



# Expanding **minds** and Opportunities

## Section 6: A Growing Nationwide Infrastructure for Quality, Expansion, and Partnerships

Leveraging

**the Power of Afterschool  
and Summer Learning  
for Student Success**

A compendium of studies, reports, and commentaries by 100+ professionals and policy leaders on the best practices, impact, and future of expanded learning opportunities

Terry K. Peterson, PhD, Executive Editor

# Contents

## Section 6: A Growing Nationwide Infrastructure for Quality, Expansion, and Partnerships

- 
- 1 Creating the Recent Force Field: A Growing Infrastructure for Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Opportunities**  
Terry K. Peterson, Steve Fowler, & Terri Ferinde Dunham
- 
- 8 Making Partnerships Work for Policies That Expand Learning Opportunities: Statewide Afterschool Networks**  
An-Me Chung, Gwynn Hughes, & Terri Ferinde Dunham
- 
- 15 Taking Expanded Learning to Scale: California's Road to Success**  
Superintendent Tom Torlakson & Jennifer Peck
- 
- 21 Municipal Leadership Is Essential: Quality Afterschool Opportunities Strengthen Cities and Our Youth**  
Mayor Christopher Coleman, Mayor Karl Dean, City Council Member James Mitchell, Jr., Mayor Betsy Price, & Councilman-at-Large Ronnie Steine
- 
- 28 Improving the Quality and Impact of Afterschool and Summer Programs: Lessons Learned and Future Directions**  
Nicole Yohalem & Robert C. Granger
- 
- 34 Using Research to Continuously Improve Afterschool Programs: Helping Students to Become 21st Century Lifelong Learners**  
Denise Huang
- 
- 42 The Continuing Demand for 21st Century Community Learning Centers Across America: More Than Four Billion Dollars of Unmet Need**  
Patricia O'Donnell & Joseph R. Ford
- 
- 47 Quality Improvement and Successes for 21st Century Community Learning Centers in Minnesota**  
Allison Anfinson & Sheila Oehrlein
- 
- 53 Providing Rich Academic and Learning Supports Through New Hampshire's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative**  
Christina MacDonald & Suzanne Birdsall
- 
- 59 Oregon's 21st Century Community Learning Centers: A Key Component of Student Success in College, Work, and Citizenship**  
Susan Inman, Pete Ready, & Jenni Deaton
- 
- 65 Strengthening Out-of-School Time Initiatives to Support Student Success: The Role of United Way in Afterschool, Weekends, and Summer Learning**  
Ayeola Fortune
- 
- 71 School-Community Learning Partnerships: Essential to Expanded Learning Success**  
Priscilla Little

**Terry K. Peterson**

Senior Fellow, College of Charleston

**Steve Fowler**

Partner, FowlerHoffman, LLC

**Terri Ferinde Dunham**

Partner, Collaborative Communications Group

## Creating the Recent Force Field: A Growing Infrastructure for Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Opportunities

Over the past 15 years, an increasingly vital and complex infrastructure has helped fuel and sustain the afterschool and summer learning movements. With the aid of both formal and informal intermediaries, this evolving infrastructure works to improve quality and increase access in order to help more young people catch up, keep up, and get ahead in engaging, safe, and supervised settings. This infrastructure has helped more than two million young people participate in afterschool and summer learning opportunities over the past 10 years.

No one agency, organization, or group is responsible at the community, state, or national level for the hours from 3:00–6:00 p.m. on weekdays or in the summer while most parents are working. Despite the increase in availability of afterschool and summer programs, 15 million children still go home alone with no adult supervision during these hours. Many schools, educators, families, and community- and faith-based organizations seek to fill these gaps with positive developmental experiences and expanded learning opportunities, but too often these programs can be disconnected, underfunded, and underutilized in many communities.

To meet these challenges, this growing infrastructure for expanded learning, both after the school day ends and during the summertime, provides the supports and resources that would be impossible for any single program or organization to create. Public funding has been critical, fueled by the growth in federal funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative since 1997 and in some cases by growth in state funding, such as California's After School Education and Safety program. Notably, quality systems have grown exponentially with the development and the adoption of

quality standards now established in more than 34 states. The articles in this section of *Expanding Minds and Opportunities* focus in detail on some of the elements of this essential infrastructure.

Below we summarize some of the recent dynamics of this unique infrastructure by looking at five critical components of the current afterschool “force field.” This sometimes invisible but veritable force field of organizations, policies, funding, networks, and research creates opportunities and removes barriers to expanded learning opportunities for millions of young people in rural and suburban communities, as well as small towns and large urban areas nationwide.

## **Afterschool Force Field**

.....  
*FORCE #1: Federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers program*

Broad bipartisan support contributed to the creation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1994. This bipartisanship has extended across the years in securing the reauthorization of the initiative in Title IV, Part B of the ESEA, as amended in 2002, and also in generating substantial increases in federal appropriations for the initiative from 1997 to 2012.

The consistency and growth of the program—from \$1 million in 1997 to more than \$1 billion 15 years later—has been a major catalyst for the field. Local 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs serve as models of best practice, help define quality, provide professional development, and focus on academic outcomes, thus compelling all kinds of afterschool programs to be more intentional in their design and approach. The shift of responsibility for awarding 21st Century Community Learning Center grants in 2002 from the federal to the state level led to state education agencies assigning staff and even creating divisions with responsibility for administering the program and supporting quality afterschool in their state. These entities not only manage grant competitions and monitor programs but also support the development of program indicators and sponsor conferences and trainings that deepen understanding of effective afterschool programming.

Community-school partnerships are required for successful 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs. Along with family engagement, these collaborations are unique features of the type of innovative learning opportunities that 21st Century Community Learning Centers created as compared to most other federally or state-funded programs.

A number of national, regional, state, and local foundations have contributed to the development of quality programming and support networks for these community learning centers. From the beginning, the C. S. Mott Foundation has been a critical ally in this growth and the nationwide infrastructure it represents.

As of May 2012, there were 4,619 21st Century Community Learning Centers local grantees funding afterschool and summer programs for almost 1.7 million children and youth in 11,068 school-based and community-based centers across the country (Afterschool Alliance, 2012). The program is so popular and competitive that only one out of three local requests for funding is awarded. Over the last 10 years, \$4 billion in local grant requests had to be denied because of the lack of adequate federal funding and intense competition (O'Donnell & Ford, 2013).

Many state departments of education, along with other state and community partners, are aggressively working to improve the quality and results of expanded learning programs, while at the same time keeping the programming relevant and attuned to the needs of today's students. Several articles in the Infrastructure section of *Expanding Minds and Opportunities* present in-depth the strategies states are taking to keep afterschool and summer 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs constantly improving and addressing contemporary issues.

Several states have moved to expand learning beyond the traditional school day and year through positive new working relationships among classroom teachers and community-based practitioners, or “second-shift” educators. The biggest such state initiative, both in terms of the number of programs affected as well as the scale of investment, is in California where several thousand schools with community partners are helping expand education and enrichment opportunities to tens of thousands of struggling and low-income students. In many ways, the California program is working in parallel and in concert with the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative. This is an important approach from which other states could learn to make large-scale policy improvements in expanded learning.

.....  
*FORCE #2: Statewide afterschool networks: Coalitions for policy, funding, and quality*

Weaving the voices of many into one collective and strategic policy agenda is a fundamental element of the force field that is provided by statewide afterschool networks. Now in 41 states, these networks are designed to create sustainable structures of statewide, regional, and local partnerships, particularly school-community partnerships, focused on supporting policy development at all levels.

These statewide entities of grassroots and grasstops leaders—from the governors’ office and legislature to business, education, and community leaders—are driving the movement and leveraging a vast array of resources into expanded learning programs. With modest but consistent investment from the C. S. Mott Foundation and other national, state, and local funders, the networks do “a little with a lot” by focusing relentlessly on a common agenda to expand program availability and ensure quality learning experiences.

Over the past 12 years these networks grew from a simple idea to a powerful force now emerging in all 50 states.

.....  
*FORCE #3: Citywide systems: Coordinating data, dollars, and development*

With the statewide afterschool networks force at the state level, a complementary force is rising from cities and communities to link out-of-school-time players and stakeholders. At the local level, intermediaries connect public and private funders with providers, serving as the nucleus and guiding coordinator within a community's multifaceted network of government, schools, nonprofit organizations, and expanded learning programs. The Wallace Foundation has played a pivotal role in seeding intermediaries in a number of cities.

Some of the most influential leaders in the country are mayors and local municipal leaders who understand deeply that young people need more opportunities to succeed. They are taking the charge of advancing learning by coordinating the work of municipal agencies, including parks and recreation departments, human services offices, museum and library systems, arts organizations, housing authorities, and other public service entities. Equally impressive, local leaders from United Ways, faith communities, and community-based organizations are stepping up to develop systems of support—realizing the value of collaboration rather than operating in isolation.

The depth of this element of the afterschool infrastructure is apparent in the work of the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute). Here, a national membership organization is supporting summits and online learning communities with mayors, council members, and other municipal leaders and their staffs to inform local officials about the education, public safety, and economic development benefits of afterschool. It is providing new tools to improve local programs, from Connecticut and Texas to Minnesota and North Carolina to Washington State and Tennessee.

.....  
*FORCE #4: Established body of research and evidence*

Now we know: quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities work. We know that quality expanded learning programs are associated with increased academic performance, increased attendance in school, significant improvements in behavior and social and emotional development, and greater opportunities for hands-on learning in important areas that are not typically available during the traditional school day. Throughout *Expanding Minds and Opportunities* are numerous examples that define and demonstrate engaged and enriched learning.

Other sections of *Expanding Minds and Opportunities* compendium detail the research, including the strong, comprehensive meta-analysis by Joseph Durlak (Loyola University Chicago) and Roger Weissberg (University of Illinois at Chicago) and the longitudinal work by Deborah Vandell (University of California-Irvine) and the Harvard Family Research Project. The recent significant growth and depth of the research and best practice base is a very positive force.

Just 15 years ago, tools and materials were limited to a few quality sources such as the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and organizations in the community education field. Now there are thousands of tools and resources available. The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)'s Out-of-School Time (OST) Program Research and Evaluation Database ([www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography](http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography)), led by Heather Weiss, is a compilation of profiles written by HFRP of research studies and evaluations of OST programs and initiatives. The National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks ([www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/](http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/)) has more than 500 resources to support systems-building. The Finance Project's Out of School Time Information Resource Center ([www.financeproject.org/index.cfm?page=25](http://www.financeproject.org/index.cfm?page=25)) shares resources that help leaders address financing and sustainability issues for out-of-school time programs. The National Summer Learning Association maintains a summer learning library and produces extensive research briefs ([www.summerlearning.org/?page=library](http://www.summerlearning.org/?page=library)), and the Afterschool Alliance presents hundreds of research summaries and issue briefs, including a summary of studies documenting afterschool outcomes ([www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm)).

New continuous improvement tools and reports, some highlighted in this Infrastructure section of *Expanding Minds and Opportunities*, provide an unequivocal force supporting and propelling quality expanded learning opportunities across the country.

.....  
*FORCE #5: Building the movement: The Afterschool Alliance*

Finally, there is a growing interconnection of many diverse groups, including educational and youth development institutions and community, cultural, and scientific organizations, working to expand and enrich learning in engaging and broadening ways. Not too long ago these schools and community and faith-based organizations were largely disconnected.

The Afterschool Alliance, formed in 1999, is connecting diverse and important players from the local, state, and national levels in the expanded learning space to come together for the common purpose of building public will to strengthen the infrastructure for expanded learning. At the federal level, the Afterschool Alliance is a leading voice for children, youth, families, and communities, dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for more afterschool investments.

Each October, the Afterschool Alliance annually hosts Lights On! Afterschool—an essential grassroots education and advocacy effort. In 2012, more than one million people gathered at more than 9,000 sites across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide to participate in an unparalleled rally for afterschool programs.

The Afterschool Alliance produces and disseminates a vast array of fact sheets, issue briefs, research, and polling information that have come to be highly regarded. Its report *America After 3PM* (2009), the nation's most in-depth study of how America's children spend their afternoons, finds that 15 million young people—more than a quarter of our nation's children—are alone and unsupervised after school.

## Conclusion

The force field for expanded learning opportunities is comprised of more individuals and institutions than can be named in one article. Notable forces that have contributed mightily to the force field include the National AfterSchool Association, which connects afterschool professionals; Foundations, Inc., which provides high quality professional development; the Coalition for Community Schools, which helps build up and out afterschool programs into community schools and community learning centers; and the Coalition for Building After-School Systems, which builds citywide afterschool systems. The new Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project shares cutting-edge best practices. The American Institutes for Research's Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS) is designed to inform and improve the 21st Century Community Learning Centers across the United States.

Education, community, and state leaders, as well as foundations and national organizations can and should now capitalize on this infrastructure to advance cutting edge learning and youth development.

The evidence of the force field is also seen in emerging special interest groups, such as the American Educational Research Association OST Special Interest Group (SIG), and the Grantmakers for Education's Out of School Time Funders Network. Successful afterschool programs have also benefited greatly from the leadership and resources of independent community and faith-based programs; many local, regional and national foundations; and affiliates of major, nationwide organizations such as the Ys, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Communities in Schools. Additionally, statewide and regional conferences and the nation's regional education labs have contributed significantly to the identification and spread of best practices.

The articles in *Expanding Minds and Opportunities* demonstrate the recent breadth, depth, and growth of the infrastructure supporting quality expanded learning opportunities in afterschool and summers. Education, community, and state leaders, as well as foundations and national organizations can and should now capitalize on this infrastructure to advance cutting edge learning and youth development.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Terry K. Peterson** is called “the King of Afterschool” by former United States Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. Terry has a long and successful history of helping local, state, and national organizations develop strategies and partnerships for comprehensive education reform and expanded learning opportunities. He has worked internationally in Argentina, Mongolia, Brazil, Northern Ireland, China, and South Korea. He currently is Senior Fellow and Director of the Afterschool and Community Learning Network at the College of Charleston.

**Steve Fowler** of FowlerHoffman LLC—consultants on communications strategies for system and policy change—contributes to several initiatives on expanded learning opportunities for children and youth in afterschool and summer programs. He is currently also serving as an advisor to SRI International’s project on the role of social networks in disseminating science content in California’s afterschool system. His hands-on experience as a state senator in Nebraska taught him how policy making and budgeting really work.

**Terri Ferinde Dunham** has managed the National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks for 10 years, building an infrastructure for network development. As a partner at Collaborative Communications Group, she works with foundations, nonprofits, government agencies, and communities to reimagine when, where, and how children and adults learn. Currently, she also leads the Expanded Learning and Afterschool project, working to promote afterschool and summer learning programs as sustainable affordable approaches for expanding learning. Previously, she held outreach and communications positions for 10 years at the United States Department of Education under Republican and Democratic administrations.

---

## REFERENCES

Afterschool Alliance. (2009). *America after 3PM*. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3_Full_Report.pdf)

Afterschool Alliance. (2012). 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing Afterschool and Summer Learning Supports to Communities Nationwide. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/21st%20CCLC%20Fact%20Sheet\\_5\\_3\\_12\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/21st%20CCLC%20Fact%20Sheet_5_3_12_FINAL.pdf)

O’Donnell, P., & Ford, J. (2013). The Continuing Demand for 21st Century Community Learning Centers across America: More than four billion dollars of unmet need. In T. Peterson (Ed.), *Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success*. Washington, DC: Collaborative Communications Group.

**An-Me Chung**

Former Program Officer, C.S. Mott Foundation

**Gwynn Hughes**

Program Officer, C.S. Mott Foundation

**Terri Ferinde Dunham**

Partner, Collaborative Communications Group

## Making Partnerships Work for Policies That Expand Learning Opportunities: Statewide Afterschool Networks

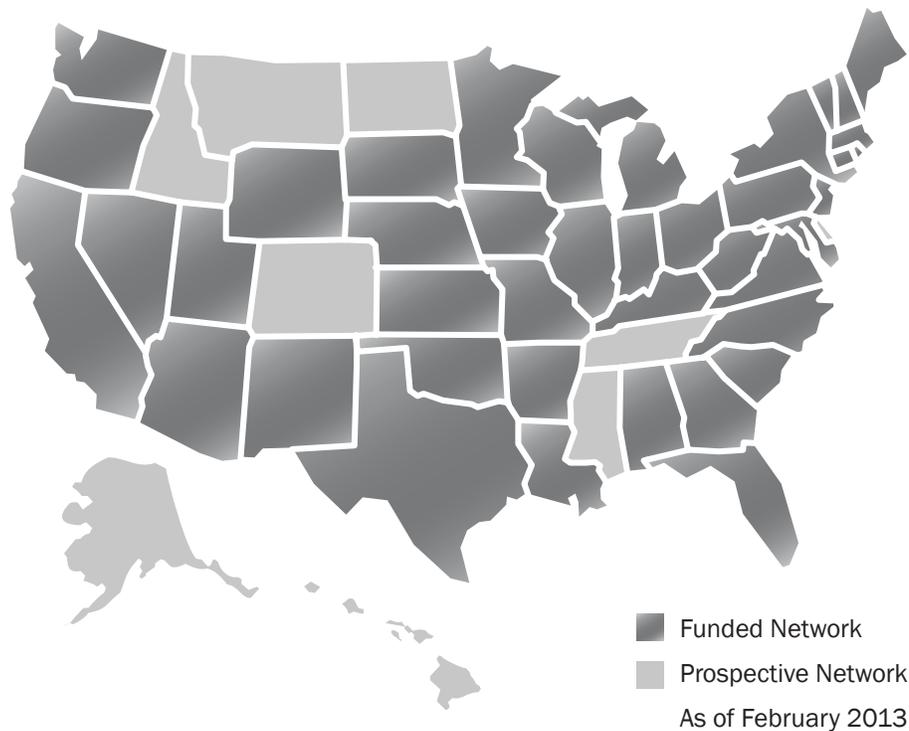
Statewide afterschool networks are defining new ways of collaborating and shaping policies and practices for afterschool and expanded learning opportunities across the country. From Rhode Island to California, this national network of statewide afterschool networks has successfully sustained an afterschool movement dedicated to ensuring that all students have access to engaging and effective programming. “There is no doubt that these systems and infrastructures are based on the ideas that individuals and institutions can work toward a common goal and that long-term partnerships can make a difference,” notes Heather Weiss, founder and director of the Harvard Family Research Project.

Now in 41 states, with expectations of growing to more, the statewide afterschool networks—through the support of the C.S. Mott Foundation and other funders—are focused on actively engaging and educating key decision makers in support of effective school and community-based afterschool programs, particularly in underserved communities.

### Designing a New Way for Collaboration

Since 2002, the C.S. Mott Foundation has provided competitive funding to coalitions of key stakeholders in states committed to furthering afterschool and expanded learning policies and practices. The initiative was built on the public-private partnership started in 1998 between the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the C.S. Mott Foundation to support the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program. The public dollars directly support the programs, while the Mott Foundation funds activities better suited to philanthropy than government, such as providing technical assistance, generating public will, identifying promising practices, supporting research and evaluation, and developing options for public policy.

## Statewide Afterschool Networks



After the federal program grew from \$40 million in 1998 to \$1 billion in 2002, administration of the initiative devolved primarily to the states. The C. S. Mott Foundation adopted a strategy to build a national expanded learning infrastructure that would connect grassroots and grassstops institutions and organizations and that would offer competitive funding to one statewide entity in each state. The design was to provide the “glue funding” to form networks that require a partnership between the state department of education and influential organizations and key stakeholders in a state. The mission was to build a wider, deeper, and stronger afterschool movement that would weather a distressed economic climate, changes in political leadership, and other challenges to comprehensive education programs.

The overarching goal was to build coalitions of diverse organizations working together to leverage public and private funding and partnerships in pursuit of good policies and practices. “No one ‘owns’ the field of afterschool. Networks must organize one voice, one message, and agree upon policy that helps all,” explains Janelle Cousino, vice president at FowlerHoffman and a technical assistance provider to the networks. Networks function through a common vision, collective action, and shared responsibility and establish themselves as the “go to” source for research, examples of good practices, and expertise on afterschool and expanded learning opportunities.

### Impact of the Statewide Afterschool Networks

Few other educational initiatives have the 10-year track record of the statewide afterschool networks. These networks have been key to advancing policy initiatives such as students’ ability to earn academic credit for learning that takes place outside of school hours, promoting school-community partnerships, and securing and sustaining

resources despite difficult economic times. These networks are also cultivating multiple leverage points to expand learning opportunities, including aligning afterschool and summer learning with policy agendas in education, child care, health and wellness, juvenile justice, nutrition, and others. Impact is assessed across a spectrum of results, from policy wins to diffusing threats to cutting afterschool funding to assisting municipal leaders in supporting quality afterschool programming. Even with limited resources and capacity, networks are high-impact investments.

An internal evaluation report from the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) (2010) concluded, “networks have made real strides toward building statewide infrastructure and policy support for afterschool programs, and have done so against a backdrop of change and uncertainty” (p. 51).

For more than a decade networks have ascribed to three common goals and report on their activities against those goals:

- 1. Creating sustainable partnership structures for policy development.** Networks understand that partnerships of influential individuals, agencies, and organizations are essential in showing policymakers and others that the support and need for afterschool programs is widespread and real. “Creating networks that are widely representative means continually working to bring new voices to the table while keeping all members of the network engaged,” remarked Kacy Conley, network lead for the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network.

Engaging the right stakeholders helps make the network agenda fit the needs of the state and makes it more likely that policy developments align with the network goals. Impact is measured in small and large ways:

*The Positive Youth Development Grant Program Act was passed by the Arkansas legislature in 2011 and signed into law. It builds off of the 2008 recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs by establishing a structure for a system of state-funded afterschool and summer programs.*

*In Illinois, the After-school Youth Development Program Act, SB 3543, was signed into law in July 2010 and creates a framework for coordinating and strengthening afterschool services in the state.*

## **Statewide Afterschool Network Goals**

### **2002–present**

1. Create a sustainable structure of statewide, regional, and local partnerships, particularly school–community partnerships, focused on supporting policy development at all levels.
2. Support the development and growth of statewide policies that will secure the resources necessary to secure and sustain new and existing school-based and school-linked afterschool programs.
3. Support statewide systems to ensure programs are of high quality.

*In Rhode Island, the General Assembly passed H5967, which created a Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning. The taskforce also explored several high quality summer programs for all grade levels and made recommendations on ways to improve access to summer learning in the state. The taskforce reported its findings and recommendations in a report to the General Assembly in May 2010 and helped to develop the framework for funding that was included in the state FY2013 budget to pilot this work.*

- 2. Support statewide policies to secure funding.** Expanded learning opportunities are funded by an array of public and private dollars from multiple levels of government and under many agency banners—from human services to childcare to juvenile justice to education. Yet if bringing together the varied pieces and players in the afterschool picture is a challenge, many network leads say that educating policymakers on the need for more funding in an era of record budget deficits is the most pressing challenge today.

Lean state budgets have led many networks to adopt a more comprehensive approach to funding and expanding learning opportunities. Although difficult, new funding is possible. Examples include the following:

*Connecticut successfully advocated for the creation of a new \$5 million annual grant program for afterschool programming (now \$4.5 million).*

*The Massachusetts state legislature created a statewide commission to examine the state’s afterschool programs and recommended improvements. The commission’s report helped build support for a more than 150% increase in funding for state programs, from \$2 million to \$5.5 million.*

*The Washington legislature passed the 2007–2009 biennial budget with \$3 million allocated specifically for afterschool grants, marking the first time that the budget ever included dedicated state funds to support afterschool programs.*

*Shaping policy to make afterschool and summer learning an “allowable” use of existing or new funding also advances the work significantly. For instance, in Oregon, the state passed a law in which \$260 million in “school improvement funds” can be used for a variety of programs that raise student achievement, including afterschool programs.*

- 3. Support systems to ensure quality.** The quality design and delivery of afterschool and summer programs is a top priority of every afterschool network. Networks spearhead tough conversations about quality, bring the right stakeholders to the table, and facilitate consensus on standards and creating quality systems. “Quality is the most important conversation we can have,” said Katie Magrane, lead of the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP). “We can all agree that afterschool and out-of-school-time programs should be providing youth with hands-on experiential activities that complement in-school learning, support social-emotional development, and have an intentional focus on student outcomes.”

More than 34 states<sup>1</sup> now have quality standards for afterschool and summer programs and most were developed (directly or indirectly) by the networks. The standards development process itself is an engagement process, with networks counting upwards of 70 organizational partners engaged and hundreds of program staff and families involved.

Networks have also created self-assessment tools, common indicators for youth outcomes, and quality improvement systems.

**Networks have also created self-assessment tools, common indicators for youth outcomes, and quality improvement systems.**

Widely adapted by other states, the New York network recently revised the Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool. This tool is mandated by the New York State Education Department for all 21st Century Community Learning Centers in the state, the Office of Children and Family Services for programs receiving After School Advantage funds, and by New York City’s Department of Community and Youth Development for programs receiving funds for out-of-school-time programs.

Additionally, networks play a key role in professional development of afterschool professionals, providing conferences, workshops, webinars, academies, and other supports for frontline afterschool staff and directors. “We work to broker professional development opportunities,” said Jamie Knowles-Griffiths, network lead for the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP). “We work with school

districts, colleges and others to involve afterschool professionals.” Laveta Wills-Hale, lead for the Arkansas Out of School Network, added, “Networks bring people together to define quality. We’re working to ensure expanded learning opportunities are supported, sustained, and aligned with education systems.”

## **Unencumbered Supports: Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC)**

Nearly every day a network will contact a member of the Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC) seeking advice on issues small and large, from how to engage key stakeholders to how to refine a governance structure for the network, to how to pursue a policy agenda like awarding credit to students based on mastery of content and skills as opposed to seat time. The easy accessibility of ATAC to the networks and the “just in time” technical assistance has been critical to the health, longevity, and sustainability of the networks. “I turn to our national partners at ATAC to get the pulse of national discussions and work that’s being done by other networks across the country. This helps us adapt to broader issues and utilize what’s working elsewhere to benefit Iowa,” explained Michelle Rich, network lead of the Iowa Afterschool Alliance.

---

1. Several states are currently developing quality standards.

Before the first cohort of statewide networks was selected, ATAC was formed as a team of national organizations and leaders funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation to support the networks. ATAC includes the Afterschool Alliance, American Institutes for Research, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Finance Project, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, and National League of Cities, with assistance from Terry Peterson of the College of Charleston Foundation, FowlerHoffman, Mainspring Consulting, and Collaborative Communications Group.

By modeling partnerships needed to influence policy at the national level, ATAC supports the networks directly through its expertise, advice, and potential collaborations with initiatives such as STEM, early childhood, or digital media and learning. “We often say that our role is to facilitate and ‘set the table’ providing the space and time for collaborating on network challenges and opportunities,” remarked Victoria Wegener, a partner at Mindspring Consulting, a key technical assistance provider to the networks. With the support of ATAC, the ability to network and share experiences and strategies with one another both in-person and virtually through national meetings, monthly calls and webinars, and an online community has been crucial to the success of networks. In addition, individual ATAC organizations work on projects to educate their members on how afterschool advances policy priorities, like the CCSSO Innovation Lab Network or the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families support to mayoral summits across the country.

## The Future

For more young people to succeed educationally and in life, a strong education system that includes both school and expanded learning opportunities throughout the year is vital. “It is imperative that we focus a spotlight on the ways kids learn, the opportunities they need to succeed academically, and how we might shape a system that encourages more of them to stay in school, graduate, and go on to become productive contributors to society,” articulates William S. White, President and CEO of the C.S. Mott Foundation. A system that scaffolds multiple approaches, demands innovation, reinforces learning in and out of school, and provides students with a diverse array of school and community-based educators is a giant step in the right direction.

**Although there is not yet a silver bullet for fixing public education, afterschool programs are a “silver lining,” and the statewide afterschool networks need to maintain their important role in re-imagining how, when, and where students learn.**

The opportunities afforded by being a part of a vibrant national network allow each statewide afterschool network to stay abreast of the latest innovations, people, resources, issues, and windows of opportunity and prepare for thoughtful and strategic action over the long haul. A 21st century learning system that ensures all young people have the opportunity to succeed in school and work, and contribute to society, depends on the diligence, organization, and passion of the networks and their ability to constantly evolve and embrace challenge.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**An-Me Chung** served as a program officer at the C.S. Mott Foundation from 2000-2010 where she focused grantmaking on building systems to support young people with optimal opportunities for learning and enrichment beyond the traditional classroom. She currently serves as associate director of education for U.S. Programs at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In this role, she focuses on grants relating to public education and the implications for education of young people's use of digital media. Previous jobs include associate director at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at the Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College. There, she worked with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Department of Education and directed the Save the Children Out-of-School Time Rural Initiative. Chung holds a BS from Washington University in St. Louis, a PhD from Yale University, and completed a post-doctorate fellowship at Columbia University.

**Gwynn Hughes** is a program officer at the C. S. Mott Foundation where she manages the Learning Beyond the Classroom portfolio, seeking to provide optimum opportunities for academic support and enrichment for young people to learn and develop in school, summer, and afterschool. Formerly, Hughes was executive director of the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP)—the Massachusetts statewide afterschool network—where she led a statewide coalition to improve afterschool programs, including the establishment of a legislative commission on afterschool and out-of-school time and the identification of new state funding for afterschool programs. Hughes holds a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College, a juris doctorate degree from Northeastern University and a master's degree in music from the University of Virginia.

**Terri Ferinde Dunham** manages the National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks and creates opportunities for the networks to connect and share learning. As a partner at Collaborative Communications Group, she works with foundations, nonprofits, government agencies, and communities to reimagine when, where, and how children and adults learn. Currently, she also leads the Expanded Learning and Afterschool project funded by the C. S. Mott Foundation. Previously, she served for 10 years at the U.S. Department of Education where she produced a live, interactive television program featuring school and community leaders.

**Tom Torlakson**

California State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Jennifer Peck**

Executive Director, Partnership for  
Children and Youth

## Taking Expanded Learning to Scale: California's Road to Success

California has an exciting story to tell. Since 2007, roughly 4,500 schools in our state have been able to offer afterschool (and in some cases summer learning) programs to thousands of students in high-poverty communities thanks to California voters' support of Proposition 49<sup>1</sup> and to the federal investment in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. We are striving for every one of these programs to be filled with engaging, hands-on, relevant, and exciting learning opportunities that support mastery, expand horizons, and draw on the talents of both school and community educators.

Presently, our afterschool field in California is in a great deal of transition, as we seek to take our work to the next level. Since we began investing state and federal resources in afterschool programs in the late 1990s, a great deal has changed in our state; and the needs of children, families, and schools have intensified in a variety of ways. In addition, we have learned a considerable amount about what it takes to provide high quality afterschool experiences to students that lead to better outcomes for children, families, and schools.

Because of these factors and more, we have become intensely focused on making sure that our investments in afterschool programs—nearly \$700 million per year in California when state and federal funding are combined—are having the greatest possible impacts on student learning and success. We are changing the way we do business by transforming our approach from one that for too long operated on a parallel

---

1. In 2002, California voters approved Proposition 49, which constitutionally mandated increased state grant funds that leverage community resources for before and afterschool programs in public elementary and middle schools to provide tutoring, homework assistance, and educational enrichment. See *California Education Code (EC) 8482*.

California leaders have been keenly aware that we need to become a state recognized for the quality of our out-of-school-time investments and not just for being the state spending the most money on these important programs.

track to the regular school day to one that involves schools and partners working side by side to expand learning beyond the school day and school year.

It is well known that dollars do not always equal results. California leaders have been keenly aware that we need to become a state recognized for the quality of our out-of-school-time investments and not just for being the state spending the most money on these important programs.

To address this, in 2006 we—as policy maker and advocate working together—developed critical implementing legislation before over \$400 million in new funding went out across the state.<sup>2</sup> This legislation focused grants on the lowest-income communities, increased grant sizes, and improved the accountability system to look at a range of academic and other student success measures beyond just test scores. An expansion of this scale presented many challenges, but these new policies put us on a very promising path.

Over the years, we have joined many others in our state in intensive efforts to identify how to best support programs to achieve the maximum level of impact on student learning and success. We have chosen to focus on a few critical strategies

that we believe will leverage the best results and outcomes from California’s sizable investment in expanded learning, including making state policy more targeted, flexible, and responsive to local needs; prioritizing summer learning; encouraging school-day educators and community partners to work as a team in every aspect of program operation; and institutionalizing a definition of high quality expanded learning opportunities to ensure programs focus on what works.

Specifically, here are some of the things we have been able to accomplish together as a statewide team focusing on these goals:

**Examining how the state invests its dollars in improving program quality and impact.**

To this end we have

- *created a new division at the California Department of Education solely focused on out-of-school-time investments and brought in smart new leadership from the field to lead this division;*
- *implemented a strategic planning process that includes both department staff and field representatives and is developing improvements to our statewide and regional systems of program support; and*
- *begun to re-examine our laws governing state and federal afterschool funding to identify where we can simplify and streamline processes, provide more flexibility to local programs, and ensure accountability structures that are appropriately matched to program goals.*

2. Prior to the passage of Proposition 49, California allocated \$120 million annually to the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program. Proposition 49 expanded this existing program to \$550 million annually, and renamed the program the “After School Education and Safety Program.”

### **Tackling the huge gap in summer learning opportunities for students in California.**

Together we are

- *raising awareness about the devastating effects of summer learning loss with policy makers, educators, and the public;*
- *making existing funding for summer learning programs more flexible and effective at the local level through legislation; and*
- *adopting a new approach to high quality summer learning programs that moves us away from the old remedial summer school model, and moves us toward programs that integrate learning with enrichment, nutrition and outdoor experiences, and the fun – and effective – summer learning experiences that all children deserve.*

### **Institutionalizing the “expanded learning” frame as the way we do business.**

To this end, we are

- *creating a definition of high quality expanded learning that can inform policies that impact out-of-school-time programs, as well as school improvement funding and other resources that contribute to an expanded learning day and year;*
- *considering the range of approaches to expanding learning time a community might implement, including afterschool and summer, community schools, and linked learning at the secondary level;*
- *identifying key factors to success of any expanded learning approach, such as partnerships between schools and community organizations, and implementing practices that effectively engage students as well as their families;*
- *developing and creating effective messaging to key stakeholders of what we already know through experience and research—that when done well, afterschool, summer, and other forms of expanded learning programs can absolutely support student learning; and*
- *engaging principals and superintendents as our partners and champions in communicating the value of expanded learning opportunities.*

As we embark on this exciting transformation, we are going in with our eyes wide open. We know that the expanded learning terminology, and the policy implications that go with it, has been the subject of a challenging debate at the federal level and around the country. We know that some in the afterschool world feel justifiably nervous about funds being diverted to only adding minutes or hours to the school day, without really doing anything differently. And we also know that those fears could be realized if strong policies and practices are not in place reflecting both what we know about how kids learn most effectively and the components that must be in place to effectively utilize additional learning time.

We believe that local communities need to decide which approach(es) makes the most sense for their student population. We also believe that embracing the expanded learning frame will allow us to build much-needed bridges between community-based program providers and the schools they serve and give us an opportunity to talk about how all partners—schools, community organizations, and families—can contribute to student learning and success.

Many programs in California have already proven just that. With a relatively small amount of money, these programs provide a different type of academic content that is standards-aligned but project based, offer homework help, serve nutritious snacks, teach children (and their parents) about healthy eating, offer physical activity that has regrettably all but disappeared from the school day, and increase student engagement in school.

With a relatively small amount of money, these programs provide a different type of academic content that is standards-aligned but project based, and increase student engagement in school.

For example, in a 20-year UCLA longitudinal study, researchers found that elementary school students who participated for 3 or more years in LA's BEST afterschool program were about 20% less likely to drop out of school than similar students who did not attend LA's BEST (Huang et al., 2005; LA's BEST, 2006). A 2011 UCLA study confirmed the lasting impact of high quality afterschool programs showing that students who participated in LA's BEST in their elementary school years demonstrated gains in math, science, and history GPAs as well as standardized test scores in 8th grade (UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluations, Standards, and Student Testing, 2011).

Participants in 86 Oakland Unified School District afterschool programs—virtually all of which are state- or federally funded—increased their school-day attendance by 35,343 days in 2010–11, earning the district close to \$1 million in additional revenue (Public Profit, 2011).

Blair High School in Pasadena, a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantee, increased its on-time graduation rate by 28% over 4 years, which school leaders in large part attribute to academic supports such as embedding tutoring into sports and enrichment activities and credit recovery programs provided by the BlairLEARNS program (Blair International Baccalaureate High School, 2007).

The operative factor in these successes is “high quality.” We in California know very well from our experiences in scaling up that helping programs provide meaningful and impactful learning experiences for children that support school success is no simple task. We have learned that many expanded learning programs are not as effective at improving student outcomes when they work in isolation from schools. We have learned that it can be challenging to get busy, pressured educators to find the time and will to

collaborate in a meaningful way with community partners. We have learned that when schools and partners develop a shared vision for student success, pool their human and financial resources, and fully take advantage of the resources our state provides for expanding learning time, kids do better.

Here in California, in addition to getting our own house in order around operating a strong system of training and professional development for afterschool staff, we know that we also have to support schools and districts in their capacity to take advantage of expanded learning partnerships and promote the idea that facilitating student learning is a joint endeavor between all parties. This takes more than talk—this takes creative collaboration.

For example, here at the California Department of Education and in the field, we are discussing concrete ways that California's 4,500 expanded learning programs can support schools in the task of implementing the Common Core Standards. We are piloting efforts to bring more hands-on science education to students through afterschool and summer learning programs. We are dedicating half of our 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding to high schools and using that resource to boost college and career readiness.

We are piloting efforts to bring more hands-on science education to students through afterschool and summer learning programs. We are dedicating half of our 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding to high schools and using that resource to boost college and career readiness.

## Conclusion

We are very proud of what we have collectively accomplished in our state. We have made serious investments in expanded learning programs, and we are serious about making these investments as effective as possible. We recognize we are constantly learning about what works best, and we have much more to do in order to ensure that all students receive a strong, well-rounded education. We believe the only way to move closer to that goal is through partnerships—between policy makers and stakeholders; between school districts and community partners; within and across all kinds of public agencies; and between students, parents, and their schools. It is only through genuine partnerships that we can truly expand high quality learning opportunities for all students.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Tom Torlakson** was elected in 2010 to a 4-year term as California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He has served as a classroom teacher and coach and as a member of the Antioch Council, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and the California State Senate and State Assembly. In 1998, Torlakson authored legislation leading to the development of the largest system of afterschool programs in the nation. In 2006, he authored the bill that led to the 300% expansion in these programs so that they now reach 4,000 schools around the state. Born in San Francisco, Torlakson earned the Vietnam Service Medal while serving in the U.S. Merchant Marine. He earned a BA in history, a life secondary teaching credential, and an MA in education from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Jennifer Peck** was a founding staff member of the Partnership for Children and Youth in 2001 and has served as its executive director since 2003. In late 2010, Jennifer was appointed senior policy advisor and transition team director for Tom Torlakson, the newly-elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Prior to joining the Partnership, Jennifer spent 8 years as an appointee of President Bill Clinton at the U.S. Department of Education, where she supported implementation of numerous initiatives including student loan reform, School-to-Work, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

---

## REFERENCES

Blair International Baccalaureate High School. (2007). *2006–2007 BlairLEARNS High School Program data points*. Pasadena, CA: Author.

Huang, D., Kim, K. S., Marshall, A., & Pérez, P. (2005). *Keeping kids in school: An LA's BEST example*. Los Angeles, CA: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing Retrieved from <http://www.lasbest.org/download/keeping-kids-in-school>

LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program. (2006). *Annual report 2005–2006. Caught up in the act ... of success*. Retrieved from <http://www.lasbest.org/download/2005-2006-annual-report>

Public Profit. (2011). *Oakland out-of-school time programs findings report [Executive Summary]*. Retrieved from [http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/cms/lib07/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/79/Oakland\\_OST\\_Findings\\_Report\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_10.17.11.pdf](http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/cms/lib07/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/79/Oakland_OST_Findings_Report_Executive_Summary_10.17.11.pdf)

UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluations, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). (2011). *Supporting student success in middle schools: Examining the relationship between elementary afterschool program participation and subsequent middle school attainments [Executive Summary]*. Retrieved from <http://www.lasbest.org/download/executive-summary>

**Christopher Coleman**

Mayor, St. Paul, MN

**Karl Dean**

Mayor, Nashville, TN

**James Mitchell, Jr.**

City Council Member, Charlotte, NC

**Betsy Price**

Mayor, Fort Worth, TX

**Ronnie Steine**

Councilman- At-Large, Nashville, TN

## Municipal Leadership Is Essential: Quality Afterschool Opportunities Strengthen Cities and Our Youth

Times have changed. In order for the United States and our cities to remain the beacons of hope they have been for the world, it is our responsibility to help our young people develop the skills and talents to find gainful employment and to attract businesses to our cities. Leaders across organizations and institutions, along with parents, have to work together toward the common goal of supporting our youth; no one should presume to take on this goal alone. There are too many social and economic challenges that affect outcomes for young people today that unfortunately make it so easy for many youth to take the wrong turn. As mayors and councilmembers, we have come to learn that in order to ensure that our young people get and stay on the right track, we have to get involved early and create opportunities throughout our communities to help them thrive. *Their success* is the success of our cities. Conversely, the unfortunate reality is that *their failure* is also our failure.

It is common knowledge that children spend 80% of their waking hours outside of school. While we agree that more can and should be done to educate our cities' youngest residents during the school day (and that cities have an important role to play in supporting educational efforts), most mayors do not control their school systems. We

As mayors and councilmembers, we have come to learn that in order to ensure that our young people get and stay on the right track, we have to get involved early and create opportunities throughout our communities to help them thrive.

are in a unique position, though, to use our mayoral and council “bully pulpit” and leadership to enhance the options that children and youth have during that other 80% of time by creating high quality expanded learning opportunities in the afterschool hours, on weekends, and during summers.

## **Growing Municipal Support**

Over the years, there has been a growing interest from municipal leaders in supporting afterschool efforts, as the National League of Cities documented in a recent report highlighting our four cities and 23 others (Spooner, 2011). Why? Because our charge as mayors and councilmembers is to keep our cities safe, spur economic growth, ensure a high quality of life, and provide access and opportunity for all. This is not always easy to do given the difficulties many of our communities face. Fortunately, there are many ways that afterschool and expanded learning opportunities can help city officials confront many pressing local challenges such as public safety, school attendance and truancy, low academic achievement and graduation rates, college and career preparation, civic engagement, hunger and obesity, and risky behaviors such as substance abuse and teen pregnancy. Our efforts to address these challenges are aligned with and supported by a strategy of providing resources and building partnerships to support afterschool programs.

City governments are essential partners with school districts and nonprofit organizations in supporting local youth. Many municipalities already provide a complement of opportunities to their young people via their parks and recreation departments, police athletic leagues, libraries, and museums. Often though, we have seen that communities take a siloed approach, with each program or department trying to solve challenges on its own rather than taking a more integrated approach in which partnerships with other city agencies, schools, and an array of nonprofit afterschool programs can have even greater impact. A powerful way to unite these programs is to include them as part of a citywide system of public, private, and community-based afterschool and expanded learning opportunities. Working together, community leaders can

- *improve the quality of programs,*
- *target programs and investments to youth most in need,*
- *provide joint training to providers from different organizations, and*
- *work collectively to increase participation rates.*

## **Citywide System Approach**

Over the past decade, municipal leadership—and in particular, strong leadership by the mayor—has been a powerful catalyst for progress in the development of citywide systems of afterschool programming. As mayors and councilmembers, we have made afterschool a priority in our cities and have called upon our agency heads to work with school leaders and other youth-serving, community-based organizations to create, strengthen, or expand afterschool learning opportunities. Taking on such an effort is too heavy a burden for any one agency or organization alone; but working together as a group of passionate and committed leaders in a city, we are accomplishing amazing things for our youth.

Time and time again, we have seen how a high quality afterschool program can change a young person's life and how such programs can have a positive ripple effect on families and neighborhoods. Our desire is to substantially increase the number of young people across our cities who have access to and participate in a quality programs. We know that the more often a child comes to a program and the longer he or she stays engaged, the greater impact it will have on that child's life. Trying to scale up is not easy; it requires an intentional plan with focused goals and action steps developed with a number of key community and school partners.

Mayors and other city leaders are in a great position to begin these important conversations and to bring key partners to the table. These leaders may include school superintendents and other district officials, school board members, chiefs of police and other law enforcement officials, United Way executives, leaders of large and small nonprofit organizations, college and university representatives, chambers of commerce and the local business community, the philanthropic community, faith-based organizations, parents, and youth themselves. The mayor's and councilmembers' commitment to an issue can often inspire unlikely organizations to engage in a collective plan or communitywide system to support young people that can have more power and impact than individual efforts.

The key elements that make up such a system are committed leadership from multiple stakeholders, a coordinating entity to manage all of the moving parts, strong and reliable data, a focus on quality, thoughtful efforts to increase participation, and careful multiyear planning (Wallace Foundation, 2008). The purpose of using a comprehensive approach is to determine the programs we have in our community, their locations, the nature and level of demand from youth and their families, and the neighborhoods that lack afterschool opportunities. Then, we can target resources to ensure that young people have adequate and appropriate access to quality programs.

We are also developing standards to ensure all programs in our communities are of high quality and that providers and parents know what a quality program looks like. Additionally, we are coordinating professional training for program providers to help them support the developmental needs of young people. Perhaps most importantly, our cities are developing data management systems that track student participation in afterschool programs and give us information about their school attendance and behavior so that program staff can intervene and help where needed. This new ability to measure the impact of afterschool programs helps us ensure that our resources are well spent and allows us to communicate the importance of continued investment to our constituents.

The key elements that make up such a system are committed leadership from multiple stakeholders, a coordinating entity to manage all of the moving parts, strong and reliable data, a focus on quality, thoughtful efforts to increase participation, and careful multiyear planning.

## City Investments to Support Afterschool Are Worth It

Over the past decade the growth of federal funding provided through the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative has helped cities across the country increase program slots and partner with schools and community-based organizations to develop comprehensive programming. While this has been an invaluable source of support for programs, the federal grants are time limited, and the resources are never enough to meet the demand. To augment these dollars, resources provided by cities, parents, nonprofits, and local philanthropies have made a big difference in meeting local demand for afterschool programs. We have to "put our money where our mouth is" if we hope for others to join us with their own resources as well.

Despite the extreme pressures on municipal budgets in these last several years, many of us have worked hard either to realign municipal funding, invest new dollars from city general funds, or at least hold the line to protect afterschool budgets. For example, in a flat budget environment, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean proposed one new initiative in his 2009 budget: resources for the Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) to implement a coordinated afterschool network that partners with a wide variety of neighborhood organizations to bring academic and enrichment opportunities to middle school youth. "There is tremendous need for afterschool programs for our middle school students—only 10% of our 21,000 middle schoolers participate in a structured after school program," Dean said at the time. "What we have learned over the last several months is that, in addition to need, there is tremendous interest from our students to be a part of these programs when they're offered. My goal is for NAZA to sustain the expansion and existence of neighborhood-based programs for the long-term."

In response, the Nashville Metro Council appropriated \$400,000 for the city's first Afterzone, then included an additional \$600,000 to launch the second in January 2011. The FY12 \$800,000 allocation seeded a third Zone, launched September 2012, with a fourth Zone on track for the 2013–14 school year. Mayor Dean appointed a director of afterschool initiatives in his office to manage the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the AfterZone rollout. Ronnie Steine, councilman-at-large, has been a long standing champion of afterschool in Nashville. He said, "In an environment of limited resources, one has to prioritize, and our city leadership understands we cannot back up for our young people. This means we have to support and nurture our youth when not in school so they can succeed in school."

Leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, have also focused on the needs of middle school students and, in particular, have recognized that afterschool programs could be a deterrent to juvenile crime. Over a decade ago, councilmembers and school board leaders made a joint commitment to invest city and school dollars to launch three new middle school afterschool programs. Councilmember James E. Mitchell has had a steadfast commitment and passion for youth and has fought to keep funding alive for these programs, despite budget battles. Mitchell shared, "I am very proud of the Charlotte City Council's commitment to afterschool programs and to the success of our youth. The city now funds six different providers for a total of \$2.4 million dollars from our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation." The city's former police chief also served as a critical champion for afterschool, underscoring the connection to keeping youth safe, and current Mayor Anthony Foxx has committed his support to afterschool and young people.

Resources to support afterschool can come from many different places. Since 2001, the city of Fort Worth has dedicated more than \$1.4 million annually to support afterschool programming in four school districts through partial proceeds from a one-half cent sales tax dedicated to a crime control and prevention district. Some of the tax revenue is used for afterschool programs because city leaders made a clear case that having afterschool programs is part of an overall crime prevention strategy. City partnerships with school districts can encourage additional commitments. Fort Worth Independent School District agreed to the joint creation of “Fort Worth After School,” using general operating funds to match \$1.1 million of the city’s commitment and employing staff to oversee the 84 school-based programs. Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants add \$4 million to afterschool programs. The city’s willingness to use voter-supported tax levies has resulted in a large pool of sustainable and flexible funding that puts the city in a strong position to lead afterschool system-building efforts. “We simply must invest in the future of our city, and that starts with giving every child the opportunity and tools they need to be successful in the classroom, and ultimately, in life,” said Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price. “We in Fort Worth are very proud of the bond between the city and the Fort Worth ISD to provide local children fun, healthy, productive and education-based alternatives to staying home alone. Now, thanks to our new Wallace Foundation grant, we’re very excited about the chance to take our afterschool system to a whole new level.”

Fort Worth’s willingness to use voter-supported tax levies has resulted in a large pool of sustainable and flexible funding that puts the city in a strong position to lead afterschool system-building efforts.

Aligning and making better use of existing resources in an era of tight budgets is another strategy. In-kind investments can sometimes be as important as financial resources. Creating joint-use agreements for city and school buildings, as well as shared maintenance of facilities, vehicles, parks, and athletic fields can open up more and better afterschool and summer opportunities. Sometimes the greatest need may be to identify a staff person to kick off a citywide effort and begin bringing multiple cross-sector partners to the table. No matter how much we galvanize other leaders across our community to invest time, resources, space, technology, training, and equipment, we cannot overlook how valuable the contribution of a passionate and knowledgeable staff person can be to lead a citywide system building effort.

For instance, in 2006, Saint Paul, Minnesota, Mayor Christopher Coleman formed the Second Shift Commission, a broad stakeholder group representing the city of Saint Paul, the Saint Paul Public Schools, and large and small community-based organizations, to figure out how to increase access to effective afterschool learning opportunities while creating a bridge to in-school learning. Mayor Coleman appointed his staff to lead the commission’s work. Their recommendations led to a new city-school-community partnership called Sprockets—a coordinating entity, structured as a citywide out-of-school-time network. Both the Sprockets director and data system project lead are housed in the city’s parks and recreation department and three staff are “on loan” from the YWCA of St. Paul and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship

at Augsburg College. The team focuses on improving quality, building a citywide data system, piloting shared learning programs between teachers and youth workers, and advancing a framework of youth success as learners, contributors, and navigators. In addition, Sprockets works with four neighborhood network teams of youth serving organizations that link youth development opportunities and services at the neighborhood level. Together, the Sprockets team is bringing the community's resources to bear on a comprehensive, citywide initiative. "Sprockets has quickly built a powerful set of tools and connections to youth-serving organizations to improve their programs and help youth develop essential life skills, confidence and experience," said Mayor Christopher B. Coleman, "This is exactly what I hoped would happen when I created the citizen commission several years ago. Sprockets is one of the keys to my vision of all youth succeeding in school and life."

## **What City Leaders Can Do**

One of the most essential actions that municipal leaders can take to drive change is simply to convene key stakeholders to discuss the afterschool needs in the community. It may seem like an easy step, but it is an important one. Mayoral and councilmember champions can lead the charge and demonstrate the importance of the issue and identify the roles each partner can play towards a solution. Often the most challenging thing is getting the right folks to the table; once they are there, city leaders can lead the group in making a "to-do list" for each stakeholder.

A second useful step is to map the distribution of afterschool opportunities that exist across the community. Providing clear, visual evidence of the lack of accessible programs in certain neighborhoods can build public and political will for afterschool investments. Without the ability to present these data, local leaders often believe that their communities may have ample program options, when the reality may be that there is seriously inadequate or unequal distribution of programs across neighborhoods. Though a mapping process may take time to complete, this is a relatively easy "win" and can help generate a deeper understanding of the local afterschool landscape and help communicate needs more clearly to key community leaders.

Taking a citywide approach often fuels further progress and drives more strategic discussions about next steps. Early analyses of community resources and needs frequently reveal troubling gaps and spark efforts among key stakeholders to fill them. It is hard to say "no" or to turn away from a map that glaringly shows high crime or poverty in a neighborhood clearly lacking afterschool opportunities—and, in fact, it would not be right or politically savvy to do so. When we saw our community's needs, we knew we had to do something about it... and we have.

## **It's All Connected**

Supporting afterschool programming is part of our education improvement strategy, economic development strategy, neighborhood development strategy, and crime prevention strategy. In short, it's all connected. When young people are engaged in positive activities, there are numerous positive outcomes. It is the job of municipal officials to make those connections. Ultimately, it is our job to support our children and youth as our communities' future. If you are a municipal official, we invite you to join us in expanding and improving afterschool opportunities in your own communities. If you

are a community organization leader, a parent, or a school leader, we urge you to ask your mayor and councilmembers to bring your community together to plan how to make afterschool a collaborative priority for the community.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Saint Paul Mayor **Chris Coleman** has advocated for education, public safety, and economic development in his 6 years as mayor and for 6 years before that as a city councilmember. Prior to becoming an elected official, he spent 8 years as a county public defender and prosecutor and also worked in nonprofit finance. A champion of education, Mayor Coleman launched Sprockets, a citywide out-of-school-time network that developed the first data system of its kind in the state. His leadership in transportation led to the Central Corridor, the largest transit project in Minnesota history. He is currently 1st vice president of the National League of Cities.

Mayor **Karl Dean** is in his second term as Nashville's mayor. He has made education and youth, public safety and economic development his major priorities. Under his leadership, Nashville has dramatically lowered its truancy rate and increased its graduation rates. In 2011–2012, he served as co-chair of the National League of Cities Council on Youth, Education and Families.

**James E. Mitchell, Jr.**, is a native of Charlotte, NC, where he has served on the Charlotte City Council since 1999 as the District 2 representative and as a vocal champion for afterschool and other youth opportunities. Mitchell is the immediate past president of the National League of Cities.

Mayor **Betsy Price** was elected mayor of Fort Worth June 18, 2011. Since then, she's been actively engaging the city's young people, working to create jobs, fighting for fiscal accountability and open government, building a citywide health and fitness initiative, and being a cheerleader for local public schools. A successful business owner for 17 years, Mayor Price began her career in public service as Tarrant County Tax Assessor in 2000 and quickly used her business experience to make her department one of the most efficient in Texas, saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

Councilman-at-Large **Ronnie Steine** is a 17-year veteran of Nashville's Metro Council. In 2011–2012, he served as co-chair of the National League of Cities Council on Youth, Education and Families and currently serves on the Forum for Youth Investment's Ready By 21 National Leadership Council. He received the Afterschool Alliance's State Champion Award for Tennessee in 2010.

---

## REFERENCES

Spooner, B. S. (2011). *Municipal leadership for afterschool: Citywide approaches spreading across the country*. Washington, DC: National League of Cities. Retrieved from <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/afterschool/municipal-leadership-for-afterschool-citywide-approaches-spreading-across-the-country>

Wallace Foundation. (2008). *A place to grow and learn: A citywide approach to building and sustaining out-of-school time learning opportunities*, Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Pages/Sustaining-Out-of-School-Time-Learning-Opportunities.aspx>

**Nicole Yohalem**

Senior Director, Forum for Youth Investment

**Robert C. Granger**

President, William T. Grant Foundation

## Improving the Quality and Impact of Afterschool and Summer Programs: Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The afterschool field has made important progress in the past 15 years, particularly since the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program rapidly expanded starting in 1998. Increased federal, state, and local support demonstrates that taxpayers and policy makers want safe and engaging activities for young people while parents work. As a result, afterschool options have grown rapidly, with programs adding spaces and expanding to new sites. At the same time, funders and practitioners have created infrastructure—namely state and local intermediary organizations—to advocate for the field and support its expansion.

The evidence that afterschool programs can deliver on multiple goals—academic, social, and behavioral—is much stronger than it was 15 years ago. However to produce positive effects, programs must be effectively designed and delivered. As afterschool and summer learning programs have made a greater claim on public resources—and the economy has tightened—they are experiencing increased pressure to justify support. The prevailing view seems to be that if these and other social programs are going to draw significant funding, they need to be able to produce positive results consistently. Similar accountability pressures have occurred in other sectors such as preschool, K–12 education, and mentoring. One result of this pressure is increased attention to program quality within the field; and as we discuss later, a great deal that has been learned in that regard is now being incorporated into afterschool and summer program design and delivery.

Some of the pressure on afterschool has come from K–12 education, which is itself being pushed to improve achievement and attainment. As interest grows within the education community about how afterschool and summer programs can play a role in “expanded learning” efforts, challenging questions related to mission persist for providers. What should be the focus of afterschool programs? Is developing “21st century skills” such as personal responsibility, teamwork, and persistence paramount, or should programs be concerned with a narrower set of academic outcomes? Should programs be operated by schools, community organizations, or both? Should services be delivered in school buildings or elsewhere in the community?

Although research does not provide clear answers to these questions, in part due to variation in local needs, goals, and program design, it does affirm the increased focus within the field on defining and improving program quality. As noted above, programs can have positive effects on academic, social, and behavioral outcomes, but not all programs that set out to achieve such effects do so, and we know that quality varies both within and across sites. Understanding why this is so has become an important priority. Are varying results due to program content? Program processes and structure? Characteristics of the organization implementing the program (for example, how well that organization is run or its rates of staff turnover)? Features of the surrounding community (for example, youth being able to safely get to the program regularly)?

While much more needs to be learned, especially about how organizational and community factors affect afterschool program effectiveness, current research does confirm a consensus among practitioners—that program processes, content, and structure matter. Focusing on these features has some important advantages. In contrast to community- or family-level factors, program-level features are under the control of practitioners, and thus afterschool supervisors and line staff consider them a “fair” focus for accountability. Significant progress has been made on identifying these features of program effectiveness, designing valid and reliable ways to measure them, and helping program leaders and staff assess and improve them. The remainder of this article reviews this progress and discusses our recommendations for advancing the afterschool field.

## Developments in the Field

**An evolving evidence base.** As noted above, evidence that afterschool programs can deliver on multiple goals—academic, social, and behavioral—is much stronger than it was 15 years ago. Reviews conducted by Patricia Lauer and colleagues (2006) and Joe Durlak and Roger Weissberg (2010) were particularly useful in synthesizing the results from a large number of program evaluations. Durlak and Weissberg’s review had a major influence on the field. They found, on average, programs had a positive effect on a range of academic and other important outcomes. They also began to shed light on why. They reviewed 68 evaluations of afterschool programs focused on improving personal and social skills, such as reducing risky behavior. The results drew attention to the importance of specific program features (for example, implementing active and sequential activities focused on explicit goals) in producing positive effects. Lauer and her colleagues reviewed 35 evaluations of academically focused afterschool and summer programs for low-income children. They, too, found positive news on academic measures, although they were not able to identify particular program or contextual features that predicted the positive effects beyond participation itself.

Positive effects in both reviews were driven by a subset of the programs in the sample (roughly one-third), and the evaluations included in both reviews were of relatively small programs. Among the few large-scale programs that have been rigorously evaluated, their effects are limited (Granger, 2011), and we still lack a clear understanding of why this is so. There is increasing interest in this question, however, and efforts are underway in the field to address this.

**Increased understanding of high quality practice and how to measure it.** Research shows that interactions among young people and adults during program activities are positively related to how well youth function and their developmental outcomes. Practitioners tend to see this as more than a useful correlation and believe that staff-youth interactions are the active ingredients that distinguish programs that make a difference from those that do not (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2009). Research has not yet proven this, but it is beginning to make the case that adult/youth interactions cause youth outcomes to change. Historically, though, monitoring and accountability have focused on structural features such as staff qualifications and staff-student ratios that do not seem to predict effectiveness, at least in the K–12 research literature (Mashburn et al., 2008).

Durlak and Weissberg’s analyses illuminated the importance of specific program features that might productively shape staff-youth interactions, and they did so at a time when the afterschool field was ready to listen. In 2002, the National Research Council (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) identified eight features of positive developmental settings. Since then, consensus has been building about what constitutes high quality practice in afterschool settings and how to measure it. The NRC report, along with research by Reed Larson, Deborah Vandell, Durlak and Weissberg, and others contributed to this growing consensus. By 2006, the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA), developed by Charles Smith and colleagues at the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, was one of several observational tools designed to measure program quality being refined and used in the field to advance both research and practice.

**Systemic efforts to improve quality.** As measures of program quality matured, practitioners leading afterschool organizations and systems, who were eager to use research-based tools to improve their programs, began incorporating them into their staff development efforts. Increasingly, continuous quality improvement systems that include observational assessments, improvement planning, and targeted training and coaching are being implemented and enhanced at the local and state levels.

In addition, there is now limited, but promising evidence that such strategies can improve afterschool program quality. This echoes recent positive results (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lunl, 2011) in K–12 education about the impact of coaching-based professional development built around a validated tool for assessing teacher-student interactions. A rigorous evaluation of the Youth Program Quality Intervention—designed to improve practices measured by the Youth PQA—resulted in improved instruction and higher levels of staff retention in a wide range of afterschool sites (Smith et al., 2012). Designed to be responsive to the specific conditions of the afterschool field (for example, high turnover, limited training, part-time staff), the Youth Program Quality Intervention is a “low-stakes” model. Site managers are accountable for implementing continuous improvement practices rather than attaining specific thresholds of performance.

This model is now being adapted and used by more than 80 networks of afterschool and summer programs across the country, including nine state education agencies using it to support implementation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative in their states. In Michigan, for example, observational assessments of all 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees are conducted annually using the Youth PQA, and corresponding professional development offerings are available to all grantees. A network of regional coaches provides training, coaching, and technical assistance to a subset of grantees that either refer themselves or are referred by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Coaches work with those sites to implement improvement plans and maintain online service logs that are accessible to MDE. Coaches are in regular communication with MDE so that quality and compliance issues can be identified and addressed quickly. Several states, including Arkansas and Vermont, have developed an integrated quality improvement system based on the Youth Program Quality Intervention that supports both 21st Century Community Learning Centers and TANF-funded school-age child care programs.

## Recommendations for Advancing the Field

In order to get more afterschool and summer programs consistently producing robust, positive effects for children and youth, efforts to advance research and practice should build on the progress we have described.

- **Research.** *Instruments designed to measure program quality could benefit from revisions to make them more clear and specific. Researchers also need to produce better, scalable measures of youth behaviors and dispositions that contribute to school success, such as work habits, persistence, and engagement in learning, and others that push beyond the academic domain. More studies that assess how quality improvement approaches affect program practices are also needed (in general, results about the effectiveness of staff development programs in K–12 are mixed [Yoon et al., 2007]). Additionally, studies that confirm the belief that when staff practices improve, youth outcomes also improve would constitute a critical milestone for the field. Less likely to advance our understanding of how to improve quality are more impact evaluations of small programs. We know such evaluations can be an important gateway to gaining funding support. We already know, however, that such programs can work, but many need to do better—some much better—and the field is now headed down a fruitful path of better understanding how to define, support, and sustain high quality.*
- **Practice.** *Practitioners need more validated, cost-effective approaches for continuously improving practice. One promising approach is for practitioners to partner with researchers to develop and test different improvement approaches. Such partnerships allow for the integration of research-based tools and knowledge with local circumstances and expertise, and the current press for evidence-based practice across the human services fields could help sustain such collaborations.*

*Partnerships should pioneer and test different approaches, including new assessment strategies and intentional variations in the duration and delivery of coaching and training. Rapid but disciplined research and development processes that advance practice and accrue reliable information about how to improve program quality are needed. This will require developing and institutionalizing new ways of working collaboratively across practice and research; promising strategies are being refined in health care and increasingly tested in education and human services to do just that (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2010). State afterschool networks can work with state education agencies and their research and evaluation partners to test and refine promising strategies within 21st Century Community Learning Centers-funded and TANF-funded school-age child care programs. Municipal afterschool systems can do the same at the local level, and national intermediaries can spread the word about promising practices.*

- **Policy and funding.** *Afterschool and summer learning programs and systems are not able to bear the full cost of this important work of improving quality on their own. Public systems should allocate professional development and monitoring resources toward continuous improvement approaches; and foundations that support programs, infrastructure, and research should seize the opportunity to subsidize the development of tools and strategies designed to support continuous improvement.*

The afterschool and summer learning field is ripe for a focused wave of research and development that does not involve dramatic changes but rather capitalizes on the significant progress made over the past 15 years. Afterschool and summer learning programs can have positive effects on a range of important outcomes, and thus they have earned the right to be included in discussions about advancing young people's learning and development. Future investments in education and youth development should recognize afterschool and summer as important opportunities to advance student success, and more fully capitalize on growing capacity at the state and local levels to expand and improve programs.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Nicole Yohalem** has led work related to afterschool at the Forum for Youth Investment for the past 11 years. Prior to that she worked at the intersection of youth development practice and research at Michigan State University Extension and the HighScope Educational Research Foundation.

**Robert C. Granger** is president of the William T. Grant Foundation. From 2003 to 2011 the foundation focused a significant portion of its grant making on improving the quality of afterschool programs.

---

## REFERENCES

Allen, J. P., Pianta, R. C., Gregory, A., Mikami, A. Y., & Lun J. (2011). An interaction-based approach to enhancing secondary school instruction and student achievement. *Science*, 333, 1034–1037.

Bryk A. S., Gomez L. M., & Grunow A. (2010). *Getting ideas into action: Building networked improvement communities in education*. Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Durlak, J., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 294–309.

Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Granger, R. (2011). Our work on the quality of after-school programs: 2003–2011. *William T. Grant Foundation Annual Report*. New York, NY: William T. Grant Foundation.

Larson, R. W., Rickman, A. N., Gibbons, C. M., & Walker, K. C. (2009). Practitioner expertise: Creating quality within the daily tumble of events in youth settings. In N. Yohalem, R. Granger, & K. Pittman (Eds.), *New Directions for Youth Development* (No. 121, pp.71–88). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lauer, P. A., Akiba, M., Wilkerson, S. B., Apthorp, H. S., Snow, D., & Martin-Glenn, M. L. (2006). Out-of-school time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students. *Review of Educational Research*, 76, 275–313.

Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., . . . Howes, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child Development*, 79, 732–749.

Smith, C., Akiva, T., Sugar, S. A., Lo, Y. J., Frank, K. A., Peck, S. C., . . . Devaney, T. (2012). *Continuous quality improvement in after-school settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study*. Washington, DC: Forum for Youth Investment.

Vandell, D. L., Shernoff, D. J., Pierce, K. M., Bolt, D. M., Dadisman, K., & Brown, B. B. (2005). Activities, engagement, and emotion in after-school programs (and elsewhere). *New Directions for Youth Development*, 105, 121–129.

Yohalem, N. & Wilson-Ahlstrom, A. (2009). *Measuring youth program quality: A guide to assessment tools* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Forum for Youth Investment.

Yoon, K., Duncan, T., Lee, S., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. (2007). *Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement*. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest.

**Denise Huang**

Project Director/Senior Researcher, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, University of California, Los Angeles

## Using Research to Continuously Improve Afterschool Programs: Helping Students to Become 21st Century Lifelong Learners

... high quality afterschool and summer learning programs, when effectively aligned with learning opportunities provided during the school day and year, can provide an ideal setting to support successful youth development.

The challenges of the 21st century—the explosion of knowledge, the rapid advances in technology, the globalization of the economy, and the need for a creative, adaptable workforce— have profound implications for education. They have put a premium on students’ ability to learn continuously, apply their knowledge to new situations, and solve complex problems.

*A New Day for Learning* (Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force, 2007) emphasized that children learn *all day*, not just during normal school hours. To meet the many challenges of the 21st century, the report urged schools and their associated afterschool and summer learning programs to develop comprehensive, integrated learning approaches that value the distinct experiences provided for children by diverse community stakeholders and at different times of the day and year.

Simultaneously, researchers and policymakers are increasing an emphasis on the inclusion of youth development principles within afterschool and summer learning program settings

(Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). They believe that these programs have the potential to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge, resiliency, and self-esteem that will help them succeed in 21st century society (Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Pittman, 2003).

They also believe that high quality afterschool and summer learning programs, when effectively aligned with learning opportunities provided during the school day and year, can provide an ideal setting to support successful youth development.

This article will lay out a set of research-based principles and practices for developing, implementing, and maintaining high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs that can create productive citizens and lifelong learners of the 21st century.

## Indicators of Program Quality

In 2003, prominent afterschool practitioners, political supporters, and research experts gathered at a national Afterschool Summit in Washington and identified five general performance indicators of successful afterschool programs. Such programs promote students’

- **academic achievement** by *fostering enthusiasm for learning*;
- **social attitudes and behaviors** by *emphasizing better school attendance and willingness to take personal responsibility and by providing them with leadership experiences*;
- **skill-building** by *providing activities that are outside of their comfort zones* ;
- **health (physical, mental, emotional)** by *ensuring students’ safety and building resiliency* ; and
- **sense of community** by *encouraging family involvement and structuring opportunities for civic engagement (U.S. Department of Education, 2003)*.

These indicators of effective afterschool and summer learning programs can be framed under three broad domains: program structure, program implementation, and program content. Table 1 identifies the core indicators of quality under each domain.

.....  
*Table 1. Quality indicators for afterschool programs.*

Program Structure	Program Content	Program Implementation
Goals clearly defined	Connects with school learning	Strong leadership
Program structures aligned with goals	Has a youth development approach	Quality staff
Program mission and vision designed to motivate staff	Relates to 21st century	Clear communication and support to all stakeholders
	Engages students	Positive relationships*
		Built in assessment and continuous improvement loop

\*According to the National Partnership of Quality Afterschool Learning Study (Huang, 2010), this is found to be the common core element among quality programs.

**Program structure.** Afterschool and summer learning programs can powerfully communicate their program goals through clear mission and vision statements. Such statements can also motivate program staff and guide program functioning. A “theory of change” should be clearly specified to spell out what the program wants to achieve (goals and detailed objectives), then link program objectives and student outcomes to indicators of program effectiveness and quality (Anderson, 2004). These strategic procedures require intentional alignment of program activities to each program goal; alignment of goals for learning during the school day, after school, and during the summertime; and alignment of activities that promote students’ interests and meet students’ specific needs.

**Program content.** With the program structure secured, afterschool and summer learning leaders must then ensure that students have sufficient access to efficient learning tools, relevant content, and staff who are skilled in instructional content. New 21st-century curricula, including global awareness, financial and civic literacy, and creativity and the arts, can be incorporated within the framework of the new Common Core State Standards. It is also equally important for students to practice “how-to-learn skills,” including (1) communication skills, (2) thinking and problem-solving skills, and (3) interpersonal and self-directional skills.

To motivate students to focus, “learning must effectively connect to students’ questions, concerns, and personal experiences, thereby capturing their intrinsic motivation and making the value of what they learn readily apparent to them” (Learning First Alliance, 2001, p. 4). Afterschool and summer learning programs should therefore feature a variety of high-quality activities and provide academic content through real world examples, applications, and experiences, both inside and outside of school (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006; C. S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice, 2005; Westmoreland & Little, 2006).

Effective program implementation starts with strong, knowledgeable leaders who can create a positive organizational climate.

Moreover, when instructional content, staff, and resources reinforce students’ positive self-perceptions, there will be a resulting increase in positive social behaviors and academic achievement, along with fewer behavioral problems (Durlak et al., 2010).

**Program implementation.** Effective program implementation starts with strong, knowledgeable leaders who can create a positive organizational climate. These leaders hire quality staff and keep them updated with relevant knowledge and skills. They also create open communication among afterschool, summer learning, day school, parent, and community stakeholders. This relationship-building among adult stakeholders is critical to program success.

Moreover, the one key element that consistently stands out in research on high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs is the positive relationship between staff and students. This relationship is a key determinant of student engagement in school and often leads to increased student motivation, higher academic competence, and increased valuing of school (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, & McMaken, 2007).

## Benefits of Positive Staff-Student Relationships

Afterschool and summer learning programs have a number of distinct advantages over schools that can foster deeper staff-student relationships. In particular, with fewer curricular demands, more time is available in afterschool and summer settings for students and staff to form positive relationships. Furthermore, afterschool and summer learning programs provide students with access to an expanded network of adults and mentors in the community (Rhodes, 2004).

A study of the LA's BEST program reveals some of the key benefits of these deeper relationships with caring adults (Huang et al., 2007). Students perceived their relationships with LA's BEST staff as encouraging, positive, and supportive. In turn, students perceived themselves as behaving well, working hard, and feeling good about the experience of learning in school and at LA's BEST. Students who held positive relationships with afterschool staff were more likely to be actively engaged in the program and, in turn, were more engaged in their school during the day. Similarly, students who felt supported and encouraged by staff were more likely to place a higher value on education and have greater aspirations for their futures.

... students who felt supported and encouraged by staff were more likely to place a higher value on education and have greater aspirations for their futures.

## Bridging School, Afterschool, Summer Learning, and Communities to Improve Student Impact

According to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003), "After school programs need a strong connection to the learning objectives of the school day in order to increase student achievement." This continuity of learning between the school and afterschool and summer learning programs is supported theoretically in the work of Noam, Biancarosa, and Dechausay (2002). They posit that the "bridging" of school and afterschool helps to promote more meaningful academic learning. They find that congruity of environments, including congruity of learning goals and teaching styles, is associated with increased academic performance in literacy and other academic areas. They recommend that program staff communicate with day school teachers about homework and other student needs.

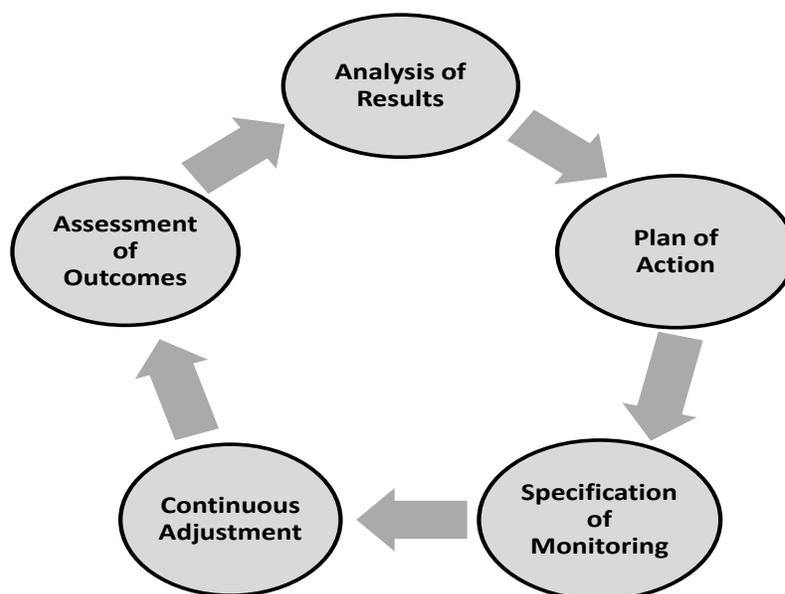
Since family and neighborhood factors are also strong forces in the students' lives, this "connectedness" can be further expanded into students' families and neighborhood communities through family events, internships, and community services. This would help students develop civic awareness, a stronger sense of belonging, and the characteristics of good citizenship. The Harlem Children's Zone project exemplifies the success of such practices (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011).

## Being a Role Model for Learning and Improving

Finally, to promote lifelong learning for students, afterschool and summer learning programs can demonstrate that adults are willing to learn and improve as well. Effective programs employ a continuous monitoring system to determine whether they are meeting their program goals and to continuously fine-tune program implementation.

Such evaluations are simple and easy to administer. They generally involve gathering data from students, parents, teachers, school administrators, staff, and volunteers (or a sample thereof); measuring instructional and implementation adherence to program goals; providing feedback to all stakeholders for program improvement; and identifying the needs for additional implementation procedures or resources, such as increased collaboration, staff, or materials. Figure 1 illustrates the continuous nature of program monitoring and evaluation procedures.

.....  
*Figure 1. Model of the data-based decision-making process.*



## Summary Recommendations for Policies and Sustainability

The following recommendations will help policymakers and afterschool and summer learning program leaders build and sustain high-quality programs.

- **Recruit quality staff and reduce staff turnover.** *Although it seems obvious, recruiting and retaining high-quality staff is essential to afterschool and summer learning program success. In addition to providing equitable salaries, benefits, and career advancement opportunities, policymakers and afterschool program leaders should establish a recognition program to acknowledge the contributions of afterschool staff. Appropriate esteem titles may further help afterschool staff fulfill their intrinsic goals.*

- **Build bridges between school, afterschool, and summer learning programs.** *Programs should include in their goals a specific objective to increase collaboration between school day learning and afterschool and summer learning experiences. Shared professional development between classroom teachers and expanded learning staff may offer opportunities for collaboration. School day, afterschool, and summer learning staff may use such opportunities to align curricula, enhance student engagement, develop common standards for student discipline, and use school data to support curricular decision making. This increased alignment and curricular collaboration, however, should not result by default in the dilution or elimination of hands-on learning and other student engagement, youth development, and relationship-building strategies that are also needed to make afterschool and summer learning programs effective and well attended.*
- **Provide appropriate content, tools, and training.** *To combat the “digital divide” that separates children from low-income families and their more privileged peers, and to prepare students with a broad range of 21st-century skills, appropriate technology and equipment need to be available at the program sites. New 21st-century content, including global awareness as well as financial and civic literacy, also needs to be presented. Meanwhile, staff also need up-to-date training on the delivery of such curricula and the use of the new technologies so that they can fully support students in developing their 21st-century skills.*
- **Establish networking systems.** *The neighborhood community plays a vital role in supporting students’ positive development. Afterschool and summer learning programs should be encouraged to recruit and incorporate families, community members, and local services into their programs.*

## Conclusion

A nationwide survey of afterschool program staff explored the reasons that they worked in this field. The single most frequent staff response was their desire to make a difference in the students’ lives. Because they perceived themselves as having the ability to make a difference, staff felt a high sense of efficacy, demonstrated high expectations for students, and encouraged their students to succeed (Huang, Cho, Mostafavi, & Nam, 2008).

For students coming from disadvantaged environments, having a relationship with adults possessing these personal and professional characteristics is particularly powerful. Not only do staff have the potential to assist students with personal issues, but they also have the power to encourage and instill educational values and high aspirations. The establishment of a strong bond between students and staff directly influences student engagement in afterschool and summer learning programs and also serves as a powerful predictor of student engagement in school. With appropriate administrative and instructional content support, this unique relationship may also serve as the ideal venue for staff to mentor students in developing their 21st-century skills.

When afterschool and summer learning programs provide the context for students to experience these supportive relationships, include engaging up-to-date content, complement and align with but not replicate the school day, and link to families and community, students begin to believe in their own efforts and develop the lifelong learning skills needed to be productive, global citizens of the 21st century.

## For More Information

- The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (<http://www.p21.org/>)
- National Center for Quality Afterschool (<http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/>)
- The Forum for Youth Investment (<http://www.forumfyi.org/>)

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Denise Huang** is a project director and senior researcher at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at UCLA. She leads a research team conducting multiple research and evaluations on after school programs nationwide. Her recent work includes evaluations of afterschool programs and investigations of the effect of motivation, attribution, and effort towards academic achievement. Huang is also the co-principal investigator for the California Statewide Afterschool Evaluation Project.

---

## REFERENCES

- American Youth Policy Forum. (2006). *Helping youth succeed through out-of-school time programs*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Anderson, A. A. (2004). *Theory of change as a tool for strategic planning: A report on early experiences*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.
- Birmingham, J., Pechman, E. M., Russell, C. A., & Mielke, M. (2005). *Shared features of high performing afterschool programs: A follow-up to the TASC evaluation*. Retrieved from <http://www.sedl.org/>
- C. S. Mott Foundation Committee on After-School Research and Practice. (2005). *Moving towards success: Framework for after-school programs*. Washington, DC: Collaborative Communications Group.
- Dobbie, W., & Fryer, R. G. (2011). Are high-quality schools enough to increase achievement among the poor? Evidence from the Harlem Children's Zone. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 3(3), 158–187.
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of afterschool programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(3–4), 294–309.

Herrera, C., Grossman, J. B., Kauh, T. J., Feldman, A. F., & McMaken, J. (2007). *Making a difference in schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring impact study*. New York, NY: Public/Private Ventures.

Huang, D., Cho, J., Mostafavi, S., & Nam, H. (2008). *What works? Common practices in high functioning afterschool programs across the nation in math, reading, science, arts, technology, and homework—a study by the national partnership* (CRESST Report 768). Retrieved from University of California, Los Angeles, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing website: <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports/R768.pdf>

Huang, D., Coordt, A., La Torre, D., Leon, S., Miyoshi, J., Pérez, P., & Peterson, P. (2007). *The afterschool hours: Examining the relationship between afterschool staff-based social capital and student engagement in LA's BEST*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation.

Learning First Alliance. (2001). *Every child learning: Safe and supportive schools*. Baltimore, MD: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Little, P. M. D., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H. B. (2008, February). After school programs in the 21st century: Their potential and what it takes to achieve it. *Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation*, 10. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

Noam, G. G., Biancarosa, G., & Dechausay, N. (2002). *Learning to bridge—bridging to learn: A model and action plan to increase engagement between schools and after school programs in Boston*. Boston, MA: Boston's After-School for All Partnership.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (2003). *Evaluating supplemental educational service providers: Issues and challenges*. Portland, OR: Author.

Pittman, K. (2003). 21st century skills and indicators. *Youth Today*, 12(7), 51.

Rhodes, J. E. (2004). The critical ingredient: Caring youth-staff relationships in after-school settings. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 101, 145–161.

Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force. (2007). *A new day for learning: A report from the Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force*. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/ANewDayforLearning.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *After School Summit summary report*. Retrieved from Partnership for After School Education website: <http://www.pasesetter.org/reframe/documents/summit.pdf>

Westmoreland, H., & Little, P. M. D. (2006). *Exploring quality standards for middle school after school programs: What we know and what we need to know: A summit report*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

**Patricia O'Donnell**

Grant Writer/Researcher, School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, College of Charleston

**Joseph R. Ford**

Graduate Student, College of Charleston

## The Continuing Demand for 21st Century Community Learning Centers Across America: More Than Four Billion Dollars Of Unmet Need

The *America After 3PM* study determined that of the 14.3 million children in self-care after school, nearly 4 million of them would like to participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them in their community (Afterschool Alliance, 2003). In a more recent study, it was determined that the number of students in self-care rose from 14.3 million in 2003 to 15.1 million in 2009, despite greater availability of afterschool care (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). This disparity prompted a study to determine to what extent the largest nationwide funding source for local afterschool and summer learning programs in, or linked to, schools is meeting the demand for requests.

This potential funding source is the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, funded by the United States Department of Education, supports community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during nonschool hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Although it is a federally financed program, state departments of education manage the actual competition for funding in their states. Awards are made to local schools or community groups (working with local schools) interested in offering educational, youth development, and family programming afterschool and during summers. Interestingly, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative is the largest federally funded education effort that fosters both community-school partnerships and family involvement.

Because this is such a large and diverse country with many different, and often competing, education interests in the various states and localities, there is a strong need to assess over time the extent of the demand for afterschool and summer learning opportunities funded by 21st Century Community Learning Centers. So the purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which state competitions for 21st Century Community Learning Centers were able to meet local requests for funding over the past 9 years. Of particular interest were both the percentage of grant requests that were funded and the total dollar amount of requests funded over these years.

## Methodology

In order to determine the number of grant applications and recipients for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the online database from the U.S. Department of Education's Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS) was searched. Queries were conducted by competition, by state, from 2002 to 2010 by year for each year listed below. Therefore, the data reported here are as accurate as the data held by the PPICS. These queries were conducted October–November, 2011.

## Results

- **Between 2002 and 2010, only about one in three applicants for 21st Century Community Learning Centers was awarded funding (See Table 1 and Figure 1).** *During this time period 19,638 grant requests were received by 21st Century, of which 7,034 were funded (35.82%).*
- **Between 2002 and 2010, nearly \$4.3 billion of total requests for 21st Century Community Learning Center programming were not funded (see Table 2 and Figure 2).** *During that same time period, over \$6.5 billion was requested from 21st Century funding, of which nearly \$2.3 billion (34.85%) was received.*

Figure 1 displays the total number of awards requested and received each year between 2002 and 2010. Figure 2 displays the total amount of money requested and received during the same time period.

Because this is such a large and diverse country with many different, and often competing, education interests in the various states and localities, there is a strong need to assess over time the extent of the demand for afterschool and summer learning opportunities funded by 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

.....  
 Table 1. 21st Century grant number of applications and awards, 2002–2010.<sup>1</sup>

Year	Applicants	Awards	Percent Awarded
2002	474	140	29.54%
2003	2,836	775	27.33%
2004	3,498	1,389	39.71%
2005	1,397	464	33.21%
2006	1,293	328	25.37%
2007	2,379	895	37.62%
2008	2,510	1,063	42.35%
2009	3,095	1,234	39.87%
2010	2,156	746	34.60%
TOTAL	19,638	7,034	35.82%

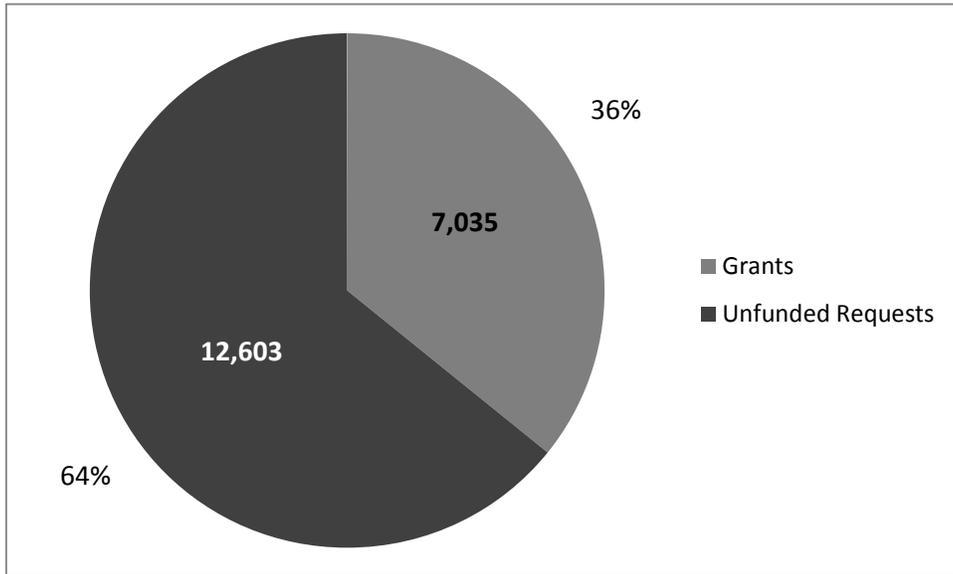
.....  
 Table 2. 21st Century grant application dollar amount requested versus received, 2002–2010.<sup>2</sup>

Year	Money Requested	Money Granted	Percent Granted
2002	\$149,577,283	\$33,879,393	22.65%
2003	\$902,930,300	\$238,297,883	26.39%
2004	\$1,267,895,855	\$480,515,709	37.90%
2005	\$391,072,195	\$97,937,098	25.04%
2006	\$405,828,894	\$84,254,758	20.76%
2007	\$815,515,985	\$298,568,650	36.61%
2008	\$994,112,531	\$454,767,845	45.75%
2009	\$1,100,341,496	\$392,087,341	35.63%
2010	\$553,286,565	\$213,230,061	38.54%
TOTAL	\$6,580,561,103	\$2,293,538,738	34.85%

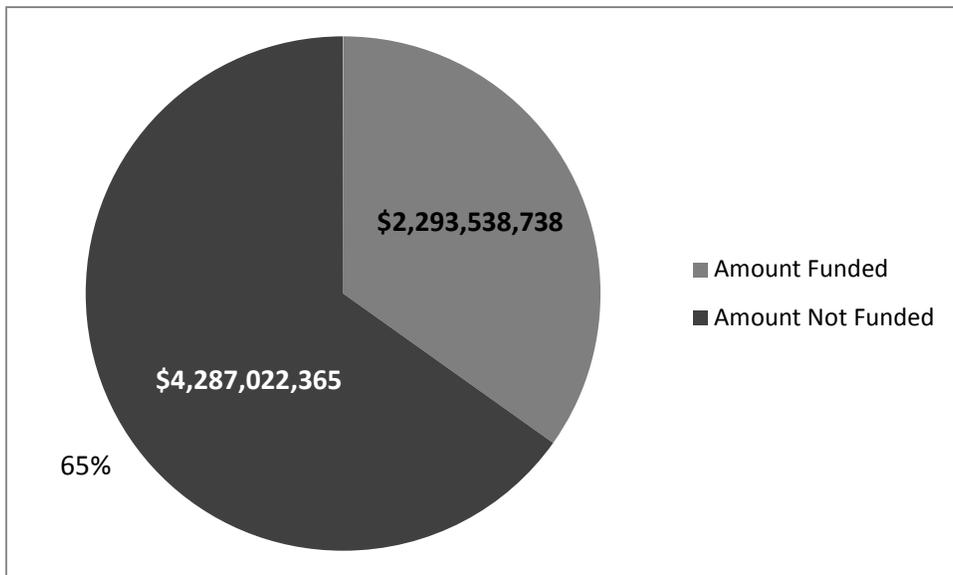
1. The data presented here are part of the Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS) <http://ppics.learningpt.org/ppicsnet/public/default.aspx>. According to the PPICS website, “The purpose of this system is to collect basic information about 21st CCLC programs across the United States. PPICS was created in 2003 at the commission of the US Department of Education (ED). The system was built to help ED track 21st CCLC programming following the transition from federal to state administration, which took place in 2001. Each year, PPICS is used to collect program data from some 3,000 21st CCLC grants covering close to 9,000 centers serving 1.5 million student attendees.”

2. Ibid.

.....  
*Figure 1. 21st Century grant total number of grants and unfunded requests, 2002–2010*



.....  
*Figure 2. 21st Century grant total amount requested and received, 2002–2010*



## Conclusion

Looking across the states over 9 recent years, it is clear that the interest and demand has been high and remains steady for 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

On average, only about one in three grant applications receive funding. From 2002 to 2010, there were over \$4 billion dollars of unfunded 21st Century Community Learning Center applications across America.

This high demand and percentage of unfunded applications should not be surprising when compared to the two national surveys conducted during this same time period, which showed a high interest by families for more quality afterschool programs across America.

Given the continuing high interest and demand for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, it would make sense to find ways to increase significantly the support and resources for school-community partnerships that expand learning after school and during the summer across America.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Patricia O'Donnell** received her PhD in sociology from the University of Notre Dame with specialty in both criminology and research methods. She is currently a grant writer/researcher for the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance at the College of Charleston and teaches research methods to graduate students in teacher education.

**Joseph R. Ford** is a graduate student pursuing a master of arts in teaching with a focus on choral music education. He is a graduate of the College of Charleston with a BA in applied music.

---

## REFERENCES

Afterschool Alliance. (2009). *America after 3PM: Key findings*. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM\\_Key\\_Findings\\_2009.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM_Key_Findings_2009.pdf)

Afterschool Alliance. (2003). *America after 3PM: A household survey on afterschool in America* [Executive summary]. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press\\_archives/america\\_3pm/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press_archives/america_3pm/Executive_Summary.pdf)

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Program description. Retrieved November 20, 2012, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>

**Allison Anfinson**

Former Results Measurement Director,  
21st Century Community Learning Centers,  
Minnesota Department of Education

**Sheila Oehrlein**

Safe & Healthy Learners Team,  
Minnesota Department of Education

## Quality Improvement and Successes for 21st Century Community Learning Centers in Minnesota

During the 2010–11 school year, in 98 centers throughout Minnesota, 21,000 youth—many of whom were struggling in school or at risk—had opportunities to catch up, keep up, and get ahead through 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

While all 21st Century Community Learning Centers provide activities designed to address the academic needs of the students they serve, they also attend to the physical, social, and emotional needs of participants. As research has shown, youth programs designed to support social and emotional development can have a positive impact on academic performance and improved behavior (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

The Minnesota Department of Education has administered the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative since 2002 with federal funds authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001. Across the state, 21st Century Community Learning Centers use school-community partnerships to offer afterschool, before-school, and summer learning opportunities for students attending high-poverty, low-performing schools.

For those working on 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other similar expanded learning initiatives in Minnesota, a collective focus on three elements—quality improvement, innovation, and results—is deemed essential to success. This article will discuss the state’s efforts and progress associated with each of these core elements.

## Promoting Quality and Innovation

A network of strategic partners, including the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the University of Minnesota's Extension Center for Youth Development, provides technical assistance, training, and coaching to 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees as they assess their programs and implement quality improvement plans.

By prioritizing a comprehensive program model, in combination with an integrated quality assessment and improvement plan, MDE pushes applicants to create youth-centered environments designed to meet the unique needs of the youth in their community.

Starting in 2006, MDE has engaged in a partnership with the Extension Center for Youth Development to offer a technical assistance program called Quality Matters. Over the course of a year, participants in Quality Matters receive training, resource materials, and hands-on support to create and sustain environments that are positive places for young people to learn and develop.

In addition to participation in training and technical assistance, all 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees are required to include a line item in their annual budget to support ongoing quality assessment and improvement efforts. Grantees must also provide a summary of the results of their quality assessments, as well as a summary of their quality improvement plans on their annual reports to MDE. These requirements ensure that quality assessment and improvement are fully integrated in all programs.

MDE promotes innovation by setting high expectations for 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees. This begins with the grant application. All applicants must describe how their proposed program will meet the academic, physical, social, and emotional needs of participants. By prioritizing a comprehensive program model, in combination with an integrated quality assessment and improvement plan, MDE pushes applicants to create youth-centered environments designed to meet the unique needs of the youth in their community.

Another way MDE promotes innovation is by setting high expectations for grantees to retain program participants. According to research, young people have larger gains across multiple outcomes if they are able to participate frequently and over a sustained period of time (Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2007). Grantees are challenged to develop interesting, engaging learning opportunities that will attract and retain participants. MDE and its partners provide training and technical assistance to grantees to infuse best practices that support retention, including school-community partnerships, family engagement (Little et al., 2007) and leadership opportunities for young people (Deschenes et al., 2010).

## **Innovative, Effective 21st Century Community Learning Centers**

.....  
*Division of Indian Work, American Indian Math Project, Minneapolis*

The American Indian Math Project (AIMP) is a program run by the Division of Indian Work in partnership with Anishinabe Academy, a public magnet school in South Minneapolis focused on Native American culture and language. Each component of the program is designed to help participants become productive adults by supporting their academic, social, and family connections. To achieve this, AIMP applies a comprehensive, case-management approach to the program with three key components: tutoring 4 days a week, family nights providing academic enrichment at least once a month, and recreational activities at least twice a month.

The program has been highly successful. In 2010–11, 64% of participants improved their math grades, and all of the fifth-grade participants were either approaching or achieving the math standards. Of the sixth through eighth graders served, 40% had end-of-year grades of a C or higher. Additionally, teacher survey data submitted for the same year to the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Profile and Performance Information Collection System showed that over half of the students made improvements in academic performance (63%), turned in homework on time (62%), completed their homework to the teachers' satisfaction (58%), and behaved well in class (52%) (American Indian Math Project, 2011).

.....  
*Beacons Program, Minneapolis*

Minneapolis is one of six cities participating in the national Beacons Network, turning schools into youth centers during the afterschool and summer hours. Each year, Beacons serves over 2,500 young people and their families at eight centers in the city. Each center works to increase academic achievement, school connectedness, the capacity for productive adulthood, and opportunities for youth leadership and community engagement by offering a wide variety of programs including service learning, leadership training, character and social skills development, arts and cultural enrichment, sports and recreation, mentoring, and tutoring.

The Minneapolis Beacons program has had a positive impact on the academic performance of its participants. Youth who participated more than 90 days were twice as likely as nonparticipants to be proficient in reading, based on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment results (Minneapolis Beacons Network, 2011). Over 70% of regular attendees had improved academic performance or participation in class (72%), according to teacher survey data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Profile and Performance Information Collection System for 2010–11.

.....  
*Encore, Columbia Heights Public Schools, Colonial Heights*

Columbia Heights is a suburban Minneapolis community with a rapidly changing population. Columbia Heights Public Schools has used its 21st Century Community Learning Centers, called ENCORE, to help meet the needs of a growing body of students with limited English proficiency. The ENCORE program provides a unique mix of activities focused on the arts, as well as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). ENCORE participants have shown significant gains, both academically and socially. During the 2010–11 school year, 82% of students reported that they learned new things and 67% of students stated that the program helped them do better in school (ENCORE, 2011). Students reported that the program helped them feel good about themselves (89%), get along with others (75%), imagine life as a grownup (68%), talk to others when upset (64%), and make healthy choices (62%). Academically, students also had great gains. The majority of participants scored at or above grade level in reading (65%) and math (70%). Students who attended 30 days or more had the best performance, with 80% at grade level or higher in reading, 90% at grade level or higher in math, and 73% at grade level or higher in both subjects. English language learners were the mostly likely to show improvement and had the greatest gains in comparison to other students (ENCORE, 2011).

.....  
*McGregor Public Schools, McGregor*

Since 2002, McGregor Public Schools, a small rural school district in central Minnesota, has been home to a high quality afterschool program that has integrated youth voice as a key component of their program design. Program staff in McGregor solicit feedback through focus groups and surveys, and they also use a youth advisory board to provide input on program design and offerings. Based on the information collected, the program has revised its marketing strategies, increased program offerings, and created group clubs based on youth-identified interests.

Participating students have seen academic and social gains. One of the most successful offerings has been small-group mentoring, an activity that targets youth who have low academic achievement, poor attendance, high incidence of behavioral violations, and other indicators of risky behaviors or vulnerability. The groups meet weekly to check school progress and participate in recreational activities, enrichment, and service projects. Eighty percent of participants in small-group mentoring made gains in achievement, decreased behavioral violations, and increased attendance. The program has found the greatest academic gains have occurred with multiyear participation. After participating in the program for 2 to 3 years, many students have increased their grades to a “B” average, or a GPA of 3.00.

## Improvements in Student Learning and Behavior

Data provided by grantees show that Minnesota's 21st Century Community Learning Centers are on the right track. In communities across the state, large numbers of high-need students have increased opportunities to participate and engage in learning outside of the classroom. Innovative approaches to programming, with an emphasis on personal and social development as well as academic improvement, are showing promising results. Annual performance reporting shows that regular participation in 21st Century Community Learning Centers has had a positive impact on student behaviors. In 2009–10, school day teachers reported that 68% of 21st Century Community Learning Centers regular attendees (participants who attended programming 30 days or more) improved their academic performance. Teachers also reported the following improvements in student behavior of regular attendees:

- *Completing homework satisfactorily (65%)*
- *Participating in class (65%)*
- *Turning homework in on time (61%)*
- *Being attentive in class (59%)*
- *Coming to school motivated to learn (58%)*
- *Getting along well with others (55%)*
- *Behaving well in class (53%)*
- *Attending class regularly (45%)*
- *Volunteering for extra credit or responsibility (44%)*

## Conclusion

The design of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative invites local school-community partners to create learning and support opportunities to meet their students' needs. To share and encourage "what works," the Minnesota Department of Education and a coalition of strategic partners, including the University of Minnesota's Extension Center for Youth Development and the state's afterschool network, provide resources, training, and coaching to grantees as they assess their programs with an emphasis on quality improvement and innovation.

This statewide infrastructure of support and collaboration for continuous improvement, combined with innovative, local school-community programming and partnerships and a focus on results, constitutes a winning combination for quality afterschool opportunities and for the children and youth in 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

In communities across the state, large numbers of high-need students have increased opportunities to participate and engage in learning outside of the classroom.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Allison Anfinson** is the former results measurement director for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program at the Minnesota Department of Education. Anfinson came to the Department in 2006 with experience in research, evaluation, and community development.

**Sheila Oehrlein** leads the Safe and Healthy Learners at the Minnesota Department of Education. She has staffed the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program for the department for 6 years. Oehrlein has nearly 20 years of experience working with or on behalf of youth, having worked in a variety of settings including schools, and child care centers.

---

## REFERENCES

American Indian Math Project. (2011). *21st Century Community Learning Centers end-of-year progress report, 2011*. Unpublished report submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education, Roseville, MN.

Deschenes, S. N., Arbreton, A., Little, P. M., Herrera, C., Grossman, J. B., & Weiss, H. B. (with Lee, D.). (2010). *Engaging older youth: Program and city-level strategies to support sustained participation in out-of-school time*. Retrieved from Harvard Family Research Project website: <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/publications-resources/engaging-older-youth-program-and-city-level-strategies-to-support-sustained-participation-in-out-of-school-time>

Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

ENCORE. (2011). *21st Century Community Learning Centers end-of-year progress report, 2011*. Unpublished report submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education, Roseville, MN.

Little, P. M. D., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H. B. (2007). *After school programs in the 21st century: Their potential and what it takes to achieve it* (Research Brief No. 10). Retrieved from Harvard Family Research Project website: <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/after-school-programs-in-the-21st-century-their-potential-and-what-it-takes-to-achieve-it>

Minneapolis Beacons Network. (2011). *21st Century Community Learning Centers end-of-year progress report, 2011*. Unpublished report submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education, Roseville, MN.

**Christina MacDonald**

Program Specialist, 21st Century  
Community Learning Centers Program,  
New Hampshire Department of Education

**Suzanne Birdsall**

Education Consultant, 21st Century  
Community Learning Centers Program,  
New Hampshire Department of Education

## Providing Rich Academic and Learning Supports Through New Hampshire's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative

Let's put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.

**- Sitting Bull**

The New Hampshire 21st Century Community Learning Centers program currently serves 24 communities and more than 10,000 youth across the state. Evaluation data show that individual programs serve significant populations of at-risk students who can benefit from the rich academic and social supports provided by these programs. In particular, 55% of enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, 16% are eligible for special education services, 8% are Limited English Proficient (LEP), and 32% and 40% perform below proficient on the state reading and mathematics assessment, respectively. These percentages all exceed statewide averages.

In evaluation surveys (Russell & Woods, 2012), principals overwhelmingly report that the 21st Century Community Learning Centers contributed to

- *improved social skills for students (97%);*
- *improved literacy skills (90%); and*
- *improved math skills (86%).*

Evaluation findings (Russell and Woods, 2012) also revealed that students reported

- *high levels of satisfaction with the program,*
- *high levels of satisfaction with engagement in learning,*
- *high levels of satisfaction with the positive interactions with staff and their peers in programs, and*
- *high levels of satisfaction with an emphasis on skill-and mastery-focused activities.*

The strength of New Hampshire's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program lies in the quality and dedication of its local program sites and its ability to function cohesively towards common goals and shared outcomes.

Through a close-knit and well-networked set of program grantees, New Hampshire has created a foundation and support structure to meet the needs of children and their families across the state, as well as to maximize resources and opportunities for educational innovation through expanding learning time after school and during the summers. Two specific ways that New Hampshire is accomplishing this include building a collaborative community and constructing statewide data collection systems for program improvement.

### **Building a Community**

The strength of New Hampshire's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program lies in the quality and dedication of its local program sites and its ability to function cohesively towards common goals and shared outcomes. Recognized by its peers nationwide as consisting of a remarkably well-networked and cohesive group of local grantees, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in New Hampshire is founded on a community of shared interest and aspirations and is grounded in a strong belief that the potential for greatness is far greater when implementation begins from a place of shared strength. This core principle resonates at each level—among staff at each site and among sites across the state—thus creating opportunities for shared learning,

collaborative problem solving, and a team-based approach to creating high quality afterschool opportunities for youth, families, and communities. Building this community of shared interest and strength has been accomplished intentionally over the past 10 years through the implementation of deliberate strategies and actions.

At the state level, local program directors meet bimonthly with 21st Century Community Learning Centers state coordinators to launch initiatives, receive information, network, and share challenges and opportunities regarding their individual and statewide programs. Meetings often begin with a protocol facilitated by an experienced program director to encourage sharing and building personal and professional connections among the participants. Directors are often invited formally or informally to discuss the various processes, approaches, and resolutions they have developed in response to cross-cutting challenges or issues. As a result, they come

to know each other's strengths and are comfortable looking to each other for support. This opens the door for a variety of grassroots support strategies including mentorships, peer site visits, and regional collaboration for professional development and advocacy events, such as Lights On Afterschool—a nationwide effort led by the Afterschool Alliance to build understanding and support for quality afterschool programs.

A formalized network of site coordinators has been established to create a platform for those managing day-to-day operations to connect. This group, facilitated by one of the current 21st Century Community Learning Centers program directors, meets regularly, up to five times per year. The agenda includes professional development training, as well as opportunities to share and distribute program resources, strategies for resolving day-to-day program challenges, and curriculum ideas. Both the format and the topics are generated internally, based on the self-identified needs of the participants. Additionally, the site coordinator network hosts an annual showcase highlighting successful clubs and program strategies. Though optional, each of these meetings attracts over half of the site coordinators who state that these are a highly valued resource.

This kind of networking and capacity-building also occurs at a multistate/regional level. New Hampshire's state coordinators are members of the New England regional network that meets quarterly to share successes and resources, strategize around shared challenges, and identify opportunities to collaborate on common goals and initiatives. These meetings have established strong relationships of support in which the coordinators serve as resources for each other, both in and outside of these formal meetings to address their needs and challenges. The regional structure also provides a venue to share policies, strategies, and initiatives, including, for example, evaluation strategies, competition processes, and opportunities for innovation. It also generates opportunities to collaborate on professional development, funding opportunities, and regional partnerships with external stakeholders.

## **Collaborative Leadership**

New Hampshire's success in building a community of best practice among its 21st Century Community Learning Centers sites is not solely a product of collegial relationships and partnering. Rather, it also involves a process of collaborative leadership in which the members share a vision and responsibility for improving the work.

We like roundtables at conferences because we learn so much from each other.

- 21st Century  
Community Learning  
Centers Coordinator

## New Hampshire's Record of Successes

.....  
*Anytime-Anywhere Learning: High level partnerships lead to education reform*

Anytime-Anywhere Learning is a keystone for education reform in New Hampshire. In 2005 the State Board of Education established mastery of course competencies as the standard for earning high school credit, rather than mere seat time. The board also included the flexible use of time and place in the state's School Approval Standards, which allowed for extended learning opportunities to become an alternate pathway for credit toward graduation for high school students. Subsequently, in 2006, New Hampshire was awarded a Supporting Student Success grant through the National Governor's Association and Council of Chief State School Officers with C.S. Mott Foundation funding. This grant supported the formation of high-level partnerships to implement extended learning opportunities. Building on this collaboration among the Governor's Office, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and PlusTime New Hampshire (the state's afterschool network), Supporting Students Success Through Extended Learning Opportunities was launched as a 3-year pilot program at four high schools in 2007 with funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. These sites, in turn, shared their knowledge and expertise with newly designated 21st Century Community Learning Centers high school sites, as well as other high schools throughout the state. The 21st Century Community Learning Center program application for new funding now includes extended learning opportunities as an option at funded high school sites.

... the State Board of Education is proposing that it be a requirement, not an option, for all high schools to offer extended learning opportunities to their students.

Building on the successes of this pilot, the State Board of Education is proposing that it be a requirement, not an option, for all high schools to offer extended learning opportunities to their students. Students throughout New Hampshire would be able to earn credit towards graduation via individual or group competency-based learning opportunities designed in collaboration with community partners and highly qualified teachers. These activities could include designing and implementing a research study with the local hospital, developing a marketing plan for the neighborhood farm stand, or teaching a dance class for the local preschoolers.

.....  
*New Hampshire's summer conference*

It is through this collaborative style that the state's 21st Century Community Learning Centers annual summer conference is planned. Each year a group of 6–8 program directors volunteer to work with the state coordinators to identify the content and structure the conference. From identifying topic areas and recruiting presenters to coordinating the schedule and conference format, the directors are heavily involved in ensuring that the conference meets the needs of their school and community administrators, their peers, and their direct staff.

.....  
*Local program directors as a statewide asset*

Local program directors have become an asset statewide in helping address larger education reform issues. Directors actively participate on state-level advisory committees pertaining to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and the other education-related issues, including evaluation and data systems, the Child and Adult Care Food Program Advisory Council, New Hampshire Children's Alliance, and Extended Day. These professionals serve not only as representatives, giving voice to the interests and potential impacts on their programs, but also serve as key problem solvers and strategists. Their creative thinking, out-of-the box ideas, and on-the-ground experience provide insight and motivation for a new level of innovation. Through this process they are developing increased professional capacity and are honing their leadership skills.

.....  
*Program improvement*

One of the most important resources in program improvement and growth is the ability to use data to inform the strategies, policies, and practices. This capacity is being developed in a three-pronged approach:

- 1. Evaluation design.** A new statewide evaluation with an external evaluator was launched in the spring of 2012. The new evaluation system was designed to streamline data collection and increase consistency across programs. Survey data previously captured at the local level has been integrated into the statewide evaluation, allowing programs to compare their progress with state-level aggregates while minimizing duplication of effort. Additionally, capitalizing on existing state-level online data collection systems has significantly expanded local capacity by eliminating time consuming data entry and providing immediate access to results.

Maintaining a collaborative approach, the state coordinators and program directors have come together in an effort to identify what data is currently being collected, where, and how; how existing data systems interact; and what information can be extrapolated. The goal has been to identify the resources and opportunities currently available for programs to assess their impact and to think critically about how to use this data to map out a path of continued progress and increased youth outcomes.

- 2. Constructing statewide data collection systems.** Efforts to integrate 21st Century Community Learning Centers program information into existing data systems have increased significantly. In addition to developing a process to upload 21st Century Community Learning Centers participation data into the state Department of Education's data warehouse, programs have increased use of the national PPICs<sup>1</sup> and New Hampshire's own Performance Pathways. The aim has been to extract meaningful data and reports that can be used both internally, to support program development and quality, and also to be able to share program successes with stakeholders in a way that clearly demonstrates the impact and value added to the community.

- 3. Program improvement.** This new system also links to existing educational data sources, allowing for deeper and more meaningful analysis of the social and academic impacts of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers at both the state and local levels and across a variety of programmatic and demographic characteristics. As a result, this evaluation not only enhances the ability of the state and local programs to assess program successes and identify opportunities for improvement but also establishes a unified system that streamlines data collection, minimizes data burden, and capitalizes on existing systems to maximize the availability of data at the state and local level.

## Conclusion

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in New Hampshire has all the essential elements of successful expanded learning programs—providing enriching programming to youth during high-risk hours, a focus on increased academic success, and targeted professional development for afterschool professionals. Yet, what makes New Hampshire’s efforts distinctive are strong networking, collaborative leadership, capacity-building, and an evaluation design linked to the development of state-level data collection systems that can be mined to inform improved program development.

Because of these successes, more young people are receiving more quality learning opportunities, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative is also regarded as an important state asset by serving as a learning lab and resource for other efforts to improve educational outcomes for many more children and youth across New Hampshire.

A man is called selfish not for pursuing his own good, but for neglecting his neighbor’s.  
- Richard Whately

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Christina MacDonald** is a state coordinator for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program in New Hampshire. A former teacher, she is dedicated to supporting local programs in their quest for high quality, sustainable learning opportunities that meet youth needs and cultivate a passion for life-long learning.

**Suzanne Birdsall** has worked at the New Hampshire Department of Education administering the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program since 2002. Prior to this she was an elementary school teacher and founded a nonprofit afterschool enrichment program. Her vision for afterschool includes engaging cohesive groups of afterschool professionals to create fun, relevant, and invigorating opportunities to New Hampshire’s youth.

---

## REFERENCES

Russell, C., & Woods, Y. (2012). *Evaluation of the New Hampshire 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Findings from the 2011–12 school year*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.

1. According to the PPICS website (<http://ppics.learningpt.org>), “The purpose of this system is to collect basic information about 21st CCLC programs across the United States. PPICS was created in 2003 at the commission of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The system was built to help ED track 21st CCLC programming following the transition from federal to state administration, which took place in 2001. Each year, PPICS is used to collect program data from some 3,000 21st CCLC grants covering close to 9,000 centers serving 1.5 million student attendees.”

**Susan Inman**

Director of Learning Opportunities, Options and Supports, Oregon Department of Education, and Administrative Licensure Coordinator, Willamette University

**Pete Ready**

Education Specialist, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Oregon Department of Education

**Jenni Deaton**

Administrative Specialist for the Learning Opportunities, Options and Supports Team, Oregon Department of Education

## Oregon’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers: A Key Component of Student Success in College, Work, and Citizenship

In 2011, Oregon’s legislature affirmed a clear and ambitious education goal for the state, known as the “40-40-20” goal. This goal states that by 2025, 40% of adult Oregonians will hold a bachelor’s or advanced degree, 40% will have an associate’s degree or a meaningful postsecondary certificate, and *all* adult Oregonians will hold a high school diploma or equivalent—including the remaining 20% who will likely choose not to pursue post-secondary education beyond a high school diploma. Leaders across the state have been working to advance Oregon’s educational attainment rates, but the passage of the goal into law through Oregon Senate Bill 253 has prompted a new drive for action and change.

Against that backdrop, Oregon’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers have been working to increase academic achievement to enable students to close the achievement gap. Every year more than 25,000 students attend 128 centers located in areas of high poverty across the state of Oregon. According to a 2011–12 report by Learning Point Associates, teachers report that

The passage of Senate Bill 253 has now intensified the necessity of offering even stronger academically based programs, along with enrichment activities that expand students’ intellectual and developmental horizons.

- *72% of the attendees in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool programs improved in their academic performance, and*
- *2/3 increased their rates of homework completion (Learning Point Associates, 2012).*

The passage of Senate Bill 253 has now intensified the necessity of offering even stronger academically based programs, along with enrichment activities that expand students' intellectual and developmental horizons. So it is more important than ever that Oregon's afterschool programs learn from and use current research to make improvements.

## **Expanded Learning Opportunities and Time**

Building systems of support and sustainability, while ensuring quality programming, is the overriding mission of Oregon's 21st Century Community Learning Centers office at the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Oregon's expanded learning activities and enrichment services, implemented by local programs and community partners, provide students with rich learning experiences that prepare them for success in college, in the workplace, and as citizens.

Outcomes of expanded learning time depend on many factors, including how effectively the extra time and opportunities are used and to whom they are directed. As Silva (2007) points out,

*Research shows that extending the right kind of time to the students who need it most can improve student learning and effectively close the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their more affluent peers...But the preponderance of evidence on extending time in schools suggests that the benefits of adding to the school day or year are by no means certain or universal (p. 9).*

Programs that focus on specific, predetermined academic and social outcomes tend to have a greater impact than those that focus too narrowly on academic outcomes or, alternately, those that lack focus or specified outcome goals. Programs are most successful when they offer a variety of structured, age-appropriate choices, when the environment is supportive, and when the experience is not perceived as punitive. According to a 2005 RAND Corporation report, nine common characteristics are associated with high-quality, effective out-of-school-time programs:

- *a clear mission*
- *high expectations and positive social norms*
- *a safe and healthy environment*
- *a supportive emotional climate*
- *a small total enrollment*
- *stable, trained personnel*
- *appropriate content and pedagogy, relative to the children's needs and the program's mission, with opportunities to engage*
- *integrated family and community partners*
- *frequent assessments (Bodilly & Beckett, 2005, p. xv)*

Given the emerging research on afterschool program quality and its relationship to outcomes, it is clear that...quality afterschool programs also share the following features: appropriate supervision and structure, an environment that fosters positive youth-adult relationships, intentional programming with opportunities for autonomy and choice, and good relationships among the various settings in which program participants spend their day (Little, 2007, p. 8).

In the Oregon Department of Education, efforts are being made to increase sustained participation in well-designed afterschool programs because studies have shown that all children, particularly disadvantaged children, may gain a host of benefits that lead to better overall educational outcomes. Many of these are also building blocks specifically to improve student achievement. (See Durlak and Weissberg's article elsewhere in this volume, which finds that broad-based, quality programs have a positive effect on achievement and test scores.)

### **Oregon's Leading Indicators for Program Quality**

Based on the growing research and evaluation studies that show afterschool and summer programs can and do make a positive difference, the Oregon 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, in collaboration with the Oregon Leading Indicators Advisory Group; long-time partner Oregon Afterschool for Kids Network (Oregon ASK); and staff at the American Institutes for Research, developed leading indicators for program quality and continuous improvement.

The following are Oregon's defined leading indicators by category:

.....  
*Collaboration and Partnership*

- *Partners associated with the center are actively involved in planning, decision making, evaluating, and supporting the operations of the afterschool program.*
- *Staff from partner organizations are meaningfully involved in the provision of activities at the center.*
- *Staff at the center will be engaged in intentional efforts to collaborate and communicate frequently about ways to improve program quality.*
- *Steps are taken by the center to establish linkages to the school day and use data on student academic achievement to inform programming.*

.....  
*Staff*

- *Staff at the center are provided with training and/or professional development.*
- *Staff at the center complete one or more self-assessments during the programming period.*
- *Staff at the center are periodically evaluated/assessed during the program period.*

.....

### *Intentionality in Student Program Offerings*

- *There is evidence of alignment between (a) program objectives relative to supporting youth development, (b) student needs, and (c) program philosophy/model and the frequency/extent to which key opportunities and supports are provided to youth.*
- *There is evidence of alignment between (a) program objectives relative to the academic development of students, (b) student needs, and (c) program philosophy/model and activities being provided at the center.*
- *There is evidence of intentionality in activity and session design among staff responsible for the delivery of activities intended to support student growth and development in mathematics and reading/language arts.*

.....

### *Intentionality in Family Program Offerings*

- *Steps are taken by the center to reach out and communicate with parents and adult family members of participating students.*
- *There is evidence of alignment between (a) program objectives relative to supporting family literacy and related development, (b) family needs, and (c) program philosophy/model and activities being provided at the center.*

These indicators demonstrate clear connections that school day and data analysis are key elements on the path to strengthening the capacity and quality of afterschool programs statewide.

## **Initiatives for Student Success in Strategic Areas**

With a strong foundation in the basics of systems building, 21st Century Community Learning Centers program grantees are required to integrate statewide programs in the areas of reading and math, with additional options for federally funded science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and English language acquisition initiatives that match their program and community partners' vision of desired program outcomes. Describing measures of growth for anticipated student academic and social outcomes has become a critical part of program quality and improvement. The strategic alignment of extended learning opportunities with school day academic programs increases program effectiveness and the quality of each child's experience in afterschool programs.

The strategic alignment of extended learning opportunities with school-day academic programs increases program effectiveness and the quality of each child's experience in afterschool programs.

The primary academic initiative for 2011–12 was provided with support from Oregon’s STEM leadership team. A two-phase program, emphasizing regional partnerships and professional development for paid and volunteer staff resulted in 25 of the 31 grantees receiving approved STEM implementation grants. Five of the implementing programs also qualified for professional development STEM grants. The outcomes included increased student access to technology, science, math, and engineering during the extended learning time offered afterschool and during the summer, as well as increased teacher training for improved program quality. What follows are two examples of program successes in Oregon with the STEM initiative: Salem-Keizer Education Foundation and Springfield Public School Afterschool Programs.

There is growing enthusiasm for Salem-Keizer Education Foundation’s (SKEF) successful school gardens program, which is one component of their 21st Century Community Learning Centers’ STEM offerings. In partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Marion-Polk Food Share, Life Source, and countless volunteers, students are tending to their school gardens on a daily basis and are enjoying the harvest for lunch. The program will open a new aquaponic greenhouse during the winter of 2012–13. SKEF is also the first program in Oregon to implement Mouse Squad, a nationally acclaimed program that creates technology-based opportunities for student success in today’s information society.

For the past 5 years, Springfield Public School Afterschool Programs have provided students in grades 1–12 with a variety of hands-on STEM programs. Building bridges between school-day and out-of-school-time instruction, the Hamlin Middle School STEM Summer Program offered three 1-week robotics sessions in July 2012. At Springfield High School, afterschool students in the Music Recording Studio learn songwriting, basic music theory, digital audio engineering, beat production and studio management. They write their own lyrics and sing and record their own songs. Springfield’s afterschool classes are designed to support quality academic and career-related experiences while sparking students’ imagination and creativity.

### **New Emphasis on Program Sustainability**

Since the system of 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs across Oregon anticipates a decline in funding rates in the coming years, program sustainability has become a focus of program quality planning. Importantly, to build broader ownership for sustainability, the Oregon Department of Education recently provided funding for the statewide afterschool alliance affiliate OregonASK to present a statewide webinar for all 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees on program sustainability. The Finance Project, based in Washington, DC, facilitated the webinar.

Currently 11 Oregon 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees are working through an intensive program of sustainability planning exercises facilitated by OregonASK Americorps/VISTA volunteers. Building a local sustainability team is the launching point for the great work of Oregon’s programs to continue into 2012–13, resulting in a strategy for the inevitable reduced levels of state funding as the programs mature.

## Conclusion

Oregon's statewide infrastructure of support and collaboration to provide academic enrichment opportunities for students, coupled with the innovation of local district programs and partners, create a powerful combination of quality afterschool services and supports for Oregon youth in 21st Century Community Learning Center programs. These programs will contribute significantly to the achievement of Oregon's 40-40-20 goal, and they are a tremendous learning resource for many struggling students across the state.

---

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Susan Inman** is the director of learning opportunities, options and supports at the Oregon Department of Education, as well as the administrative licensure coordinator at Willamette University. Inman has served in various positions in education during the past 25 years. She has taught in grades kindergarten through post-secondary and served as a school principal for 10 years. Susan has supervised English language learning programs, migrant education, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and charter schools for the Oregon Department of Education since 2011.

**Pete Ready** has been an education specialist for Title IV-B, 21st Century Community Learning Centers at the Oregon Department of Education since 2006. Ready's background includes teaching middle school and high school English language arts and middle school special education, and serving as coordinator of community-based alternative schools, and Head Start program director.

**Jenni Deaton** is an administrative specialist for learning opportunities, options and supports at the Oregon Department of Education. Deaton has been with the department since 2009, and was part of the communications staff in the superintendent's office prior to joining the Learning Opportunities team in 2011.

---

### REFERENCES

Bodily, S. J., & Beckett, M.K. (2005). *Making out-of-school-time matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG242>

Little, P. (2007). *The quality of school-age child care in after-school settings*. (Research-To-Policy Connections No. 7). New York, NY: Child Care & Early Education Research Connections.

Learning Point Associates. (2012). *Changes in student behavior among regular attendees (Federal Teacher Survey Results): All states-2012*. Retrieved from Profile and Performance Information Collection System website: <http://ppics.learningpt.org/ppics/reports/aprBehaviorChangesFed.asp>

Silva, E. (2007). *On the clock: Rethinking the way schools use time*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/OntheClock.pdf>

**Ayeola Fortune**

Director of Education Initiatives,  
United Way Worldwide

## Strengthening Out-of-School-Time Initiatives to Support Student Success: The Role of United Way in Afterschool, Weekends, and Summer Learning

Any effort to improve education must factor in the reality that students spend only 20% of their time in school (Davis & Farbman, 2002). Boosting youths' opportunity for success—in school, work, and life—must therefore include a robust strategy for using out-of-school time to expand learning opportunities.

Working with our partners at the national, state, and local level, we want to cut the number of high school dropouts—currently 1.3 million students every year—in half.

This strategy must include a shared vision, collaboration, aligned activities, and collective action among all sectors to reach our youth with high quality, well-designed, and well-implemented afterschool, summer, and weekend programs.

This is an issue that matters to United Way. Education is a priority for our network of 1,200 state and local United Ways. Working with our partners at the national, state, and local level, we want to cut the number of high school dropouts—currently 1.3 million students every year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010)—in half. Quality afterschool and summer programs can address the very factors (such as poor attendance, failing grades, misbehavior, very low test scores, and disengagement from schools) that have been linked to dropping out (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007).

That means ensuring that meaningful supports and opportunities exist for all children—especially children from disadvantaged families—from birth through young adulthood.

It also means seizing every opportunity. United Way network surveys have found that some 95% of local United Ways fund out-of-classroom learning, but far fewer actually collaborate strategically with program providers and other key stakeholders to develop a system of well-placed, quality afterschool, weekend and summer learning programs that strategically capture the energy of many different providers and build strong school-community-family partnerships.

As program funders, United Ways have a unique opportunity to help advance

- *academic enrichment and supports that expand learning in engaging ways after the school day ends and during the summer and that do not merely provide youth with “more of the same” from the typical school day;*
- *opportunities for youth to build personal skills, cultivate new interests, and develop meaningful relationships with peers and supportive adults; and*
- *opportunities for youth to engage in constructive extracurricular activities that support learning and development.*

Yet, communities also need systemic approaches to address ongoing challenges around access, quality, participation, alignment, coordination, and sustainability.

United Ways are respected as community conveners, communicators, connectors, and funders. Increasingly, they are using their considerable capacity to fill these roles in their communities to help individuals and institutions better understand and fully realize the potential of afterschool, summer, and weekend programs to improve student success. They are mobilizing the community around expanding quality afterschool and summer learning programs, while working to deepen and strengthen existing efforts to ensure that community and school-based programs are high quality, relevant, engaging, age appropriate, accessible, and effectively targeted to serve those most in need.

That is happening across the country. In Boston, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack County brought together key stakeholders to examine the challenge, to plan, and then to act in alignment. The group fielded a survey on existing youth assets, developed summer literacy and employment programs, and organized a donated playground in a housing development.

The aim was to maintain or increase student reading skills, build the capacity of afterschool and summer staff, and increase school partnerships and family engagement. The coalition (involving three United Ways) integrated literacy into expanded learning time programs in underperforming school districts, targeting more than 1,800 youth in seven communities. Some 68 hours of training for 100 staff helped integrate language and literacy into out-of-school-time learning, bring school and program staff together to learn from each other, and improve school-program-family partnerships.

Results for the Boston Summer Literacy Initiative showed that 85% of the participating youth tested better than expected—with 68% showing academic gains, according to a study commissioned by the MA Department of Early Education and Care (Love, 2011). Youth read more, improved their vocabulary and reading comprehension, and improved their attitudes toward reading.

In Austin, Texas, the United Way for Greater Austin made community engagement a focus of its expanded learning time work, including youth focus groups that informed an action agenda. Afterschool, school community partnerships, and family involvement were incorporated as a cornerstone of the United Way's new Middle School Matters initiative, a partnership with 16 agencies, including expanded learning time providers, to provide tutoring, parent education, mentoring, and after-school programs in the three lowest-performing schools.

Leveraging both organizational and individual partnerships is the “sweet spot” for many United Ways. These organizations are uniquely positioned in communities to support afterschool and summer learning coalitions by tapping

- *their ability to reach across sectors (e.g., local government, schools, cultural and philanthropic institutions, faith and community-based organizations, non-profit agencies);*
- *their annual workplace campaigns that engage individual donors;*
- *and their strong business relationships.*

For example, as part of United Way's national call to action to recruit one million education volunteers, United Ways are recruiting employees of local businesses as mentors and tutors for youth who may not have adult role models. By identifying and developing these mentors, volunteers, and tutors from the business community—and by regarding them appropriately as “second-shift caring adults” or “community teachers”—United Ways can give added significance and attention to this vitally important community learning resource.

In Grand Rapids, the Heart of West Michigan United Way is bringing the community together around 900 struggling students in its most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Some 1,200 community volunteers work one-on-one in the Schools of Hope initiative, with more than 60 companies giving their employees paid time off to mentor or tutor after school. The strategy is paying off, as kids are gaining academic and other skills.

Driving systemic improvements in afterschool, summer, and weekend programs requires understanding what works and replicating success. Since 2008, with the support of JCPenney, United Way Worldwide invested in out-of-school-time initiatives in 10 communities. These pilots have dug deep to strengthen existing, or build new, expanded learning time coalitions; map the availability and quality of programs in their communities; address the gaps in data, services, and opportunities; and engage key constituencies (for example, youth, parents, teachers) to get a better sense of needed supports.

Collectively, these learnings suggest that United Ways can significantly strengthen these efforts in their communities by taking these steps:

... the United Way for Greater Austin made community engagement a focus of its expanded learning time work, including youth focus groups that informed an action agenda.

- **Map the expanded learning time landscape.** *Without knowing where quality afterschool, weekend, and summer learning assets are located and needed, good and informed decisions are impossible. Many communities begin without a clear understanding of where the programs are, who they serve, and what kinds of outcomes they are producing. Gaining this understanding can be transformative, identifying unmet needs and galvanizing support.*
- **Measure program quality.** *Many programs do not have a way to assess their own impact and quality. Programs often use different approaches to show impact, so comparisons cannot be made. United Ways can help develop a common language and understanding of quality across programs. As funders, United Ways can invest in quality improvement approaches that tie professional development to specific areas that need support. There is a growing body of research that is finding factors that are linked to better program results.*
- **Leverage passion to develop professionals.** *People working in youth development are very passionate, but they often operate in isolation. Participating in professional convenings can therefore be an important way to generate an enhanced sense of professionalism. Also, connecting youth development professionals and community volunteers with educators and schools can produce more engaging, interesting, and quality afterschool, weekend, and summer programs. This takes thoughtful and focused collaborative planning among schools and community teachers or second-shift caring professionals. United Ways can insist on, fund, and help lead such collaboration.*
- **Create and coordinate an aligned network.** *“Connecting the dots” within a community matters. It is crucial to coordinate services to close gaps, avoid duplication, and demonstrate contributions of many community stakeholders. United Ways have relationships with stakeholders—providers, schools, community and faith-based organizations, arts and cultural groups, colleges, businesses, etc.—that can be leveraged to create stronger alignment, coordination, and communication.*

Achieving all of this requires a systemic, big-picture approach that is not piecemeal or focused on individual programs.

That means we must ensure a shared community vision and coordinated action—along with mutual accountability, sustained effort, and measured results—across a diverse coalition. It means working collaboratively on communitywide and community-based strategies that can drive real change. Finally, it means bringing people from all walks of life together to work in meaningful ways—not just giving but also advocating and volunteering—to advance these community strategies.

“Driving with data” is critical. In Jacksonville, Florida, the United Way of Northeastern Florida and its partners used local data, experts, and community conversations to create Achievers for Life, an effort to target struggling middle schoolers who showed

attendance, behavior, and self-esteem problems (based on school data). Key strategies included improving the quality and availability of out-of-school-time supports and employing Family Advocates to work with families. After one year, participants showed a 31% boost in GPA (United Way of Northeast Florida, 2008).

These are the kinds of creative partnerships and *results* that United Ways want to achieve in every community. The following are some suggestions for community organizations seeking to work with United Ways:

- *Attend United Way events and introduce yourself and your work. United Ways staff members meet many people this way that they would not otherwise know.*
- *Invite local United Way staff to your events and to see your program. United Ways spend a lot of time doing this to understand emerging best practices/ programs that might be off their radar.*
- *Ask about ways to get involved and who else you should get to know. United Ways have a good vantage point in the community and can help facilitate introductions to others.*
- *Share program outcomes and the demographics of the populations you serve. This way, United Ways can better align resources to meet needs.*
- *Be a liaison to the communities you serve. This will help United Ways understand how best to help bring resources to that neighborhood or community.*
- *Advocate and educate the public on important community, state, and national issues concerning education, income, and health.*

## **Conclusion**

Evidence continues to mount that quality afterschool, weekend, and summer programming can turn out-of-school time into a positive learning opportunity, helping constructively fill the 80% of waking hours that young people are not in school. These expanded learning opportunities can also help address some of the key factors contributing to young people dropping out of school, including absenteeism, behavioral problems, and poor course performance. To leverage this time in a cost-effective manner requires bold, and often new, community-school collaborations, taking advantage of the many youth-serving organizations and volunteers who are interested in working with children and youth, as well as applying school resources in some new ways in the expanded learning time and space.

We know that “more of the same” is expensive and unlikely to make much difference. New partnerships, new ways of working, and new levels of collaboration are needed. Because of the United Ways’ broad reach in the community—active in 1,200 communities and in relationship with 50,000 employers—they can be a vitally important, positive force to support and drive the expansion of engaging learning opportunities after school hours and during summers and weekends by working closely

with schools, community organizations, and volunteers. It is imperative that community and youth-serving organizations, schools, and voluntary organizations work together with their United Ways to capitalize systemically on the power of expanded learning after school, during the summers, and over weekends. Working in new ways to generate new, more engaged learning and positive youth development opportunities can help dramatically improve the odds for success for many of America's youth.

## For More Information

Please contact your local United Way's community impact staff. Contact information is usually on its website, or track down your United Way at <http://www.liveunited.org>.

---

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ayeola Fortune** is the director of education initiatives at United Way Worldwide, leading the organization's work to improve middle grade success and boost high school graduation. She helped lead the development of United Way's education roadmaps, which outline core community strategies, high-impact implementation approaches, and roles United Ways can play to reach United Way's goal to cut high school dropout numbers in half by 2018. Previously, she served as the director of Extended Learning Opportunities and Development Project at the Council of Chief State School Officers. Fortune has also been a middle and high school teacher and has taught and developed curricula at the University of Pittsburgh.

---

### REFERENCES

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2010). *High school dropouts in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.all4ed.org/files/HighSchoolDropouts.pdf>

Davis, J., & Farbman, D. A. (2002). Schools alone are not enough: After-school programs and education reform in Boston. *New Directions for Youth Development*, (94), 65–87. Retrieved from <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/SUSE/projects/ireport/articles/afterschool/schools%20are%20not%20enough.pdf>

Hammond, C., Linton, D., Smink, J., & Drew, S. (2007). *Dropout risk factors and exemplary programs: A technical report*. Retrieved from [http://www.dropoutprevention.org/sites/default/files/uploads/major\\_reports/DropoutRiskFactorsandExemplaryProgramsCoverPages5-16-07.pdf](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/sites/default/files/uploads/major_reports/DropoutRiskFactorsandExemplaryProgramsCoverPages5-16-07.pdf)

Love, M. L. (2011). *Evaluation of summer 2010 out-of-school time literacy and learning promotion grant*. Retrieved from [http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Final\\_OST\\_Evaluation\\_2\\_4\\_11.pdf](http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Final_OST_Evaluation_2_4_11.pdf)

United Way of Northeast Florida. (2008). *Achievers for life: Addressing the dropout crisis*. Retrieved from [http://www.uwnefl.org/documents/UWAchieversForLife\\_OneYearProgress.pdf](http://www.uwnefl.org/documents/UWAchieversForLife_OneYearProgress.pdf)

**Priscilla Little**  
Research and Strategy Consultant

## School-Community Learning Partnerships: Essential to Expanded Learning Success

For the past decade the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative has asked schools to work in partnership with community- and faith-based organizations to support children's learning during the hours after school and during the summertime. Consequently, there has been tremendous growth across the nation in intentional efforts to forge meaningful partnerships between schools and afterschool and summer programs.

Increasingly, the field is recognizing that these partnerships are essential to efforts to expand *when, where, how, and what* students learn (Little, 2011). This article begins with an overview of the benefits of school-community partnerships to students, schools, and community organizations. It then examines the role of partnerships in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, reviewing national data on the numbers and kinds of partners that 21st Century Community Learning Centers nationwide are engaging with to support student success. The article concludes with a discussion of four features of effective learning partnerships.

## The Benefits of School-Community Partnerships

When schools and community organizations work together to support learning, everyone benefits. Partnerships can serve to strengthen, support, and even transform individual partners, resulting in improved program quality, more efficient use of resources, and better alignment of goals and curricula (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

First and foremost, learning partnerships can support student outcomes (see, for example, Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008). For example, the *Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study* found that afterschool programs with stronger relationships with school teachers and principals were more successful at improving students' homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior, and initiative. This may be because positive relationships with schools can foster high quality, engaging, and challenging activities, along with promoting staff engagement (Miller, 2005).

In addition to supporting student learning directly, partnerships can have additional benefits to students and their families. They can

- *provide continuity of services across the day and year, easing school transitions and promoting improved attendance in after school programs;*
- *facilitate access to a range of learning opportunities and developmental supports, providing opportunities for students and teachers alike to experiment with new approaches to teaching and learning;*
- *facilitate information sharing about specific students to best support individual learning; and*
- *provide family members with alternative entry points into the school day to support their student's learning.*

### Using Partners to Complement Program Offerings

Being a Lifelong Achiever Starts Today (BLAST) is a 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative program in Atlanta, Georgia. It has an effective collaboration with Atlanta Memorial Hospital and New Attitudes Health and Fitness Center. Students are taught and mentored to help improve their lifestyle by making dietary changes and exercising properly and regularly. Students have access to a full array of health professionals and services at the center and can participate in a 10-week wellness program. At the end of the 10-week course, known as "The Body Shop," the student who has made the greatest transformation receives a New Attitudes membership. This membership provides access to the entire wellness and fitness center for one year. Many students also learn how to swim and overcome their fear of the water. Since there is no community pool or community gym available, this partnership has made resources available to students that would otherwise not be available to them (Manhattan Strategy Group, 2011).

Learning partnerships can also greatly benefit schools. They can

- *complement the academic curriculum with a wider range of services and activities, particularly enrichment and arts activities that may not be available during the school day;*
- *support transitions across the school years, particularly the critical middle to high school transition, which research indicates is a key predictor of high school graduation (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007);*
- *reinforce concepts taught in school without replicating the school day, often exposing classroom teachers working in the after school program to new pedagogies;*
- *improve school culture and community image through exhibitions and performances that help “shine the light” on students whose talents may not be apparent in the classroom; and*
- *gain access to mentors, afterschool staff, and other resources to support in school learning and improve the teaching and learning in the classroom itself.*

Finally, learning partnerships with schools can strengthen and support community partners. They can

- *help gain access to and recruit groups of students most in need of support services;*
- *improve program quality and staff engagement, particularly when there is crossover between school and community organization staff;*
- *foster better alignment of programming to support a shared vision for learning, one which aligns curriculum to support state and local standards; and*
- *maximize resource use such as facilities, staff, data, and curriculum.*

### **Community Partners Can Support School Partners**

Roger Williams, a Title I School in Providence, Rhode Island, is one of three anchor schools for a wide range of afterschool programs in the South Side/West End AfterZone supported and coordinated by the Providence After School Alliance (PASA). While Roger Williams struggles to make AYP, its partnership with PASA, city agencies, and community-based organizations to expand afterschool services has contributed to improved school performance. The partnership with PASA has played a critical role in improving the scale and quality of afterschool services at Roger Williams, currently reaching more than 360 youth in 45 different programs. Funding and staffing support from PASA has provided resources to expand academic and enrichment program options and double the number of participants. PASA also improves program quality by supporting partnerships with high quality providers that include community-based organizations, individual instructors, the school district, and the local police department (Providence After School Alliance, internal communication, 2011).

## The Role of Partnerships in 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Partnerships are a critical component of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and each year since 2006 the number of partners has continued to grow. By 2010, the 3,450 funded grantees engaged over 30,000 partners, with an average of almost 9 partners per grantee. Community-based organizations were the most common partners in 2010, almost three times higher than any other type of partner. For-profit corporations and school districts were the second and third most utilized partners, with colleges and universities also playing a main partnership role.

Partners perform a number of important roles: They offer programming, provide in-kind services, and provide paid and volunteer staffing (see Table 1). Further, Table 1 illustrates that more partners have steadily made more contributions to 21st Century Community Learning Centers over the past 5 years.

.....  
*Table 1. Number of grants with a partner providing a given contribution type across 5 years of annual performance reporting.*

Partner Contribution	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Programming	2,464	2,582	2,695	2,881	3,139
Paid Staffing	1,782	1,814	1,906	1,965	2,046
Volunteer Staffing	1,833	1,924	1,933	2,042	2,185
In-Kind Goods	2,113	2,246	2,351	2,477	2,698
Funding	813	872	968	915	929
Evaluation Services	1,043	1,076	1,049	1,078	1,160

### School Day Staff Can Support Student and Staff Recruitment Efforts

The City Day Extended Academy Mentoring Program is a 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative program in Salt Lake City, Utah. To create cohesion between the school-day and afterschool programs, school day teachers are highly involved in the planning and implementation of programs, and all afterschool staff must follow the same policies and procedures regardless of site. Staff are recruited for specific roles within the programs. The Project Director creates a list of required qualifications for particular programs that principals must heed when hiring afterschool staff. Along with the Project Director's recommendations, consulting teachers in the district complete staff observations and provide a list of individuals who have demonstrated skills and characteristics that may be well suited to the afterschool program. Principals make a concerted effort to hire program staff who have been with the district for 3 or more years and who have appropriate professional licenses; new teachers, or those changing grade levels, are not actively recruited in order to allow them sufficient time to get acclimated before gaining additional responsibility within the district (Manhattan Strategy Group, 2011).

Analysis of the financial support that partners contribute by providing the services listed above reveals that in 2010 alone, partners contributed over \$230 million to the 3,450 initiative grantees. Over the past 5 years partners have contributed over \$1 billion to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers programming.

Together, these data suggest that partners are an essential component of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and they have been growing significantly in all dimensions over the past 5 years. Partners provide vital in-kind services and supports, as well as real dollars, which add significant value to the work of 21st Century Community Learning Centers. As centers consider bringing on more partners it is important that project and site directors understand how to develop and cultivate effective partnerships. The next part of this article discusses the features of effective partnerships.

Over the past 5 years partners have contributed over \$1 billion to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers programming.

## Features of Effective School-Community Partnerships

There is emerging consensus on an inter-related set of features that help promote and sustain healthy school-community partnerships (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010):

- **A shared vision for learning and developmental outcomes for students.** *This vision acknowledges the critical, complementary roles of schools, community partners, and families. A shared vision also helps partners avoid working against each other and instead pursue a common vision of student success. When school leaders embrace a vision for student success that considers students' physical, emotional, and social well-being in addition to academic outcomes, the partnership is more likely to be successful than when competing agendas operate during the expanded learning day.*
- **A diverse set of partners with effective communications mechanisms and relationships among multiple staff at multiple levels.** *Strong and sustainable partnerships need relationships that are built at multiple levels (for example, at the district, school, and classroom levels) and among multiple school staff, including district and nonteaching staff. Working with partners at different levels helps the afterschool and summer programs become integral to the daily life and culture of the school at all levels, from the principal to the custodian. In addition, relationships at various levels can help mitigate the effects of staff turnover at other levels; for example, strong relationships with teachers can help sustain the partnership in the event of a change in principals.*

- **Intentionally blended staffing with role clarity to promote understanding of how the work is relevant to all.** *For afterschool and summer programs, this means hiring staff who have legitimacy in the school building and who are skilled at building relationships with school staff. Some programs do this by hiring licensed teachers, people who “speak the same language” as school-day teachers, can substitute and consult in classrooms, and can participate in professional development activities. Hiring licensed teachers who also teach at a host school facilitates information sharing and forges connections with other teachers who might not otherwise make time for “outside” programs or services. Blended staffing may also mean a liaison who serves an important bridging function between the school and the afterschool or summer program.*
- **Clear data-sharing processes and agreements.** *One feature of a strong collaboration is the ability of partners to access information and data from each other, including, if possible, student-level academic data (e.g., test scores and grades). Afterschool and summer programs can use these data both to track and strengthen student performance and to demonstrate the impact of their services. In addition to getting data from schools, some programs provide their own data to schools to promote reciprocal data sharing.*

As efforts to expand learning opportunities and time continue to grow under a variety of approaches and models—whether afterschool, summer learning, expanded or extended learning day or year, or out-of-school time—it is important that all these efforts build on the strong base of effective partnerships already present among schools and afterschool and summer programs, capitalizing in particular on the rich history of partnerships advanced by 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

## For More Information

### School-Community Partnership Resources

- **Afterschool: The Bridge Connecting Schools and Communities**  
[www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/afterschool-bridge-connecting-schools-and-communities](http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/afterschool-bridge-connecting-schools-and-communities). This brief highlights how afterschool programs can serve as bridges that connect schools and communities, positively benefiting youth and families, schools, community-based organizations, and the community as a whole.
- **A Guide for School Principals**  
[www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/guide-school-principals](http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/guide-school-principals). This guide was produced by The After-School Corporation (TASC) to help support principals in their efforts to build and sustain partnerships with TASC-funded afterschool programs.
- **Meaningful Linkages between Summer Programs, Schools, and Community Partners: Conditions and Strategies for Success**  
[www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Meaningful%20Linkages%20full%20report%20rev%2010.09.pdf](http://www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Meaningful%20Linkages%20full%20report%20rev%2010.09.pdf). This report documents and describes how to create and sustain meaningful partnerships between high-quality summer learning programs and schools.
- **Afterschool: The Bridge Connecting Schools and Communities**  
[http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue\\_30\\_bridge.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_30_bridge.cfm). This issue brief describes the benefits of family, school, and community partnerships.
- **Strengthening Connections Between Schools and Afterschool Programs**  
[www.learningpt.org/afterschool/strength.pdf](http://www.learningpt.org/afterschool/strength.pdf). This guide examines comprehensive program planning to better integrate afterschool programming with the school day.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Priscilla Little** is an independent research and strategy consultant who has been working on issues related to effective afterschool and summer learning programs for over a decade. Her clients include national education research firms, state education agencies, not-for-profit agencies, and private foundations. She is currently working for The Wallace Foundation to support its afterschool system-building work, and with the U.S. Department of Education on a research study to investigate good and innovative practices in 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs. The views represented in this article are solely her own and do not represent those of her clients.

---

## REFERENCES

- Harvard Family Research Project. (2010). *Partnerships for learning: Promising practices in integrating school and out-of-school time program supports*. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/partnerships-for-learning-promising-practices-in-integrating-school-and-out-of-school-time-program-supports>
- Little, P. (2011). *Expanded learning opportunities in Washington state: Pathways to student success*. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org/UserFiles/File/ELO%20Policy%20Brief%20Single%20Pages.pdf>
- Little, P., Wimer, C., & Weiss, H. (2008). *Afterschool programs in the 21st century: Their potential and what it takes to achieve it* (Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation No. 10). Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/content/download/2916/84011/file/OSTissuebrief10.pdf>
- Manhattan Strategy Group. (2011). *High school promising practices project for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, Addendum 1*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Miller, B. M. (2005). *Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school*. Retrieved from United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley website: <http://supportunitedway.org/>
- Neild, R. C., Balfanz, R., & Herzog, L. (2007). An early warning system. *Educational Leadership*, 65(2), 28–33.