

CNA Education, in partnership with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), interviewed **Kathleen N. Straus**, a member of the Michigan State Board of Education, on the state's out-of-schooltime standards. Straus has been on her board for more than 20 years, having first been elected in 1992 and reelected in 2000 and 2008. She served as president of the board multiple times, and she has been a supporter of out-of-schooltime programs. NASBE asked Straus to discuss the development and refinement of her state's out-of-schooltime standards.



Standards are a powerful tool that state boards of education can wield to support and improve education systems. Boards set them to establish a vision for what effective practice should look like, as well as to provide indicators for measuring quality. Such standards typically cover classroom activity during the school year. The Michigan State Board of Education, however, has developed standards for out-of-schooltime learning, including afterschool or summer programs. It is one of the only boards in the country to do so.

Michigan convened a task force in 2001 to begin developing the standards. The task force, comprising staff from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and school district representatives, came up with findings and recommendations that became the initial draft of the standards. The Michigan Out-of-Schooltime Standards of Quality were adopted in 2003, revised in 2008 while Straus was president of the board, and revised

again in 2013. They provide guidance in health and safety, human relationships, program staffing, indoor and outdoor environment, program activities, and administration.

What was the original motivation to develop and adopt the Michigan Out-of-Schooltime Standards of Quality in 2003?

The standards were the result of a recommendation from our Integrating Schools and Communities task force. The task force found that many students did not have safe places to be after school and during the summer and recommended development of model standards to help create quality out-of-schooltime programs in the state. Over the years, the board has been very supportive of such programs, and the development of the standards was a natural progression of this support. We wanted to make sure the programs had guidance on quality.

It is vitally important to support

students, particularly at-risk students, outside the classroom to improve their chances of success. A key philosophy of the standards is to emphasize both academic and social development, to help programs develop students' skills in both areas. Out-of-schooltime programs are a great opportunity to do that. They can develop their leadership skills through arts projects or hands-on activities, for example. While the standards don't address the content that needs to be taught to develop these skills, it is important that these social skills elements are included in activities and implemented at a high level.

In the 2013 version of the standards, the board included some new elements, such as mention of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and alignment with early childhood standards. What process did the board go through as it revised the standards this time?

The state convened an ad hoc committee of MDE staff and stakeholders to align the out-of-schooltime standards with the early childhood standards already adopted by the board. The committee recommended to the board that the standards be inclusive of all age levels, as well as students with special needs. New standards had recently been adopted nationally regarding healthy eating and physical activity in out-of-schooltime programs, and we incorporated some of this guidance. We had had many discussions about the importance of STEM for students, so we added that to the standards to ensure out-of-schooltime programs emphasized these areas as well. In addition, the governor has been very supportive of out-of-schooltime programs, and this helped move the process forward.

What do you think the next policy steps might be as the Michigan board looks to support out-of-schooltime programs in the state?

I think the board will continue its interest in this issue. The next step for us will be to try to find out more about what has been going on in local communities and programs regarding implementation of the standards. It is definitely hard to hear from all the programs using the stan-

dards in the state. We have less information about programs that do not receive federal funding for out-of-schooltime programs because there are so many of them. It is going to take a while to get input from these programs, but we will continue to hear from MDE about implementation and hope to have some recommendations once staff get all the feedback. A possible next step will be the inclusion of the Michigan Out-of-Schooltime Standards in a tiered quality rating system for school-age care and education programs. Some work is already being done with stakeholders to explore the possibilities for this form of implementation.

What insight do you have for members of other boards across the country as they look to support out-of-schooltime through policy?

Above all else, be very inclusive of the stakeholders you engage as you develop policy around out-of-schooltime, especially parents and teachers. Other stakeholders you could get feedback from include students, members of the business community, labor unions, school administrators, and agencies such as social services, health, law enforcement, and justice. All these entities were represented in the initial task force, and we continue to get feed-

back from them as we refine the standards. Initially, they weren't used to talking to each other about this topic. However, quality out-of-schooltime programs require coordination and support from all these entities and organizations to be effective.

Support for this issue has grown over the last 10 years. While the board has been supportive for almost 15 years, there was some initial resistance from stakeholders when the standards were first developed, particularly around funding. However, we've brought a number of those stakeholders into the conversation over the years, and have found a lot of common ground.

Chris Sun is an associate research analyst in education at CNA, a nonprofit research organization assisting NASBE with the development of this issue of the Standard.

Resources

Michigan State Board of Education. *Model Standards for Out-of-Schooltime After-School Programs in Michigan* (Lansing, MI, 2013), https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MOST_SBE_APPROVED_031213_422342_7.pdf.

Sun, Chris. *Summer Learning: A New Vision for Supporting Students in Summer Programs* (Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education, 2011) http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/DG_Summer_Learning_Nov_2011.pdf.

