to seek connections, synergies, and mutual supports in the work it does. But there remains a tension between trying to understand the effects of the PBC-AEC program in isolation and the broader, integrated mission of Prime Time.

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# Conclusion

In this report we have sought to identify key features and effects of the PBC-AEC program during its second pilot year, provide information on its status, and raise questions that might be helpful in shaping the program going forward. We look forward to continuing to explore and understand the ways that the PBC-AEC might best contribute to individual learning, organizational success, and a professional afterschool field.

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