



Expanding **minds** and Opportunities

Section 4: The Power of Community-School Partnerships in Expanding Learning

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

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Gail Connelly

Executive Director, National Association of Elementary School Principals

Paul G. Young

Former Executive Director, National Afterschool Association and Adjunct Professor, Ohio University

More Than Just Another “To-Do” on the List: The Benefits of Strong School, Principal, and Afterschool/Community Relationships

The research is clear: *Principals matter* in the outcomes of their schools (Young, 2009). Next to having a great teacher in the classroom, strong principal leadership is the second most important factor in improving student outcomes. Moreover, research shows that high quality afterschool and summer learning programs also play an important role in helping students achieve academically, socially, emotionally, and physically (Vollmer, 2010). Therefore, it seems logical to suppose that collaboration between principals and afterschool and summer learning leaders would occur quite naturally; however, they often do not do so, despite knowing that they should.

While sharing the leadership responsibility for the success of children and youth in school, after school, and during the summertime poses many challenges, there are increasing examples of how to make this collaboration not only work well, but yield very positive results. The benefits of strong principal and afterschool/community relationships are numerous and should not be regarded as just creating more tasks or work to handle. Overcoming these challenges requires a paradigm shift about the distinctive, yet complementary purposes of school, afterschool, and summer learning. This paradigm shift incorporates rethinking and redefining staff roles and responsibilities; community engagement; and how, when, and where children and youth learn and flourish.

That is why the boards of directors of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Afterschool Association (NAA) joined together in 2009 to challenge our members to “build a new day for learning,” aimed at achieving innovative reform within schools and through quality afterschool and summer learning programs. This does not mean just adding more responsibility to the jobs of principals and afterschool leaders. Rather, it means pursuing a clear path to achieving

cooperatively designed learning and developmental goals for students based on enriched and experiential learning. When principals and afterschool leaders share leadership responsibilities, they can create seamless connections between school and afterschool and between school and summer learning programs resulting in higher levels of achievement, a well-rounded education, and fulfillment for all children and youth. Further, they can engage and involve parents and families across the continuum, from school to afterschool and then to their homes, leading to greater satisfaction with and support for public schools.

When principals and afterschool leaders share leadership responsibilities, they can create seamless connections between school and afterschool and between school and summer learning programs, resulting in higher levels of achievement, a well-rounded education, and fulfillment for all children and youth.

NAESP's *Leading Afterschool Learning Communities* (2006) emphasizes the importance of strong school/afterschool partnerships in the context of laying out a set of research-based standards for what principals should know and be able to do to ensure highly effective afterschool and summer learning programs and initiatives. High-quality afterschool and summer learning programs offer a unique opportunity to provide students with enrichment and support to augment and reinforce the learning and cognitive growth that is achieved during the school day and year. Such programs incorporate an expansive vision of learning and a strong commitment to collaborate with schools to manage resources.

Setting standards for “bridging” school, afterschool, and summer learning for the benefit of students is an important start, but it takes a significant commitment of resources to achieve the desired results. Federally funded programs for afterschool and summer programs offer a real opportunity for principals and afterschool and summer leaders from the community to come together to provide academic enrichment opportunities during nonschool hours for children, particularly for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. As a result, many outstanding practices and initiatives have emerged in communities across the nation in terms of rethinking the time and place of the learning day to improve student achievement. It is clear that strong partnerships focused on creating a shared vision, collaborative planning,

and fostering a common culture emphasizing high achievement are keys to successful school/afterschool partnerships.

What follows is a set of key insights, principles, and practices for partnership and collaboration that will reinforce the efforts of schools, afterschool, and summer learning programs to enhance learning and achievement.

Relationship building is the cornerstone to achieving positive school/afterschool outcomes for children and youth.

Across the nation there are scores of model programs featuring successful partnerships between principals and afterschool and summer learning program directors. These programs provide students with positive and safe environments, empower learning and academic success, and encourage an ongoing collaboration among peers, adults, and the greater community that puts the needs of the students first.

Scott Langham, principal of Bay Minette Elementary School in Baldwin County, Alabama, works collaboratively with Cherry Penn, president of the Alabama Community Education Association, who is also the After School Childcare Program supervisor and 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants program manager for Baldwin County. “The Project Tiger Paws has provided a quality afterschool program and plays a vital role in providing opportunities for our students to realize learning can be fun,” Langham said in an article for the Press-Register Community News last year. “The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program provides outstanding enrichment activities for the students at Bay Minette Elementary School, which encourages the students to think of themselves as capable learners” (Press Register, 2010).

Shared vision, planning, and culture are essential to effective school/afterschool/summer learning efforts.

Increasingly, principals and afterschool leaders are being expected to do more with less. Some principals may think of afterschool as an additional task they must manage; more realistically, afterschool affords solutions to their many challenges in meeting the learning, social, and emotional needs of students. When principals and afterschool directors provide a common vision, encourage collaborative planning, and foster a professional culture of mutual support for effective program implementation across all institutional settings, they help every student have a better chance for success.

IS 318 middle school in Brooklyn, New York, makes afterschool part of the school culture, a key factor in their success as a school. Principal Fortunato Rubino, Assistant Principal John Galvin, and afterschool leaders work with teachers and community-based organizations to offer students academic help as well as up to 40 different enrichment activities, including ceramics, art, band, guitar, fitness, homework help, reading and math programs, photography, cheerleading, volleyball, basketball, yoga, academic contests, computer arts, theater/drama, chorus, orchestra, bicycling, cross-country, football, soccer, baseball, track, wrestling, softball, field hockey, martial arts, debate, yearbook, newspaper, student government, technology, and more (Jacobs, 2011).

Effective planning solidifies school/afterschool/summer learning collaboration.

Effective planning is essential for the success of school, afterschool, and summer learning initiatives. It must involve the principal and the afterschool and/or summer learning program site leaders and cannot be delegated to others. Each must know how and be able to connect and form a strong professional relationship and foster similar relationships among their respective professional staffs. Increasingly, for example, principals are instituting collaborative intervention-planning practices that involve their staffs and afterschool personnel in data analysis and the development of coordinated team approaches to helping students achieve.

School/community partnerships improve academics, attendance, and more for students at Holmes Junior High School in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Principal David Welter credits their afterschool program ECHOES (Every Child Has the Opportunity to Excel and Succeed), which offers a

wide variety of programs and builds many positive adult-child relationships. According to Welter, the data that has been collected since their program was initiated in the 2002–03 school year show that collaboration between the Cedar Falls Community School District and the Cedar Falls community, along with innovative and engaging learning opportunities tied to academics and a caring and energetic staff, has produced positive results for their students. Tracking of students involved in the ECHOES program showed significant improvement in attendance, fewer behavioral referrals, and better grades (Welter, 2010).

Effective afterschool and summer learning programs expand learning opportunities.

They do not replicate classroom lessons. Principals and afterschool leaders should meet briefly each week to coordinate their communications and plan the alignment of learning activities with the strong caution that afterschool and summer learning programs and activities not lead to a replication of what happens during regular school hours or the regular school year and thus simply become “more school” after school.

Planning must involve the principal and the afterschool and/or summer learning program site leaders and cannot be delegated to others.

Rather, both principals and afterschool leaders should want afterschool and summer learning to be the time and place in which young learners are free to explore, develop, and be enriched in a variety of differently structured activities and environments. Many successful programs are designed to offer activities, experiences, and relationships that promote students’ social and emotional development, often reducing the risk of delinquent behavior and further enhancing their academic performance and motivation to continue to learn. For some learners, the standard school day or school year does not allow adequate time to learn what is necessary for success in the modern workforce and world. High quality afterschool and summer learning programs provide more time and opportunity for those who need it most, taking into account and accommodating the different ways students learn.

Dayton’s Bluff Elementary was once one of the worst performing schools in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The school has deliberately worked over the past 10 years to collaborate across sectors, improve professional development, provide innovative approaches to learning, and truly let research drive decision making. The Achievement Plus program has been critical to the success of Dayton’s Bluff. Established as a partnership between Saint Paul Public Schools and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Achievement Plus works to improve student achievement in Saint Paul’s urban schools, while also creating an urban education model and demonstration site. With the help of Achievement Plus, Principal Andrew Collins and the teachers have been able to collaborate across sectors—bringing together teachers, parents, and community leaders—to improve student engagement and parental involvement, develop afterschool opportunities, and provide students with a wide range of opportunities that foster safe and supportive learning environments. From a recreational center attached to the school to programs that offer health care services and information on housing and literacy, Dayton’s Bluff offers students and their families increased opportunities for success (“St. Paul Elementary School,” 2010).

Conclusion

NAESP and NAA will continue to encourage acceptance of the value of strong school/afterschool/summer learning program partnerships. Our organizations also see 21st Century Community Learning Centers as a real opportunity to build and “test drive” these partnerships, so current proposals to water down or eliminate the partnership requirements and afterschool provisions in the program guidelines makes little sense. We therefore see the need to expand the federal appropriations for afterschool programs rather than cut them back; moreover, we should avoid loading up these initiatives with extraneous requirements that can undermine their original and fundamental purposes. At the same time, we will support key initiatives that improve and strengthen best practices in the field, including

- *pre-service training for principals that defines, details, and showcases evidence-based practices of effective, high quality afterschool programming;*
- *joint leadership training for principals and afterschool leaders;*
- *development of learning communities where school/afterschool/community representatives share the school as the hub of activities; and*
- *investments in school and afterschool training opportunities and staff professional development so that children and youth in both settings will be served by qualified personnel.*

Student learning is no longer the sole province of schools. Therefore, it is imperative that principals and afterschool program site leaders, along with their faculty and staff colleagues, strive to build strong ties of mutual support for enriching the experiences of children and youth in schools and afterschool and summer learning programs in every learning community throughout our nation. As the nation’s economy improves, we also welcome state and local efforts to develop policies and make financial investments that invite and encourage expanded learning opportunities after school and during the summertime through strong school-community partnerships.

For some learners, the standard school day or school year does not allow adequate time to learn what is necessary for success in the modern workforce and world. High quality afterschool and summer learning programs provide more time and opportunity for those who need it most, taking into account and accommodating the different ways students learn.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gail Connelly is the executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and president of the NAESP Foundation, located in Alexandria, Virginia. NAESP leads advocacy and support efforts on behalf of its 23,000-member network of elementary and middle school principals. Connelly's 35-year career in education and association management ranges from early childhood to adulthood with specialized knowledge of K–8 educational administration.

Paul G. Young has served in leadership roles with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (president, 2002–03), and the National AfterSchool Association (president & CEO, 2010–12). In addition, his experience as a principal and an afterschool program director has provided him special, practical insights into the needs of principals and afterschool professionals as they work to create expanded learning opportunities for children and youth. He is passionate about helping principals and afterschool professionals align school and afterschool and equipping young educators with the principles needed to become outstanding leaders and contributors to the profession.

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Jodi Grant

Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

Joan Higginbotham

Director of Community Relations, Lowe's

Reinaldo Llano

Director of Community Relations,
Bright House Networks

Lisa Lucheta

Principal and Owner, Torani

Business Leaders: Expanding Afterschool and Summer Learning Opportunities Can Make a Bottom Line Difference

For a number of years, business leaders have voiced concern over the future workforce, citing that many young people entering the workforce are ill equipped. Leaders say students need stronger social, teamwork, and critical thinking skills, as well as more opportunities to learn and explore in a hands-on setting.

Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance, sat down with several business leaders who serve on the Afterschool Alliance Board of Directors to gain a better understanding of their perspectives, and to discuss how afterschool programs can help.

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A new study is issued every couple weeks that raises alarm over our future workforce. Often cited is the need for stronger communication, teamwork, leadership and critical thinking skills, as well as more science, technology, engineering, and math students. What is the most important skill set tomorrow's workforce needs, and are we doing enough to develop those skills?

Reinaldo Llano: I've seen the reports, and they ring true. One of the reasons our company, Bright House Networks, and the cable industry more broadly, are so supportive of afterschool programs is that we know they can help our workforce pipeline. We need employees with a broad range of skills, from excellent social and communications skills for customer service and sales to highly skilled technicians who can continually develop as new products are introduced to the market.

One of the reasons our company, Bright House Networks, and the cable industry more broadly, are so supportive of afterschool programs is that we know they can help our workforce pipeline.

Joan Higginbotham: Academics are paramount; but they are not sufficient without social, communication, and critical thinking skills.

We are in a different place than my parents were; the workplace is highly technical. Employees need to think about what is happening and make real-time decisions that require a lot of thought. The ability to get along in a team setting is also essential for success.

Lisa Lucheta: From a purely business perspective, the skills required of our future workforce are different from those of even the recent past. In this highly technical, connected world, critical problem solving, collaboration, and innovative thinking will be key skills. Afterschool programs are essential in delivering content that support development of these skills.

Higginbotham: Afterschool helps in all of these arenas. Not only do students get academic enrichment, they build social skills in group settings, thus, self-confidence and self-esteem, which are critical to self-development.

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What is so special about the kinds of experiences afterschool programs provide?

Lucheta: Opportunities for creative development and self-expression have been minimized or eliminated in the regular school day for many children. Afterschool programs place a priority on creative youth development. They play a critical role in sparking interest in learning for kids, helping to keep kids in school and on a path to graduation.

In an afterschool program, kids might work together to build a community garden or develop a music video; in doing so, they must lead, negotiate, plan, and communicate. And all the while they are learning, being expressive, and creating something of value.

Llano: Afterschool programs are great at exposing students to career paths. Kids have the chance to develop informal, friendly relationships with experts and professionals and really get their hands around a subject matter. An engineer may help them build robots, or a visiting artist may design a mural with them.

Afterschool programs incorporate incredible hands-on projects that make intimidating subjects like science and technology exciting and appealing. We desperately need more young people to engage in these subjects, and to pursue tech careers.

Higginbotham: Afterschool programs provide exposure. For a lot of youth, that is all they need... You can't do something if you don't know it exists.

This is particularly true in underserved communities. These kids might not have the same opportunities as other kids. An internship in an office, or a visit to a real science lab, may be their first experience of a professional setting. It can provide a whole new view of the world and unlock their own potential.

We must ensure these children have exposure to the experiences that quality afterschool programs offer. It can provide the impetus for kids to strive to do something with their lives.

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From a business standpoint, what will be the impact on our nation if we don't ensure all kids have access to these kinds of experiences?

Higginbotham: If we don't start taking the need to develop these skills seriously, we'll have to import a skilled workforce. The quality of education has declined, and many of our students in the U.S. are not competing on the same level with their peers across the ocean.

We are missing an enormous opportunity to cultivate this generation of students, and that concerns me on several levels. From a business standpoint, who is going to run our future businesses? From a personal standpoint, how are our young people going to fend for themselves as adults in an ever-increasing competitive global market?

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You sound pretty passionate about this. Why is this issue important to you?

Higginbotham: I had the sort of experience we're talking about as a kid, in a program called Inroads, and it had a tremendous impact on me and my career.

I was good with math and science, but I did not know what to do with my skills until I took part in Inroads. The program showed me what I could do with math and science in the real world ... and led me to pursue a career in engineering and then to become an astronaut.

Llano: My whole life is shaped by my afterschool experience. I was at a critical point in high school. I had really disconnected from school, had stopped going to class and started to fail, when a counselor suggested I take part in an afterschool program.

In the program, we received college and career counseling and went on college field trips. More importantly, someone inspired me to do my best. Our rapport with the afterschool staff was different than any I had ever had with an adult or educator.

I will never forget visiting the family of one of the afterschool staffers. It was my first visit to a community outside of my experience. She had gone to Wellesley and her family lived in an upscale neighborhood in Massachusetts. They were my first Latino role models; they gave me something to strive to become. I thought, "I want a house like this, a neighborhood like this."

She also sacrificed to run our afterschool program. She could have worked anywhere, making much more money. That put a personal onus on us to be the best we could be; we felt accountable to her and ourselves.

My whole life is shaped by my afterschool experience.

It was the afterschool program that connected me back into school, inspired me to get involved, to meet people and make friends.

Lucheta: I've seen the "spark" that afterschool programs can ignite firsthand, through our work with local programs. From "teaching" science and art classes at our local Northern San Mateo County Boys and Girls Club to sponsoring an 8-week art class in a San Francisco Beacon program to interacting with our nationwide afterschool label contest winners, it is clear to me that the engagement, potential for learning and social interaction present in these programs provide tremendous opportunities for these children to be more successful in school and in their lives.

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Lisa, tell us more about Torani's work to support afterschool programs. Why have you made afterschool programs a focus of your charitable work?

Lucheta: For Torani, being in business is more than just doing business. It's about the positive impact we make in our communities. It's also about adding creativity to people's lives.

Since 1925, Torani has made ingredients that go into flavorful and creative beverages worldwide. Our flavoring syrups, sauces, and other beverage products are synonymous with creativity and invention. Our interest in creative expression led us to focus our activities on youth in our communities and their access to creative expression.

For the last 9 years, Torani has conducted our "Art for Kids" label contest in afterschool programs nationwide. The afterschool students' winning artwork is displayed around the world on bottles of our Torani syrup. Torani donates 5% of the sales of these syrups to the Afterschool Alliance.

It's very gratifying for us to know we are promoting the artistic talents of children through our contest and, that through this program, we are making a financial contribution to quality afterschool programs.

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What has been the impact on your business?

Lucheta: We have begun to incorporate our community efforts around afterschool into our work with our value chain partners. One example of this was Torani's "Our Café Gives Back" program in Seattle. We engaged our café partners in the area by creating Torani beverages whose sales would benefit the local afterschool program of their choice. It was a good way for our customers to engage their customers in an effort that would directly benefit their community.

The Art for Kids program has also been wonderful in nurturing employee morale and the collaborative team approach that is part of our culture at Torani. Our entire team votes on the artwork to be selected for the labels each year in April. Team members are delighted to present awards to the winning students, bring them Torani syrup with their own labels, and host an Italian soda and pizza party for their programs. It helps us all to be closely aligned with our vision and values, to benefit from each others' thinking, and to spur growth and innovation. The program resonates with our team members.

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Reinaldo, Bright House Networks has also created a company-wide afterschool initiative, supporting efforts to expand programs nationally and donating more than \$1 million to local afterschool programs. What led Bright House Networks to invest in afterschool?

Llano: We have our customers to thank for guiding us toward investing in afterschool. In 2005, we conducted consumer research to better understand the issues our customers cared about and where they thought we could best make an impact. Our customers told us loud and clear that afterschool programs were important to them, and they felt Bright House Networks could help.

We have a relationship with our customers; they allow us in their homes to provide cable service. Our afterschool investments allow us to give back and get involved in our communities in a personal way.

We provide financial support to key organizations in our service areas, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, YMCAs, and smaller afterschool providers. We also offer free high speed Internet for computer labs, video services, and equipment that give kids access to technology and information. Nationally we are a champion for the Afterschool Alliance and their phenomenal work to expand and improve afterschool programs to the millions of young people and their families who really need and want them.

The unique nature of afterschool programs—the variety of partnerships and partners, the quality of programming, the creativity and flexibility of the space—makes it a really great fit for us to put our resources to use for the community.

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What has been the impact on your business?

Llano: People have a more positive view of our company since we began investing in afterschool programs. We have great stories to tell about the impact we are making—and even better, we have made meaningful connections in the communities we serve. We have seen kids' lives changing.

Supporting afterschool programs has helped differentiate us in a positive way to our customers.

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Do any of you have any final words of advice or recommendations to offer?

Lucheta: Our collective passion for and commitment to high quality afterschool experiences is evident. Business leaders, whether they are heads of large corporations in the nation's biggest cities or they run small businesses anywhere in this great nation, should weigh in to ensure that quality afterschool programs are well supported and are available and accessible to all children in every community across America. It is in the business interest to strengthen the 21st Century Community Learning Centers to make sure they include school-community partnerships and engaged learning that broadens our young people's skills. We need to do more to support and build local afterschool and summer learning partnerships in neighborhoods that don't have them, but need them. It's nothing short of a national imperative in order to ensure that America remains competitive and maintains its leadership in our global economy.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Jodi Grant has served since 2005 as executive director of the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs. Previously, she served as director of Work and Family Programs with the National Partnership for Women and Families. Grant has also worked on Capitol Hill in various Senate staff positions.

Joan Higginbotham is director of community relations for Lowe's, Inc. An engineer and a former NASA astronaut, she flew aboard Space Shuttle Discovery mission STS-116 as a mission specialist. Higginbotham is the third African American woman to go into space. She has a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Southern Illinois University and two master's degrees—one in management and one in space systems—from Florida Institute of Technology. She has earned many varied awards, from the Commendation of Merit for Service to the Department of Defense to the Presidential Sports Award in bicycling and weight training. She joined the board of the Afterschool Alliance in 2010.

Reinaldo Llano is director of community relations for Bright House Networks, the nation's 6th largest owner and operator of cable systems, serving 2.4 million customers. He is responsible for a multi-million dollar charitable giving and community outreach program. Llano has served on the Afterschool Alliance board since 2007 and is actively engaged in a number of other community and youth-serving organizations. He is a proud graduate of afterschool programs, which he credits with helping him stay in school and launch a successful career.

Lisa Lucheta is principal and owner of Torani, a company that produces flavoring syrups, sauces, and blended drink bases. Started in 1925 by her grandparents Rinaldo and Ezilda Torani, the company currently engages over 100 employees. Torani products are made in South San Francisco, California, and are distributed in more than 40 countries. Vice-chair of the Afterschool Alliance board, Lucheta has served on the organization's board since 2007.

Reuben Jacobson

Senior Associate for Research and Strategy,
Coalition for Community Schools at the Institute
for Educational Leadership

Martin J. Blank

President, Institute for Educational Leadership
and Director, Coalition for Community Schools

The Afterschool and Community School Connection: Expanding Learning Opportunities and Partnerships

When community and school leaders in Tulsa, Oklahoma, faced the challenge of providing meaningful instruction, youth development, and recreational opportunities for students during the summer, they turned to their existing community school partners for help. Over 40 partners provided summer learning experiences for about 400 children, just as they do during the regular school year, both after school and during the school day. Without a culture of partnerships, children would not have these rich opportunities available for learning and development.

Tulsa is one example of an increasing number of communities across around the country that are using the community school strategy and its reliance on partnerships to provide expanded learning opportunities—before, after, and during traditional school hours, as well as on weekends and during summers.

Just as community schools typically orchestrate local partnerships in order to provide afterschool programs, comprehensive afterschool programs that have strong community partners—such as those funded with 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative monies—can more easily be broadened and deepened to become community schools. For example, the Lincoln Community Learning Centers Initiative was built with 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds, and Chicago has used these funds in a similar way in many schools. The funding stream provided by this key federal initiative has, in fact, been a vital resource for the afterschool component of community schools across the nation.

In many ways, a community school is like a smartphone. With a smartphone, you can select any “app” and receive the services you need. At a community school—as a “smartschool”—key stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, community members, and partners, all work together to determine what “apps,” or what opportunities and supports, students, family members, and residents need.

Partnerships are essential in the current economic climate. Funding from states, cities, and districts for summer and afterschool opportunities has been drastically reduced, and fewer students are receiving afterschool academic reinforcement and enrichment, as well as summer supports that are essential in improving student outcomes (Fleming, 2011; Benning & Athavaley, 2009). With budgets under continued threat and challenging economic prospects, schools must build deep and intentional relationships with community partners to expand learning opportunities. In addition, these circumstances make it even more important to maintain strong support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and to encourage greater use of federal Title I monies for community schools and for expanded learning opportunities after school and during the summers.

The Community School Strategy

What are community schools, and how do they work?

A community school is a place and a set of partnerships connecting school, family, and community. Community schools reach families and community residents by extending learning after school, over weekends, and during the summertime and by making the school open to the entire neighborhood.

In many ways, a community school is like a smartphone. With a smartphone, you can select any “app” and receive the services you need. At a community school—as a “smartschool”—key stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, community members, and partners, all work together to determine what “apps,” or what opportunities and supports, students, family members, and residents need. They identify partners who can provide those opportunities, and then integrate partner assets and expertise into the core work of the school, helping to enrich the curriculum, construct deep and motivating student learning experiences during and beyond the school day, and create the right conditions for teaching and learning.

What sort of opportunities do community schools typically offer? The answer varies based on local need and resources, though most typically offer a combination of the following:

- *Early childhood opportunities*
- *Engaged learning in the classroom*
- *Expanded learning opportunities, including afterschool and summers*
- *Family engagement*

- *Health and social supports*
- *Youth development*
- *College and career assistance*
- *Community engagement*

Like a smartphone, community schools also have an operating system that makes all the “apps” work in a synchronized manner. A school-site leadership team, often comprised of a supportive principal, teachers, students, parents, support staff, community partners, and others, is responsible for creating a shared vision, identifying desired results, and helping to align and integrate the work of partners with the school. Additionally, a community school coordinator—ideally full time—is an essential ingredient of successful efforts. The coordinator works hand-in-hand with the principal, and is responsible for building relationships with school staff and community partners, engaging the community, and coordinating an efficient delivery of supports to students, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Community schools function and are sustained most effectively when they are part of a system of community schools that spans grade levels, school buildings, and school districts and are embedded in the culture of the school district and the community. These scaled-up systems typically have a community leadership group, as well as an intermediary organizational partner that connects school-site work to communitywide decision making. Community-level strategies can have significant benefits for scaled-up expanded learning efforts.

In Tulsa (www.tacsi.org), where there are 22 community schools and a community leadership group that includes two superintendents and community leaders, it was natural for leaders who wanted to create enriching summer opportunities to reach out to community partners. They asked partners such as the American Red Cross, Boy Scouts, the Tulsa City-County Library, the Tulsa Health Department, and others, who were already organized at the community level and were already working in community schools, to step up and fill in the summer gap—and they did. Community school coordinators, primarily funded through Title I, are essential to getting partners organized to support students.

In Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon, multiple community partnerships align expanded learning opportunities for afterschool, weekends, and summers with the core mission of the school system to support student learning. There are 68 Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) community schools (<http://web.multco.us/sun/sun-community-schools>) in the county. At the systems level, the SUN Coordinating Council brings together representatives from each of six participating school districts, the county, the Portland mayor’s office, and business and community partners to drive the SUN initiative. The lead partner at each SUN school signs a collaboration agreement that establishes the results and strategies they will use to achieve results. The agreement, which is reviewed annually, states that “All SUN CS (community schools) services are to

be linked with the school day and are planned and delivered in close collaboration with the school principal and staff.” A recent study found that students in SUN schools have higher attendance and earned more credits towards graduation than their matched peers.

The community school strategy supports rural communities in identifying expanded learning opportunities, as well. The Bangor Area School District in rural Pennsylvania has 3,347 students, 35% of whom were eligible for free and reduced lunch in 2010—an increase of 12 percentage points over 4 years. Bangor’s schools are part of the United

The importance of parent engagement to a child’s academic success is widely acknowledged . . . Parents also are decision makers who are part of the process of identifying programs and activities for students.

Way of Greater Lehigh Valley’s Community Partners for Student Success (COMPASS), a regional community school initiative. The initiative leverages 21st Century Community Learning Center dollars, as well as community-based assets. Bangor’s community schools partner with local banks, community colleges, faith-based institutions, local government, and others, to support expanded learning activities. According to Jill Pereira, the director of COMPASS, “The community school strategy has helped Bangor engage local partners such as the business community differently. They are more than funding partners as they support apprenticeships, weekend and summer learning experiences, service projects, and more.”

The importance of parent engagement to a child’s academic success is widely acknowledged, and community schools offer multiple pathways to engage parents. In a community school, parents often participate in adult-focused activities in the school building, such as ESL or GED classes, family literacy programs, and computer training. These activities are often provided in conjunction with afterschool, evening, and weekend programs and in collaboration with community partners. Community schools also involve parents through family nights; intensive parent outreach, including home visits; and parent leadership programs.

Parents also are decision makers who are part of the process of identifying programs and activities for students. In Cincinnati (<http://clcinstitute.org/>), parents at Ethel M. Taylor Academy participate in the school’s Local School Decision Making Committee (LSDMC), which makes decisions about which partners to bring into the school to support student learning. For example, the LSDMC assessed afterschool providers and made the decision to offer tennis lessons. This choice strengthened the neighborhood by bringing activity to an under-utilized community tennis court while also teaching students about math principles in an engaging manner.

Many other places use a partnership strategy to expand learning opportunities in their community schools as well. In New York City, the Children’s Aid Society (<http://nationalcenterforcommunityschools.childrensaidsociety.org>) serves as the lead partner

agency for 22 community schools. Funded in part by 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Title I funds, they provide enriching afterschool activities such as dance, music, cooking classes, leadership development, and college readiness activities to support student learning.

Partnerships support college and career goals as well. In Philadelphia, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania (<http://www.upenn.edu/ccp/index.php>) provides enriching and engaging opportunities to students at nearby Sayre High School. Teachers extol the benefits of having a partner with expertise and resources to support classroom instruction through activities such as hands-on labs and small group projects led by Penn students. Participating students are developing college and career readiness skills in the health field through expanded learning opportunities that include clinical practice, outreach to the community, community health development projects, health careers education, and professional skills development.

Beyond their direct impact on students and their families, community schools offer another crucial advantage to school and community leaders: community schools generate public support for public education. Community schools and comprehensive afterschool programs with community partners are often strongly connected.

By mobilizing the assets and expertise of community partners to offer enriched and expanded learning opportunities for students after school and over weekends and summers and to address nonschool factors influencing achievement, community schools give everyone a role and a responsibility in the education of our young people. From a community-schools perspective, a range of stakeholders across various sectors of the community—business, higher education, nonprofit, government, faith-based and neighborhood groups—must contribute to the education of our children. Our nation will only achieve its education goals by engaging the entire community in deep and purposeful partnerships with the host of organizations in our communities that have a stake in the success of our young people.

Beyond their direct impact on students and their families, community schools offer another crucial advantage to school and community leaders: community schools generate public support for public education.

Recommendations

A community's decision to expand learning opportunities and partnerships after school and during the summer can be a catalyst for developing a community school. Conversely, community schools are a natural venue to expand learning and partnerships for students and families beyond the typical school day and year. Both necessitate adopting effective strategies for engaging in an open and positive dialogue with school and community entities, mobilizing all the assets in a community, aligning efforts with the school's improvement plan, and affirming a commitment to enriching and engaging opportunities that motivate students to learn and expand their experiences so that they can be successful.

We offer the following recommendations for schools, school districts, and partners in order to strengthen learning opportunities after school and over the summer using community school partnerships.

- **Maximize the funding, partnership, and family engagement elements of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative to develop and deliver comprehensive afterschool and summer learning programs.** *If appropriate, sustain these efforts by building them “up and out” to be community schools.*
- **Encourage greater use of the federal Title I monies, including supplemental educational services (SES) monies, both for expanding learning opportunities after school and during summers and for initiating and sustaining community schools.**
- **Apply the community school strategy to enhance and sustain expanding learning opportunity efforts.** *Successful community schools around the country have incorporated afterschool and summer learning and expanded learning partners as a central part of their work.*
- **Incentivize partnerships that support expanding learning afterschool and over summers.** *More places are seeing that expanded learning opportunities are most effective when supported and sustained by multiple partnerships. Funders should require or incentivize community school partnerships as part of their application process.*
- **Leverage funding through the community school strategy.** *Community schools are able to leverage funding from partners; city, state, and federal government; philanthropies; and other sources. By diversifying their funding, community schools ensure continued support of expanded learning opportunities and other activities.*

For More Information

Learn More

Visit a community school. The best way to see the myriad of activity taking place before, during, and after the school day is to visit one of the many community schools around the country.

Read More

Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship (http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CBL_Book_1_27_06.pdf)

www.communityschools.org

Expanding the learning day: An essential component of the community schools strategy in *New Directions for Youth Development*, Fall 2011.

Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy (www.communityschools.org/scalingup) guides schools, districts, and partners through the stages of starting and scaling up a community school strategy.

Financing Community Schools: Leveraging Resources to Support Student Success (http://www.communityschools.org/resources/capacity_building_finance.aspx)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Reuben Jacobson is the senior associate for research and strategy for the Coalition for Community Schools at the Institute for Educational Leadership. Previously, Reuben worked at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and spent two tremendously challenging and wonderful years teaching fifth and sixth grade students in D.C. Public Schools as a D.C. Teaching Fellow. Reuben has a master's degree in education policy from the George Washington University and a master of arts in teaching degree from American University.

Martin J. Blank is the president of the Institute for Educational Leadership and the director of the Coalition for Community Schools. A VISTA volunteer in the 1960s, Marty has extensive experience developing school and community partnership and was co-author of the seminal report *Together We Can: Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services*.

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Elaine M. Johannes

Associate Professor and Extension Specialist – Youth Development, School of Family Studies and Human Services, Kansas State University

Cathy Mullins

Assistant to the Provost/Grants Officer, Shawnee State University

Marcia J. Dvorak

Director, Kansas Enrichment Network, University of Kansas

Bringing Universities Into the Mix: New Opportunities for Enhancing Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs

We can be wise only together.

- Margaret J. Wheatley

The Potential of Partnerships for Creating New Opportunities

Combining the efforts of afterschool providers and institutions of higher education creates a wealth of opportunities for children and communities:

- *Padgette, Deich, and Russell (2010) suggest that postsecondary institutions can help with data collection, research, and program evaluation; provide facilities and staff training; identify quality curricula and link programs to statewide standards; and provide mentors and volunteers.*
- *America's Promise notes that postsecondary institutions can serve as catalysts, conveners, providers, partners, innovators, and civic generators (America's Promise, 2004, p. 14).*
- *Lawson (2010) outlines a partnership model that specifies a variety of supports that can be provided by universities to community partners, including*
 - service learning programs and internships for undergraduate and graduate students that place them in community-based settings;
 - joint grant development and other revenue-generating programs and services;

- initiatives designed to provide training, technical assistance, and capacity-building supports; and
- a centralized office with stable, visible, and talented leaders who provide a single point of contact and a firm basis for ongoing communication and partnership management.

Tapping and utilizing these resources allows afterschool programs to benefit from a rich exchange of knowledge and experiences.

There are many examples of powerful afterschool-higher education collaboration in urban areas and medium to large cities. Schools and community groups based in smaller towns and rural communities, however, often do not regard public colleges and universities—which might be 50 or 100 miles away—as a resource for starting up, expanding, or improving afterschool and summer learning programs or for assisting them with their 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Likewise, many colleges and universities also may not see the potential for an afterschool partnership with schools and community groups in small towns and rural areas.

These partnerships are worth exploring, however, because they combine both like-minded and unlike-minded individuals and organizations into creative alliances that can achieve powerful results. While such partnerships require time; commitment; and systematic, intentional, results-focused efforts, they can also eliminate inefficient institutional siloing, unnecessary competition, and contentious thinking. This potential can be explained this way: “[L]arge-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 38).

Bringing New Experiences to Students in Hutchinson, Kansas

Botany. Nursing. Physical therapy. Computer design. These classes are not typical for young people, but thanks to a partnership with the Hutchinson Community College, middle school students are able to see what these educational and career paths are like.

Nickerson School District, South Hutchinson, Kansas, is home to the Leadership Enrichment and Academic Learning Academy, which works with 369 children in grades K–12 to improve behavior and engagement in learning through community partnerships, notably with local universities. Inside the classroom, college aides are among the program instructors that help students form aspirations for their futures and prepare for higher education. Outside the classroom, middle school and high school students take part in awareness learning days at Hutchinson Community College, where they have the opportunity to explore new fields of study in a hands-on environment and university setting. At the culmination of eighth grade, students take a trip to Kansas State University where they tour the campus and meet with students serving as program ambassadors. In high school, students work closely with Hutchinson Community College and Sterling College on their performing arts programs, where they produce single act plays. The students are involved in every aspect of the show, including script writing, acting, designing lighting and sound systems, and set building.

The following real-life examples tell the story and show the potential of university-afterschool partnerships that could be created in every state, especially states with large numbers of rural or low-income communities.

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Shawnee State University

Shawnee State University (SSU) is the lead institution of the Ohio South Consortium that manages the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs established as “After School Malls” in 39 school-based sites across seven school districts in Appalachian Ohio. The area is made up of small, rural towns with high unemployment, high poverty, and low educational attainment. The university is an open-access institution with a mission to serve communities, including providing afterschool services.

The Ohio South Consortium reflects a robust school-university collaboration. Participating school districts interview and hire 21st Century Community Learning Centers site coordinators, who meet regularly to share ideas and resources and assist the consortium director in planning professional development. The university writes the grants, manages research, houses administrative staff, serves as fiscal agent, and schedules evaluation visits. University facilities house afterschool events. Faculty and student clubs provide learning experiences and connect programs to resources.

SSU also offers a summer enrichment day camp for students in the region. Students from 21st Century Community Learning Centers sites receive scholarships to attend and are provided transportation.

Bloom Vernon Elementary School

Bloom Vernon is one of SSU’s long-time 21st Century Community Learning Centers partners. Assistant Principal Sandy Smith notes, “The university’s involvement is a huge plus. Shawnee provides accountability, administrative and technical support, and has helped our district and others in the county build relationships that extend beyond the afterschool programs.” The school district credits afterschool programming for generating life-changing differences for many attendees.

The Ohio South Consortium and SSU have provided the operational framework for southern Ohio’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers program for 12 years. The collaboration works well because of well-established relationships between the university and the community, starting with their collaboration in 1992 to expand Tech Prep programming to area high school students. Largely a commuter campus, SSU has a familiar feel to local residents. Even if funding levels change for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, SSU will doubtless remain an active partner in providing a safe learning environment to students enrolled in afterschool and summer programs.

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Kansas State University

Though there is some measure of funding available to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers in rural areas, resources are often inadequate, resulting in an uneven patchwork of afterschool programs with varying standards and limited scopes. The good news is that opportunities to address these challenges exist through partnerships with land grant universities located in each state and territory of the United States.

Through its extension educator network, Kansas State University, the oldest land grant university in the nation, has successfully built and sustained partnerships for rural afterschool. The university has established partnerships with an array of local afterschool programs, from small town stand-alones to large, centrally administered 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool programs. Additionally, Kansas State supports 4-H afterschool clubs on three military installations.

Given the variety of operational challenges that 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees in rural areas may face, partnering with land grant universities provides many types of support to help programs overcome those challenges. Such partnerships can provide university students with opportunities for student teaching and conducting research studies and concomitantly can provide afterschool and summer programs with additional staff and evaluation services. While these are typical examples of community partnerships for most major universities, regardless of their mission or location, there are additional important extension/outreach roles especially for land grant universities:

- *conducting needs assessments to establish afterschool programs;*
- *training for program leaders in evidence-based practice, positive youth development, and learning theory;*
- *identifying quality curriculum (e.g., science, healthy living, citizenship) that can be appropriately tailored for delivery in rural areas;*
- *bringing resources to the community through grant writing and marketing;*
- *cooperating with programs that address the needs of families; and*
- *providing research-based information for public policy changes (Ferrari, Linville, & Valentine, 2003).*

Council Grove, Kansas

Council Grove (population 2,182) is one rural community that has partnered successfully with Kansas State University to host a 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Council Grove wanted to broaden its afterschool offerings to address the community's high child obesity rate and lack of formal venues for physical activity for children and youth. With an understanding of the university's mission, leadership in Council Grove and Unified School District 417 worked with university faculty to acquire federal funding for a 5-year research and extension project, the "Power Up Club" for elementary students in an afterschool setting. Focusing on healthy living and physical activity, the club was led by Council Grove high school students who had been trained in an evidence-based health curriculum by Kansas State faculty. In addition to training, university faculty provided evaluation support and documentation of the program's impact on youth. The success of the program motivated Council Grove high school students to expand "Power Up Clubs" into summer healthy-activity day camps, and the program has become a model for rural afterschool programs across the state (Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network, n.d.).

This successful partnership between a major university and a small town would have not been possible without an understanding of the land grant university's mission—teaching, research, and outreach—and a respect for the capacity of town and afterschool leaders. It is this sort of mutual understanding that will serve afterschool programs well as they seek to partner with their state's land grant universities.

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Kansas Enrichment Network

The Kansas Enrichment Network serves as an intermediary to afterschool providers across the state. Seeking “collective impact,” the network collaborates with afterschool programs, universities, and a host of other community-based organizations. The University of Kansas manages the fiscal responsibilities, freeing the network to establish partnerships that strengthen services to 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees and other afterschool providers.

Recently, the Kansas Enrichment Network facilitated an outreach effort by Kansas State and Cornell University to provide training in positive youth development to afterschool providers. Dropout prevention events were enhanced through Wichita State University’s assistance. A statewide infrastructure around science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) has been created for stakeholders in Kansas who seek to increase STEM opportunities for youth. Outreach to afterschool program providers across the state, including those in rural and low-income communities, was strengthened through collaborations with the University of Kansas, Fort Hays State, Johnson County Community College, Kansas City Kansas Community College, and intermingling partnerships through Kansas State. Collectively, these higher education partners are bringing valuable stakeholders, resources, rigor, and relevancy to the table.

Faculty members on the network’s advisory board heighten benefits. Presentations and discussions afford members increased understanding of youth and brain development and promising practices. Credibility soars as afterschool research is sprinkled into conversation.

Recommendations

- **Schools should seek out institutions of higher learning.** *If you are involved in a local afterschool program or a local or state afterschool network, seek out help and support from your local colleges, especially land grant institutions or public colleges in rural areas because they often have a mission to improve educational and youth development opportunities and to strengthen communities and schools. For a land grant university, this connection is typically managed through its extension services, employing both university and community-based educators.*
- **Colleges and universities should seek out afterschool partnerships.** *If you are professionally affiliated with a university, especially a land grant institution or a public college in a rural part of a state, seek outreach opportunities by considering partnerships with 21st Century Community Learning Centers sites and other afterschool programs because they help fulfill that aspect of your mission.*
- **Partnerships require a full commitment.** *When you create partnerships, you should build in the time and commitment to ensure that they are strong and sustainable. Relationships must be built and nurtured before partnerships are realized. This requires time and dedication from all stakeholders. Commitment flourishes when partnerships complement each other’s strengths and support each other’s weaknesses to the desired purpose. Partners should foster open communication and celebrate success.*

- **Partnerships should blend rigor and relevancy.** *All stakeholders seek quality opportunities for children and youth to prepare them for success in school and life. Universities foster rigorous research, innovative ideas, and knowledge of promising practices. They can contribute to partnerships by unpacking research to make it relevant and practical for program implementation.*
- **Success depends on mutual understanding and mutual respect.** *Partners should work to foster understanding across community sectors. They should learn about each other, develop mutual respect, and commit to the common purpose.*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Elaine M. Johannes is associate professor and an extension specialist in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University. She is also the co-director of Kansas Operation Military Kids (OMK) and co-principal investigator of the seven-state Community Program to Prevention Childhood Obesity, funded by USDA/AFRI. Johannes has directed two, 5-year USDA grants in the prevention of youth-related problem behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropout, delinquency, and violence) through effective afterschool programming in Kansas.

Cathy Mullins is the academic grants officer and assistant to the provost at Shawnee State University. Since 2000, she has successfully authored several 21st Century Community Learning Center grants for southern Ohio school districts, as well as served in a consultant capacity for other organizations' submissions. Mullins holds an MBA and BS in Communications from Ohio University.

Marcia J. Dvorak, statewide network lead of the Kansas Enrichment Network, has worked in the youth development field for 5 years. Previously, she was a teacher, director of gifted education, and elementary principal in Illinois. Dvorak holds a PhD in curriculum and teaching from the University of Kansas, a master's degree in educational administration from Western Illinois University, and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Quincy University.

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Val Marmillion

President and Founder, Marmillion + Company

Gene Rose

Executive Vice President, Marmillion + Company

With contributions from the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Missouri Botanical Garden, and Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

Museums as 21st Century Partners: Empowering Extraordinary “iGeneration” Learning Through Afterschool and Intergenerational Family Learning Programs

Research indicates that informal learning institutions, such as museums, zoos, and aquariums, contribute to nurturing the development of children and families through experiential educational offerings. Indeed, participation in purposeful youth museum programs can greatly enhance and foster family learning. Falk and Dierking (2010) note that 95% of a child’s time learning science does not happen in school and that there are many informal learning opportunities for parents to provide their children with a sense of how the world works around them. Thus, what happens outside of school profoundly influences learning. In fact, as much as 33% of the variance in student achievement can be attributed to differences between children whose parents read to them, encourage them to go to college, and take them to the library and cultural events and children whose parents do not provide those supports (Goodwin, 2011).

As research by Weiss, Little, Bouffard, Deschenes, and Malone (2009) found, “Forty years of steadily accumulating research shows that out-of-school or ‘complementary learning’ opportunities are major predictors of children’s development, learning and educational achievement.” Even more troubling is that “economically and otherwise disadvantaged children are less likely than their more-advantaged peers to have access to these opportunities” (p. 2).

Learning in the 21st century requires students of the “iGeneration” to develop a set of skills needed to succeed in the workforce and to become productive citizens in our society (Rosen, 2011). These skills cannot be developed in isolation; they depend on the social learning experiences offered in institutions like museums. Through a variety of strategies, including partnering with afterschool and summer learning programs and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, these institutions are modeling the kind of learning that will help parents support and encourage more independent thinking in their children and cultivate their lifelong interest in the world around them.

Extraordinary Family Learning Destination Consortium

A national consortium of 16 large and geographically dispersed museums, zoos, botanical gardens, and historic sites—with a combined market area of over 80 million people—has formed to improve their offerings, services, and outreach to students and schools. The Extraordinary Family Learning Destination Consortium provides the gateway to a “must see and do” collection of exceptional family learning experiences. It seeks to build the capacity of its member organizations to transform the lives of children and families while better serving the communities in which the organizations are located.

The consortium includes

- *Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum* (<http://www.alplm.org>)
- *Atlanta History Center* (<http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/>)
- *American Folk Art Museum* (<http://www.folkartmuseum.org/>)
- *Birmingham Civil Rights Institute* (<http://www.bcric.org>)
- *Children’s Museum of Indianapolis* (<http://www.childrensmuseum.org>)
- *Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh* (<http://www.pittsburghkids.org>)
- *Colonial Williamsburg* (<http://www.history.org>)
- *Denver Botanic Gardens* (<http://www.botanicgardens.org/>)
- *George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate, Museum & Gardens* (<http://www.mountvernon.org/>)
- *Heard Museum* (<http://www.heard.org>)
- *Kentucky Horse Park* (<http://kyhorsepark.com/>)
- *National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium* (<http://www.mississippirivermuseum.com/>)
- *National Railroad Museum* (<http://www.nationalrrmuseum.org/en-us/default.aspx>)
- *Please Touch Museum* (<http://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org/>)
- *San Diego Zoo* (<http://www.sandiegozoo.org>)
- *Tennessee Aquarium* (<http://www.tennessee.org/Home.aspx>)

The Extraordinary Family Learning Destination Consortium provides the gateway to a “must see and do” collection of exceptional family learning experiences.

Collectively, the organizations in the consortium constitute a rich resource for afterschool and summer learning programs and 21st Century Community Learning Centers throughout America. They also provide powerful examples of partnerships with afterschool and summer learning programs for other museums, zoos, and historic sites across the nation.

Exemplary Programs

The following are four specific examples that are working particularly well that involve consortium members:

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The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis – Starpoint Summer Camp and Museum Apprentice Program (MAP).

Each year, more than one million people visit the 11 exhibit galleries in the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, featuring the arts, science, and the humanities. The museum has adopted intergenerational family learning as its signature educational theory. The interactions among family members, spurred by a visit to the museum, result in a greater sense of family connectedness (Wood & Wolf, 2008); moreover, such positive experiences also strengthen the connection of families to museums (Wood & Wolf, 2010).

Two exemplary programs for community and neighborhood youth at the museum were developed to serve children in the summer and after school. One is the 6-week StarPoint summer camp program, which targets approximately 120 underrepresented youth ages 6 - 12 each summer. The camp is structured around exhibit themes and incorporates elements of the arts and humanities, science and technology, and social awareness. The overall goal of StarPoint is to motivate children to become self-directed learners.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University documented that access to summer learning opportunities can have a significant effect on the academic future of low-income youth. “More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income

Youth participants in MAP acquire or strengthen skills for 21st century learners. For instance, James has been a part of MAP since age 13 and now volunteers in the museum’s biotechnology lab on a regular basis.

“I have learned leadership skills and how to work on a team with people with different ways of thinking,” he says.

Two of his favorite activities include producing the MAP Music Festival as part of the “Rock Stars, Cars, and Guitars” exhibit and participating in the Lego League as part of the “Lego Castle Adventure” exhibit.

youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college” (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007). The StarPoint program helps to bridge this gap. Many StarPoint youth return annually, and several of their parents were once participants in the camp.

A second, more in-depth experience, the Museum Apprentice Program (MAP), is offered each year to approximately 30 youth ages 13–18. These students come from varied socio-economic backgrounds and represent urban and suburban public schools, private schools, and home-schooled students. The museum’s staff is a natural fit for afterschool and summer programs; they can facilitate learning for these youth by providing access to content and technology for research, arranging field trips and site visits, connecting youth with guest experts, and serving as mentors.

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Birmingham Civil Rights Institute – Parents Plus Program

The Birmingham Cultural Alliance Partnership (BCAP) consists of a partnership with all of the museums in the city of Birmingham, including the Jazz Hall of Fame, Birmingham Museum of Art, McWane Science Center, Southern Museum of Flight, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, the Vulcan Park and Museum, and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. In adherence to the requirements for funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the BCAP is primarily reaching low-income students who are on the free or reduced lunch program. One of the key features of the partnership is its Parents Plus program that produces parenting workshops focused on addressing children’s behavioral issues, relieving stress, and establishing more discipline at home.

One of the key features of the partnership is its Parents Plus program that produces parenting workshops focused on addressing children’s behavioral issues, relieving stress, and establishing more discipline at home.

The efforts of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) provide a powerful example of connecting affiliated institutions with schools to support student learning. BCRI helps students make cultural connections in the community by spending 2 weeks at each museum. The Institute’s permanent and multimedia exhibitions provide a self-directed journey through Birmingham’s contributions to the civil rights movement and human rights struggles. With a grant from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, in a partnership with local schools, more than 200 students take part each year in on-site programs at the school and field trips to each of the museums.

On-site tutoring by museum staff at schools is focused on improving reading and math scores. In addition, the staff provides support for cultural enrichment, physical fitness, and nutrition education activities, as well as youth mentoring programs focused on teaching conflict resolution, leadership, and confidence. Students also learn about volunteering and giving back to the community through civic education and service learning.

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Missouri Botanical Garden – Community Science Investigators Project

As one of the top three botanical gardens in the world, the Missouri Botanical Garden (MOBOT) includes a 79-acre urban oasis that is a National Historic Landmark. It also serves as a center for science, conservation, education, and horticultural display, and as such, it includes sophisticated grounds and family programs. One program focuses on biodiversity and sustainability and encourages underserved children to explore nature in their local communities and in their own backyard.

Through a partnership with local schools, and with support from a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, the institution delivers programming from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. every day for elementary and high school students within the St. Louis Public Schools. High school students provide co-teaching and mentoring for elementary students.

The afterschool program provides an intentional, rigorous connection to what students are learning during the school day in math, science, the arts, and other subjects and helps them understand the interrelationships among these subjects. In addition, instructors establish expectations for engagement that will inspire student curiosity. By holding family science nights as part of these programs, MOBOT engages families as part of their year-round programming. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and learn as a family unit so they understand how to model the kind of interaction they can have with their children on their own.

Jamiya, age 10, who comes from a single parent home with five other siblings, has shown improvement in her social skills, test scores, and overall grades as a result of her participation in the afterschool program. Prior to entering, she was very quiet and withdrawn, but she now socializes with the other students and shows strong leadership skills as a blossoming cheerleader and dancer. Without the afterschool program she would not have access to additional academic tutoring, girl scouting, cheerleading, tennis, golf, photography, storytelling workshops, cooking, and African dance through the Harambee Institute.

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Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh – YouthAlive Afterschool Program

The Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh has delighted children and families for 28 years through its “Play With Real Stuff” philosophy that asserts that hands-on, interactive learning experiences in which children create and experiment with tangible materials are essential to a child’s development.

The museum’s YouthAlive Afterschool program partners with nearby middle schools and hosts an afterschool program for sixth and eighth graders. Local artists work with students in a variety of activities that combine the arts and the sciences, such as printmaking, silk screening, pottery, stained glass art, sewing, soldering, and woodworking. The museum’s goal is to encourage students to think differently about the learning that takes place in their classroom. Exploration, discovery, and inquiry skills are emphasized throughout the program.

... the museum holds an open studio night and dinner for parents of participating children and provides tickets to cultural events in the area to encourage parent-child interaction in informal settings throughout the community.

The YouthAlive program is focused on African American and inner-city students. The museum offers a tiered program in which students can get paid if they continue with YouthAlive after ninth grade, or they can receive credit for volunteer hours by participating in a VolunTeens program.

As part of the program, the museum holds an open studio night and dinner for parents of participating children and provides tickets to cultural events in the area to encourage parent-child interaction in informal settings throughout the community. In addition, the museum partners with the University of Pittsburgh Center for Learning to research the life skills that students are learning in out-of-school environments and to study the rich learning that occurs when parents and children are interacting in informal exhibit settings.

Conclusion

The projects and activities described above exemplify the collaborative work produced by museums that ultimately engages youth and their families in afterschool and lifelong learning experiences. Yet, there is more work to be done to address the inequities that exist among populations with regard to access to high quality, informal learning experiences. Developing more museum partnerships with afterschool and summer learning programs in schools and community organizations is one way to overcome this gap.

Overall, there is great potential for the consortium to leverage the major investments made in afterschool and summer programs by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the C.S. Mott Foundation, and others to broaden access to high quality, informal learning opportunities in the community and in afterschool and summer learning programs. These programs answer the call of 21st century learning by providing children with opportunities to develop new talents, accomplish larger goals, and build a repertoire of lifelong learning skills for the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Val Marmillion is a strategic communications specialist and president and founder of Marmillion + Company, a firm that during the last 20 years has provided services to numerous local and national organizations, associations, and businesses.

Gene Rose, a former journalist and government communicator, serves as the firm's executive vice president. The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Missouri Botanical Garden and the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh contributed information for this article, on behalf of the Extraordinary Family Learning Destination Consortium. The consortium promotes intergenerational learning experiences at the nation's most prestigious family institutions.

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Dennie Palmer Wolf

Principal Researcher, WolfBrown

Leaf Palaces and Illustration Worlds, or Why the Arts Belong in Out-of-School-Time and Afterschool Programs

As I worked on this article, Hurricane Sandy blew through New York. In my part of Brooklyn, school children had a full week of “out-of-school” time. In those long days I saw cardboard-box houses, gory detailing on Halloween costumes and ghostly front porches, Lego empires and Minecraft worlds, and leaf palaces in playgrounds. It has been a kind of natural experiment—and testament to the very human urge to create, make, and imagine.

Educating imaginative students will require in- and out-of-school opportunities, the rigor of classroom explorations, and the informal investigations that out-of-school time can nurture.

So it is sobering to think about what has happened to the opportunities to create during the school day. Since accountability for student achievement in math and reading has climbed, and budgets for public education have shrunk, time in the school day for what many people deem “noncore” courses like art, music, and even science, has been shaved. We can—and should—protest this loss. First, federal education laws actually include the arts in the definition of “core subjects.” Second, as a nation, we can’t afford not to turn that very human urge to create into educated imaginations. At the same time, these constraints should also spur us to seize the opportunities of out-of-school time and in afterschool and summer learning programs. Educating imaginative students will require in- and out-of-school opportunities, the rigor of classroom explorations, and the informal investigations that out-of-school time can nurture.

Think about it this way: Expanded learning opportunities in afterschool and summer programs may provide a setting particularly suited to arts learning. Educators can do more with these ungraded, uninterrupted blocks of time:

- **Offer longer stretches of learning.** *In the school day, time is frequently carved up in 40–50 minute segments. This is hardly enough time to set up, paint, and clean up—or compose—or rehearse.*
- **Introduce children to all kinds of teachers.** *In engaging afterschool and summer learning programs, arts specialists can teach new types of classes, classroom teachers can show off their arts skills, teaching artists can be instructors, and community volunteers can share their skills.¹*
- **Permit cross-age grouping.** *With no age- and grade-based structures, young people can work across ages and experience levels in ways that permit mentoring, modeling, and apprenticeships.*
- **Foster cross-disciplinary projects.** *Without the subject-matter strictures and structures of the school day, a theater project can be equal parts local history, interviewing skills, and theater production.*
- **Be porous.** *Well-designed afterschool and summer programs, because of their flexibility, allow for more travel and excursions. This could be a quick trip to collect leaves for a printing project, time in the school auditorium to watch the high school step team perform, or a more structured outing to a museum that includes learning to use public transit.*
- **Send the 24/7 message.** *When arts learning extends into out-of-school time, it communicates the message that the arts are not just a “class” but an avocation—even a way of being. A child can carry a sketchbook anywhere; (s)he can write lyrics on the bus.*

A Case in Point: Providence ¡CityArts! for Youth

Located in Providence, Rhode Island, ¡CityArts! is a community arts organization that has been providing free professional arts education to local young people ages 8–14 since 1992. Acknowledging the need for arts learning out of—as well as in—school, ¡CityArts! has joined forces with the Providence Afterschool Alliance (www.mypasa.org), a citywide effort to create “after zones,” areas of the city served by a common campus where young adolescents can engage in an elective set of courses that range from athletics to arts. At one participating middle school, Roger Williams, ¡CityArts! supports classroom teachers in integrating the arts, partners with arts specialists, and teaches free standing arts classes in out-of-school time both on campus and at its own studios.

Arts and Evidence-Based Practices

The staff at ¡CityArts! think long and hard about designing and implementing the courses that they teach in extended learning time, drawing on a range of evidence-based practices. Just a few examples illustrate how much more than “make and take” these 10-week courses are:

1. For two examples of this in action see www.bigthought.org/BigThought/SubNavPages/ThrivingMinds and www.citizenschools.org.

- *Each course is an exploration of major arts skills and techniques folded into a major project where students apply those capacities (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2009). For instance in the course Illustration World, 11- to 14-year-olds explore a variety of 2D media, from paint to pastels to pen and ink, and learn the art of bookmaking. They also learn how to create characters and worlds to tell a story, creating books of their own. In the course Community Mural, 8- to 10-year-olds conceive, plan, and paint a giant mural for a community health clinic and plan for its opening.*
- *Each course develops life skills, like communication: ¡CityArts! teaching artists make time for discussion and reflection, interviewing and presenting in ways that build young people’s language skills—a particularly important part of learning in a neighborhood where as many as one in three families speaks a language other than English. These are exactly the kinds of oral language outcomes that are featured as an integral part of the English language arts standards in the Common Core.² For example, in a current course on heritage, students and teaching artist Victoria Ray have vigorous talks about what makes someone who they are—bringing in everything from accent to dress to what foods they like. At the end of the course, they exhibit and explain their work.*
- *Each course recognizes that family engagement can significantly amplify learning. At the end of every session, youth plan a “Teach Back” session where they become the instructors, make a lesson plan, and invite whomever they want. In that session, they teach the lesson to their guests. Families get an evening out, they experience of the pleasure of being a learner, and they get a deeper understanding of their children’s talents and interests. In a neighborhood where many families struggle economically, these events are also a chance to celebrate families’ hopes and aspirations for their children.*

The presence of these strong and evidence-based practices is beginning to have a clear impact on Roger Williams students’ learning and behavior. As of the 2011–12 school year:

- *chronic absenteeism has dropped from 42% to 29%,*
- *discipline referrals have decreased by 10%: and*
- *since 2009, the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on state tests of student achievement has risen by at least 10 percentage points (from 31% to 41% in reading; from 19% to 32% in writing) (Wolf, Farbman, & Sherlock, in press).*

Developing Human Capital

¡CityArts! staff knows that these positive outcomes only occur with high-quality teaching and learning. As a result, the organization invests heavily in building the human capital it takes to do this work well.

Sustaining experienced teachers and teaching artists. The organization created a position for a director of education, who has the explicit assignment of building a culture of learning and reflection for adults as well as young people. In this position, Adrienne Gagnon observes every class and talks with each instructor about its design and implementation. At the end of each course, Gagnon holds a focus group for young people in which they talk with

2. See www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf.

her—without their teacher—about what they wanted to do, what they learned, and what they think could be better. Building on this knowledge, Gagnon designs regular workshops in which teachers explore the needs and questions identified through those observations. This year, for example, the teaching artists are looking at how they can support student collaboration, having seen how much support young people need in this area and how individualized many of their course projects were. Every Thursday night, the studios are open after the last class so that teaching artists can stay on to do their own work in a collegial atmosphere.

The organization makes a similar investment with their partner teachers at Roger Williams. In August, before school started, ¡CityArts! brought researcher Eileen Landay from the ArtsLiteracy Project to talk about her new book, *A Reason to Read: Linking Literacy and the Arts*. The second half of the day they spent in the studios working on arts-integration projects that could fuel English language arts learning throughout the year.

Expanded day teaching artist project: Building the next generation. Executive Director Barbara Wong knows, however, that she also has to build the skills of the next generation of teachers and teaching artists. Three years ago she and her staff wrote and won a 3-year AmeriCorps grant to fund the Expanded Day Teaching Artist Project (EDTAP). This project supports five full-time (1,700 hours/year) and 21 part-time (300 hours/year) members working as teaching artists in the two middle schools that are partnering with ¡CityArts!. Team members apply and are selected for a combination of their arts skills and commitment to service in the public schools. Once they are accepted, team members receive an extraordinary level of professional development throughout the year that they serve with EDTAP:

- *They teach side-by-side with skilled arts specialists during the school day, learning many of the important strategies for being effective teachers in an urban middle school that is striving to improve.*
- *In the afterschool hours they work in a the well-run PASA program, staffed with a skilled site coordinator, where they are able to observe and learn how other arts and youth development organizations design and deliver programs.*
- *In addition, every Friday, team members have an entire day devoted to their professional growth. In the mornings they meet together to go over the triumphs and challenges of the past week, discuss major issues, and attend meetings and events relevant to their practice. (For example, they recently went to hear Milton Chen from the George Lucas Foundation and Edutopia speak.) In the afternoons, they curate and post student work, write individual blogs about student learning, and plan for their courses.*

The Need for Policy Supports and Funding to Provide Access to Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Infused With the Arts

Giving all children the chance to grow up imaginative means that we have to keep a variety of art disciplines within the regular school day and year. At the same time, those hours will, for the foreseeable future, be limited. So there is an equally important need for accessible, quality afterschool and summer learning that features the arts and other forms of creative work. This demands, however, that communities make exactly the kinds of commitments that Providence has:

1. funded options for expanded learning days with teaching artists who work both in the school day and in well-run afterschool programs and include time for elective and sequential arts learning for all children;
2. municipal and state funding for free and affordable high quality afterschool programs;
3. eligibility for experienced local cultural organizations to be partners and providers; and
4. continued federal funding for public service options, like Americorps, which make it possible for talented individuals to be supported and trained while they offer their time and energy.

Without such commitments, access to high quality imaginative activity could become a luxury good open to only those children whose families can locate and afford fee-based extended learning opportunities. Without those commitments, children growing up in the contemporary United States, particularly those who live in poor neighborhoods, will experience an imagination divide perfectly aligned to the income divide their families struggle with.

For this reason, we should take our commitment to growing up imaginative even further. While most afterschool and summer learning programs already embrace—and some vigorously advocate for—the notion that out-of-school learning programs should be more than additional hours of homework and tutoring, the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative should strengthen this program requirement so that it is universally accepted and applied. Afterschool and summer learning programs must *enrich* and *extend* learning, including the arts. Similarly, arts and cultural groups must continue to be eligible providers.

Continuing professional development must be built into those same programs. In fact, we need Artistcorps—a national program offering an affordable way to train a new generation of skilled and experienced teaching artists coupled to a set of public service opportunities for any adults who want to do the work of passing on imagination.

Those leaf palaces towering in Brooklyn playgrounds? Those illustration worlds coming to life in Providence—one day they might be buildings, bilingual children’s books for the next generation of young readers, or novels that delight and console—but only with universal opportunities to play, make, and invent.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dennie Palmer Wolf is a researcher and writer who has long argued for the role of the arts in development and education. Her current work focuses on the research, policies, and initiatives that would guarantee all children the opportunity to develop their creative capital. For current colleagues, projects, and writing see www.wolfbrown.org.

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Barbara K. Stripling

Assistant Professor of Practice, Syracuse University

School and Public Libraries: Enriching Student Learning and Empowering Student Voices Through Expanded Learning Opportunities

I Am

by Brother Poet

I speak therefore I think,
I think therefore I am,
Being of existence, I am a voice,
A voice in this world that should be heard,
Outspoken yet underspoken,
I have much to say, but nothing to say at all.

- *Reading for Their Life* by Alfred W. Tatum (2009)

Our society may have no greater obligation than to ensure that every young person develops the academic, social, and personal attitudes and capacities that will lead to a fulfilling and successful life. Youth follow a journey first to discover and then to develop their own talents, interests, preferences, and personal voice. For some, the path to developing their unique capacities and establishing their distinctive identities and voices is paved with multiple opportunities to read, explore, experience, and pursue interests during the out-of-school-time hours. For others, their voices are stifled by limited access to books, trips, learning experiences, and technology. This lack of access can have dire consequences, leaving our youth with restricted voices and “nothing to say at all.”

The lack of access is most pervasive for our young people during out-of-school-time hours. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992) reported that young people have an average minimum of 1,900 hours of time out of school every year that can be filled by activities of their choice. Libraries, both public and school, have an important role in empowering student learning and voices through expanded learning opportunities after school and during the summer.

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What does the research say about libraries and expanded learning time?

A major goal of libraries has always been literacy for all people (Lyman, 1977). The impact of participation in library programs and services during afterschool, weekends, and summers is significant. Instead of spending their summer with no books to read, disadvantaged youth who have access to libraries have increased access to books; research has shown that youth who have greater access to books read more (Krashen, 2004). The more that young people read, the better they read (Krashen, 2009). A research study in California found that the number of hours that the school library was open was significantly related to test scores at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Achterman, 2008). A Massachusetts study found that students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels who have access to afterschool hours in their school library exhibit higher achievement on the state test (Baughman, 2000). In Missouri, research determined that summer reading participation was significantly correlated with achievement on the state test (Quantitative Resources, 2008).

Expanded learning literacy experiences are particularly important in providing equitable opportunities for learning and reading for disadvantaged youth to prevent the summer slide when, on average, students lose up to one month of instruction, and disadvantaged students lose even more (Cooper et al., 1996). A research brief published by the New York State Library summarizes the critical importance of libraries' providing rich reading experiences for disadvantaged youth after school and during the summer: "Differences in out-of-school access to books, positive reading practices, and connections with institutions supportive of self-discovery and reading, account for much of the disparity in student academic success" (Balsen & Moore, 2011, p. 2). Two-thirds of the reading achievement gap for ninth graders can be traced to "unequal access to summer learning opportunities" (Balsen & Moore, 2011, p. 1).

Afterschool, weekend, and summer programming in libraries has positive impacts on communities as well as young people. Many public and school libraries engage the parents in their children's literacy development through family literacy or parent education programs, including providing parent guides, modeling read-alouds and lapsits¹, helping parents with their own literacy needs, and guiding them in the selection of books for their children (Dowd, 1997; Cerny, 2000; Kupetz, 1993). Libraries can build their community focus by promoting public discussions (Weibel, 1992), using cooperative and creative play to foster the sharing of cultural practices (Neuman, 1994), and supporting parents who speak a language other than English at home or who have low literacy levels (Celano & Newman, 2001).

1. Lapsits are expressive reading and conversation with a child nestled in a lap.

A powerful draw for youth to participate in expanded learning time activities at the library is access to technology. Research has found that higher income children benefit more from access to technology than lower-income children because lower income children are less likely to have strong parental guidance in modeling the use of the computer and, therefore, often resort to simply playing games (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). The guiding support of a librarian enables all young people to have successful technological experiences.

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What can we learn from examples of library expanded learning time programming?

Some libraries maintain expanded learning programming independently, such as the LEAP afterschool program of the Free Library of Philadelphia that is designed to serve low-income youth from 6 to 18 years of age. This is a full-bodied program that includes homework help, access to technology, cultural and educational programming, and even career development activities (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). The Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore has designed a youth program of community service in which students are trained to work as interns in library branches and learn to conduct library programs for children and youth (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). Other libraries (both public and school) provide expanded learning programming to youth through partnerships with various community agencies and afterschool and summer programs.

The Phoenix Public Library's Teen Central program, for example, partners with a number of city agencies and businesses to provide social support (e.g., a teen hotline) and training in film editing and financial literacy (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). The After School Matters (ASM) program in Chicago is the result of a partnership among the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, and the Chicago Public Library. In 2005, this program operated in more than one-fourth of the city's high schools, offering paid apprenticeships, career exposure, arts, educational enrichment, and a drop-in center (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). The J. Lewis Crozer Public Library in Chester, Pennsylvania, partners with the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool and summer programs at Chester Community Charter School to sponsor activities throughout the year designed to foster a love of books in children and families (<http://www.chestercommunitycharter.org/21st-century-community-learning-centers-21st-cclc-program>).

A third approach that libraries have taken to provide expanded learning opportunities is to focus on outreach, especially to the teen community. The Tucson-Pima Public Library has created Teen Centers, offering technology training and career development opportunities, and giving young people the chance to advise the library and provide community service (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). In New York City, the three public library systems and school libraries have partnered to create a joint summer reading program that includes booklists and activities for all age levels and outreach through an interactive summer reading website (Barber & Wallace, 2006).

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What recommendations will help public and school libraries design successful expanded learning time programs and services and work more effectively with afterschool and summer programs?

Based on the research and examples of expanded learning time programs in and with school and public libraries, a number of recommendations can be made to enhance the success of such programs.

Engage the entire community. Encourage a communitywide expectation that afterschool, weekend, and summer programs will work collaboratively with school and public libraries to offer children and youth an engaging set of library-related learning opportunities.

Form the programs around a youth development vision. Programs should be designed around the principles of youth development rather than the deficit model. Youth development principles include providing youth with choices, ensuring that they have opportunities to develop and express their own voice, strengthening their self-confidence by ensuring that they have successful experiences, providing opportunities for relationship building and socializing with friends, and focusing on learning.

Commit to funding, staff, and resources. Successful programs are integrated into the regular operation of the library, with a strong commitment to providing dedicated staff, resources, and ongoing funding. Appropriate books, technology, and other resources are important, but most important to participating youth are caring and energetic adults who provide guidance, support, and training and create a safe and welcoming environment.

Develop partnerships among school and public libraries, community agencies and schools that operate afterschool and summer programs, and businesses. Expanded learning time programs are most successful when they are developed and operated through partnerships because the various entities involved bring different areas of expertise and broader community support. Partnerships with community agencies, especially those operating or coordinating afterschool and summer programs, as well as local businesses, enable school and public libraries to design programs to serve the whole family and to customize aspects to fit the needs and interests of their local community. Programs that reach out to teens as well as younger children often include the teens themselves as partners in operating the program. As a result, teens develop important leadership and collaboration skills.

Foster innovative thinking that builds on the strengths of all partners. In order to take advantage of the unique strengths of each agency involved in planning afterschool and summertime library opportunities, library and community leaders need to open the lines of communication and creative thinking. Several strategies may help communities establish “innovation zones” where all ideas are welcomed and partnerships are built: Form advisory committees that bring together leaders in school and public libraries, afterschool programs, and community agencies to form plans and design programs; conduct focus groups and town halls to solicit creative ideas from diverse constituencies; provide mechanisms for community organizations to describe and offer their unique programs and expertise; and maintain an active outreach program to solicit new ideas and feedback from potential partners and contributors.

Provide meaningful activities in structured and welcoming environments. Teenagers enjoy opportunities that are both meaningful and enjoyable and expose them to potential careers, internships, and service to the library or in the community. Afterschool and summer learning programs should therefore be composed of multifaceted, enriching experiences involving reading and sharing, technology, education, the arts, imaginative problem solving, and creativity. By collaborating with youth-serving organizations that offer afterschool, weekend, and summer programs (for example, those that feature the arts, literacy, STEM, or sports and recreation), public and school libraries can add substantive and enriching activities, new expertise, and key resources to the mix for youth.

Advocate and plan for sustained support. In order to sustain support for expanded learning time programs and services, libraries must implement active advocacy efforts, reaching out to the youth they would like to serve, families in the community, community agencies and partners, local businesses, and government officials with messages about the importance of this programming for the community and the successes that youth have experienced through afterschool, weekend, and summer programs. As part of their partnership, school and public libraries and community-based organizations that offer afterschool and summer programming should align their services, build on each other's strengths, and promote each other. Library leaders should encourage foundations, local, state and federal officials to expand funding and support to library, school, afterschool and summer collaboration to expand offerings and the number of young people served.

Conclusion

Public and school libraries can, indeed, play an important role in providing environments and opportunities for young people to develop their strengths, pursue their interests, and express their own voices. Programs offered by libraries after school and during the summer can help struggling and disadvantaged young people catch up, keep up, and get ahead by giving them rich and meaningful learning experiences during those many hours when they are not in school. Partnerships among all agencies serving youth and their families—public libraries, school libraries, afterschool and summer programs, and schools—build an ecosystem of caring and enrichment that supports high levels of engagement and achievement for our youth.

For More Information

For additional examples of the types of expanded learning programs available to youth through school and public libraries, see the following websites:

Learning Opportunities, Careers

Chicago Public Library - www.chipublib.org/forteens/teensoptopics/jobscareers.php

Grand Island (NE) Senior High - http://www.theindependent.com/news/local/after-school-program-gives-students-time-for-homework-and-other/article_2e08f9b3-6c63-5809-b661-6c3723432643.html

Makerspaces in Libraries

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/tjmccue/2011/11/15/first-public-library-to-create-a-maker-space/>

<http://spotlight.macfound.org/blog/entry/Maker-Spaces-in-Libraries/>

<http://theunquietlibrarian.wordpress.com/2012/06/28/makerspaces-participatory-learning-and-libraries/>

The Arts

Denver Public Library: <http://kids.denverlibrary.org/fun/afterschool.html>

ASAP Theatre Works: <http://www.phillyasap.org/Drama.aspx>

Science

LEAP into Science: <http://www.fi.edu/leap/#how>

SciDentity: <http://scidentity.umd.edu/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara K. Stripling has had a 35-year career as a school librarian and library administrator. Formerly director of library services for the New York City schools, Stripling is now assistant professor of practice in the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University. Stripling is president-elect of the American Library Association. She will serve her term as president in 2013-14.

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Barry Ford

Director of Public Affairs and Advocacy,
United States Tennis Association

Tennis in Afterschool and Summer Programs: A Winning New Model to Expand Fitness and Learning

The expanded learning community is uniquely positioned to provide opportunities for children and youth to be physically active in safe, accessible spaces.

The introduction of quality physical activity and sports programming in afterschool and summer programs is a critical strategy in the fight to reverse the crisis of childhood obesity in this country (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011). The crisis has garnered growing attention in recent years. Nearly one-third of American children and adolescents, age 2–19, are either overweight or obese; moreover, since 1980, the rates of childhood obesity have tripled (CDC, 2012). In fact, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (n.d.) warns that if this trend is not reversed “we are in danger of raising the first generation of American children who may live sicker and die younger than the generation that preceded them.”

The primary causes of childhood obesity are well understood (Levi, Segal, St. Larent, & Kohn, 2011). In simplest terms, children and youth consume more calories than they burn off through physical activity or growth. The expanded learning community (which includes schools,

nonprofits, state networks, local funders, and local intermediaries) is uniquely positioned to provide opportunities for children and youth to be physically active in safe, accessible spaces, while acquiring the knowledge and skills to live active and healthy lives at healthy weights.

In addition to its key role in reversing childhood obesity, a CDC study (2010) found that quality and consistent physical activity—at least 60 minutes a day—has many other health benefits and is positively associated with improved academic performance, increased concentration and attention in class, and improved classroom behavior. The study recommended that education leaders incorporate sports programming and physical activity into afterschool programming as a way of supporting the academic mission of schools (CDC, 2010).

This article describes how changes in the game of tennis and the vision and energy of local nonprofits, schools systems, and state-level leaders can democratize the opportunity to be physically active during out-of-school time and can have a positive effect on expanding learning after school and during the summer. Other types of physical activities might also offer such opportunities if we think creatively about imbuing expanding learning time programs with physical activities aimed at educating the whole child and reinforcing learning in creative, active ways.

Tennis as Intervention

Over the last few years, the United States Tennis Association (USTA) has worked with grassroots leaders, tennis providers, afterschool programs, schools, school districts, and private and commercial clubs that serve substantial youth populations to pilot and then fully implement the most substantial change to the game of tennis in a generation. In January 2012, the USTA changed the rules of tennis to scale the sport appropriately for children and launched an initiative, 10 and Under Tennis, to encourage them to take up the sport. Now, children between the ages of 6 and 10 years old play on courts sized appropriately for them. They use tennis balls that are larger, move slower through the air, and bounce at an ideal height. Children now also use newly designed racquets that are a more appropriate size and weight for their age. What these changes have meant for the afterschool world is that now tennis can be played in almost any recreational setting without the need for traditional courts, and it can be introduced by caring adults who have no formal tennis background.

The examples that follow illustrate how afterschool and summer programs have integrated tennis programming with a resulting positive impact on both participants and providers.

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Georgia

In the spring of 2009, the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council (GAIC), the state afterschool network lead in Georgia, partnered with the USTA and a select number of Georgia-based National Junior Tennis and Learning Chapters to launch the Georgia Afterschool Tennis and Education program. The Georgia Afterschool Tennis and Education program, or GATE, is a tennis, fitness, and learning program that primarily serves economically disadvantaged youth living in Atlanta, Savannah, and Augusta. The GATE program, created to increase physical activity and fitness in Georgia's youth, exposes youth to new mentor relationships and enhances existing afterschool programs that serve young people in the hours after the school day ends and during the summer months. The GATE program strives to accomplish this by providing a tennis component, usually offered two to three times a week, to afterschool and summer learning programs that serve children in targeted neighborhoods.

After being launched in 2010, the GATE program grew in 2011 by 15%, serving 36 sites and over 1,400 young people, ages 6–12. These sites included elementary schools, middle schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA's, city and county recreation facilities, a public housing unit, several 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and Department of Health and Human Services Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grantees. The GATE program sites provide a minimum of 6–8 weeks of programming in the fall and spring, during which participants are likely to be exposed to tennis 2–3 hours a week.

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New Jersey

The National Junior Tennis & Learning of Trenton (NJTLT) is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to improving the lives of young people from varied socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds through tennis and education programming. It serves annually 2,500 young people annually. NJTLT created the Academic Creative Engagement curriculum in response to requests from its school partners. NJTLT was aided in this venture by financial support from local sponsors, as well as funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative as a New Jersey

sub-grantee. The Academic Creative Engagement curriculum is a free afterschool educational and fitness program that supports classroom instruction by using an academic curriculum connected to the sport of tennis, 21st century skills, and the new Common Core State Standards. The curriculum provides key developmental assets to participating children, gives them access to safe and healthy educational opportunities, and encourages parents to participate in their child's learning.

NJTLT typically implements the Academic Creative Engagement curriculum in an afterschool setting by having approximately 30 students per session participate 2–3 days a week for a 6–8 week session. NJTLT offers three such sessions for youth throughout the school year (fall, winter, and spring) and then offers a summer session that uses a more intensive programming model. On each Academic Creative Engagement program day, the students are divided into two groups. For the first 45 minutes, one group of students learns about tennis and exercise with a tennis professional while the other group participates in academic enrichment activities focusing on math, literacy, and nutrition. After 45 minutes, the groups rotate their focus for the remaining 45 minutes.

Online assessment surveys are used to measure program outcomes. In addition, report card grades and student reflections are included in the evaluation process.

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Virginia

For the last 2 years, the USTA has partnered with Newport News Public Schools and the Newport News 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs to bring the 10 and Under Tennis program to local schools and the broader community. With the enthusiastic support of the USTA and its Virginia state affiliate, USTA Virginia, over 300 of the school district's third graders who participate in 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs have been given the opportunity to engage in tennis programming through 10 and Under Tennis. The school system has connected math and reading activities to its tennis programming to give participants a complete experience, exercising both the body and the mind. The system also plans to link the tennis program to students' school-based physical fitness program as a way of fostering greater health and wellness.

After students have completed the 10 and Under program, they are encouraged to participate in the tennis programs sponsored by Newport News Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, as well as those sponsored by other local clubs and wellness centers. City leaders hope that the tennis component of its 21st Century Community Learning Centers programming will result in having young people not only develop an attachment to and proficiency in the sport of tennis but also in having them develop the confidence, character, and resilience to succeed in and graduate from high school.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to guide key local stakeholder groups in planning and implementing a successful sports or physical activity program (whether tennis or another activity) as part of high quality afterschool and summer programming:

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Afterschool and Summer Learning Providers

- *The successful integration of physical activity into an afterschool program requires that a provider be fully committed to facilitating this type of program enhancement, requiring resources in terms of time, space, and talent.*
- *Afterschool providers should develop partnerships with individuals and organizations that have deep expertise in the sport to make the overall effort successful.*
- *The afterschool or summer learning leader should design the physical activity or sports activity not only to expand fitness time and opportunities, but also to reinforce other learning goals of the program, including developing and enhancing skills that are important to students' success during the school day (for example, reinforcing the importance of academic success, responsibility, teamwork, and persistence).*
- *Providers must make any physical activity component of their programs engaging and interesting for the young people involved. They should choose activities that will enable youth participants to experience early success and competence.*

- *Afterschool state networks and intermediaries should assist in quality programming and expansion by*
 - making sure there is adequate program dosage and intensity provided for participants;
 - having a streamlined monitoring and evaluation process;
 - involving city-level elected officials; and
 - assigning dedicated staff for administration of program effort; and helping secure national, regional, and local funding sources.

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Sports Organizations or Physical Activity Groups

- *Groups should understand their core competencies and have those be the focus of any collaboration. They should not stray from what they know and do well.*
- *Groups should look for partnerships that allow them to add value without straying from their mission. Yet, it is very important to reinforce the particular learning goals of the afterschool or summer partner programs, as well as other goals including responsibility, attendance, and teamwork.*
- *Groups should be ready to commit to a multiyear relationship (3 years or more) so that they are able to demonstrate the efficacy of their program or sport.*
- *In addition to supporting and enhancing the services of an afterschool provider, groups should also work to increase the capacity of those providers so that they can successfully implement the sports or physical activity program independently over time.*

Conclusion

The health and the quality of life that our children will enjoy are threatened by cultural trends that inhibit the development of healthy habits. Schools undervalue and greatly limit physical education and physical activity during the school day. Too many communities in this country have limited access to healthy and nutritious foods. Finally, too many young people spend too many hours in front of electronic screens instead of engaging in active play.

Communities throughout the country can begin to reverse the effects of these trends by harnessing the energy and resources of local and state networks of afterschool and summer learning providers and making more intentional use of those hours that young people are not in school. In addition to keeping young people active, partnerships between out-of-school-time providers and tennis and other fitness organizations—can also broaden young peoples’ skill sets and opportunities—a winning combination. We do not have to settle for a future in which our children live shorter and sicker lives than we have lived.

For More Information

www.usta.com/Youth-Tennis/National-Junior-Tennis-Learning/NJTL

www.usta.com/About-USTA/thebigserve/afterschool-adoptaschool

www.usta.com/About-USTA/thebigserve/resources

www.afterschoolga.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Ford is the director of public affairs and advocacy for the United States Tennis Association and has been a member of the USTA national staff since 2006. He leads the association's efforts to build and deepen its relationships with public sector policy makers at every level of government and to expand the availability of quality, tennis-themed, out-of-school- time programs throughout the country. Ford is a board member of the Afterschool Alliance and served as vice president for external relations at the After-School Corporation (TASC). He brings 26 years of professional experience as a government official, lawyer, nonprofit executive, and political candidate to this work. Ford holds an AB degree from Harvard College and a JD from Harvard Law School.

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Randy Neve

Program Manager, Marshfield Clinic and Network
Lead, Wisconsin Afterschool Network

Gladys Bartelt

Educational Consultant, Marshfield Clinic

The Mutual Benefits of Health Care and Afterschool Collaboration

Research identifies quality education as a key determinant of good health. Moreover, recent research from the expanded learning field has documented the significant potential that afterschool programs have for improving students' health and academic success. An investment in infrastructure that supports strong collaboration between afterschool and health care can enhance the potential of afterschool programs to address many of the compelling academic and health needs faced by children.

Many children who participate in afterschool programs face serious risk factors such as poverty and poor school performance (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011). These young people can benefit most from a well-designed collaboration between health care providers and afterschool programs. The case study presented in this article illustrates the point.

Background: Health and Education Connections

Being overweight or clinically obese are both largely the result of physical inactivity and poor diet. These conditions can increase the risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, arthritis, and poor health status (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Only 38% of students in grades 9–12 are meeting the current Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendation of 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of each week (CDC, 2011).

One reason for the low rate of physical activity is the rapid increase in recreational use of media such as TV, movies, computers, video games, and music. While the American Academy of Pediatrics (2010) recommends children have less than 2 hours of screen time/day, a 2010 national study reported that 8–18 year-olds devoted an average of

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7.5 hours/day to such sedentary behaviors. This is more than 53 hours/week and does not include time spent using the computer for school or talking/texting on a cell phone (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). Research shows that high levels of media use are also associated with obesity, attention difficulties, and sleep and eating disorders (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004).

Research has also established a strong correlation between health and education. An individual's education level has been found to be a determinant of his/her health, regardless of the type of health outcome scholars studied, including the likelihood to develop diseases, the likelihood to survive diseases, and self-reports of health status (Cutler & Lleras-Mooney, 2006).

New research has shown evidence of the important role that afterschool programs can play in supporting positive educational and health outcomes. Studies indicate that children involved in afterschool programs are significantly less likely to be obese at follow-up than nonparticipants (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes, three times more likely to use marijuana or others drugs, and are more likely to drink, smoke, and engage in sexual activity. Studies show children who take part in afterschool programs attend school more regularly and have higher aspirations for finishing school and going to college. They are half as likely to drop out of high school and 30% less likely to participate in criminal activities, saving an estimated \$2.50 in crime-related costs for every \$1 invested in afterschool programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2008).

A Case Study: How One of Wisconsin's Largest Health Care Providers Is Connecting Health Care and Afterschool

Marshfield Clinic is the largest private group medical practice in Wisconsin and one of the largest in the United States. The clinic is involved in local, regional, and statewide initiatives to advance the quality of afterschool programs that serve thousands of Wisconsin children and youth each day. The Clinic's Center for Community Outreach provides user-friendly tools, learning events, technical assistance, action plan strategies, and other resources to help afterschool programs focus on evidence-based strategies to improve child and youth outcomes associated with academic success, healthy active living, and personal and social development.

Marshfield Clinic as a local resource and an afterschool learning lab. For the past 22 years the Marshfield Clinic has operated a comprehensive afterschool program known as Youth Net. Youth Net is open 5 days a week throughout the year with a focus on academic success, healthy active living, and personal and social development. Annually, Youth Net serves over 350 Marshfield-area children and youth ages 8–18, with a daily

attendance average of 155. Over 70% of these students qualify for free-and-reduced lunch, and 43% receive special education services. Children are referred to the program due to poor school performance, behavioral issues, and family conflict. The following are core program components:

Homework Club. Homework Club is a program for youth in grades 2 through 6. AmeriCorps members, mentors, and other staff provide academic assistance and support. Math, reading, and computer labs are available each day. Incentive programs encourage regular participation. Consistent attendance at Homework Club has been shown to boost the academic and behavior performance of participating youth (Marshfield Clinic, 2011). Due to strong ties with area schools, what is learned at school is reinforced in the afterschool setting.

Healthy, active, living. Physical activity and nutrition education are an intentional part of the daily programming. Physical fitness activities and nutrition education are available daily in collaboration with the Marshfield Area YMCA and Marshfield Parks & Recreation Department. Healthy snacks are provided daily.

Teens United. Teens United is a program for youth in grades 7 through 12. Academic assistance is provided to all participants. Educational, recreational, and vocational activities are provided to facilitate personal and social development and improve health and academic outcomes.

Summer program. A day-long summer program is offered 5 days a week with an emphasis on education and health and wellness. Collaborating with the School District of Marshfield and University of Wisconsin-Marshfield/Wood County, Youth Net staff teach School District of Marshfield summer school classes with a specific outreach to Youth Net participants. Transportation and a lunch program are provided to all participating youth. An afternoon summer program focusing on literacy, health, and recreation rounds out the summer program.

Family nights. Family nights occur monthly and provide an opportunity for families to socialize with each other and Youth Net staff around a meal and participate in educational and fun activities.

Marshfield Clinic's AmeriCorps Afterschool Initiative as a regional resource for better afterschool linkages with health. In 2012, 24 Marshfield Clinic Afterschool AmeriCorps members were placed in afterschool programs, providing 40,800 hours of direct service. Some of the most successful programs were located in small, rural communities that would otherwise not be able to offer afterschool services nor connect better learning supports with better health activities. Furthermore, Marshfield Clinic worked closely with the State Department of Public Instruction to make this valuable resource available to their 21st Community Learning Center sites in Marshfield Clinic's service region.

Some of the most successful programs were located in small, rural communities that would otherwise not be able to offer afterschool services nor connect better learning supports with better health activities.

Members worked directly with children and youth by implementing Marshfield Clinic's Youth Net program's case management system. In addition, members provided direct service to local public schools, further strengthening the ties between afterschool and day school and between education and health activities.

Marshfield Clinic as a state-level resource: Wisconsin Afterschool Network. Since October 2008, Marshfield Clinic has provided leadership and been the fiscal sponsor for the Wisconsin Afterschool Network (WAN). Wisconsin is one of 41 states that receive funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to provide statewide leadership for afterschool programs. Marshfield Clinic is the only health care provider in America serving as the host for a statewide afterschool network. However, health care providers in other states could be a strong force for afterschool, too.

In the previous 3 years, the Wisconsin Afterschool Network (WAN) has experienced an expansion of authentic partnerships, braiding and blending policy development efforts between individuals and organizations that historically have not reached consensus on afterschool issues.

WAN's role in facilitating this interaction has served to revitalize network participation. Current efforts have been launched to create a comprehensive statewide system for professional development for afterschool programs that is available and accessible to all Wisconsin providers.

Marshfield Clinic's Case Management System: Linking Data for Afterschool Improvement and Health Services

A carefully designed enrollment process for afterschool programs has the potential (with parental approval) for programs to communicate directly with a child's primary care provider to design preventive services to meet the identified needs of enrolled youth, for example, early and periodic screening, well-child visits, immunizations, behavioral health appointments/treatment plan compliance, dental screening and sealants, and asthma case management).

Marshfield's case management process has incorporated results of seminal research by the Harvard Family Research Project, including key elements found to be necessary for afterschool programs to achieve the quality needed for positive outcomes.

A carefully designed enrollment process for afterschool programs has the potential (with parental approval) for programs to communicate directly with a child's primary care provider to design preventive services to meet the identified needs of enrolled youth.

The case management system is a five-step process:

1. A formal enrollment interview, conducted with both the child and parents/guardian, starts the process of assessing the needs of the child, supports establishing preliminary goals and objectives, facilitates establishment of rapport, provides an opportunity to answer questions and obtain signatures on release-of-information forms.
2. Once a child is enrolled, teachers are contacted to assist in assessing needs regarding academic success, personal/social development, and healthy active living. Working as a team, day school and afterschool staff tailor intentional and sequential programming to meet individual needs.
3. A case management team convenes to review information collected through the enrollment interview and teacher contact.
4. The team develops a case management plan for each enrolled child.
5. Case management plans are reviewed throughout the year to determine progress and to be adjusted as needed to increase the potential for successful outcomes.

Recommendations for Afterschool and Health Care Collaboration

What follows are several key recommendations for both health care providers and afterschool providers.

Health care providers can offer the following:

- *Case management/health improvement plans for youth enrolled in afterschool programs. If thoughtfully designed, the registration/intake forms for the afterschool program can serve as a gateway for communication between afterschool and the health care provider (with parent permission).*
- *Services designed to meet the identified needs of enrolled youth (e.g., early and periodic screening, well-child visits, immunizations, behavioral health appointments/treatment plan compliance, dental screening and sealants, asthma case management)*
- *Oversight and advice to help leverage the full scope of local community resources*
- *Support and advice to state and local afterschool networks*

Afterschool and health care can collaborate to achieve the following:

- *Address the prevention needs of youth in ways that transcend the capacity of traditional schools, afterschool programs and health care providers*
- *Support schools and afterschool programs by identifying and addressing health and health-related problems that may interfere with the ability to learn*
- *Support working families by allowing parents to stay at work while the education and routine health care needs of their children are met*

- *Work to contain costs by reducing the number of hospital and emergency room visits*
- *Strengthen the connection between key community stakeholders and key leaders from health care, education, business, governmental systems, and other community sectors*
- *Work to meet the strategic goals of health providers' (immunization rates, well child check-ups, etc.) Support children in the development of positive health habits that they will carry across the lifespan*
- *Develop meaningful relationships with qualified staff, which can have a positive influence on the health and behavior of children and their families*

Conclusion

While on the surface it appears unusual to have health care providers and afterschool programs working together over a region and state, the mutual benefits are positive and significant for both entities. Since so many children and youth attend afterschool programs each day, these programs are natural venues for health care providers to reach large numbers of children with relative ease, especially as the country moves more assertively into health care reform. Working together, these unlikely partners can have a very positive impact on education, youth development and health outcomes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy Neve, network lead for the Wisconsin Afterschool Network (WAN), provides support, oversight, and leadership for all WAN teams/committees as they work toward development of statewide school-age partnerships, policies, and systems of quality. Over the past 15 years as Afterschool Program Manager for Marshfield Clinic, Neve has acquired significant experience in the design, development, and delivery of comprehensive, research-based afterschool programming. He has successfully served as the WAN Network Lead for the past 3 years.

Gladys Bartelt, education specialist, serves as a consultant for WAN's professional development system, the development of afterschool health services, and pilot programs through Marshfield Clinic AmeriCorps. Bartelt has over 30 years of experience working in all areas of education. She is particularly skilled in the development of individualized case management techniques for at-risk youth enrolled in afterschool programs.

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