

# The Michigan Technical Assistance and Coaching Support Services (TACSS)



## Intervention Design

In 2009, MDE partnered with the Weikart Center to provide increased professional development offerings for all grantees and intensive training, coaching, and technical assistance (TA) for a subset of referred grantees. These services are provided by regional TA/coaches, hired by the Weikart Center. The TACSS initiative was developed as a scalable quality improvement intervention, drawing heavily on experience in the national Head Start program's technical assistance model.<sup>1</sup>

The initiative aims to grow a culture of performance accountability and an infrastructure for continuous quality improvement and sustainable change in Michigan's 21st CCLC program. By providing resources at the grantee level, TACSS supports Project Directors to align those resources and develop improvement plans targeting academic and developmental outcomes for young people. One main purpose of the TACSS initiative was to extend the reach of MDE's support for grantees, so that issues of quality and compliance can be identified and addressed without sanction. The TA/Coaches maintain live online service logs that are accessible to MDE consultants, and are encouraged to be in regular communication with MDE consultants.

## Background

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the state fiduciary for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) funding, has worked with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (Weikart Center) since 2003 to improve instructional quality in afterschool programs throughout the state. Since 2004, MDE has required 21st CCLC grantees to conduct self-assessments using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA). While statewide deployment of program quality self-assessment has been well received, the TACSS Initiative was developed to support grantees across the full range of needs for technical assistance related to continuous quality improvement.

There are four components to the initiative: annual quality support services, intensive training and technical assistance (T&TA) planning, individualized training and coaching, and leading indicators. Each component is designed to serve a broad range of program T&TA needs related to organizational operation, instructional quality and youth development.

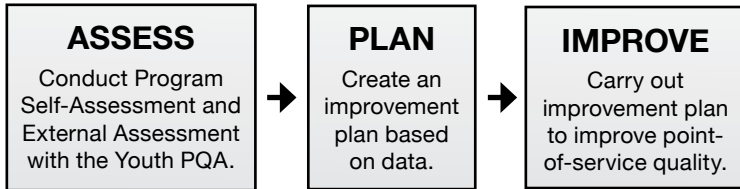
## Annual Quality Support Services

TA/Coaches will continue to offer the key training supports for the experimentally validated Youth

<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, L., Derr, M. Boller, K., Hallgren, K., Hawkinson, L., Marton, K., & Dadgar, M. (2006). *Meeting Head Start and Early Head Start Grantee Needs for Training and Technical Assistance: Final Report of the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Quality Assurance Study*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

Program Quality Intervention (YPQI)<sup>2</sup> on a regional basis to all 21st CCLC staff and vendors throughout the state. TA/Coaches will also help MDE plan and execute annual Kick-off events and present at afterschool conferences throughout the year.

**The Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI)**



**Grantee Intensive T&TA Planning**

In order to ensure that grantees with specific capacity building needs receive appropriate assistance, TA/Coaches will work intensively with referred grantees for a period of two years, developing detailed quality improvement plans using data from various sources, including Youth PQA,<sup>3</sup> EZReports<sup>4</sup> and parent, youth, and teacher surveys.

**Individualized TA and Coaching**

TA/Coaches will provide on-site, on-line and regional supports to carry out T&TA plans, provide coaching and resource referrals for sites and individuals, and help connect new and struggling grantees with experienced project director “mentors”. All Michigan 21st CCLC grantees are eligible and welcome to participate in the regional trainings provided throughout the state. Additional supports are available through referral by MDE and self-referral. MDE referred seven grantees in the pilot year, as well as all newly funded grantees. Several other grantees, upon learning about the initiative, requested to be involved.

<sup>2</sup> The Youth Program Quality Intervention is a research-validated process for improving program quality. Training supports include Youth PQA Basics (live or online), Planning with Data, External Assessment, and Quality Coaching for site management and aligned Youth Work Methods for instructional staff.

<sup>3</sup> The Youth PQA is a research-validated instrument designed to assess point of service quality in out-of-school time programs. It is both an evaluation and a learning tool: robust enough for research and high stakes accountability, and user-friendly enough for program self-assessment. For validation information see Smith, C., & Hohmann, C. (2005). *Full findings from the Youth PQA Validation Study*. Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press.

<sup>4</sup> EZReports is the software utilized by Michigan’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers to track youth attendance and participation.

**Leading Indicators**

The Weikart Center has worked closely with MDE and Michigan State University, the state evaluator for the 21st CCLC grant, to develop grantee-level Leading Indicators to track progress over time in the areas of organizational operation, instructional quality and youth development. These indicators are comprised of multiple weighted measures and data profiles are available on demand at the state, grantee and site levels of aggregation. They highlight components endorsed by the 21st Century Statewide Advisory Committee as representative of high-quality programs, particularly of programs that promote academic success. TA/Coaches will use these to inform and model data-driven planning procedures for referred grantees and will provide strategic support throughout the actual planning process. Evaluators at Michigan State University will use the indicators to evaluate performance of the overall TACSS initiative.

**Progress So Far**

TA/Coaches were hired in June of 2009. A critical aspect of their orientation, in addition to becoming trainers in the Weikart Center’s YPQI content, was receiving training in the essential elements of managing and supporting a 21st CCLC grantee, such as EZReports and the Michigan Electronic Grants System. The TACSS team also worked closely with MDE and other experienced Project Directors around the state to develop the Project Director Resource Guide, available to grantees on a flash drive. The TA/Coaches worked with MDE to coordinate that year’s Kick-off event, as well as the Orientation for new grantees. At each event, they presented information about the TACSS initiative and met with their assigned grantees. By December 2009, 22 out of 90 grantees (representing 115 of 340 sites) were receiving intensive T&TA support from a TA/coach. In the first six months of the 2009-2010 21st CCLC program year, the TACSS team conducted 27 trainings (live and online), training more than 900 people.

**Next Steps**

The Weikart Center expects to have the online training platform launched by the end of June 2010, and is developing a cadre of afterschool

professionals to serve as mentors for programs around the state. The TACSS team looks forward to working with MDE as they continue to develop additional resources to support grantees around the state. The TACSS TA/coaches employ a coaching model rooted in the following principals: data-driven, outcomes-oriented, strengths-based, rooted in the development of relationships and collaborative creation of actionable goals.

*“The TACSS Initiative is an outstanding program that will hopefully serve as a national model for all out-of-school time programs.”*

*– John Taylor, MDE 21st CCLC Consultant*