

BETTER TOGETHER

Building Local Systems to Improve Afterschool

A Conference Report



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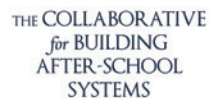
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A report on a conference organized by:





A view from the conference: the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Md.

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Better Together:

A Conference on Afterschool System Building

By H.J. Cummins

From left: Will Miller, president of The Wallace Foundation; Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, mayor of Baltimore; and Jane Sundius, director of education and youth development for the Open Society Institute of Baltimore, discuss afterschool and system building during the conference's opening session.



Almost everyone believes that afterschool programs are one of those good things for youngsters. And yet many kids are left out: Only 15 percent – 8.4 million – of the country’s school children participate, according to a report, “America After 3 PM,” by the advocacy organization Afterschool Alliance.¹ That leaves millions more students returning to empty houses, or worse.² At a Feb. 21-22, 2013, conference in Baltimore, close to 400 people invited from 57 U.S. cities gathered to discuss what they could do to push for better afterschool programs – and make sure that programming is available to all the kids who need it.

1 Afterschool Alliance, JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Key Findings, *America After 3 PM*. 2009. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM_Key_Findings_2009.pdf

2 According U.S. Census publication *Who’s Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 2011*, an estimated 11.1 percent of grade school-age children, some 4.2 million kids, care for themselves on a regular basis during a typical week. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p70-135.pdf>

The meeting was put together by five organizations that generate and spread ideas to improve education and opportunities for young people: the American Youth Policy Forum, the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, The Forum for Youth Investment, the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education & Families and The Wallace Foundation, which

director of education and youth development for the Open Society Institute of Baltimore, a philanthropy that has been financing afterschool work in the city for about 16 years. Not only do the programs meet academic needs (assistance with math homework, for example), they help kids “find themselves – their interests, their passions, their friends,” Sundius said. “All of our kids need that. Afterschool programs aren't optional.”

If you really want to know why we should build systems, it's because too many of our young people are in crisis, and it's every day that their futures are at great risk.

funded the event. Attendees represented an array of institutions at work in the field – including city and county governments, foundations, schools, nonprofits and the programs themselves.

The subject animating them was an emerging feature in the world of afterschool programming: citywide “systems” that coordinate the work of all groups concerned with afterschool so they can together raise program quality and availability. Hence, the conference name: “Better Together: Building Local Systems to Improve Afterschool.” Attendees came from communities that have a system effort under way, whether mature or recently hatched, and in the spirit of “better together,” each city sent a team representing the different partners in their systems.

Why are afterschool programs important?

Making the case for good afterschool programs, Jane Sundius spoke to the conference's opening session as both a mother of three and program

Afterschool is especially important in neighborhoods where poverty, drugs, violence and other problems endanger children and teens. “If you really want to know why we should build systems, it's because too many of our young people are in crisis, and it's every day that their futures are at great risk,” Wallace's director of learning and enrichment, Nancy Devine, said in a session, “What Is an Afterschool System and Why Build One?”

Afterschool professionals are working at a time of growing academic gaps in this country, Wallace President Will Miller told the opening session. One indicator: Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a test considered a benchmark of student proficiency nationwide, show African-American fourth-graders falling behind their white peers. Their math proficiency rates rose from 3 percent to only 17 percent from 1996 to 2011, compared with an increase from 27 percent to 52 percent for white students, Miller said.³ Other research points to gaps in opportunity, too. The poorest 12- to 17-year-olds, for example, lag behind other teens by almost 20 percentage points when it comes to participation in sports, clubs or afterschool lessons, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.⁴

“Afterschool is really where the community can help the school push back against what I call the hungry bear of poverty, because that's really the thing that keeps taking bites out of our progress,”

3 U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2011*. Washington, D.C., 16. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012438>

4 U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, as reported in *A Child's Day (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)*. The most recent *A Child's Day* covers 2009. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/children/data/sipp/well2009/tables.html>



St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman

On List of Great Afterschool Allies, Top Slot Goes to Hizzoner

For anyone looking for a good afterschool advocate, the first door to knock on could be the mayor's.

Mayors care about safety between 3 and 6 p.m. They care about well-educated youngsters – tomorrow's taxpayers and workforce. And when mayors call meetings, schools, police departments and chambers of commerce show up, the National League of Cities' Audrey M. Hutchinson said in an interview during the Better Together conference. Hutchinson is program director of education and afterschool in the league's Institute for Youth, Education and Families.

All that adds up to the potential for mayors to be the driving force for afterschool in their cities.

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed made good on a 2009 campaign promise to open all

the city's 33 recreation centers – two-thirds of which had been shuttered – to house afterschool programs. It took \$3.7 million in city money, plus the mayor won corporate support, from outright grants to donations of playground equipment, according to Amy Phuong, the city's chief service officer.

In Boise, Idaho, Mayor David Bieter created a Mayor's Council on Children and Youth and established a network of afterschool programming – After 3 Boise (meaning after 3 p.m.) – as his first priority. "He wants Boise's youth to grow up in a place where they feel safe and valued, and have full access to opportunities – believing that kind of childhood helps them grow up to be successful, engaged citizens and decide to make Boise their home," said Theresa McLeod, the mayor's assistant for special projects.

In St. Paul, Minn., Mayor Chris Coleman also sees afterschool programs as the heart of a strong community. "This is all connected," said Bela Shah Spooner of the National League of Cities, quoting Coleman. "Afterschool is my neighborhood development strategy. It's my crime prevention strategy. It's my economic development strategy."

The commitment is often personal, as it is with Mayor Angel Tavares in Providence, R.I. "His life was transformed by afterschool," said Hillary Salmons, executive director of the Providence After School Alliance (PASA). "It advanced him, as he says, from Head Start to Harvard, but it really was his violin lessons and his art classes and his poetry and summer experiences that added juice to his life."

Robert Balfanz, principal research scientist at Johns Hopkins University, said in an interview.

Another reason for attention to afterschool is demand from adults. Over and over, parents have said they want their children in a safe place after school and getting help with their homework. The Afterschool Alliance survey showed that the parents of 38 percent of the children not currently in a program – some 18.5 million kids – would like them to be.

Moreover, what's good for families is good for cities, many municipal officials argue. Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake has put safety and strong academics at the core of her efforts to bring 10,000 families into the city. "People want to live where they know their family, their kids,

have a shot," she told the opening session.

Why are afterschool systems important?

In the early 2000s, The Wallace Foundation, a philanthropy that concentrates on education, enrichment and the arts, became concerned that promoting good afterschool programs isn't enough, that a gem of a program here or there is not going to ensure that great programs are accessible to all youngsters who need them. Wallace began working on the idea of building afterschool systems that would help communities strengthen programs overall and make sure kids could take part in them. In 2003, Wallace started a major

initiative that eventually included five cities – Boston; Chicago; New York; Providence, R.I.; and Washington, D.C. – to help them develop these systems. Since then, Wallace has launched a second initiative to support system building in nine others: Baltimore; Denver; Fort Worth; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Louisville, Ky.; Nashville; Philadelphia; and St. Paul.

We have pretty compelling evidence now that high-quality programs can influence a range of important academic and social outcomes for young people. We also have evidence that low-quality programs do not.

Independent of Wallace funding, a number of other cities across the country have taken a serious interest in systems work. All of that has meant the sprouting of afterschool systems that, for the most part, didn't exist a decade ago. The good news is that there is evidence that citywide afterschool systems can make a positive difference, Devine said. She cited a RAND Corp. study that found that Wallace's original five-city initiative had provided "a proof of principle – that organizations across cities could work together toward increasing access, quality, data-based decision making and sustainability."⁵

More research can help determine the ultimate impact of these young systems. For now, those working in the field can benefit by sharing emerging lessons about what helps, or hinders, afterschool system success.

5 Susan J. Bodilly, Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al., *Hours of Opportunity: Lessons from Five Cities on Building Systems to Improve After-School, Summer, and Other Out-of-School-Time Programs (Volume I)*, RAND Corporation, 2010, 74. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org

Two key roles for systems: boosting program quality, collecting and using good data

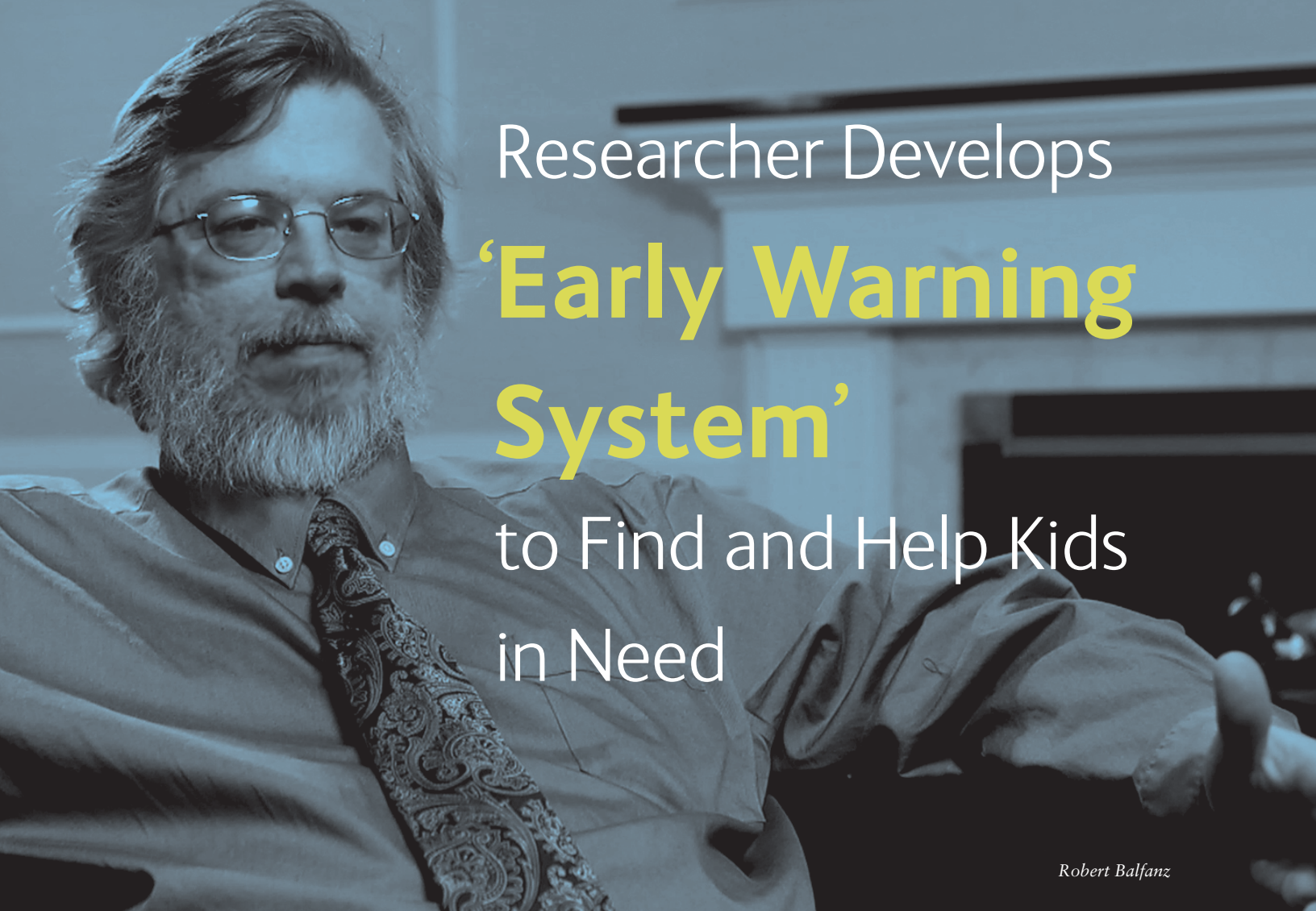
So, what, exactly, is an afterschool system? Simply put, it's a partnership of all the major afterschool players in a community, although who these players are varies from city to city. In most cases, the groups include local government agencies like youth departments, parks and recreation departments, and libraries; afterschool program providers; and funders, including private groups and government. In many cities, schools are central. And in a number of places, colleges and universities, which sometimes house programs, add to the mix. Higher education can also help in training afterschool workers and in assessing program quality and results ("evaluation research"), Dale Blyth, a professor in the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development, said in an interview.

The structure of the partnerships varies across communities, too. Most of them have a coordinating entity, sometimes called a "backbone organization," a term popularized by the nonprofit consulting firm FSG. These organizations can be housed in many places. In New York City, the municipal department of youth and community development serves as the backbone, while in many cities nonprofit "intermediaries," such as the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) in Providence, R.I., have sprung up. Their work can include fundraising, training and professional development for afterschool workers, information sharing and advocacy, according to the first national survey of intermediary organizations.⁶

Among the backbone organizations' most critical functions, however, are two matters that were of particular importance to the conference-goers: improving the quality of afterschool programs and collecting and analyzing data to contribute to that goal.

(continued on page 11)

6 Jessica Donner, *Making the Connections: A Report on the First National Survey of Out-of-School Time Intermediary Organizations*, Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, 2012. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org



Researcher Develops 'Early Warning System' to Find and Help Kids in Need

Robert Balfanz

As afterschool systems look for guidance in targeting and serving students in need, they have only to remember their ABCs, according to Robert Balfanz, principal research scientist at Johns Hopkins University. Balfanz helped develop an early warning system to pick up signals that children are in danger of dropping out of school.

Signs of failure come early, Balfanz said in the conference session "Data and Youth Outcomes," as he described three crucial markers that adults need to pay attention to: children's school attendance, behavior and course completion – or ABCs. Especially in high-poverty areas, youngsters as early as the sixth

grade who are missing a month or more of school, getting into even mild misbehavior, and failing math or English have very low odds of graduating, he added in an interview.

The beauty of the markers is they flag which students to target and how to help them, Balfanz said in the conference session. "There's got to be infrastructure laid so it's easy for afterschool providers to know who among their kids missed a few days of school last week, who's got in trouble, what test they have on Friday, and who's not turning assignments in," Balfanz said.

For good programs, he looks for both strong academic offerings and enrich-

ments like drama, debate, dance, robotics and chess. Not only are such activities "cognitively rich," he said, they move students quickly through a cycle of effort, performance and feedback.

"The real power of afterschool, I think, is giving them lived experiences that effort leads to success," Balfanz said, "because in a high-poverty environment what life teaches you is that life is capricious. It doesn't tell you that if you work really hard good things always happen."

“Every time we demonstrated success, we demonstrated that we were concerned about quality. It wasn’t just about giving kids a place to go.”

After Hurricane Katrina, a Community “Miraculously” Re-Builds Afterschool



Gina Warner

Building better afterschool for urban kids is difficult under the best of circumstances. Imagine what Gina Warner faced in 2006 when – five months after Hurricane Katrina – she assumed oversight of a small nonprofit, the Partnership for Youth Development, that was bent on building the afterschool system in New Orleans. Here are edited excerpts of an interview in which Warner, now executive director of the National AfterSchool Association, talks about afterschool in the wake of one of the worst natural disasters in the nation’s history.

“Out of the 115 parks and recreation centers in our city, 107 were damaged. We went from over 200 afterschool programs to just three. They were in public schools serving families living on cruise ships, primarily families of first responders. These families had been traumatically impacted by the storm, had lost their homes – and afterschool was really the place for them. Imagine children

going to live on a cruise ship for their evenings. The idea of afterschool – a place for them to run around and play and be kids – was so important to their social and emotional well-being.

“Prior to the storm, the City Recreation Department budget had been about \$5 million. In the first summer after Katrina, that budget dropped to \$87,000. What are you going to do with \$87,000? How are you going to serve kids?”

“Miraculously, I can’t even begin to talk about the number of people who worked without salaries that summer to do everything that we could to support our kids. Given the devastation, people were reluctant to invest: Would the money be well spent? Were families coming back? We had to do a lot of persuading to get them to understand that we needed to have these programs and send a signal to families that neighborhoods and communities were coming back and therefore they could return – from Houston, from Atlanta,

from Baton Rouge.

“Public investors, national foundations: They really all came together to help and support our kids. Every time we demonstrated success, we demonstrated that we were concerned about quality. It wasn’t just about giving kids a place to go. That drove other investments, allowing us to make the case that we were putting the city on a new and improved track in terms of how we served our children.

“By the time I left six years later, we were up to well over 300 afterschool programs and had brought back many of our recreational centers. In so many neighborhoods, the afterschool, the community center was the linchpin. I’m happy and really proud of the work that we did in the afterschool community to be such a part of rebuilding not just programs but neighborhoods and the city as a whole.”

How a system improves program quality

It's pretty simple. To reap benefits from after-school, children need to attend programs that are good. "We have pretty compelling evidence now that high-quality programs can influence a range of important academic and social outcomes for young people. We also have evidence that low-quality programs do not, and that's really critical," Nicole Yohalem, senior director of special projects at The Forum for Youth Investment, said during a session called "Building Quality: Lessons From Research and Practice."

Afterschool systems begin to raise the quality of programs citywide by getting the afterschool partners to arrive at a consensus on the definition of program quality and then work toward improving programs according to that definition. This is no easy task, and experts in afterschool break down the steps as follows:

- using the agreed-upon definition of program quality as the basis for program standards;
- developing the standards;
- adopting assessments that determine where programs meet those standards – and where they fall short;
- getting programs to use those assessments; and
- improving the programs based on what the assessments show.

How is this effort best organized? Yohalem advises thinking of an endeavor with three stages: a planning phase that engages all the individuals and organizations that need to come together; a designing and building phase, in which the stakeholders develop what Yohalem calls a "quality improvement system" (QIS); and a refining stage for stakeholders to make needed adjustments and sustain the QIS. Ideally, says Yohalem, who co-authored a guide to quality improvement systems, this amounts to the creation of a feedback

We do have to balance our support for improvement with performance, in our role as monitor and steward of city tax levies. If you have a contract with us for 100 kids and you have only 50, that's a problem. And if those 50 are not attending, that's a problem.

loop – planning-improvement-reflection, leading to more planning-improvement-reflection – as the effort works to strengthen quality across the community.⁷ (This mirrors the feedback loop that afterschool staff members can use to improve programming at their sites, she added.)

For an assessment tool, many have turned to the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA), from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, a division of The Forum for Youth Investment. Another popular choice mentioned at the conference is the Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS), from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College. Some systems have customized one of the national tools – as Providence and Palm Beach County, Fla., did with the Youth PQA. Others have created their own.

As groups go about setting standards and selecting their assessment tool, they don't have to reinvent the wheel, Yohalem said in an interview. Research has already identified some characteristics, beyond basic safety requirements, of good programming, she said, such things as: hands-on learning, an atmosphere in which children can develop friendships, and opportunities to exercise

⁷ Nicole Yohalem, Elizabeth Devaney, Charles Smith and Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, *Building Citywide Systems for Quality: A Guide and Case Studies for Afterschool Leaders*, Forum for Youth Investment, 2012. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org.

leadership. Generating the kind of data that can ferret out problems and point to how to solve them is very important, Yohalem stressed. “If you’re told that 14 percent of your kids are reading below grade level, it’s hard to know what to do with that,” she said. But a new wave of observational instruments gives afterschool workers concrete feedback on their strengths and weaknesses: Did they greet the kids as they walked in? Did they create small groups? Did they ask open-ended questions, a way to provoke independent thinking and discussion? Did they interact in ways that are respectful?

Assessing programs: carrots and sticks

One of the biggest challenges in getting programs to accept evaluation is allaying fears that programs with low assessment scores will be punished by reduction or suspension of funding. So, many systems simply take money off the table and work under the assumption that programs will – voluntarily – want to eliminate deficiencies. In policy vernacular, that’s called replacing “high stakes” with “low stakes.”

Prime Time Palm Beach County, an intermediary that reaches about 200 programs serving 20,000 kids, mostly elementary school students, chose the low-stakes approach, executive director Suzette Harvey said in the conference session “Building Quality: Lessons from Research and Practice.” To do that, Prime Time contracted the ratings work out to a third party from the start. “We realized we weren’t going to get the kind of trust, the kind of buy-in and the authentic participation we wanted otherwise,” Harvey said. Prime Time has no hand in the direct funding of programs, for the same reason. Instead, it has become the place where providers go to get help to improve, erasing deficits that the assessments find. Prime Time’s providers have shown that they care about their own professionalism. “Usually they’re harder on themselves than any folks from the outside are,” Harvey said in an interview. That and all the supports that Prime Time provides have made the arrangement successful. “We have never had the situation where a program falls a couple of points and gets defunded,” she said.

Providence and its intermediary PASA, which focused initially on programming for middle school students, began with a low stakes approach in part because the city didn’t have a huge number of providers available to serve this age group, according to Elizabeth Devaney, a PASA consultant and the organization’s former director of quality initiatives. “But we also felt pretty strongly that the high-stakes approach would just alienate the people we wanted to partner with,” she said. “We needed to build a system where we were raising all boats.” Devaney spoke during a conference session called “Going to Scale: Growing and Sustaining Quality Improvement Systems (QIS).”

Systems use many “carrots” to encourage acceptance. Through a third-party agency, Prime Time in Palm Beach County gives one-time payments of \$200 to \$3,000 to individual workers – exclusively at QIS sites – who earn particular certificates or degrees, Harvey said in an interview. “It’s our ‘we-want-you-to-stay-in-the-field incentive,’” she said. And PASA “endorses” programs that meet certain standards, Devaney told the conference: They must maintain enrollment and average daily attendance rates of 80 percent or better; at least four-fifths of their students must rank the program as good or excellent; and the programs must earn a 3 or more (on a scale of 1 to 5, with “5” being the best) on the program quality assessment. Their reward? Higher hourly payment rates, exclusive rights to bid on some new projects – and pride.

In some cases, programs face “sticks,” too – often wielded by government agencies accountable for a good return on tax dollars. In New York City, poorly attended programs – often seen as a proxy for poor quality – get docked a portion of their payments, Denice Williams, assistant commissioner for out-of-school time programs in the city’s department of youth and community development, said in an interview. “We do have to balance our support for improvement with performance, in our role as monitor and steward of city tax levies,” Williams said. “If you have a contract with us for 100 kids and you have only 50, that’s a problem. And if those 50 are not attending, that’s a problem.”

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Speakers Debate Purpose of Afterschool: Academic or Other?

The role of academics in afterschool programming aroused debate at the conference, reflecting a tension in the field: Should afterschool seek mainly to bolster students' school performance? Or should it seek mainly to help kids in a variety of non-academic ways, from supporting their social-emotional development to providing a safe place for fun, relaxation and skill building?

Programs have to be measured by their impact on academics, said Jonathan Brice, school support network officer for Baltimore City Public Schools, a district of about 85,000 students. He spoke during a session called "What Is an Afterschool System and Why Build One?" Afterschool programs need to be fresh and interesting, but ultimately their results should be scored by better report cards and test scores for students, Brice said, adding this is what schools expect and funders want to see. He would love to be able to go to them with anecdotes of youngsters who had overcome obstacles because of afterschool, he said, "but they'll say, 'Okay. That's nice, but what data do you have that support that?'" In the end, Brice said, afterschool students "should really be leading the emergence of higher achievement in all of our schools."

Challenging that notion was Carla Sanger, president and CEO of LA's BEST,

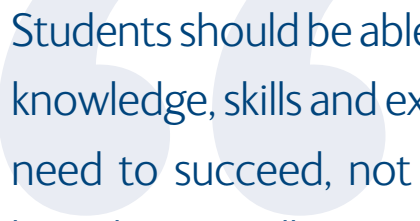
servicing students in some of the most vulnerable neighborhoods in Los Angeles. "I don't care about test scores," Sanger said, adding, "I don't want to be blamed nor cheered for increases or decreases in test scores. It's not my job." Too much emphasis on academics drains programs of time for activities – like sports or theater – that build the capacity to learn. "Giving children access to their thoughts and feelings to make them feel credible is so, so important, and I never want to lose sight of that," Sanger said. She also noted LA's BEST tracks the program's impact on certain behaviors – and through this has data suggesting positive program effects on school attendance and crime rates. "I'm helping kids become more available to learn," she said.

Two developments are challenging the either-or nature of the debate. One is that many people in both the education and afterschool worlds have come to view absenteeism, a cause of poor student achievement, as an appropriate target of afterschool. Brice said afterschool programs contributed to a 30 percent drop from 2007 to 2011 in the number of students missing 10 or more days. "You have to give [students] an inducement – like having the type of activities that cause students to want to attend – and that's where out-of-school time really, I think, makes its mark – because it's about engaging students," Brice said in an interview.

Another development is the emergence of valid measures for "noncognitive" abilities. Johns Hopkins University researcher Robert Balfanz, speaking at a conference session on "Data and Youth Outcomes," cited the Gallup Student Poll, a youth development survey that captures such traits as optimism and well-being – and has the research that connects these to academic achievement. The free, online tool asks youngsters questions like, "How many times in the past week has someone given you a statement of positive affirmation of your contribution?" For providers, he said, "When you find lots of kids in your program saying, 'No one,' then you know that you have an issue."

Betsy Brand, executive director of the American Youth Policy Forum, answers the question, "What's the primary purpose of afterschool?" by saying afterschool can serve many functions. "High-quality afterschool programs can provide students with both academic supports that lead to improved school performance and attendance, and they can allow students to explore new fields and identify and ignite passions," she said. "With their combination of formal and informal learning, afterschool programs are situated to help students develop in all domains."

From left: Nancy Devine, Wallace Foundation director of learning and enrichment, moderates a panel discussion with Jonathan Brice, school support network officer, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Carla Sanger, CEO of LA's BEST.



Students should be able to acquire the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to succeed, not only in school but also in college, work and life ... Afterschool and summer programs are a great venue for developing skills.

Building quality: recruitment, staff training and more

Afterschool systems from across the country shared examples of how they are working to meet their standards of quality.

For Carla Sanger, president of LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow), which serves 28,000 youngsters in 189 elementary schools, recruiting the right workers is key. Most of LA's BEST staff members live within two miles of the programs where they work, Sanger said in an interview. "We do that by design because they have such an interest in improving their own communities," she said. "I do believe that community folks involved in solving problems are undervalued. So we start with that value."

Given its emphasis on neighborhood recruitment – rather than traditional credentials like experience and professional certificates – the intermediary has developed a training program that meets its site staff members where they are. An online component does that literally – making many of its trainings available to workers both at the sites and on their home computers, Tommy Brewer, director of staff development, said in an interview. It also does that figuratively, Brewer said, giving this example: LA's BEST has a program of "basic training" workshops in such skills as classroom management, activity planning, homework support and emergency procedures. But first the trainees complete a series of online prerequisites that include fundamentals in child development. That

way, everyone shows up for the workshops with a solid background and prepared for the lessons.

Frontline workers are not the only ones who could use help burnishing skills. A common theme raised at the conference was the necessity of providing support to directors of the program sites. "It's your site leader who you're expecting to do the work and manage the work," Charles Smith, executive director of the Weikart Center, said in the "Building Quality" session. Others pointed out that site directors don't have as high a turnover rate as the frontline afterschool staff, so boosting their abilities can be particularly cost effective. Moreover, if site directors are skeptical of improvement efforts, the chances of success plummet, Harvey, in Palm Beach County, said. "We've had situations where we would do training with the frontline staff, get them all excited to go, and the director would not attend the training and would not let them implement any of the work that they'd done, and that became very demoralizing," she said.

System organizers also need to be ready to do course corrections in training, as Prime Time Palm Beach County learned. The intermediary hit on the idea of sending some of its best site directors as "peer coaches" into emerging programs, Harvey said in the "Building Quality" session. But feedback after a year pointed to a problem: It turned out the coaches were so busy giving 110 percent to their own programs that they didn't have time for the extra duty – "and you could always have the element of competition," Harvey said. Instead, Prime Time's existing full-time "quality advisers" took on the one-on-one coach role.

One city leader suggested that better training for all the people who staff afterschool programs may not be enough to ensure the existence of a stable, effective afterschool workforce – that upping the famously low salaries in the profession matters, too. "One thing we are going to have to address is paying people what they are worth," said Paul Soglin, the mayor of Madison, Wis., speaking at a session called "Going to Scale – Growing and Sustaining Quality Improvement Systems."

STOP

Red Flags Keep Kids From the Academic Danger Zone

Because every day of struggle pushes students further off the learning track, an afterschool program in southwest Baltimore is making sure that one bad day doesn't turn into two.

The strategy is a "red flag system," and it's at the heart of Higher Achievement's work with about a quarter of the 220 middle schoolers at Lakeland School, a low, red-brick building in one of the city's poor neighborhoods.

It works like this: At the end of the formal school day, Higher Achievement mentors supplement students' daily class lessons, using materials provided by the program. Later that night, they assess each student. And the review is so specific that a mentor can see not only that Sally did poorly on math that day but that her particular struggle was with simple variable equations, for example. The mentor notes (or, "red flags") that in the program's data management system, which by the next day spits out

follow-up lessons specifically on simple variable equations. The review helps ensure the student doesn't fall behind on any one core principle.

"The tool was created to jump in early, so we don't have to sit and wait for report cards at the end of the semester," said Erin Hodge-Williams, Higher Achievement's Baltimore director.

The red flag system was introduced in the 2012-2013 school year at all the Higher Achievement sites: three in Baltimore, and 10 more in Pittsburgh; Richmond, Va.; and Washington, D.C. — where Higher Achievement began. The program, which aims to close the opportunity gap for young people in high-risk communities, currently serves about 1,000 students — or, "scholars," as they're called. It focuses on middle school, a time notorious for setting students up to fail and eventually drop out.

Higher Achievement operates on an extensive schedule. During the school

year, students spend 3:30 to 8 p.m. three days a week in the afterschool program, which also provides an evening meal, homework help and electives that run from drama to athletics. A six-week, all-day summer program is equally rigorous, and culminates with a field trip to a college campus. (The organization receives support from The Wallace Foundation for its expanded learning efforts.)

Evidence of success for the red flag system is early and anecdotal. But Lakeland figures from the first to second quarter of the 2012-2013 academic year show that math failure rates dropped from 42 percent to 10 percent. At the same time, students scoring As or Bs rose from 17 percent to 37 percent.

"We really believe it's because of how individualized and proactive we are with the students," Hodge-Williams said.

Data for smart decision making

Current, reliable information is the engine of afterschool systems. With reliable data, afterschool organizers can chart the progress of their efforts, recognize problems and possible remedies, handle matters ranging from program location to program improvements and arm themselves with the facts to build a compelling case about afterschool for funders and the public. In other words, good data power good decision making.

Data on how programs are affecting kids

The type of information that systems collect depends in part on what system organizers see as the purpose or purposes of afterschool programming: Is it to boost academic achievement, to nurture social-emotional skills or to support youngsters in other ways entirely? The system reason-for-being differs from city to city, but many conference speakers, including Balfanz, the Johns Hopkins researcher, pointed to school attendance as a particularly telling measure of the value of afterschool for children.

Chris Smith, executive director of the intermediary Boston After School & Beyond, sees atten-

(continued on page 19)

Through an Arts Program, Middle-



Leave it to kids in an afterschool program to turn a symbol of urban decay into a symbol of hope.

Wooden planks covering up broken doors and windows are a dispiriting sight on abandoned row-houses in East Baltimore. Last fall, however, a group of middle-schoolers looked past the blight and envisioned the planks as canvases for striking street art. Equipped with wheat-paste and brushes, they covered the boards with life-sized portraits of the futures they imagined for themselves – as doctors, lawyers, athletes, business people and other professionals.

The project exemplifies what can happen when various afterschool players work together. It was the result of a summer digital photography class offered at an East Baltimore charter school, the Collington Square

School, through Elev8, a program that brings afterschool, summer and other programming to disadvantaged middle-school students. Elev8 tapped the Creative Alliance, a visual and performing arts organization housed in a refurbished movie theater in Baltimore's Highlandtown neighborhood, to run the class. Then, under the guidance of professional artists, 10 tweens mastered photography and studio basics, learned about the history of street art and dreamed up a project to bring art to their neighborhood while showcasing their aspirations for adulthood.

You can view the results – which were also displayed at the Better Together conference – on these pages.



Schoolers See Beyond the Blight



Building Provider Financial Know-How



Hilda Polanco

“System sustainability” – as in, can afterschool systems survive when public and private funding is scarce? – was a phrase on the lips of many conference-goers. But the vitality of a set of organizations at the heart of such systems was also very much on the minds of attendees: the nonprofits that provide programming to kids.

These organizations, like many nonprofits, often suffer cash-flow and other money difficulties that put their futures in danger and hamper their current operations. The reason for the problem is twofold: the groups’ own financial management weaknesses and burdensome payment practices by government and other funders.

Launched in 2009, Wallace’s Strengthening Financial Management demonstration project has sought to change this picture by offering financial training to 26 leading afterschool groups in Chicago and working to improve private and Illinois state funding procedures.

In a conference session on how after-

school nonprofits can build their financial know-how, one speaker painted a portrait of the stress funders sometimes place on nonprofits. “Illinois is the poster child for state fiscal crisis,” said Delia Coleman, director of public policy at the Donors Forum, an association of Illinois philanthropies and nonprofits that has received Wallace funding for its efforts to reform funders’ payment practices in the state. “The state is number one in unpaid reimbursements and number three in not covering the full cost of services and changing the contract terms midstream.”

For Mujeres Latinas en Acción, a social service organization that offers afterschool programming to children and teen girls in Chicago, financial management training has proved valuable in the face of Illinois’ funding problems, said Maria Pesqueira, president and CEO of the group. Emphasizing that she was far from a numbers person – “believe me, I’m not an accountant” – Pesqueira said her organization has nonetheless learned to view budgeting as “a tool and a map” to accomplishing its goals. “At the end of the day, it’s the dollars

that we have on hand (or hope to have on hand) and how we spend them that allows us to do the work we do on a daily basis,” she said in an interview.

Hilda Polanco, who led the Chicago afterschool organizations’ financial training and consulting, urged nonprofits that want to strengthen their finances to consider taking four steps: develop a strong financial plan; regularly review financial results; design a strategy for building cash reserves; and make sure that everyone in the organization understands the group’s financial underpinnings. Polanco is founder and managing director of Fiscal Management Associates, which carried out the financial management training in Chicago for Wallace.

Most important? The financial plan, Polanco said in an interview. “Of all the different aspects of financial management that we focus on in building organization strength, we really think planning is first and foremost the place to begin,” she said.

dance as a two-fer. “Of all the measures, attendance is my favorite because it’s both an indicator and an outcome,” Smith said in the “Data and Youth Outcomes” session. “It can be an outcome of a good afterschool program if it draws kids to school, and we know that’s predictive of so many good school outcomes.”

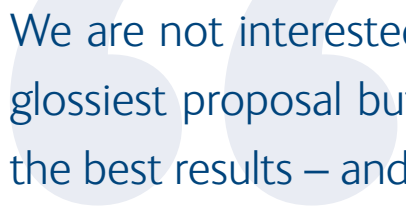
For The After-School Corporation (TASC), which is working on an effort, called ExpandedED, to increase learning time in 11 schools in Baltimore, New Orleans and New York City, student progress toward high school graduation is a central goal, said Katie Brohawn, TASC’s director of research. A tool called GradTracker uses attendance along with two other indicators – academic proficiency and behavior – to determine the proportions of ExpandedED children who are on track to graduate, closing in on graduation or off track, Brohawn said. Academic proficiency is determined by student results on standardized tests, while behavior is determined by how children score on assessments of social-emotional development, including the KIPP Character Report Card. Developed by the KIPP charter schools, this instrument rates children on a scale of one (“very much unlike the student”) to five (“very much like the student”) in eight character traits, from “zest” to “self-control” to “curiosity.”

Several conference speakers said they believe so-called “soft skills” – like persistence, problem-solving and developing relationships – are making headway as success measures. One was Boston & Beyond’s Smith, who prefers to call them “power skills.” “Our work is based on the idea that students should be able to acquire the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to succeed, not only in school but also in college, work and life,” Smith said in the “Data and Youth Outcomes” session. “We believe strongly that afterschool and summer programs are a great venue for developing those skills.”

Putting data to use: improving program quality

Data can help afterschool system organizers figure out program strengths and weaknesses and then respond with the help the programs need to improve.

Boston & Beyond, for example, used information from three related assessment instruments to take the pulse of the city’s summer programs, which include 40 schools, 17 independent nonprofits and about 1,600 students in grades 3 through 12,



We are not interested in who has the glossiest proposal but who’s giving us the best results – and has the track record to prove it.

–Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake,
Baltimore, Maryland

Smith said in an interview. Two were program assessments: the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes Y – the SAYO Y, completed by the youth – and the observational Assessment of Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT), completed by outside evaluators. The third tool was the SAYO T – for completion by teachers and program staff members, who looked at youngsters pre- and post-program in four skill areas selected by the sites: communication, engagement in learning, relationships with adults and initiative.

Beyond all that, the evaluations captured summer attendance figures and youngsters’ progress in math and English Language Arts. Then each program received a report that benchmarked it both against the average of all sites and against every other site individually. “We saw differences in both program and student-level measures, and we used the data to inform and customize training and coaching,” Smith said. “On average these programs improved year over year from 2011 to 2012. So this helps individual programs and the whole system improve.”

PASA uses program attendance figures as one way to monitor quality in the middle-school

programming, known as The AfterZone, which it oversees. In an AfterZone sports league run by police officers, PASA noticed, for example, that while enrollment was always high, attendance regularly dropped off. The officers were good guys and capable coaches, consultant Devaney said in an interview, “but for them, something like how to build reflection into a sports program was a foreign concept.” PASA sent in youth development experts to provide training – suggesting, for example, that the coaches build in leadership opportunities for the kids by letting one student lead the stretching exercises or by making an eighth-grader an assistant coach. “We saw the attendance improve steadily over time,” Devaney said.

Other data uses: pinpointing problems, filling programming gaps, advocating

Breaking down data in new ways can reveal problems and point the way to solutions. For example, research in Baltimore showed that special education students were underrepresented in afterschool programs, Balfanz said in the “Data and Youth Outcomes” session. “That’s a key group of students who need to come to school every day and need to do well,” he said. One way to tackle this was to beef up recruitment efforts. In scrutinizing its data, TASC uncovered a previously undetected pattern of absences at one New York school: Attendance plummeted on the Fridays before three-day weekends, with the result that students could lose a week of classes over the course of an academic year. The school responded to the data by sending parents a note explaining that it was important for children to attend even on days before a three-day weekend, TASC’s Brohawn told the session “Sharing Data Across the Afterschool System to Inform Decision-Making and Improve Quality and Access.”

Data also tell cities where they need afterschool programs. Bela Shah Spooner, principal associate for afterschool initiatives at the National League of Cities’ Institute for Youth, Education & Families, described this “mapping” in an interview. First, cities ask the question: What do we have? They map their schools and existing programs – including details on what those programs look like and what ages they serve. They also look at

transportation, crime data and poverty levels – often using data on students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches as an indicator of family income. Then cities ask the question: What do we want for our young people? “There needs to be a conversation about, ‘What do we want to do about the needs in our community? What is our vision for young people? What outcomes do we want and what is it going to take to get there?’” Spooner said. And then they can find – and fill – any gaps.

In New York, Williams, the assistant commissioner for out-of-school time programs, said the city uses youth demographics to identify the neediest areas, allocating 75 percent of afterschool dollars to “priority ZIP codes.” The numbers help justify spending decisions to elected officials across the city. “Using the data and being able to share the data with them is powerful,” Williams said in the conference session, “Increasing Access to High Quality Afterschool Programming.” After looking at similar demographic information – including statistics on poverty and juvenile crime and access to transportation – officials in Boise, Idaho, decided to send two Mobile Recreation Vans evenings and weekends into certain neighborhoods, according to Theresa McLeod, assistant to Mayor David Bieter. Not only do the vans bring art supplies and recreational equipment to the youngsters, they also bring healthy snacks, as well as information on nutrition and health, to their families.

For funders, reliable information is crucial to making responsible financing decisions. Mayor Rawlings-Blake described her time as president of the Baltimore city council, when she would scrutinize how local afterschool dollars were being spent. “When you took a look at the map and you saw concentrations of resources without outcomes changing, we knew we had to do things differently,” she said during the conference’s opening session. Rawlings-Blake advised those seeking support from funders to present “the numbers” to make their case. “We are not interested in who has the glossiest proposal, but who’s giving us the best results – and has the track record to prove it,” she said.

(continued on page 22)



Wanted: Great Afterschool Programs for Teens, Too

Among the biggest voids in city afterschool systems is high-quality programming for middle- and high-school students, programming that could help keep vulnerable adolescents on the track to adult success, while steering them clear of drugs, dropping out and other dangers.

Good afterschool for this age group rests on an understanding of what adolescents want and need, conference speakers said. That begins with offering students plenty of opportunities for leadership, according to Priscilla Little, an afterschool initiative manager at Wallace and former associate director of the Harvard Family Research Project. A study that Little co-authored found that giving students many ways to demonstrate leadership was a key (read “statistically significant”) characteristic

of teen programs with high retention rates.¹ Little spoke during a conference session called Attracting and Retaining Older Youth.

Adolescents also want some say in programming, according to another panelist, Heather Clawson, vice president of research, evaluation and innovation at Communities in Schools, a drop-out prevention program.

What that programming looks like varies by age-group. Middle-school students need some structure, but prize the ability to experiment with lots of different activities, said Hillary Salmons, executive director of the Providence After School Alliance, which oversees a

large network of programs for middle- and high-school students in that city. High school teens are typically more eager to specialize. “They are starting to self-select. ‘I want to be a dancer. I’m really into film. I’m into developing video games,’” Salmons said during an interview.

Mary Ellen Caron, chief executive officer of After School Matters, a program for teenagers in Chicago, illustrated just how important such opportunities can be. She recalled a high school student who told her he had won a four-year scholarship to Oberlin, which is known for its music conservatory. The clincher? His only musical training had come in afterschool.

“I get goose bumps just telling you that,” she said.

¹ The study, *Engaging Older Youth: Program and City-Level Strategies to Support Sustained Participation in Out-of-School Time*, is available free of charge at www.wallacefoundation.org.

A Workout to Build Financial Muscle: **StrongNonprofits.org**



Launched in early 2012, www.StrongNonprofits.org is a website containing more than 60 free how-tos, tools and articles for afterschool and other nonprofits that want to strengthen their financial management. Features range from a five-step budget-development guide to an article on sensible growth strategies and a podcast on how to understand the true costs of programming. The site also offers an array of aids, including the “Go or No Go Decision Tool,” a questionnaire that helps an organization decide whether accepting a contract would help or hurt the group’s bottom line.

The site grew out of The Wallace Foundation’s Strengthening Financial Management initiative, which has offered training and consulting to help 26 Chicago afterschool nonprofits bolster their financial know how. *[See article on p. 18.]* The content was assembled by Fiscal Management Associates, a consultancy that specializes in financial management for nonprofits and that provided the Wallace grantee training and consulting.

Data collection requires effort

All of which is not to say that collecting and sharing data is easy. Afterschool systems have to work within the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act – FERPA. Typically that involves a data-sharing agreement with the schools, Christopher Kingsley, principal associate for data initiatives at the National League of Cities, said in an interview. And anything beyond basic “directory information” – name, address, phone number and such – requires permission from the parents, except under very specific research conditions, he said. Sometimes schools will add that permission form to the many documents that parents sign when enrolling their children; sometimes it’s handled when youngsters sign up for afterschool programs. As long as all the paperwork is in order, Kingsley said, “FERPA doesn’t forbid the exchange of student information where it is in the best interest of kids. As long as afterschool providers are sensitive to the assurances schools require, in terms of how data is shared and used, they have every reason to expect they’ll be granted the access they need.”

Apart from complying with student privacy regulations, afterschool organizers have to manage within the different ways schools record their data and make it available. TASC’s Brohawn encountered much variation when she was collecting data for the ExpandedED schools, she said in an interview. New York has a long windup that involves going through an institutional review board, getting parental permission and putting in a data request. “There are lots of steps, but they are well laid out, and once you do them you have access to a wealth of data,” Brohawn said. In New Orleans, on the other hand, Brohawn had no central board to turn to and was dealing with individual charter schools that each kept different data. She found the simplest way to gain access to each was to send a copy of the New York non-disclosure form. “We said, ‘Just so you know, this is what New York City lawyers approved.’ And they decided to use that language,” she said.

Getting the data machinery right: choosing an MIS

In order to collect, store and share data, many cities set up a central, shared repository of important statistical and other information – a Management Information System, or, MIS. Cities choose from a variety of possible MIS caretakers, Kingsley said in an interview. Sometimes it’s a foundation, as in St. Paul, Minn., where the Wilder Foundation manages the MIS. Sometimes it’s the school system – Nashville, for example – or a city agency. In still other instances, the caretaker is an independent nonprofit, Kingsley said.

The other basic decision for afterschool efforts is whether to buy one of about six commercially available systems or build one of their own. If data management will be the task of a partner that is already handling extensive data – as with cities or school districts – some efforts decide just to build on what’s in place, according to Kingsley. “But a lot of nonprofits don’t have anything like a data system, and in those cases oftentimes they’re not well served trying to create something from scratch,” he said.

Whatever MIS is chosen, it should be as hassle-free for users as possible, Kingsley said. Program providers, for example, may already be making similar reports to multiple funders, so the system data-collection effort should avoid requiring them to fill out yet another form. One possibility is to streamline data collection so that multiple databases work together and information sent to one satisfies many, he said.

It’s also important that the MIS capture whatever pieces of information all the various stakeholders want and then share that data with them. Sometimes really useful information doesn’t reach the providers – like the results of external assessments of their quality, Kingsley said. “Without that, if programs are performing poorly, they’re missing the information that could galvanize them to do better,” he said. “Conversely, high-quality programs are missing the validation that can help them sustain the commitment of funders and city leaders to their work.”

Teams from 57 cities gathered in Baltimore Feb. 21-22, 2013, to learn and share lessons about afterschool system building.



Professional Development, YouTube-Style

By knowing who is staffing its programs – young adults, mostly in their early 20s – LA’s BEST is taking a page from YouTube as it devises new ways to train workers. The organization has developed an assortment of three- to five-minute videos to post on its own online training platform. Starting in the fall of 2013,

staff members will be able to search for information in the way they are used to these days: calling up brief videos that cover very specific tasks – in this case such topics as “Effective Check-ins” and “Transition Strategies.”

“We know that for the majority of our staff, this is their first job, so we’ve taken

on the responsibility organizationally to prepare them to do the work we want them to do,” Tommy Brewer, director of staff development at LA’s BEST, said in an interview.

Boosting program participation

Afterschool programs are of little use if young people can’t reach them or choose not to take part. Indeed, boosting participation in programs is one of the main challenges in the afterschool field. Smart use of data can help in ways noted earlier in this report, enabling system organizers to make more informed decisions about things like program location or quality improvements.

It also helps to hear what students have to say, as system organizers in Boise, Idaho, learned.

Boise added outreach to junior high students at the urging of several high school members of the Mayor’s Council on Children and Youth, McLeod, the mayor’s assistant, said in an interview. Those high schoolers went into three junior high schools and surveyed students to see if they felt connected to their community and if they were involved in afterschool activities. If not, was it lack of interest? Unappealing programs? Jobs?

A big reason for lack of involvement, it turned out, was lack of transportation. So, working with the transit authority that operates Boise’s city buses, the high school students created a pilot program called My Ride Junior High. On bus route maps, they added potential points of interest for students – afterschool programs, the YMCA, the art museum, libraries and volunteer opportunities.

“We wanted students to feel like they have opportunities to be engaged in safe, accessible afterschool activities, rather than be home alone,” McLeod said. Because its buses were not full that time of day, the transit company agreed to give out free passes – now 150 to 250 per semester – and all the players will consider expanding the program to all the city’s junior highs. “I’m certain our partners are willing to look at this because the problem and a solution were identified by students,” McLeod said. “They are the ‘subject matter experts,’ and we’re not,” she said.

Building systems that can last

Conference-goers needed little reminder that afterschool efforts face a tough financial climate and that the “new normal,” as Baltimore Mayor Rawlings-Blake put it, means parsimonious public spending. Given that reality, many wondered, what could be done to ensure that afterschool systems endure?

Speaker after speaker emphasized that although sufficient funding for high-quality programming is crucial, they see the unified efforts of the many players in afterschool as the key to “sustainabili-



Jessica Donner, director of the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, stresses the importance of building trust among afterschool partners.

ty.” Essential to keeping these partnerships strong and lasting is trust – and building that takes time, said Jessica Donner, director of the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, a group representing intermediary organizations. It also takes a fair-minded guide at the helm, she added in an interview. “We think it’s important to have a neutral leader or coordinating organization that can help merge cultures of schools and community organizations and help people feel comfortable working together,” she said.

Speakers offered a number of other practical approaches for keeping afterschool systems going. “You need to put it in your city charter ... because then it’s law,” said Adam McFadden, a city councilman from Rochester, N.Y., speaking from the audience at a conference session called “Leadership and Political Will.” Afterschool system organizers shouldn’t hesitate to pull out all communications and fundraising stops, said Sanger, who noted that the first person she hired at LA’s BEST was a public relations director. “[P.R.] was critical to bringing visibility, volunteerism and ultimately money to the program,” she said. As for fundraising, LA’s BEST benefits not only from the rainmaking abilities of its governing board but also the talents of its “BEST Friends” board of young professionals – who volunteer for the program and hold their own fundraising events, raising more than \$200,000 annually.

For Jonathan Brice, the school support network officer for Baltimore City Public Schools, community support is crucial. “Our approach to sustainability is not so much about the money,” he said. “It’s about creating that public groundswell of support that says, ‘Guess what? We know what’s best for our children. We know that the afterschool programs that are working in this school help to extend learning, help to enrich opportunities for our young people. And we don’t care who the superintendent is, this is something that this school community has said helps our kids to be better – oh and by the way, we’ve got data to back it up.’ ”

In other words, the best shield for an afterschool system is a community convinced that kids need it.

Alexandria, VA	Denver, CO	New York, NY
Asheville, NC	Fort Worth, TX	Oakland, CA
Atlanta, GA	Grand Rapids, MI	Omaha, NE
Austin, TX	Hartford, CT	Philadelphia, PA
Baltimore, MD	Houston, TX	Pittsburgh, PA
Boise, ID	Indianapolis, IN	Portland, OR
Boston, MA	Jacksonville, FL	Providence, RI
Bridgeport, CT	Kansas City, MO	Richmond, VA
Brooklyn Park, MN	Lincoln, NE	Rochester, NY
Buffalo, NY	Little Rock, AR	Saint Paul, MN
Burlington, VT	Los Angeles, CA	San Antonio, TX
Cambridge, MA	Louisville, KY	San Francisco, CA
Charlotte, NC	Madison, WI	Seattle, WA/King County
Chester, PA	Milwaukee, WI	St. Louis, MO
Chicago, IL	Minneapolis, MN	Syracuse, NY
Cincinnati, OH	Nashville, TN	Tampa, FL
Cleveland, OH	Newark, NJ	Tucson, AZ
Contra Costa County, CA	New Haven, CT	Washington, DC
Dallas, TX	New Orleans, LA	West Palm Beach, FL

Thursday, Feb. 21

Site visits to afterschool and summer learning programs in Baltimore.

Plenary 1

Welcome and Overview

A conversation on why, and how, cities invest in afterschool systems.

Will Miller, *President*, The Wallace Foundation,

Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, *Mayor*, City of Baltimore

Jane Sundius, *Education and Youth Development Program Director*,

Open Society Institute–Baltimore

Friday, Feb. 22

Plenary 2

Why Build a Quality Afterschool System

Nancy Devine (moderator), *Director of Learning and Enrichment*, The Wallace Foundation

Dr. Jonathan Brice, *School Support Networks Officer*, Baltimore City Public Schools, MD

Carla Sanger, *President & CEO*, LA's BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program, CA

Plenary 3:

Understanding Data and Youth Outcomes in a Quality Afterschool System

Betsy Brand (moderator), *Executive Director*, American Youth Policy Forum

Dr. Robert Balfanz, *Co-Director*, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University

Hillary Salmons, *Executive Director*, Providence After School Alliance (PASA), RI

Chris Smith, *Executive Director*, Boston AfterSchool & Beyond, MA

Plenary 4:

Building Quality: Lessons from Research and Practice

Nicole Yohalem (moderator), *Senior Director of Special Projects*, Forum for Youth Investment

Suzette Harvey, *Executive Director*, Prime Time Palm Beach County, FL

Charles Smith, *Executive Director*, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Denice Williams, *Assistant Commissioner*, Out-of-School-Time, New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, NY

Breakouts

- Developing a System-Wide Data Strategy
- Sharing Data Across the Afterschool System to Inform Decision-Making and Improve Quality and Access
- Leadership and Political Will
- Role and Types of Intermediaries and Coordinating Organizations
- Afterschool's Connection to Expanded Learning Time
- Exploring the Initial Stages of a Quality Improvement System
- Going to Scale—Growing and Sustaining Quality Improvement Systems
- Funding, Resources and Sustainability
- The Challenges & Opportunities of Linking to Cradle to Career Initiatives
- Strengthening Financial Management
- Attracting and Retaining Older Youth
- Increasing Access to High Quality Afterschool Programming
- Scaling Local System Best Practices through Statewide Afterschool Networks
- Learning from National and State Afterschool Initiatives
- Looking Forward

About the “Better Together” Conference Planning Partners



American Youth
Policy Forum

American Youth Policy Forum

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), founded in 1993, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC that educates and informs policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local

levels. AYPF’s goal is to enable policymakers to become more effective in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation’s young people by providing information, insights, and networking opportunities to better understand the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers, and participating citizens in a democratic society. AYPF’s work covers a range of education and youth topics, such as secondary school reform, afterschool and expanded learning opportunities, college access and success, dropout prevention and recovery, alternative education, youth employment, service learning and civic engagement, and career and technical education. This breadth of knowledge allows AYPF to bridge fields and sectors and supports our view of the need for integrated, holistic, and comprehensive academic and support services to help every youth become successful in a career and as a lifelong learner and engaged citizen.

AYPF has had a long interest in supporting afterschool, expanded, and summer learning opportunities as a way to help young people be successful in school and better prepared for college, careers, and civic engagement. Our forums, webinars, study tours, convenings, and such publications as *Learning Around the Clock: Benefits of Expanded Learning Opportunities for Older Youth* (2009) educate policymakers around the country about developing and sustaining high quality afterschool and expanded learning opportunities for all youth and can be accessed at www.aypf.org, where also you can join our mailing list to learn about upcoming events and resources.

THE COLLABORATIVE
for BUILDING
AFTER-SCHOOL
SYSTEMS

Collaborative for Building After-School Systems

The Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS) is a coalition of leading intermediary organizations representing cities and regions across the country. CBASS’s mission is to expand the availability of high-quality learning opportunities, including after-school and summer that help

children gain the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to lead successful lives. We do this by helping cities and regions employ coordinated approaches to increase the scale, quality and accountability of programs, and to leverage the combined power of community organizations and schools to create integrated, effective, and inspired learning systems for our children and youth.

CBASS works to define outcomes and effective practice for expanded learning systems, demonstrate models for scaling program initiatives and advancing quality, support system builders through knowledge sharing and technical assistance, and educate policy makers on the value of the out-of-school-time sector and expanded learning systems. For more information, visit www.afterschoolsystems.org.



The Forum for Youth Investment

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan action tank dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are ready by 21 – ready for college, work and life. Informed by rigorous research

and practical experience, the Forum forges innovative ideas, strategies and partnerships to strengthen solutions for young people and those who care about them. Founded in 1998, the Forum is a trusted resource for policymakers, advocates, researchers and practitioners and provides youth and adult leaders with the information, connections and tools they need to create greater opportunities and outcomes for young people. Please visit www.forumfyi.org.

The Forum's David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality empowers education and human service leaders to adapt, implement and bring to scale research-validated quality improvement systems to advance child and youth development. Afterschool and other out-of-school time systems throughout the United States rely on the Center's intervention, performance metrics and aligned professional development to drive their continuous improvement efforts. These include an evidence-based intervention model (Youth Program Quality Intervention, or YPQI) and a core set of instructional quality metrics (Youth Program Quality Assessment, or Youth PQA). To learn more about these resources, visit www.cypq.org/.

National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education & Families



The National League of Cities (NLC) is a national membership organization dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Working in partnership with 49 state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. When a city or town joins NLC, its elected officials and staff can participate in NLC's programs, activities and governance. State municipal leagues are also active members of NLC, guiding the organization's priorities and serving as an important link to cities in their state. To learn more, visit www.nlc.org.

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The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a special entity within NLC, helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders can play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth. The YEF Institute provides guidance and assistance to municipal officials by compiling and disseminating information on promising strategies and best practices, building networks of local officials working on similar issues and concerns, and conducting research on the key challenges facing municipalities in the core program areas of education and afterschool, youth development, early childhood success, safety of children and youth and family economic success. Within the afterschool program area, YEF has provided technical assistance to over 40 cities to help build their citywide afterschool systems and established the Afterschool Policy Advisors' Network (APAN), a network of city leaders interested in learning and sharing best practices on afterschool efforts. To learn more, please visit www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/afterschool.



The Wallace Foundation

Based in New York City, The Wallace Foundation is an independent, national philanthropy dedicated to supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for disadvantaged children. The Foundation maintains an online library of lessons about what it has learned, including knowledge from its current efforts aimed at strengthening educational leadership to improve student achievement; enhancing out-of-school time opportunities for disadvantaged students; and building appreciation and demand for the arts.

The Wallace Foundation has been investing in community-wide afterschool systems since 2003, continuing a commitment to afterschool opportunities dating to the Foundation's co-founder DeWitt Wallace. The Foundation is currently sharing lessons and insights from this work. It is currently working with 9 cities in order to learn more about strengthening quality and data collection, and will soon launch a research effort to learn more about how cities can use data effectively. For more information, please visit www.wallacefoundation.org.

Afterschool

Take Home Library

Visit the websites of “Better Together” conference partners for the latest resources and ideas for developing, improving and expanding access to high-quality afterschool:

- American Youth Policy Forum (www.aypf.org)
- Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (www.afterschoolsystems.org)
- The Forum for Youth Investment (forumfyi.org)
- National League of Cities: Institute for Youth, Education & Families (www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/youth-education-and-families)
- The Wallace Foundation (www.wallacefoundation.org)

Resources to Explore

What is a System and Why Build One?

- *Making the Connections: A Report on the First National Survey of Out-of-School Time Intermediary Organizations* (Collaborative for Building After-School Systems 2012) (afterschoolsystems.org/content/document/detail/3779/)
- *Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches Spreading Across the Country* (National League of Cities 2011) (www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/youth-education-and-families/afterschool/municipal-leadership-for-afterschool-citywide-approaches-spreading-across-the-country)
- *Hours of Opportunity Volume I: Lessons from Five Cities on Building Systems to Improve After-School, Summer, and Other Out-of-School-Time Programs* (RAND Corporation 2010) (www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Pages/Hours-of-Opportunity-Volumes-I-II-III.aspx)
- *Hours of Opportunity Volume III: Profiles of Five Cities Improving After-School Programs Through a Systems Approach* (RAND Corporation 2010) (www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Pages/Hours-of-Opportunity-Volumes-I-II-III.aspx)
- *AfterZones: Creating a Citywide System to Support and Sustain High-Quality After-School Programs* (Public/Private Ventures 2010) (www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/coordinating-after-school-resources/Pages/Afterzones-Creating-Citywide-System-to-Support-and-Sustain-High-Quality-After-School-Programs.aspx)
- *Cities and Statewide Afterschool Networks Partnering to Support Afterschool* (National League of Cities 2009) (www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/cities-and-statewide-afterschool-networks-partnering-support-afterschool)
- *A Place to Grow and Learn: A Citywide Approach to Building and Sustaining Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities* (Wallace Foundation 2008: check back soon for revised edition!) (www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Pages/Sustaining-Out-of-School-Time-Learning-Opportunities.aspx)
- WEBINAR: Strengthening Citywide After-School Opportunities I—All About Intermediaries (Part 1 of a 3-part series co-hosted by The Wallace Foundation, Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, National League of Cities, and the Forum for Youth Investment 2012) (www.wallacefoundation.org/view-latest-news/events-and-presentations/Pages/All-About-Intermediaries.aspx)

Data: The Engine of the System

- *After-School Data: Six Tip Sheets on What Cities Need to Know* (Wallace Foundation 2012)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/collecting-and-using-data/Pages/After-School-Data-What-Cities-Need-To-Know.aspx)
- *Building Management Information Systems to Coordinate Citywide Afterschool Programs: A Toolkit for Cities* (National League of Cities 2012)
(www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/afterschool/building-management-information-systems-to-coordinate-citywide-afterschool-programs-a-toolkit-for-cities)
- *From Soft Skills to Hard Data: Measuring Youth Program Outcomes* (Forum for Youth Investment 2011)
(forumfyi.org/content/soft-skills-hard-data-)
- *Using Data to Improve Quality in City-wide Afterschool Systems: Lessons from Boston* (American Youth Policy Forum 2011)
(www.aypf.org/resources/using-data-to-improve-quality-in-city-wide-afterschool-systems-lessons-from-boston/)
- *Using Data to Improve Quality in City-wide Afterschool Systems: Lessons from Providence* (American Youth Policy Forum 2011)
(www.aypf.org/resources/using-data-to-improve-quality-in-city-wide-afterschool-systems-lessons-from-providence/)
- *Collecting and Using Information to Strengthen Citywide Out-of-School Time Systems* (National League of Cities 2011)
(www.nlc.org/Documents/Find-City-Solutions/IYEF/Afterschool/collecting-and-using-information-to-strengthen-citywide-ost-systems-august-2011.pdf)
- *Hours of Opportunity Volume II: The Power of Data to Improve After-School Programs Citywide* (RAND Corporation 2010)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Pages/Hours-of-Opportunity-Volumes-I-II-III.aspx)
- WEBINAR: Strengthening Citywide After-School Opportunities II—Harnessing the Power of Data (Part 2 of a 3-part series co-hosted by The Wallace Foundation, Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, National League of Cities, and the Forum for Youth Investment 2012)
(<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/view-latest-news/events-and-presentations/Pages/All-About-Intermediaries.aspx>)

Quality and Equity: The Goals of the System

- *Building Citywide Systems for Quality: A Guide and Case Studies for Afterschool Leaders* (Forum for Youth Investment 2012)
(forumfyi.org/building_system_quality)
- *Tough Times, Tough Choices in After-School Funding: Pathways to Protecting Quality* (RAND Corporation 2012)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/quality-and-cost/Pages/Tough-Times-Tough-Choices-in-After-school-Funding.aspx)
- *Strengthening Partnerships and Building Public Will for Out-of-School Time Programs* (National League of Cities 2010)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/coordinating-after-school-resources/Pages/Strengthening-Partnerships-Building-Public-Will-Out-of-School-Time.aspx)

- *Continuous Quality Improvement in Afterschool Settings: Impact Findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention Study* (David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality 2010)
(cypq.org/content/cycle-assessments-and-improvements-boosts-afterschool-quality)
- *Out-of-School Time Policy Commentary #13: “Speaking in One Voice”* (Collaborative for Building After-School Systems and Forum for Youth Investment 2008)
(www.forumfyi.org/content/out-school-time-policy-commentary-13-speaking-one-voice)
- *Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools* (Forum for Youth Investment 2007)
(forumfyi.org/content/measuring-youth-program-quality-guide-assessment-tools-2nd-edition)
- WEBINAR: Strengthening Citywide After-School Opportunities III—Improving Quality Systemwide (Part 3 of a 3-part series co-hosted by The Wallace Foundation, Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, National League of Cities, and Forum for Youth Investment 2012)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/view-latest-news/events-and-presentations/Pages/Webinar-Improving-Quality-Systemwide.aspx)

Funding and Sustainability

- *Strengthening Financial Management: An Online Suite of Tools and Resources for Afterschool Providers* (Wallace Foundation and Fiscal Management Associates 2013)
(www.strongnonprofits.org)
- *Fiscal Fitness for Nonprofits: Project Puts Chicago After-School programs and Funders Through a Financial Workout* (Wallace Foundation 2011)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/financial-management-for-nonprofits/Pages/Fiscal-for-Non-profits.aspx)
- *Financial Strategies to Support Citywide Systems of Out-of-School Time Programs* (National League of Cities 2009)
(www.nlc.org/Documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/TYEF/Afterschool/financial-strategies-afterschool-gid-jan09.pdf)
- *The Cost of Quality Out-of-School Time Programs* (Public/Private Ventures 2008)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Pages/The-Cost-of-Quality-of-Out-of-School-Time-Programs.aspx)

Other Useful Resources

- *Engaging Older Youth: A Range of Resources*
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/engaging-older-youth/Pages/default.aspx)
- *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning* (RAND Corporation 2011)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Pages/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.aspx)
- *AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence’s After-School System* (Public/Private Ventures 2011)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/evaluations/Pages/AfterZone-Outcomes-for-YouthParticipating-in-Providences-Citywide-After-School-System.aspx)
- *Learning Around the Clock: Benefits of Expanded Learning Opportunities for Older Youth* (American Youth Policy Forum 2009)
(www.aypf.org/resources/learning-around-the-clock-benefits-of-expanded-learning-opportunities-for-older-youth-2009/?documenttype=18&search=advanced)
- *Getting Started With Market Research for Out-of-School Time Planning: A Resource Guide for Communities* (Market Street Research 2007)
(www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/collecting-and-using-data/Pages/Market-Research-for-Out-of-School-Time-Planning-Resource-Guide.aspx)

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee provides afterschool programming at the Allen-Field School, part of Milwaukee Public Schools district. During a warm spring afternoon, program director Mildred Olson goes over homework with a student on the playground.





The Wallace Foundation®

Supporting ideas.

Sharing solutions.

Expanding opportunities.®

The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that seeks to improve education and enrichment for disadvantaged children. The foundation has an unusual approach: funding projects to test innovative ideas for solving important public problems, conducting research to find out what works and what doesn't and to fill key knowledge gaps – and then communicating the results to help others.

Wallace has five major initiatives under way:

- School leadership: Strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement.
- Afterschool: Helping selected cities make good afterschool time programs available to many more children.
- Audience development for the arts: Making the arts a part of many more people's lives by working with arts organizations to broaden, deepen and diversify audiences.
- Arts education: Expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens.
- Summer and expanded learning time: Expanding the effective use of additional learning time.

Find out more at www.wallacefoundation.org.

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