AFTER-SCHOOL GROWS UP

By Tony Proscio and Basil J. Whiting

A Report to the After School Project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

How Four Large American Cities Approach Scale and Quality in After-School Programs

A Report to the After School Project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation   *Tony Proscio*

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

How one juvenile justice system saves lives and money by fighting crimes that haven't happened yet

A Report to the Field

The After School Project

A Program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Between *School & Home*

In 1998, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation created the After School Project with one primary goal in mind: to determine whether the growth, quality, and funding of out-of-school time programs could be significantly improved by creating a central coordinating body, or intermediary, in each locality, responsible for promoting a system of high-quality, sustainable services for all the children who need them. In our first report, nearly three years ago, we surveyed several local efforts to form such intermediaries and to organize more coherent systems of after-school activity in a variety of cities and metropolitan areas.

Afterschool Counts!

A Guide to Issues and Strategies for Monitoring Attendance in Afterschool and Other Youth Programs

By Lela Rosiz with Policy Studies Associates, Inc.
Prepared for the After School Project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Making the Most of the Day

No Idle Hours

Making After-School Time Productive and Fun for Chicago Teenagers

A report to the After School Project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by Tony Proscio

THE AFTER SCHOOL PROJECT

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A Report to the Field

Precious Time

If we start with the belief, as more and more people do, that constructive after-school activity is crucial to the development of healthy children and adolescents, then two questions naturally follow:

• How can American cities and states provide that opportunity to all or most of the children who now lack it, especially in low-income communities? and
• What would happen if they did?

PHYSICAL (IN)ACTIVITY
Among Low-Income Children and Youth
Problem, Prospect, Challenge

By Robert Halpern
Prepared for the After School Project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Courtesy of Team-Up for Youth and Bay Area SCORES

Making the Most of the Day

By Tony Proscio

*'The Algebra Project' Math Literacy apprenticeship,
Courtesy of After School Matters*

FOR EIGHT YEARS, beginning in 1998, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation set out to test a complex but far-reaching idea: that out-of-school-time activities – popular with parents and public officials, offered by a broad mix of schools and community groups, but thinly funded and of uneven quality – could be made stronger, better, and more efficiently coordinated across whole cities or metropolitan areas. The Foundation's theory, described in an early memo and later embodied in the After School Project, was that a "centralized planning effort" could build, advance, and enrich urban systems that "connect at-risk urban youth with caring adults in adult-led programs after school."

As we complete the work of the After School Project in 2006, the publication of a final report seems to call not so much for a long review of past activities (our previous reports to the field in 2001 and 2005[1] provide considerable detail on the programs we funded and what they are accomplishing), but for a look around and ahead. This report, in other words, is meant as a reflection not just on our work, but on the out-of-school-time field generally, and the opportunities and risks it faces in the remainder of this decade and beyond. In compiling that picture, we naturally relied on the experience and observations of three local organizations with whom we have worked most closely, and from whom we have learned most of what we now have to say about the field and its prospects: the San Francisco Bay Area's Team-Up for Youth, Chicago's After School Matters, and Boston After-School and Beyond.

We will present their thoughts and challenges in a moment, accompanied by some reflections of our own. First, though, to provide some context and background on the Project, the independent conclusions of our evaluation consultant, Conwal, Inc., give a perspective on what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. Conwal's full report is still in preparation as this is written, but the evaluation team made some preliminary conclusions available in a presentation in early 2006. Based on experience in

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[1] These and other past reports continue to be available from the After School Project's Web site, at www.theafterschoolproject.org.

the Bay Area, Chicago, and Boston, plus two other areas that are also pursuing centralized planning and coordination efforts, the firm drew these encouraging conclusions:

- A relatively high percentage of youth in most places participates in some form of after-school activity – Conwal estimates the average at 70 to 80 percent – though the percentage who participate regularly is much more variable from community to community.
- All three of the sites we have supported and one of the others in the study are adding new partners to their out-of-school-time networks and drawing support from a more diverse range of funders.
- The quality standards governing program activity in these sites are increasingly based on credible research and theories of effectiveness.

Some other findings are less encouraging, at least at this stage:

- None of the sites, in Conwal's view, has yet found a way to systematically enlarge the base of their community and political support.
- Despite young people's high overall rate of participation in various out-of-school-time activities, the sites in Conwal's study are directly reaching only a small percentage of the young people they have specifically targeted – between 5 and 15 percent, in Conwal's estimate.

We will have more to say about all these findings in the balance of this report. On the whole, it is satisfying to hear that independent observers are confirming much of what we have seen and concluded over the past eight years. These are impressions that we have gathered in close interaction with the various coordinating groups, but also with the periodic advice of many other practitioners whom we have convened, or who have welcomed us at their own gatherings, throughout these years.

Toward a shared idea of success

One such gathering, late in 2005, seems particularly significant as a signal of how the field is beginning to organize itself – and particularly how central the public/private intermediaries have become in that process. In November, the After School Project supported a conference of some of the country's largest and most mature after-school and youth development intermediaries in Fort Lauderdale, where they set out to formulate a common vision and agenda for their work. The group included The After-School Corporation from New York City, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust, Baltimore Safe and Sound, the Providence After School Alliance, and two of our grantees: Boston Beyond and After School Matters. Major funders, including the Charles Stewart Mott, Wallace, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations, the Open Society Institute, and the Atlantic Philanthropies, joined the group on its final day to hear a summary of the discussion and offer reactions and advice.

What made this gathering more than the usual networking-and-reflection conference was the feeling that something durable was being built, more or less on the conference floor. It was, in a way, the birth of a national clearinghouse for city-wide out-of-school-time intermediaries – organizations that were themselves largely unheard-of a decade or two ago. Citywide groups have come together before, in conferences that included all sorts of local after-school alliances, both formal and informal. Among the most notable of these has been a "Cross-Cities Network" convened by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. But

If researchers are asking the wrong questions about success and failure in out-of-school-time programs, then what are the right questions?

Downtown Dance program, Courtesy of After School Matters
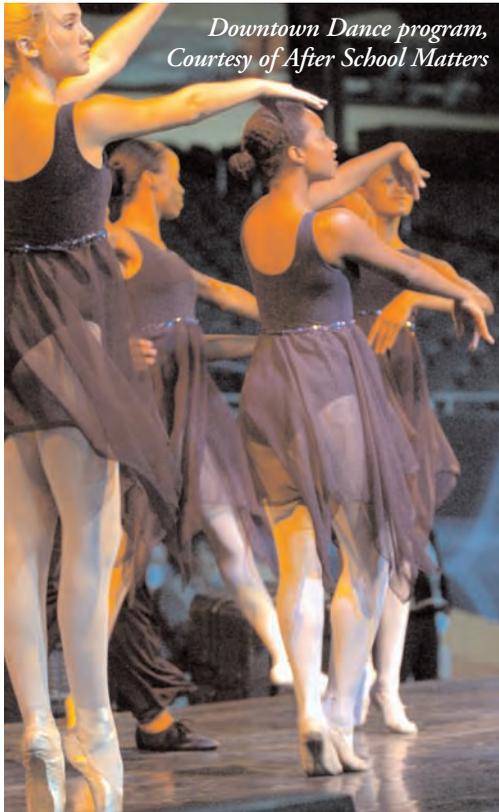
by now, the larger, better-established intermediaries have become influential and ambitious enough to need a national network of their own, and avenues of communication through which to air common problems and opportunities. The Fort Lauderdale gathering was an important step in that direction.

The highlight of the conference, and what may be its most far-reaching

outcome, was a discussion about what should constitute success for out-of-school-time programs, and how that success could be recognized and measured. It is a question that has preoccupied the field for several years. During those same years, a series of sobering studies has failed to find evidence that after-school programs routinely achieve the big, overarching goals most commonly applied to them: raising academic test scores, reducing juvenile crime, or making it easier for parents to work full-time. Some programs did indeed show some effectiveness in one or two of these areas, but their influence was rarely great, and those achievements were never applicable to the field as a whole, at least as far as quantitative information could discern.

As we have written before, the logic behind these studies often seemed farfetched when viewed close up. Researchers in some cases seemed to be asking whether small programs lasting at most a few hours a day had accomplished, within a few years, things that had stymied schools, police, and work-force systems for decades. Yet we also recognized the legitimate challenge facing anyone who criticizes these evaluations: If researchers are asking

the wrong questions about success and failure in out-of-school-time programs, then what are the right questions? As often happens when after-school organizations gather, the group in Fort Lauderdale found itself face-to-face with that conundrum and the broader question of what the participants would regard as a reasonable standard of success. But from that familiar starting point, something remarkable ensued.

The group started by agreeing that, whatever goal they might set for themselves, that goal dare not be vague, technical, or trivial. After-school providers do believe that their programs contribute importantly to young people's development, to their ability to confront challenges and fit into society, and ultimately, to their ability to succeed in school - even if not, on any given day, the numerical score they register on a test. If those things are true, then participation in after-school programs must lead to something valuable and readily discernible as young people progress through school. And that something, the conferees eventually decided, is high school graduation.

Unlike test scores, grade-point averages, and other momentary indices of technical

performance, graduation from high school depends on a student's experience of many kinds of growth, many of which can be cultivated, at least to some extent, in youth development programs in the out-of-school hours. It seems clear, from both research and experience, that out-of-school-time programs foster a feeling of attachment to learning, to classmates, and ultimately to school. Even in the early grades, they inculcate a sense of purpose, belonging, and perseverance that can help propel a student from year to year, all the way to a diploma. Although after-school programs can't solve the whole dropout problem, they should be able to raise the odds of graduating, at least for some strata of students.

This insight is hardly the last word in the still-running discussion about how after-school programs should be measured and evaluated. Nor was it a unanimous conclusion by acclamation even in Fort Lauderdale. Some participants felt more strongly about it than did others. But it is a powerful, resonant argument, and a clear standard for how the discussion about success and performance should proceed. As we will discuss in later sections, it was always part of After School Matters' theory of change, and

Courtesy of Team-Up for Youth

has become a key element of Boston Beyond's strategy and standards of self-evaluation. It is at least plausible that this will become true for other organizations as well, as the conversation about defining success widens and deepens.

Best of all, the Fort Lauderdale discussion moves the agenda beyond the facile alternatives that have often predominated in the past: either rejecting the notion of standards of success outright (as if after-school programs could be

comfortably exempt from the kinds of performance measurements that confront all other branches of nonprofit activity), or fastening quixotically on test scores alone, simply because government mandates have put such a premium on them. Using high-school graduation as a standard of achievement has the advantage of keeping academic success squarely in the equation, but with a broader definition, encompassing the many kinds of success that lead a student all the way through high school and toward

[*…local planning and coordinating bodies like the ones in this Project have proven so valuable and effective [because] different cities have manifestly different assets, needs, and preferences.*]

a more satisfying adulthood. Graduation is both a politically powerful target and, more importantly, one that truly matters to children's well-being later in life. And it's a target to which after-school programs are genuinely relevant.

Steve Pratt, executive director of Boston Beyond and one of the participants in Fort Lauderdale, neatly summarized the rationale for adopting graduation as a success standard, not only for his organization, but for the city as a whole: "Failing to graduate children from high school is tantamount to an economic death sentence. High school graduation should be, for the youth development system – not just for the out-of-school-time system – the absolute floor of our aspirations for these children. What I want to see in the next decade in Boston is movement on that number. I'm not just holding myself to that, I'm hoping to pull in the schools, juvenile justice, and youth development systems into an overall effort to drive that number up."

Breadth, depth, and local needs

Another point of agreement in Fort Lauderdale – and a message we hear consistently from our partners and colleagues around the country – is that the out-of-school-time field is growing and improving, though often sporadically and through increasingly complex and fragile networks of supporters and participants. The frontline work continues to be carried out largely by thinly funded community organizations and overworked, fiscally strapped schools. Holding it all together, in roughly a dozen cities, is a small coterie of intermediaries trying to bridge the gap between a far-flung field and a policy establishment that rarely recognizes out-of-school-time programs as a field at all – much less one with a priority claim on public support.

In such a shifting, inchoate environment, the growth in the number of programs and the increasing strength of the intermediaries has been nothing short of remarkable – a tribute to the ingenuity of the participating organizations and the enduring popularity, at least with kids, schools, and parents, of the work they do. There is something powerful about this field that is largely unofficial (and therefore often overlooked) yet formidable and lasting.

In our last report to the field, in 2005, we noted that this growth seems to be proceeding along two different paths. In some places, region-wide consortia and planning groups have opted for diversity and flexibility, supporting new or expanded programs of many kinds and, after setting broad quality standards, leaving the particulars of content and participant eligibility up to individual communities. In other places, such groups set out to promote a particular model or service to a particular clientele, establishing criteria for eligible activities and population groups and providing technical and administrative help to providers willing to participate.

The choice has definitely not been a matter of quantity vs. quality. Both approaches aim at both goals. Instead, the choice had more to do with depth vs. breadth. The calculation came down to the way in which local and regional bodies diagnosed the gaps in their constellation of out-of-school-time services. Are certain communities or groups of children more severely underserved than others? Are certain activities more sorely needed or neglected? Or is the unsatisfied need so widespread, and the regional constituency so hungry for more programs of all kinds, that the challenge lies mainly in setting broad quality guidelines and then funding

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as much expansion and diversification as possible? These were never either/or choices, and it's a rare community that wouldn't answer Yes to all these questions. But intermediaries typically started out by tilting in one direction or the other, emphasizing depth or breadth depending on their resources and their view of the most pressing local needs.

This choice is just one example of why local planning and coordinating bodies like the ones in this Project have proven so valuable and effective. Different cities have manifestly different assets, needs, and preferences. They have different sources of available funding with different goals and restrictions. Their customary methods of deliberation, leadership, and decision-making are rooted in the peculiarities of local history, public policy, and civic life. And all these varying resources and conditions leave different kinds of gaps, create different kinds of political constituencies, and call for different kinds of coordination, consultation, and intervention in each place. That is why no two of the intermediaries we support (or, for that matter, of the half-dozen others we've studied) are exactly alike.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, organizers of **Team-Up for Youth** were responding specifically to a sharp retrenchment in school-time physical fitness programs and to an accelerating decline in health and fitness among young people. There were opportunities for physical activity in the Bay Area that could be enlarged and diversified for more kids, and there were many young people (especially girls) who either couldn't find such opportunities or had no encouragement to seek them out. The response to these facts has taken the form of a new, independent intermediary that has not only multiplied the forms and locations of out-of-school-time physical activities for kids, but has significantly improved region-wide outreach to the young people who need them most.

In Chicago, **After School Matters** (ASM) sized up the available out-of-school-time services for teens and found the field almost barren: There were hardly any programs specifically for teen-agers, and programs for younger kids had little to offer those of high-school age. With hands-on support from Mayor Richard M. Daley and his wife, Maggie Daley, a group of top-level city officials, civic leaders, and experts in adolescent development designed a kind of after-school apprenticeship program. It offered teenagers a combination of work-related skills, fun, self-expression, leadership, a strong chance for part-time or summer employment – and a monetary stipend while they were in the program. The model was neither simple to implement nor inexpensive,

G-ROW Boston, Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

…Boston Beyond…started life as a consortium of funders and providers, initially called the After-School for All Partnership [whose] unifying aim was to increase the whole inventory of…programs citywide…[and to] promot[e] greater quality for those programs…

but it has worked so well that it is now being adapted and expanded by a growing constellation of community-based organizations, following ASM's program model in exchange for partial funding. (The community groups' participation is also helping to bring down the per-student cost.)

By contrast, **Boston After-School and Beyond** (known as Boston Beyond for short) started life as a consortium of funders and providers, initially called the Boston After-School for All Partnership. The members' interests in out-of-school-time programs ranged widely, and their common, unifying aim was to increase the whole inventory of such programs citywide, especially in low-income areas. They were equally concerned about

promoting greater quality for those programs, and about tracking their results. But the Partnership was happy to see a broad spectrum of providers, activities, and population groups included among the programs they supported. As their efforts at building the field bore measurable fruit, they set out to create a more formal, durable organization to carry on. The result is Boston Beyond.

All three of these intermediaries started as fledgling experiments, hoping to bring order and coherence to a rich but disorganized field. To be sure, each of them had influential funders and champions, both public and private. But they all had a great deal to prove before they could claim – as all of them now can – a central leadership role in their local out-of-school-time system. Could they truly establish quality standards and principals of effective practice that frontline providers would respect and adopt? Would they significantly increase the resources, both financial and technical, available to providers? Could they combine intellectual rigor and management savvy in ways that would appeal to funders, policymakers, and providers alike?

After working with a larger group of planning bodies for our first few years, the After School Project invested heavily in these three organizations since 2000, with aggregate support to each of them ranging between $3.75 million and $5 million over the years. The reason, in each case, is that they have either answered their central, challenging questions in the affirmative or shown that they were on track to do so. We saw in all of them a clear, determined progress from planning and deliberation to action, with practical consequences for the field that quickly became visible and measurable, and that are continuing to grow as we conclude our work.

As the period of these grants drew to an end, we asked leaders of all three organizations how they expect their challenges to evolve, and what they consider the most important factors in their success – other than their own ingenuity and hard work – over the remainder of this decade. Here is a summary version of what they told us, city-by-city. Afterward, we'll follow with a few concluding thoughts and some questions that we hope the next few years of experience will answer.

New England SCORES, Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

In the years leading up to the birth of Boston Beyond, the main goal of its organizers was first and foremost to enlarge the field, especially by raising the capacity of the schools, community groups, and churches that were then serving only small numbers of children. The participants had any number of ideas about why they wanted an expansion – some hoped for academic benefits, some for social consequences like a reduction in juvenile crime, some for experiences that would enrich individual children's lives, like learning music or developing social skills. The simple assumption that more after-school activity would be better than less was hardly controversial. If the different members had different reasons for supporting the effort, surely that was one of the strengths of the movement – a big tent under which many disparate but compatible interests could gather.

In the meantime, though, the new organization and several of its organizers have had to grapple with a growing body of scholarship – most recently a highly regarded RAND study funded by the Wallace Foundation[2] – showing that out-of-school-time programs are not, in many cases, the precision instruments of academic and social engineering that some supporters had hoped for. Some of them are, it seems, good at helping students boost their test scores or stay out of gangs or progress farther in school. But across the field as a whole, there is little evidence that simply enrolling kids in out-of-school-time activities will guarantee any of these results consistently. As a new organization, Boston Beyond naturally started by asking itself, "For what results should we hold ourselves accountable?" For anyone trying to answer that question, the RAND study and other reports – including some research we supported through the After School Project – gave only the most sobering and cautionary guidance.

If larger after-school enrollments couldn't, by themselves, be tied directly to academic achievement or lower crime, then what should Boston Beyond use as its yardstick? "We had two choices," says Steve Pratt, Boston Beyond's executive director. "We could move

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[2] Susan Bodily and Megan Beckett, "**Making Out-of-School Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda,**" RAND Corporation, 2005.

the goal posts – in effect come up with a different set of problems we might think we could solve, like keeping kids safer from crime after school, rather than trying to reduce the crime itself or improve their school performance. Instead, we took a different approach."

Rather than jettisoning the goals for which many of its funders entered the field in the first place, Boston Beyond set out to align its activities more closely with the needs that those funders – and much of the public – truly care about. The available research does not show, after all, that out-of-school-time programs can't help with academic achievement, youth crime, or other problems; simply that the expanding universe of after-school participation does not bear a measurable relationship to these issues.

So Boston Beyond asked, in effect, what if we concentrated our resources not simply on enrolling more and more kids overall, but specifically on enrolling the young people at highest risk of failing in school, dropping out, joining gangs, or otherwise limiting their future before they have a chance to live it. "What's depressing," Pratt says, "is how consistent this cohort is, from Kindergarten all the way to high school; you can draw a pretty straight line on this identifiable cluster of kids, a core you can follow all the way through these grades," as their problems persist and gradually grow worse.

"Rather than saying we want to increase the available slots in a particular school from 100 to 150 or 175," Pratt continues, "with the notion that increased enrollment is intrinsically beneficial to the whole school, our new strategy is to say that, within the maybe 500 students in that school, to pick some arbitrary numbers, there may be a core cohort driving a lot of the risks in that school. We need to start with that cohort and have a specific link between the out-of-school-time programming and the particular struggles of those kids. That has to include the non-academic barriers to achievement that those kids are facing – which, as it happens, out-of-school-time programming is particularly good at addressing."

Building school-level systems

The point is not to restrict new out-of-school-time activities solely to young people with problems, or to turn them into therapeutic "child-repair" programs.

Considerable scholarship has shown that such purely remedial programs are less effective than their organizers hope, in part because kids come to regard them as stigmatizing and even punitive. The point, instead, is to ensure that the targeted children do enroll in the out-of-school-time activities available to them, alongside other students, and that those activities genuinely contribute to improving those children's lives.

The first of Boston Beyond's new initiatives, called Partners for Student Success, will start by supporting the creation of a new position in each participating school, called Manager of Extended Learning Services. The managers will have direct responsibility for out-of-school-time activities in their respective schools, but they will also be responsible for coordinating with other programs in their communities so that kids who could benefit from those services find the right activity and participate. The managers will work with school personnel, first of all, to identify the cohort of young people with the most urgent needs, defined by criteria that Boston Beyond is developing, based on expert research and consultation with schools and providers. Next, and just as important, the managers will make sure there

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is an effective system for referring the right kids to the right activities and making sure they continue to participate.

"This is not a case-management model," Pratt explains, "where the manager gets involved in whether student X is attending program Y. The goal is to ensure that there's a system, involving teachers and counselors and administrators throughout the school, to match the kids with the services and keep them interested." Part of that system may well involve

deliberate inclusion of young people who are not "troubled kids," as conventionally defined, but whose participation in a given program will be important to its success. For example, Pratt says, "You may identify students' relationships with their peers as one of the barriers to learning. There may be a set of disciplinary issues all related to that issue. [The manager could] bring in a community-based organization that can do social-skills training, both for the troubled students and the rest of the population

of the school. The identified cohort is the must-serve group, but there are often going to be overlapping Venn circles, interventions that apply to students beyond that cohort."

This is a new, ambitious approach to the question of results and targeting in out-of-school-time programs, and it is hardly risk-free. Whether the managers and their partners will be able to target the right cohort of students, whether those students will enroll in the right activities and keep attending, and whether those activities will produce measurable results are all, at this stage, open questions. Even the idea of this kind of targeting – in effect, taking a step back from the recent conventional wisdom that programs work best when they don't single out students with special needs – is a bold exercise of intellectual and strategic experimentation. One of the still-unfolding values of citywide intermediaries like Boston Beyond is that they can marshal the financial and political support essential for taking such risks. They can document both the rationale for new ideas and the results of new work in a way that shields individual providers from the costs and pressures associated with breaking new ground.

New England SCORES, Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

Reaching for older students

Alongside Partners for Student Success, Boston Beyond's next new initiative will focus on teenagers. The few organizations that try to serve high-school-age students wouldn't be surprised at the finding that just 30 percent of adolescents in Boston participated in some form of organized out-of-school-time program in 2004, compared with 51 percent for all ages combined.

(An interesting side-note: 51 percent is an impressive increase from just five years earlier, when the Boston After-School for All Partnership found the rate to be just 28 percent citywide. "So the good news," Pratt says, "is that the After-School for All Partnership nearly doubled the percentage of kids participating in out-of-school-time programs. The bad news is that we have almost no idea who's in the 51 percent and who is in the other 49 percent that aren't participating. But we're pretty sure that the kids about whom we're most concerned are not the ones making up the 51 percent.")

The new teen initiative will therefore not only target an older set of kids who are collectively not participating in after-school programs, but it will delve deeper into that population, seeking the particular teens most likely to benefit from this activity. Like Partners for Student Success, which focuses on elementary and middle schools, the teen initiative will try to match high schoolers with the greatest risks to the programs most likely to help them. The program will focus on students who are entering ninth grade at least 16 months over-age, with a history of disciplinary problems. These are the young people, approaching dropout age, whom the schools will be most likely to lose by the sophomore or junior years. Teen programs would be designed to appeal to other students as well, but enrolling this group, and retaining their loyalty, will be the main criterion of success.

One question about this approach that doesn't trouble Boston Beyond very much is, "How do you get teens interested in these programs?" The answer to that, Steve Pratt points out, has been nicely explored and documented – in particular by After School Matters in Chicago. "The activity has to be quite recognizably different from programs at the elementary level; it's got to combine the world of work with some kind of

Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

personal enrichment and self-expression. Teens are clear on what they want: they want to develop skills, earn some money, and feel progress toward some kind of employment. It's not easy, and it's not 100 percent of the answer, but the folks in Chicago have been pretty successful with it."

When people ask what foundation initiatives like the After School Project

Among other things, Boston Beyond is currently at work on a "funding stream analysis," looking at where money comes from, and how it flows, in addressing the needs and problems of Boston adolescents.

connections don't happen spontaneously – a sad fact about America's nonprofit sector, but hardly news to the people who work in that sector. All manner of wheels are re-invented from place to place, in many fields of human need, at needless cost of dollars and frustration – all for lack of regular, clear channels of mutual information, consultation, and brainstorming.

We don't claim that the After School Project is the sole reason, or even the main one, for such conversations taking place in the out-of-school-time field. The Wallace and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations and other funders have generously supported gatherings in which we've been a grateful participant. The point is that foundation initiatives – ideally, as in this case, more than one at a time – are in a privileged position to sponsor, stimulate, and broaden the circle of innovation in a way that increases the odds of replication, learning, and success.

The prevention equation

Although Boston has learned a great deal from Chicago and other cities about serving teens, some of its thornier prob-

lems in rolling out a new program will necessarily be local, and require local solutions. Among other things, Boston Beyond is currently at work on a "funding stream analysis," looking at where money comes from, and how it flows, in addressing the needs and problems of Boston adolescents. That includes programs of the city Departments of Youth Services and Juvenile Justice, which end up serving kids who might have been helped much less expensively in out-of-school-time programs. Determining what resources are now spent on teenagers with preventable problems, and what it might cost to address these problems earlier through the after-school system, will be a key to the analysis. It will also, perhaps, make a clear argument for shifting some resources toward after-school services for teens.

Such an analysis presumes, of course, that the young people now receiving the more expensive services could have been effectively recruited, retained, and helped with an after-school activity. That hypothesis is, in effect, the one that Boston Beyond will be testing with its attempt to identify and reach high-risk young people. To do that, the organization will need to design a man-

are for, other than distributing money to worthy causes, Pratt's comment furnishes an important part of the answer. Teenagers in Boston will benefit – or at least it seems likely they'll benefit – from half a dozen years of program development, piloting, adaptation, and careful documentation taking place 1,000 miles away, all of it part of a continuous conversation with leaders from other cities, including Boston. Those

SquashBusters, Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

ageable, efficient way of serving teens and then measuring the outcomes. If it's successful, the model would need to be economical enough that it could be enlarged eventually to cover all the students who need the service. At this point, Boston Beyond is still grappling with the economics and logistics of that approach. With luck, the idea may be ready for a small pilot test, involving perhaps 100 teenagers in five schools, beginning in the 2006-07 school year.

Unlike their colleagues in Chicago, the staff at Boston Beyond has no plans to

operate programs directly; the model will need to be flexible enough to be implemented by frontline provider agencies around the city. But that will pose an ongoing responsibility for training, monitoring, and quality assurance by the intermediary and its staff. Those are functions for which intermediaries nationally have often turned out to be indispensable. Given the coalition of major funders standing behind the organization – including the Boston, Barr, Hyams, and Nellie Mae Education Foundations and the United Way – it seems reasonable to assume that Boston Beyond will be able both to support providers in implementing the program and to enforce the curriculum and quality standards that it entails. But that will depend on a great deal of planning and confidence-building taking place before the pilot begins.

Defining success and tracking progress

As for measuring results, Boston Beyond has developed a detailed evaluation strategy for Partners for Student Success, the program for younger students. That strategy will have to be adapted, at least somewhat, for the teen initiative. One

basic, core element of the program will simply be measuring enrollment and participation among the targeted cohort of young people, and comparing those against current baselines. Simply demonstrating that the targeted students actually participated in the intended programs will pose one layer of technical challenge. Then, Boston Beyond hopes to connect their rates of program participation to changes in school-time engagement. Steve Pratt's vision for this use of data is a demanding one: "I'm hoping that in six or seven years, I can point to a continuum of interlocking engagement strategies that runs from elementary school straight into high school."

The effort to zero in on a small cohort of young people is a sharp departure from Boston Beyond's early years – Pratt describes it as Version 2.0 of out-of-school-time programming. Version 1.0 was building the supply of available slots, making greater use of Boston's current after-school resources to reach more kids and raise the standards of quality across the board. The new version, building on that much-expanded capacity, now seeks to aim some of the expanded resources more deliberately where they are most urgently needed.

…making…choices, and learning from them, is a key reason why cities need central clearinghouses of information, funding and (most of all) leadership.

This is a balancing act that not every out-of-school time provider would necessarily embrace. The debate between enlarging the whole universe of service and focusing on special needs and risks is still a live one throughout the field. Boston Beyond's choice to shift toward the latter was taken with long deliberation, and only after several years' hard work on the former approach. But at the risk of belaboring an important point: making such choices, and learning from them, is a key reason why cities need central clearinghouses of information, funding, and (most of all) leadership. Our support for Boston Beyond through these formative years has already yielded intriguing lessons for the field, and its next phase of work will undoubtedly yield even more.

Even as our support comes to an end over the course of 2006-07, the increasing participation of other major funders in Boston and elsewhere ensures that the work will continue, expand, and improve. The newest major commitment in Boston, as this report goes to press, is from the Wallace Foundation, which has made an $8 million grant to Boston Beyond over three years to support Partners for Student Success and related activity. The grant, part of a new Wallace initiative in several cities, aims at raising enrollment and participation rates in out-of-school-time programs and improving the programs' quality. Given Boston Beyond's keen interest in targeting specific groups for enrollment and scrupulously measuring the benefits they derive from their enrollment, it was in many ways a natural choice for such a grant.

While Steve Pratt generously credits the After School Project as his organization's first and formative source of national support, the kind of "mezzanine" funding offered by Wallace – dollars that help convert a promising startup into a complete, ambitious, and durable program – is actually among the scarcest form of philanthropy in this field. The Wallace Foundation's willingness to build on earlier funders of Boston Beyond, and to help the organization focus its vision for its next stage of growth, is one encouraging sign that philanthropy in the out-of-school-time field is working with an unusual degree of harmony and cross-consultation, with strategic benefits greater than any one foundation could have accomplished on its own.

Hill House,
Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

The San Francisco Bay Area: From an Idea to a System

Among the earliest grants in this project was initial support to help launch Team-Up for Youth, a region-wide intermediary promoting significantly more opportunities for physical activity for young people in the out-of-school hours. Although the idea was not unprecedented – for example, the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation in New York City started in 1992 with a similar focus – concentrating exclusively on physical activity was an unusual choice for a new, aspiring out-of-school-time intermediary. At the time, at least one branch of conventional wisdom, over-simplified though it was, argued passionately that after-school services had to be varied to succeed – that a single branch of work wouldn't interest enough young people to matter, or would neglect too many developmental needs, or would turn off too many constituencies. (Youth development expert Robert Halpern, a fellow at the Erikson Institute in Chicago, punctured that prejudice in a formative paper in 2004: The trendy fixation on variety, he wrote in a footnote, "ignores, among many other things, the exact tendency for after-school programs to involve children superficially in a wide range of short-lived activities, the value of getting into activities or projects in depth, children's frequent preference for doing so, especially as they get older, and the importance of thematic or single-focus programs to the field … .")[3]

At the other extreme, some authorities seemed all too willing to concentrate out-of-school time activities solely on one topic - but that topic, most of the time, was academics. To observers whose main preoccupation was with test scores, including the authors of the main federal out-of-school-time program, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief goal of after-school activities should be improving achievement in school. In that case, the more time spent on homework, remedial education, and other exercises directly related to grades and test scores, the better.

This is a belief shared mainly among people who are not much involved in the actual practice of out-of-school-time programs. Unfortunately, those are

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[3] Robert Halpern, "**Confronting the 'Big Lie,'** " Partnership for After School Education, Summer 2004, p. 3, note 3.

among the most influential people behind whatever attention the field receives in public policy circles. (Halpern again: "Virtually every one of the many new public initiatives in states and cities throughout the country is justified by the need to improve academic achievement. … [Yet] most of the experiences children have in most programs, beyond doing homework, have little or nothing to do with the narrow, specific, disembedded skills measured on [standardized] tests."[4])

Enter Team-Up for Youth, bucking both these orthodoxies with an all-fronts effort to promote and enrich athletic activity in all its forms. The forms included team sports, individual competition, martial arts, and non-competitive forms of exercise and expression such as yoga, Tai-Chi, or dance. Although the focus on physical activity was single-minded, the purposes were multiple: not only promoting health and fitness but also building self-confidence, poise, and resilience; learning teamwork and other social skills, developing positive relationships with caring adults, and (particularly in the case of girls) overcoming social barriers to joining in physical activity as an equal participant with other kids. Academic performance,

too, might well be improved, at least indirectly, thanks to the self-assurance, discipline, and other values derived from physical activity – though these would be hard to measure, and in any case would be only one possible set of outcomes among many.

Longtime practitioners and observers of the youth development field will recognize all these objectives, and so they should. Team-Up for Youth always saw itself – and has since proven itself – as a youth development program in the out-of-school hours, not solely as a cheerleader for athletics per se. Yet its assessment of the Bay Area's youth programming environment was that opportunities for physical activity were not only scarce but actually declining, with consequences for young people that were both harmful to their health and socially limiting. With major support from the After School Project, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr., Fund, and the San Francisco Foundation, Team-Up started work in 2001. Six years later, with some $4.2 million in grants to community organizations and a network of training, recruiting, and technical assistance programs, it has helped Bay Area nonprofits expand to serve 9,000 more youngsters than before, through

an expanding roster of programs covering just about every conceivable form of physical activity. Of the participants in the 9,000 new slots, 60 percent are girls.

Where youth development meets adult development

The expanding numbers describe only the surface of the story. What makes a sports program into a youth development program is not only the quality of the activity itself, but the quality of the adult guidance behind it, and the kinds of skills, attitudes, and experiences it instills in its young participants. Team-Up, therefore, takes its training and staff-development programs at least as seriously as its grants. In 2005 alone, Team-Up's workshops trained more than 400 coaches and staff members for participating community organizations. It provided direct consulting to 20 groups, held a series of two-day training camps for coaches, and introduced a pioneering Girls Sports curriculum that drew 130 executives and program directors to its first session.

The latest step in the program, at the time this is written, has been the creation of a Coaching Corps – a volunteer

4 Halpern, pp. 2-3 and 6-7.

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program piloted at two local college campuses, in which students undergo Team-Up's distinctive training curriculum and fan out as coaches in neighborhood programs across the Bay Area. "In effect," says Team-Up Executive Director Tim Johnson, "we've added to our repertoire: not just brokering funding and information, but actually brokering people." In the corps' first semester, 25 students from Mills College and the University of California at Berkeley took coaching positions at nine organizations. The second semester more than doubled the participation, to 55 coaches. That new number should more than triple by the end of 2006, when the number of campuses is expected to expand to four. The two additional campuses – Laney Community College and Cal State-East Bay – were chosen specifically for their potential to draw a more diverse, and possibly more local, group of volunteers.

The impetus behind the Coaching Corps was primarily to bring able, enthusiastic young adults into a field desperately short of personnel. (After a few years of rapid expansion, community organizations were increasingly telling Team-Up that they couldn't add more slots or programs because they couldn't find more adults to lead them.) But the

benefits have turned out to be much greater than merely easing some of the coaching shortage. The newly trained young coaches, it seems, have helped promote Team-Up's staff-development curricula among other employees and volunteers at the organizations where they're working. Welcomed at first as simply additional hands on deck, the volunteers' skills and youth-development savvy have impressed the organizations' leaders enough to prompt the question, "Where can the rest of our coaches get the same training?" Team-Up has been more than happy to answer that question. Meanwhile, as the young volunteers sign

up for second and third tours of duty (about half of the first cadre returned for the next semester, and several have said they intend to keep coming back), they are becoming prime candidates to serve as mentors to other coaches and to recruit more of their classmates into the program.

There are still more personnel challenges waiting to be addressed. Two examples, both of them subjects of new initiatives now on the drawing board, are a coaching shortage among women of color and a need for training specifically tailored for employees of public park


Courtesy of Team-Up for Youth and the Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (Berkeley, CA)
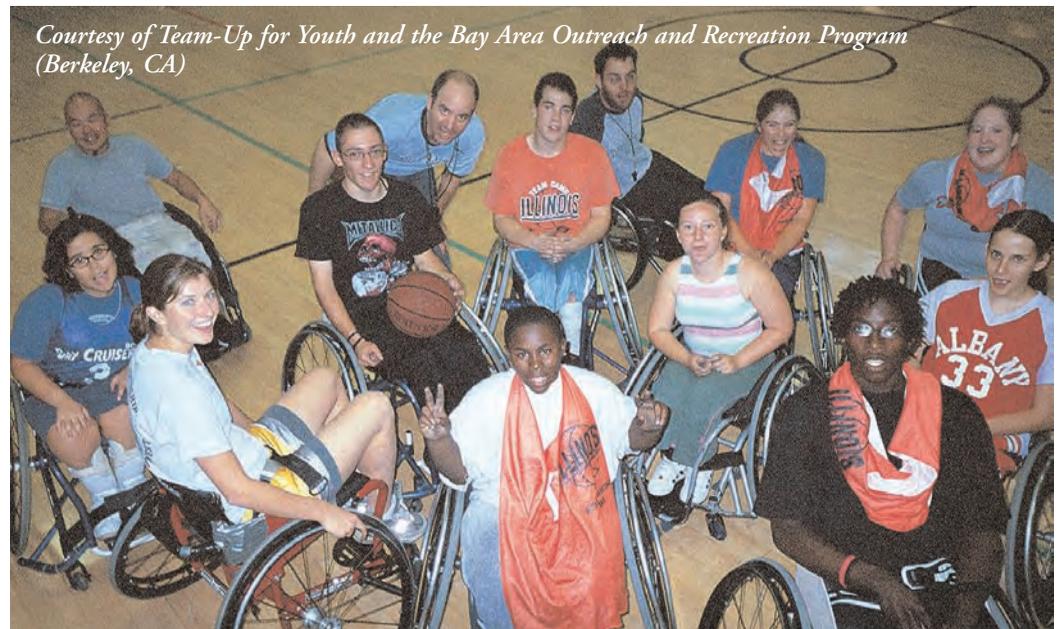
and recreation departments. In both cases, nonprofit and government agencies have approached Team-Up for help and leadership – a significant development, considering that the organization has been in full operation for barely more than four years.

"When we started," says Deputy Director Rachel Baker, "the money [granted to community organizations] was our main calling card, because we had no reputation. But that's changed over time, and our relationships and other services are now a much bigger part of what we offer. We're expanding our training staff, developing wider relationships with consultants trained in the Team-Up approach. That expands our appeal to organizations that may not initially come through our door as a grant recipient, but might get training or technical assistance, and then later might apply for a grant."

Forming broader, and bigger, alliances

Grants are, to be sure, a crucial part of Team-Up's program, and remain an important calling card, not only in its relationship with neighborhoods but
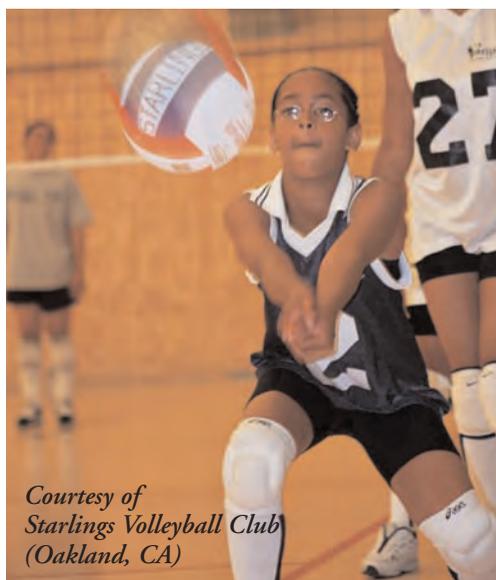
Courtesy of Starlings Volleyball Club (Oakland, CA)

with foundations and government agencies as well. Its flagship program, the Neighborhood Sports Initiative, set out to seed coalitions, organizations, and programs of youth sports in underserved, low-income neighborhoods – networks that could eventually sustain themselves with support from multiple sources. Besides providing six years of grant funding (in amounts that gradually decline after the third year, as communities raise money from alternative sources), Team-Up helps form networks of providers, volunteers, parents, other residents, schools, and public agencies in each neighborhood to assemble as wide a mix as possible of physical activities

for local young people. It provides staff training, help in fundraising, and negotiation of useful relationships among the various parties. The goal is not only to organize and launch programs, but to make better use of local leadership and expertise, public facilities, and existing community organizations in creating high-quality physical experiences for kids. Each neighborhood coalition typically serves 400 to 500 young people with a broad assortment of activities.

The partnership-building takes place at a larger, citywide level as well. Soon after California passed the nation's first gender-equity law for out-of-school-time sports, parks and recreation officials in San Francisco and Oakland turned to Team-Up for technical help in meeting the new law's requirements. At first, the relationship consisted mainly of developing new programs for girls in the two cities, with advice and some partial funding from Team-Up. Since then, however, Team-Up's relationship with the city departments has widened, and in the process it has helped broker some direct relationships between community groups and the city agencies as well. Team-Up has gone on to develop programming with San Francisco's Parks Trust and to help the city's Departments

…partnership-building takes place at a larger, citywide level as well…Team-Up's relationship with the city departments has widened, and in the process it has helped broker some direct relationships between community groups and the city agencies…

of Children, Youth, and Families and Parks and Recreation collaborate on programming in city recreation centers. Two of the first cadre of Coaching Corps volunteers were placed directly with Oakland's Parks and Recreation Department.

Although it's still a tentative and recent start, collaboration with these city agencies has constituted what Tim Johnson calls "a real sea change" in the past year – both in the agencies' view of what Team-Up can offer and in Team-Up's ability to understand and address the departments' needs. These are categorically different kinds of relationships from those that Team-Up cultivated in its first few years, when it concentrated mainly on solidifying its relationships with community-based organizations and independent private funders. But government departments have become more and more important to the future of the program. Among other things, Team-Up's latest strategic plan calls for expanding to serve a wider geographic area – a challenge that, given tight resources, will make collaboration with local government indispensable. The government bodies "are big institutions that have the potential to provide both accessible and affordable programs in
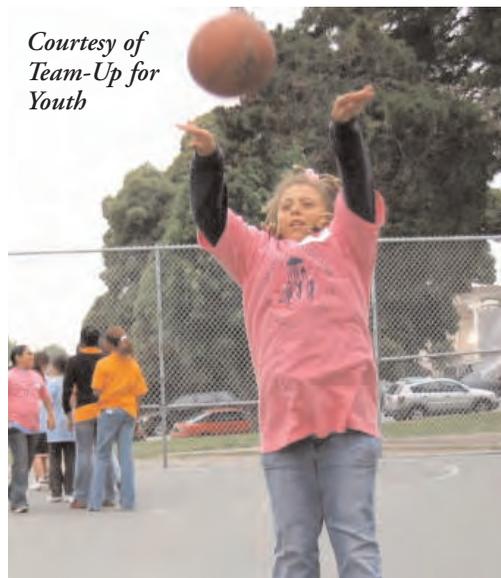
Courtesy of Team-Up for Youth

their communities," Johnson says. "The scale, affordability, and accessibility of the [public] programs is considerable. Admittedly, in some ways it's more challenging to work with public agencies, but it can have a huge impact on many more young people."

Voice, stature, and substance

The theme uniting all these various branches of Team-Up's work is the creation of a cohesive field – and the establishment of a public priority – where there had previously been only a thinly dispersed assortment of activities.

It's not that the activities weren't excellent (some were topnotch, though even those were rarely financially secure or well staffed, and many others were still rudimentary and fragile). It's that they were few in number, rarely encountered one another, had little by way of a unifying theory or rationale for their work, and claimed hardly any consistent attention from public authorities – some of which controlled resources these programs critically needed, like park and school facilities, equipment, transportation, and program dollars.

Team-Up's first important achievement, which was a good deal more remarkable four or five years ago than it might seem today, was the establishment of the principle that physical activity is a valuable, effective form of youth development. Best of all, it's a form that genuinely appeals to kids and can provide them an enriching learning experience not available in the schooltime hours. At the same time, the new organization has managed to engender an *esprit-de-corps* among providers, who now form a lively and growing community of experience, learning, and good practice. By launching a process of research and evaluation, it began to help organizations describe and demonstrate their value both to

The theme uniting…[the] various branches of Team-Up's work is the creation of a cohesive field - and the establishment of a public priority – where there had previously been only a thinly dispersed assortment of activities.

young people and to their communities. "There aren't a lot of funders in sports," Rachel Baker points out. "So we're trying to capture in our evaluation work the spillover benefits for youth development, health, community-building, safety, and educational performance. We need to build a case for what a sports program means for the fabric of a community, for kids, and for schools."

But providing the field with a definition, a common purpose, and a megaphone was in some ways the easy part of the challenge. What made Team-Up more than an innovative leader – what made it a system-building intermediary – was its attention to the technical, financial, and logistical impediments to enlarging the field of activity.

The challenges of recruiting and placing volunteers

The most recent and telling example of that kind of system-building has been in the formation of the Coaching Corps – an appealingly simple idea, but one beset with technical problems that in the past had all but stopped such efforts in their tracks. Recruiting and placing the volunteers was hard enough, but the real challenge came in screening them – background checks, fingerprinting, questions of legal liability and insurance – and then in making sure they were well trained and ready to provide quality service. When, some years earlier, a Bay Area sports program had thought about signing up volunteer coaches from a local university, the group found the

liability and logistical issues overwhelming, partly because it couldn't afford an experienced, full-time staff person to work through them all. Working in behalf of all the region's physical activity programs, Team-Up found a manager with substantial experience in deploying and overseeing volunteers, and with the help of a team of outside professional specialists, the obstacles were quickly overcome. "There's an economy of scale in our handling this," Tim Johnson says, "because once we figure out these things, we can apply the solutions to more and more coaches in more and more neighborhoods – and the community organizations don't have to bear the burden."

In the haphazard environment of the past, even if some organization had somehow found its way around all the various roadblocks, the odds of other organizations' benefiting from the same solution would have been small. The strongest case we know of for the creation of central planning and system-building organizations like Team-Up for Youth is their ability to pinpoint the constraints that keep strong activities from growing, multiplying, and excelling, and then removing those constraints, for the benefit of the whole field.

Courtesy of Team-Up for Youth

A widely known but rarely spoken fact about the after-school field – which consists, by and large, of relentlessly optimistic, visionary, and tireless people – is that many practitioners turn suddenly anxious or despondent at the first mention of teenagers. "We know we can help younger children," one such practitioner told us, speaking confidentially about her own program. "We can do things we know will interest them, engage their imaginations, keep them coming back and bonding with us and the other kids. For teenagers, we don't know any of that, and there are very few people who do."

If that's true, then some of those "very few people" must be working at After School Matters in Chicago – that rarest of out-of-school-time programs devoted exclusively to high-school-age youngsters. Our reporting on ASM has been more extensive than on any other organization we've supported in the After School Project, largely because we believe some of this anxiety about serving teenagers is the result of a near-void of information on successful models and practices for older kids. (Fortunately, both the lack of information and the resulting anxiety seem to be ending. Not only have both of the other cities in this report formed ambitious efforts to serve teens, but the number of other efforts nationwide is beginning to climb, as is the level of scholarly and professional discussion of the topic.)

But another reason for our close attention to this program has been its likelihood of accomplishing things that some experts and practitioners used to think were improbable at best. In the judgment of Chicago city and school officials, and of researchers who have studied the program, ASM does show signs of real success with teens on several fronts. Some recent research has shown that when young people participate in After School Matters programs they attend school more faithfully and fail fewer courses. More broadly, the program has demonstrated that high-school-age young people are interested in certain kinds of after-school programming, will sign up and keep coming, and will say, at the end of the experience, that they've

> *…After School Matters is categorically unlike any out-of-school-time program… that we're aware of. Most of the program is designed as a bridge to work, consisting of a variety of 'apprenticeships' in various creative or technical disciplines…*

learned something valuable in the course of an enjoyable experience. In a field still too young to have much solid evidence of success in most of its endeavors, these are at least noteworthy accomplishments, and may be signs of something truly groundbreaking.

To be sure, After School Matters is categorically unlike any out-of-school-time program for younger children that we're aware of. Most of the program is designed as a bridge to work, consisting of a variety of "apprenticeships" in various creative or technical disciplines, under the tutelage of practitioners and professionals in their respective fields. Participants are paid a weekly stipend of $45, tied to their attendance, and produce some form of tangible product – a work of art, a Web page, a performance, a documentary video, a certificate of mastery - at the end of each semester or summer program. Many of the apprenticeships lead to summer jobs or internships. (One of them, a program that trains lifeguards, is a virtual guarantee of summer work in perpetuity, given the chronic shortage of lifeguards in beach-rich Chicago.) Teenagers who are not available for, or inclined toward, the rigors of a full-scale apprenticeship are welcome in unpaid, informal "clubs"

where participants can drop in and out at will and can participate, usually in some form of sports or games under the supervision of attentive adults, whenever they choose to show up.

The intermediary as practitioner

Our support for After School Matters has not been based solely on its pioneering work in a neglected field. The organization is also impressive and important as a model coordinating body – and specifically, as the builder of a new and far-reaching system – in many of the same ways as Boston Beyond and Team-Up for Youth. With the considerable benefit of strong mayoral backing, After School Matters has linked the Chicago Park District, Public Schools, and Public Library into a network of support for the apprenticeships and clubs, in which the public agencies provide facilities, equipment, personnel, and logistical support that would have been prohibitively expensive and complicated to arrange in any other way. After School Matters has also built a widening circle of community-based organizations that are replicating – or, in many cases, developing variations on – the apprenticeships

that ASM originally designed and implemented. This growing network of independent collaborators, all working around a carefully designed program model, is an impressive achievement of system-wide organization, standard-setting, and partnership.

Although these things make After School Matters an exemplary coordinator-intermediary, it is also something more than that: it is a direct operator of programs in some three dozen high schools across the city. (ASM's staff doesn't conduct the apprenticeships; the instructors are independent professionals working under contract with ASM, which approves curricula and monitors performance.) This blurring of the distinction between intermediary and direct provider was, in some ways, inescapable: For an organization engineering and testing a fundamentally new kind of after-school program, it was essential for staff to immerse themselves in the operation of the apprenticeships; hear the responses of apprentices and instructors; talk through problems with school, parks, and library staff; adjust the model; and then find ways to maintain its integrity as it expands. At the same time, ASM also worked with a selection of community-based partners, especially

Textile Design apprenticeship,
Courtesy of After School Matters

those with useful expertise, facilities, or access to potential instructors. But the expansion to a large universe of community-based collaborators – numbering roughly 50 at the time this is written – came mainly in later years, once the model was field-tested and perfected. By now, ASM is at least as much a planning and coordinating body as it is a provider, though it has been careful to keep its feet planted firmly in both worlds.

Still, as the coordinating role expands – in effect, as ASM loses some of the simplicity of operating a program that it directly controls - the pressures familiar to other intermediaries begin to mount. Without radically expanding your staff,

how do you maintain quality over an ever-widening universe of sites, partners, and curricula? How do you enforce basic requirements without seeming heavy-handed or stifling creativity? How do you recruit and train more and more adults with the requisite backgrounds, and keep them interested and involved in the program so you don't have to keep replacing them?

From 'our program' to 'everyone's program'

The challenges of coordination, in ASM's case, are somewhat more complicated than for most intermediaries. Put

in simplest terms, most coordinating and planning organizations do not "own" the activities that they are trying to support and improve. They are influencers, negotiators, monitors, idea-generators; they raise resources, solve problems, and eliminate roadblocks that affect the provider agencies and other interested players who deliver service. Their access to dollars, information, and government and civic leadership makes them a potent force for quality and coherence. But their authority is usually moral (and to some extent fiscal), not statutory. They can persuade, fund, and support, but they cannot command; nor is it usually helpful for them to try.

ASM, especially in its early years, did "own" its model, and in ways both technical and practical, it still does. Success still depends mightily on the organization's ability to keep the strongest elements of that model intact, even as more and more people implement it in more and more places. Still, as ASM becomes as much an intermediary as a provider, and as its program becomes well established as part of the repertoire of Chicago's schools, parks, libraries, and community organizations, ASM's ownership and control of the model will be tested.

…as After School Matters becomes as much an intermediary as a provider, and as its program becomes well established as part of the repertoire of Chicago's schools, parks, libraries, and community organizations, ASM's ownership and control of the model will be tested.

The test only grows harder as the apprenticeships become more popular, more familiar, and more widely embraced. As David Sinski, executive director of After School Matters, puts it, "Now that we're coming to be seen less as something new and innovative, and more as part of the daily norm, especially in schools, we find we have to work harder to maintain [the program's] distinctness and clarity of purpose. For example, as you become more and more embedded in schools, principals and administrators no longer see the program as some unfamiliar, outside phenomenon – which we're very glad to see happening – but that means that they sometimes tend to see it as an extension of the school day." Some principals, for example, have sought to limit the apprenticeships only to students who maintain a given grade-point average. That is just one small example of what happens when other organizations, with somewhat different missions, become joint implementers of a carefully designed model. "How do you collaborate and cooperate," Sinski asks, "without losing your identity?"

One answer to that question, which ASM started testing in 2004, is to organize its staff into regional teams whose members can develop close relationships with the subset of schools, community groups, and other partners working in a single part of the city. The regional teams get to know the landscape, develop personal relationships, hold regular training sessions, spend time at apprenticeship sites and in the offices of essential collaborators. Functioning, in a sense, as mini-intermediaries, the teams still have the challenge of keeping the various geographic areas in touch with one another and maintaining the overall coherence of a single, citywide program. But that is a comparatively small burden to bear in exchange for having direct, personal contact with the schools, parks, libraries, instructors, and provider agencies that make the program work.

There is no question that a wider sense of ownership for the program is a sign of its success and something to celebrate. In fact, widening the circle of "co-owners" is essential if ASM is to meet its goal of serving at least half the teenagers in Chicago who need an after-school activity. Still, for the sake of maintaining quality and for keeping the model consistent enough to be studied and evaluated over time, the organization will have to maintain a careful, constantly shifting balance between flexibility and control, consensus-building and rule-setting, encouraging innovation and enforcing common standards.

Adding rungs to the ladder

Meanwhile, After School Matters still has some innovations ready to roll off the assembly line. In the summers of 2003 and '04, and then during the school year beginning in the spring of 2005, ASM began piloting a new introductory experience, called a pre-apprenticeship, for younger teens of roughly ninth-grade age. This preliminary program exposes participants to possible areas of interest – say, with field trips to local businesses or artists' workshops or galleries – in which they might later seek out apprenticeships. But instead of training them in particular disciplines, the pre-apprenticeships focus students on general work-related skills like punctuality, dressing appropriately, writing a résumé, and searching and applying for a job. The sessions therefore maintain the world-of-work orientation of the full-scale apprenticeships, but without the commitment to producing a product and mastering a set of technical skills. The program is still a prototype,

operating only at certain schools, as ASM irons out the model and begins recruiting more instructors to expand it.

At the other end of the spectrum, a new program is under development for older teens who have completed at least one apprenticeship and would like to do something more demanding. The idea of "advanced apprenticeships" would entail performing work on commission – designing a Web site, creating artwork, or developing a performance specifically for a paying customer or sponsor. Or it might, as with lifeguards, involve getting a higher-level credential (a "Water Safety Instructor" certificate allows someone to teach and supervise as well as perform normal lifeguarding duties). For advanced sports apprentices, there may be opportunities to take responsibility for certain functions at Park District facilities, such as handling stadium management, or to take a role in officiating at games. The point of the advanced apprenticeships would be that they would more closely resemble a job, and would recognize the proficiency that a student has acquired in a basic apprenticeship.

A further step up the ladder, an internship in an outside workplace, is likewise

under development. Currently running just in the summer months, ASM internships work much as the better college-level internships do: students are assigned to a workplace outside of school, where they report to a supervisor,

Culinary Arts apprenticeship, Courtesy of After School Matters

are responsible for clearly defined tasks of real value to the employer, and get relevant training on the job. Building on earlier summertime apprenticeships in child care, for example, a new internship has been developed for advanced work

at Head Start centers around Chicago. Another example is an internship at the city of Chicago's 311 call centers, where residents can report problems and get information on just about anything. After a period of training in how to handle calls and search for information on the city's computer system, ASM interns will be fielding calls from their fellow Chicagoans throughout the coming summer.

Together with the pre-apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships, the internships would complete what ASM calls a "Ladder of Opportunity," in which teens would have not only the adult experiences of acquiring basic skills and then learning a craft or line of work, but eventually the opportunity to engage in some kind of market transaction or the equivalent of an entry-level job. The new rungs of the ladder expand and refine the fundamental insight behind the original apprenticeship model: that teenagers, much more than younger children, want and need to feel like valued participants in the adult world. Their interest in out-of-school time is not simply in finding something to do with otherwise idle hours – they already have plenty of activities that they regard as worthy of their time, however

…the ideal relationship between after-school coordinating bodies and local government remains a much-debated question…

much adults may dislike some of their choices. What draws them to out-of-school-time programs and keeps them coming back is the affirming and challenging experience of exerting themselves on something they recognize – and other people recognize – as valuable.

Of course, one child's sense of value and affirmation may be quite different from another's – hence the need for a wide variety of apprenticeships. But the challenge, the exertion, the affirmation, and the opportunity to prove oneself in the wider world seem to be part of a successful formula for teens. Simplifying those elements somewhat for younger students, and notching them up for older ones, would then seem to complete the continuum.

Between community and government: A postscript

In our last report, in 2005, we obliquely raised the possibility that After School Matters might soon become part of Chicago city government. Because of the deep involvement of the mayor and his wife, the heads of major city departments, and senior City Hall staff, it had always seemed possible that, if the program succeeded, the city would want to absorb ASM formally into its regular services to children, youth, and families. That has not, in fact, occurred; After School Matters remains a formally independent nonprofit organization with close ties to (and extraordinary support from) city government.

Even so, the ideal relationship between after-school coordinating bodies and local government remains a much-debated question well beyond Chicago. One reason for that debate is evident in the attention we have paid, in the preceding paragraphs, to partnerships and collaboration, to the balance between flexibility and maintaining standards, and to innovation and experimentation. All these issues call for a combination of the authority and standardization that can come from government control plus the versatility and enterprise typical of independent nonprofits.

Some cities have chosen one solution over the other. San Diego's nationally respected "6 to 6" program is entirely part of the city's Department of Community and Economic Development, though it operates through a network of community-based contractors.

Boston Beyond is entirely independent of city government, despite a close working relationship with City Hall. Others, though, function in more of a gray area, and derive real benefits from keeping it that way. Though it continues to be formally independent, After School Matters draws a great deal of strength from its unusual relationship to the city's bureaucracy and top leadership. Some of that arrangement is admittedly a side-effect of Chicago's particular political and governmental structure, but a lot of it is replicable, and may hold lessons for other cities contemplating ways of organizing and coordinating their out-of-school-time programs.

One benefit of the close relationship between the city and After School Matters has been the recent decision by the Wallace Foundation to invest $8 million over three years in the citywide coordination and improvement of out-of-school-time opportunities for Chicago teens. Wallace was interested both in building capacity in city government to coordinate after-school services and in ensuring that these services were of high quality, innovative, easy for families and teens to locate and use, and sustainable. The unusual kinship between After School Matters and City

Fencing club, Courtesy of After School Matters

Hall made it clear that Wallace could, with a single grant, support all of these goals, promoting both smarter public management and a stronger private service delivery system.

The planning process for Chicago's application to the Wallace Foundation was led by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Harold Richman, a senior researcher at Chapin Hall, describes the proposal as resting on four pillars: (1) developing more information on the program for both families and program managers; (2) raising the quality of programs and the skills of the people who run them; (3) promoting innovation in program design - including the new tiers of After School Matters' apprenticeships and internships; and (4) ensuring a

broad enough base of support so that the program is sustainable beyond the support of any one foundation.

All of these, Richman points out, are priorities for both the city and After School Matters. But in certain cases – innovation, for instance – the independent intermediary has a distinct advantage and a proven track record that make it an indispensable part of the Wallace endeavor. That is among the chief reasons why the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's After School Project made such an early, strong commitment to ASM – long before there was yet any track record on which to bet. "None of this would have happened without the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation," Richman said, reflecting on the Wallace grant. "There

would have been no After School Matters without RWJ, and Chicago would not have been a competitor as one of the three Wallace cities without After School Matters and the national distinction of being a pioneer." Yet it's equally true that there would be much less opportunity for After School Matters, or for Chicago's teens, without the dramatic infusion of new resources now being provided by the Wallace Foundation and other recent funders. Here, as in Boston, the timing and staging of foundation support has been a part of the city's success in building an ambitious out-of-school-time system for teens – and now, in enlarging, improving, and sustaining that system into the future.

From Here On: Organizing an Unruly Universe

We noted, early in this report, that central coordinating and planning groups in the after-school field have generally aimed their efforts in one of two directions: either seeking to serve as many kids as possible with a wide variety of programs to suit many needs and tastes, or zeroing in on a particular type of programming or demographic target and trying to enlarge and strengthen that segment of the field. We called this choice, for simplicity's sake, a matter of breadth vs. depth. In our sample of three large intermediaries, we noted that the program in Boston had been taking the former approach and those in Chicago and the San Francisco Bay Area the latter.

It may be significant that in the past year, as the program in Boston has matured and become a free-standing organization, it too has begun focusing its vision more narrowly, attempting to produce a deeper effect on a relatively small and carefully defined subset of the school-age population. In fact, what Boston Beyond's Steve Pratt calls "After School 2.0" is a genuinely dramatic turn in the direction of depth, considering that Version 1.0 in Boston had been almost entirely about broadening the field to as many kids, with as many kinds of activities, in as many underserved communities, as possible.

Boston Beyond's new vision of reaching a small cohort of children with the greatest needs and risks is now every bit as laser-like a focus on one part of the field as that of Team-Up for Youth or After School Matters. In fact, more than either of the other programs, Boston Beyond has taken on the challenge of reaching a particular, precisely defined group of kids with services meant to solve an explicit set of problems. Both of the other programs, despite considerable specificity about means and ends, have a wider-ranging set of goals and targets than that.

The point is not that we consider one or more of these approaches better than the others. It is almost certainly too soon to make that sort of judgment. The point is that the different intermediaries have made

their different choices with great deliberation, tested them with years of effort, refined them with wave after wave of new information, and described their aims to the rest of the field with uncommon candor and intelligence. They have set clear enough criteria for their own success so that, in a few years' time, close observers will be able to judge for themselves whether these models are on track. That alone is an excellent sign that something important and useful is under way.

But more to the point, for the purposes of this Project, it is the existence of the intermediaries that has made all the deliberation, testing, refinement, and public accountability possible. All three cities had plenty of out-of-school-time activity already under way. All of them were well supplied with experts and supportive public officials. If the goal had simply been to multiply programs, the creation of intermediaries and planning bodies would no doubt have been helpful, but not necessarily decisive.

Instead, in all three places – and in several other cities that we surveyed over the years – the role of coordinating or intermediary groups made a fundamental, categorical difference in the form

and function of their cities' after-school systems. They did this, first of all, by reaching a community-wide consensus on a pair of crucial questions: What does this community want from its after-school programs, and how do we propose to get what we want? They then pursued the answers with all (or nearly all) of the interested and responsible parties working around a single table. The answers they came up with were different from place to place, both in their goals and in their chosen methods. But they were all carefully arrived at and, in the end, widely endorsed. And they carried a more or less consistent concern for quality, accountability, sustainability, and responsible methods of evaluation.

Sharpening the message

Regardless how particular intermediaries chose to answer the fundamental questions, the solutions they arrived at were not only challenging to achieve, they were usually hard to explain. More than most areas of public policy and social endeavor, the out-of-school-time field pursues a mind-numbingly long list of purposes and objectives, with an even longer list of methods for achieving

Web Design apprenticeship,
Courtesy of After School Matters

them. Even when these lists are winnowed somewhat in the goal-setting and planning process, the final choices still tend to be complex and multi-layered. Achieving any particular objective usually calls for a demanding combination of intersecting strategies. The simpler an after-school program's goal is to describe, the more reductive and improbable it tends to seem (as when some public authorities declare out-of-school programs to be simply instruments for boosting academic test scores).

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No branch of the human services is purely linear and formulaic, of course. But most have a basic roster of standard means tied, through tradition or scholarship or both, to well-established ends. The out-of-school-time field has yet to hone its self-definition to a comparably short and well-understood list of purposes and methods. Given all the things that parents, schools, communities, and youngsters hope for from these programs, it may never be able to do so.

This may help to explain one of the less encouraging findings from the evaluation of the After School Project by Conwal, Inc., mentioned at the beginning of this report. In its preliminary analysis, Conwal was not able to detect any systematic enlargement in the base of community and political support for the five after-school intermediaries the consultants studied. It may be that the half dozen years of this Project were simply not enough time for the complex and still-evolving idea of out-of-school-time systems – as opposed to programs – to take root in either politics or policy. It's worth noting that the three intermediaries in this report spent several years, in their work with us, sharpening their message, focusing their ambitions, and organizing their efforts around a more

and more precise idea of what their communities need and how they can help supply that need. The results, after some years of work, seem powerful enough to foment greater organized support over time. But that is a challenge that remains to be addressed.

Yet whatever it may lack in official policy support, the field unquestionably enjoys enormous, steady popular support from individual families, teachers, and youngsters. Scholars and policy-makers may well argue (and we would agree) that practitioners need many more years of research and testing to know for sure what the value of this or that form of out-of-school-time program might be. Yet parents, by and large, are less troubled by such skepticism and are happy to see more programs proliferate. Between the grassroots push for more and more activity and the expert uncertainties about which programs are best for what, the field continues to veer this way and that, seeking a rationale and a method of working efficiently, responsibly, and creatively.

In that still-uncertain middle ground, the value of a broadly representative, experienced, and publicly accountable planning group or intermediary becomes

almost self-evident. The process of collectively grappling with the twin questions What do we want? and How will we produce it? is the best way we know of, at least so far, for achieving a clearer vision of means and ends in the field and adjusting that vision as more and more information becomes available.

That process is mostly local, and in our view it should remain local. The difference in approaches among the various cities where we've worked and visited is testament to the different priorities, needs, ideas, and opportunities that predominate in different places. While the added resources provided by federal programs like the 21st Century Community Learning Centers are desperately needed and welcome, the one-size-fits-all philosophy with which that particular program has been implemented is regrettable. Supporting and empowering intermediaries that can rally local actors around local solutions is the surest way to produce a system that genuinely serves each community's parents, schools, and youth – and that holds the allegiance of the many leaders and organizations on which all these programs depend.

About the After School Project

The After School Project concluded on June 30, 2006. Created by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 1998 as a five-year, three-city demonstration aimed at connecting significant numbers of young people in low-income neighborhoods with responsible adults during out-of-school time, the Project focused on developing: (1) an array of developmental opportunities for youth, including physical activity and sports, educational, social and recreational programs; and, (2) strong local organizations with the necessary resources, credibility, and political clout to bring focus and visibility to the youth development field.

For more information on the After School Project and its three sites, please go to:
www.theafterschoolproject.org.

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Robotics program, Courtesy of After School Matters

Courtesy of Team-Up for Youth

G-ROW Boston, Courtesy of Boston Beyond - BYSI

The AfterSchool Project

www.theafterschoolproject.org