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Afterschool Partnerships with Higher Education

Community partnerships are the cornerstone of some of the most successful afterschool programs. For example, the average afterschool program funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant leverages resources through relationships with at least six local organizations. Higher education institutions are one of the most frequent partners. Many experts recognize the natural motivation and mutual benefits for universities to partner with schools and programs serving school-age youth.

Afterschool and Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions, from state universities to community colleges, bring valuable resources to afterschool programs. They can bolster students' aspirations for higher education and help prepare them for college. Higher education institutions partner with afterschool programs in a number of ways:

- Provide college students as tutors, mentors or activity leaders;
- Offer training, technical assistance and specialized services to afterschool program staff and participants; and
- Contribute to the emerging knowledge base of the field by evaluating afterschool programs.¹

Public schools provide universities with at least some of their future students, and colleges and universities prepare and train the vast majority of future teachers. Both institutions are devoted, at least in part, to the pursuit of learning and intellectual development, and both play a major role in socializing and preparing American youth for future roles in society.¹

Pedro Noguera
University of California,
Berkeley

Examples of Successful Partnerships

Each year, the number of successful partnerships between afterschool programs and higher education institutions increases. Partnerships are meeting local needs by offering career-development, mentoring, tutoring, evaluation assistance and adult education.

In Corvallis, Oregon

Students from **Oregon State University**, in collaboration with the Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences program (SMILE), help more than 700 disadvantaged students in local elementary, middle, and high schools attain the skills necessary to graduate from high school, go on to college, and pursue a career in the math and sciences. This is accomplished through their work in after-school clubs, outdoor science camps, college-connection challenge activities, and local field trips.²

In Long Beach, California

Students from California State University at Long Beach teach afterschool students from Washington Intensive Learning Center about computer literacy and website design. The students are partnered together through Better Learning After School Today (BLAST), a

group which places college students and adult volunteers in afterschool programs. Long Beach City College, the University of California system, the local YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Campfire Boys and Girls and Girl Scouts are just some of the partners in BLAST.

We must, as an institution and a nation, make sure we provide the opportunities, education, and means to attain social and economic success for all people commensurate with their abilities.

Edward J. Ray
President,
Oregon State University

In Boston, Massachusetts

Harvard University students tutor youth from the Mission Main housing project in the Mission Hill After School Program four afternoons a week. The college students partner with one or two children and help them with homework, take them on field trips and participate in projects designed to enhance academic learning. The program is designed and directed by the college students.⁴

In Montana

Researchers from Montana State University's Department of Health and Human Development and the Montana State University Extension Service surveyed 2,500 youth statewide that participate in 4-H clubs. The evaluation found that approximately 75 percent of the 4-H members are involved in up to four out-of-school activities and that 4-H members are more likely than other youth to succeed in school, have leadership roles in their community and be considered role models by their peers.

In Covington, Kentucky

Parents and adults can enroll in college and technical classes at Urban Learning Center campuses while their kids enjoy afterschool activities, thanks in part to a 21st CCLC grant and several higher education institutions. Northern Kentucky University, Thomas Moore College, Northern Kentucky Technical College, Covington Independent Schools, Forward Quest and Covington Community Center united in 1998 to create the Urban Learning Center as a way for local adults to enhance their work and educational aspirations. Since then, the Urban Learning Center has taught almost 1,000 students.

Benefits of Successful Partnerships

The benefits of afterschool partnerships with higher education extend beyond the immediate advancement of the students enrolled in afterschool. Such partnerships also benefit the education field and the afterschool field of providers looking for talented, experienced staff.

- College students are the second largest category of staff in afterschool programs after teachers.⁵
- Breakthrough Collaborative, a program that serves underprivileged youth, hires high school and college students to teach at their summer program. Although many of the youth staff are not considering careers in education when they begin the summer program, by the end of the program, more than 72 percent say they plan to pursue a career in education".⁶
- A study conducted in Illinois found that college students who volunteer to work with youth may then opt for a career in education.⁷

The partnership is beneficial to college students as well:

- College students who volunteer in afterschool programs are more likely to have a higher grade point average (GPA) and an increased knowledge-base.³

- Studies suggest that college students who volunteer in afterschool programs devote more time to homework and studying and graduate from college feeling better prepared for the workforce.⁴
- College students receive many of the same life skills benefits as the afterschool participants receive.⁵

Partnerships between afterschool programs and higher education have the unique advantage of providing youth programs with relatable mentors and role models whose presence increases youth participation and satisfaction.

- A new study suggests that relationships between and among afterschool staff and students play an integral role in quality programming, and that hiring a strong staff is one of the ways in which program managers can improve their programs.⁶
- College students are often passionate about what they are doing and enjoy working closely with children.⁷
- Most youth cite the afterschool program staff as the most important factor in why they continue to attend afterschool programs.⁸
- Youth mentors have been shown to have a lot of enthusiasm and engage in activities that are of interest to their students.⁹
- Studies reveal that youth feel special when older peers are interested in them.¹⁰

Partnerships between afterschool programs and higher education institutions can contribute to the success of an afterschool program and its students. Afterschool participants, staff, schools, college volunteers and youth workers are all potential benefactors of a successful partnership.

1 Noguera, P.A. (1998). Toward the development of school and university partnerships based upon mutual benefit and respect. *Motion Magazine*. Retrieved July 10, 2007 from <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/pnsup1.html>.

¹ Collaborative After-School Project at the University of California, Irvine, (2001). Rationale for K-16 Afterschool Learning Partnerships.

² Lougee, A. (2007, July 23). The SMILE Program. Retrieved July 23, 2007, Web site: <http://smile.oregonstate.edu/>.

⁴ (2001, December 5). The Mission Hill After School Program. Retrieved July 23, 2007, Web site: <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~mhasp/>.

⁵ Learning Point Associates. (2006, July). 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Analytic Support for Evaluation and Program Monitoring: An Overview of the 21st CCLC Program: 2004-05. Naperville, IL.

⁶ *Breakthrough Collaborative*. San Francisco, CA

⁷ Wilson-Ahlstrom, A., & Yohalem, N. Voices and Choices: Illinois Youth Work Professionals Discuss Opportunities, Challenges and Options for the Profession. Retrieved July 31, 2007, from http://www.forumfyi.org/Files/IL_Focus_Group_Report_-_final.pdf.

³ Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (1998). How Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, Retrieved July 31, 2007, from <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/events/seru21symposium2005/papers/sax2.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rieger, M. (2002). Better to Give. *Colby Magazine*, 91, Retrieved July, 2007, from <http://www.colby.edu/colby.mag/issues/spr02/bettertogive/rieger.html>

⁶ Grossman, J., Campbell, M., & Raley, B. (2007). Quality Time After School.

⁷ (2006, January). Helping Youth Succeed Through Out-of-School Time Programs. *American Youth Policy Forum*, Retrieved July 31, 2007, from <http://www.aypf.org/publications/HelpingYouthOST2006.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Herrera, C., Sipe, C., McClanahan, W., Arbretton, A., & Pepper, S. (2000). Mentoring School Age Children: Relationship Development in Community-Based and School-Based Programs. *The National Mentoring Partnership, Public/Private Ventures*, Retrieved August 8, 2007, from http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/34_publication.pdf.

¹⁰ Ibid.