

Reaching for the Stars

Examining YoungStar and its effect on the quality of Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce



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Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum – which was established in 1913 as a local government watchdog – is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of government and the development of southeastern Wisconsin through objective research of regional public policy issues.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was undertaken to provide policymakers, citizens, and business leaders in the Milwaukee area with information that will allow them to better understand the potential impacts of Wisconsin’s child care quality rating and improvement system – “YoungStar” – on Milwaukee County’s afterschool program providers. We hope that government and community leaders will use the report’s findings to inform discussions during upcoming policy debates, budget deliberations, and civic gatherings regarding Milwaukee County’s child care system.

Report authors would like to thank the leadership and staff of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and The Registry for all of their assistance in providing us with information and patiently answering our questions.

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Introduction

Nearly four years have elapsed since the enactment of YoungStar, Wisconsin's child care rating and improvement system. YoungStar is based on the premise that child care quality will improve if providers are motivated and supported to meet certain quality standards, and if parents have the information they need to choose high-quality child care options. Under YoungStar, all providers that receive funding from the state's child care subsidy program, Wisconsin Shares, are required to be evaluated on a five-star rating scale. Quality ratings are issued – and childcare subsidy rates are determined – based on a provider's success in meeting several criteria related to the educational qualifications of employees, learning environment and curriculum, professional practices, and the health and well-being of children.

Since the law's implementation, the Public Policy Forum has published several reports that have analyzed YoungStar's potential and actual impacts on Milwaukee County child care providers, parents, and children. Most recently, our attention has expanded beyond early care providers to those providing services to school-age children in afterschool settings. Beginning in 2012, providers of afterschool care also were required to be evaluated and rated by Youngstar to be eligible for reimbursement under Wisconsin Shares.

Our recent research has revealed that most afterschool programs in Milwaukee County have received relatively low ratings, and that their biggest hurdle to improving their scores often involved the educational qualifications of program staff. In light of the potential consequences of that finding – which include the possibility that the supply of afterschool providers could diminish because of the financial penalties imposed by YoungStar on poorly-rated providers – we determined that further analysis was warranted to explore the opportunities available for afterschool providers to enhance the educational qualifications of their staff.

In this report, we examine the nature and scale of the educational gaps in Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce in relation to YoungStar, and explore the availability of training and education for afterschool program staff. Our research is guided by the following key questions:

- *What educational standards do state policies establish for the staff of afterschool programs in Wisconsin, and how are programs in Milwaukee County doing in meeting those standards?*
- *If staff education is the most common hurdle preventing afterschool programs from improving their quality ratings, how high is the hurdle and how can it be overcome?*

In the first section of this report, we review how afterschool programming overlaps with early childhood care in Wisconsin with regard to state licensing and funding. We also explain how the state's YoungStar system evaluates programs serving school-age children, focusing primarily on YoungStar's requirements related to staff education. While some afterschool programs are not expected to participate in YoungStar, at least 134 programs in Milwaukee County had been evaluated under the rating system's new school-age track as of June 2013.



Next, we analyze data provided by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and The Registry – an independent organization responsible for evaluating the educational credentials of child care professionals in Wisconsin – to gauge the extent to which staff education poses an obstacle for afterschool programs aspiring to improve their YoungStar ratings. To measure the educational gaps that may be preventing local afterschool programs from improving their YoungStar ratings, we examine the educational credentials of 1,437 individuals currently working with school-age children in Milwaukee County and how those credentials match up with YoungStar’s staff education requirements.

Finally, we examine the potential to close training gaps for afterschool workers in Milwaukee County by assessing the supply of relevant coursework offered at area colleges and universities, the costs associated with those courses, and the availability of state resources to support afterschool professional development. We also include three case studies that illustrate the varying degrees to which afterschool programs in Milwaukee County rely on Wisconsin Shares funding to support their programs.

As we have discussed in previous research, afterschool programming is an important component of Milwaukee County’s educational framework that demands an emphasis on quality, but it is unique in ways that may inhibit efforts to define quality per the standards used for early childhood care. With this report, we hope to further clarify the on-the-ground impacts of one of the key quality measures used by Youngstar to assess afterschool program quality so that policymakers can better understand its application and its effectiveness in meeting legislative intent.



Background

State licensing

As our [previous research](#) has shown, there is considerable overlap between afterschool programming and early childhood care in Wisconsin with regard to state regulations and funding, despite significant differences between the two in terms of program design and scope. Afterschool programs provide school-age children with care and supplementary education outside of regular school hours, while early childhood care programs primarily serve children under the age of five years and operate for the entire day.¹ In Milwaukee County, many afterschool programs are required to be licensed as group child care centers because of the ages of the children they serve and/or because they accept child care subsidies as a form of payment from low-income families.

The State of Wisconsin requires all programs that care for four or more children under the age of seven to be licensed as group child care centers, and to meet associated standards related to the educational qualifications of program staff.² All programs accepting Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies – which assist low-income families to pay for child care for children up to age 13³ – also must be licensed. Programs are exempt from state oversight if they are operated by a public school district or private school, but school boards and private school administrations overseeing those programs are expected to ensure that the programs meet or exceed state standards. In Milwaukee County, dozens of afterschool programs accept Wisconsin Shares subsidies and/or serve at least *some* children under the age of seven years, so they are required to be licensed as group child care centers.

Licensing regulations for group child care centers include distinct educational requirements for staff working in four different positions: assistant teachers, teachers, program directors, and program administrators (**Table 1**). While the requirements are more demanding for higher-level positions, most requirements can be met through non-credit coursework.

There are relatively few training requirements for assistant teachers and teachers, which are entry-level positions. Teachers, for example, must complete two non-credit courses (*Introduction to the Child Care Profession* and *Skills and Strategies for the Child Care Teacher*) or two for-credit courses in child development, early childhood education, or child psychology within six months of starting their position. One of those courses must be a “broad-based” course that provides an overview to the field of child care. Broad-based, for-credit courses specific to working with school-age children have been approved by DCF and by The Registry, an organization that serves as the professional development approval system for child care in Wisconsin.⁴⁵ Non-credit options specific to working with school-age children

¹ For purposes of this study “afterschool program” and “school-age program” are used interchangeably.

² Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF): *DCF 251 Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Centers* http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/licensed/pdf/dcf_p_205.pdf

³ In order to qualify for a Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy, families must meet income eligibility and work-related requirements and their children must attend a regulated child care program.

⁴ Parents working as assistant teachers are exempt from this training requirement.



currently are not available, however, which prevents afterschool program staff from accessing developmentally-appropriate training.

Center directors and program administrators – who supervise staff and manage program operations and finances – are expected to meet additional training requirements. In order to qualify for center director positions, for example, individuals must complete coursework toward the 18-credit Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential, a six-course series focused on program administration and financial management.⁶

Table 1: Training requirements for staff of licensed group child care centers, by position⁷

Assistant teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One non-credit course (<i>Introduction to the Child Care Profession</i>) OR one course for credit in child development, early childhood education, or child psychology within six months of starting position
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two non-credit courses (<i>Introduction to the Child Care Profession</i> and <i>Skills and Strategies for the Child Care Teacher</i>) OR two courses for credit in child development, early childhood education, or a related field High school diploma or equivalent 80 full days or 120 half days of experience as an assistant teacher
Center director (centers licensed to serve 50 children or fewer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two approved non-credit courses OR courses for credit in child development, early childhood education, or a related field One course in the Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential or its equivalent within one year of starting position High school diploma or equivalent 80 full days or 120 half days of experience as a teacher or assistant teacher (two years of experience is required if the center is licensed to serve 51 children or more)
Center director (centers licensed to serve 51 children or more)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four approved non-credit courses OR courses for credit in child development, early childhood education, or a related field Wisconsin Child Care Administrator Credential or its equivalent within three years of starting position High school diploma or equivalent Two years of experience as a teacher or assistant teacher
Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One year of experience as a manager or completion of one course (non-credit or for credit) in business or program administration One year of experience as a center director or teacher or completion of one course (non-credit or for credit) in child development, early childhood education, or a related field 10 hours of training in supervision or personnel management within one year of beginning position

⁵ The Registry: http://www.the-registry.org/Portals/0/Documents/Resources/Entry_Level_Course_List_School-Age.pdf

⁶ The Registry: <http://www.the-registry.org/Credentials/Administrator.aspx>

⁷ Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF): *DCF 251 Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Centers* http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/licensed/pdf/dcf_p_205.pdf



As the previous discussion indicates, state licensing requirements set a relatively low educational bar for entering the afterschool field as an assistant teacher or teacher, and individuals can rise up to program director positions through a combination of on-the-job experience and additional training. With the recent introduction of the state’s YoungStar system, however – which was designed to improve child care in Wisconsin by rating provider quality, supporting providers to make quality improvements, and helping parents to make better-informed child care decisions – licensing requirements are no longer the only set of state benchmarks that many afterschool programs are working to meet.

YoungStar & Wisconsin Shares

In March 2012, the State of Wisconsin added a new “*school-age*” track for afterschool programs to its Youngstar quality rating and improvement system, which was originally designed exclusively for early childhood care.⁸ All programs accepting Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies are required to participate in YoungStar, which evaluates programs in several key areas, including staff education and training. The requirements for programs under the new school-age track are distinct from those of the early childhood care tracks, though there is considerable debate as to whether the school-age track is tailored sufficiently to reflect the unique characteristics of afterschool programs, particularly with regard to staff education in light of the part-time nature of most afterschool program positions.

School-age programs are programs that exclusively care for school-age children before or after school or during the summer or school breaks.

Group child care centers are programs that care for nine or more children for less than 24 hours per day. These programs typically provide early childhood care for children under the age of five years, but may also offer care for school-age children.

Staff education is one of four categories used to evaluate YoungStar providers. For most programs, it poses the greatest obstacle to advancing to a higher rating. (YoungStar’s other categories of evaluation are learning environment and curriculum, business and professional practices, and health and wellness.) YoungStar awards points to programs for the educational qualifications of two categories of employees: teachers, and program directors.⁹ As outlined in **Tables 2 and 3**, those employees must meet specific educational requirements in order for a program to qualify for a YoungStar rating of 3 stars or higher.

The educational qualifications needed to qualify for a YoungStar rating of 3 stars or higher are greater than those needed for a state child care license. School-age programs, for example, need at least half of their teachers to earn a minimum of six credits in child development or early childhood education in

⁸ YoungStar rates early childhood care providers in two “tracks” with distinct criteria: home-based “*family*” providers and center-based “*group*” providers.

⁹ For clarity, we use “teachers” and “program directors” as position titles for the staff of both school-age programs and group child care centers in this report. For school-age programs, DCF uses the term “group leaders” rather than “teachers” and “site supervisors/coordinators/directors/administrators” rather than “program directors.” For group child care centers, DCF refers to the two position categories as “lead teachers” and “program directors.”



order to earn 3 stars (non-credit courses are not accepted), and the program’s director must have at least 24 approved credits for a 3-star rating. The staff education benchmarks for 4 and 5 stars are significantly higher, requiring all teachers to have at least six related college credits, and all program directors to have an associate degree or better.

Table 2: Staff education needed for *school-age programs* to meet each YoungStar rating level

YoungStar rating	Teachers	Program directors
3 Stars	6 credits in early childhood education or child development for 50% of teachers	24 related credits (6 or more credits in supervision/personnel management or financial management)
4 Stars	6 credits in early childhood education or child development for 100% of teachers	Associate degree with 36 related credits (6 or more credits in supervision/personnel management or financial management)
5 Stars	18 related credits or completion of Afterschool and Youth Development Credential for 50% of teachers; 6 related credits for all other teachers	Administrator Credential plus either a related associate degree or unrelated bachelor's degree

Table 3: Staff education needed for *group child care centers* to meet each YoungStar rating level

YoungStar rating	Teachers	Program directors
3 Stars	6 credits in early childhood education for 50% of all teachers	Administrator Credential
4 Stars	18 credits in early childhood education or Infant/Toddler Credential or Inclusion Credential for 50% of teachers; 6 related credits for all other teachers	Associate degree in a related field or unrelated bachelor's degree
5 Stars	Associate degree in a related field for 100% of teachers	Administrator Credential plus either related associate degree unrelated bachelor's degree

Notably, YoungStar’s staff education requirements for school-age programs are based on those originally created for group child care centers. For example, the 3-star requirement for teachers is the same for both school-age programs and group child care centers. The bars for 4 and 5 stars, however, are set higher for teachers working in group child care centers than they are for those working in school-age programs. In fact, the 5-star requirement for school-age programs aligns with the 4-star requirement for group child care centers.

The Youngstar ratings assigned to programs have an impact on financial reimbursement. Programs with YoungStar ratings of 3 stars are considered proficient and receive the base Wisconsin Shares subsidy reimbursement rate – which was frozen at the same rate from 2006 to 2013, but recently increased slightly – while programs rated 4 or 5 stars are considered high-quality and receive subsidy



reimbursement bonuses of 10% and 25% respectively. Programs with 2-star ratings remain eligible for Wisconsin Shares participation, but receive a 5% cut in their subsidy reimbursement payments. Providers that receive one star are ineligible to participate in the program.

The Registry

The Registry plays a significant role in YoungStar's staff education category of evaluation, as DCF uses data from The Registry to determine the points each provider receives for the educational qualifications of staff. While it is not mandatory for individual employees to participate in The Registry for purposes of YoungStar, programs aspiring to earn YoungStar ratings of 3 stars or higher must have sufficient Registry participation among their staff to prove they have the educational qualifications needed for those higher ratings.

The Registry is responsible for reviewing the educational background of each "Registry participant," verifying that they meet the training requirements for state licensing, and placing each participant at one of 17 "career levels" based on his or her educational qualifications.¹⁰ For example, individuals who have earned six related credits – the minimum needed for teachers working in school-age programs to meet YoungStar's requirements for ratings of 3 stars or higher – are placed at Registry level 7. DCF, which administers Wisconsin Shares and YoungStar, uses the Registry levels of all program staff to determine a program's overall score for YoungStar's staff education category.

The Registry's process of approving courses and degrees involves examining each participant's college transcript. According to The Registry's director of professional development, the following criteria are used when approving courses completed by Registry participants:

- The institution offering the course or degree program must be regionally accredited.
- The participant must have earned a passing grade on all courses.
- Courses in early childhood education are accepted for school-age professionals but courses focused on school-age education are not accepted for early childhood care workers. The Registry tries to determine the course's target audience in deciding whether it qualifies as early childhood or school-age education.

The fact that an individual can take courses in early childhood and be considered qualified to work with school-age children is considered problematic by some afterschool leaders, who feel that the increased focus on educational outcomes indicates a greater need for those working with school-age children to have developmentally-appropriate training. As discussed in other sections of this report, there is currently a lack of both non-credit and for-credit courses in Wisconsin that focus on working with school-age children in afterschool settings.

Beyond the criteria listed above, The Registry approves courses largely based on their titles and the departments in which they are located, which may be prone to a certain degree of error. If a course is not approved, however, the Registry participant can contest the decision.

¹⁰ The Registry career levels: <http://the-registry.org/Membership/CareerLevels.aspx>



Completed non-credit coursework is added to participants' Registry records as well. Trainers can enter trainings into The Registry's system and include a roster of those who completed the training. Alternatively, trainers can give each participant a Registry-approved certificate of attendance that includes the event ID number. The student then needs to send the certificate of attendance with their application to The Registry to have it verified on their account.

Summary

The State of Wisconsin requires many afterschool programs in Milwaukee County to be licensed as group child care centers and to participate in YoungStar. An important component of both the licensing and Youngstar evaluation processes is staff training and education, which is assessed by The Registry, an independent entity that evaluates the educational qualifications of afterschool and early childhood care professionals. YoungStar's staff education standards for earning a rating of 3 stars or higher are more rigorous than those set by state licensing regulations. This is important because a rating of at least 3 stars is required to avoid a subsidy reduction. Programs can receive subsidy reimbursement bonuses by meeting higher standards and earning YoungStar ratings of 4 or 5 stars.



Youngstar ratings for afterschool programs in Milwaukee County

Two data sources are available to explore how Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce is faring in meeting YoungStar's training expectations. In this section, we use DCF's YoungStar data to show how the afterschool workforce is performing at the program level. In the next section, we use data from The Registry to analyze workforce characteristics at the level of individual staff members. Both data sets reveal the substantial challenges afterschool programs face in meeting YoungStar's staff education requirements.

For purposes of this study, we analyzed the YoungStar ratings of programs evaluated under both YoungStar's "school-age" and "group center" tracks (tracks 2 and 3) because there is overlap between them with regard to both state licensing and YoungStar's staff education criteria. As previously mentioned, many school-age programs are expected to be licensed by the state as group child care centers. In addition, YoungStar's staff education criteria for school-age programs were based on those previously developed for group child care centers. Including both tracks in our analysis also allowed us to make comparisons between the two sets of providers.

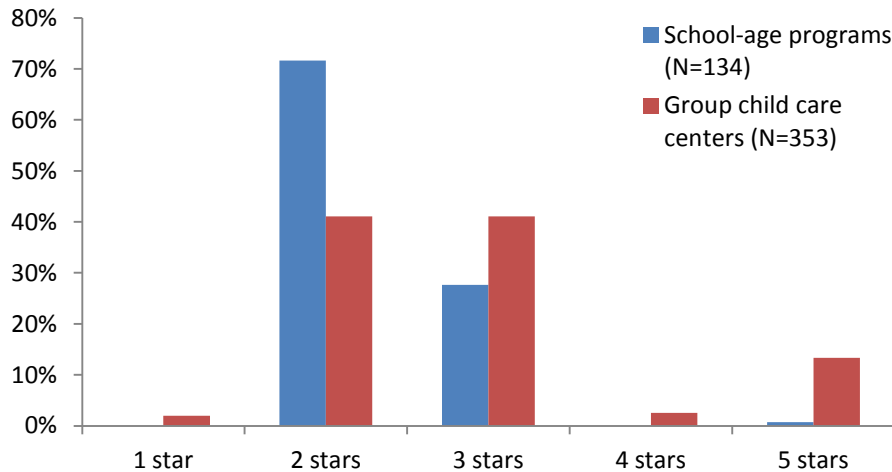
There are also other areas of overlap between school-age programs and group child care centers. Before the formal application of YoungStar to school-age programs in March 2012, for example, several afterschool programs began participating in YoungStar under the group center track; those programs remain in that track today.

The ratings of programs evaluated under YoungStar's "family" child care track (track 1) are not included in our analysis because state licensing regulations and YoungStar's staff education criteria for family child care providers are distinct from those of the other two tracks. Family child care programs also are structured quite differently from school-age programs and group child care centers, as family providers have only one staff member and serve comparatively few children.

As of June 2013, school-age programs in Milwaukee County had received significantly lower YoungStar ratings than group child care centers (**Figure 1**). Among the 134 school-age programs that had been rated under YoungStar, only **one** had achieved a rating of at least 4 stars (indicating high quality), while 72% of the programs received 2-star ratings. A majority of group child care centers, on the other hand, received ratings of 3 stars or higher (57%).



Figure 1: YoungStar ratings of school-age programs and group child care centers in Milwaukee County¹¹



As shown in **Figures 2 and 3**, most school-age programs and group child care centers in Milwaukee County that currently have 2-star ratings do not have the staff education levels needed for their programs to qualify for a higher rating.¹² For example, the June 2013 DCF data show that 91% of 2-star providers in both YoungStar tracks have program directors who *do not* meet YoungStar’s specific education requirements for ratings of 3 stars or higher. In fact, the data show that additional training for both program directors *and* teachers would be needed to assist the vast majority of 2-star programs in qualifying for higher YoungStar ratings.

While that finding is cause for concern for both sets of providers, it appears particularly troublesome for school-age programs, as a far higher percentage of school-age programs than group child care centers currently have 2-star ratings (72% vs. 42%, as shown in **Figure 1**). This finding indicates that efforts to help programs advance from 2 stars to 3 stars by way of additional staff training would need to have a particular focus on school-age programs in order to close the ratings gap between the two groups of providers.

¹¹ Data provided by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. June 20, 2013.

¹² Those programs that do meet staff education requirements for higher ratings likely do not meet requirements under one or more of YoungStar’s three other categories of evaluation.

Figure 2: Maximum staff education requirements met by school-age programs currently rated 2 stars¹³ (N = 96)

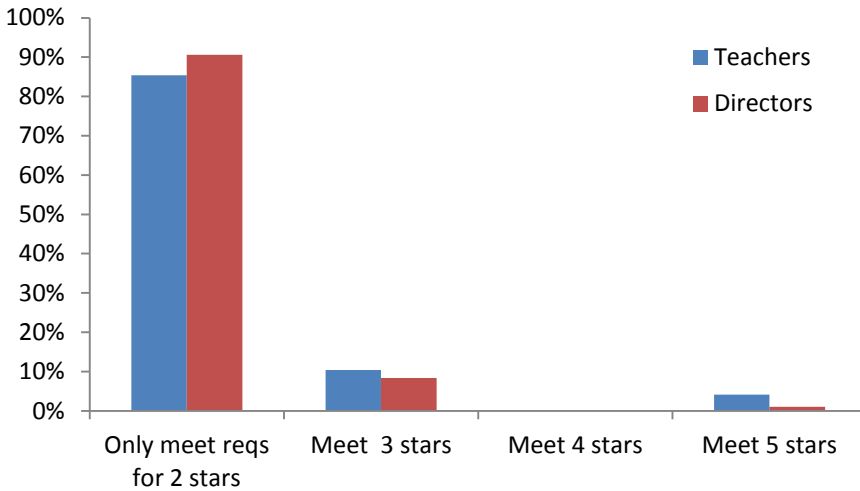
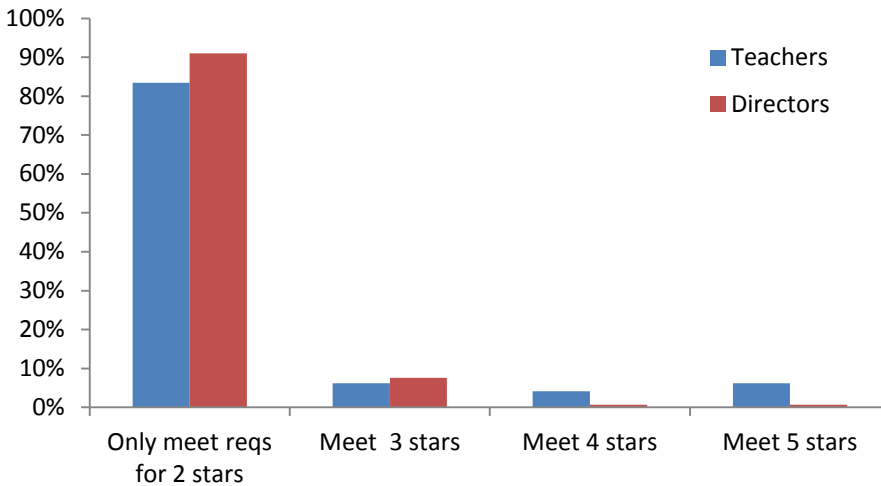


Figure 3: Maximum staff education requirements met by group child care centers rated 2 stars (N = 145)



Staff training clearly represents a substantial hurdle for programs currently rated 3 stars, as well, though 3-star programs appear to have more varied challenges. Among 3-star school-age programs, for example, directors are more likely than teachers to possess the educational qualifications needed for their program to qualify for 4 or 5 stars (49% vs. 35%, as shown in **Figure 4**). The opposite is true for group child care centers, where teachers are much more likely to meet YoungStar’s 4- or 5-star education requirements than program directors (86% vs. 10%, as shown in **Figure 5**). It appears, therefore, that efforts to assist school-age programs with 3-star ratings to qualify for 4 or 5 stars may wish to emphasize training for teachers, while similar efforts targeting 3-star group child care centers could emphasize training for program directors.

¹³ PPF calculations using DCF data.



Figure 4: Maximum staff education requirements met by school-age programs currently rated 3 stars (N = 37)

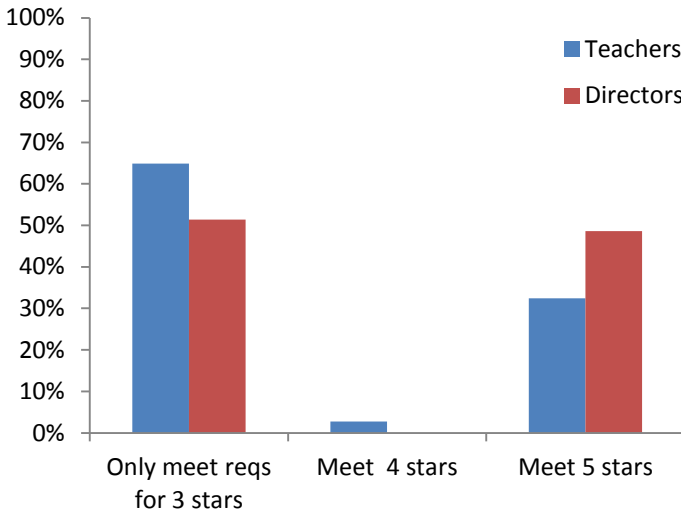
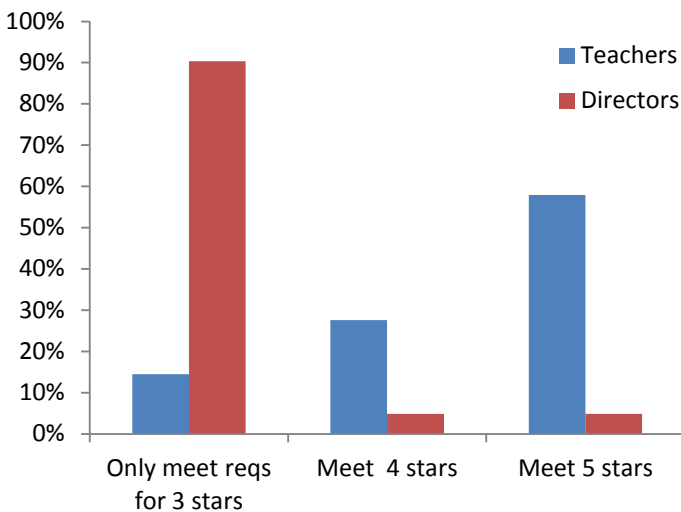


Figure 5: Maximum staff education requirements met by group child care centers rated 3 stars (N = 145)



Overall, most 3-star programs would require additional training for at least a portion of their staff in order for their program to qualify for a higher YoungStar rating. For example, only seven of the school-age programs included in **Figure 4** meet the education requirements for *both* their director and their teachers to qualify for a five-star rating. A total of 16 other school-age programs currently receiving 3-star ratings have *either* a director *or* a set of teachers who meet the 5-star education requirements, but not both, indicating that more effort may be needed to advance those programs up the ratings scale.

Summary

While staff education is only one of four categories of evaluation used in YoungStar’s quality ratings system, our analysis of DCF data shows that failure to meet staff education criteria continues to preclude many Milwaukee County providers from earning higher ratings and increased Wisconsin Shares funding. We also find that school-age programs are struggling disproportionately to earn YoungStar ratings of 3 stars and higher – in large part because of requirements related to staff education.

Consequently, an important question raised by this analysis is whether more support is needed to help school-age programs advance up the ratings ladder; or, conversely, whether the staff education requirements themselves – which originally were designed for group child care centers – may merit further review, particularly given the reliance of school-age programs on part-time staff. In the next section, we dig deeper into the characteristics of individual school-age staff members in an attempt to shed light on that question.



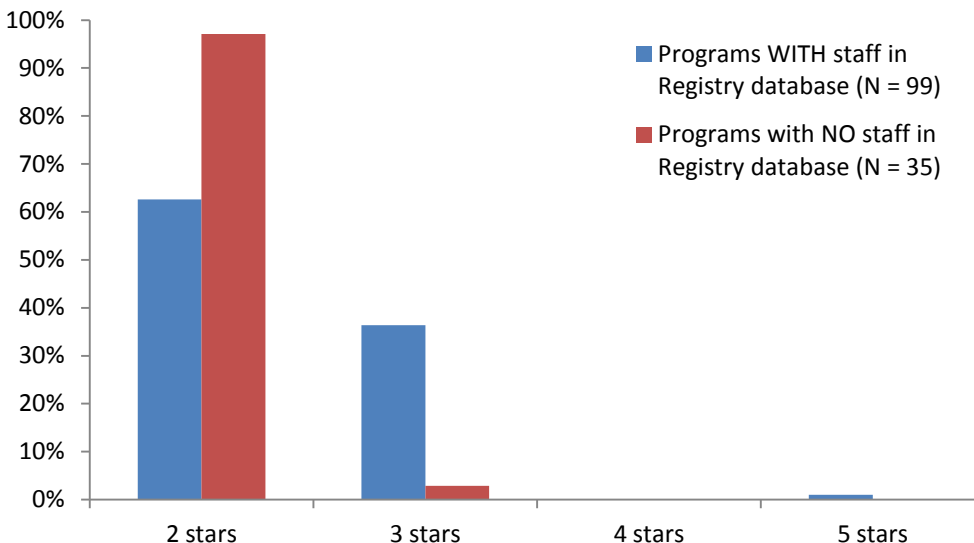
Analysis of Milwaukee County’s afterschool workforce

To further understand the existing educational levels of those currently working in afterschool programs in Milwaukee County – and to better gauge the potential training needs of the afterschool workforce relative to YoungStar requirements – we turned to The Registry’s database, which represents the most comprehensive source of information available on afterschool and child care professionals in Wisconsin. The Registry’s database includes a wealth of information about each Registry participant, including years of experience, wages earned, and post-secondary credits and degrees held.

It is important to note that The Registry’s database does not contain data for every individual working in an afterschool program in Milwaukee County. That is because a) While DCF relies on The Registry’s data to verify the educational qualifications of program staff in determining YoungStar ratings, universal Registry participation by all program staff is not required; and b) Legally exempt and unregulated programs are less likely to have any staff participating in The Registry.

In addition, it should be noted that our analysis of Registry data likely makes Milwaukee County’s workforce appear to have somewhat *higher* training levels overall than is actually the case. That is largely because afterschool programs with higher YoungStar ratings are more likely to have staff members participating in The Registry than those with lower ratings, as shown in **Figure 6**. For example, 97.1% of the YoungStar-rated school-age programs **with no** staff members listed in The Registry’s database have 2-star ratings, while the same is true for only 62.6% of those with staff **who do** participate in The Registry.

Figure 6: YoungStar ratings of school-age programs in Milwaukee County in relation to Registry participation



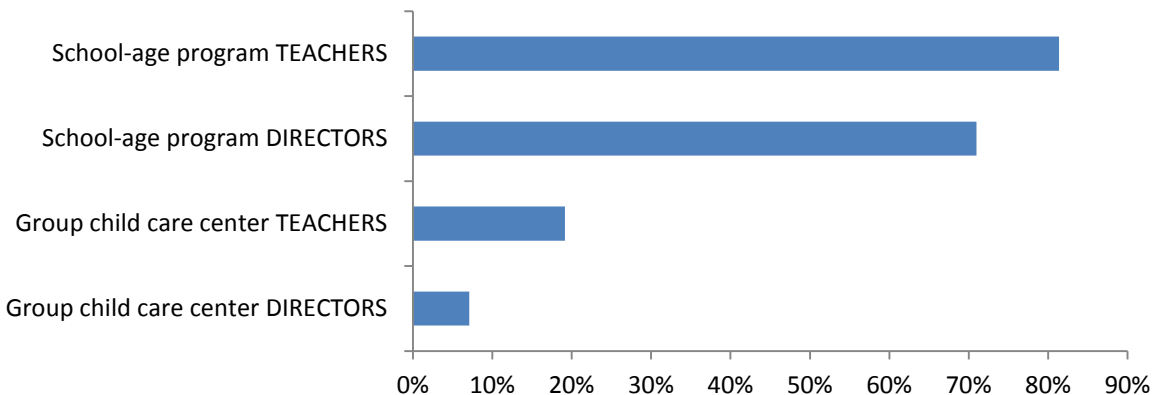
Presumably, Registry participation is higher for highly-rated providers because those with well-trained staff have greater motivation to document their qualifications so they can earn higher YoungStar ratings and increased Wisconsin Shares funding. In addition, there is a fee to participate in The Registry, so programs with limited funds may be unlikely to pay for all of their staff members to be added to The Registry, particularly if they have lower levels of education and training that will not help to improve the program’s YoungStar rating.

Among the 6,681 individuals listed in The Registry’s database as working in a Milwaukee County program¹⁴, we identified a total of 1,437 individuals who:

- work in a school-age program or group child care center located in Milwaukee County (family child care providers were excluded);
- have at least one open employment record indicating they are currently employed;
- are teachers or program directors (assistant teachers were excluded as they are not evaluated under YoungStar¹⁵)
- specifically indicated they work with school-age children (individuals who *only* work with preschool children, toddlers, and/or infants were excluded);

As shown in **Figure 7**, the vast majority of school-age program teachers and directors work exclusively with school-age children, while the same is true for much smaller percentages of those who work for group child care centers. Among the 1,437 afterschool professionals we include in our analysis, 551 (38.3%) work exclusively with school-age children and 886 work with both school-age children and younger kids (61.7%).

Figure 7: Percentage of individuals in each position who work exclusively with school-age children



¹⁴ PPF analysis of data provided by The Registry.

¹⁵ Six assistant teachers who work in school-age programs and 116 assistant teachers who work in group child care centers in Milwaukee County are listed in The Registry’s database but were not included in our analysis.

Demographics and basic employment data

As shown in **Figures 8 and 9**, the Registry data show that most afterschool professionals in Milwaukee County are female and more than half are African American. Nearly 92% of Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce lives in Milwaukee County.

Figure 8: Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce, by gender (N = 1,303)

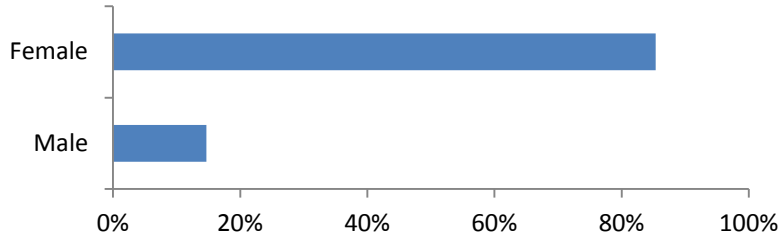
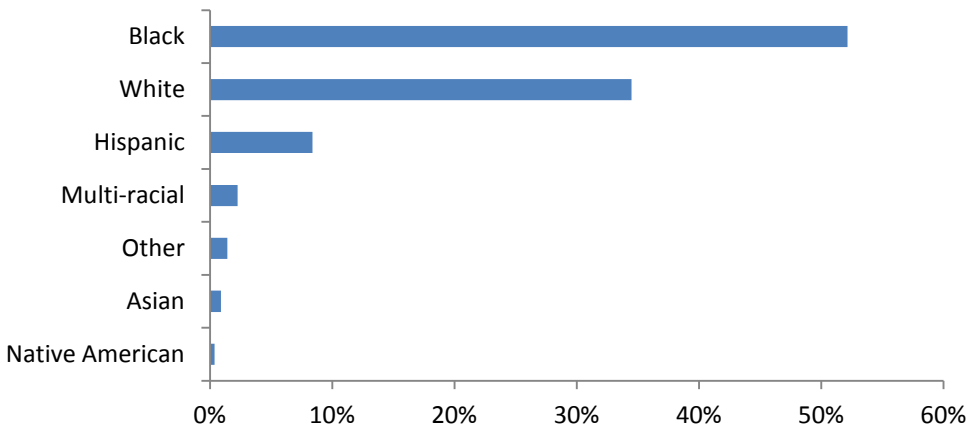
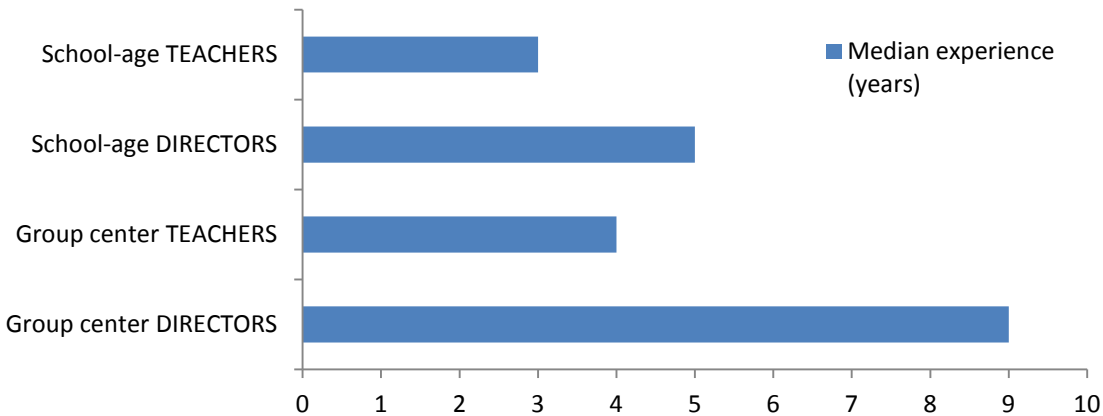


Figure 9: Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce, by race/ethnicity (N = 1,323)



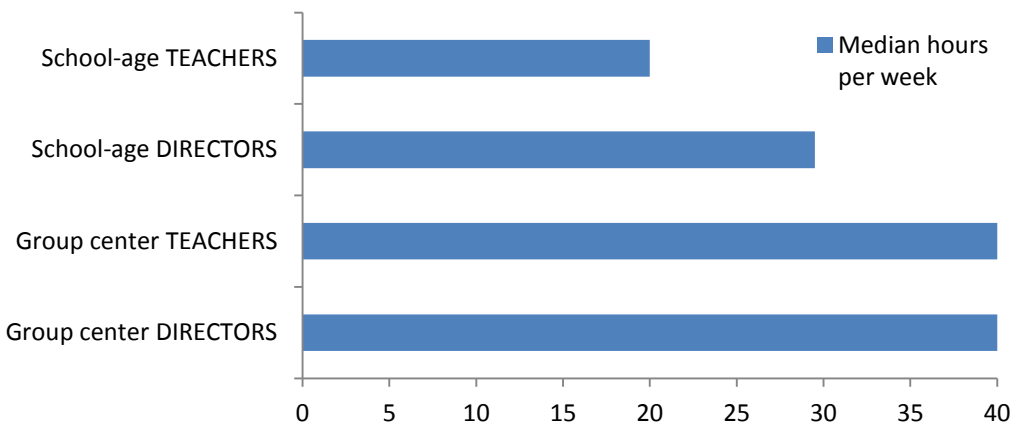
Employees of school-age programs tend to have less experience than those of group child care centers (**Figure 10**). That is particularly the case for program directors; the median experience for directors of school-age programs is five years, compared with nine years for directors of group child care centers.

Figure 10: Median years of experience, by program type and position



Since afterschool programs typically operate during limited hours of the day, it is not surprising that individuals working for school-age programs are more likely to be part-time than staff of group child care centers (**Figure 11**). In fact, the median number of hours worked by teachers in school-age programs is only 20 hours, compared with 40 hours for teachers working in group child care centers. According to program administrators with whom we spoke, the part-time nature of most school-age program positions has a substantial impact on the ability of programs to attract workers who view the jobs as “permanent.”

Figure 11: Median hours worked per week, by program type and position



With a largely part-time workforce and a relatively high turnover rate, it also is difficult for school-age providers to develop a workforce that meets YoungStar’s staff education requirements. For example, in order for a school-age program to achieve a 4-star rating, 100% of its teachers must earn at least six related college credits. Many applicants for teacher positions do not have those credits, and many individuals who *do* have the credits or who earn the credits while on the job do not stay in their positions very long. Consequently, while a number of programs have been able to earn YoungStar

ratings of 3 stars by having at least 50% of their teachers with six credits, almost none have been able to reach the 100% threshold for 4 stars.

Interestingly, as shown in **Figure 12**, wages appear to be relatively comparable between school-age programs and group child care centers, with relatively low wages for entry-level positions and small increases for director-level positions. There is only limited potential for entry-level employees to earn higher wages by advancing to director-level positions at school-age programs, as the median school-age program director earns less than two dollars more per hour than the median teacher. That factor also may affect the stability of the afterschool workforce.

Figure 12: Median hourly wage, by program type and position¹⁶



Staff education and training

The educational attainment of Milwaukee County’s afterschool workforce varies widely. Among teachers working in school-age programs, there appear to be two large pools of individuals: those with a high school diploma or its equivalent (51%) and those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (44%); very few individuals fall somewhere in between, i.e. possessing a one-year certificate or two-year associate degree. Meanwhile, the educational attainment levels of program directors in school-age programs are only modestly higher than those of teachers.

Table 4: Educational attainment, by program type and position

Highest education attained	School-age programs		Group child care centers	
	Directors	Teachers	Directors	Teachers
No HS diploma	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%
HS diploma/GED	34.4%	50.6%	36.2%	61.4%
1-yr certificate	1.0%	0.9%	0.0%	1.1%
Associate degree	5.2%	4.6%	13.8%	12.6%
Bachelor's degree	38.5%	32.4%	33.5%	20.0%
Master's degree	20.8%	11.1%	15.8%	4.6%
Doctorate	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%

¹⁶ Wage data were available for roughly half of the Registry participants we analyzed (681 or 47.4%).



The relative lack of individuals in the middle of the educational scale may result from a lack of relevant programs available for youth development as compared to early childhood education. Significantly higher percentages of group child care center employees have earned associate degrees, while smaller percentages have earned bachelor's degrees or higher. The data also do not show individuals who have earned college credits but have not completed a certificate or degree program.

Gap analysis

Since all of the individuals included in our study work for programs evaluated by YoungStar, we analyzed their collective educational credentials to understand how they stack up to YoungStar's educational requirements. This analysis allows us to better gauge the extent to which training gaps may be preventing school-age programs in Milwaukee County from advancing to higher YoungStar ratings.

Our analysis measures the gaps that exist between the current educational levels of the afterschool workforce and the educational levels needed for the school-age programs included in our analysis to qualify for 4 stars. This approach is logical because programs with 4- and 5-star ratings are considered "high-quality" by DCF, and it is important, therefore, to assess the professional development that would be needed to develop high-quality afterschool programming across the board.

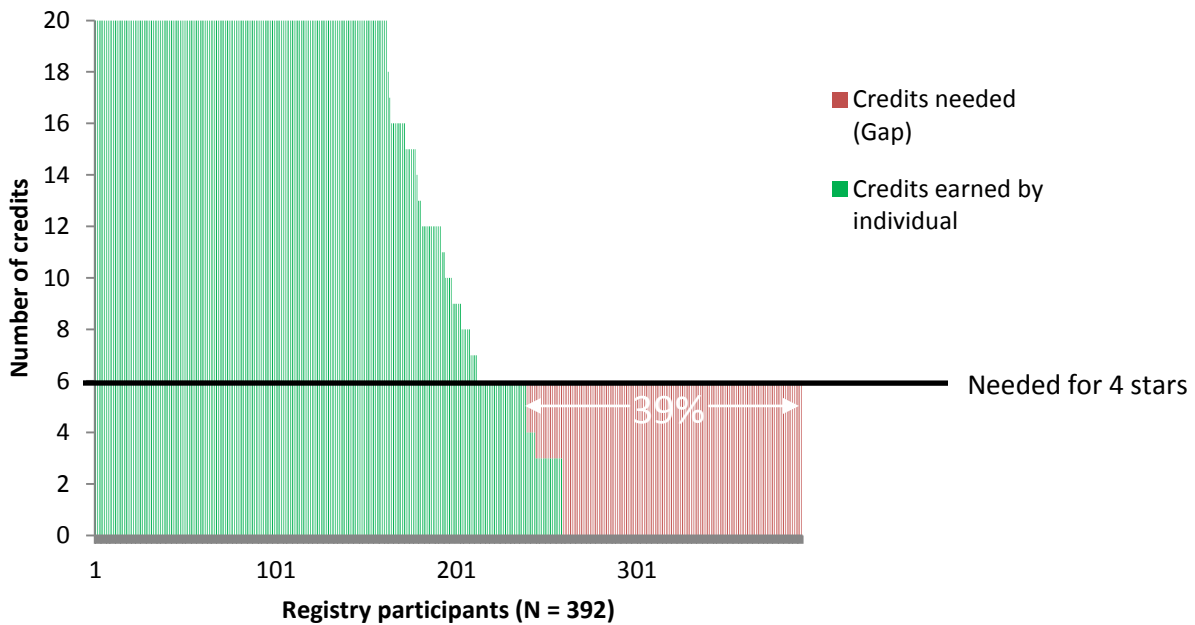
In addition, structuring our study in this way allows for a clearer analysis than would be possible if we focused on the educational gaps preventing programs from earning 3 stars. That is because YoungStar requires 100% of teachers to meet the same minimum educational requirements for programs to earn 4 stars, while programs can qualify for 3 stars if 50% of their teachers meet the same threshold. Since it is acceptable for programs not to have every teacher participating in The Registry, it is difficult to measure the gaps for 3 stars accurately using Registry data.

Our analysis shows that the pool of 392 teachers working in the school-age programs included in our analysis would need to earn at least 853 additional credits overall for all of their programs to qualify for YoungStar ratings of 4 stars.¹⁷ All teachers must earn a minimum of six related credits for programs to qualify for 4 stars. **Figure 13** – which shows the number of credits earned by each of the 392 teachers – indicates that 39% have earned less than six related credits, including 34% who have earned no approved credits at all.

¹⁷ Individuals with bachelor's degrees in unrelated fields do not have to have six related credits to meet YoungStar's requirement for 4 stars, so all individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher were presumed to have no educational "gap" for this calculation.



Figure 13: Training gaps for school-age program teachers, relative to YoungStar requirements



In order for every school-age program in Milwaukee County to bring each of its teachers up to the educational attainment level required to qualify for 4 stars, we estimate that an investment of between \$117,000 and \$288,000 would be required to cover tuition for necessary coursework at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) or the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM).¹⁸ This analysis does not factor in those who do not participate in The Registry or other potential costs that programs may incur for increased wages, as staff members may need to cover extra shifts so their colleagues can attend classes. Thus, these estimates are conservative.

Interestingly, almost half of the teachers who have at least six approved credits have earned them in early childhood education, as opposed to coursework focused on school-age children. Among the 204 teachers in The Registry’s database who have at least six approved credits, 92 have earned some or all of their credits in early childhood education (45.1%). This may be due to the relative lack of available for-credit courses focused on afterschool care and education, an issue that is discussed in greater detail in the next section of this report.

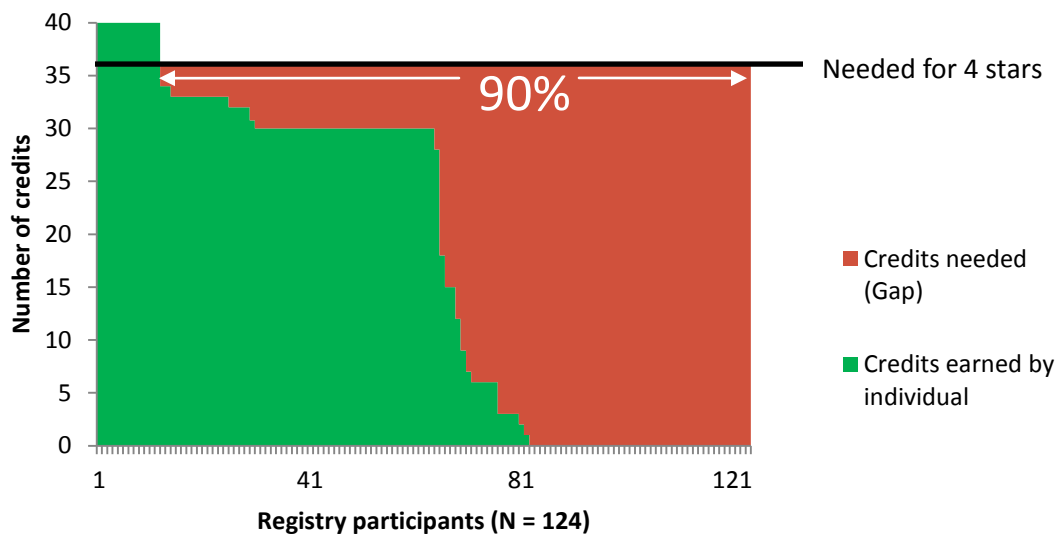
The training needs are greater for school-age program directors, as shown in **Figure 14**. Program directors must earn at least 18 credits in school-age or early childhood education to meet the YoungStar requirement for 3 stars and 30 related credits for 4 stars. To meet both 3- and 4-star requirements, program directors *also* must earn at least six business-related credits in supervision and financial management. Currently, 90% of program directors have earned less than the 36 total credits required for 4 stars, including 33% who have no approved credits. There is a notable plateau at 30 credits

¹⁸ Based on MATC’s tuition cost of \$136.66 per credit and UWM’s undergraduate tuition rate of \$337.13 per credit.



because many program directors have earned sufficient education-related credits but lack the six required business-related credits.

Figure 14: Training gaps for school-age program directors, relative to YoungStar requirements



As a group, program directors would need to earn 2,293 credits for all school-age programs included in our analysis to qualify for 4 stars, which would cost \$313,000 to \$773,000 for tuition alone.¹⁹

Summary

This review of the educational credentials of individuals working in school-age programs in Milwaukee County further illustrates the large gaps that exist between the educational levels of the afterschool workforce and the requirements set by YoungStar for programs to earn ratings of 3 stars and higher. For example, very few 2- and 3-star school-age programs have both a director and teachers with the educational credentials needed for the program to qualify for a higher rating. Significant investments in professional development would be required to prepare all of the county’s school-age programs to advance to a rating of 3 stars, and even greater investments would be needed to advance programs to high-quality ratings of 4 or 5 stars.

Our analysis also confirms frequently-cited challenges faced by afterschool programs with regard to cultivating and maintaining a well-trained staff. Since afterschool programs operate during limited hours of the day, their teachers tend to be part-time, which causes many individuals to view the positions as temporary. Low wages and relatively little potential to earn higher wages by advancing to program director positions also appear to be factors potentially limiting professional development efforts among Milwaukee County’s afterschool workforce.

¹⁹ For program directors with less than a bachelor’s degree, we calculated this “gap” based on their need to earn at least 30 credits in school-age or early childhood education *and* six business-related credits in order to meet YoungStar’s 4-star requirements. For those who have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, we calculated this gap based solely on their need to earn the six business-related credits.

Training opportunities and support for afterschool professional development

Given our finding that staff training is a significant need for many afterschool programs in Milwaukee County, we next reviewed the prevalence of course offerings at local colleges and universities that are relevant to afterschool care and education, and the extent to which support is available to help programs and individuals wishing to pursue professional development opportunities.

We quickly discovered that relatively few opportunities exist in Milwaukee for individuals to take courses for credit that focus specifically on youth work in afterschool settings. In fact, UWM is the only educational institution located within Milwaukee County that currently offers such courses. UWM offers both for-credit and non-credit courses in youth development through its Youth Work Learning Center, including courses aligned with Wisconsin's new Afterschool and Youth Development Credential (see text box below.)²⁰ UWM also offers a 15-credit Youth Work Certificate program that prepares students to

Afterschool and Youth Development Credential

Since the creation of YoungStar's school-age track, The Registry has approved a 12-credit Afterschool and Youth Development professional credential program, which offers a new rung on the educational ladder between entry-level, non-credit coursework and full degree programs. The new credential program, which was developed by a nonprofit organization called the Wisconsin Afterschool Network, is specifically designed for individuals who work with school-age youth outside of the classroom. This contrasts with most related degree programs, which are either in education (i.e. for future schoolteachers) or in early childcare education. The new credential series was launched in fall 2013 at several colleges and universities throughout Wisconsin, including UW-Milwaukee and UW-Platteville.

To some extent, the Afterschool and Youth Development Credential series aligns with YoungStar's requirements for school-age program professionals. An individual who completes the 12-credit credential series meets the highest educational bar YoungStar sets for teachers; in order for a program to earn 5 stars, at least 50% of its teachers must have completed the credential or earned 18 approved credits. In order for an individual who has earned the credential to be prepared to compete for program director positions, however, he or she would need to complete additional business-related coursework in personnel and financial management.

The Afterschool and Youth Development Credential program includes the following four courses:

- Course 1: Foundations in Afterschool and Youth Development
- Course 2: Engaging Youth in Groups
- Course 3: Intentionality in Programming
- Course 4: Capstone Course - Site Programming and Operations

UW-Platteville is the only institution in Wisconsin offering all four courses in the credential series in the 2013-2014 academic year. The credential takes approximately 12 to 18 months to complete at UW-Platteville and tuition for the full 12-credit series is \$3,329. UW-Platteville offers its courses online only, which allows students throughout the state to earn the credential.

²⁰ UWM Youth Work Learning Center: <http://www4.uwm.edu/sce/dci.cfm?id=19>



work with youth in a variety of settings, though that program is only open to degree-seeking students.

UWM only is offering Course 1 of the Afterschool and Youth Development Credential series in the 2013-2014 academic year, but plans to add Course 2 and Course 3 to its offerings in the near future. (In fall 2013, 13 UWM students completed Course 1.) UWM also plans to better align the new coursework it is offering related to the Afterschool and Youth Development Credential with its more established Youth Work Certificate courses in the near future. The university does not plan to offer the final capstone course in the credential series, however, largely because it is less content-driven and more focused on portfolio review. The capstone course also requires additional payment to The Registry. UWM students wishing to complete the credential would have to go through another institution, such as UW-Platteville.

While MATC does not regularly offer courses aligned with the Afterschool and Youth Development Credential or other courses targeted toward individuals working in afterschool settings, the college has worked with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee to provide for-credit, customized training for afterschool program staff with the support of a state Workforce Advancement Training (WAT) grant. That partnership is described in detail below. MATC officials also have expressed a willingness to provide regular courses aligned with the credential in the future, provided there is sufficient demand from the afterschool workforce.

MATC also offers technical diploma and associate degree programs in early childhood education and two associate degree “tracks” in education, which provide additional opportunities for afterschool professionals to take relevant courses that meet YoungStar requirements. The college’s degree offerings include an “educational foundations track,” which prepares students to transfer to four-year institutions to complete teaching licenses or bachelor’s degrees in education, and a “paraprofessional track,” which prepares students to work in K-12 education supporting classroom teachers. Both of these tracks emphasize coursework in the college’s early childhood education program. Notably, these programs generally direct students to areas outside of the afterschool field.

Non-credit courses, which are a more affordable training option for afterschool programs needing to meet state licensing requirements, are offered through several local organizations and institutions of higher education, including 4C for Children, Early Education Station, UWM, and the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA).²¹ These courses are designed for early childhood care, however, rather than school-age care. An expanded role for non-credit coursework may be worth considering. For example, non-credit courses focused on school-age care could be developed and approved for teachers. Non-credit courses also could be developed for program directors who have degrees but lack the business-related credits needed to achieve ratings of 3 stars and higher.

WAT grants

MATC’s Office of Workforce and Economic Development, in partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, recently received two grants from the State of Wisconsin to provide for-credit training to individuals working in afterschool programs as teachers. That partnership has allowed

²¹ The Registry: <https://www.the-registry.org/myregistry/>



participants to earn six credits, which helps their programs to qualify for a YoungStar rating of 3 stars or higher. MATC's initial WAT grant of \$75,823 was used to train 181 participants in 2012 and 2013.²² A smaller, second grant of \$22,368 will be used to train an additional 60 individuals in 2014.

Rather than being spread out over a semester like an academic course, MATC staff deliver each 3-credit training program in one intensive week. According to Boys and Girls Clubs leaders, the structure of the trainings allows for greater participation among their staff, as many individuals who work part-time for one of their afterschool programs also have full-time jobs during the day. The training courses have been open to staff of United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee (UNCOM) agencies as well, though most of the participants to date have been employees of the Boys and Girls Clubs.

While this approach has proven successful in helping the Boys and Girls Clubs to access needed training for their staff to meet YoungStar criteria, there may be limited potential for other afterschool programs in Milwaukee County to follow their lead. All 16 technical colleges in Wisconsin compete for a limited pool of WAT grant funding, and most funding supports customized training for businesses with at least 100 employees throughout the state.²³ Some afterschool leaders also question whether the condensed training design used by MATC and the Boys and Girls Clubs is ideal.

YoungStar micro-grants

YoungStar's policy objective not only was to rate the quality of early childhood care and afterschool programs in Wisconsin, but also to help those programs improve. To that end, DCF provides technical consultation and awards micro-grants to programs to help them pay for needed improvements. Most programs that participate in YoungStar are eligible to receive a \$1,000 micro-grant each year when they complete technical consultation. Notably, programs that opt not to participate in technical consultation receive automated 2-star ratings and are not eligible for micro-grants.

Between September 1, 2012 and September 1, 2013, 111 school-age programs in Milwaukee County accessed \$1,000 YoungStar micro-grants. Those programs allocated 93% of their micro-grant dollars to purchase materials for children.²⁴ Most of the remainder was allocated for Registry participation fees (3%), adult resources (1%), and non-credit professional development opportunities (1%). School-age programs in Milwaukee County did not allocate any of their micro-grant dollars to pay for credit-based education for staff. This indicates that YoungStar micro-grants may be considered insufficient in value for programs to view them as a viable resource to help pay for professional development, or that programs have other needs that appear to be taking precedence.

Notably, organizations with multiple sites are not allowed to pool micro-grants, which may limit the grants' potential with regard to staff education. According to one program leader with whom we spoke, allowing large programs to pool micro-grant funds would allow them to target investments across sites to maximize impact.

²² Data provided by MATC's Office of Workforce and Economic Development: <http://www.matc.edu/OWED/>

²³ Wisconsin Technical College System: http://www.wtcsystem.edu/initiatives/business_industry/trng_grants.htm

²⁴ Data provided by Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)



TEACH scholarships

The State of Wisconsin's TEACH scholarship program represents another opportunity for afterschool program staff to access financial support to pursue professional development. TEACH scholarships are available to early childhood care and school-age program professionals and cover both tuition and missed wages for hours spent in the classroom rather than at work. The TEACH scholarship program is funded by DCF and administered by WECA.

While TEACH has offered over 7,000 scholarships to individuals throughout Wisconsin since 1999, it appears that very few afterschool professionals in Milwaukee County currently are accessing TEACH.²⁵ In federal fiscal year 2012 (October 1, 2012 - Sept 30, 2013), only three individuals from Milwaukee County who work in school-age programs were awarded a TEACH scholarship (**Table 5**).

Table 5: TEACH scholarships awarded to afterschool professionals in Milwaukee County, FY 2012²⁶

Job title	Scholarship value	Working towards
Assistant Teacher	\$4,113.75	Associate Degree
Teacher	\$4,113.75	Associate Degree
Administrator	\$4,226.25	Administrator Credential

The TEACH scholarship program may represent an underutilized resource that more afterschool program professionals could attempt to access in the future, though one potential barrier is the requirement of a financial investment from programs. TEACH pays for 75% of participants' tuition costs, and programs must cover the remaining 25% and are expected to commit to offering a raise or bonus to employees after completion of the scholarship.²⁷ Programs also must provide scholarship recipients with 15 hours of paid release time from their position each semester, though that time is reimbursed by TEACH at \$10 per hour.²⁸ Since TEACH scholarships can help programs improve the educational qualifications of their staff – and thus their YoungStar ratings – the costs associated with TEACH participation could be compensated in some cases through increased Wisconsin Shares funding tied to higher ratings.

Summary

Both UWM and MATC offer for-credit courses that are relevant to afterschool program professionals. UWM regularly offers semester-long courses that are specifically focused on youth work in afterschool settings, while MATC's regular course offerings are primarily geared toward early childhood care professionals and future schoolteachers. For purposes of meeting YoungStar requirements, however, both school-age and early childhood education credits are accepted for school-age program staff.

²⁵ Wisconsin Department of Children and Families: <http://dcf.wi.gov/childcare/teach/default.htm>

²⁶ Data provided by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association upon request.

²⁷ WECA: <http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/teach/costs-and-financial-aid/>

²⁸ Scholarship recipients are expected to commit to staying with the program or in the field for a specified period.



WAT grants, TEACH scholarships, and YoungStar micro-grants are three potential sources of support that can assist programs and individuals to pursue professional development in the afterschool field. To date, WAT grants obtained by MATC and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee appear to have had the largest impact in helping Milwaukee County's afterschool workforce to earn credits required by YoungStar, though the condensed design of the training programs has not been evaluated for effectiveness. Now that MATC has developed the training programs, other afterschool programs could seek to access those trainings for their staff by applying for additional WAT grants or by paying for the training programs directly. TEACH scholarships are another resource that more afterschool programs and individuals could pursue to support afterschool professional development.



YoungStar's influence on funding for afterschool programming in Milwaukee County

We conducted the analysis in this report with the assumption that YoungStar – and its influence on Wisconsin Shares funding – is motivating and supporting afterschool programs in Milwaukee County to make quality improvements. To provide insight into whether that is actually the case, we collected data on Wisconsin Shares funding in relation to YoungStar ratings for all school-age programs in Milwaukee County. We also examined several individual afterschool programs to understand how the interplay between YoungStar ratings and Wisconsin Shares funding has affected them.

Since nearly three quarters of school-age providers in Milwaukee County currently have YoungStar ratings of 2 stars and are therefore receiving a 5% reduction in their Wisconsin Shares reimbursement payments, we were curious about the impacts of the reduced revenues on those programs' overall finances. We also asked whether the increase in reimbursement funding that would result from a higher YoungStar rating is sufficient to offset the increased costs programs must incur – through staff training and other quality improvements – to earn the higher rating. While our analysis does not fully answer those questions, we present information and case studies that provide valuable perspective.

In 2013, \$5.13 million in Wisconsin Shares reimbursement funding supported 139 programs evaluated under YoungStar's school-age track.²⁹ This funding represents the largest single source of financial support for afterschool programming in Milwaukee County, though the extent to which individual programs rely on reimbursement funding varies considerably. Some programs do not accept Wisconsin Shares subsidies as a form of payment and therefore are not expected to participate in YoungStar, while for some other afterschool programs, Wisconsin Shares reimbursements may be their largest source of financial support.

By comparison, the other primary source of funding for afterschool care and education in Milwaukee is the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CLC) program, which is the only federal funding source devoted solely to afterschool programs.³⁰ During the 2012-2013 school year, the federal CLC program provided \$3.95 million to 65 afterschool programs in Milwaukee County.³¹ The lower level of CLC funding provided to fewer afterschool programs in Milwaukee County demonstrates the crucial nature of Wisconsin Shares funding for Milwaukee County's afterschool system as a whole.

At the individual program level, however, the significance of Wisconsin Shares funding in relation to programs' overall budgets vary widely, which likely affects the extent to which YoungStar motivates programs to earn higher ratings. For example, the total combined Wisconsin Shares reimbursement funding that 81 2-star school-age programs in Milwaukee County *lost* in 2013 through 5% payment reductions was approximately \$96,000. While the funding cuts were not spread evenly across the 81

²⁹ Data provided by Wisconsin DCF upon request.

³⁰ While Wisconsin Shares funds are attached to individual students, CLC funds are distributed at the program level through a competitive grant process. In order to compete for a CLC grant, at least 40% of the students a program serves must be from low-income families, and programs must demonstrate an academic need.

³¹ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_clc



programs, the average 2-star program lost roughly \$1,200 in Wisconsin Shares funding in 2013 and would have received about \$2,400 above current funding levels if it had received a 4-star rating. Given our discussion above regarding the costs of education, therefore, it may take many years of increased funding for the average program to make up for the costs that likely would be incurred for staff development and other program improvements needed to earn and maintain a higher YoungStar rating.

In order to understand the significance of Wisconsin Shares funding on individual programs, we asked two of Milwaukee County's largest providers of afterschool programming and one small afterschool program to give us a breakdown of their revenue sources. Those programs are Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee, and the Holton Youth and Family Center.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee

Wisconsin Shares funding comprises about 20% of the overall revenue supporting the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's afterschool programs, though the percentage varies from program to program. Most of the remaining program revenue comes from the federal CLC program and philanthropic sources. The agency's 26 school-based programs have a total annual budget of roughly \$5.3 million.³² In 2013, approximately \$1.2 million of that came from Wisconsin Shares reimbursement funding. The agency also runs six "branch" clubs that receive no CLC funding but are more expensive to operate because those centers are much larger and serve an expanded membership base. The total annual cost of operating the six branch locations is roughly \$6.2 million, and about \$1.1 million came from Wisconsin Shares in 2013.

Most of the Boys and Girls Clubs programs currently have 3-star ratings, so they are not experiencing the 5% cut in Wisconsin Shares reimbursement funding incurred by most of their afterschool program peers. The Boys and Girls Clubs also operate the only school-age program in Milwaukee County that has earned a 5-star rating, and several of their 3-star programs are progressing toward earning 4 stars.

Based on current rates of Wisconsin Shares participation among Boys and Girls Club program participants, the agency could experience a substantial increase in reimbursement overall if it were able to move all of its programs up to at least 4 stars – potentially in the magnitude of \$200-250,000 per year.³³ The scale of that funding increase would seem to warrant the investments in staff education that would be needed to meet 4-star educational and training standards. The Boys and Girls Clubs are indeed working to provide additional training for their staff through a partnership with MATC, as previously explained in this report.

Yet , additional staff training alone will not move every Boys and Girls Clubs program up the YoungStar rating scale. In addition to staff education, YoungStar's learning environment and curriculum category often prevents programs from advancing to 4 or 5 stars, according to agency leaders. In order to earn at

³² Financial data provided by Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee upon request.

³³ In 2013, the Boys and Girls Clubs' total Wisconsin Shares reimbursement funding was \$2.34 million. Most of their programs currently are rated 3 stars and would receive a 10% increase in Wisconsin Shares funding if they moved up to 4 stars. A few of their programs are rated 2 stars, so a jump to 4 stars for those programs would carry with it an additional 5% increase in Wisconsin Shares funding.



least 4 stars, programs must be evaluated using a School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS), which assesses programs in the following areas: space and furnishings; health and safety; activities; interactions; program structure; staff development; and special needs.³⁴ According to agency leaders, it often is difficult for school-based programs to perform well on the SACERS because schools are designed for educational activities, whereas the SACERS evaluates programs based on standards established for child care facilities.

YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee

The YMCA has a different funding model from the Boys and Girls Clubs. For example, the YMCA does not receive federal CLC funding for its programs. In addition, whereas the Boys and Girls Clubs' programs are essentially free for parents, program fees are a primary funding source for the YMCA. The YMCA does accept Wisconsin Shares subsidies for qualifying families and all of its programs participate in YoungStar.

The YMCA operates 33 afterschool and early childhood care programs in the Milwaukee area, including 21 located in Milwaukee County. Those programs predominantly serve school-age children and most are evaluated under YoungStar's school-age track. Among the agency's 33 programs, 29 are rated 2 stars, one is rated 3 stars, and three are rated 5 stars. (All of the YMCA's programs with 5-star ratings are evaluated under YoungStar's group child care center track.) According to YMCA leaders, staff education clearly poses the greatest challenge to their programs earning YoungStar ratings of 3 stars and higher.

The amount of funding the YMCA receives from Wisconsin Shares is relatively low, largely due to low participation in Wisconsin Shares among program participants. Among the agency's 1,153 total participants, only 132 were supported by the child care subsidy program (11%). The low rate of Wisconsin Shares participation seems to indicate that relatively few YMCA program participants are from low-income families, though the agency provides scholarships for many participants.

Although most of the YMCA's programs are rated 2 stars and receive 5% reductions in their Wisconsin Shares reimbursement payments, the agency's 5-star programs receive 25% bonus payments that make up for those losses. In 2013, for example, the bonus payments for the YMCA's 5-star programs outweighed the reductions for the agency's 2-star programs by approximately \$25,000. The YMCA estimates that it could have earned an additional \$4,000 in reimbursement funding if all of its programs had achieved ratings of at least 3 stars, or \$8,000 if they all had received 4 stars. For an agency with such a large staff, that level of increased funding may or may not make up for the increased costs the agency would incur if it were to pursue the staff development needed for its programs to earn higher ratings.

Despite the fact that Wisconsin Shares represents a small portion of the YMCA's overall program revenue – meaning changes to that funding brought on by YoungStar would have relatively little impact on the agency's overall finances – agency leaders see other benefits to participating in YoungStar. The technical consultation and micro-grants provided by the program, for example, are valuable to the agency.

³⁴ University of North Carolina: <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/school-age-care-environment-rating-scale-sacers>



Holton Youth and Family Center

Many afterschool programs in Milwaukee County receive no Wisconsin Shares funding and thus are not expected to participate in YoungStar. The Holton Youth and Family Center is an example of such a program. In fact, the center receives neither Wisconsin Shares nor federal CLC funding to support its programming. Although we were unable to obtain information about the primary funding sources supporting the Holton Youth and Family Center, it is clear that this and other afterschool program providers that similarly do not receive Wisconsin Shares funding are financially unaffected by YoungStar. Consequently, the quality rating and improvement system likely has little influence on the staff development goals of those programs. In addition, since YoungStar does not rate programs that do not receive Wisconsin Shares subsidy reimbursement, the utility of YoungStar for parents wishing to make quality comparisons between programs is limited.

Summary

Youngstar's staff education requirements for school-age programs do not affect all programs equally, as programs rely to varying degrees on Wisconsin Shares funding that is tied to their YoungStar ratings, and some receive no Wisconsin Shares funding and therefore are not expected to participate in YoungStar at all. The data and case studies presented here show the variety among afterschool programs in Milwaukee County in this regard, which may influence the extent to which state regulations and funding are motivating afterschool providers to seek the types of quality improvements encouraged by YoungStar.



Observations & Conclusion

Two primary findings emerge from our analysis of the aptitude of Milwaukee County’s afterschool workforce as measured by Wisconsin’s YoungStar child care rating and improvement system:

- 1) There is a substantial “educational gap” between the current workforce and a workforce that would allow every YoungStar-rated program to attain a high-quality rating. Furthermore, the availability of professional development classes that would help to reduce this gap is limited, and funding mechanisms that might help programs address the gap have considerable barriers to utilization.
- 2) School-age programs disproportionately struggle to meet YoungStar’s staff education standards as compared to early childhood care providers. This suggests that policymakers may wish to consider whether the rating system’s staff education requirements for school-age programs – which were modeled after those used for group child care centers – are calibrated appropriately.

In addition to those broad findings, our research produces the following specific observations regarding afterschool programming in Milwaukee County:

- **School-age programs in Milwaukee County have disproportionately low YoungStar ratings relative to group child care centers.** Nearly three quarters (72%) of school-age programs have received 2-star ratings, as compared to 42% of group child care centers. In addition, less than 1% of school-age programs in Milwaukee County have received ratings of 4 or 5 stars (indicating high quality), while 16% of group child care centers have done so. As noted above, these differences raise questions as to whether school-age programs are indeed of lower quality than early childhood care programs in Milwaukee County, or whether modifications may be needed to better adapt YoungStar’s evaluation criteria to school-age programs.
- **YoungStar’s staff education requirements are a major obstacle preventing many school-age programs in Milwaukee County from receiving proficient (3 stars) or high-quality ratings (4 or 5 stars).** YoungStar has specific staff education requirements for program directors and teachers that must be met to qualify for ratings of 3, 4, or 5 stars. Very few programs currently have staff with the educational credentials needed for their program to improve their YoungStar rating. Among the 96 school-age programs in Milwaukee County with 2-star ratings, for example, only nine have the staff education credentials needed to qualify for a rating of 3 stars or higher. Similarly, among the 37 school-age programs with 3-star ratings, only seven meet all of the staff education requirements needed to qualify for 4 or 5 stars. For most school-age programs, therefore, additional credit-based training for both their program director and teachers would be needed to advance from 2 to 3 stars or from 3 to 4 stars.

Since teacher positions in afterschool programs are part-time, it can be challenging for programs to retain staff members and to develop a staff with the educational credentials needed for YoungStar ratings of 3 stars and higher, according to school-age program administrators with whom we spoke. Some afterschool leaders also question whether YoungStar’s current staff education standards



foster an optimal afterschool workforce. A program could be rewarded, for example, by replacing staff members with several years of experience with college students who lack that experience, but who have the credits needed for the program to earn a higher YoungStar rating. Some programs also feel they are able to provide more culturally competent and stable programming with staff members from the program's neighborhood, even if those individuals lack the professional credits required by YoungStar. Those programs generally say they are content to remain with 3-star ratings.

- **Efforts to advance the YoungStar ratings of school-age programs in Milwaukee County from 2 to 3 stars and from 3 to 4 stars would require a large investment in credit-based workforce training.** The educational gaps preventing school-age programs in Milwaukee County from earning high-quality ratings of 4 or 5 stars are significant. Collectively, we estimate that teachers would need to earn at least 853 additional credits and program directors would need to earn at least 2,293 additional credits for all programs to qualify for 4 stars. We estimate the cost for tuition alone to provide this training would be between \$430,000 and \$1,061,000. Smaller but still substantial investments would be needed to move all programs up to a rating of 3 stars.
- **Limited state resources are available to help programs invest in staff development, though in some cases, programs may be able to take better advantage of those resources.** YoungStar provides small micro-grants that can help pay for professional development, and the state's TEACH scholarships and WAT grants represent additional opportunities. Micro-grants offer most programs that participate in YoungStar \$1,000 per year, which are only sufficient to make a modest impact on staff training and usually are used to pay for other needed program improvements. TEACH scholarships appear to be an underutilized resource among school-age programs, as only three scholarships supported training for school-age program professionals in Milwaukee County during the 2012 fiscal year, though the costs programs must incur for their employees to participate in TEACH may prevent some from doing so.

WAT grants are providing a substantial benefit to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, helping their staff members earn the six credits needed to qualify for YoungStar ratings of 4 stars through condensed training programs developed by MATC's Office of Workforce and Economic Development. Those grants could offer an opportunity for additional afterschool providers. The condensed training courses may be a promising model for other afterschool programs whose part-time staff members similarly have full-time jobs during the day, but additional evaluation may be needed to determine the effectiveness of the program design.

- **YoungStar's ability to stimulate quality improvement among afterschool programs in Milwaukee County ultimately may be limited given uneven participation in Wisconsin Shares.** Wisconsin Shares child care reimbursements are a major source of funding for afterschool programming in the state, though the extent to which individual programs rely on the reimbursements varies. Wisconsin Shares contributed \$5.13 million to 139 school-age programs in Milwaukee County in 2013, while the other large public funding source, the federal CLC program, contributed \$3.95 million to 65



programs. The substantial investment of Wisconsin Shares funding demonstrates the influence YoungStar now has on the afterschool system as a whole with regard to setting quality standards.

Nevertheless, afterschool programs rely to varying degrees on Wisconsin Shares funding to support their programs. For those receiving limited Wisconsin Shares support, it is unclear whether the increased reimbursement that results from earning a higher YoungStar rating can offset the training costs programs must incur to achieve the higher rating. Meanwhile, those afterschool programs that receive no Wisconsin Shares support are financially unaffected by YoungStar and do not receive quality ratings.

Overall, we hope this analysis of YoungStar ratings and their application to afterschool programs will provide valuable insight to policymakers that will encourage them to explore system improvements. In particular, the question raised in our previous research regarding the efficacy of existing staff education requirements for school-age programs would appear to merit further consideration.

While YoungStar's fundamental goal of encouraging quality improvement remains worthwhile, that goal also hinges on the system's ability to provide information to parents that will allow them to choose high-quality options. Given that less than 1% of afterschool programs currently are rated 4 or 5 stars, most parents are precluded from using YoungStar to make such a choice when it comes to afterschool programming. That, in turn, indicates a need to tweak the ratings system, invest more heavily in quality improvement, or both.

