STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

A Plan to Align Out-of-School Time Initiatives with High School Reform

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Executive Summary

This paper makes the case for a more systemic alignment of high school reform and out-of-school time (OST) initiatives. The authors offer new models for high school OST programming in New York City.

Under the leadership of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, New York City has taken bold steps to provide teens with high quality educational and after-school experiences through its high school reform efforts and Out-of-School Time (OST) initiative. Both the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) seek to increase student engagement in learning, promote students' healthy development and success and prepare youth for work or higher education. Both support school collaborations with community organizations. School reform initiatives and community organizations also serve the same young people and therefore, have tremendous potential to reinforce each other.

In fact, a growing body of research shows that students who regularly attend after-school programs are more likely to improve their grades, test scores and classroom engagement (Policy Studies Associates 2007). An evaluation of The After-School Corporation's high school after-school programs showed that participants had better school attendance, passed more Regents exams, and earned more credits than non-participants (Policy Studies Associates 2004). After-school programs can also help participants acquire workforce readiness skills and personal attributes that employers want, including improved conduct and work habits (Brown, & Thakur 2006, PSA 2007).

Thus far high school reform and OST efforts have not been explicitly coordinated or aligned through public policy. To this end, stakeholders from the New York City high school reform and after-school communities, including The After-School Corporation (TASC), the Youth Development Institute (YDI), The Urban Assembly schools, school principals and staff members of DOE and DYCD, ¹ came together to develop this paper.

This paper is jointly authored by TASC and The Urban Assembly.

Recommendations

SUPPORT OST PROGRAM MODELS THAT Contain Core Elements of Program Success

We recommend that moving forward, DYCD require OST programs serving older youth to include the following core elements, which are supported by the findings of a recent evaluation of high school OST programs (PSA, June 2008):

• Tangible rewards and explicit value-added experiences (e.g., skill and knowledge development, work experience, stipends, wages, scholarships or academic credit);

- Positive, supportive, and professional relationships with adults, facilitated by low participant-to-staff ratios
- Programming that is different from but connected to school.

INCREASE PARTICIPANT FUNDING RATE

Although high school OST programs have great potential to benefit participants, our experience suggests that in the absence of any collateral funding, high school OST program operators have a difficult time offering compelling services at the current spending level of \$540 per participant for 108 hours of programming. This makes it difficult to attract students and maintain high participation rates. We encourage DYCD to increase the per-student funding rate for high school OST programs to range from \$1,000-\$1,600, depending on the intensity and depth of programming. (OST elementary school programs allot up to \$2,000 per participant, although for considerably more hours.)

INCREASE LATITUDE IN THE NUMBER OF REQUIRED OST PROGRAMMING HOURS

We recommend that DYCD afford greater latitude in the number of hours programs operate, so that limited resources can be used to provide participants with more meaningful experiences such as shorter term internships, community service or research projects.

PROMOTE CLOSER ALIGNMENT OF OST with Other Programs and Funding Streams

DYCD should consider ways to have OST providers leverage other funding streams including those managed by DYCD, such as the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), to create high impact programs

SUPPORT INNOVATIVE PROGRAM MODELS

We encourage DYCD to support a variety of innovative high school OST program models that would provide New York City youth with experiences which are content-rich and suitable for a range of interests and skills. Among the most promising to be considered are the following:

- Time In is a new program model being developed by TASC that takes a flexible and personalized approach by building on participants' existing activities and addressing their individual academic and personal development needs and interests. Time In managers help students develop personalized schedules of OST activities by evaluating and validating their current commitments; identifying other activities they want to pursue and times when they are available; and accessing a range of services (e.g., test preparation, karate, graphics design classes, etc.), some of which take place off-site, through each participant's personal "activity budget". Time In participants engage in at least 15 hours of validated activities per week, including their existing productive commitments.
- After-School Apprenticeship Program (ASAP) is based on the After School Matters (ASM) program in Chicago, a nationally acclaimed program that helps high school students explore careers and develop skills through intensive paid apprenticeships and subsequent paid internships, many of which are funded through Chicago's summer youth employment program. ASM offers apprenticeships in arts, sports, technology, science, and journalism/spoken word, and operates at a large scale. During the program's pilot year in New York City, ASAP participants' attendance

and completion rates were very high, despite many of the apprentices having long commutes to their training and work sites.

• Credit-bearing OST Activities for high school students can attract participants to after-school activities and help them meet their requirements for graduation. High school principals and youth development stakeholders emphasize that while OST activities may be "credit bearing" they should not be considered "credit recovery," or offer credit to make up for failed fundamental classes. DYCD could allow CBOs, in close consultation with school principals, to provide activities for which high school students may receive elective, physical education, or art credit, provided that the activities are facilitated by staff with relevant expertise and meet all DOE regulations, including supervision by a DOE teacher. These credit-bearing activities could also include meaningful work, project, or internship experiences.

While all OST programs and New York City public high schools would benefit from the suggestions in this paper, the five Career and Technical Education (CTE) demonstration sites currently in development by DOE's Career and Technical Education division would be ideal sites to test the better integration of workforce preparedness training and exposure to educational and experiential opportunities.

Part I: The Case for Alignment

Under the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg, New York City has taken bold steps to provide teens with high quality educational and after-school experiences through its high school reform efforts and the city's Out-of-School Time (OST) initiative, which includes 122 after-school programs for high school students.² New York City high school reform and OST initiatives serve the same young people. They share common goals and strategies, and have great potential to reinforce each other's efforts to educate and develop youth. However, thus far high school reform and OST efforts have not been explicitly coordinated or aligned.

To this end, in March, 2008, stakeholders from the New York City high school reform and after-school communities (including TASC, YDI, The Urban Assembly schools staff and students and DYCD staff) came together in Chicago to discuss opportunities for collaboration at the "Building Bridges: Afterschool and High School Aligned for Youth Success" Conference.³ The group has continued to meet in New York City, and has added DOE staff and high school principals. Our goal was to develop this paper which makes the case for a more systemic alignment of high school reform and OST initiatives, and offers new models for high school OST programming in New York City.⁴

High school reform efforts aim to increase student engagement in learning, increase high school graduation rates, and prepare youth for the workforce or higher education. However schools cannot meet these goals by themselves. This is why NYC DOE has sought to involve the broader community in the school day and beyond. OST programs share these important goals, and can both complement and deepen school day learning by addressing in different ways subjects taught during school, and by exploring new disciplines altogether (Halpern 2007). A growing body of research shows that students who regularly attend after-school programs are more likely to improve their grades, test scores and classroom engagement (PSA 2007). Specifically, an evaluation of TASC's high school after-school programs showed that participants had better school attendance, passed more Regents exams, and earned more credits than non-participants (PSA 2004). After-school programs can also help participants acquire workforce readiness skills and personal attributes that employers want, including improved conduct and work habits (Brown, & Thakur 2006, PSA 2007).

OST and high school reform utilize similar strategies for engaging students and promoting their healthy development and success. Opportunities for alignment are significant.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Across high school reform and OST initiatives, community organizations play an increasingly important role. They bring resources, skills, and knowledge to schools and after-school programs in ways that increase student engagement and achievement. Many new small high schools operate in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs), and DOE has also created transfer schools for under-credited students that utilize CBOs as full partners with DOE funding. The mayor has appointed a task force on Career and Technical Education to develop a program of coursework and internships to prepare students for post-secondary education and to enter the workforce directly. This presents additional opportunities for community collaboration. OST programs which are operated by CBOs, often in public schools, fit well within this strategic framework.

Focus on Personalization/ Relationships

Both high school reform and OST emphasize personal attention to students and relationships built through smaller learning communities and low student/staff ratios. High school reform efforts in New York City have reorganized many high schools into smaller schools with smaller class sizes. OST programs focus strongly on child-centered services. They are able to provide participants with personal attention and positive relationships because CBO staff is less expensive than school staff, which allows for lower student-to-staff ratios. CBO staff members serve as role models with whom students can easily identify, as they often come from the communities they serve and reflect the backgrounds of the student population.

LEARNING BASED ON THEMES

Many new high schools use themes (e.g., the Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice) around which they organize learning, although these themes too often receive diminished attention because of the many competing demands placed on schools. OST programs have greater flexibility in their scheduling than do schools, which enables participants to explore specific topics or themes in greater depth than may be possible during the school day. They can gain authentic experience, skills, and expertise in areas connected to, but decidedly different from, the school day.

While all OST programs and New York City public high schools would benefit from the suggestions in this paper, the five Career and Technical Education (CTE) demonstration sites currently in development (as per DOE's Career and Technical Education division) would be ideal sites to test the better integration of workforce preparedness training and exposure to the range of educational and experiential opportunities that exist for high school age youth. High schools with CTE programs integrate rigorous academic study with workforce skills in specific career pathways. Students receive instruction in an industry-related area and have the opportunity to graduate high school with industry-specific competencies and skills that lead to postsecondary education, further industry training and/or entry into the workforce. There is significant overlap in the goals of the CTE program of study and what we propose as core elements of future OST programs, and we believe that OST programming would be a logical complement to current CTE school programming.

CHALLENGES FOR HIGH SCHOOL OST Programs

The challenges inherent in offering OST programs for high school students are not insignificant. Program operators often have difficulty meeting their enrollment and attendance goals (PSA, June 2008). Students in large schools may not be aware of the programs. Even in smaller settings, OST programs may not meet students' needs and interests, or they may conflict with the many responsibilities that today's high school youth have. Unlike younger students who have less say in what they do after school, high school students are essentially free agents who can opt in and out of extra-curricular activities as they choose. Their interests are more diverse and more specific, which makes it unlikely that one program will satisfy large numbers of students. Also, some high school students do not want to stay after school; they want to have experiences in new and different venues.⁵ In addition, many students have job and family commitments elsewhere that make regular participation in OST programs unfeasible.

These programmatic challenges can translate into budgetary challenges. High school programs are generally smaller and thus enjoy fewer economies of scale. They also require more sophisticated and experienced staff, compared to OST programs for younger participants. Finally, high school programs frequently need to offer participants stipends as incentives for participation and to partially offset the wages students could earn were they to work. Despite these challenges, high school OST programs have tremendous potential to complement and strengthen the work that high schools do to promote education, youth development, high school graduation and workforce readiness.

Part II: A Strategy for Aligning High School Reform and OST

A recent evaluation of high school OST programs (PSA, June 2008) supports the inclusion of the core elements detailed below. We recommend that moving forward, DYCD require OST programs serving older youth to include the following:

TANGIBLE REWARDS AND EXPLICIT VALUE-ADDED EXPERIENCES

The most effective high school OST programs are those which provide youth with tangible benefits. Programs should include one or more of the following:

- Skill and knowledge development (vocational, professional, academic, artistic, etc.). Students should have opportunities to pursue interests and have experiences that are otherwise unavailable to them in or out of school.
- Stipends, wages, or scholarships. Many high school students work after school, sometimes in settings that offer few opportunities for personal or professional development. Whether or not students would be working, financial incentives can help programs attract and retain students who might not otherwise participate.⁶
- Academic credit or certification where appropriate, based on program content and duration, can provide a significant incen-

tive for regular participation in OST programs and can help increase graduation rates (see program models below). Employers and higher education institutions will view as valuable professional development experience participants' certificates of completion for trainings or classes in areas such as sign language or CPR.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS

Numerous research studies show conclusively that personal attention and relationships with caring adults foster positive youth development. OST programs provide important opportunities for students to have positive relationships with adults who provide mentorship and guidance and can serve as role models, including skilled professionals who are experts in their fields. To facilitate these relationships, high school OST programs should have staff-to-participant ratios of ideally 1:10, but not more than 1:15.

PROGRAMMING THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM BUT CONNECTED TO SCHOOL

High schools and OST programs serve the same students and share common goals of preparing students to graduate from high school. At the same time, OST should not feel like more school, and should provide experiences outside of the classroom setting and even away from the school site. Key strategies could include:

• Advisory classes, which are found in the majority of New York City public high schools, are designed to form closer bonds between students and staff and to provide opportunities for discussion and support related to issues both in and out of school. The content of advisory classes is flexible, and advisories could provide an important venue for involving school staff in helping students manage their out-of-school time and access available programs and resourc-

es. They could involve staff from CBOs to make students aware of OST options.

- Outreach/enrichment coordinators, in some New York City high schools connect students to after-school and summer activities. They could help high school students identify their needs and interests and access activities and services.
- OST programs should acknowledge, leverage, and weave in **existing school extracurricular activities**, rather than compete with them. OST programs are only one component of high school students' afterschool activities.
- Programs can support students through key **transitions** from middle to high school, and from high school to higher education or employment. Transitions can be difficult if not traumatic for some students, and OST programming can provide the stability and counsel that is needed during these critical junctures in students' learning experiences.

Part III: High School OST Program and Cost Models

We encourage DYCD to explore a variety of innovative high school OST program models that can provide New York City youth with experiences that are content-rich and suitable for a range of interests and skills. OST programs should also acknowledge the changing needs and interests of students as they mature, by providing opportunities for advancement within a program and into new programs. The three models for high school OST programs described below are aligned with the goals of high school reform and incorporate the core elements described above.

Time In is a new program model being developed by TASC, one that takes a flexible and

personalized approach by building on participants' existing commitments and addressing individual academic and personal developmental needs and interests. **Time In** managers staff centers where students can socialize and study, and they help individual students develop personalized schedules of productive OST activities.

They do this by evaluating and - wherever possible - validating students' current commitments, and by developing strategies for enhancing the rigor of these activities (e.g., literacy strategies related to babysitting, or training to be a coach related to playing basketball). They identify other activities students want to pursue and times when they are available. They also help each student access a range of negotiated services (e.g., test preparation, karate, graphics design classes, etc.) through a personal "budget" of \$300-\$500 per participant. They assist students with program applications and interview preparation. Some of these services could take place off-site.

Time In participants take part in at least 15 hours of validated activities per week (at least three hours of which will be academically related) including their existing productive commitments. Participants' schedules will vary based on their interests, but each will include:

• Academic related activities (minimum 3 hours/week) which can include regular participation in extended day programming offered by the school; Supplemental Education Services (SES); credit recovery; tutoring; and test preparation. Time In managers will collaborate with teachers, principals, and families to ensure that academic needs and requirements are being met. Completion of the academic component provides participants with access to their "budget" allocation for enrichment activities of their choice.

- Enrichment and leadership activities (5-10 hours/week) could include dance classes, guitar lessons, SAT preparation, physical fitness classes, or job training, etc., which participants choose and access with the help of the Time In manager, using their activity budgets. Some services may be offered on site by the CBO, while others will be provided by other organizations off-site. In order to provide activities that are both cost-effective and tailored to students' interests and schedules, and that take advantage of the vast array of program options in New York City facilitated by experts and professionals in their fields, DYCD (or another designated organization) would negotiate with service providers throughout New York City.
- Existing approved productive activities (2-6 hours/week) that could count towards Time In hour requirements. These may include: babysitting, working, school clubs, band practice, music lessons, volunteering, tutoring, religious school, organized sports, etc.
- Meetings with the Time In manager (1 hour/week). Weekly group meetings serve to build community among the students (many of whom will be participating in different activities) and provide a chance to share experiences and address issues. Participants will also meet individually with their Time In managers at least once per month to receive personal attention including college and career guidance, and to evaluate and adjust their activities.

The **Time In** model costs about \$1,600 per participant.⁷ However, validating and counting students' activities as part of their 15 weekly hours would increase the actual value of the program to the student and the public.

The After-School Apprenticeship Program (ASAP) is based on the After School Matters program in Chicago. This nationally acclaimed program helps high school students explore careers and develop skills through intensive paid apprenticeships, and subsequent paid internships, many of which are funded through Chicago's summer youth employment program. ASM offers apprenticeships in arts, sports, technology, science, and journalism/spoken word, and serves several thousand high school students annually. Apprentices receive stipends for their work and attendance is required. After School Matters currently operates in 57 high schools and in collaboration with 111 community-based organizations. An independent study of the initiative by Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago found that students who participate in ASM miss fewer days of school than similar classmates. Students who participate at the highest level of the program also failed fewer core academic courses and had higher rates of graduation and lower dropout rates than similar students who did not participate.

In spring and summer of 2008, TASC piloted **ASAP** in partnership with two CBOs. The programs served 40 students who came from 15 different high schools. They were selected to be trained as sports coaches through an application and interview process. Apprenticeships took place in the spring after school and on weekends, two to three hours a day, three days per week, for eight weeks. Students were required to attend all apprenticeship sessions, and those who met attendance requirements of 85% received a stipend of \$35 per week. Under the guidance of a skilled instructor, **ASAP** participants learned to coach younger children in the fundamentals of basketball or soccer. They also learned to facilitate age-appropriate recreational activities and practiced these skills at nearby after-school programs. Apprentices who successfully completed training were offered paid summer internships where they used their new skills to work with younger children as recreation leaders and coaches at area summer camps. Participation in trainings and completion rates were very high (80% and 90% respectively at the two CBOs) in the program's pilot year, despite one-way commutes from school of an hour or longer for many of the apprentices.

ASAP costs approximately \$1,000 per participant (including stipends) for the 8-week school year session described above, and approximately \$1,600 per participant for the summer (including six weeks of work paid at minimum wage).⁸ This is about the same as the Chicago program. ASAP internships could be funded through the SYEP program so that youth who have demonstrated their commitment and skills during the school year are rewarded for their efforts. Linking performance in school year OST activities to summer employment could also help boost enrollment and participation rates in OST programs.

CREDIT-BEARING ACTIVITIES

Interest is increasing in OST activities that provide academic credit to high school students, both as a way of attracting students to afterschool activities and helping them meet their graduation requirements. In California, more and more high schools are offering "credit reclamation" classes after school to students who need core curriculum credits for graduation. Students earn credit if they successfully complete sixty hours of after-school coursework in their individual core subjects over 10 weeks. In New Hampshire, the "Extended Learning Opportunities" program is piloting after-school credit recovery in four high schools by granting academic credit for learning that takes place outside of the classroom or outside of school altogether. Learning may include structured projects. An example is writing articles for publication in a local newspaper, provided there are pre-defined competencies aligned with state education standards which students prove they have mastered in order to receive high school credit for the work.

In our discussions with high school principals and youth development stakeholders, both groups emphasized that while OST activities may be "credit-bearing," they should not be considered "credit recovery." They should not offer credit to make up for failed core academic courses. Rather, DYCD should allow CBOs to work closely with school principals to design activities that earn high school students elective credits or help them meet their physical education or art requirements.

Students would be required to participate for at least 54 hours in order to receive academic credit as per DOE regulations. But credit-bearing OST activities should include meaningful work or internship experiences as well as traditional content or skills instruction. Moreover, credit-bearing activities would need to be delivered by staff with relevant expertise and, per DOE regulations, supervised by a DOE teacher. However, one teacher could oversee multiple credit-bearing activities facilitated by qualified CBO staff.

OST programs would be a strong complement to the in-school learning experience at CTE schools, as CTE students are already acclimated to special sequences of courses that specialize in workforce preparedness. For example, The Urban Assembly School for Green Careers is a new high school that will prepare students for careers in the field of sustainable energy and energy conservation. Capitalizing on the opportunity to break the mold of traditional CTE schools, it is designed to be a yearround school with four-week integrated learning modules, rather than traditional semesters with discreet 45-minute periods.

The cost of credit-bearing activities would vary, depending on materials and number of participants in each course. However, the cost of a student taking two credit courses (108 hours) led by a certified teacher with nine other students would be less than the \$540 per participant that OST currently allots⁹.

Part IV: Recommendations

INCREASE PARTICIPANT FUNDING RATE

DYCD broke new ground in its funding of after-school programs for high school students on a large scale. In an effort to improve these programs, DYCD has acknowledged the need to consider alternative program and cost models, and has invited input.

Currently, high school OST programs operate for a minimum of 108 hours per school year, and are supported with a maximum of \$540 per participant in OST funds. Unfortunately, the current funding level is insufficient to operate a high quality, stand-alone OST program. The current cost model encourages OST program operators to count kids in existing programs funded through other sources so they can spend more than \$540 per child and reach their participation targets. This reduces the number of New York City youth receiving program services of any kind. A recent evaluation of high school OST programs (PSA 2008) confirmed that many OST programs need other funding sources to operate, which means that OST may not be increasing the number of youth served; and these programs provide services for more than 108 hours, which means that the actual rate OST provides is much less than \$5 per hour. The \$540 per participant rate is not grounded in any concrete formula related to the actual costs of providing OST programming for high school students, and is out of sync with the other work-for-pay options for high school age youth.

Aside from the Beacons, which serve high school students on a much less formal basis, DYCD's other after-school and summer programs for high school students allocate significantly more funds per participant than OST. For example, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program serves 4,600 at-risk students at a rate of \$7,000 per youth, including summer activities. The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) serves 30,000 youth who are paid minimum wage for 25 hours of work per week for 6-7 weeks and receive approximately \$1,250 for the summer, in addition to their supervision and training.

Our experience suggests that in the absence of any collateral funding, OST program operators have a difficult time offering compelling services. This in turn makes it difficult to attract students and maintain high participation rates. We encourage DYCD to increase the funding rate for high school OST programs to range from \$1,000-\$1,600, depending on the intensity and depth of programming. (OST elementary school programs allot up to \$2,000 per participant, although for considerably more hours.)

INCREASE LATITUDE IN THE NUMBER OF REQUIRED OST PROGRAMMING HOURS

High school OST programs should also be afforded greater latitude in the number of hours they operate, so that limited resources can be used to provide participants with more meaningful -- but more expensive -- experiences, such as short term internships, community service, and credit-bearing courses. This could also make programs more attractive to older students with crowded schedules and other commitments.

INCREASE ALIGNMENT OF OST WITH Other Programs and Funding Streams

Finally, we encourage increased alignment of OST with other programs and funding streams that can enhance experiences for high school teens. For example, in order to provide greater continuity for high school students, a portion of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) should be reserved for participants in OST. This would give students greater incentive to participate in OST activities during the school year and make them more productive and effective workers in their summer jobs. The current SYEP lottery system, while insuring greater equity, offers kids a reward just for being kids. It sends the wrong message to the many youth who work hard during the year to enhance their work skills in preparation for a summer job.

This is an exciting and pivotal time for the New York City education and youth development communities. There is tremendous potential to align the programs and institutions that serve the city's high school students -- both during and after-school -- toward the common goal of high school graduation and preparation for what comes next. As the New York City DOE continues its high school reform efforts, including a renewed emphasis on Career and Technical Education, DYCD has expressed the desire to think creatively about its high school Out-Of-School Time programs. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide our ideas and suggestions, and look forward to continued efforts to design and implement programs and policies that support New York City teens in realizing their full potential.

We invite you to consult with the authors if you have questions or comments.

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Endnotes

1. DYCD staff attended initial meetings of the work group but were not involved in the development of this white paper.

2. OST also includes more than 500 after-school programs for elementary and middle school students.

3. Sponsored by DC Children and Youth Investment Trust with partner After School Matters, with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

4. DYCD has acknowledged its intention to explore new and innovative program and cost models for its High School OST programs. Although DYCD staff attended the Building Bridges Conference, they were not involved in the development of this white paper.

5. A majority of participants in both ASAP sites stated a preference for not having the program at their schools, as they want to have experiences in other places and meet new people, despite the fact that virtually all the participants had to travel to reach the sites.

6. However, high school OST programs that train students for jobs working with younger children not only provide a positive youth development but also strengthen the OST workforce. Currently, 10% of the after-school workforce is made up of high school students, and a recent evaluation of OST programs found that those that hired at least some young staff members had higher program attendance rates than those without these young staff members (PSA, January 2008).

7. This rate includes salaries and fringe for Time In managers, a project director and assistant, training, overhead, and \$400 per participant for selected activities and services.

8. ASAP cost estimates include salary and fringe for a program director and assistant and for CBO partners, stipends for participants during the school-year apprenticeship, and minimum wage for participants during the summer internship. However, if OST and SYEP were aligned, the vast majority of the cost of the summer portion of ASAP, participant wages, could be paid through SYEP.

9. This figure is based on procession rate wages and fringe for teachers and CBO staff, materials, and administrative costs.