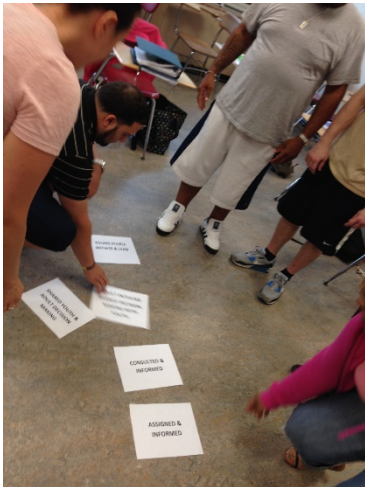


ALIGNING COMMUNITY COLLEGE YOUTH WORK CURRICULUM WITH NATIONAL CORE COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH WORKERS

by Rebecca Fabiano, MEd

Core competencies for youth workers in the U.S. differ from state to state, and city to city. However, while the competencies may vary, they have many of the same major categories, with some modifications to meet specific state or local needs. Core competencies are different from core standards, which generally refer to the quality of a *program*. Staff need to acquire competencies to successfully meet core standards.

In 2014, Reggie Jones, Jack Drummond, and I -- instructors of the Youth Work courses at Community College of Pennsylvania (CCP) -- underwent a process to align three Youth Work courses with national core competencies. At the time, The City of Philadelphia's [Department of Human Services Out-of-School Time](#) system had recently adopted the [National Afterschool Association's Core Competencies for Youth Workers](#) as a tool for making professional development more intentional, supporting youth workers on their career path and working to improve overall program quality.



It made sense that the Youth Work courses at CCP should be intentionally aligned (where possible and applicable) to the competencies the city was going to be using to assess and support the youth development workforce. The three courses, which originally had been written with a behavioral health lens, hadn't been revisited in any coordinated way since I started working there in 2007, and the timing seemed right. Some of the alignment

work included adopting an asset-based, youth development framework as the basic principles in all the classes. Reggie began using Project Based Learning (PBL) in her courses because youth workers in the OST system in Philadelphia are required to develop their lessons using PBL as their facilitation strategy. By having them experience PBL as a learner, they gained the practical experience and understanding of what it would take to do in the field.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS?

It is a smart move to align course work in a certificate or degree program to national core standards for which the youth workers will ultimately be held accountable. It's my belief, as well, that organizations hiring youth development professionals can and should align *their* work with national core competencies. A few ways that youth programs can do this follows:

Start by finding the competencies that make sense for your program and get familiar with them and the accompanying tools (such as an assessment or self-assessment tool).

For example, an organization I work with was looking to strengthen the supervisors of youth workers and create a more intentional pipeline within their organization for staff to advance and grow. They chose the [Core Competencies from the New York City Department of](#)



Sample of the crosswalk

[Youth and Community Development](#). In addition, they have a set of competencies for [supervisors of youth workers](#). For your organization, it might be the set of competencies your state uses.

Choose 1-3 competencies to work on as an organization and design your professional development around improving those competencies. Revise your instructional observation and supervision tools. This could be an exercise that you do in partnership with some key staff to increase their buy in and understanding of the organizational vision.

Utilize the Core Competencies when developing your job descriptions. Provide exact language that shows what people need to know or know how to do for that job. You might even go a step further to explain how you'll plan to help employees develop additional competencies or deepen the competencies.

CONCLUSION

Youth deserve to be supported through the exciting and daunting task of growth and development by *trained*, well-prepared, caring adults. Utilizing core competencies to align college-level coursework is necessary for youth workers to enter the field ready to support youth, develop quality experiences for them, and engage with the community. Youth programs can help strengthen the field by utilizing core competencies to support youth workers in their professional growth, and by intentionally designing professional development as well as support structures around the competencies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND HER COLLEAGUES:

Rebecca Fabiano, MEd has been teaching at the Community College of Philadelphia since 2007. She was the Curriculum Coordinator from 2012-2015. In 2010, she founded a small, women-owned [business](#) which, "supports organizations and individuals that work with children and youth". Reggie S. Jones, MSS, MLSP, LCSW, [Director of Counseling Services at Bryn Mawr College](#), an Instructor at Community College of Philadelphia and University of Pennsylvania and Jack Drummond, M.Ed, Director, [Office for Black Male Engagement for the City of Philadelphia](#).