



Arizona Department of Health Services Empower Out of School Time (OOST) Program Administrator & Teacher / Staff Feedback

Date: March 14, 2018

Empower
Empowering young children to
learn healthy habits for life.



Research Objectives & Methodology

Research Objective: Assess the barriers of implementation of Empower Standards and needed tools and / or resources.

Target Audiences:

- OOST administrators
- OOST program staff
- Statewide (Maricopa County, Northern Arizona, Southern Arizona)

Methodology:

- Focus Groups: Phoenix - 2 groups – 1 with administrators, 1 with program staff
Tucson - 2 groups – 1 with administrators, 1 with program staff
Administrator Telephone Interviews: Flagstaff (1), Kingman (1), and Show Low (1)

Note: Participants included administrators and staff from facilities that serve a variety of age ranges, including: infant through age 12, ages 5 to 7, 5 to 10, 5 to 12, 5 to 14, and 8 to 10 years.

Moderator: All focus groups and telephone interviews were conducted by Wendy Godfrey, senior analyst at WestGroup Research.

Dates: February 6 through February 19, 2018

The findings in the following slides are qualitative and therefore intended to be directional rather than predictive. Because of the limited number of respondents involved in the research study, all findings should be regarded as exploratory in nature. The results should not be considered projectable to the broader population.



Executive Summary

- ▶ Generally, the words and goals attributed to the Empower program are positive (e.g. independence, foundation, activity, health, wellness).
- ▶ Directors are more familiar with the Empower Standards than teachers / staff. Directors get more information and more in-person training on the Empower program than staff, who often learn from co-workers, self-teach, or go online.
- ▶ In general, the standards are thought to be relevant, but for some, considered fairly basic and common sense, with many settings reporting they would do these things anyway.
- ▶ The standards are followed to varying degrees. Some programs are quite diligent about making sure they're following the standards, while others follow them if and when it fits with their other practices, procedures, and schedules.
- ▶ Some participants feel the Empower Standards are appropriate for pre-K, but not school-aged kids (e.g., tooth brushing program, breastfeeding). Separating the standards by age group was frequently suggested.
- ▶ Challenges directors face adhering to the Empower Standards include: dealing with requirements / regulations, lack of school day and before / after school program cohesion, and motivating, communicating, and monitoring staff.
- ▶ Challenges staff face include: turnover, knowing what to implement and keeping it in focus, finding resources / time, getting signatures etc. to comply with rules, lack of variety / fresh ideas, and (the lack of) follow-up and enforcement.

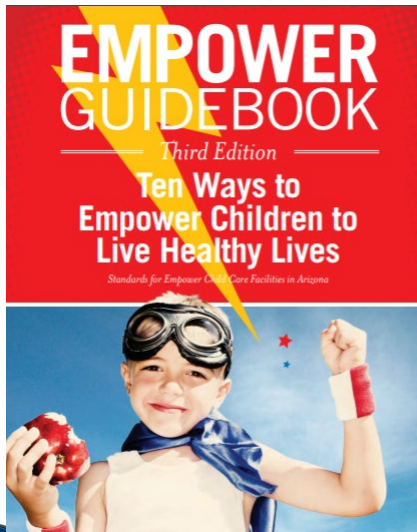


Executive Summary

- ▶ Possible new standards relate to behavior, overall hygiene, dietary accommodations (e.g., gluten-free, lactose intolerant), drinking water, bullying, violence in school, bingeing, leadership, stress management, special needs, and adult / child interactions.
- ▶ There are numerous groups and resources available to directors and staff. Many times there is overlap and confusion about various standards and regulations, specifically with regard to Licensing, Quality First, and Empower.
- ▶ Information isn't always cascaded in a consistent way to staff. In addition, before and after school staff are often not aware that the procedures they are following are Empower Standards.

Executive Summary

- ▶ Whereas most directors have seen the Empower Guidebook, many teachers / staff know little about it and have either never seen it or remember seeing it once early on. Fewer have seen the Active Play! book.
- ▶ The superhero graphics are popular and relevant to most age groups today.
- ▶ In addition, all of the materials are considered colorful, bright and inviting. However, as is true with most materials that are posted on bulletin boards, they start blending in with the scenery over time.
- ▶ Many perceive the materials to be geared toward very young kids with little information or activity suggestions for school-aged kids.



- ▶ The web-site includes quite a bit of information and materials for people to use, but isn't always known about or easy to navigate.
- ▶ Those who find them, like the resources and report the activities make their lives easier.
- ▶ The process to obtain replacement materials when staff move locations, there are new employees, or the setting simply loses materials, isn't straightforward.
- ▶ The newsletter is not utilized as much as it could be. Some don't remember getting it or simply get it forwarded from their director, but are not sure what to do with it or may not have time to read it.



Executive Summary

- ▶ Suggestions for ways to improve the **Empower Pack** and related materials include limiting the amount of text on the materials, creating an app to access materials, creating more branded giveaways, using different demographics in visuals and text, and including even more kid friendly images. Participants also suggest being clear about how to get replacement materials.
- ▶ Suggestions for the Empower **program** overall include having standards for different age groups, dropping / adding some standards, offering more training, having more onsite liaisons and follow-up, partnering more with Licensing, updating materials more often, including parents more, and, of course keeping the Licensing discount.

Empower Program General Discussion



Words / Phrases that Come to Mind re: Empower

Participants most often mentioned *activity*, *health* and *wellness* when asked to describe the program. Below are words and phrases participants shared about the program.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Growing strong children | Servicing & teaching | A health and wellness and guide to run a program |
| Being active | Promoting different ideas | Enriching |
| Building independence | Offering life skills | Daily active exercise/play |
| Promoting wellness | Staying healthy & nutrition | Health |
| Education | Giving strength | Food & exercise |

It's a collaborative program that brings families and educators together over improving the health of every individual, children and families.

I would have guessed that it was about leaders and empowering youth if I had just heard the word.

Goals of the Empower OOST Program

Most feel the program provides building blocks to foster independence and healthy decision-making in the future. They believe they are helping children by providing knowledge and encouraging habits that will serve children well as they grow into adults.

Build Independence

- *Provide kids more of an understanding, more of an independence to be capable to make choices to start engaging in different activities and start understanding how it is empowering and how it is helping.*
- *I look at it as we are the training wheels for them so that when they get out in the world they can definitely do it on their own.*

.Build a foundation

- *I think it's more like a foundation. I know the kids that I serve, we are the ones responsible for training them. They come to our program because the parents are so busy. Parents no longer have time to train their kids on this is how you eat right, this is how you cook right, and these are the right choices.*
- *We want them to have knowledge so they can make the right choices.*

Provide guidelines

- *Promote health and wellness. I think it sets guidelines on health standards for children.*
- *I think it sets guidelines on some health standards for children, so it regulates a little bit what we are feeding them and what kind of physical activities that we are doing, so I would say to promote health.*

Goals of the Empower Program

Teachers / staff also feel the program goals are to be inclusive and provide for engagement with the community.

Encourage engagement

- *I wrote down to encourage or to motivate families and kids on what we provide and put it out there for them to where if they want it they can have it as far as the smoking, for example, if they need help with something like that the information is there and available for them or that we have a safe environment for them and to encourage them to come to us and to be with us.*
- *To make everyone feel that they can be empowered to use our programs that we offer to them and that it's not just for one person or one family, it's for an overall group that comes to our center.*

Provide resources

- *We have ways that they can reach other people to help with their counseling or whatever needs to be done. Our brochures also provide other names of people that would provide for those kids or for those families, so there are other ways that they can contact other people, other resources. I think it gives them the availability to know what resources are out there for them because a lot of the parents don't know what is out there for them and their kids because they might have special needs or financial issues or even behavioral issues.*

Who is Empower Designed for?

Participants described a fairly broad audience, with some suggesting the program is geared toward pre-school aged children, with others saying all children, and still others including parents in the target groups. Directors tend to be more specific about targets, while staff are more likely to include the parents or guardians in the definition.

Pre-school aged children

- ▶ *I think ages 3 to 8 because that's when they are learning and engaging and we're really teaching that.*
- ▶ *Ours is preschool to school age, which is through sixth grade for us.*
- ▶ *Usually by age 8 or higher they have really strong opinions about things. . . so I think ages 3 to 8 is perfect.*
- ▶ *I agree that it applies from birth to age 12, but I think a lot of it fits better for birth to age 5.*

All ages

- ▶ *I think all ages can learn from it, but you just have to have the right activities to go with each grade.*
- ▶ *I think it's more designed for all walks of life that we have that come into our programs that we can empower them by offering sun safety lessons or dental health lessons, it's for our children and even for the parents of our children or other guardians.*
- ▶ *Our families, our parents, our kids, all who attend our center.*
- ▶ *I think it applies to anyone. I know the Department of Health Services is from 6 weeks old through age 12, that's what I fall under, and the sooner the better.*
- ▶ *I would say it is targeted to all kids of any age up through middle school.*
- ▶ *I would agree that it is for the students K-5, but I also think it's for the parents too.*

Empower Standards

Reactions to Empower Standards

Directors are very familiar with the Empower Standards and do a good job articulating them. Teachers / staff have a more difficult time, but are aware of rules they need to follow. Many do not know the policies or procedures are related to Empower nor do they have a grasp of all 10 of them.

For the most part, participants agree the standards are relevant today. Some even feel they are common sense and maintain they would be doing these things whether or not they were part of Empower. However, others suggest the standards are more relevant in certain settings than others. For example, some suggest they are appropriate in pre-K settings but less so with school-aged kids, with a few others suggesting they are more or less appropriate in public vs. private school settings.

Participant's **Positive** Comments:

- *I think they are appropriate and very relevant. A lot of them I implement pretty much on a daily basis with a lot of my kids.*
- *I saw (Empower) as a way to kind of get people on the same page. Arizona for so long didn't have any kind of quality ratings with them, but we're just backwards and late doing everything.*
- *I think it's a good program, and I would hate to see it go away. Our state regulations, they are a little lax in my opinion.*
- *Definitely some of these standards influenced us and have pushed some of our staff to be like, okay I need to think of a different way to handle a situation.*

Reactions to Empower Standards

Participant's **Negative** Comments:

- *Being part of a public school district, I think a lot of this happens already, and I feel like when I present some of this information it's overkill if that makes sense. They get a lot of this within their curriculum. They get a lot of this within some of the community information that gets sent out from schools or from other things, so I'm not sure I reach a whole lot of people at that point, and I feel like they are already kind of getting a lot of it already.*
- *I think at least half of them are fine, it's kind of what we already do. And then a couple of them are like I don't know why I need to be involved in that, like where is that my place as a childcare provider? I feel like that is a parental/family/personal choice, and some of it is just not practical for us.*

Reactions to Empower Standards

Participants had the following positive things to say about specific program standards.

#1 Activity / screen time

- *No more than 60 minutes or limited screen time is very good. We don't have electronics at all at our place, and the ones who notice are the fifth graders because they all have phones.*
- *I think the 60 minutes of physical activity is good for them because it gets them out there moving instead of just leaving them inside, and it comes natural to them.*

#2 Sun Safety

- *The sun safety is obviously important. We live in Arizona where it is 115 degrees outside, so that is a must.*

#3 Breastfeeding

- *Breastfeeding is for us. I believe that it's a very healthy message to be sending out and to be breastfeeding friendly with our age group.*
- *It fits perfect for my program because they are ages 1 through 5.*

#4 CACFP

- *We have an afternoon snack, and it's provided by the school, so it follows the food program guidelines, and we know it's going to be something nutritional.*
- *We utilize #4 with the children that bring their own snack to the facility, so we put out a letter stating that we follow these guidelines.*

#5 Fruit Juice

- *We do implement (limiting fruit juice) on a daily basis throughout the entire center. There are times that I go in during the daytime and it's strictly implemented. They really like us to do it.*

Reactions to Empower Standards

#6 Family-Style Meals

- *We are really big on family style eating, so parents do come in. They don't eat the food, but they sit with the kids and the kids eat food and then they just wait for them to finish and they get to hang out with us and the other kids.*
- *We certainly started emphasizing how you do family style, for example, just don't walk around the perimeter of snacks, sit down and talk with the children.*

#7 Oral Health

- *I think #7 is very important and we don't implement it regularly in our center, but I would like to see that implemented.*
- *We usually have a week dedicated to dental health once a year. We will get a doctor to come in and talk to us about dental health and he passes out toothbrushes for the kids, so we do have a week of that kind of stuff.*

#8 Staff Training

- *At the beginning of the year we will go through trainings that touch on almost all of this. . .*

#9 and #10 ASHLine / Smoke-Free Environment

- *We also have a no-smoke environment, and it is posted in front of the door as well as on our bulletin boards. I think it is important because it is a health issue. Back in the day parents were not so serious about that, smoking in front of the children, they just didn't know, so it has raised awareness, and it is important to keep the awareness going.*

Challenges to Implementation: Directors

The chart below summarizes some of the challenges program directors face while trying to implement the Empower Standards:

| Standards | Requirements / Regulations | School & After School Cohesion | Staff |
|---|--|--|---|
| Standards aren't all age appropriate | Licensing, Empower, lots of rules | Lack of united front between school & before / after school programs | Motivating teachers with tenure who have seen it before |
| Hard to make time for 60 minutes of outside activity | Conflicting directives (e.g. screen time) | Lack of sharing critical information (e.g. autistic, special needs) | Getting staff buy-in |
| Must get permission slips to apply sunscreen | Lack of examples of how to implement the standards (e.g. family style meals) | Not knowing daily issues a child may have had in school | Ensuring staff are aware of the standards and materials |
| Difficult to limit to 2 juice servings / week | Rules / requirements don't align, are repetitive, or contradict | | Not knowing if staff received / are using materials regularly |
| Difficult to monitor staff and parents (smoking) | Over-regulation (e.g. this is <i>my</i> business) | | Staff turnover, moving schools |
| Sanitation of and financial impacts of family-style meals | | | |
| Oral health can be hard to implement with lots of kids | | | |

Challenges to Implementation: Directors

Standard #1: Physical Activity

- *I was just reading over the standards, and I get to go around the other programs, and I know that my district struggles with...not my site personally because I just map it out, but I know other of our sites will struggle with making sure they have 60 minutes of activity outside.*

Standard #2: Sun Safety

- *The boss will bring all the supplies and get as many signatures as you can get together, and it's hard to keep up with that. Like she said, a lot of times you don't get the signatures, and without the signature you can't do anything no matter how big your heart is or your thoughts are.*

Standard #3: Breastfeeding

- *The only one that really came about with my staff was the breastfeeding because we're not a preschool, so they just didn't understand why that was part of it, so I had to explain that this was a broad standard, so it's not for everybody. . . I think it was the word breast because we're dealing with fifth and sixth grade boys, but I don't know.*
- *To give you an example, the breastfeeding one, to be honest I've never had a parent come to the school-aged program and say, do you have a place that I can breastfeed? But I get that with a preschool because there are infants and there are children that are still breastfeeding.*

Standard #5: Juice

- *Secondly, limiting **fruit juice** to no more than 2 times a week? For our school-aged program, putting juice out two times a week we would get dinged on that right away. We do it everyday.*

Challenges to Implementation: Directors

Standard #6: Family Style

- *Teachers that are not in control of their classroom do not want to let the kids do that scoop. The directors that are really watching their food budget, they do not want to put that scoop out because you will have new kids when they are learning that will put their hand in there and it's gross.*
- *Our challenge is with the school district we do snack and everything is prepackaged, so how do you serve a package of granola bars family style?*

Standard #7: Oral Health

- *Implementing a tooth brushing program is kind of hard with hundreds of kids. I think the topic is wonderful and we enjoy that, but doing the whole tooth brushing part of it, there's no way.*
- *I feel it's the parent's responsibility to instill that tooth brushing thing, I don't think it needs to be here.*

Standards #9 and #10: Smoking

- *We have all of our signs up, but I'm struggling with staff and parents that still sneak in smokes in the parking lots and stuff, and I have encouraged my staff, and I'm just the evil witch there because I don't understand how smokers are and the lifestyle that they live, but I do know the facts and the children and the health hazards to them.*
- *Honestly, it's not for me to say whether they smoke or not, that's not up to me. As a business owner I can say we're not going to have it on my property, and that's the right of any business owner, not just a childcare center, and that's actually an Arizona state law right now that all businesses are smoke-free pretty much, so it's kind of a redundancy.*

Challenges to Implementation: Directors

Requirements / Regulations

- *We all are licensed, so the Department of Health licensing rules are our first and foremost, and these are additions because you have to abide by your licensing. There are a lot of rules that have to be followed.*
- *I think public schools already have a lot of this built in, so I feel like sometimes they contradict. For example, because we are part of a public school, the big push is technology, it's STEM, and they are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on iPads to do all of this individualized learning, but then I'm limited on screen time (with Empower).*
- *Multiple standards, they don't always align or sometimes they are repetitive, or contradict.*
- *We kind of laugh about it in our trainings and we will go, whoa there are state standards, and then there are district standards, and then there are my specialist standards, and then there are my team standards.*
- *It's a running joke because I literally train all my staff because a lot of them come from the school setting, and I say here at our after school program kids only know how to go to the bathroom by themselves from 8:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon because all day long if they have to go to the bathroom they raise their hand and go to the bathroom, but licensing says I have to follow them to the bathroom from 3:00 to 6:00, so it's a running joke, and I think that's an example of how Empower and licensing **don't** necessarily apply to school-aged kids.*

Challenges to Implementation: Directors

Cohesion with School Day

- *We have 2 autistic kids ... they are legally required to do all sorts of things to accommodate them during the school day, but it's rare that we are even told this child has Asperger's or whatever else it might be and that's why they're not socializing well, so I find that to be really awkward, and if you have a kid that doesn't like to be touched and **you're not told** that, that's a problem.*
- *We work at a school, so we work directly with the teachers, and I know some schools have really good relationships with their teachers and some of the teachers understand what our program does. In our case, some of the teachers have a harder time working with xxx because we are separate from the school. We work at the school, but we don't work for the school, and we are building our relationship with them, and I think it just stems from they don't really necessarily know what we do or they don't understand that these standards are embedded into our program.*

Motivating Staff

- *It's hard to get staff buy-in because they don't understand why this is important. If there was more of the 'why' behind these why things are in place...*
- *You have teachers who have been with you for 30 years or 20 years, and it just kind of gets brushed under the rug, and even if you try to motivate and say we've got this going on and I'm going to give you all xxx or something, it just kind of gets old after a while and nobody is really motivated about it.*

Challenges to Implementation: Teachers / Staff

The chart below summarizes some of the challenges program **teachers / staff** face while trying to implement the Empower Program.

| Staff | Resources / Time | Requirements / Regulation | Lack of variety | Enforcement |
|--|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Staff turnover | Lack of games, equipment | Parental sign-off required | Same snack / meal everyday | Difficult to enforce (smoking) |
| Staff get preoccupied with other things | Broken equipment | Different diet requirements | No updates to activities | Not part of daily routine |
| Not on staff's radar screen | Don't like what is provided (food) | Allergies | Becomes stale to staff with long tenure | |
| Staff not taking initiative / proactive | Teachers need to buy materials for kids | Facilities aren't always available (e.g. breastfeeding) | | |
| Not sure what to do to implement | Lack of time | | | |
| Lack of cohesion between school and after school program | Don't have the facilities | | | |

Challenges to Implementation: Teachers / Staff

Staff

- *The staff might forget to use some of it in their daily routine, so they might need to stick with them because they get sidetracked and not use them or they might just have the kids sit around and play instead of being more physical and doing healthy exercise.*
- *They go through teachers like you wouldn't even believe. They've talked integrity, they've talked about responsibility, they've talked about lots of things, but I've never seen the after school program affect these kids.*
- *The staff might get caught up in gossiping and talking more instead of being more into the children or just get preoccupied with other things.*
- *I just haven't thought about it as part of the program. Oral health. It's just not on my radar, but it could be if I put it there.*
- *Honestly, I think it just depends mostly on us. If you want to implement an activity, be active yourself because they are kids and they are learning by example, so if you are going to want to implement these things then take it upon yourself to also show them that you are doing these things for yourself as well.*
- *There's definitely a breakdown like that at our school where it feels like there is a real concrete line between the school day and the after school program, and ... it is often looked at as sort of like us and them in a way. When a kid has a tough day, there's no communication between the school day and the after school program.*

Challenges to Implementation: Teachers / Staff

Lack of Resources / Time

- *I don't know what the answer to this is because I'm sure it all comes down to funding, but having made the switch from early childhood to school age about 2 years, as an early childhood professional I felt like there's no resources.*
- *Things always break . . . or they will have a bunch of balls, but they will all be flat.*
- *If we ran out of product, we didn't get the parents to bring it in on a timely basis, and then I remember the program falling behind, so there was no follow-up on it or anything.*
- *During the summer months, if you really think about it, it can become a financial hurdle for some centers because sunscreen is not cheap.*
- *That's another thing, we have to provide that place for a woman to have privacy to do those kinds of things (breastfeeding), but we do not provide that, we don't have the facilities to provide that.*
- *I'm sure all of our workload is pretty similar. Sometimes you're just putting out fires, that's how it feels like at my job .. you're just trying to keep the kids all quiet and doing their homework, and there is no natural opportunity to say, "Hey it's Empower time!"*
- *And then if we do the oral and healthy education I would buy them all toothbrushes and teach them how to do it, and I would teach them to brush their teeth every morning after we have breakfast, but the center felt like it was taking too long, so we do it every other month, but I want to touch base on it every day.*
- *We're always looking for resources but don't have the funding to purchase all the materials.*

Challenges to Implementation: Teachers / Staff

Requirements / Regulations

- *I think one of the things that stops people from implementing the dental program is that you have to have the go-ahead from the parents, the signatures, and remembering back, we didn't get many signatures.*
- *And the same thing with sun safety, in our program we have to have them provide the sunscreen. Per DHS, the parents have to provide it with their name on it and when they can put it on, and it just gets to be all the requirements, so it's just easier not to bother. And some people are allergic to certain kinds (of sunscreen). I have a nephew like that and he can only use one certain brand of sunscreen, otherwise he breaks out really bad. So like I said, sometimes it's easier just not to bother.*
- *Our boss says they can always use the office, but it does have a window and a doorway, so there's really nowhere private that we have per se for (breastfeeding).*

Lack of Variety

- *At my school with the food program we get snacks every day, but a lot of times we get the same snack every day, so the kids don't want to eat it.*
- *Those of us that have been around for awhile, would really like some updated materials to work with.*

Hard to Enforce

- *I know we do the smoke-free environment, and we have the ASHLine available, but there are still a lot of people in our area that do smoke and they smell like ashtrays.*

Suggestions for Current Standards

Participants were asked for their suggestions to improve the existing set of standards. Ensuring the standards were age appropriate was mentioned often, especially as it pertains to Standard #3, breastfeeding.

| | Comments |
|---|--|
| Make standards age appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I think there should be standards for preschool or early childhood and then different standards for school-aged kids.</i>• <i>It's almost like there needs to be two sets of standards, like one for elementary school and one for preschools so that they would be kind of divided, so like the breastfeeding wouldn't pertain to us, whereas it would at a preschool.</i>• <i>When we go through the school district it is a healthy choice, but it's so limited, and we run into where our older kids are hungrier, but the serving guidelines are so small, so we address that all the time that they need to increase the servings.</i>• <i>We do offer seconds, but they are still starving. And for some of our kids, sometimes that snack is the last meal they get for the day.</i> |
| Coordinate standards across programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I'm curious, too, of how it fits in because there has been a push in Arizona for standardization of after school programs, so AzCASE and the Afterschool Alliance has put a lot into that, so I would think there is some redundancy there too, they should be either working together or incorporating this into all the standards we are looking at if you want to be a quality program.</i> |
| Watch over-regulating | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>It all comes down to simply don't regulate me. I'm here to help the families raise their children, but I'm not here to do it for them.</i> |

Suggestions for Current Standards

Participants also suggested combining standards, as well as updating materials and providing additional resources.

| | Comments |
|--|---|
| Eliminate fruit juice requirement or combine it with #4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Personally for me, I know that we have eliminated fruit juice completely.</i>• <i>You really don't find 100% juice unless you are juicing it yourself. depending on what meal it is and how much sugar intake they already had for those meals, then you have to really look at the sugar intake and can you fit the fruit juice in there, but that is part of number 4 really.</i> |
| Combine the smoking standards | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>I think the smoke one, number 9 and 10 could almost be one standard combined and maybe add something else</i> |
| Provide resources with the standards | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Some resources to go along with it, resources for the teachers, a curriculum and resource so it's all right there and ready to go.</i> |
| Update existing materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>We always create standards, and in 10 years we sit there and say they don't apply to us anymore because the kids have changed or society has changed, so to have standards, they should be ever changing. I think it's great to have a base, but the kids and our parents change, and we just always need to update.</i> |

Suggestions for New Standards

Directors and staff were also asked if they had suggestions for any new standards. They identified the following list of potential standards for the Empower Program.

1. Behavioral issues (bullying, character)
2. Hygiene (washing, germs)
3. Accommodations (diet, allergies, special requests)
4. Drinking water
5. Dealing with violence (in schools, elsewhere)
6. Binging
7. Leadership / autonomy
8. Stress management
9. Special needs
10. Adult / child interactions (brain health, early childhood, how adults treat children)

Suggestions for New Standards

Behavior

- *Working with school-aged kids, we're always talking about bullying and the character counts and things like that. I think to have a healthy child and to empower children, that's an important standard that needs to be in there.*
- *I don't see it on here, but it's behavioral issues. Maybe offering them different references as to where they might use anger issues management, educating parents on how to deal with that.*
- *I have children who are refugees that are here, and they don't feel like they fit in completely, so a way for them to work out their feelings with other children or vice-versa.*
- *Bullying is one of the issues that I think should be on here because not only do I see the children, but I see the parents doing it to their own children.*
- *We just work really hard showing them in our classroom that sometimes you do lose and sometimes you will lose, and then from there we will build their emotions and try to cope with losing.*

Hygiene

- *I would rather take the fruit juice and put it in number 4 and then do something on hygiene, not only hand washing but those that have school-aged children there is a lot more hygiene that we deal with.*

Accommodations

- *Something we bumped into that was touched on is the dairy and gluten-free allergies because we end up with a couple of kids every year, so how to accommodate that.*
- *For the glucose and catering to the different diets, the number one reason we went to parents providing their own meals was because of this.*

Drinking water

- *I'm surprised they don't do anything on drinking water. I think instead of the juice one, it should be drinking water. We're constantly telling our kids they need to drink water. And they have the DHS ruling that you have to have water available, so I'm surprised it's not on here. But yet they have two standards for smoking.*

Suggestions for New Standards

Dealing with violence

- *I feel like with the times of suicide and violence and with all the stuff that is happening in schools, letting the people walking into your program know that this is a place where we're going to educate ourselves as the teachers on how to protect your child or how you can protect yourself or how you can make a change in your home in order to prevent something like a shooting at school from happening.*

Binging

- *Binging is the word that comes to my mind. It's interesting how society now is like binging on TV watching and binging on this and that. It's not good for you in any way usually, and yet it is totally acceptable now that you would sit and watch 20 hours worth of your favorite program or you would eat candy the day after Halloween until you throw up*

Leadership

- *I think as school-aged programs something we are looking to do is how do we support autonomy and leadership and how can we do that within these standards, what does that look like?*

Stress management

- *I think stress management would be good. The site that I am at, there are a lot of behavioral issues, and I think it would benefit the kids if they found a way to express themselves better, and I think anxiety is really common these days, especially when you get older.*
- *I think that we do really need to touch base with the stress and coping skills.*
- *I said provide weekly stress management or mental health and emotional health education or implement a stress management program.*

Special needs

- *Another thing is special needs. We have a lot of special needs kids, autistic kids, ADHD kids, and I think us getting training on it is important because these kids are with us in the morning, they are at school all day, and then they are back with us in the afternoon.*
- *I said to ensure that all staff has training on mental illness because that is a huge chunk of our kids.*

Adult / child interactions

- *I think standard number 11 should be the significance of adult/child interactions, and I think that actually should be number 1.*

Learning About & Participating In the Empower Program



Learning about Empower OOST: Directors

Directors learned about the Empower Program in a variety of ways, and have different experiences regarding the amount of ongoing communication they receive. Some remember getting lots of materials, while others report getting the Empower Guidelines, but little else. Most directors acknowledge that the reduced licensing fee was a BIG motivator in adopting the Empower Standards.

Participant Comments:

- *I know that my boss came to me and said we have to incorporate this program because we're going to get a huge discount so we had to train on it, but now Empower is everywhere, so it's kind of hard to avoid it you just learn as you go and get the trainings and word of mouth.*
- *I'm constantly getting emails on it, we have flyers that we have to post, we have the trainings that we have to go to, so the information is out there to those who know about it.*
- *During one of my licensing visits when I worked at a preschool, someone from DHS came (and mentioned the Empower program).*
- *I do remember the licensing lady asking if I wanted to be part of Empower and get a discount, and I said 'yes.' She said, 'Here's the book.' I put it away, and I never look at it, and then I get newsletters with good articles, but I've never had anybody talk to me about it.*
- *They might not know it is an Empower standard, but they know because we get Quality First visits every year, and the coaches are coming every month and they are checking what you give them for snacks, and they come during lunch to see if we are doing the family dining style.*

Learning about Empower OOST: Teachers / Staff

Most teachers / staff hear about Empower at their job via their directors, or by seeing posters and brochures. A few have received training at seminars or other conferences.

Participant Comments:

- *The company I worked for, I had done a few projects with them, and they always talked about Empower and they showed me the pamphlet and things like that.*
- *I saw brochures in the daycare. It's there, but you have to go look for it.*
- *As part of our training as we come into the program, they talked about some of the Empower brochures that they had out, and I can even remember going to Phoenix and they had a whole seminar type thing on Empower, so you could go to different classes.*
- *There is a paper on the wall with the 10 things on there, and I read it. One time I went to the CACFP and they talked about it there, too.*
- *It was part of job training, the poster on the wall, and my boss is big on making sure we are implementing it as much as we can, and I've read the pamphlet.*
- *I heard about it a couple of years ago when I first started my job.*
- *My coordinator told me. It's embedded in our program.*
- *We go over it in trainings, but you know how trainings are, and then we don't realize this is embedded into our program every day, so we're not like, 'Oh we're following an Empower standard,' it's just happening.*
- *They put up posters and materials, and it's almost like a requirement, but it's not necessarily covered.*

Training Received: Directors

Some directors feel there are too many training opportunities, in general, explaining that it is difficult to get to all of them. However, others said they would like more hands-on training on Empower, with some saying it would be great to have someone come to their site. Still others, who have long tenures, are looking for something new in the way of Empower training.

Participant Comments:

- *The in-person training - I loved it, it was really good. We learned about breastfeeding, so it was really interesting to see other centers do it.*
- *I'm a hands-on person, so that works for me, but I'm sure online would work for my staff because they are much younger than I am.*
- *It's refreshing to be able to get out and go to those trainings. And to hear other people's ideas as well or what they are doing in their program.*
- *I think it's hard for me to go to anymore trainings.*
- *Here's the book, read it and implement it.*
- *They require you to complete 18 hours, and they have a full year to get that done, so it's annually, but that's the thing after 30 years, are you able to find all brand new trainings? That's the hard part.*
- *When I started working there I emailed xxx and she showed me all about it and she talked me through it and told me that I had to do lessons and stuff that would go with these standards.*
- *I participated in a couple of the Empower trainings ..they did have one in Flagstaff and I attended that one, and I believe I attended one in Phoenix.*

Training Received: Directors to Staff (Directors)

Directors report that they try to disseminate information to staff, but admit they are not always diligent about doing so. Some remember to communicate Empower news and updates regularly, while others are less proactive and still others report they share materials remotely (e.g., forwarding emails, posting). Some communicate the information but do not mention Empower by name.

Participant Comments:

- That is part of our routine for staff meetings. We used to do a monthly staff meeting, and then we went to quarterly. . . we will take one of those quarters and dedicate it to the Empower program and make sure that everybody...it's more of a reminder now.*
- We have a lot of young staff, so online training is good because we can have them at the site if there is some down time and require them to take those trainings, so it's right there rather than staying after or going during the day because that's really difficult for most of them.*
- At the beginning of the year we will go through trainings that touch on almost all of this; however, it's not followed up on by our superiors, it's really just left up to the site coordinator to how much do you want to stick to the rules.*
- In the Empower standards specifically, we do that once a year in our August all-staff meeting right when school starts, and we review, so anybody new to the website we show them where you can get some cool ideas, and I share the Empower newsletter that I get once a month, so I forward that out to all my staff. I can't say that I'm super knowledgeable how they use the information, but I know that I use the information.*
- I would have to ask my newer staff if they actually realized they're being trained for Empower or if they are being trained that that's just how we do things, that's part of our policy.*
- Staff would say that's our policy. They probably wouldn't know it is specifically related to Empower because they have enough to deal with, so my philosophy of what they need to know is this is what we're going to start doing.*

Training Received: Directors to Staff (Staff)

Teachers / staff report getting training via a variety of sources: their bosses, a point person or “lead,” on their own online, or at training sessions.

Participant Comments:

- *I'm the main one who goes to every training and every class, and I will also invest my own money into things if they're not too expensive so that I can go back to the center with all these programs and all these papers and say this is what's going on.*
- *We have all kinds of resources that you guys provide just in the Empower stuff, and I'm sure some of it is free and some of it is not, but if you go online you can make lessons about exercise, you can do lessons for the week or day on sun safety, you can keep on doing this every day for a week.*
- *More times than not, our boss, she did Empower trainings for us for the first 2 or 3 years I've been there, but we haven't had it in the last year or two.*
- *At my site it seems like a site coordinator is generally invited to participate in training for various programs, and they will come back to their sites and try to then disseminate that information to the staff.*
- *Once I started there then I started learning about all of this on my own. We had all the paperwork and everything, and the director told me about it and showed me everything, so I just started learning about it.*
- *We would go to training for 3 hours and they would talk about that, and we do these mandatory trainings once a month and we do them after work when people are tired and it's during the dinner hour, and it's almost like we've just got to get through this kind of thing.*

Other Health-Related OOST Resources Used

- CACFP - Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA)
- AzCASE – Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
- STEM everything is based off of STEM.
- SPARK which is a recreation program.
- Quality First / First Things First
- GAP Ministries
- United Way - Quality Counts
- United Way - Whole Child Whole Teacher
- Head Start Pre-K
- Online resources (e.g. aerobics and yoga)
- Our own curriculum team
- ACE, the Adverse Childhood Experiences study
- CATCH is a curriculum, and then the CATCH box is like the physical activity component of it
- The Change Network
- The Afterschool Alliance
- AzQSAT, which is the after school quality standard assessment tool
- Playworks - A games database
- YouTube
- Ultimate Camp Resource



Empower Pack

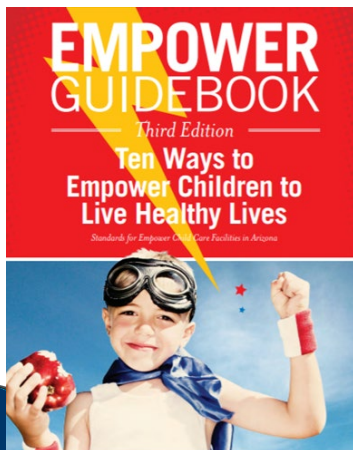


Empower Guidebook & Active Play! Book

Most teachers / staff did not remember seeing the Empower Guidebook or Active Play! book. Directors were more likely to remember seeing the materials, but had either misplaced them, wished they were updated more frequently, or felt school aged students were not represented to the extent they would like them to be.

“Empower, you mean the red book, and they were like I don’t even know where my book is”

“I’ve never seen this”.



“I would have loved to have this” (Activity Book)

“It doesn’t look like any of the kids I work with. My site is predominantly African American and Hispanics”

“And I haven’t gotten anything updated in years”

“The active playbook I think can be updated.”

“I’ve never seen active play, just the guide book.”

As a tool or resource, it’s fine. I think it is laid out well.

“This here only has pictures of preschoolers in it”

“I’ve used them a lot as resources, but I noticed that a lot of the activities are more geared towards the younger children rather than the older children, so I would like to see more active play ideas and things for the older children”.

Empower Guidebook & Active Play! Book

Many directors and staff acknowledged that they have seen the Guidebook and Active Play! book at one time or another but admitted they don't necessarily rely on them as resources. A few others confessed that they had lost or misplaced their books, and had trouble trying to replace them. Directors with multiple sites suggested it would be great if all of their locations or centers had a copy of the Guidebook.

- *We got these when we first started, and then one of my sites lost theirs, and trying to find a replacement was very difficult. So the materials when they first came out you got them, but then if something happened to them you couldn't get them replaced.*
- *I think it would be really nice for the directors to each have a binder with all of this information in a binder with additional activities and stuff, as well as these here that the teachers can touch and use when they are planning their activities and things like that, just so I have my own copy and I keep it for me to refer to and to give them more ideas, but also there are these that are very user friendly and they are hands-on for the teachers to use.*
- *I have 8 centers and we share with preschool. I'm sure if I went to the preschool director who does all the licensing, she has that, but it's not readily available to everyone.*
- *We get the Empower packet and I don't remember any of my sites getting those.*
- *. . . we got it years ago but I haven't seen any updates and I haven't gotten a new book.*

Empower Guidebook & Active Play! Book

Some of the teachers agreed that while they assume there are numerous marketing materials related to Empower “out there,” they don’t always get to those who actually implement the program. That said, many participants had seen some, though not all, of the materials that were shown in the groups. The laminated Standards sheet, breastfeeding sign, and MyPlate graphic were noticed most often.

- *It seems like all the marketing stuff...it’s almost like a funnel, like the powers that put all this stuff out, they’re sending it to our supervisors and our directors and saying here’s all this stuff, and it’s not making its way down the funnel to each of the individual sites at all.*
- *I know that my staff has said, ‘I got all this stuff in the mail, what am I supposed to do with it?’*

Several participants suggested having the materials available electronically and more easily accessible on the website.

- *Do you see this paper right here? Do you notice that you had to copy it out of a book, it’s page 7 of something? You can’t click online and just get this page, a nice pretty beautiful handout that just has the 10 standards. No, I had to copy 10 separate pages, and I had to click on each standard and print it. Or you could do the big book which is 87 pages.”*
- *Do they offer any of those resources electronically...that’s far more user friendly for me than if I had a book.*

Empower Materials: Look & Feel

Participants generally agreed that superhero imagery is current and attracts kids of all ages.

“I have the Empower facility sticker on our front window that I know the kids like it because it’s a superhero”

“That looks good to me because they are sort of into superheroes and that sort of reflects that. It almost looks like something that a kid would pick up, that it is targeted towards the kid and not towards the person that is going to be implementing the program.”

“That one is more fun because every child is a superhero right now, and the fact that they changed that to that theme is very good because it’s very today.”

“There is a lot of superhero stuff out there. The kids are really into that. I think the area where I’m at, they believe in them. They think they are their heroes. If they are using them on here, then maybe it’s also to make the children aware because sometimes children make their parents aware, like oh I saw the bulletin board up there with the superhero on it mom, did you see it?”

Empower Materials: Look & Feel

Both directors and staff like the poster images. They are colorful and fun. Unfortunately, over time they become part of the scenery and are often ignored.

They have a lot of information and they are very informative, but they do become part of the scenery.

"I think they are cool if you stop and read them, but after a while they just become part of the scenery and just blend in."

"They are colorful, and everybody always says it is appealing to them."

"They are eye-catching."

"They look fun".

Ten Ways To EMPOWER Children To Live Healthy Lives

As child care providers, we want young children to develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime. The Empower Program provides child care facilities with clear strategies, called Empower Standards, to create healthy environments for all children. See how easy it is to incorporate the Empower Standards into your everyday routine.

1. Provide at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity, including adult-led and free-play. Limit screen time to three hours or less per week and no more than 60 minutes of sedentary activity at a time.
2. Maintain a smoke-free environment.
3. Practice "sun safety."
4. Determine whether the facility is eligible for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and participate if eligible.
5. Make Arizona Smokers' Helpline (ASHLine) education materials available at all times.
6. Provide a breastfeeding-friendly environment.
7. Ensure staff members and child care providers receive three hours of training annually on Empower topics.
8. Limit serving fruit juice to no more than two times per week.
9. Provide monthly oral health education or implement a toothbrushing program.
10. Serve meals family-style and do not use food as a reward.

For more information please visit TheEmpowerPack.org

USDA is an equal opportunity provider. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - 2008.

Empower Materials: Suggestions

While directors and staff find the materials colorful and fun and believe the superhero imagery is appealing to kids of all ages, participants had a number of suggestions to improve the Empower Pack / ancillary materials.

Be mindful of different demographics: Consider using a bigger variety of ages, income levels, and ethnicities.

- *I don't think that the literacy meets our demographic. I feel like our demographic has low literacy, so they wouldn't understand.*
- *It doesn't look like any of the kids I work with. My site is predominantly African American and Hispanics, so I think it would be cool to maybe have a girl on there too. I do like that there is a Spanish one too, that is nice.*

Alert directors to communications going out so they can reinforce and distribute to staff.

- *I have to say as a director, I'm not at every site, so I don't know what is being sent to them, you're kind of like, well they might have it. It would be helpful to me if somehow it could be communicated, hey by the way all of the sites should be getting blah, blah, blah, because then I can follow up and say, hey did you get that hung up, did you get that resource? If I don't know what is going out then I don't know.*

Make it easy to get materials and replacement materials.

- *I move classrooms almost every summer, so what happens if I lose that? I can't request it. I can't print it.*

Empower Materials: Suggestions

Create bulletin board materials wisely and sparingly.

- *There are a lot of things that go on our boards, so all of this stuff is great, but just maybe ways to combine because you're putting so many different things that need to be on the board, and you want to put some of this on there too, but maybe shrink and combine them and make them so there's a better way to utilize them on the boards.*

Create an Empower Program app.

- *Another thing I think the program would probably benefit from is a lot of days everything is electronic, so creating maybe an app with resources and with forms for the teachers because each teacher in our classrooms, they all have a tablet, and they go through everything for that, the kids' information, all of that stuff, but maybe creating an app so that it is there at the hands of the teacher where they can pull up those things.*
- *An app sounds like a really good idea, and then you would be able to print out any forms you are missing. Half of my stuff disappears (on bulletin board), so just the fact that I could go in easily to the app and find it and print it out again and put it back on my board would be awesome.*

Create and provide branded items.

- *Sometimes a prop is the best sort of educational tool for us. If you come in and there is a big bag of balls that says Empower on it, you're going to be more familiar with the name of the program, and I'm one that would take the time to read this manual and say, oh here's a really cool game that we could play, but a lot of times I feel like I'm strongest the day after training where we actually play the game and then I can bring it back and maybe make a prop.*

Empower Newsletter

While a few participants were aware of the Empower Newsletter, most were not. Interestingly, several suggested it would be a good idea to have such a newsletter that would include program updates, recipes, age appropriate activities, success stories, and training.

- *We're part of the Empower program for the school-aged program, and they send out monthly newsletters, so I just forward that on to all the sites. If we got a monthly newsletter on Empower from the Department of Health, just for the updates, that's how they could do training, and that's how they could make this program better is to do a monthly newsletter that we can print and give to all of our staff members because that's just more communication and it's not coming directly from me, it's coming from the state, like look at the new up and coming or try this technique.*
- *You can use a newsletter and do training on that newsletter, and you can provide resources and you can provide a curriculum idea, and then a resource would be how to get free toothbrushes, for example, and where to get them or whatever.*
- *Coming from a director's point of view, I know that when I sifted deeper I just started digging into the newsletters and the overwhelming amount of materials in there. I want to say shame on me because having a handout once a month, it's so easy. I don't even really need to do anything besides go to the newsletter, click on an article, print it, make 100 copies, and send them to my parents.*

Empower Program Suggestions



Empower Program: Suggestions

Almost everyone mentioned that more training and engagement with the program was needed. Increasing awareness of resources, updating materials, and including more hands-on interactions with Empower staff would be well-received.

1. Update materials, have more resources and more training.
2. Combine some of the existing standards and add new ones.
3. Develop different standards by age group.
4. Include parents more frequently.
5. Ensure there is implementation follow-up.
6. Make online resources easier to use and more accessible.
7. Consider adding an on-site liaison.
8. Encourage Licensing to be more of a partner.

Empower OOST: Suggestions

Update materials, add resources / training

- *What I wrote down is updating materials as well as more resources and training and learning about the program.*
- *Follow-through on resources and guidance and really touching base.*
- *I think one of the biggest things that we need that goes along with the training and keeping it current and things like that is just updating your staff with these resources, the Empower resources, and it's not a sales job to promote Empower, but also in training your staff.*
- *I said make the information more available to us. It's there, but make it more up to date so we know what programs they have, like one month talk about the breastfeeding program, the next month talk about the smoking program, and so forth. so it's more in our face instead of it being over there somewhere.*
- *Overall, I would say training your staff about the packet because I'm sure there are some centers that just post it and say this is our empowerment area, please look at it and call it a day.*
- *I think we would do a lot better if we did proper training. Every 3 to 5 months we have new people, whether it be just volunteers or actual hands-on teachers who are going into classrooms and aides.*
- *And that would be good for Empower to have trainers who came out and introduced it, even if it was just say my school district, if they would attend a leads meeting and then just did a little training then everybody would know how to use the things that we get from Empower instead of just taking it and stuffing it into our drawer, we could go back and train our staff on how to use the material or how to play the games.*

Empower OOST: Suggestions

Combine some of the existing standards & add new ones

- *I said combine some of the standards and add new ones such as drinking water, heat index, and hand washing.*
- *My suggestion is to combine some of the standards but add more standards that are more age appropriate for elementary schools, so separate standards maybe.*

Have different standards by age group

- *Mine was basically to guide standards to school age programs, like this is guided more towards the younger kids. I work with K-6, and we don't do the breastfeeding, so having separate standards.*

Include parents

- *I think the parents have to volunteer a certain amount of time per month or per year (for another program), and I think that makes them aware of everything that is out there for them, and this would be one of those programs that would be great if the parents could volunteer 1 day out of the year or 1 hour out of the entire year and come and see and become more aware.*
- *For my school, we know about it as far as the director and me, but the parents don't really know about this, so I was thinking how a lot of people use social media now, so maybe making a page where you can post phone numbers and links and giving them that information that way.*
- *Maybe a parent night or a specific night every few months to enlighten the parents on a specific topic and better train the employees as well, so that way everybody is knowledgeable about it.*
- *Broadcasting it more to not only the kids but to the families of what we're teaching them at school and then what you can do at home as well to continue with this Empower program.*

Empower OOST: Suggestions

Ensure there is follow-up

- *Nobody from licensing ever said show me how you're using it. Nobody ever said you just got a \$2,000 break on your licensing, can you show me how you are using that, and yet I have been. They just ask me, but I've never had to prove it. You're the first person who has ever called and said how are you doing it*
- *I'm all about accountability, I kind of do it anyway, but I can easily see that people would just check the box and never do it or never really have any very specific and intentional things they are doing about Empower, and I think that is a very huge missing step.*
- *They used to come in with a thing that said, are you going through these things? The last few times I noticed that they're not really asking or even questioning or looking.*

Make online training / resources easier

- *Have trainers to be able to go online and take classes to get the technical support and just making a better presence as being an Empower program.*
- *What I would find even easier is if they had a canned training online, like a module, where here's a training if you want to do something in person, and as a supervisor I can click on there and I've got the agenda and the activities.*
- *And you can find materials, but you've got to dig and drill and click on this link which will take you to this link which will take you to this link ...you've got to dig pretty deep.*

Empower OOST: Suggestions

On-site liaison

- *I would say a liaison that comes in and sort of gives you specifics about how to introduce and how to build something or do something that has to do with screen time or physical activity, etc. so someone who comes in and says, hey this is all great, all these materials, but here's how you do an exercise.*
- *Right, a liaison that just comes in and sort of puts that link between the person that is going to implement it and the supervisor that knows we're supposed to be doing it and has all the materials but didn't necessarily use them.*

Licensing as a partner

- *Licensing I think is viewed as a gotcha kind of thing. It's like a dreaded thing for staff, like are they going to come? What are they going to catch? Am I doing something wrong? It's not viewed as a resource of, oh okay you're right, I don't do that, what are some ways I can do that? I don't think those conversations take place in regards to Empower or licensing.*
- *It's a checklist, and you get told what you're doing and what you're not doing, there's nothing like how can I support you with this, there's no feedback.*