

Leveraging resources to Promote Positive School-CBO Relationships

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courtesy Cedar Ridge Fun, Fun, Fun, and More Fun 4-H Club, Gainesville, FL

Many afterschool programs operated by neighborhood or community-based organizations (CBOs) take place in students' school buildings. Navigating relationships between afterschool programs and their host public schools can be challenging for both parties. At times, tension in such relationships can throw unnecessary roadblocks on the path to achieving successful and enriching youth programming. Connecting, coordinating, and leveraging the resources of both schools and CBOs, however, can enable both institutions to develop and implement effective afterschool programs (Blank & Langford, 2000).

Ferguson and Dickens (1999) delineate four primary forms of resources or assets necessary for any

community development organization to accomplish its goals and achieve its outcomes:

- **Physical resources:** concrete assets such as buildings, tools, or materials
- **Financial resources:** money and funding streams
- **Social resources:** the norms, shared understandings, and trust inherent in strong relationships among various actors
- **Intellectual resources:** the skills, knowledge, and competence of main stakeholders such as teachers and program staff

This review article uses the Ferguson and Dickens resource framework to examine how CBOs and schools have leveraged their resources to achieve their common goal: the increased learning and positive development of youth in their care. Our review draws on rich evaluation data harvested from the Harvard

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Family Research Project's (HFRP's) Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database to provide examples of afterschool programs that have successfully navigated the challenges of sharing resources with schools.

Our Methodology

The HFRP's Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database provides information about evaluations of out-of-school time (OST) programs and initiatives. Its purpose is to support the development of high-quality OST evaluations and programs. Evaluations in the database meet the following three criteria:

- The evaluated program or initiative operates during out-of-school time.
- The evaluation (or evaluations) aims to answer a specific evaluation question or set of questions about a specific program or initiative.
- The evaluated program or initiative serves children between the ages of 5 and 19.

Each profile contains detailed information about the evaluations, as well as an overview of the OST program or initiative itself. The settings of the programs profiled in the database differ quite a bit, ranging from school-based, school-operated programs to school-based, CBO-operated programs to community- or university-based programs. Programs profiled include not only afterschool programs, but also summer, special weekend, before-school, and weekend programs, as well as comprehensive initiatives with multiple OST components.

The programs in this review represent a subset of the database: afterschool programs that take place in public schools but are managed or operated by CBOs. Of this subset, we examined the evaluation reports to find those that included an evaluation of the program's implementation.

Of those, we selected those whose implementation findings dealt with school-CBO relationships. This process resulted in a final set of 15 programs, from which the issues and examples highlighted in the rest of this article are drawn (see box). While these programs are not statistically representative of all such programs, we hope that the situations culled from these evaluations will provide helpful "food for thought" to practitioners and program planners who need to navigate school-CBO relationships.

Physical Resources

When CBOs and schools do not adequately plan the division and use of physical resources, issues may arise that create unnecessary tension and may even disrupt the groups' shared mission. By physical resources, we mean all the tangible prerequisites for program operation: adequate space and facilities; such infrastructural necessities as maintenance, lighting, and storage; and materials such as supplies, books, games, and computers. Many physical-resource issues are context-specific; that is, they are unique to the individual school-CBO relationship. However, some concrete examples from the HFRP's Program Evaluation Database can help program leaders think through potential physical resource issues and illustrate real-life strategies for their successful negotiation. Based on our review, two primary physical resource issues emerged

Evaluation Reports Included in This Review

This review article draws on information from the evaluation reports of the 15 programs listed below. For more information about the programs and their evaluations, visit the Harvard Family Research Project's Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database at: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/evaldatabase.html>

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers National Program
- Cap City Kids
- Child First Authority
- Extended-Service Schools Initiative
- Fifth Dimension/UC Links Expedition Program
- Fort Worth After-School Program
- Georgia Reading Challenge Program
- Hawaii A+ After School Program
- LINC of Greater Kansas City
- Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST)
- New York City Beacons
- North Carolina Support Our Students
- Polk Bros. Foundation's Full Service Schools Initiative
- Owensboro 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- San Francisco Beacons Initiative

from the field: equal access to physical resources for school and afterschool programs, and the adequacy of the physical space for shared programming.

Equal Access to Shared Space

For most afterschool programming, CBOs must negotiate with schools over access to adequate space for their program activities. For instance, The After-School Corporation (TASC), which operates a system of nonprofit-run school-based afterschool programs in New York City, found that, while 57 percent of its sites had access to all types of necessary spaces in the school, some sites reported lack of access to certain facilities: libraries, computer labs, storage space, and office space. Another frequently raised issue was access to classrooms; teachers sometimes hesitated to let program staff use their space for fear that supplies would be taken and classrooms would not be cleaned at the end of the day. TASC staff engaged in a number of strategies to overcome these obstacles. For example, to gain access to computer labs and technology centers, some TASC sites consciously involved the schools' technology teachers in their afterschool programs and nurtured relationships with teachers who had computers in their classrooms. Program staff won the trust and cooperation of classroom teachers by using checklists posted outside the classrooms to help all parties monitor classrooms' conditions; by hosting breakfasts and other special events in order to foster teachers' support of the afterschool program; and by offering resources and materials, such as books and art supplies, to classroom teachers in appreciation for their cooperation. (For more information on the TASC program and its evaluation, see Reisner, White, Birmingham, & Welsh, 2001.)

Access to physical resources was also an issue for the Fort Worth After-School Program, which provides academic enrichment and positive developmental opportunities at 52 elementary and middle school sites in Fort Worth, TX. In a number of cases, the program's evaluation found that programs were restricted to using cafeterias and outdoor play areas. This restriction frustrated program staff, who wanted to use the classrooms, computer areas, and libraries in order to provide academically enriching experiences. In the second year of the program, the evaluation found that many sites had experienced increased access to these spaces,

due in large part to a strategy used by many afterschool programs: employing school personnel as afterschool staff. School personnel, who already had access to many of the physical spaces, were able to bring this access to the afterschool setting. (For more information on the Fort Worth After-School Program and its evaluation, see Witt, King, & Lee, 2002.)

Another strategy, used by San Francisco Beacons Initiative, is to develop formal memoranda of under-

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standing (MOUs), which can help to define explicitly the acceptable domains of access to physical resources.

Adequacy of Physical Space for Shared Programming

A further challenge for the CBO-school relationship involves the adequacy of the physical space that the CBO hopes to use for afterschool programming. The Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) Initiative provided small program improvement grants to individual sites for use in ensuring that their school-based facilities matched their program needs. The schools also benefited from this infusion of MOST-funded resources. (For more information on MOST and its evaluation, see Halpern, Spielberg, & Robb, 2000.) Unfortunately, not every school and CBO has access to specialized grants for program or facilities improvement. In these cases, CBOs can look for smaller-scale methods of accomplishing similar ends.

The San Francisco Beacons Initiative (SFBI) provides an example of a program that has dealt with space issues on a smaller-scale. SFBI aimed to transform local schools in disadvantaged communities into "youth and family centers that would become a beacon of activity uniting the community" (Walker & Arbretton, 2001, p. 1). While an independent evaluation found that SFBI was off to an extraordinary start, many Beacons sites encountered hurdles involving schools' lighting systems. Many of the school buildings, having been designed for use solely during the school day, had inadequate lighting for use during evening hours. The issue of lighting turned out to be critical, since one of the key components of the

Beacons initiative is to provide safe places for youth during the evening. One way in which SFBI remedied the situation was by purchasing portable spotlights to illuminate portions of the school during Beacons' hours of operation. This example illustrates the many small ways in which CBOs can contribute to their host schools while simultaneously meeting their physical resource needs. (For more information on SFBI and its evaluation, see Walker & Arbreton, 2001.)

Financial Resources

When CBOs step into public schools to run afterschool programs, financial resource issues can either enhance or detract from their mission. Financial resource issues have to do not only with who will pay for what services, supplies, and labor, but also with the practical consequences of the parties' decisions on use of funds. While matters of the wallet can negatively affect school-CBO relationships, some programs have developed creative solutions to financial resource issues—solutions that ultimately strengthen relationships and improve programs. Our review reveals three possible solutions for schools and CBOs to consider: dedicated, collaborative, and innovative funding.

Dedicated Funding

Baltimore's Child First Authority (CFA) provides an example of a program that developed a dedicated stream of funding for citywide afterschool programming, thus eliminating competition among providers. The CFA is a formal legal partnership created by a local grassroots organization called BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development), Baltimore City, and the Baltimore City legislature. The CFA was granted bonding authority through this partnership; it is also empowered to receive and deploy a dedicated funding stream for afterschool programming in Baltimore. (For more information on Baltimore's Child First Authority and its evaluation, see Fashola, 1999.)

While this situation is obviously a unique solution to the question of harnessing financial resources, other unitary funding streams, such as the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CLCC) pro-

gram, can serve a similar purpose. In 21st CCLC, a funding stream is dedicated solely to afterschool programming, provided that the program falls within the federal guidelines. Using or creating a steady, unitary source of afterschool financing can head off some of the tensions involved in negotiating the use of financial resources between schools and CBOs.

Collaborative Funding

Use of funding from a larger variety of sources is often unavoidable. Furthermore, CBOs may not have enough of their own funding to operate completely autonomous afterschool programs. In these cases, programs can find opportunities to turn such situations to their advantage—at the same time tightening their relationships with schools—by devising collaborative funding solutions.

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For example, the North Carolina Support Our Students (SOS) program is funded by the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice through grants made directly to nonprofits that run afterschool programs. By collaborating with public school systems, many SOS sites pay only a fraction of their staff directly with SOS state funds. The Orange County Public School System, for example, supports 24 of 30 SOS staff members on school sites, many of whom are regular schoolteachers paid to stay on after school. CBOs can collaborate with schools in such ways to finance afterschool staffing, thereby preserving scarce resources for richer afterschool services, while, at the same time, building relationships with school personnel and providing opportunities for collaboration that can strengthen children's learning both in and out of school. (For more information about SOS and its evaluation, see Johnson, 2002.)

In another major afterschool initiative, the Extended-Service Schools Initiative, evaluators found that schools and school districts provided more than 20 percent of program costs across its nationwide program sites. A major portion of support came in the form of in-kind contributions, such as transportation,

snacks, custodial assistance, and rent-free use of the school building. Partnering with the schools financially also opened access to other unexpected financial resources, such as federal and state funding streams. This example highlights the fact that financial resource issues in the school-CBO relationship extend beyond the tangible matters of who pays for what and out of which budget. In-kind resources and access to supplemental funding sources are also important financial matters for both parties to consider when negotiating financial resources. (For more information on the Extended-Service Schools Initiative and its evaluation, see Grossman, et al., 2002.)

Innovative Funding

Schools and CBOs have also worked together to develop innovative ways to balance and expand financial resources. For example, a North Carolina SOS program held a silent auction, at which it auctioned furniture that had been repainted by students as well as work donated by local artists and galleries. Five percent of the proceeds were donated to a student-chosen organization in the surrounding town, with the remainder benefiting the SOS program. The SOS site thus generated additional financial resources while both providing enriching experiences for its youth and complementing the academic and social mission of its host school.

Another common but innovative funding strategy is to decrease costs rather than increase revenues. For example, in both the MOST initiative and the Georgia Reading Challenge Initiative, CBOs used volunteers to complement their regular staff. One city in the MOST initiative was found to be particularly adept at linking individual program sites with larger organizations that provide volunteers, such as AmeriCorps, colleges and universities, local museums, and networks of artists. Georgia Reading Challenge recruited elderly community members to serve as mentors for youth, a practice that has been shown to be effective in realizing positive outcomes for youth (LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996). While harnessing volunteers can save programs money that might otherwise be used to hire specialists, consultants, and staff, engaging volunteers can also involve trade-offs. While some volunteers bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge to the program, some also come with limited experience of content, youth work, or both. Volunteers' schedules and levels of commitment may limit

participation. Additionally, using special volunteers such as museum staff and artists may serve programs' short-term purposes, but, as was found in the MOST evaluation, these volunteers typically do not stay beyond their initial commitment. If such volunteers spark youth's interest in their areas of expertise during their involvement with the program, they leave a void when they depart. (For more information on the Georgia Reading Challenge and its evaluation, see Office of Student Learning and Achievement, Georgia Department of Education, 1999.)

Negotiations over financial resources can be fraught with tension. None of the three financial strategies—dedicated, collaborative, or innovative—is a panacea, and any one of them is likely to involve trade-offs. Moreover, financial resource issues are likely to be the most context- and situation-specific challenges for the involved parties, as most afterschool programs have unique financial situations that require context-specific solutions. Nevertheless, schools and CBOs need to come together to find ways to leverage and negotiate financial resource issues, so that both parties can continue to serve the youth in their joint care effectively.

Social Resources

Another key aspect of the relationship between schools and CBOs is development of social resources. Social resources consist of the trust, networks, and interactions among school and program staff, the participating children and youth, their parents and families, and other community stakeholders.

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Our review reveals some promising mechanisms by which these relationships can be navigated to coordinate afterschool programs, including ways of developing relationships and of sharing information and knowledge.

Developing Relationships

Achieving “presence” in a school is an important factor in successful afterschool program delivery. Program staff in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) in Owensboro, Kentucky, learned

that the key to achieving presence in the school was developing good relationships with its staff. The Owensboro 21st CCLC is an afterschool program consisting of five Community Learning Centers that offer academic and social programs for students in Owensboro public schools. Early in the program, lack of engagement on the part of students and limited awareness of available activities on the part of school staff became somewhat problematic. Program staff responded to these challenges by purposefully building their program presence through collaboration with and outreach to school personnel at schools' existing Family Resource and Youth Service Centers. One mechanism for collaboration was the staff position of the project director, who acted as a liaison between the Owensboro Public Schools and 21st CCLC Advisory Council. Creating such a formal staff position responsible for building and maintaining connections between school and afterschool personnel helped the programs to establish their presence in the eyes of school personnel while simultaneously building important relationships for successful program implementation. 21st CCLC program staff also helped to solidify the program's presence in the eyes of existing school personnel by assisting with booths at back-to-school "Ready Fests." This presence helped achieve buy-in from school principals, teachers, and other school staff, which in turn strengthened the program's implementation. The resulting collaboration helped to increase both adults' awareness of and students' interest in the 21st CCLC programs. (For more information about the Owensboro 21st CCLC program and its evaluation, see Illback & Birkby, 2001.)

Sharing Information and Knowledge

The sharing of information and knowledge among all parties in the school-CBO relationship is an additional social resource for afterschool programs. Many programs struggle to make students aware of the opportunities and activities they offer. Since young people rely on adults to share information about what programs are available and might be interesting or helpful to them, solid relationships between CBO and school staff can be essential to ensuring strong attendance in afterschool programs. When schools and CBOs make concerted efforts to make parents feel welcome, even

more opportunities become available to increase student participation. For example, in the Polk Bros. Foundation's Full Service Schools Initiative (FSSI) in Chicago, the evaluation found that one of the strongest predictors of students' participation in FSSI programming was the degree to which students felt that their parents were frequent and welcome visitors at the school. FSSI sites engaged parents by building relationships and sharing information among families, schools, and programs through events such as annual spring picnics, for which transportation and food were

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provided to parents and students. FSSI also established oversight committees made up of representatives from the school, the CBO, and the parents. The evaluation found that when the oversight committees were developed with formal bylaws, providing clear guidelines for membership and for stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, strong relationships formed among these parties. As these examples illustrate, the careful consideration and development of social relationships between schools and CBOs, as well as with students and parents, is critical to successful afterschool programming. (For more information about FSSI and its evaluation, see Whalen, 2002.)

Intellectual Resources

Intellectual resources are the skills, knowledge, and competence of main stakeholders such as teachers and program staff. More and more afterschool programs are being charged with extending and enhancing the educational goals of the traditional school day and with providing academically enriching experiences for the youth in their care. This trend is reflected, for example, in the increased emphasis on academic enrichment in the 21st CCLC Program, as mandated through Title IV of the No Child Left Behind Act (see www.nochildleftbehind.gov). Furthermore, some children come to both schools and afterschool programs with a variety of social or emotional problems that can interfere with schools' and CBOs' missions. No matter how talented a CBO's staff, staff members' expertise may be limited in certain areas, and the program's

ability to enhance children's learning and development may be compromised. However, some CBOs have successfully overcome issues of intellectual resources by engaging outside expertise, sharing internal expertise, and investing in professional development.

Engaging Outside Expertise

As the New York City Beacons centers opened their doors to youth in many of New York's most distressed communities, a substantial number of families and children came into the programs with various social and emotional problems. Both the Beacons and the schools that hosted them wanted to help these families, but both parties lacked expertise in providing effective services to meet these needs. Harnessing outside expertise was one strategy that seemed to work for many sites. For instance, many afterschool sites included preventive service programs offered through the Administration for Children's Services, a New York City agency devoted to children's well-being. Bringing in outside help through the afterschool program served to complement both the schools' and the CBOs' missions. Furthermore, this strategy can help in convincing schools that CBO-led programming is an asset that enhances the effectiveness of the school. (For more information about the NYC Beacons Initiative and its evaluation, see Warren, Brown, & Freudenberg, 1999.)

Sharing Internal Expertise

Bringing such expertise into the school through afterschool programming need not occur only through the involvement of a third party. Many CBOs have internal intellectual resources—because of their unique histories in serving their communities in specific ways such as providing health services or running sports leagues—that they can offer to schools. Finding creative ways to share these intellectual resources with host schools, especially in ways that benefit schools beyond the boundaries of the afterschool program, can generate a great deal of goodwill and can enhance both organizations' missions. Such was the case with the Fifth Dimension/University-Community Links Expedition program. Expedition promotes archaeological learning in an afterschool program run by faculty, staff, and students from the University of California at Berkeley in an Oakland middle school. One of the challenges

faced by the program was the host school's lack of Internet access in its computer labs. By the time of its second-year evaluation, Expedition had arranged for UC-Berkeley's Information Systems and Technology staff to come into the school and complete work on the school's Internet network. The evaluators found that this gesture by Expedition personnel not only generated enormous goodwill from school personnel but also helped both parties achieve their educational goals. By finding such ways to offer something back to host schools, CBOs can improve their relationships with schools and simultaneously enhance educational opportunities. (For more information on the Fifth Dimension/UC Links Expedition program and its evaluation, see Sturak, 2001.)

Investing in Professional Development

In addition to using outside expertise, another way CBOs can enhance student learning is by investing in the professional development of program staff. The Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's MOST Initiative found that one of the key challenges in fostering synergy between school-day and out-of-school programs was building MOST staff's knowledge of how to effectively develop youth's academic skills. Investing in staff development, however, turned out to be a significant hurdle. Given the low wages and limited career paths in afterschool settings, some staff saw little or no financial gain in taking courses to enhance their ability to serve youth. Time and energy for such additional coursework was scarce, as many program staff have

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additional jobs and competing family commitments. Finally, many staff members' limited personal financial means kept them from being able to pay initial course tuitions and then wait for reimbursements. (For more information about the MOST initiative and its evaluation, see Halpern, Spielberg, & Robb, 2000.)

Despite these challenges, MOST responded with a number of strategies that seemed to be partially successful in overcoming these barriers. In the Seattle site, for example, a local community college helped bring

Resource Issues and Program Solutions

Physical Resources

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to adequate school space • Access to materials and supplies • Lighting and other physical plant needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building with regular day staff: using teachers as program staff, sponsoring special events, offering resources and supplies to teachers • Memorandums of understanding about use of classroom space; checklists to monitor classroom condition • Portable spotlights |
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Financial Resources

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of available or adequate funds for afterschool programming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated funding sources for afterschool programs • Collaborating with school districts to finance afterschool programming: school district funding, in-kind contributions, partnering to access outside funding • Innovative fundraising strategies that involve school and CBO staff, youth, parents, and community members • Garnering in-kind contributions |
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Social Resources

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating in-school activities with afterschool activities • Buy-in from principal, teachers, and school staff • Communication among key stakeholders, including youth, teachers, program staff, parents, and community members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal liaison staff positions • Relationship-building special events (including families) • Formal committees that bring stakeholders together |
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Intellectual Resources

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different philosophies for program/academic content • Local knowledge versus professional expertise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving expertise of outside groups • Offering relevant CBO expertise to assist schools and teachers • Investing in professional development opportunities; bringing opportunities close to staff; eliminating waiting periods for reimbursement of tuition fees |
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afterschool workers into courses by initially offering neighborhood-based classes and then moving in stages to traditional community college coursework. To counter the financial barriers to staff participation, some agencies in the Chicago site paid for tuition directly and then collected the reimbursement later, eliminating reimbursement burdens encountered by their staff. These are, of course, only partial solutions to the complex problem of how to best provide professional development opportunities, but they do highlight ways in which schools and CBOs can find ways to provide such opportunities to enhance the programming they offer to youth.

CBOs cannot hope to succeed in helping students learn and grow both academically and socially unless they develop their intellectual resources. These examples of strategies undertaken by various afterschool programs and initiatives illustrate how CBOs can harness intellectual resources to build relationships with their host schools while, at the same time, enhancing their own and the schools' mission to educate children and enrich their lives.

Final Reflections

In the complex world of afterschool programming, navigating the school-CBO relationship can be a significant challenge for program and school personnel. These relationships are always bound to be specific to a particular context, group of stakeholders, and wider community. Thus, recognizing ways in which schools and CBOs can work together to connect, coordinate, and leverage their resources is a key aspect of developing quality

afterschool programming. Figure 1 shows the various domains of resources that schools and CBOs might examine as they negotiate relationships in providing afterschool programming. These resources exist at multiple levels of each institution and are both tangible, such as the physical space of the school, and intangible, such as the social relationships among the teachers, staff, and children. The examples discussed above are just a few of the many ways that afterschool programs around the country are effectively building and negotiating resources in the school-CBO relationship. Enhancing school-CBO relationships in such ways ultimately encourages the development of quality afterschool programming that provides positive educational and developmental opportunities for youth.

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