



The Cross-Cities Network for Leaders of Citywide After-School Initiatives

The Cross-Cities Network is composed of 21 leaders of citywide after-school initiatives in major cities across the United States. The Network brings leaders together on a regular basis to explore common issues and develop personal relationships to sustain their work. The project is staffed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In addition to bi-annual meetings, NIOST provides staff support for the following Network activities: weekly email updates from members; topical briefs on requested issues; research reports; and a database of initiative members.

**For further information,
please contact NIOST
at 781-283-2547**

or write

**National Institute on
Out-of-School Time,
Center for Research on
Women, Wellesley College,
106 Central Street,
Wellesley, MA 02481-8203**

*or visit
our web site at
www.niost.org*



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Focus on
Connections

After School Issues

Connecting Schools and After-Schools within Citywide Initiatives

Part Two of "Finding Common Ground" (Vol. 2, Issue 1, November 2001)

While many activities occur similarly in both settings, schools and after-school programs offer unique strengths towards fulfilling developmental needs of children and youth. Beyond sharing space there are many ways that children and youth's school and after-school experiences may connect. Learning, staff, and leadership are examples of three domains where the worlds of school and after-school can potentially make powerful connections that mutually support learning and positive development goals for youth and children.

These connections between school and after-school allow more resources to be available to program participants, create greater leveraging power, and afford continuity. Schools are mandated to teach academic content and facilitate intellectual inquiry and development. After-school programs in particular have the flexibility to provide children and youth the opportunities to build relationships with caring adults, develop self-confidence and feelings of belonging, and participate in a broad range of enriching social, recreational, and artistic activity.

Connections may occur through mandate, intentional planning, or spontaneously. Linkage occurs at the school level, but can be activated

and supported through the larger district or citywide system. Citywide leadership can build the capacity for linkage that best assures school/after-school partnerships have the tools and strategies at hand to realize connection. Seattle Public Schools, in collaboration with the Learning Partners Group, St. Louis Public Schools Community Education, and The After-School Corporation of New York offer strong examples of citywide supported school/after-school connections. An understanding of the challenges faced by these citywide initiatives and the processes undertaken to implement connections, can inform other organizations seeking to replicate success.

Learning Connections

Clearly the activity of learning is not exclusive to the classroom. There are currently many definitions of learning that prevail in education literature. Despite lack of consensus on terminology—it remains that authentic learning takes place in settings outside the formal classroom. What we might wonder is how it relates to the learning that occurs in the classroom. And what are the potential benefits of intentionally linking the learning that occurs in the classroom with the learning that occurs in after-school programs?

Education reform and high stakes testing have placed new challenges and pressures on all involved in children and youth education including school administrators, teachers, out-of-school time providers, and families, to shore up the deficits in educational experiences and collectively organize more responsive, engaging, and effective education delivery systems. Shifting the learning focus in after-school from traditional after-school content and pedagogy to additional academic instruction does not seem to have much merit. Aldeman (1996) and others suggest that the decision to increase the quantity of time for strictly academic teaching and learning represents a hollow goal and can in fact have negative repercussions. Extending non-academic time at school has “important impacts on students, and students are willing to commit their free time to well-conceived and well-structured activities provided through their local schools.” Some researchers point out that after-school time provides an oppor-

tunity for participatory, exploratory learning and mentoring that could easily decrease from children’s educational experiences due to the high-stakes outcomes-based test and assessment atmosphere (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay, 2002)

Students at Ditmas Educational Complex, Intermediate School 62 – Brooklyn, New York

The After-School Corporation (TASC) founded in 1998, serves approximately 32,000 children and youth at 109 sites. TASC awards grants to nonprofit organizations that establish partnerships with individual public schools and deliver academic, arts-related, recreational, and support services to after-school participants. Church Avenue Merchants Block Association, Inc. (CAMBA) operates three TASC sites, one being at the Ditmas Educational Complex, Intermediate School (IS) 62 in Brooklyn, New York. It is a basic tenant of TASC that the programs supported “build upon and enhance students’ school-day experiences

and support the Board of Education’s performance standards and related benchmarks.” Hence, a specifically stated goal of CAMBA and IS 62 is to build greater consistency and collaboration between the day school and the after-school.

Through the after-school program students can participate in club activities such as Drama, Computer, African Dance, Hip-Hop, Poetry, and Gym; and receive assistance in their academic subjects. For 200 students the day at school begins at 8:15 and lasts till 5:45. As much as educators debate about seamless transitions and learning connections, it’s the students’ experiences and perceptions that determine whether real continuity and connections take place.

During a recent focus group, students from IS 62 shared their thoughts about after-school. In regards to how they separate the experience of school and after-school—they don’t. Students acknowledged differences between the two environments, but consider it one experience. One student said, “I feel like it’s all school. We’re still learning.” They perceive the extension of day school into the after-school and vice versa. A student explained that, “our math teacher gives us extra homework for us to do [specifically] in after-school.”

(cont. on p.3)

Learning Connections *(cont. from p. 2)*

The students were explicit that learning was a focus of both school and after-school. Students talked about the process of learning fractions and how it related to the process of learning African Dance. “For both, first the teacher explains, then she gives an example...and then we try.” Helping students understand the similarity of learning math and learning dance is the key connection that school and after-school teachers can make. Success is the mastery of the reasoning behind the activity, and the accurate execution. Asked whether they could see the value of both learning experiences, the students were quick to mention how they “must pass

math.” However, they were not too shy to disclose that learning dance is more fun, and important, also.

The learning connections at IS 62 go in both directions. One student recollected how a poem he had written during an after-school creative writing class became a subject of conversation/school assignment with his day school teacher. Another student recalled that rap poetry from the after-school poetry slam merged into a language arts exercise in day school class. We may speculate that one benefit of reciprocal connection between school and after-school is that successful learning experiences in one

domain build confidence for learning experiences in the other domain. Individual student learning strengths may be located in one domain or the other—so both domains need to be supported. Support of both domains exposes unique avenues of connection where teachers (school and after-school) can engage students, i.e., incorporating interests in rap into a standard poetry class.

Additionally, the contextual learning method emblematic of after-school can reinforce difficult learning topics from the day school in a peer supported, more relaxing environment.

Principal Connections

From a principal’s point of view the question may be: *What resources can this collaboration bring to the table and how does this collaboration increase our capacity to meet education goals?* There needs to be a well articulated strategy about why a district is undertaking a specific project and how it fits with its core mission (Pardini, 2001). Leadership buy-in is key to implementing school/after-school connections. Sarah Mello Temple of School’s Out Washington explains that “what we hear from our providers is that the principal has to be in the loop. The key is that the principal has to have a philosophical understanding of the role and worth of after-school programs.”

Based on evidence cited in Policy Studies Associates evaluation of the second year of TASC, principals who were engaged in their school’s after-school project typically offered pro-

gramming suggestions, made resources available, helped remove barriers and encouraged participation from all stakeholders. The principal offers the central coordina-

tion needed for after-school to integrate their activities with the substance of the school day or contribute to a concerted effort to enhance student’s learning (Policy Studies Associates, 2001). Fred McIntosh of TASC agrees that the school principal plays a crucial role in promoting connection between school and after-school.

Sometimes, inadvertently, principal turnover may pave the way for school/after-school connections. A new principal coming in “sees a program already in place where kids are safe, healthy, looked out for,

(cont. on p.4)

Principal Connections *(cont. from p. 3)*

etc., which helps to make him or her feel enthusiastic about the program. There's no task of having to sell the principal on the after-school idea."

In Seattle, principals have been mandated to write school transformation plans, which must include testimony of partnership with the community. For many principals the after-school program represents a logical partner to tout. In many cases this mandate has brought in the after-school provider to be a part of the transformation team and has laid the groundwork for the after-school provider to attend faculty meetings, attend site council, etc. As a result there are mutually promoted monthly meetings between school representatives and after-school providers.

Jean Anthony, Principal at the Bailey Gatzert Elementary School in Seattle confirms that her endorsement is key for any program to run successfully in the building. "What I can do as a Principal is create time on staff meeting agendas to address school/after-school issues, work the budget, and create access and collaboration around resources." The after-school program at Bailey Gatzert Elementary began about six years ago and was part of the Linkages project, so the school was well prepared for the Alignment Initiative. Bailey Gatzert Elementary

is Seattle's most urban school with a population of about 430 students, 50% with English as a second language, 90% non-white, and 30% homeless. Asked what motivated her as a school leader to promote and support an after-school program in her building, Jean Anthony replies, "the clearest signal is from the students sharing their experiences. They want to attend. Their participation in after-school makes a difference in their lives in multiple ways."

The Community Education Office of the St. Louis Public Schools focuses its work on 16 Community Education Centers, which are part of the St. Louis School District. The Community Education Office facilitates connections between school and after-school in these centers by cultivating relationships with local social service provider agencies, which can collaborate with the schools and principals to provide a wide range of youth and adult services. Ron Miller, City-Wide Specialist in the Office of Community Education, points out that principals and agencies in the Community Education Centers are encouraged to "find ways to make linkages" between all the services offered.

At Yeatman Middle Community Education Center in St. Louis, Principal Georgia Bland-Whitfield sees herself as both the instruction-

al leader for the building and the facilitator of connections between all the "different players in the building including extended day." She explains that as a community education center offering multiple services to children and adults "we have a school day and a school evening."

Collecting and disseminating data has been an integral part of solidifying the day school/extended day school connection at Yeatman. Student test scores, report cards, and teacher feedback is regularly shared between day school and extended day school professionals. To everyone's benefit, Yeatman day and extended day faculty and staff together are able to shape academic support and tutoring programs around the needs of students based on the assessments. A second key element for connection at Yeatman has been bringing the budget for multiple services under one umbrella. "It allows us to look at everything as one program," says Bland-Whitfield. "Collectively, we can look at the whole picture of services offered during day and extended day and decide how we want the program to look and how we want the experiences to be integrated." Unmistakably, the involvement and leadership of the principal is required to reach this level of information exchange and budget utilization.

Staffing Connections

One avenue for creating connection between school and after-school is through staffing. CAMBA, which operates a TASC supported program, has built strong relationships with IS 62 through the Mentor Teacher position. The Mentor Teacher is an IS 62 faculty or administrator who serves as a liaison between the school and after-school program. The position is funded for a portion of the time that children spend in after-school. Miriam McDonald serves as a Mentor Teacher for IS 62 and explains that she “will work with after-school teachers to prepare them to work with students.” As Mentor Teacher she will demonstrate day school math lessons, communicate weekly day school teaching goals, find curriculum resources, and assist after-school teachers to set clear goals for skill improvement.

It is the role of the Mentor Teacher to:

- Facilitate consistency between school and after-school by overseeing continuity of procedures, policies, behavior expectations, classroom management signals, etc.;
- Facilitate communication between school and after-school teachers about quality and quantity of homework completed during after-school;
- Facilitate communication

between school and after-school teachers about needs and issues of individual children;

- Create greater understanding and sharing in regard to classroom space and resources between school and after-school staff.

According to Christie Hodgkins, CAMBA Director of After-School Services, the Mentor Teacher’s “knowledge of school policies, procedures, staff and lines of commu-

nication, and the sharing of that knowledge with after-school staff, play a key role in creating a more seamless day for children. Equally essential is the Mentor Teacher’s understanding and support of CAMBA’s mission, philosophy and approach to working with children and families. The Mentor Teacher must be able to effectively balance both school and CBO practices and perspectives.” Regular meetings between the After-school Site Director, the Mentor Teacher, and the Principal provide for timely needs assessments and collaborative goal setting.

ELEMENTS THAT SUPPORT CONNECTION

- Commonly held understanding of youth development principles among school and after-school staff
- Cadre of teachers and after-school staff with dual interests in education and youth development
- Person or intermediary to bridge the gap between leaders of school and after-school
- Some stimuli to create action and motivation towards integration
- Time and money dedicated to relationship building
- Common understanding that school and after-school teachers serve the same children and work towards the same goals

It is the role of the Mentor Teacher to create greater understanding and sharing in regard to classroom space and resources between school and after-school staff.

Mandated Alignment

The Linkages Project, part of Seattle MOST, was funded by Wallace-Readers Digest Funds in 1999 and involved six schools and six out-of-school time providers. The goal of the project was to increase cooperation between out-of-school time programs and schools and to identify a system for building successful partnerships. School's Out Washington and The Seattle Human Services Department provided technical assistance to the project. Over the planning year of the grant, schools and programs learned that they could support and strengthen each other's work.

In 2001 the Seattle School District concluded that it needed help getting students to perform better on academic standards and that learning during out-of-school time "is critical to their success in school." It was logical to consider after-school as one ally to the improvement agenda. The District mandated alignment between school and after-school with rent-free lease agreements as the carrot. Alignment means that "schools, out-of-school time providers, and communities are working in partnership so that children and youth meet or exceed learning standards, and that schools and out-of-school time activities reflect, holistically, the developmental needs of children and youth."

To advise the Alignment Initiative, Seattle Public Schools formed the Learning Partners Group consisting of the School District, Seattle Human Services Division, child care providers, Seattle City Office

for Education, and School's Out Washington. According to Sarah Mello Temple, Education Partnerships Coordinator at School's Out Washington, "because of the work done as part of Linkages, School's Out Washington and Seattle Human Services Division were able to provide guidance to the district in defining the systemic and relational needs for true alignment."

Based on the work of the Linkages project, the Learning Partners Group outlined ten criteria for integration that must be met in order for an after-school provider to remain rent free in a school building. The criteria were created solely for the alignment process.

Programs participating in the Linkages project and programs whose leases were expiring, represented the first wave of schools/after-school programs engaged in the alignment initiative. The first wave schools and the Learning Partners Group have provided mentorship to the second wave of schools/after-school programs seeking confirmation.

While mandating school/after-school connections may have drawbacks, the result in

Over the planning year of the grant, schools and programs learned that they could support and strengthen each other's work.

Seattle has been that school districts have opened up professional development opportunities to after-school providers as well as day school teachers; after-school providers are leading professional development classes during summer institutes and in-service for teachers; and some principals have incorporated their after-school leaders into their school improvement plans and management teams. This activity has translated into increased connections between students' school and after-school experiences.

SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Criteria for OST Provider/School Alignment

1. The school and provider engage in activities that mutually promote programs and services and model effective partnerships that support the integration of the core school day and OST program;
2. The school and provider coordinate program planning and curriculum to ensure alignment between activities and learning standards and communicate to support children's learning;
3. The school and provider coordinate and communicate to support children's acquisition of developmental assets;
4. The school and provider develop and adhere to a plan for shared use of key partnership resources such as facilities/space, curriculum, staff, volunteers, equipment, technology and transportation;
5. The school and provider share pertinent information and communicate regularly about individual student needs; a shared approach to issues related to behavior management, family engagement, child health and safety is used;
6. The school and provider actively participate in district designated professional development opportunities;
7. The school and provider share access to emergency materials and have a shared approach to emergency procedures;
8. A mechanism is present to assure that parents, families and the broader community can meaningfully shape the alignment process;
9. The school and provider jointly develop an approach for ensuring that culturally relevant and anti-biased learning strategies are utilized;
10. The provider develops a plan for reinvesting rent savings in staffing (wages and benefits), training, materials, facility improvements or other efforts that enhance program delivery to children and families.

Forging Connections

How would we know that connections were going on?

We would see:

1. *Examples of good communication strategies:*

- Regular meetings occur between school and after-school professionals;
- Principal and teachers can articulate the goals and contributions of the after-school program;
- After-School Director and staff can articulate the goals and contributions of the day school program;
- Parent/families are aware of the opportunities for after-school care;
- Principal and teachers promote to parents/families the use of after-school programs as a teaching and development support;
- Parent/families can articulate the ways their children's school and after-school experiences intersect and are supported by each other.

2. *Examples of written agreements that guide/frame interactions*

- Written agreements that describe how school and after-school work collectively to meet education and youth development objectives;
- Assessment tools that can be used across school and after-school domains and shared between the two.

3. *Examples of reciprocity*

- Day school teachers have a visible role in after-school program and after-school teachers have a visible role in day school program;
- There are intentional connections between curriculum in after-school and curriculum in day school, i.e., children are working on ratios in math, after-school teachers can incorporate ratios into painting activities, etc. In addition, day school teachers can ask children who attend after-school

Resources

After-School Leaders interviewed for this publication:

New York

Fred McIntosh
The After-School Corporation
Research Coordinator
fmcintosh@tascorp.org

Christie Hodgkins
Church Avenue Merchants Block
Association
Director of After-School Services
christieh@camba.org

Daniel Kreiss
Church Avenue Merchants Block
Association
After-School Program Director - IS 62
dkreiss@earthlink.net

Miriam McDonald, Mentor Teacher
Five students
Ditmas Educational Complex,
Intermediate School 62

Seattle

Sarah Mello Temple
School's Out Washington
Education Partnerships Coordinator
stemple@schoolsoutwashington.org

Jean Anthony
Bailey Gatzert Elementary School
Principal
janthony@seattleschools.org

St. Louis

Georgia Bland-Whitfield
Yeatman Middle Community
Education Center
Principal
georgia.bland-whitfield@slps.org

Ron Miller
Office of Community Education
St. Louis Public Schools
City-Wide Specialist
Ronald.Miller@slps.org

Other Contacts:

Martin J. Blank
Institute for Educational Leadership
Director for Community
Collaboration
blankm@iel.org

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Other Resources:

"Community Programs to Promote
Youth Development"
National Academy Press
www.nap.edu

Forging Connections

(cont. from p. 7)

to write an essay on how they made
group decisions at kickball the after-
noon before, etc.;

- Day school and after-school teachers
exchange information about atten-
dance, behavior, homework, interests
in learning, family, etc.

4. Examples of broad support

- There is observable encouragement

from an overarching system (inter-
mediary, municipal, school district)
towards establishing and sustaining
integration between schools and
after-school programs;

- There are multiple school/after-
school partnerships that demon-
strate integration along a variety of
dimensions;

- There are incentives, propagated by
those in authority and position, for
schools and after-schools to work
towards integration;
- The notion of integration of school
and after-school has a recognizable
public voice.