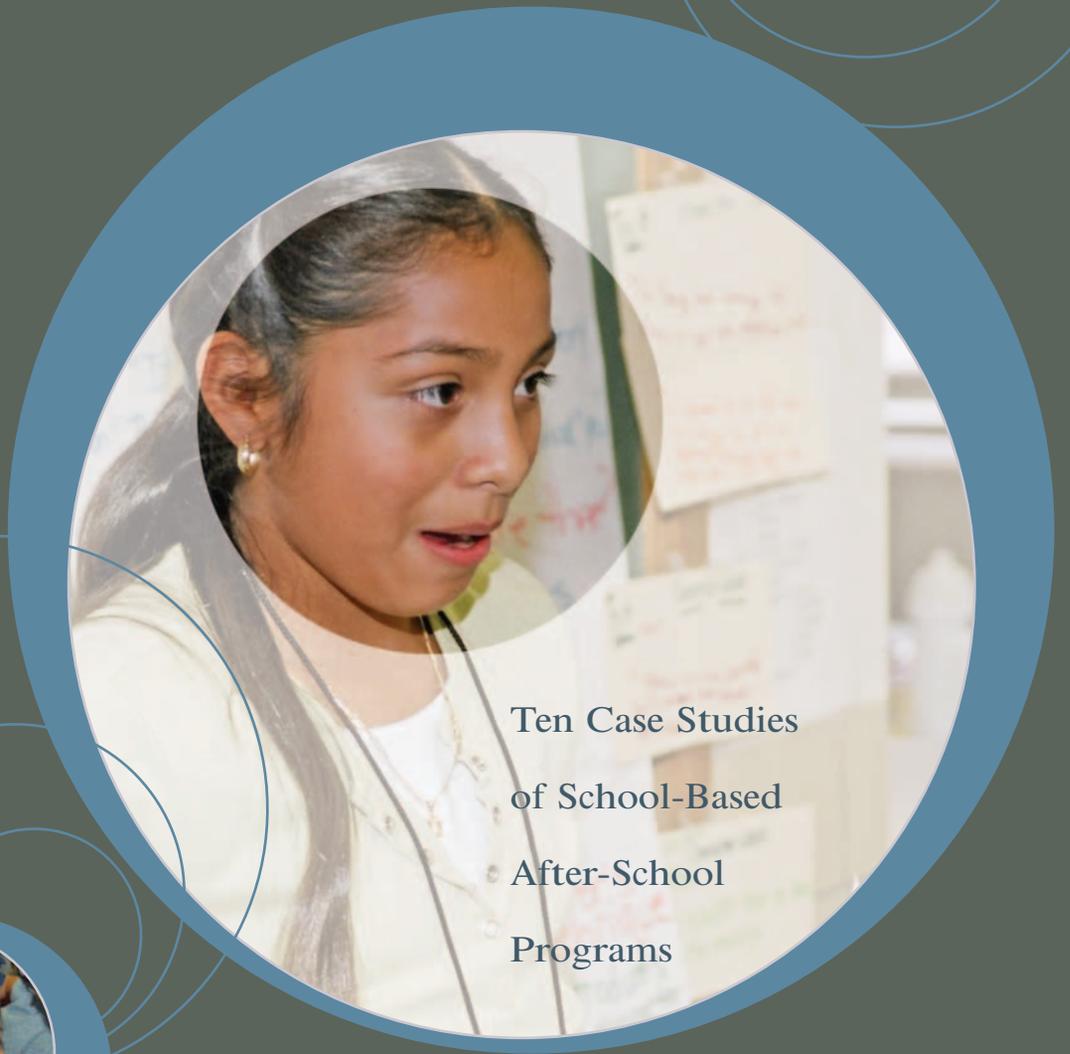


Making the Most of After-School Time



Ten Case Studies
of School-Based
After-School
Programs

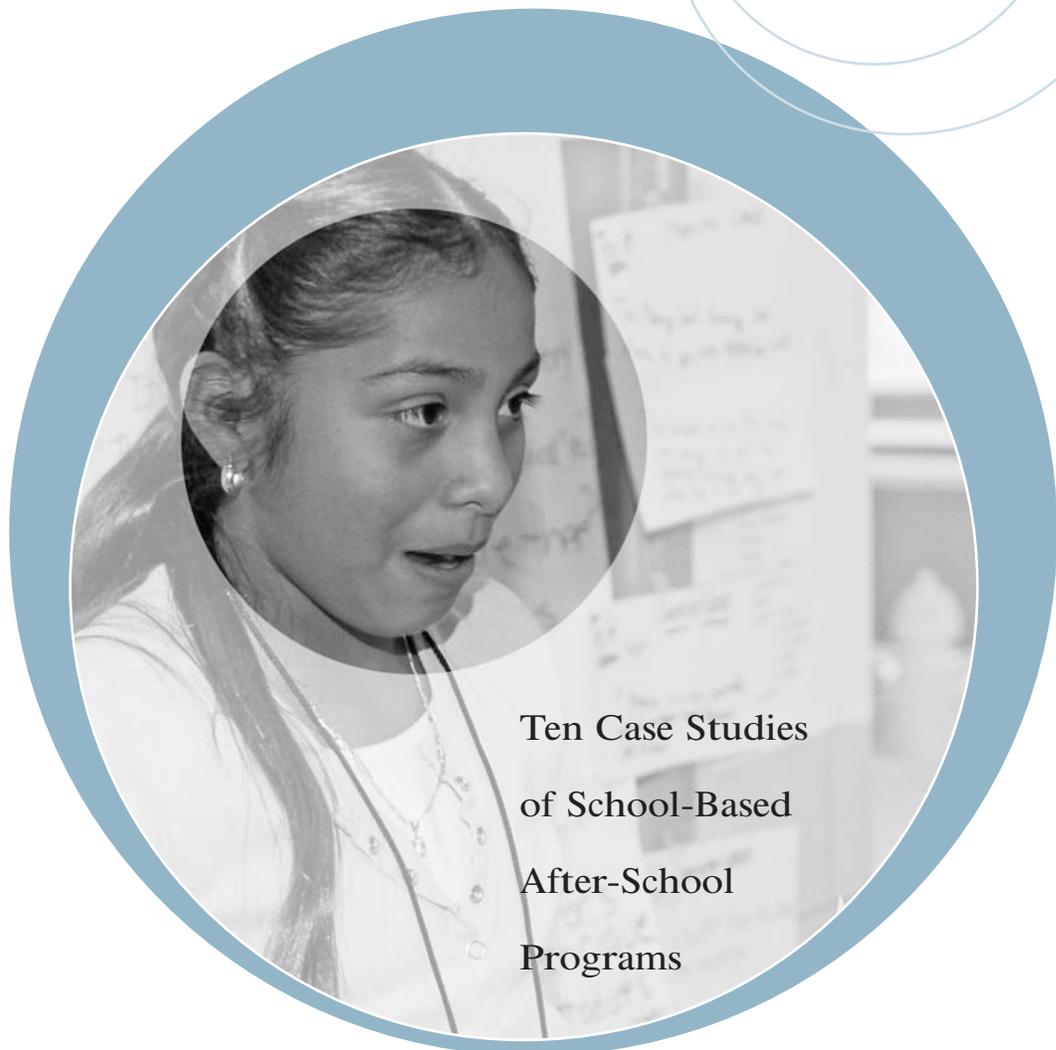


NEESP

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals

Making the Most of After-School Time



Ten Case Studies
of School-Based
After-School
Programs

NAESP

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving All Elementary and Middle Level Principals



National Association of Elementary School Principals
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The 30,000 members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals provide administrative and instructional leadership for public and private elementary and middle schools throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. Founded in 1921, NAESP is an independent professional association with its own headquarters building in Alexandria, Virginia. Through national and regional meetings, award-winning publications, and joint efforts with its 50 state affiliates, NAESP is a strong advocate for both its members and for the 33 million American children enrolled in pre-school, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 8.

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CONTENTS

ForewOrd	v
Introduction	1
North Hollywood, California	
Lowman School	5
Denver, Colorado	
Valdez Elementary School	13
Detroit, Michigan	
Harms Elementary School	21
St. Paul, Minnesota	
Jackson Preparatory Magnet School	29
Wadsworth, Nevada	
Natchez Elementary School	39
New York, New York	
Captain Manual Rivera Junior School PS/MS 279	49
Asheville, North Carolina	
Johnston Elementary School	59
Bennington, Vermont	
Molly Stark School	69
Alexandria, Virginia	
Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School	77
Aberdeen, Washington	
Miller Junior High	87
Appendix	97
Acknowledgements	99

Foreword

The case studies presented in this publication clearly show there is no single formula for a successful school-based after-school program. Rather, success depends upon how well the program reflects the characteristics and needs of the students and community it serves. There are, however, some essential components that must be in place—and primary among these is the commitment and support of the school principal.

NAESP has a long history of involvement with after-school programs, beginning with a 1988 survey in which our members indicated their concern for children's safety in the after-school hours. While two-thirds of those surveyed felt schools were the logical providers of after-school activities, only 22 percent of respondents had programs in their schools.

When we published our first *Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care* in 1993, most after-school programs were designed to provide fun, recreational activities in safe, caring environments. As the 1990's drew to a close, however, parents, educators, and government officials were recognizing the potential of after-school to provide additional time for homework help, remediation, and academic enrichment. The 1999 revision of our Standards publication, *After-School Programs and the K-8 Principal*, reflects this expanded focus and emphasizes the central role of the principal in connecting school with after-school programs.

Also in 1999, NAESP conducted a nationwide telephone survey of 800 principals, and found that 67 percent of schools were now engaged in providing some form of after-school programming, while another 15 percent were actively engaged in starting programs. Principals surveyed felt their programs were successful in improving school day attendance, enhancing students' academic and social skills, and engaging and supporting parents. When asked how NAESP could best serve them in their efforts, the overwhelming request was for resources on promising after-school practices. We designed this publication to be a practical resource for principals, drawn from the perspectives of colleagues who have created strong programs and have experienced first-hand the contributions these programs can make to achieving the educational mission of their schools.

— *Dr. Vincent L. Ferrandino, Executive Director*
National Association of Elementary School Principals

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INTRODUCTION

In the pages that follow, you will read about 10 very different and exciting after-school programs. During past two years, NAESP has conducted an in-depth study of these programs with a focus on the various roles principals play in helping to make them successful.

We profile school-based programs in urban, rural, and suburban communities across the United States. In some cases, the schools and the after-school programs are very large, while others serve only a small number of students. Both elementary and middle school programs are included, and we made a special effort to examine programs that serve diverse student populations. You will read, for example, a study of a program on the Paiute Indian Reservation in Nevada, as well as one that brings together a school for students with special needs and a neighboring elementary school.

Whether you are a principal, an after-school coordinator, a parent, a youth-worker, a teacher, a member of the business sector, or a community member, you will gain valuable insight into the ingredients of effective after-school programs. You will hear directly from principals about what they have learned and how they have benefited from having after-school programs in their schools.

Criteria for Case Study Selection

Criteria for selection of programs included in this study were developed using two primary sources. The first was the 1999 NAESP publication, *After-School Programs and the K-8 Principal: Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care*, which presents the best thinking of the Association and its members on the essential elements of effective school-based programs. We then organized these elements under the seven components of after-school identified by the Promising Practices Pilot Group as part of their work to create a national database of promising practices. The after-school programs featured in this study do not necessarily meet all of the criteria, but were chosen because they exemplify key aspects of the criteria. Our intention is to offer principals and others a variety of program models from which to learn.

The criteria are:

- Strong Community and Family Involvement
- Exemplary Programming
- Effective Management and Administration
- Excellent Staffing and Training
- Sound Financial Practices
- Effective Research and Evaluation Practices
- Active Involvement of the Principal in the Development and Management of the Program¹

All of the case studies do, however, meet the criterion of active involvement of the principal in the development and management of the program. Some of the principals profiled are responsible for initiation of their after-school programs. Others became principals of schools with established programs or were approached by outside groups interested in starting programs at their schools. However, they all share a commitment to supporting and sustaining after-school programming.

Criteria for Case Study Selection

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- Exemplary Programming
- Effective Management and Administration
- Excellent Staffing and Training
- Sound Financial Practices
- Effective Research and Evaluation Practices
- Active Involvement of the Principal in the Development and Management of the Program¹

NAESP intentionally selected after-school sites where principals have varying levels of day-to-day involvement to illustrate ways in which principals can participate in and benefit from after-school programming, *without* becoming overburdened.

The Methodology: Capturing Each Program's Unique Features

Nomination Procedure

NAESP called upon prominent educators, nationally known researchers, after-school practitioners, and organizations concerned with after-school issues to identify potential sites for inclusion in the project.

Initial Interview

The school principal, after-school coordinator, and other key personnel at each site were interviewed by telephone.

Document Review

Personnel from each site selected for further study were asked to submit the following for review:

- Registration materials and other administrative forms
- General information on community and school demographics
- Evaluation reports
- Relevant grant applications
- Budget documents
- Curriculum samples
- Any other documents or records that were crucial to the program's operation

Site Visits

Site visits were conducted by the project researcher, who met with the school principal, the after-school coordinator(s), business partners, classroom teachers, after-school staff, students, parents, and volunteers. A tour was conducted of each school site and, where necessary, off-site meetings were scheduled with community partners. Time was devoted to observing each program's after-school classes, clubs, and activities.

Key Findings: Commonalities Across

Case Study Sites

Although each site was chosen because it exemplified key aspects of the criteria, NAESP did find certain commonalities across all of the sites, which may be especially useful to principals and others initiating new programs or

Each of the programs included in this study had the following . . .

A principal who sees after-school programs as an asset to the school and who communicates the message that school does not end when the final bell rings.

planning for improvement of existing programs. Each of the programs included in this study had the following components:

- A principal who sees after-school programs as an asset to the school and who communicates the message that school does not end when the final bell rings
- A paid coordinator(s), *other than the principal*, whose job it is to manage the after-school program
- Regular communication between the principal and the coordinator
- A menu of fun and enriching activities that complement in-school learning
- Transition time for students to have a snack and wind-down before after-school activities begin
- A program that builds bridges with individuals and organizations in the community to provide funding and resources and to offer activities of interest to students
- A paid staff
- Recognition that after-school can serve as a different way of reaching students and helping them to see the importance of education.



Ideas for Reading and Using this Report

Read Case Studies that Profile a School or Community Similar to Yours

Each of the studies begins with information about the size of the school and the after-school program, as well as the type of community in which the school is located. Additionally, the second section of each study describes the school/community setting. It contains information on student demographics as well as the wider community context.

Look for Program Models that Meet Your Local Needs

A variety of program models are profiled in the case studies. Some, such as sites in Los Angeles and New York, include citywide after-school partners. Others, such as the Denver site, utilize programming developed by a national after-school provider. Still others were developed locally by principals, parents, community volunteers, and after-school personnel.

Refer to Specific Topics, such as Funding, that Address Your Issues and Concerns

Each case study contains sections on staffing, training, programming, and funding. If you have particular areas of concern, such as finding and training staff or planning for program sustainability, each of the studies will have suggestions you may want to consider.

Supplementary Information

Several of the programs provided forms, curricula, training materials, assessments, and other supplementary information that can be found in the after-school section of the NAESP Web site (www.naesp.org/afterschool)

¹ For the full text of the Criteria, see Appendix.



north Hollywood, California

Lowman SCHOOL

LA's BEST

- Serves 335 students with special needs, primarily grades K-6; 30-50 regularly participate in the after-school program
- Urban—North Hollywood, CA (located on the east side of the 405 Freeway in the San Fernando Valley)
- Site visited during the 2002-2003 academic year

Program Snapshot

The centerpiece of after-school at Lowman is a collaborative dance and movement program that pairs the school's students with special needs and students from a neighboring elementary school. This inclusion program has brought out new skills and abilities in both groups, positively affecting students, parents, and teachers alike. The creation of an after-school program at Lowman was no small feat. After years of working to find county and state funds, Principal Helen Hartel gained the attention of LA's BEST, a unique public-private partnership that provides after-school programming for more than 100 elementary schools throughout Los Angeles. Through its affiliation with LA's BEST, Lowman now offers a variety of after-school activities, many of which are tied to students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Beliefs that Govern the Lowman School

- We serve our students best by working together as a team—parents, students, staff, and community.
- Every decision is evaluated in terms of what best meets our students' needs.
- We have high expectations for every student.
- Students are listened to and their choices are honored.
- All students deserve equal access to appropriate resources, curriculum, and support services.
- Everyone benefits when students, with and without disabilities, learn together.¹

I don't believe in telling my staff what to do per se, but in creating an atmosphere where we can learn and succeed together.

– Helen Hartel, Principal

The Setting

Lowman School is located beside the freeway in a light industrial area of North Hollywood, California. An entertainment venue featuring “Live Nude Girls” is just half a block away. The school playgrounds, which are surrounded by a high chain-link fence and largely covered in asphalt, contain a few pieces of specialized exercise equipment.

The school was originally constructed in the early 1950's as a school for post-polio children. Today it serves students with a wide variety of special needs, including Down Syndrome, autism, and various mental and physical disabilities. The students range in age from three to twenty-two years, but most are of elementary age. Many have profound disabilities, including an inability to speak or move. Others have less severe disabilities, but their parents have chosen to enroll them in Lowman to ensure that their needs are attended to properly. The student population is diverse. Sixty-six percent of the students are identified as Latino, 19 percent are white, 9 percent are black, and 6 percent are in the “all other” category, including Asian, Filipino, American Indian, and Pacific Islander. Just over 83 percent are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch.

The culture at Lowman is a collaborative one. Most decisions are made by groups of faculty, administrators, and parents. For example, the hiring committee includes, among others, the principal, a teacher, and a member of the paraprofessional staff. Curriculum development is a process that involves input from the principal, teachers, an occupational therapist, and a speech therapist. A curriculum committee meets every Thursday to review and discuss lesson plans. There are also a group of mentor teachers who meet with interested staff every Friday morning to share teaching strategies. Each child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and parents play a very active roll in the school as well.

Students are assigned to classes according to their needs and ages, where appropriate. There are two classes, for example, for autistic students, while other classes are reserved for those with specialized physical disabilities. Many of the students at Lowman participate in a mobility program, designed to help them become ambulatory. For some this means finding a way to sit upright so that they can observe their surroundings from a new perspective. For others it means learning to transfer on their own from a wheelchair to a chair or, in some cases, to walk.

Key Elements of the After-School Program

ORIGINS

Principal Helen Hartel devoted years to realizing her vision of establishing an after-school program at Lowman School. She wanted to provide a safe and enriching space for students to be after-school, but also to offer relief for over-stressed parents. As Hartel explained in a grant proposal:

Most families choose to raise their disabled son or daughter at home. However, these families may lack the financial and community resources to meet the needs of a child with multiple disabilities. This lack of resources may lead to physical and emotional stress on family members involved in caring for the child. Stress without relief may lead to premature placement of the child outside of the family home. It is our philosophy that families should receive whatever support is necessary to maintain their child with special needs in their home. The After-school Extended Learning Program will provide the family with childcare that meets the educational needs of their child, and will provide the child with an opportunity to participate in recreational, social, and learning activities. Priority will be given to families where the parents work, are actively seeking employment, or are attending school.

Initially, Hartel approached public funding agencies. One such agency would have charged parents, which ran counter to Hartel's vision for the program; another would have provided some support, but just enough to run a bare bones program. Since many students with disabilities require extra care, more teachers and staff are needed to conduct programs; in a high-need community, it is difficult if not impossible to locate qualified volunteer teachers. Hartel eventually learned of LA's BEST and applied to be part of their program. Her application was successful, and the LA's BEST program was launched at Lowman in 2000.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

The Principal

Through perseverance and a determination to make her vision a reality, Helen Hartel is largely responsible for initiating the after-school program at Lowman, and for securing its ongoing support. Today, she plays more of a supporting role. She provides training for the LA's BEST staff, helps with various logistical and personnel issues, drops in on sessions, attends events, and maintains relationships with supporters of LA's BEST.

LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow)

Founded in 1988 "as a unique partnership including the City of Los Angeles/Office of the Mayor, Los Angeles Unified School District, and the private sector," the mission of LA's BEST is to "provide elementary school children with a safe, supervised, and engaging after-school education, enrichment, and recreation program."²

LA's BEST serves thousands of students at more than 100 schools throughout the Los Angeles area. The organization provides funding, training, programming and staff support for each of its school-based sites. LA's BEST staff members at Lowman include a traveling supervisor and activities consultant (both work with five schools in the LA's BEST network), teachers, and paraprofessionals who help run the program. LA's BEST also contracts with specialized instructors, such as the dance instructor/choreographer who helped design Lowman's student productions (see LINKUP below).



LA's BEST programs are organized according to the principle of "three and a half beats:" the first "beat" is homework, the second is a cognitive enrichment program, the third is a recreational activity, and the "half beat" is a snack.

Armando, Dancer Extraordinaire

Armando is a student at Lowman School. He has a great deal of difficulty learning in traditional environments. He also tends to act in socially inappropriate ways—suddenly cursing, for instance, in the middle of a reading lesson. In the dance program, though, Armando's true talents have emerged.

For the past two years, Armando has participated in each of the productions Lowman has staged. By all accounts (those of the dance instructor, the site coordinator, and the principal) he is the best dancer in the program—he learns the steps more quickly and is able to remember them more effectively than any of the other students, including the students from Arminta.

continued on sidebar page 9

The Site Coordinator

Maria Koguchi, a para educator who has worked with students with disabilities for more than ten years, serves as the part-time L.A.'s BEST site coordinator. She works with Helen Hartel to train after-school staff members, ensuring that they understand and are comfortable with kids who have special needs. She also supervises the staff members who work with students, makes sure there are enough people on hand for each after-school session, and works collaboratively with the LA's BEST traveling supervisor to oversee the general administration of the program.

Parents and Students

At any one time, 30 to 50 students attend Lowman's after-school program. As with all Lowman programs, the after-school offering is designed to meet each student's individual needs. When students express concerns or excitement about a particular offering, the after-school staff members listen to them.

Parents are also asked to provide feedback about the program. They attend events and volunteer as their time permits. Lowman provides a Parents' Room at the school (much like a faculty lounge), where parents gather regularly to talk and share ideas. This room is available after school, and parents are encouraged to be active partners in the program.

LINKUP

Shortly after the after-school program opened its doors at Lowman, L.A.'s BEST Founder and President, Carla Sanger, contacted Ronnie Cavalluzzi, dance instructor and director of LINKUP (Linking Institutions, Neighborhoods, Kids, Universities, and Performers) to talk with her about designing a collaborative dance and movement program for the school. Cavalluzzi worked with staff members from Lowman and a neighboring elementary school to develop the program.

Cavalluzzi and her team, which includes performing arts students from near-by universities and community-service students from local high schools, contract with LA's BEST to run the collaborative movement program. They work with the elementary students to develop scripts, learn performance terminology, and produce and perform stage productions.

Arminta Elementary – Staff and Students

At the time of our site visit, Arminta Elementary served as the partner school in the collaborative movement program.³ Arminta is a neighboring school that serves more than 100 students in its L.A.'s BEST after-school program. Thirty-four fourth- and fifth-graders who have expressed an interest in theater arts, participate in the Lowman-Arminta program. They travel to Lowman (and host Lowman students at their school) to jointly produce and stage productions. LA's BEST after-school staff members at Arminta work collaboratively with Lowman staff to implement the program.

PROGRAMMING

Homework, Enrichment, and IEPs

After-school at Lowman is known as an "LA's BEST with a twist," explains Carla Sanger. LA's BEST programs are organized according to the principle of "three and a half beats:" the first "beat" is homework, the second is a

cognitive enrichment program, the third is a recreational activity, and the “half beat” is a snack. All LA’s BEST programs include three and a half beats—the difference at Lowman is that the activities are specially geared to meet the needs of students with a wide range of disabilities.

The after-school program operates throughout the school year, from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Students at Lowman have many different needs, and programs are highly individualized. In the homework program, for example, Maria Koguchi works with other LA’s BEST staff members to ensure that homework activities focus on goals articulated in students’ IEP’s. On a given day, students may be working on a particular mobility goal, or learning to use a specialized communicator. Koguchi also regularly checks in with the students’ classroom teachers, to see if there is a particular homework goal on which they need to focus.

Cognitive enrichment activities vary. In the reading club, students read a book with a theme and then participate in activities around that theme. They also take part in shape and number recognition games. Recreation includes activities such as swimming and cooking. Koguchi works with the LA’s BEST activities coordinator to design activities that will be fun and interesting to Lowman students.

The Cross-School Collaboration

The heart of Lowman after-school is the unique cross-school collaboration program. The primary purpose is to build relationships between two very different student populations, bringing together children who might otherwise have little opportunity to interact. The program is also designed to allow both groups of students to explore various learning styles—kinesthetic, musical, and emotional—as well as to help them learn more about the theater arts, the stage, and production.

The program operates each semester. Students are bused between their respective schools two times per week. Upon arrival, they begin dancing almost immediately, learning steps and getting to know each other.

Cavalluzzi, her team, and the L.A.’s BEST team work with Hartel and Arminta Principal Marcia Cholodenko so that all are sensitive to the needs of both student groups. Over the course of a semester, the students not only get to know each other, but also come to depend on each other as they learn steps for special productions, staged at the end of the semester. Parents, community members, friends, and relatives are invited to each production.

At the time of our site visit, Lowman and Arminta students came together for a dance reunion of sorts, and to view a professionally made video of their latest production. When the Arminta children arrived, they immediately intermingled with the Lowman children. It was quickly apparent that they had become good friends over the course of the semester.

After watching the video, the students performed a couple of dances together, with many of the able-bodied Arminta students swirling and moving with the Lowman students in wheelchairs. It was an amazing sight to witness. As the students began to dance, their differences faded. They were simply a group of kids having fun. Disabilities were largely unimportant. They were smiling, laughing, and dancing together!⁴

continued from sidebar page 8

As the students were rehearsing for a production in the spring of 2003, they completed a number and began to relax and rest. Armando, however, got the dance instructor’s attention and asked her why she left out a whole series of steps. Not only had the dance instructor forgotten the steps, none of the other students remembered them either. Only Armando pointed out the error. The instructor praised him and they rehearsed the number again, the right way this time!

For Armando, this experience has been transformational. It has given him new confidence and helped him to stand out, not because he’s acting in ways that others find offensive, but because on the dance floor, he is truly a star.

STAFF TRAINING

Training is provided on a variety of levels. LA's BEST provides regular training for all of its after-school staff members. Topics for training events include time management, leadership, effective in-school/after-school relationships, parent involvement, how to assign volunteers, and creative programming.

In addition, Site Coordinator Maria Koguchi and other Lowman staff provide training for after-school staff and volunteers to prepare them for their work with special needs students. This is an on-going process. If the program is to function smoothly and efficiently, staff members must communicate regularly. As new students enter the program, new needs inevitably arise.

An important component of training in this program is the initial orientation and ongoing work instructors do with students from Lowman and Arminta. To prepare Arminta students for their interactions with kids from Lowman, for example, Principal Helen Hartel has developed a PowerPoint presentation that she presents to Arminta students at the beginning of each semester. The presentation is shared regularly with after-school staff members as well.

Hartel begins by explaining that the students at Lowman are just like students anywhere—they like to laugh, play, and learn. She shows some of the specialized equipment her kids use, along with photos of students using the equipment. “I tell [the Arminta students] that it's O.K. to feel uncomfortable, that they may feel afraid at first. But I also tell them to trust themselves, to be open, and to listen to their hearts and minds,” says Hartel. Preparing Arminta students in advance, dispels many of their concerns. “When they arrive, they often recognize the students and their equipment. Things seem familiar to them already.”

FUNDING

LA's BEST budgeted approximately \$245,000 for the 2002-2003 academic year at Lowman. Because of the need for a low student-to-staff ratio and for a highly trained staff, the major portion of this funding covers personnel costs. Staff costs are figured on four hours per day, 180 days per year, at a rate of \$12 to \$17 per hour.

Also budgeted are costs for transportation, equipment, supplies, and training. L.A.'s BEST administrators work with the principal and the site coordinator to develop and manage the program budget.

To fund its programs, LA's BEST maintains a balance of city, state, federal, foundation, corporation, business, and individual support. Currently, government support makes up 75 percent (State of California 37 percent, City of Los Angeles 19 percent and Federal 19 percent), and private sources 25 percent.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

The program at Lowman is relatively new, having been in operation for three years at the time of our site visit. At present, attendance is tracked and there are regular discussions about how things are going. Maria Koguchi talks frequently with teachers to determine what students need to work on during

the homework activities, which are tied to individual IEP goals. LA's BEST traveling staff members also submit regular reports on the program.

Results

Although the collaborative dance and movement program has not been comprehensively evaluated, it has clearly exceeded expectations. Students from both schools have grown from the experience of interacting with each other, visiting each other's schools, and staging productions. As Arminta principal, Marcia Cholodenko, explains, "this program has been particularly rewarding for students who might otherwise be just one of the crowd at Arminta. Here they stand out. They have taken on the roles of helpers and leaders. They receive recognition not only from their parents and teachers, but from the parents of the children at Lowman as well."

Helen Hartel has seen her students thrive in the program as well. "They have risen to the occasion. We've see big changes in behavior and in their senses of what's possible. They look forward to getting on the bus, seeing the other children, and performing."

The Principal's Point of View

Don't stop until you get to "yes."

Although it took a number of years to fund, develop, and implement an after-school program at Lowman, Principal Helen Hartel and her staff did not give up on the vision. When one agency told them no, they turned to another and another until they found LA's BEST. Ultimately, their partnership with LA's BEST enabled Hartel to offer her students a much richer program than even she had envisioned.

Don't let fear get in the way.

Everyone involved in the collaborative dance program agrees it has surpassed all expectations. At first, however, no one knew what to expect. Lowman was initially partnered with another L.A.'s BEST school. Things did not run smoothly and problems arose. Buses came late, or the wrong buses arrived (students from Lowman require specialized buses to travel). Staff members gave students too much direction.

When Arminta Elementary was approached to become a partner, Principal Marcia Cholodenko wondered, "Will this just be one more thing for us to manage as a staff? How will our children respond? Is it a viable concept? Will it be worth the effort it takes?" Cholodenko's fears were soon allayed as the program took off. Helen Hartel called the Los Angeles Unified School District administration and ironed out problems with busing. Staff members built on lessons learned from the first year and began to take a more hands-off role with students. "As I watched the program take shape, I wished my three children had had the opportunity to do something like this. It's amazing. Do not be afraid to take a risk," says Cholodenko. "One thing that we have all learned from this experience is that children are capable of rising far above adult expectations," says Dance Instructor Ronnie Cavaluzzi. "Kids have to be taught to hate and fear each other. After working with these kids, we began to step back more and let them teach each other. They were up to the task, and they loved it."

"The students' productions were like any old school play," says Hartel, "It was hard to tell the Lowman kids from the Arminta kids."



"They [students] have risen to the occasion. We've see big changes in behavior and in their senses of what's possible. They look forward to getting on the bus, seeing the other children, and performing."

“One thing that we have all learned from this experience is that children are capable of rising far above adult expectations,” says Dance Instructor Ronnie Cavaluzzi. “Kids have to be taught to hate and fear each other. After working with these kids, we began to step back more and let them teach each other. They were up to the task, and they loved it.”

Post Script

Helen Hartel officially retired after 32 years as a teacher and school administrator. She is now a consultant with L.A.’s BEST, developing programming and new initiatives for students with special needs. Recently, Hartel helped Lowman establish a new partnership with Saticoy Elementary School. “A number of changes happened at the end of the 2003-2004 school year,” she explains, “Ronnie Cavaluzzi moved to Washington, D.C., both Maria [Koguchi] and I left Lowman, and Marcia Cholodenko retired from her principalship at Arminta. We felt it was time to do something new with the cross-school collaboration.” Students at Lowman now meet weekly with interested third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders from Saticoy Elementary, and together they work on LA’s BEST projects, such as a recent city-wide science fair. They’re also exploring music and dance with Raven Drum, a professional drumming and movement group. During the summer of 2004, LA’s BEST staff members from Lowman and Saticoy participated in an intensive staff development session with Raven Drum.

Hartel has been energized by the new partnership and her role in LA’s BEST. “I’m traveling to conferences and sharing what we’ve learned in this program. And, this year, the students are using digital cameras and laptops. The kids are going to keep photo journals of their work together. Once you begin to think about what the possibilities for collaboration and learning are, the sky’s the limit!”

¹ Lowman School Vision Statement

² LA’s BEST 2001-2002 Annual Report, p. 3

³ At the time the case study was conducted, Arminta was the partner school. Currently, Lowman partners with Saticoy Elementary.

⁴ For more detailed information on this unique collaborative, see “The WizKids of Lowminta: Taking Inclusion to New Heights,” by Janalee Jordan-Meldrum, *Leadership Compass*, Winter 2003, Volume 1, Number 2, pp. 1-3.



Denver, Colorado

Valdez Elementary School

Denver Scores

- Serves just over 450 students (grades PreK-5); 32 students regularly participate in the after-school program
- Urban—Denver, Colorado (located on the Northwest side of Denver)
- Site visited during the 2002-2003 academic year

Program Snapshot

At Valdez Elementary School, books abound and the emphasis is on literacy—a school-wide focus for several years. When Jenna Farley, executive director of the fledgling Denver SCORES, approached Principal Tom Archuleta about starting an after-school program at Valdez, the value for Archuleta was its literacy focus. Denver SCORES combines after-school soccer with an innovative writing curriculum. Students participate in soccer practices and games three days a week and spend the other two days writing, performing, and publishing poetry, and participating in community writing projects. While the program's goal is to improve students' literacy skills, soccer is the enticement for kids.

I want to partner with after-school providers who share my belief in meeting the best interests of the kids, who see beyond kids' poverty and their organizational needs to meet funding quotas.

– Tom Archuleta, Principal, Valdez Elementary School

The Setting

Valdez Elementary School is situated in northwest Denver. East of the school grounds, the downtown Denver skyline is prominent. The area immediately surrounding Valdez, neglected until recently, is now undergoing gentrification. Single-family homes, some built during the Victorian era, are being refurbished and sold for increasingly higher prices.

Most of the students at Valdez, however, still come from low-income backgrounds. Ninety-eight percent are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch, and many live in nearby multi-family houses and apartments. Over 96 percent of the students are identified as Hispanic, 1.6 percent as white, and the remaining come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

More than 70 percent of the students speak Spanish at home and participate in the school's English Language Learner's program. The mobility rate at Valdez is 100 percent, as many families move to find work in other places. The school offers a health clinic and a full-time mental health counselor to provide additional support for students and their families.

The literacy focus at Valdez began with a collaborative literacy project and now includes the Denver Public Schools' Literacy Program. Students and teachers have access to an extensive library and reading is encouraged throughout the school. Although student test scores have been on the rise for a few years, they continue to be low. Since the initiation of the No Child Left Behind Act, pressures to improve test scores have been mounting.

Key Elements of the Program

ORIGINS

When Principal Archuleta arrived at Valdez Elementary several years ago, he worked to re-build the existing after-school program into one that was manageable and would serve the needs of his students. He streamlined the number of programs offered, eliminating those that were poorly run or not in line with his vision for the school.

Denver SCORES first approached Archuleta about bringing the program to Valdez in spring 1999. Although initially skeptical, Archuleta liked the program's emphasis on literacy, as well as the soccer angle. He was concerned, however, that organizers would not raise sufficient funds to get the program up and running. Reluctant to promise his students something he could not deliver, Archuleta told Denver SCORES founder, Jenna Farley, that he would give the program a try if she could raise the money and receive sufficient support from the Denver community. Farley made good on her promise, and Denver SCORES was in place at Valdez by Fall 1999.

THE PLAYERS – WHO'S INVOLVED?

Denver SCORES

Denver SCORES is an affiliate of America SCORES (<http://www.americascors.org>), which has programs in 11 cities across the United States. Its mission is “to strengthen urban public school communities through soccer and academic enrichment. The program aims to foster each individual child’s self-confidence and self-expression through soccer and creative writing activities.”¹

At the time of our visit, Denver SCORES was operating in eight public elementary schools in north and west Denver. It serves third, fourth, and fifth grade children, and hires regular classroom teachers as soccer and writing coaches. The organization trains each participating teacher in the use of America SCORES curriculum and provides the program framework, including a city-wide poetry slam, a community writing project, regular soccer scrimmages between schools, an annual soccer festival, and other activities that bring the schools together.

The Principal

Tom Archuleta serves as the overall after-school coordinator at Valdez. In addition to Denver SCORES, the Girl Scouts, Sylvan Learning Centers, and some additional after-school clubs meet at the school. Each program has a point person, or program coordinator, who serves as a liaison between the school and the program provider.

Archuleta also serves on the board of Denver SCORES. He helps guide and direct the group’s vision, represents the interests of Valdez and the school system, and serves as the voice for other principals whose schools participate in the program. He attends Denver SCORES’ literacy and soccer events and participates in such activities as plays and skits that the group conducts for the school.

Archuleta, who grew up in north Denver and graduated from North High School, understands the community and the kids at Valdez. Jenna Farley views him as a true partner.

The Site Coordinator and the Teaching Staff

Four Valdez teachers serve as coaches for Denver SCORES, including David Baird, who has worked with the program for four years. Baird also serves as the site coordinator and Valdez point person with Denver SCORES. If a teacher leaves the program, Baird and Tom Archuleta work together to recruit a new teacher.

Denver SCORES employs classroom teachers for a number of reasons. Teachers know the school culture and they know the kids. Through Denver SCORES they get to know the kids much better, often establishing long-term relationships with them. Teachers also help SCORES staff develop the program curriculum, ensuring continuity between in-school and after-school learning.

Teachers in their first year with the program are paid \$30 per hour-and-a-half session. They receive a raise to \$35 their second year and \$40 for three or more years of service. The pay raises serve as a way of retaining teachers and rewarding them for their service. Teachers not only enjoy the extra pay that the program offers, but they also enjoy interacting with their

America SCORES

Originally begun in 1994 by a public school teacher in Washington, D.C., SCORES began its life as an after-school soccer program. Program founder Julie Kennedy was concerned that many of her students had no place to go once the school bell rang. So, she started organizing after-school soccer activities. As the weather turned cold, Kennedy began offering creative writing workshops as well. Over the course of the year, she developed a model for the program and named it DC SCORES. DC SCORES quickly spread to 24 Washington area schools, and soon Kennedy was approached about replicating the program across the country.

America SCORES was born a few years later. America SCORES provides the structure for the program, develops curricula in consultation with local sites, offers annual soccer camps and writing workshops for soccer and writing coaches, and publishes Kicker, a magazine that showcases student poetry and creative writing.



students in a different context, seeing youngsters become poets and writers, as well as soccer players. As Frank Montoya, long-time soccer coach at Valdez remarked, “I would do this even if I weren’t paid. I’ve really watched my students grow in the program; it’s helped me to become a better classroom teacher.”

Parents, Students, and Community Volunteers

Parents and community members volunteer as referees for soccer scrimmages and games. They also assist with field trips and student activities during the year. Student participation is encouraged in a number of ways. Attendance is monitored carefully, and students who miss more than three sessions without a valid excuse are no longer eligible to participate. Participation is recognized with badges for leadership, commitment, and teamwork. The activities themselves encourage participation. The focus is on teamwork, skill-development, and self-expression—whether the activity involves writing poetry, playing soccer, or joining in the community writing project.

PROGRAMMING

Denver SCORES operates for 10 weeks in the fall and 10 weeks in the spring. Thirty-two students participate at Valdez, including 16 boys and 16 girls. After the final bell rings, students meet to enjoy a snack before accompanying their writing or soccer coaches to the day’s session. Everyone participates in soccer three days per week and joins a girls’ or boys’ writing group on the other two days.

Both the soccer and writing curricula conform to Colorado Physical Education and Reading and Writing Standards. Denver SCORES has developed fact sheets that outline ways in which curricula are tied to the standards and share this information with everyone involved in the program.

Liaison David Baird and the Valdez teachers work together to select students who will participate in the program, often recruiting students they feel would benefit from extra writing practice. They also promote the program as a kind of reward: “If you work hard in class,” Baird tells his students, “you can join Denver SCORES.” Once selected, students and their parents sign a contract agreeing to attend the soccer and writing sessions, participate in special events, and try their best in the classroom and on the field. The contract and nearly all Denver SCORES materials, including a newsletter for parents and students, are printed in both English and Spanish.

Soccer

The soccer curriculum is developed by America SCORES, however Denver SCORES works with the coaches to customize activities for each school. In addition to developing soccer skills, the curriculum emphasizes teamwork, confidence building, leadership, and commitment. Boys and girls scrimmage against each other and participate in regular soccer matches with other Denver SCORES schools.

Reading, Writing, Publishing, and Performing Poetry

The writing curriculum is delivered in two parts. In the fall, students study, write, perform, and publish poetry. They learn concepts such as meter and rhyme, and they write different forms of poetry. They have opportunities to

publish their poetry through venues such as the Denver SCORES Web pages, its SCORES SCOOP newsletter, and the bi-annual national magazine, Kicker. In another fall activity, students from each SCORES city participate in a city-wide SCORES Poetry Slam! They often wear their soccer shirts, as they show off their newly discovered performance skills.

Community Writing Project

In the spring, students complete a community writing project designed to help them get to know their community better. Often the focus is on the more immediate school community, using writing as a way to take action for community improvement. At the time of our visit in spring 2003, Valdez students were working on a violence prevention project. As part of their campaign, the boys' group developed a column for the school newsletter. They encouraged students to write letters (Dear Abby style) to the columnist, asking for help with violence issues. In crafting one response, students wrote, "Dear Always Fighting," and encouraged the student to try talking with others before lashing out.

The community writing curriculum, developed with input from America SCORES sites around the country, takes students through a process in which they first define their community, then identify problems in the community, chose a problem they will work on, and develop strategies for responding to the problem. Often, they write skits that illustrate the problem as well as various solutions and then present the skits to fellow students, parents, and community volunteers.

Borrowing from models, such as the Earth Force Community Action Problem Solving (CAPS) model, (<http://www.earthforce.org/section/programs/caps>), the curriculum focuses on helping students become active participants in their communities. Teachers are trained as facilitators, guiding students while allowing them to choose problems and identify and implement solutions to those problems.

Education directors from America SCORES sites review the curriculum annually and revise as necessary. SCORES Power of Poetry curriculum, used in the fall season, offers two volumes with different lessons to ensure students and coaches will not become bored with repeated lessons. The community writing curriculum is designed to let students choose different community action projects each semester.

STAFF TRAINING

Once employed by the program, teachers and coaches become part of the SCORES Corps. At the beginning of fall and spring sessions, they participate in daylong training events conducted by Denver SCORES staff and experts in the field who serve as guest trainers. Teachers meet as a full group in the morning and then divide into soccer and writing sessions in the afternoon. The emphasis throughout is on encouraging individual skill development and teamwork. The SCORES program belongs to the Positive Coaching Alliance (<http://www.positivecoach.org>), and SCORES training sessions focus on helping teachers encourage students to aim for their personal best, while honoring the "game" and recognizing their teammates' needs as well. Students also receive the message that it is okay to make mistakes.²

During afternoon training, teachers discuss the curriculum and participate in practice teaching sessions. Valdez teachers involved in the program

My Grandpa

By Jose Orozco
Valdez Elementary

Published in SCORES SCOOP,
December 2001

I remember my grandpa, Changel

I remember when he would say,

"Deme un besito, mijo,"

"Give me a little kiss, son"

And of course I would,

But now I don't or can't

Because he left me and all of us

Who loved him,

But he still lives in our hearts.

For he shall live with us

until we go bye bye too.

Then we will live with him.

Jamming with Stephen King and Friends

“Teaching kids to write is equivalent to teaching kids to think; giving kids the tools to write is giving them the resources to be successful in life. Combining all of this with soccer is like putting peanut butter with chocolate. I am surprised every public school hasn’t adopted a SCORES program.”

— Best Selling Author Stephen King³

Nationally, the program sponsors fundraising concerts with a rather unique band of players—Stephen King, Amy Tan, Dave Berry, and Mitch Albom among others, all bestselling authors in their own right, who also like to play music together. Named the Rockbottom Remainers, the band travels and plays exclusive benefit concerts for SCORES programs (see <http://www.rockbottom-remainders.com>). In November 2001, the Remainers’ benefit raised over \$100,000 for Denver SCORES.

When the Remainers perform a concert in a SCORES city, they also meet with SCORES’ students. This serves as an excellent tool for reinforcing SCORES’ message about the importance of writing in students’ lives.

speak both Spanish and English, essential since many of the students in the program are still learning English. Students write and perform in both languages. Denver SCORES Program Director Michelle Shedro, a former teacher with experience in English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education, and fluent in English and Spanish, helps the writing coaches customize SCORES curricula for their students.

Shedro and SCORES Athletic Director Brandon Blew visit each SCORES site at least four times during a semester. They observe the coaches, give feedback, and encourage them to actively notice good behavior.

SCORES also offers teachers and coaches opportunities to hone teaching skills during summer soccer camps run by the Colorado Rapids and in writing workshops at the University of Iowa.

FUNDING

As a Denver SCORES site, Valdez Elementary pays \$750 per year and provides space, including classrooms for writing workshops, fields for soccer practices/games, and large rooms for program assemblies, parent nights, and community events. Each student pays \$15 per semester to participate in the program.

Denver SCORES raises money to support the program, which costs approximately \$800 per year for each student. The SCORES franchise has grown in part because of its success in developing both national and local funding partners. The organization has developed partnerships with the United States Soccer Foundation and professional soccer teams, such as the Colorado Rapids. Soccer stars, including Brandi Chastain, serve as spokespersons for the program. Locally, Denver SCORES hosts an annual corporate soccer cup to raise funds; it also cultivates both corporate and individual support for the program throughout the Denver metro area.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

In addition to regular observations that ensure programs are working effectively and adhering to the SCORES curriculum, Denver SCORES also collects survey data from students, parents, coaches, and classroom teachers.

Students and coaches are surveyed each semester and feedback is used to guide the development of the curriculum and activities. Parents are surveyed occasionally as well.

Results

Surveys done thus far have demonstrated that the program is having a positive effect on all involved. A survey administered to a small sample of parents in the spring of 2002, for example, indicated most were very satisfied with the program. Additionally, literacy and sportsmanship rubrics employed to evaluate the program during 2002-2003, showed an increase in students’ reading, writing, and sportsmanship skills.⁴ The 2002-2003 Denver SCORES evaluation report concludes, “[t]he children in Denver SCORES are benefiting from their participation in a five-day-a-week after-school program. Exposure to poetry, soccer, and community service has resulted in children with a stronger sense of self-esteem who spend more

time reading and writing, who understand the importance of regular exercise, and who feel qualified to identify and change problems in their community.”⁵

Challenges

While parents, students, and the school seem pleased with the program, Denver SCORES continues to focus on improving its evaluation methods and instruments. It is working with America SCORES to develop richer literacy and scholarship rubrics to assess the effects of the program on the students. This is an especially challenging task, given the fact that many students in the Valdez program are just learning to speak English. Also, since Valdez has a high mobility rate, it is difficult to determine the impact of the program over time.

The Principal's Point of View

Create an after-school structure that works for your school.

When principal Tom Archuleta arrived at Valdez Elementary, the school hosted a variety of after-school programs. In the absence of a full-time after-school coordinator or the funding to hire one, Archuleta took on coordination of the programs himself. He quickly discovered a number were poorly run. Providers failed to show up and students would be left in the school building without supervision. He set about changing the way after-school worked at Valdez. He now requires a firm commitment to the school and the students. Each provider is expected to assign a coordinator for their program, find substitutes when staff members are absent, and be responsible for children in their care. Providers check in regularly with Archuleta, updating him on students' work and discussing the ways in which various programs coordinate with the school curricula.

Find programs that complement your academic offerings.

Archuleta streamlined his after-school offerings, finding programs that complement the school curriculum. The Denver SCORES emphasis on literacy fits perfectly with Valdez's focus and also offers opportunities for students to learn soccer and participate in unique literacy activities. Teachers at Valdez also benefit from the SCORES training and an additional paycheck.

After-school involvement can offer the principal unexpected opportunities for professional growth.

As a result of his participation on the Denver SCORES Board of Directors, Tom Archuleta has become acquainted with people throughout the Denver community. He has honed his presentation and political skills as a spokesperson for the organization. And he has raised his profile in the Denver Public School system. To ease the time commitment of serving on the board, Archuleta hosts their meetings at Valdez. This gives other board members an opportunity to see firsthand how the program works at a local school.

¹ Denver SCORES Fact Sheet

² See the Positive Coaching Alliance's Vision Statement at <http://www.positivecoach.org>.

³ America SCORES Web site

⁴ See Denver SCORES Final Evaluation Report, 2002-2003.

⁵ Denver SCORES Final Evaluation Report, 2002-2003, p. 3.



Detroit, Michigan

Harms elementary School

Program Snapshot

- Serves just over 565 students (grades PreK-5); 180 regularly participate in the after-school program
- Urban—Detroit, Michigan (located on the southwest side of Detroit)
- Site visited during the 2003-2004 academic year

Harms Elementary is a vibrant place. Although it is one of the oldest schools in Detroit, built in 1915, it serves as a nerve center in the community. The after-school program at Harms is an essential part of the school's vitality. Students participate in activities ranging from dance, to Accelerated Reading, to a unique community service class. The program draws on resources from throughout the Detroit community, including student artists from the University of Michigan and seniors from a neighboring apartment complex. The glue that holds all of this together is a student-focused, community-based approach to education; a visionary principal; and a committed, caring staff.

I want to do more than educate your children. I want to raise your property values.

– Patricia Diaz, Principal

The Setting

Southwest Detroit was originally home to the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge Plant, which, with its five-dollar-a-day wage, drew Appalachian, African-American, German, Italian, Hungarian, Armenian, Irish, and various Eastern European workers and their families to the area. In more recent times, Southwest Detroit has attracted immigrants from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries.

Harms Elementary is situated just outside a Federal Empowerment Zone and next to Mexicantown. The neighborhood contains a mixture of industrial and residential buildings. As one approaches Harms from the interstate, the view includes several wrecking yards, early 20th Century row houses, and old apartment buildings. The school itself is directly across the street from a high-rise housing complex for seniors.

Eighty-five percent of Harms students are identified as Hispanic, 10 percent are white, 3 percent are black, and 2 percent are Native American, Asian American, and Arab-American. Approximately 92 percent of the students receive free- or reduced-price lunch. Most live in Spanish-speaking homes. Of the approximately 160,000 students in Detroit Public Schools, only about 10,000 are Hispanic. Harms, therefore, holds a unique position within the school district.

Key Elements of the After-School Program

ORIGINS

After-school at Harms grew out of a desire on the part of Principal Patricia Diaz to support working parents with before- and after-school care for their children. Her earliest initiative was the use of Title I funds to pay teachers who agreed to stay after school and tutor children. She then established a relationship with Communities in Schools of Detroit, part of the national Communities in Schools (CIS) organization that operates in approximately 180 communities across the United States. Through locally incorporated organizations like CIS of Detroit, the organization provides support, personnel, and funding to supplement local education monies. Diaz hired Janet Ray to serve as CIS coordinator at Harms, and to seek outside support to finance and operate a full-fledged after-school program at the school.

Harms now offers Kidcare (a before- and after-school child-care program available to parents 50 weeks a year) and a summer camp. The school also boasts a multifaceted after-school enrichment program with a full-time coordinator and more than 40 paid and volunteer staff.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

The Principal

In many respects, Principal Patricia Diaz is the driving force behind the growth and success of the after-school program at Harms. Upon her arrival eight years ago, she made a number of changes, turning the school into a “community school,” where children would be welcome when regular school was out, and creating a new culture at Harms. She introduced Accelerated Reading and Math programs and demanded that teachers have high expectations for every student. ¹

Diaz met resistance from teachers and parents at first, but with the support of her district supervisor, she weathered the protests and has turned the school around. She works closely with the After-School Coordinator Dora Badger and the current CIS director, Sarah Hartman, to ensure that the after-school program at Harms continues to grow and thrive.

Communities in Schools (CIS) of Detroit

From Patricia Diaz’s perspective, the primary role of the CIS director at Harms is to bring additional resources (i.e., money) to the school. In her previous position as assistant principal at another elementary school, Diaz had seen the magic CIS could do. She knew the initial investment, though costly, would pay off. This is why she hired CIS Director Janet Ray shortly after becoming principal at Harms and charged her with raising funds to bring community resources into the school.

Ray not only brought additional funds into the school, she also established a relationship with the University of Michigan’s Detroit Initiative Program (see Detroit Initiative below). As a result of this partnership, she was able to bring students into Harms to work with the students after school.

Ray also worked with Detroit Public Schools to ensure that Harms would be included in a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant application submitted by the District. When the application was successful, Harms was able to hire a full-time coordinator for after-school programs.

The After-School Coordinator

If Patricia Diaz is the visionary behind Harms’ after-school success, After-School Coordinator Dora Badger is the heart and hands of the program. She hires, trains, and supervises the after-school staff and volunteer corps. With current CIS Director Sarah Hartman, Badger writes grant proposals and reports to foundations and other funders. She oversees the development of the after-school schedule each semester, manages the finances, and handles most of the administrative tasks. She takes time to know each of the children, their parents and caregivers personally. It is clear that children and adults alike adore “Ms. Dora,” as they fondly call her.

Teachers and Staff

A number of teachers and paraprofessionals at Harms serve as staff members for the after-school program, working with Dora Badger to provide tutoring and offer classes. By analyzing space needs for after-school, Diaz determined that if teachers would teach in the program two days per week (at a rate of \$26 per hour), their classrooms would not be needed for the

Metric Art

Measuring Up! Building Metric

Measurement Skills through Art at

*Harms Elementary School: Lessons from
the Detroit Connections Project*

Measuring Up! is a curriculum guide

for an innovative art program

developed collaboratively between the

University of Michigan's (U. of M.)

School of Art and Design and Harms

Elementary School. Since 2000, faculty

and students from U. of M.'s School of

Art and Design have been working

with the staff at Harms. Initially, they

consulted with Diaz to learn more

about students' needs at Harms. For

the 2002-2003 year, Diaz suggested

that the university develop an art

curriculum that would incorporate

mathematics skills, since students'

MEAP scores had been weak in this

area during the previous year.

As a result, the university developed a

metric arts curriculum, which was then

taught in the after-school program at

Harms. The curriculum was integrated

into the Detroit Connections program,

and U. of M. students participating in

the program traveled to Harms once a

week to work for an hour and a half

with the children in the Metric Arts

after-school club.

continued on sidebar page 25

program on other days. This made sense to the teachers and demonstrated that Diaz was aware of their needs as well. Teachers are paid with Title I and other funds that support the after-school program.

University of Michigan Students —

Detroit Initiative and Detroit Connections

Two groups of students from the University of Michigan are involved in after-school programming at Harms: one from The Detroit Initiative, which operates within the Edward Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning; and another from the Detroit Connections program within the School of Art and Design.

Students who participate in the Detroit Initiative serve in various community-focused projects and each semester, a number of those students choose to work in the after-school program at Harms. They are tutors and teachers, sometimes developing classes of their own, and often assisting others.

After CIS Director Janet Ray made the initial connection with Detroit Initiative, the word began to spread that Harms was a good organization with which to partner. Thus when faculty at the University of Michigan's School of Art and Design were looking for an elementary school to work with, they approached Harms. For the past three years, faculty members from the school have offered specially designed after-school art courses at Harms through the Detroit Connections program.

Students, Parents, and Community Members

Students are able to select classes each semester. They are also encouraged to share their ideas for after-school clubs. Parents are active in the program as well, providing feedback to the staff and volunteering to help with activities where possible.

A number of community members and groups also partner with the after-school program at Harms. Some serve as volunteers, others as paid tutors and teachers. A few offer special programs, such as the Community Helpers class, designed and taught by the community-based non-profit, Imagine Kids Impact (for information, see <http://www.imaginekidsimpact.org/>). Another local non-profit, Youth Vision, acts as an advisor to the school and also serves as the fiscal agent for a grant from the United Auto Workers Foundation.

PROGRAMMING

The Harms Elementary after-school program, also known as HAWKS (Harms After-School Winning KidS), serves just over 180 students out of the more than 500 in attendance at the school. Sixty-three of the 180 students are also signed up for Kid Care, the childcare program available to working parents whose children attend Harms.

Each semester, students sign up for the program with their parents' permission. There are no fees for participating, although parents do pay a fee of \$10 per week for their children to participate in Kid Care.

Registration preference is given to students who have been identified by their teachers as needing extra help in math, reading, and basic language skills. All students, however, are eligible to sign up for the program, which operates from 2:45 to 4:00 p.m., 27 weeks of the year. Kid Care is open Monday through Friday until 6:00 p.m., 50 weeks a year.

The HAWKS calendar at Harms generally follows the school calendar at the University of Michigan. Since so many members of the after-school staff are university students, Badger and Diaz decided to schedule the after-school sessions this way to maximize the college students' participation in the program.

Teacher Tutoring

Teacher tutoring is the cornerstone of the HAWKS program. Begun in 1999, the teacher tutoring program is supported with Title I funds. Tutorial sessions are offered three days per week, every week that regular classes are in session. Two sections of teacher tutoring are available at each grade level on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. There are also two teacher tutoring sessions each week for kindergartners.

The teacher-to-student ratio is low (between 1:7 and 1:12), and is designed to help students improve their skills in math, reading, and language arts. To ensure compliance with No Child Left Behind requirements, Diaz, Badger, and a committee composed of teachers, university representatives, and parents drafted guidelines detailing the objectives of the program and methods for determining whether objectives have been met.

Regular classroom teachers operate the tutoring sessions, working with children from their own classes or within their grade levels. They track student attendance and participation, as well as grades and MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program) scores.

Clubs and Other Activities

Children in the HAWKS program participate in a variety of clubs, including Science Exploration, Reading Rainbow, Dance Club, Academic Games, Writing Artists Club, Garden Club, Adventure Games, and Computer Club.

Many of the clubs, such as Science Exploration and Reading Rainbow, are academically focused. Almost all the clubs are designed with Harms' core curriculum in mind. The clubs are run by Harms' staff, youth volunteers, University of Michigan students, and other community members. Dora Badger develops the class schedule each semester. She works with students and staff members to make sure that a variety of classes are available and that students' needs and interests are being met.

STAFF TRAINING

Dora Badger is responsible for training the after-school staff. In September 2002, Harms published a guide, *After-School Program Volunteer and Counselor Orientation Manual*, which is given to all the after-school staff. When new staff members come on board, they meet with Badger to go over issues such as logistics, program objectives, and staff roles and responsibilities. Some staff members, such as the students who work with the Detroit Initiative program, may already be assigned to work with a particular class. Others may be hired to offer new classes. All staff members are required to keep copies of lesson plans in the After-School Program Office.

Badger admits that with such a large and diverse staff, and a wide range of offerings each semester, she is unable to officially train each staff member. The orientation manual helps to overcome this obstacle. It includes

continued from sidebar page 24

The curriculum is based on the following premise:

“There are concepts and processes shared by art and math. Quantitative and geometric skills are deeply embedded in many kinds of art making. Likewise, there are tremendous visual and design possibilities in the exploration of basic math concepts. By integrating art and math holistically into personal, concrete projects, one becomes necessary to the other. Skills in measurement are built through a sustained, creative process.”³

Measuring Up! contains lessons from each semester of the program. During the first semester, students built Alebrijes or large papier-mache sculptures, an art form that originated in Oaxaca, Mexico in the 1940s. During the second semester, students participated in a bookmaking project, where they created symbolic representations of their hopes and dreams for the future.

For the 2003-2004 year, the collaboration between the School of Art and Design and Harms combined art and writing skills.

Power-Sharing, Harms' Style

A number of years ago, Detroit Public Schools required all schools to develop a site-based management structure. As a result, each school created a site council, whose job was to make school-wide decisions. Though nervous at first about what this power-sharing arrangement would mean, Diaz decided to embrace the new structure. And, despite the fact that schools are no longer required to have such councils in place, Harms retains its council.

The council is composed of: the principal; representatives from the teaching, custodial, and support staffs; parents; and the CIS director. It meets monthly and makes important school-wide decisions. Decisions are in turn shared with staff and parents. Each staff member and parent has a specific council representative with whom they interact.

continued on sidebar page 27

essential information such as contact numbers, dress code, check lists for before, during, and after each session, and guidelines for effective counselors. The manual also includes extensive guidelines for reporting potential child abuse cases, forms for lesson plans, and ideas for games and activities.

FUNDING

The after-school program is funded from a variety of sources. The 21st CCLC grants have provided between \$82,000-85,000 annually for the past three years. In addition, Harms receives \$50,000 annually from the United Auto Workers (UAW) Foundation and an additional \$15,000-25,000 from the UAW Foundation to support its summer activities offered through Kid Care.

Approximately \$19,000 in Title I money is used to support the teacher tutoring portion of the program. Through the efforts of its Communities in Schools Director, Harms also receives significant in-kind support and other smaller grants that are used to fund the after-school program. Daily snacks, for example, are donated by Gleaners Community Food Bank.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

Programs at Harms are evaluated in a variety of ways. The United Auto Workers Foundation requires monthly reports from Harms and sends an independent evaluator to the school to conduct regular site visits. Additionally, Harms tracks students' test scores and grades, as part of its agreement to receive 21st CCLC funding.

At the end of each session, classroom teachers are asked to assess each after-school participant's performance in the regular classroom. Evaluation criteria include:

- timeliness of homework;
- homework completion;
- class participation;
- willingness to take on extra work;
- class attendance;
- classroom behavior;
- academic performance;
- preparedness to learn.

Results

Since the HAWKS program began, "teachers have consistently reported that students who participate in the HAWKS program improved in turning in their homework on time and in class participation."⁴ Additionally, MEAP scores have risen every year since the HAWKS program was initiated.⁵

The Principal's Point of View

Don't be afraid to take a risk.

When asked what advice she would give other principals, Pat Diaz exclaimed, "Don't be afraid to take a risk!" Diaz has taken many risks since she arrived at Harms eight years ago. She had a vision of what Harms could be—a school with high expectations for students, one that cared about them and provided them with resources that would enable them to learn and achieve in ways that did not seem possible before. Because she has worked hard to expand the notion of what an elementary school is capable of doing, and because she has taken risks, Diaz has realized much of her vision.

Share Power.

One of the greatest risks Diaz took was to give up some of her traditional power. Instead of opposing the site-based decision-making council, Diaz agreed to share decision-making with the larger school community. She found this freed her to focus more time on instructional leadership. The success of this power-sharing arrangement led to a similar arrangement with the after-school program. By allowing Dora Badger to manage the day-to-day aspects of the program, and Sarah Hartman to handle fundraising, Diaz can concentrate her efforts on making sure the program is in alignment with the curriculum goals for the school. She has found she is able to step back from the program without becoming disengaged. And the program continues to grow.

Allow "outsiders" in.

Diaz took the risk of allowing (and even inviting) outsiders into the school. Since after-school began at Harms, the school has formed partnerships with a number of community agencies, including the University of Michigan and Youth Vision. One partnership with the University of Michigan Detroit Initiative led to another with the School of Art and Design. By making simple concessions, like modifying the after-school schedule to match the university schedule, Harms has been able to greatly increase its after-school staff without incurring additional costs.

The partnership with Youth Vision has also brought in additional volunteers. Youth Vision helps to develop programming for Harms and also serves as the fiscal agent for the UAW Foundation grant.

Diaz trusts Hartman and Badger to manage these partnerships so they will not become too overwhelming for her or a burden to the school.

Remain Committed to Your Vision.

In 2003, Detroit Public Schools cut after-school pay for principals. Though disappointed, Diaz did not give up. While some principals decided they could no longer afford to spend time on after-school programming, Diaz looked for ways to manage her after-school time more effectively.



continued from sidebar page 26

Because the site council makes a number of administrative decisions Diaz would otherwise have to make, she is able to focus more of her attention on instructional issues.

A similar power-sharing arrangement has been established for after-school. Diaz shares responsibilities with both the CIS director and the after-school coordinator. She helps to guide and direct the program—to ensure that its academic enrichment programs, for example, are in alignment with the in-school curriculum—while the CIS director focuses her efforts on garnering community support, and the after-school coordinator works on managing the day-to-day program.



Diaz has seen the benefits that the HAWKS program provides to her students, and she is unwilling to relinquish them. Because of Harms' success, she was given the opportunity to serve as a national spokesperson for the importance of after-school programs. During the 2002-2003 school year, Harms was a national media site for Lights on Afterschool, a project of the Afterschool Alliance. Diaz also traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the After-School Summit, led by now-governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and then Secretary of Education, Roderick Paige, and to meet with legislators, urging them to support the 21st CCLC program.

¹ Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math are programs designed by Renaissance Learning. They combine reading and math with regular, individualized computer testing. To learn more, see the Renaissance Learning Web-site, <http://www.renlearn.com>.

² See the Edward Ginsberg Center Web site, <http://www.umich.edu/~mserve/di/mission.html>

³ Ceci Mendez and Janie Paul, *Measuring Up! Building Metric Measurement Skills Through Art at Harms Elementary School: Lessons Learned from the Detroit Connections Project*, The University of Michigan School of Art and Design, 2003, p. 2.

⁴ Afterschool Tutorial Program Description, 2003-2004, Harms Elementary School, p. 2

⁵ Afterschool Tutorial Program Description, 2003-2004, Harms Elementary School, p. 2



St. Paul, Minnesota Jackson Preparatory Magnet School

Program Snapshot

When Principal Patrick Bryan arrived at Jackson Magnet School in 2001, Jackson's after-school program was in trouble. Bryan built bridges with the community, hired a new after-school coordinator, and with the support of the St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS), revamped the program. Today, after-school is anchored by strong partnerships between the school and community-based organizations, such as the University of Minnesota's 4-H Extension Program, Hmong-American Partnership, and the St. Paul Conservatory of Music. The majority of students at Jackson identify themselves as Hmong, an ethnic group whose origins can be traced to parts of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and other Asian countries. To better serve these students, and all the students at Jackson, the after-school program features Hmong culture and language classes, clubs, tutoring, homework help, and enrichment activities. Bryan credits the after-school program with strengthening the school's relationship to the community and bolstering students' achievement scores.

- Serves 480 students (grades Pre-K-6); more than 200 students regularly participate in the after-school program
- Urban—St. Paul, MN (located in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul)
- Site visited during the 2003-2004 academic year

It takes a tremendous amount of time and effort to build effective community partnerships, but the initial investment pales in comparison to the payoff everyone, including the principal, receives once partnerships are in place.

– Patrick Bryan, Principal

The Setting

The Frogtown area of St. Paul, originally a French enclave, is now home to a mixture of Asian-American, Caucasian, Latino, and African-American families. With the second highest crime rate in the city, Frogtown is a tough neighborhood. As part of a police sting operation conducted during the 2002-2003 school year, more than 60 drug dealers were arrested in the vicinity immediately surrounding Jackson Magnet School.

As a magnet school, Jackson draws students from throughout St. Paul, despite the neighborhood's reputation. Approximately 70 percent of the students are bused to school. Fifty-six percent are identified as Asian, 24 percent black, 12 percent Hispanic, and 8 percent white. Eighty-seven percent receive free- and reduced-price lunch. Fifty percent receive English Language Learner (ELL) services, and 70 percent speak a language other than English at home.

Jackson's magnet focus is enrichment and acceleration, enabling students to participate in band and orchestra, for example. The after-school program is designed to complement this focus and provide academic support to students in need. Principal Patrick Bryan views the school's diversity as an opportunity to broaden enrichment offerings. Jackson is one of a handful of schools in the country that enables students to participate in a bilingual English/Hmong program during the day. That program is carried over into after-school through a partnership with the St. Paul Public Schools ELL Department's Hmong CLAN'D (Culture, Language, Art, 'N' Dance) program.

Key Elements of the Program

ORIGINS

After-school at Jackson began in 1999 as part of a larger SPPS 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) initiative, which funded after-school programs at eight schools—five elementary and three middle/junior high schools. The goals of the program were to increase student achievement, reduce drug use and violence among youth, and increase parents' abilities to support their children's education.

Initially called *Pathways to Progress*, the program was designed to ensure continuity by linking after-school providers at elementary schools with middle and junior high schools. The schools were divided into clusters and after-school coordinators were hired according to the needs of each cluster. As one of three schools in Cluster 1, Jackson received its own coordinator. The other two clusters hired one coordinator each.

Today, the elementary and middle schools are no longer paired and some of the original after-school programs closed when federal funding of the original grant concluded. After-school at Jackson, however, has continued

to grow and currently receives funding through Minnesota's 21st CCLC program, as well as an extensive network of community partnerships cultivated by principal Patrick Bryan.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

St. Paul Public Schools

Lee Litman, currently the Project Coordinator of SPPS 21st CCLC grants, was among a group of administrators from the District office who wrote the first 21st CCLC grant proposal. Litman, then part of the District's Community Education program, and her team identified high-need schools, met with officials at those schools, and then crafted a proposal to develop the *Pathways to Progress* After-School Program.

From the beginning, a number of key community partners were involved, along with the schools served by the grant. Litman assembled an advisory board that met regularly to guide the development of the overall project. She also worked with principals at each site to hire and train after-school coordinators. Through the project's evolution, Litman has remained district coordinator. She continues to work closely with Patrick Bryan and the after-school staff at Jackson.

The Principal

At the time Patrick Bryan arrived as principal four years ago, many of Jackson's community partnerships had languished. The after-school coordinator overspent her first-year budget, and the school was in danger of losing its after-school program. Bryan was brought on board, in part, to build new bridges to the community and to rework the after-school program. His first action was to replace Jackson's original coordinator with current coordinator, Emily Weiss. He then began scheduling meetings with various community partners and rebuilding the school's relationship with the community.

Bryan's role in after-school now consists of meeting regularly with Weiss and Litman to ensure that everything is on track; looking for additional funding streams and occasionally writing grant proposals; recruiting teachers and school staff to work in after-school; meeting with community partners, when necessary; and continually looking for ways to connect in-school to after-school learning.

The After-School Coordinator

Coordinator Emily Weiss is responsible for developing the after-school program; hiring, supervising, and training the after-school staff; managing the budget; and other day-to-day aspects of the program. Although Lee Litman is her immediate supervisor, Weiss meets regularly with Bryan and reports to him as well.

In an effort to integrate her position with the regular school program, Weiss has taken on such responsibilities as breakfast supervision, student discipline, and bus discipline. While these extra responsibilities provide her with more time to know the students and school staff, they also require long days, sometimes beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending after 6:30 p.m. After-school is in session Monday through Thursday, so Weiss occasionally takes Friday afternoons off. She is well liked by students and staff alike, who see her as a tremendous asset to the program.

The Hmong-American Partnership

Many of the Hmong people living in the St. Paul area immigrated to the U.S. after the Vietnam War (see www.hmong.org for more information on the ethnic origins of the Hmong).

A number entered the United States as refugees and relocated to St. Paul.

Over time, they formed a strong community in the area, word spread, and the community grew. Today, St. Paul boasts the largest concentration of Hmong peoples in the United States.

The Hmong-American Partnership (HAP) was formed in the 1990s “as a Hmong community-based organization that would draw equally on the strengths of the Hmong culture and those of other American communities. HAP’s mission is: to foster trust; to assist Hmong in achieving their full potential and participating actively in the community; and to promote mutual respect, cultural awareness, and the exchange of knowledge and values.”¹

continued on sidebar page 33

The Staff

Weiss works with approximately 30 staff members on a regular basis, including 12 certified teachers, a number of paraprofessionals, and community volunteers. Principal Bryan assists her with recruitment of teachers and paraprofessionals, who are paid at their regular rates from the 21st CCLC grant or a Federal Tutorial Assistance Grant. Some community members are paid with grant funds as well. Others volunteer through their community organizations.

Community Partners

Community partners are essential to Jackson’s after-school program. They include:

- University of Minnesota Extension Service Center for 4-H Youth Development, which offers a variety of 4-H Club enrichment activities taught by 4-H staff. 4-H serves as the school’s “primary partner” for its 21st CCLC grant, playing a key role on the advisory committee, guiding the development of the program, and designing curriculum.
- Hmong-American Partnership (HAP), which offers Hmong Youth Pride, a yearlong after-school club run by a community instructor and several volunteers. HAP also provides individualized reading tutoring to predominantly Hmong-speaking children as part of the Tutorial Assistance Grant.
- The St. Paul Conservatory of Music, which provides individual and group lessons on guitar, violin, and recorder, taught by faculty from the Conservatory.
- The Area Learning Center (ALC), an SPPS program, which provides academic support services for students in different grade levels, taught by certified teachers.
- The St. Paul Public Schools ELL Hmong CLA’N’D (Culture, Language, Art, ‘N’ Dance) program, taught by certified teachers and community volunteers.

Partners teach classes, host special events for parents and community members, and provide staff and funding for a number of the classes and clubs offered after school.

Students and Parents

In order to encourage student and parent involvement in the program, Emily Weiss takes part in school open houses, conferences, and family event nights. Her presence provides opportunities for families to ask questions, learn more about the after-school program and offer suggestions for program improvement. It also ensures that Weiss will be a familiar face to parents and family members. Students also provide informal feedback to Weiss regarding program activities and schedules, as she interacts with them during the course of daily programming.

Patrick Bryan has made after-school updates a permanent part of the agenda at Jackson’s parent, community, and staff Site Council meetings. He initiates round table discussions among parents several times a year, in which they express their expectations for both the school day and after-school program.

PROGRAMMING

After-school at Jackson runs from 3:45 to 5:45 p.m., Monday through Thursday, during first semester, October through December, and second semester, January through May. Children and their parents register for classes/clubs each semester. With a few exceptions, most of the offerings are grouped by grade level. When the school day ends, students enjoy a snack in the cafeteria before joining the teachers in their respective classrooms. At program closing, students walk home, are picked up by their parents, or are bused to their homes.

There is no fee for participating. Students performing below grade level are encouraged to sign up for after-school and receive registration preference for certain classes. All students, however, are eligible to attend.

Hoops and Homework

Most students participate in a homework activity. On Mondays and Wednesdays, fifth- and sixth-graders attend Hoops and Homework, co-taught by Jackson's P.E. teacher and a classroom teacher, assisted by paraprofessionals. The hoops activity differs each session, with students learning to play volleyball in the fall of 2003. "The purpose," according to Emily Weiss, "is to engage students' minds and bodies. To make homework more fun." There is also a Homework Headquarters class where students work on crafts when they have completed their homework.

Clubs

Students may register for a variety of clubs, including Hmong Youth Pride, Hmong CLAN'D (Culture, Language, Art, 'N' Dance), and 4-H O.K. Kids Club. Students in each of the clubs vary in age and participate in activities unique to their club. In the CLAN'D program, for example, they may choose to study the Hmong language on Mondays and Wednesdays and/or learn traditional Hmong dances on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In the 4-H O.K. Kids club, students take part in a variety of age-appropriate activities, including work exploration and community science.

Pairing Classroom Teachers with Community Partners

To free teachers of the burden of planning after-school classes on their own, and to underscore school community connections, classroom teachers are often teamed with community partners. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, for example, many students participate in a program sponsored by St. Paul Public Schools Area Learning Centers, which is designed to improve academic skills. During the first 45 minutes, students engage in math or reading activities based on the school-day curriculum. They may request homework assistance as well. A certified teacher handles this portion of the class, with the assistance of a community member. The second half of the class involves enrichment activities, such as making creative snacks, arts and crafts, or simple science experiments, designed and taught by a community member, assisted by a teacher. Teachers and community instructors learn to work as a team, taking into account the academic needs of each student in order to tailor assignments and planning the enrichment activities as incentives and rewards for jobs well done.

Special Activities

A Tutorial Assistance Grant (TAG) obtained in 2002, enables students to register for tutoring assistance in reading. Jackson is a Success for All

continued from sidebar page 32

The Hmong-American Partnership works in schools throughout the St. Paul Public School system, providing the Hmong Youth Pride program, as well as other special events and cultural activities. The Hmong Youth Pride program at Jackson is offered free of charge. In turn, Patrick Bryan has collaborated with the staff at HAP to secure grants to support the organization.

The Jackson Prep Players

Among the academic/enrichment programs available to fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students is the Jackson Prep Players. Students who register for this class, which meets two times per week throughout the school year, participate in various math and reading activities during the first part of class. During the last 45 minutes, the class turns into a singing and performance troop.

The group, which is led by the Jackson music teacher, has staged performances both inside and outside the school building. Every year the Prep Players put on a combined show with the fourth- through sixth- grade school choir in December. This has become another way to tie together the regular school day and the after-school program. In 2003, the group gave a performance at the Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul, and the Prep Players also perform at Jackson's Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event.

school, so all tutors, including classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and even the volunteers from the Hmong-American Partnership, utilize materials that support the Success for All model.²

Students may also take private or small-group music lessons, taught by faculty from the St. Paul Conservatory of Music and funded by the 21st CCLC grant.

Principal Bryan feels special activities are essential to the enrichment experience. He and Weiss continually seek to provide more of these experiences.

STAFF TRAINING

Lee Litman hosts monthly staff meetings for the after-school site coordinators, providing training on district rules and regulations, budget management, payroll, and business office procedures. Since after-school at Jackson is part of a larger on-going SPPS initiative, Litman also encourages staff members to take advantage of district-wide staff development opportunities such as computer training, CPR, and First Aid. Grant funds also support staff participation in regional 21st CCLC trainings and workshops sponsored by the National Center for Community Education.

Emily Weiss hosts orientation sessions and training meetings for staff members and volunteers at Jackson. All staff, including volunteers who work with community partners, must undergo a background check and fingerprint screening by the District. They participate in a general orientation session, which includes a tour of the school and a discussion of school policies and culture at Jackson. There are also special training sessions for TAG tutors, as well as teachers and community partners working in the Area Learning Centers program. And, hourly staff members have also participated in workshops provided by 4-H Youth Development, which have been specifically designed for those working in after-school programs for youth.

FUNDING

Most of the costs for Jackson's program have been paid through 21st CCLC grant funds. The 21st CCLC grant allocation for 2003-2004 was approximately \$84,000. Twenty-first Century funds cover all of Emily Weiss' salary, as well as those of hourly staff. Licensed teachers are paid at their contract rate and paraprofessional staff members are paid at their normal hourly rate; other staff costs vary depending on the program. The grant also covers the cost of supplies and food for snacks and special events.

To expand program offerings, Jackson has obtained additional grant funds and in-kind support. The school received a Tutorial Assistance Grant for the school years 2002-2004, which covered some costs for tutors and materials. Jackson also receives considerable support from its partners. The Ramsey County 4-H program is provided free of charge to the school, as is the District's English Language Learners Hmong CLAN'D program. The District pays for busses and teachers' salaries through its Area Learning Centers program.

The District originally planned to create a support system for after-school programs through the Community Education Department. As the national education focus has shifted increasingly toward academic achievement, however, more and more of the District's after-school services are

supported through its Area Learning Center's (ALC) program, designed to provide academic services that supplement in-school learning. As Lee Litman looks for ways to institutionalize district-level support for after-school programs, she increasingly looks toward the ALC program.

The current Minnesota 21st CCLC grant will take Jackson through at least two more years, with the option of continuing for another two years, for a total of five years. Continued funding is dependent on federal allocations from Congress. In the meantime, Patrick Bryan and Emily Weiss continue to work at maintaining strong community partnerships, and seeking other sources of support for after-school offerings.



EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

After-school at Jackson is part of a longitudinal program evaluation that began with *Pathways to Progress*. The District contracted with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota to help direct evaluation efforts for the grant. CAREI's three-year program evaluation looked at a number of factors, including:

- the variety of classes offered in Pathways schools;
- parent, teacher, and principal satisfaction with the program;
- grades of participants who attended the program 30 or more days each year, compared to those of non-participants;
- reading and math scores of participants, compared to non-participants;
- school attendance; and
- discipline issues.³

Results

Evaluation results for the *Pathways* program were quite positive. With regard to the goal of increasing student academic achievement, evaluators found after-school participants received higher scores than their non-participating counterparts on standardized tests. "Regular participants frequently began with lower scores prior to *Pathways*' involvement and still completed 2003 with higher scores on the standardized tests in both [math and reading] subject areas."⁴

Additionally, the researchers found that "*Pathways* was an integrated program," that in-school and after-school were not seen as separate, but simply parts of the larger school offering.

Reports of surveys, site visits, and interviews indicated teachers, principals, and parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program. Teachers reported, for example, that "four out of every five Pathways students showed improved habits and skills consistently associated with better academic performance, classroom behavior, and improved academic work."⁵

Site-specific outcomes were not included in the evaluation, so it is difficult to draw conclusions from the report about the direct impact at Jackson. In 2001, however, Jackson was listed as a school that "needed assistance" under No Child Left Behind guidelines. The after school program was, in Principal Bryan's opinion, a significant factor in helping the school make

sustained Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In 2003, the school came off the list and student achievement has been steadily climbing. In addition, initial data collected by the school indicated that 82% of first- through third-graders participating in the after-school Tutorial Assistance Grant (TAG) program showed an increase in their reading scores and were making gains towards reading at grade level.

Support for Jackson's program is strong. Parents, teachers, and administrative staff believe in the program. All see it as a uniting force for the school, bringing in new community partners, and creating rich academic and cultural offerings for students.

The Principal's Point of View

Reach out to the community.

When Patrick Bryan arrived at Jackson, he found many of the school's community partnerships had languished. He consulted parents, teachers, and students to determine the groups that were important to them, then made phone calls and attended meetings. He estimates during his first year at Jackson, he attended perhaps one or two community meetings each week. He made it a point to listen, to find out what the groups hoped to accomplish, and to look for ways that the school and the community could work together. As a result, Jackson now has solid partnerships with a number of high-profile community groups.

"The key," Bryan says, "is to think about how your work is intertwined—about how you serve the community, and about how the community can serve you." As Bryan and Jackson Magnet have gained trust with various groups, he attends fewer meetings, but he still makes a point to call community representatives regularly, to check in, share good news, and learn about new needs. Recently, Bryan wrote a letter of support for one of the groups with whom the school works. They are applying for a grant, and he was happy to assist. "They've provided a terrific program for us, free of charge. The least we can do is to help them with this grant proposal."

Know when to let go.

Like all school principals, Patrick Bryan has a lot on his plate. He risks burnout by taking on too much. How does one effectively run a school in a tough urban neighborhood, meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, supervise staff, manage a multi-million dollar budget, provide inspiration and instructional leadership, and build bridges with the community at the same time?

Bryan says he has learned to let go. Now that Jackson has solid community partnerships in place, Bryan depends on Emily Weiss to manage many of these relationships. He also depends on Lee Litman's assistance in finding additional resources and support for after-school. Test scores at Jackson are on the rise, and the school is making Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. He credits the after-school program with helping to strengthen Jackson's offerings and with bringing the school together. Bryan can now focus more of his attention on building the school's new Pre-K program.

Find an after-school coordinator with the right set of skills.

This is key, according to Bryan. When he and Lee Litman sought to hire a new after-school coordinator, they wanted someone with the following:

- good planning/organizing skills;
- a high tolerance for ambiguity;
- patience;
- problem-solving ability;
- good cross-cultural communication skills;
- tenacity; and
- a love for kids.

With Emily Weiss, they have clearly found the right person. Weiss sees her role as that of a de-facto after-school principal. She supervises staff, manages the building, and is responsible for the safety and well-being of 200 children on any given day. It's a big responsibility, but Weiss enjoys the challenge. Bryan trusts Weiss with many of the after-school development and management responsibilities. The trust is mutual and Jackson students and families are the beneficiaries of the strong, supportive working relationship between the principal and the site coordinator.

Post-Script

Jackson currently has 526 students, including 60 new four-year-olds who make up the Pre-K School Readiness and Community Kindergarten programs. Hmong American Partnership no longer provides tutoring but continues to provide, free of charge, the Hmong Youth Pride program. The tutoring provided through the Tutorial Assistance Grant, which concluded in June 2004, has been continued as part of the 21st CCLC grant. Jackson's 21st CCLC grant proposal was originally funded for up to five years, however recent budget reductions have reduced the grant period to four years. The school is currently in the second year of this funding cycle and looking toward the future.

¹ Hmong-American Partnership Web site, <http://www.hmong.org>.

² Success for All is a whole-school reform model that originated through work begun at Johns Hopkins University in the 1980s. Today there are more than 1,500 Success for All schools throughout the United States. For more information on Success for All, see <http://successforall.com/>.

³ The evaluation was designed so that comparison groups (participants and non-participants) were “matched” at each school, according to the following factors: “grade, free- and reduced-price lunch status, English Language Learner status, ethnicity, and gender.” Center for Applied Research and Evaluation, University of Minnesota; *Final Evaluation Report: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Pathways to Progress, St. Paul Public Schools*; March 2004, p. 4.

⁴ Center for Applied Research and Evaluation, University of Minnesota; *Final Evaluation Report: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Pathways to Progress, St. Paul Public Schools*; March 2004, p. iii.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. iii.



Wadsworth, Nevada

Natchez Elementary School

Program Snapshot

- Serves 175 students (grades PreK-6); 115 regularly participate in the after-school program
- Rural—Wadsworth, NV (located on the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, 40 miles north east of Reno)
- Site visited during the 2003-2004 academic year

The after-school program at Natchez Elementary School gives students a safe and caring place to learn, have fun, and improve their academic achievement. It also provides opportunities to deepen their understandings of their heritage. Most children growing up on the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation no longer speak the Paiute language. Like their contemporaries, they receive a steady diet of fast-paced, slang-laden English from commercial television. One of the goals of the after-school program at Natchez Elementary School, located just inside the reservation, is to strengthen students' connections to Paiute culture. In addition to homework and reading time, the after-school program at Natchez includes Paiute language classes, drumming, tribal arts, and cooking. Students also take part in a variety of recreational activities and field trips. The program has aligned diverse community groups with the school, provided relief to working parents, and greatly increased learning opportunities for students.

Our test scores have climbed over the past couple of years. We're making AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress], and I am certain that is directly related to the after-school program.

– Jason Childs, Principal

The Setting

Wadsworth, Nevada is a small town on the edge of Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation in Nevada's high desert. The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe has approximately 2,250 members, the majority of whom live on the reservation.¹ Bordered by craggy mountain ranges, Pyramid Lake received its name from an outcropping of red rock, which resembles a pyramid, in its center. The landscape surrounding the lake is stark, with plenty of open range.

Some members of the Tribe raise cattle; some work for the Pyramid Lake Fishery or other recreational businesses related to the lake; a number are employed by various tribal and government entities; and still others work at the Amazon shipping plant nearby. Still, employment opportunities are slim. Forty-five percent of the Tribe is unemployed. The lack of jobs poses a challenge for younger members of the Tribe, especially those who would like to remain on the reservation.

Although located on the reservation, Natchez Elementary School is part of the Washoe County School District, which includes Reno and other small towns nearby. The school serves 175 students. Half walk to school, and the other half are bussed from the small town of Nixon, near the lake, and from outlying homes on the reservation. About 85 percent of the students are Native American; 8 percent identify as Hispanic and 7 percent as white. Eighty-three percent are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch, and many live far below the poverty line.

Like other American Indian tribes in the United States, the Pyramid Lake Paiute are working hard to sustain and enrich their linguistic and cultural traditions. After-school at Natchez is rooted in the community and plays an important role in this work. It is designed to help students bridge the cultures that surround them, to perform well on state-administered tests, and to learn more about tribal ways of life—to open opportunities for the future and deepen understandings of the past.

Key Elements of the After-School Program

ORIGINS

After-school programming at Natchez took shape following the receipt of a 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant in July 2000. Although there had been some after-school activities prior to the grant, there was no formal after-school program. The 21st CCLC grant proposal grew out of a series of meetings among a group of school and community organizations to discuss ways of meeting the needs of youth, especially “at risk” youth, in Washoe County’s rural communities. The Washoe County

School District applied for Federal 21st Century funds to support the program at Natchez, along with two other rural schools—Johnson Elementary and Gerlach High School.

Each of the schools developed a unique after-school program, but focused on the same overall goals to:

- “Provide activities offering significant expanded learning opportunities that contribute to reduced drug use and violence;
- Provide activities that [would] assist students to meet and exceed local and state achievement standards in core academic subjects; and
- Solicit and capture the support and participation of parents and the community.”²

Janet Davis, community liaison (and now after-school coordinator) at Natchez, actively participated in the community meeting process and worked with the group to plan grant-funded activities at the school. James Barclay, a former Natchez principal and current Washoe County Schools administrator, and Karen Owen, then the principal of Natchez, also guided the group in their discussions.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

Washoe County School District

The school district manages the 21st CCLC grant and coordinates activities among the grant sites. In addition to providing fiscal oversight, the district also conducts quarterly trainings for the site coordinators and project staff. As a former principal at Natchez Elementary, District Project Director James Barclay understands many of the issues Natchez students face.

The Principal

When Jason Childs became principal of Natchez Elementary in the fall of 2002, he met with After-school Coordinator Janet Davis to discuss how they could work together. Childs views the after-school program as a natural—and in many ways, essential—complement to the in-school curriculum. He assists Davis in the recruitment of teachers, finds space for program activities, and shares resources with the after-school program.

The After-School Coordinator

Janet Davis has worked at Natchez Elementary School for almost two decades. She has served in a variety of administrative posts, including her most recent as community liaison. When Natchez received their 21st CCLC grant, Davis was hired as the site coordinator.

She recruits and hires staff; develops and manages partnerships with community and tribal organizations; provides training for staff members; and manages the budget and other administrative aspects of the program. She is well known and liked in the school and the community, and therefore has been able to build an extensive support network for after-school at Natchez. Everyone involved views her as a crucial element in the program's success.

Literacy is the Key — Save the Children’s Rural Programs in the U.S.

“The dividing line between rich and poor in America today is education, and when one in six children in the United States lives in poverty, literacy becomes a critical link in a chain that can either shackle children to a life of poverty or be used to pull them out of it.”⁵

Though known primarily for its international work, Save the Children also invests in children and communities in the United States. For the past few years, the organization has developed community-based partnerships (focused on literacy) in rural areas in the Southwest, the Southeast, and Appalachia.

Programs are built from “the ground up,” working with community volunteers. Save the Children regional staff visit communities, meet with interested community members, and then work with them to provide materials and support that fit the local community. In turn, volunteers receive training around issues such as literacy development, partnership building, and program assessment.

continued on sidebar page 43

Teachers and School Staff

The after-school program utilizes a total of 19 paid and unpaid staff members, including two classroom teachers, the librarian (who is also the computer specialist and the coordinator of the school’s Accelerated Reader program³), the bus driver, the school custodian, three high school students, and a number of community staff and volunteers. Teachers are paid at a rate of \$20 per hour. Classified staff members receive \$12 to \$16 per hour, depending upon their experience and duties.

Since Natchez’s teaching faculty is small (there are only nine classroom teachers, many of whom commute from Reno), Davis has looked creatively inside and outside of the school to find experienced educators who can assist with the after-school program. She recruits staff and community members with special skills, such as drumming, beading, and horseback riding, to teach the enrichment classes. She has also worked with the Save the Children’s Western Area Office to hire AmeriCorps and other volunteers.

Save the Children

Save the Children has worked in partnership with Natchez for almost a decade, and the school is currently one of their 11 model literacy sites. As such, Natchez has received an infusion of money, training, and reading materials, along with a van to assist with transportation needs. Materials are used in school and after-school, supporting programs such as Accelerated Reader and Kidzlit.⁴

Both Janet Davis and Buddiette Salway, the school’s current community liaison, serve as Save the Children volunteers. They manage the budget, attend trainings provided by the organization, and work with Jason Childs and the after-school staff to develop activities for the students.

Tribal/Community Groups

After-school at Natchez is embedded in a web of community partnerships:

- Pyramid Lake Parks and Recreation Department helps provide funds and equipment that enable Natchez to sponsor softball and soccer teams.
- Pyramid Lake Health Services has partnered with a local 4-H club to offer cooking and nutrition classes after school. The group also offers nutrition classes to adults who attend some of the programs at Natchez.
- Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe’s Johnson O’Malley program (a federally funded program that provides Indian Education assistance to tribes and local schools) offers tutoring to students in Natchez’s after-school program.
- Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe’s Language in School program offers Paiute language/culture classes to Natchez students free of charge.
- Pyramid Lake Housing Authority hosts an annual poster contest and a fire safety pizza party for students and families in the after-school program.
- Cub Scout Outreach Program provides a Cub Scout leader and activities for boys.
- Pyramid Lake Sumunumu Alcohol and Drug Program provides a community educator, curriculum, prevention programs, and life skills classes.

Janet Davis, with the support of Principal Jason Childs, has worked diligently to cultivate these community partnerships. Because Davis personally knows many of the community members who run these programs, she has been able to build both formal and informal partnerships. In turn, the partners see the after-school program as a natural extension of their work at the community level. From their perspective, Natchez's after-school program is the perfect venue for reaching kids and often their parents as well. Many activities would not exist without these partnerships. For example, neither Parks and Recreation nor Natchez Elementary would be able to sponsor sports teams on their own.

Parents and Students

For working parents, the after-school program offers much needed relief. Prior to the existence of the program, some working parents would retrieve their children from school and simply bring them back to work. The program has also made it possible for other parents to seek employment. Several commented during our site visit that tension has decreased around their homes. "My kids get their homework done. They are running and playing and learning about our culture, and they're much happier when they get home at night," said one parent.

Parents receive a weekly newsletter that details upcoming events and announcements and includes a "Principal's Corner." Parents also volunteer to teach enrichment classes and help out with community events. The 21st CCLC Grant includes funds for community activities as well as adult learning, and many parents take advantage of these opportunities as well.

Davis encourages open communication with her students. She and her staff listen to and respect the students—and the students respond positively. Natchez recently adopted a computer-based evaluation program that allows students to provide regular feedback on program offerings as well.

PROGRAMMING

After-school is offered Monday through Thursday in four seven-to-eight-week sessions. There is also a summer program. During the school year, students are grouped by grade level. Typically, they follow a schedule that includes:

- Snack from 2:30-2:45 p.m.
- Homework from 2:45-3:45 p.m.
- Recess from 3:45-4:00 p.m.
- Enrichment activities from 4:00-5:00 p.m.
- Dinner from 5:00-5:20 p.m.

There are seven groups, with 10 to 20 students per group. Each group is assigned a lead teacher and, depending upon the size and composition of the groups, most are assisted by an additional staff member or community volunteer.

Homework/Tutoring

Janet Davis and Jason Childs worked together to develop a system of communication between classroom teachers and after-school staff to ensure that students receive assistance with their homework and additional support. On Monday, classroom teachers leave their homework assignments in a box for after-school staff to reference as they assist students with

In Natchez's case, transportation is a real issue, since many students and their families live far from the school. So, Save the Children purchased a van that Davis and Salway use to ferry kids and their families back and forth to school related activities. Davis and Salway also use the van to help Natchez' families take care of medical and welfare needs. According to Janet Davis, the van has been a "lifesaver."

Learning to Cook

During the 2003-2004 school year, Pyramid Lake Health Service partnered with the 4-H extension service to offer an after-school cooking and nutrition class at Natchez. The class was designed to teach students how to cook healthy meals. 4-H donated the food and supplies and Pyramid Lake Health Service staff members taught the class.

“Diabetes is a serious problem on the Reservation,” says Health Services coordinator, Tonya Wolf. “A big part of what we’re hoping to teach children is that there are many healthy foods that can be fun to cook and eat.” The goal of the class is also to reach parents, to change family eating habits. “Kids love learning how to make their own meals, and they like to share what they learn with their parents,” explains Wolf.

homework. After-school staff members utilize the same system of communication to provide feedback to classroom teachers. Although this requires some extra work on the part of classroom teachers, after-school assistance is very helpful to them.

Teachers assign reading time as part of each day’s homework. A twenty-minute block during homework time is set aside as reading time, to complement the school’s Success for All curriculum.⁶

Enrichment Activities

Students participate in a variety of activities. Some, such as soccer and softball, are seasonal. Others depend upon the availability of teachers and community staff. Davis collaborates with Childs to create a schedule that offers students a menu of activities to complement the school day.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, students could take Kidzlit, computers, art, beading, Paiute, cooking, music, traditional dancing, Pee Wee Rodeo, drama, swimming, and roping. Schedules vary. Some classes are taught in week-long formats. Others are offered daily or twice a week throughout the session. Students are assigned to some of the enrichment activities—all students participated in Kidzlit, computers, and Paiute classes, for example—while they are allowed to select other activities, such as soccer, drama, and Pee Wee Rodeo.

Paiute language classes have been a big hit. So big, in fact, that Childs anticipated creating space during the school day for additional classes. During our site visit, students were recounting basic words and numbers through an old Paiute story. A high school student sat in the class with the youngsters to learn the language along with them.

One goal of the after-school program is to actively engage students—to get them moving while they learn, whether through sports activities or through cultural programs such as dance. Students love being active and enjoy showing off their newfound skills to their parents and the community. Instead of watching TV after school, they are engaged learners. For many, the program serves as an incentive to attend school.

Field Trips and Community Events

In addition to the standard schedule, after-school at Natchez also sponsors field trips and hosts a number of community events. There are annual adventure trips to theme parks for those students who attend and participate regularly in the after-school program. Students and their families have journeyed to Reno to visit cultural venues, to other reservations to take part in their activities, and to the University of Nevada, Reno to participate in university-sponsored events.

The Natchez 21st Century After-School Program collaborates with the Pyramid Lake Save the Children Program to celebrate Native American Month in September. Motivational speakers, traditional cooking classes, a social powwow and other activities are planned. Save the Children also hosts family literacy nights and Accelerated Reader nights in collaboration with the Natchez Title I Program. Additionally, students travel to a nearby swimming pool as a physical activity on a weekly basis.

STAFF TRAINING

Janet Davis participates in trainings on a wide range of issues through both Save the Children and the 21st Century program. In turn, she trains and orients after-school staff, making sure that they understand the goals of the program, the needs of the students, and policies and procedures.

After-school staff members also participate in quarterly staff development offered at Natchez on topics such as Success For All Roots and Wings, Writing and Literacy, and Early Childhood Development. This cross training further cements connections between in-school and after-school learning.

FUNDING

Natchez has two primary funding sources for its after-school program: the 21st CCLC grant and Save the Children. It also receives considerable in-kind support and staffing assistance from various tribal and county agencies and organizations. Most partners provide their services free of charge.

For the past three years, the school has received \$185,000 from the 21st CCLC grant, \$15,000 of which is set aside for parent/community programs. During the first year of the program, Natchez purchased new computers and software to outfit a lab that is used by students during the day and adults in the evening. On an annual basis, most of the 21st Century funds have been used for staffing and transportation costs, curriculum materials, events, and activities. The Nevada Food Bank provides a free dinner through its Kids Café program, and the Washoe County School District Nutrition Services provides a free snack for the children every day.

With additional support from Save the Children (as a Model Literacy Site, the school receives almost \$43,000 per year, in addition to \$14,900 in sponsorship funds), Davis has been able to save enough 21st Century money to carry the full-fledged after-school program over into the 2004-2005 school year.⁷ The bulk of Save the Children funds are used to pay for books, quizzes, staffing, and literacy incentives for in-school and after-school programs.

Davis hopes to find funds this year to continue the after-school program in the coming years. She spends a significant portion of her budget each year on transportation, including busing kids home each day and taking them to events. Without on-going support to cover transportation costs, it will be difficult to maintain the program as it is now. Principal Jason Childs has been very supportive, assisting with the search for new grants to complement the program.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

Initially, Washoe County Schools planned to hire a professor at the University of Nevada, Reno to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program at Natchez, Johnson, and Gerlach. This plan did not come to fruition. Instead, a University team helped Natchez and the other schools set up systems to monitor attendance and to get regular feedback from program participants, teachers, and parents. Davis and her team also relied on help from UNR to complete their Annual Performance Reviews for the 21st CCLC program. Recently, the program has used software from Foundations, Inc. to track responses to after-school programming.⁸



During the 2002-2003 school year, Davis and her team also did some action research on the 20-minute after-school reading block, correlating students' participation in the reading block with their grades in reading and their STAR scores—STAR is the assessment method that Accelerated Reader uses to evaluate students' reading abilities.

Results

Natchez attendance rates for after-school are quite high. Almost two-thirds of students come regularly, and teachers report that the students' homework completion has improved. Jason Childs sees a connection between students' academic performances and their participation in the after-school program as well.

Students, parents, staff, and community partners all praised the program during our site visit. A couple staff members wondered about the wisdom of feeding children dinner at the end of the day. (Might it take away from family time?) Overall, however, perceptions of the program across audiences are all very positive.

Challenges

Through their action research, Davis and her team found that students participating in the reading block experienced statistically significant improvement in their STAR scores. Letter grade results were mixed. Fifty percent of the students improved their letter grades by half a grade or more, 23 percent received the same grade, and 27 percent had declining grades. Natchez is using these results as the basis for a deeper look at how the reading program is implemented and other factors that may be influencing students' scores and grades.

The Principal's Point of View

Take full advantage of all available resources.

One of the challenges for an after-school program located in an isolated area is the lack of certified educational staff. Since Natchez Elementary has only nine classroom teachers, most of whom commute to the school, it has been difficult to recruit certified teachers to work in the after-school program. Principal Jason Childs has encouraged and supported Janet Davis in her efforts to recruit other individuals to work in the program.

Davis looks for classified staff, high school students, and community members with special skills. Some are steeped in traditional Paiute arts, while others are anxious to simply give back to younger children in the community. The custodian, for example, helps to coach the running team, and the bus driver teaches an arts class. Everyone offers his or her expertise in daily activities.

Empower your staff to handle responsibilities with maximum support and minimal supervision.

Principal Jason Childs left Natchez Elementary at the end of the 2003-2004 academic year to accept a position closer to his home in Reno. Despite his short tenure at the school, he has been an important advocate for the after-school program and has given Janet Davis considerable latitude in working with community partners. As a result of this atmosphere of freedom and flexibility, the community as a whole is much more invested in the school.

When asked what advice he planned to share with his successor with regard to the after-school program, Childs replied that first and foremost he would recommend giving Davis all the support she needs. “Janet knows the community and the kids. People respect and trust her.”

Principal turnover is an on-going issue at Natchez Elementary because of its remote location. Many come to Natchez to gain administrative experience and then leave to take other jobs in the city of Reno. Given this reality, Childs emphasizes it is even more important to support good staff and empower them to do their best work.

Post-Script

Natchez is planning to apply for Nevada 21st CCLC funding this year. Janet Davis and her new principal, Rick Taylor, are actively pursuing other grant opportunities as well. Taylor is a strong proponent of the after-school program, encouraging certified teachers and other staff to do all they can to support the program.

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- ¹ For more information on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, see the Tribe's Web site, <http://www.plpt.nsn.us/>.
 - ² Washoe County School District, *Application for Federal Education Assistance* (21st Century Community Learning Centers grant application), U.S. Department of Education, submitted March 2000, program abstract.
 - ³ For more information on Accelerated Reader see, Renaissance Learning's Web site, <http://www.renlearn.com>.
 - ⁴ For more information on *Kidzlit*, see <http://www.kidzafterschool.org/>.
 - ⁵ Save the Children Web site, <http://www.savethechildren.org>.
 - ⁶ Success for All is a whole-school reform model that originated through work begun at Johns Hopkins University in the 1980s. Today there are more than 1,500 Success for All schools throughout the United States. For more information on Success for All, see <http://successforall.com/>.
 - ⁷ Save the Children funds are provided through sponsorships children and their families apply for each year. The sponsorship funds are pooled and go directly to the school. This system benefits both the individual children who are sponsored, as well as the larger school community.
 - ⁸ For more information on this Quality Assurance System, see the Foundations' Web site, <http://qas.foundationinc.org/start.asp?st=1>.
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New York, New York

Captain Manuel rivera Junior School

PS/MS 279 TASC After-School Program

- Serves more than 1100 students (grades K-8); 250 regularly participate in the after-school program
- Urban—New York, N.Y.
- Site Visited during the 2003-2004 academic year

Program Snapshot

The after-school program at PS/MS 279 has boosted parent involvement in the school and helped create a small, caring community within a very large school. Like many schools across the United States, PS/MS 279 has changed its curriculum focus in recent years. Today, children spend more time during the school day working on math and literacy activities, and there are fewer opportunities for arts exploration. Fortunately, the TASC After-School program at PS/MS 279 helps to make up for this shift. Run by the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (CHCF) and supported by The After-School Corporation (TASC), the program offers a number of arts enrichment activities, including dance, music, choir, and visual arts classes. Academic offerings, such as math and reading clubs, have been structured to improve students' skills through sports and educational games. Kids produce plays, perform concerts, and dance at Madison Square Garden.

There is no such thing as an 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. mentality here. Our school is open everyday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We see 'in-school' and 'after-school' as integrally linked.

– Pedro Santana, Principal

The Setting

Captain Manuel Rivera Junior School, PS/MS 279, is located in a working-class neighborhood in the Bronx borough of New York City. It is a relatively new school, built in the early 1990s, designed to house upwards of a 1,000 students. At six stories high, it closely resembles the apartment buildings nearby.

In the neighborhood immediately surrounding the school there is a large Dominican presence, as well as Mexican-American, African-American, and Afro-Caribbean populations. More than 73 percent of the students are identified as Hispanic, 20.8 percent as black, 4.8 percent as Asian and others, and less than 1 percent as white.¹

Most students who attend the school live in poverty. Ninety-six percent are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch, and the school is considered a “high need” school by the New York City Department of Education. More than 25 percent of the school’s students are English Language Learners.

Life outside of school is tough, and as After-School Site Coordinator Helena Yordan explains, “parents work in the afternoons, and the kids don’t have any other place to go.”

In this challenging environment, Principal Pedro Santana sees the school as a safe haven. Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and after-school staff work together in teams. Santana has a cabinet that meets weekly to discuss school-wide issues. He works hard to involve parents and families in their children’s education. For him, the after-school program operates as a kind of small community within the larger school, helping connect kids and their families more directly to the school.

Key Elements of the After-School Program

ORIGINS

The TASC After-School program at PS/MS 279 began in the 1998-99 school year, TASC’s first year in operation. The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (CHCF), a local community-based organization, had a long-standing relationship with PS/MS 279. In the early 1990s, the group implemented a project at the school, “Organizing for Youth Empowerment,” which provided a variety of services for youth and their families, including extended-day programs.

When the initial TASC Request for Proposals was released in 1998, CHCF worked with the principal, parents, and staff of PS/MS 279 to develop and submit a proposal for TASC support. The after-school program, as outlined

in the initial TASC proposal, was designed to support students' academic work through homework assistance and clubs, as well as to offer enrichment activities such as dance, music, and choir. It was also to serve as an alternative to traditional after-school childcare programs for parents. CHCF's proposal was successful, and the TASC after-school program was launched at PS/MS 279 in the spring of 1999.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

The After-School Corporation—TASC

The After-School Corporation (TASC) was established in 1998 to create an infrastructure and support system for quality school-based after-school programs in New York City and beyond. It provides funds, programmatic guidance, training, and technical assistance to community-based organizations (CBOs) that run after-school programs in partnership with schools. In the case of PS/MS 279, TASC supports CHCF, which runs the after-school program in cooperation with the school's administration and staff. Since the school and CHCF identify strongly with TASC, the after-school program at PS/MS 279 is named the TASC After-School Program.

The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Founded in 1982, the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF) conducts various educational programs throughout New York City to improve the lives of Latino children and families (see <http://www.chcfinc.org> for more information). At PS/MS 279, CHCF runs the TASC After-School Program in partnership with the school. The after-school coordinator, Helena Yordan, is a CHCF employee, as are many of the other after-school staff members. The organization is well respected in the community surrounding PS/MS 279, and viewed as an exemplary partner by the school.

The Principal

To describe Principal Pedro Santana as a strong supporter of the TASC after-school program would be an understatement. He sees the program as an essential part of how PS/MS 279 supports and nurtures students. He provides Helena Yordan and her staff members with space, access to school staff (including the nurse, who stays after the regular school day ends to assist with any health problems students may have), funds, and, perhaps most important, an open door. He also includes Yordan in his school cabinet, the site-based decision-making body for PS/MS 279.

The After-School Coordinator

Helena Yordan has run the TASC after-school program at PS/MS 279 since its inception. Yordan recruits, hires, orients, and supervises more than 30 after-school staff members; provides professional development opportunities for staff through TASC and other trainings; works with school staff to create and implement various after-school programs and activities; and, with the help of an assistant director, manages the administrative aspects of the program.

Though she works closely with Pedro Santana, Helena Yordan reports to CHCF Executive Director Elba Montavo. CHCF and the school worked together to identify and recruit her as the coordinator. This kind of collaboration has helped to ensure a smooth working relationship between the two organizations.

After-School in Every School in America – A Bold Mission

The mission of TASC is “to create innovative after-school programs that help students reach their potential and to make those programs available to every child in New York City and New York State. And from there, the goal is to ensure that after-school programs have a permanent place in every public school across the nation by 2010.”²

This is a bold mission, but it appears that TASC is well on its way to meeting its goals. In 1998, TASC began with 25 programs in New York City. Today, it sponsors almost 280 programs, in communities throughout New York State. Public and private entities across the United States have contacted TASC to adapt the organization's model in their locales. The state of New Jersey, for example, recently launched New Jersey After 3, a program modeled on the TASC approach.

The After-School Corporation's "Core Elements"

From its inception, TASC has been much more than a funding agency. It was established to build a network of quality school-based after-school programs, run and directed by community based organizations in partnership with schools. As part of this approach, all TASC supported programs must contain certain "core elements:"

- Every student enrolled in a particular school is eligible for the after-school program.
- Programs focus on homework help; literacy, math, and science; the arts; sports; community service; and field trips.
- Regular attendance is required.
- Parents and families are involved as volunteers and participants.
- Each program has a full-time, year-round site coordinator.
- Programs have a diverse staff with varied skills and a 1:10 adult-to-student ratio.
- Students are offered nutritious food and sufficient time to eat and socialize with adults and peers.³

The TASC Core Elements help to form the backbone of the after-school program at PS/MS 279.

Helena Jordan is well known at PS/MS 279 and throughout the TASC network as a caring, energetic, and creative leader who motivates staff and students alike. She has enjoyed a good working relationship with Principal Santana since her first days as after-school coordinator, when Santana was assistant principal. She sees him as a trusted friend.

After-School Staff

Thirty paid staff members and a handful of volunteers work with the TASC After-School Program. They include two classroom teachers who volunteer their time, providing assistance with curriculum development for math and language arts classes; paraprofessionals; college students; AmeriCorps volunteers; high school students; arts and dance instructors; and parent volunteers. Paraprofessionals and qualified college students serve as group leaders. Paraprofessionals, high school students, and parent volunteers work as assistant group leaders or help out with administrative aspects of the program. Arts, music, and dance instructors are hired to teach special activities.

Helena Jordan reached out to a number of community partners in the area, including Fordham University, Lehman College, and Bronx Community College, all of who provide student workers. High school students who formerly attended the after-school program at PS/MS 279 often come back to help as student workers.

Jessica Torres, a paraprofessional who works in the middle school counselor's office and serves as an attendance specialist, is the assistant coordinator of the program. Since both the school and the program are large, she provides crucial back-up support for Yordan. She helps manage special events and activities and also assists with curriculum development for the arts program.

Parents and Students

In schools like PS/MS 279, where poverty rates are high and parents work hard just to get by, it is often difficult to cultivate strong family involvement. Pedro Santana and Helena Yordan have managed to buck this trend, however. Parents are very active supporters of the TASC After-School Program. At a recent event held in Madison Square Garden, more than 300 family members attended a student performance. Parents and family members also participate in a family literacy project at the school.

Students also play an important role in the TASC After-School Program. Principal Santana insists that students be treated with respect. In turn, students afford Santana and other adults at the school the same respect. Students suggest clubs and activities, and play an integral part in designing many of the program's public events, which include a number of dance and music performances throughout the school year. Helena Yordan works closely with the middle-school students to design activities and projects that will be of interest to them. At an age when many students check out of after-school programs, PS/MS 279 middle school students continue to be engaged.

PROGRAMMING

Creating a Caring Community

How does one create a caring community within a large urban school? “Put the kids first,” says Santana. “TASC gives us the resources we need to do that. We get to spend quality time together, learning in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. We also involve parents and families, and that makes a huge difference.”

The after-school program at PS/MS 279 is structured to let kids work with adults in small groups. Each group has a leader and an assistant leader, most of whom are bilingual. Monday through Thursday, kids work on homework first and then turn to other activities. Fridays are reserved for clubs and activities only. Group leaders maintain student portfolios that document student work.

Bonds are also strengthened through several performances and events staged by students each year. “Our performances are very important to the kids. They show off their talents and cheer each other on,” says Yordan, “We put our all into planning and staging the events.” And, parents and families turn out for the events as well. “They see their kids doing well, proudly displaying projects, singing, dancing...it’s wonderful,” exclaims Santana. Jaimee Baron, TASC program officer for PS/MS 279, notes that this kind of parent involvement, even in other TASC schools, is rare.

By bringing community and school resources together, the TASC After-School Program at PS/MS 279 exemplifies the TASC partnership model. Helena Yordan has close connections to the community. She is able to hire community artists and musicians, as well as parents and college students, who have unique talents and really care about the kids at 279. In turn, Pedro Santana helps Yordan to connect after school with students’ in school learning. The kids see TASC at 279 as a home of sorts.

Homework Help

Every day except Friday, students begin their after-school session with homework. Classroom teachers share their lesson plans and syllabi with Helena Yordan and her staff, and group leaders work closely with students to help them complete their homework. Since Yordan is at the school during the school day, she meets with teachers and serves as a liaison between in-school and after-school staff. Although the system isn’t perfect, teachers sincerely value the support the program provides. Homework completion rates are high. Parents appreciate the fact that the TASC program provides a structured and helpful environment in which their children can work.

Using Sports to Improve Reading Skills—Academic Clubs

In addition to homework assistance, the TASC After-School Program also sponsors a number of academic clubs, including math, reading, and spelling clubs. The clubs, jointly developed by school-day and after-school staff members, offer kids the opportunity to explore various academic themes in fun ways.

Helena Yordan and her staff have worked extensively with the school’s math curriculum coordinator to develop grade-level activities for the math clubs. Activities such as games and competitions are designed to complement, not duplicate, schoolwork. As Yordan explains, “students get



TASC On-Site Professional Development

With funding from the New York City Department of Education, The After-School Corporation offers TASC sites a wide selection of on-site trainings. Each site receives a set allocation of training funds. Early in the fall semester, site coordinators work with after-school and school staff (TASC sees this as another way to connect in-school and after-school) to create a professional development plan. The purpose of this plan is to help the after-school program define what its needs are and to determine what kinds of trainings would best meet those needs. The program then identifies training sessions it would like to host and submits an application form to TASC. TASC reviews requests for trainings. Once a program's training application is approved, it is then free to contact the training agency to schedule a training session.

continued on sidebar page 55

excited about math when they are given the opportunity to create their own math games, compete against one another, and win incentives. They devise questions and answers and are motivated to think critically about the subject matter they learn during the day.”

The TASC After-School Program has a long-standing partnership with the Madison Square Garden (MSG) Cheering for Children Foundation, (see the Foundation's website for more information, http://www.thegarden.com/c4c_home.html) which works with TASC sites across New York City. Through this partnership, the PS/MS 279 after-school program offers a number of activities designed to supplement students' regular academic work. For example, the MSG Reading Challenge Program provides training for group leaders, as well as materials and incentives for students to improve their reading skills. More than 50 students also participate in the MSG Club. They compete in sports activities, create special projects, and read and write about sports-related articles. The after-school program uses MSG-donated copies of Scholastic Magazine as part of the curriculum.

Exploring the Arts

Perhaps the heart of the TASC After-School Program at PS/MS 279 is the arts program. Through a variety of offerings, including theater, Afro-Caribbean and other dance classes, music, and choir, students are encouraged to develop their artistic talents.

Helena Yordan hires community artists to work with the kids, and provides support for group leaders and assistants to attend special arts trainings as well. Many of the elementary school students enrolled in after-school, for example, participate in PUTAMAYO World Playground sessions once a week (for more information on this curriculum, see the Web site, http://www.putumayo.com/playground_multicultural.html). In these sessions, students “travel” around the world and explore diverse cultures through music, geography lessons, writing, and arts projects. They display their projects at parent nights and community events hosted by the program.

Through the Madison Square Garden partnership, two professional dancers for the New York Knicks visit the school two hours each week to teach a dance and choreography class. “Our students have the opportunity to learn from professional dancers,” says Yordan, “They love it.” A number of students have also performed at the Madison Square Garden Theater.

“With all of the emphasis on standardized testing, this is something we simply cannot provide our students during the day,” notes Principal Santana.

Community Service and Field Trips

In addition to the arts, Helena Yordan has used community service as a way of keeping her middle school students involved in after-school. During the 2003-2004 school year, middle school students worked with AmeriCorps volunteers to design and carry out service projects, including a coat and a food drive, for the community.

Field trips complement different areas of the after-school curriculum. The arts are emphasized through trips to see plays, musicals, and Broadway shows. Choir and dance students also travel to various venues in and around the city to perform. The program's literacy focus is underscored

through trips to the community library. Community service activities include trips to nursing homes and hospitals, as well as the local fire and police departments.

STAFF TRAINING

On-going training and professional development is a key component of the TASC after-school model and a very important part of TASC at PS/MS 279. TASC provides extensive guidance to after-school staff members on everything from program start-up, staff management, and fund-raising, to student motivation and curriculum development. Each TASC site is assigned a program officer, who visits the school at least twice a year and meets with after-school staff. After-school staff members also participate in TASC trainings, which operate throughout the summer and during the school year.

New site coordinators undergo extensive summer leadership training to prepare them for their tasks. Since Helena Yordan successfully developed the program at PS/MS 279, she helps with some of the trainings and has mentored new coordinators as well.

Fall Orientation

For after-school staff members at PS/MS 279, the fall semester begins with a one-week (15 hour) orientation/training session conducted by Yordan. During this session, staff members explore topics such as the CHCF Mission/TASC Mission; Staff Supervision and Evaluation; Classroom Management; and Calendars/Special Projects. They also learn about special TASC trainings.

Once the initial training period is complete, new staff members take part in an orientation process, during which they shadow an experienced group leader. If they have been hired to work as group leaders, they are assigned a seasoned assistant group leader to help support them as they become acquainted with the program. Since the program at PS/MS 279 is well-respected and well-run, there is little turnover, and most staff members stay for a number of years. They also have the opportunity to participate in TASC trainings that are held periodically throughout the year.

FUNDING

The annual budget for the TASC After-School Program at PS/MS 279 is \$265,000, or about \$1,060 per student. Approximately \$160,000 comes from TASC. Other funds are raised from a variety of sources including AmeriCorps, Federal Work Study, PS/MS 279, and the Charles Hayden Foundation, all of which support personnel. Additional funding comes from HRA Federal child-care supplements; a match from the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (CHCF); New York Department of Education funds; and foundations.

TASC administers the overall budget, including all of the matching funds except those from CHCF. Funds flow through CHCF, which runs the program. About 80 percent of the budget is spent on personnel costs. The remainder covers supplies and materials, travel, insurance, and other miscellaneous costs.

continued from sidebar page 54

Trainers are chosen through a Request for Proposals process that TASC administers. Providers offer professional development on everything from anti-bullying programs, to poetry writing, to sculpture and mask-making, to youth leadership and CPR training. Helena Yordan has found this type of training to be especially valuable at PS/MS 279. “We can choose from a large selection of trainings, and by bringing the trainers here, I can get all the staff involved.”

Changing Students' Lives – One Aria at a Time

For students such as Edzahel Heredia, the arts program has been life changing. He took theater and choir classes, and discovered that he has a talent for singing. In the fall of 2003, he won a part in the Lehman and Hunter College opera “Le quivoco Stavegente.” His mother and teachers have literally watched him fall in love with music.

He notes, “I am very lucky to be in an after-school program, because I am able to participate in the arts program. Also, I am learning a lot about music. When I grow up, I want to become an opera singer.”

2004 and Beyond

TASC was initiated with a large investment from George Soros' Open Society Institute (OSI). Soros pledged to give the organization up to \$125 million dollars, provided that OSI funds would be matched three to one. That is, for every dollar OSI gave, TASC would need to raise three. Thus far TASC has used \$80 million from OSI to leverage more than \$236 million in public and private funds to support its programs.

OSI funding is about to come to an end, however. And, with the 2003 reorganization of the public school system in New York City, there may be fewer city dollars to support TASC's work. To continue growing, TASC is looking to new sources of funding and new ways of working with public and private networks. During the 2004-2005 school year, for example, part of PS/MS 279's budget will be covered by a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. This is one strategy TASC is using to tap into new sources of funding to support its programs.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

A number of tools are used to measure the quality and effectiveness of after-school programming at PS/MS 279. Helena Yordan and CHCF submit quarterly reports to TASC, detailing how programs are being implemented. TASC Program Officer Jaimee Baron also visits the school twice a year. She observes the program, meets with Yordan and Principal Santana, and submits written reports to CHCF and TASC.

To gauge the impact of its work on a larger scale, TASC commissioned the research group, Policy Studies Associates (PSA), to do an external evaluation of TASC sites. Begun in 1998, this large-scale evaluation examined data from 96 TASC sites over five school years. The student sample included “52,200 after-school participants and 91,000 students enrolled in TASC host schools, but not participating in TASC programs.”⁴

The PSA evaluation looked at factors such as what types of students were enrolled in TASC programs; how often they attended; the qualifications of site coordinators; the role of TASC programs in host schools; the variety and quality of activities and classes available to students after-school; relationships between after-school attendance and academic performance; and relationships between after-school and in-school attendance.

Results

The TASC reporting and feedback process appears to work well for PS/MS 279. Trust among TASC, CHCF, and the school is high, reports are candid, and all parties work together to address problems or issues as they arise. Students, parents, teachers, and school administrators greatly value and respect the after-school program.

Though the protocols of the PSA evaluation do not allow data from individual sites to be released, the overall TASC evaluation results are quite positive. The PSA evaluation found that student attendance at TASC programs was high; that TASC programs played an important role in their schools; that programs gave students access to activities and learning opportunities not available during the school day; and that many TASC students experienced greater gains in mathematics achievement and in school attendance compared to non-TASC students attending TASC schools.⁵

Challenges

One challenge facing PS/MS 279 is the lack of licensed teachers and workers with four-year degrees among its after-school staff. The PSA evaluation found that academic gains were highest among programs that employed licensed teachers and staff with four-year degrees to work directly with students. Though it is difficult to determine how important this component is, it is an issue Helena Yordan is well aware of and continues to work on.

The Principal's Point of View

Respect goes a long way.

At the time Pedro Santana took over as principal at PS/MS 279 in 2001, he had a good working relationship with Helena Yordan. He served as an assistant principal at the school for a number of years and saw the importance of the TASC After-School Program.

When Santana became principal, one of his major goals was to create a culture of respect at the school: respect for students' abilities, for the school grounds, for what teachers taught, and for what everyone might accomplish together.

As part of this culture of respect, Santana asked Yordan to join his school cabinet, the site-based decision-making body for the school. He sees Yordan as an educational leader. "Helena and I share ideas, we talk about students, and we work together to really reach those kids who might need extra attention and care," says Santana. By serving on the school cabinet, Yordan has first-hand knowledge of what is happening during the school day. She talks regularly with teachers, and teachers turn to her and her staff as well. "This is a great partnership," Santana explains.

It is possible to create a caring community within a large school.

Pedro Santana is principal of a very large school. More than 1,100 students attend PS/MS 279. Some can remain "invisible" during the school day in such a large building. Santana sees the TASC After-School program as one way of combating invisibility. "Seeing the children after-school is the best part of my job. It's just me enjoying the children the way I should enjoy the children," says Santana.

By keeping staff-to-student ratios low, providing students with individualized support, and offering arts, dance, music, and academic activities that are fun, the program helps the school to reach students in a different way. "The kids love being here, and I love having them here," notes Santana.

Parents are connected as well. During the 2003-2004 school year, Helena Yordan worked with ten families on a family literacy project. They met over ten Saturdays to write family history books. "It was amazing to see kids, parents, and grandparents working together to document their family history," notes Yordan, "Everyone was learning together."



Post-Script

As with several other principals in these case studies, Pedro Santana did not return to PS/MS 279 in the fall of 2004. Thus far, the relationship between Helena Yordan and the new principal of PS/MS 279 has been very positive. Since the after-school program is supported by TASC, CHCF, and the school, it is well positioned to continue to grow and thrive.

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- ¹ 2002-2003 Annual School Report, PS/MS 279, see the School's section of the New York City Department of Education Web site. "Asian and others," a designation used by the Department, includes Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, and Native Americans.
 - ² TASC Fifth Year Report, p. 7.
 - ³ TASC Fifth Year Report, pp. 8-10
 - ⁴ Policy Studies Associates, "Building Quality, Scale, and Effectiveness in After-School Programs: Major Findings of the TASC Evaluation," 2004, p. 1.
 - ⁵ Policy Studies Associates, "Building Quality, Scale, and Effectiveness in After-School Programs: Major Findings of the TASC Evaluation," 2004, pp.1-3.



Asheville, North Carolina

Johnston Elementary School

Young Scholars

- Serves 291 students (grades PreK-5); 35 participate in the Young Scholars after-school program
- Suburban—Asheville, NC (located in a western, semi-rural suburb of Asheville)
- Site visited during the 2004-2005 academic year

Program Snapshot

Imagine taking students with failing end-of-grade test scores and turning them into scholars—kids who are not only passing, but getting the highest marks possible. With support of a statewide network of North Carolina schools and a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Young Scholars after-school program has accomplished this and more. Students in the program use project-based learning to explore monthly themes that reinforce the school's curriculum. They build mosaics, plant community gardens, go on overnight camping trips, and learn conflict resolution skills. The program is anchored with tutoring and homework support. Since Young Scholars was initiated five years ago, parent involvement in the school has increased dramatically, and vandalism and discipline referrals have all but disappeared. Teachers have adapted Young Scholars project-based learning methods for their classrooms.

In the early 1990's, Johnston Elementary was viewed as a "failing" school. Today, we're a North Carolina School of Distinction, one of the 25 Most Improved Schools in North Carolina. You would not see this kind of academic growth without the Young Scholars program.

– Gardner Bridges, Principal

The Setting

Johnston Elementary is located in Buncombe County, just west of Asheville, North Carolina. The school is one of the oldest in the Asheville area. Originally deeded to the county by the Johnston family in the 1880's, the land the school occupies was once home to a one-room schoolhouse. Over time, larger buildings were constructed. In 1996, much of the school was torn down and rebuilt. Today's structure is modern, clean, and colorful. Surrounded by a high chain-link fence, it is nestled in the wooded countryside surrounding Asheville.

The school population is transitory. About one-third of the students leave each year, and a new group of students replaces them. A recent principal's survey found that only 20 percent of the school's fifth graders had been at Johnston since kindergarten.

Johnston Elementary is racially and ethnically diverse as well. Forty-four percent of the students are identified as white (41 percent were born in the U.S.; 3 percent were born in Eastern Europe, primarily Russia and the Ukraine); 19 percent as black; 18 percent as Hispanic (a large percentage of those students were born in Mexico); 12 percent as multi-racial; 6 percent as Asian; and 1 percent as American Indian. Recently a number of students moved to the area with their families from Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. Approximately 53 of the 290 students enrolled receive ESL services.

Students at Johnston face a number of challenges. The school has the highest poverty rate in the Buncombe County School System. Eighty-one percent of students qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch. More than 40 percent of the school's students live in the Section 8 mobile home park adjacent to the school or in federally subsidized apartments located nearby. Approximately 47 percent of parents have less than a high school education.¹

The beautiful countryside surrounding the school belies a harsher reality, as well. The school is locked during the day (except for morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up) due to a rash of incidents involving adults who ran into the building from the nearby highway to avoid police capture. Against this backdrop, the Young Scholars Program offers students an enriching and safe space to learn, explore, and grow academically and personally.

Key Elements of the Program

ORIGINS

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation launched the Young Scholars program in 1999. The purpose of the statewide program was to “build the academic and personal capacity of promising youth through additional and enriched learning opportunities.”² Young Scholars was also designed as a pilot project to demonstrate that a focused after-school effort could significantly improve students’ academic performance, and thereby build support for statewide funding of after-school programs.

After the program was announced, Buncombe County Public Schools formed a planning group and submitted a combined grant application for Emma and Johnston Elementary Schools. The schools were chosen for two primary reasons—low test scores and high poverty rates.

As a member of the planning group, Linda Allison, then assistant principal at Emma Elementary, helped draft the grant application. “We looked at the needs of county schools, and it was clear that Johnston really needed this program,” says Allison, “Kids were not performing well, parents worked long hours and were often unable to help with homework, and there were language barriers. We believed this program could really make a difference.”

Shortly after Buncombe County Public Schools submitted the Z. Smith Reynolds application, they were selected to be part of the Young Scholars program. At the same time, Johnston’s principal left the school and Linda Allison was promoted to principal of Johnston. During the summer of 2000, Allison and the principal at Emma Elementary hired a coordinator to run the program and Young Scholars was up and running in the fall of 2000.

THE PLAYERS—WHO’S INVOLVED?

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation/

The Public School Forum of North Carolina

When the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation initiated the Young Scholars program, they hired the Public School Forum of North Carolina to direct the program (see <http://www.ncforum.org> for more information on the Forum). As the administrator of the Young Scholars program, the Forum oversees the distribution of grants and provides training, technical assistance, and evaluation support to Young Scholars schools. Gail Daughtry directs the Young Scholars program for the Forum.

The Principals

Linda Allison, principal at Johnston from 2000-2003, hired the first Young Scholars coordinator, Molly Rose, and assisted her in the development of the initial program. She recruited teachers and staff, helped connect the program’s curriculum to the school-day curriculum, and enlisted school-wide support for the program. She also attended Young Scholars events and accompanied parents and students on Young Scholars field trips.



The Z. Smith Reynolds Approach to Programming

When the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation announced the availability of Young Scholars grants, it required the applicants to include certain core program elements:

- A primary focus on students' academic success, as determined by the ABC's performance measures (North Carolina's end of grade tests);
- A "research-based academic strategy for boosting student performance;"
- A broader focus on expanding students' horizons through experiences such as field trips, technology usage, community service projects, etc.;
- A transparent nomination and selection process for students, which clarifies the program's high expectations for students and their parents;
- A "formal relationship between parents and the project," and, in Johnston's case, a requirement that all parents contribute at least one to two hours of their time to the program each month;

continued on sidebar page 63

Allison left Johnston in the spring of 2003 to head up another school within Buncombe County and current principal, Gardner Bridges, was hired to replace her. Like Allison, Bridges quickly saw the value of the Young Scholars program for Johnston's students and gave the program his full support. When Dawn McGiboney, the second Young Scholars coordinator, announced she was leaving Johnston in the spring of 2004, Bridges sought a new coordinator who could fill McGiboney's shoes and also bring new talents and insights to the position.

The After-School Coordinators

At the time Young Scholars was initiated at Johnston and Emma, the two schools shared Coordinator Molly Rose. At the end of the first year, Rose left the program, and Johnston and Emma decided to hire their own coordinators. Dawn McGiboney, one of the lead Young Scholars teachers at Emma, was hired to serve as the coordinator at Johnson.

McGiboney brought an eclectic background to Johnston. A certified teacher with arts training, she also had experience working with students in the juvenile justice system. As Young Scholars coordinator, she hired and supervised teachers, school staff, and community volunteers; developed the program's innovative curriculum; and built bridges between the school and Johnston's families. Both principals describe McGiboney as a leader and a visionary whose belief in the students helped the Young Scholars' program take root and grow at Johnston.

The current coordinator, Holly Chandler, succeeded Dawn McGiboney in the fall of 2004. Like McGiboney, Chandler is a certified teacher. Her background, however, is in special education. Chandler also hires and supervises program staff, oversees the program, and develops the program's curriculum. For the time being, she is following McGiboney's framework. In the short time she has been on board, Chandler has gained the trust of school staff, parents, and students—no small feat, given the popularity of her predecessor. Chandler works Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., as well as on Saturdays when the program is in session.

After-School Staff—Teachers, School Staff, and Community Volunteers

Three certified teachers and the school's social worker serve as group leaders for the Young Scholars program. They provide tutoring and homework support, and help students complete monthly theme-based projects, using technology, various art mediums, and other hands-on techniques. The program also employs members of Johnston's facilities staff.

Young Scholars employs parents and community volunteers as well. "Teachers provide the core tutoring support we need. We look for parents and community members (sometimes college students) who have experience working with children and who also bring specialized skills, such as arts or gardening expertise, with them," says After-School Coordinator Holly Chandler. Teachers are paid \$15 per hour for their work in the program, while others receive \$10 per hour. "It balances out, though," Chandler explains, "because teachers (who are limited in the total number of hours they can work) work slightly fewer hours than our other staff members."

The program also makes an effort to have a racially diverse staff, reflective of the Young Scholars themselves.

Parents, Family Members, and Students

To become a Young Scholar, both students and their parents must commit to the program. Parents (or other family members, including grandparents, aunts, or uncles) are required to volunteer in the program at least two hours each month. They might accompany students on field trips, help with student projects, or offer their expertise as advisory board members. Students are required to attend regularly (those who miss sessions are dropped from the program, though Chandler notes that every effort is made to keep them there), do their best, and live up to the standards of the program.

In return, students and their families are treated with great respect. Students are honored at Young Scholars' ceremonies (on the day of our site visit, students were recognized for their entries in the Mountain State Fair) and family members receive appreciation for their support at parent conferences and Young Scholars events.

Community Partners

Over time, Johnston has partnered with a number of community organizations like Manna Food Bank, which currently provides snacks for the Young Scholars program. Community volunteers such as the food bank, local businesses, Buncombe County Schools, and others also serve on Johnston's Young Scholars Advisory Board.

PROGRAMMING

The Young Scholars Framework at Johnston

Students are selected to participate in the Young Scholars program at Johnston each semester. The program is open to fourth and fifth graders who score at levels one, two, or low three (students can score up to four) on their end-of-grade math and reading tests. Third graders are channeled into Young Scholars after they take an initial benchmark test at the beginning of the year. A teacher may nominate a student when no state testing information is available. This often occurs when students transfer to the school from another state.

Students and their parents receive a letter informing them of their eligibility for the program. To join the program, which is provided free of charge, parents must meet with Coordinator Holly Chandler. Both parents and students must sign a commitment form. Students agree to attend the program regularly, and parents agree to volunteer at least two hours of their time to Young Scholars each month.

Monday through Thursday, when the final bell rings at 2:30, the Young Scholars gather in the school cafeteria for a snack. Then they meet in groups to complete homework and begin their projects. At 5:30, the groups wrap up and students either board the bus or meet their parents outside. Principal Gardner Bridges notes that busing is essential to the program. "Without transportation, about half of these kids would not be able to participate."

A few years ago, Young Scholars decided to conduct Saturday sessions once a month at Johnston in lieu of meeting on Fridays. "We were finding," says Bridges, "that a number of kids just didn't show up on Fridays. So, we talked with parents and students and decided to offer once-a-month Saturday sessions. We go on field trips and work on projects. It gives us more time to do things and allows more parents to be involved as well."

continued from sidebar page 62

- Community partnerships;
- "The equivalent of at least 15 additional hours a week of schooling, or a total of 540 hours per year" of after-school, possibly combined with weekend or summer programs (summer programs can only comprise 20 percent of the total program);
- "Caring, qualified, and competent project staff;"
- The collection of assessment data, (e.g., test scores, attendance, feedback from teachers, students, and parents); and
- Resource support (e.g., space, transportation, personnel) from the school system.³

Using these core program elements as a starting point, Johnston developed its own unique after-school program.

It is an Honor to be Chosen as a Young Scholar

An exciting aspect of Young Scholars is the program's philosophy. Students are called Young Scholars. They are expected to do well, and the program is designed to give students the extra boost they need to do just that. "It is an asset-based model, that addresses the needs of the whole child," notes former principal Linda Allison.

- Students are nominated to join the program, and once nominated, they sign an agreement, pledging to do their best.
- Youngsters take leadership roles within the program. On the day of our site visit, students took roll, organized the snack distribution, and cleaned up the room after snack time and again at the end of the day. "They wanted to do these things, so I let them," says Chandler. "They take pride in helping to run the program, and school staff really appreciate that."
- Young Scholars are singled out as leaders within their classrooms.

continued on sidebar page 65

Homework Help

A key piece of the Johnston approach to boosting academic achievement is homework help. To ensure continuity between in-school and after-school learning, Holly Chandler and the after-school staff communicate regularly, both formally and informally, with classroom teachers through a communication log. "Teachers sincerely value the support this program provides. Since they nominate students for the program, they are even more invested in helping the program and the students succeed," says Principal Bridges.

Small multi-age groups of students meet with teachers and staff members. Teacher-student ratios are kept low, usually no more than 1-7. "We give them plenty of time to finish their work. We don't put a time limit on homework," says Chandler. Once students have completed their assignments for the day, they can begin working on their projects.

Project-Based Learning

In addition to homework, Young Scholars complete monthly theme-based projects. "The purpose of these projects," notes Chandler, "is to explore a topic in some depth, engage multiple learning styles, and empower students to complete projects of their own choosing." Chandler works with her staff and Principal Bridges to develop the curriculum for each project, ensuring continuity between in-school and after-school learning. During the month of August 2004, students worked on the theme of community involvement.

"After doing some research," explains Chandler, "we decided to enter projects in the North Carolina Mountain State Fair, which is held here in Asheville." Drawing on the artistic skills of group leaders, students made shadow boxes, wove rugs, and decorated cakes. To complete their projects, they also did library and Internet research. They looked at past entries to the fair, for instance, and researched cake-decorating patterns.

Both students and group leaders were excited about the projects. Kathy Coco, Johnston's social worker and North Carolina's reigning grand champion shadow box maker, reports, "I loved working with the kids on this project. It gave me an opportunity to share my interest with them and to watch their creative skills blossom."

Over the past few years, Young Scholars have explored a variety of themes. In each project, students:

- Use technology, such as the Internet, to do research;
- Employ various art forms to complete their projects;
- Work on enhancing reading and math skills;
- Take field trips (see the Field Trips section below for more information) that complement the project; and
- Interact with the wider community.

Field Trips and Community Involvement

To broaden and deepen their learning, Young Scholars take regular field trips, which often include their parents or other family members. Several of the field trips have included an over-night component (see the following Web page for more information on an archeological dig http://www.youngscholars.net/news_excursion.asp#241, for example). "Most of our students don't travel much. Through this program, they have been all over the state of North Carolina. It also gives us the opportunity to spend time with their parents, really getting to know them," says Principal Bridges.

During the first two years of the Young Scholars program, students regularly visited a nearby nursing home and worked on projects with the home's residents. More recently, the Young Scholars have expanded a partnership with Manna Food Bank, which, along with the school, provides snacks for the program. During the 2004-2005 year, Young Scholars will work with the food bank to put together and distribute food bags to Johnston students.

The Feathers Program

Character education is also an important component of the Young Scholars program at Johnston. Each month, students work on different character education goals aligned with the Buncombe County Schools' character education program. "This is a piece of the program that former Coordinator Dawn McGiboney really developed," says Bridges. Students receive a variety of colored feathers for exemplifying various character traits in their work and interactions with other students. "We hand these feathers out, if earned, once a month in a special group meeting and the Scholars use them to make art projects," explains Bridges, "This year they're placing their feathers on a wooden flute and watching throughout the year as other earned feathers are added."

STAFF TRAINING

As part of its commitment to the Young Scholars' program, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation hosts four meetings/training sessions per year for all of the Young Scholars' sites. The Foundation pays for site coordinators to attend, and principals agree to use their own travel money to attend at least one meeting each year. Gail Daughtry, director of the statewide Young Scholars program, notes, "We thought principals might attend a meeting or two. They have attended all of the sessions. This commitment has really helped us to build bridges between the school day and the Young Scholars program. And, having this much time with the coordinators has really helped us to learn and grow together. Ongoing professional development is a key component in programs like this."

In addition to these training sessions, which cover everything from administration and logistics, to promising practices in after-school programs and lessons learned across Young Scholars sites, Gail Daughtry provides technical assistance and travels to each Young Scholars site at least once a year. Holly Chandler is responsible for orienting and training Young Scholars' staff members at Johnston. The program is very popular at the school, so staff turnover is low. One new teacher is shadowing Chandler as she learns how Young Scholars works at Johnston. Chandler meets regularly with her staff, and they jointly develop the curriculum.

FUNDING

For each of the past four years, Johnston has received a \$70,000 grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. The grant covers staff wages and benefits (which make up the bulk of the expenses for the grant budget), supplies, non-capitalized equipment, and phone costs. Buncombe County Schools and Johnston cover the costs of transportation. The school also donates leftover lunch items for snacks, facilities, and the principal's time. Community partners, such as Manna Food Bank, help support the program as well.

continued from sidebar page 64

- They reach out to the community, completing mosaics, for example, for the Buncombe County Board of Education.
- Once Young Scholars' test scores and grades have improved, they can graduate from the program and serve as tutors to new students.

"There is no income requirement for students," principal Bridges explains. "This too helps keep the program focus on student achievement."

Group Ups

When Dawn McGiboney developed the program at Johnston, she embedded “group ups,” a form of conflict resolution, to help students resolve disagreements. Each semester, students receive group up training, where they learn to address conflict head on. “If they have a dispute,” Chandler explains, “they ask for a group up.”

Students in the group-up move to the edge of the room, and they follow the group-up rules and procedure:

Group up Rules

- Students must maintain good eye contact throughout the process.
- Students must have arms down by their sides.
- Students must not interrupt each other during the process.
- The student who initiates the group up is the first to speak.
- The only issue that should be dealt with is the issue that led to the group up. Any new issues that may arise during the group up are taken care of during a separate group up that the teacher schedules.
- The teacher designates the appropriate time for group ups.
- All students must be respectful.

continued on sidebar page 67

2005 and Beyond

The original Z. Smith Reynolds grant program was scheduled to last three years. Because of the program’s success, the Foundation agreed to extend Young Scholars funding and support for an additional two years, through the 2004-2005 school year. At the time the program was initiated (1999), state and local budget coffers were in good shape. The Foundation hoped that the state or perhaps local school districts would pick up the cost of the program, once they saw its benefits. With the economic downturn in 2001, however, this has become a more difficult task. The Foundation continues to work to find public funding for the program. In the meantime, Gardner Bridges and Holly Chandler are working with the Young Scholars Advisory Board at Johnston to raise other funds to support the program. “We really want to see this program continue,” explains Bridges, “and we’re doing everything we can to make that happen.”

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

When the Young Scholars program was launched, sites were required to document: the number of students served; student attendance; contact hours with students; projects completed; and family involvement. Johnston submits regular reports on each of these items to Gail Daughtry’s office at the Public School Forum. Johnston also submits annual progress and budget reports to Z. Smith Reynolds, which track students’ academic progress among other things. To evaluate students’ academic progress, Johnston monitors Young Scholars’ grades and end-of-grade test scores. Group leaders also submit assessments of students’ work on each project that are tied to curriculum goals for the project.

During her annual visit to Johnston, Young Scholars Director Gail Daughtry meets with the principal, the after-school coordinator, after-school staff members, students, and family members. Daughtry provides feedback to the site and suggests changes, if necessary.

Results

By all accounts, the Young Scholars program at Johnston has been very successful. The Scholars have completed a wide range of arts projects; garnered the respect of the school and the wider Asheville community; and improved their end-of-grade test scores dramatically, often going from ones and twos to fours (with four being the highest level possible). Homework completion rates are up, and grades have improved significantly as well. Johnston has reached more than 160 students over the course of five years, changing their lives and the lives of their families’ as well.

Prior to its involvement in Young Scholars, Johnston was a low-performing school. Today, it is a North Carolina School of Distinction. In 2001-2002, Johnston was designated one of the 25 Most Improved Schools in North Carolina, by the North Carolina Department of Education. Both Linda Allison and Gardner Bridges claim that these gains would not have occurred without the Young Scholars program. According to Allison, “Young Scholars changed the entire learning culture at Johnston.”

The Principal's Point of View

Leadership transitions, though challenging, can help after-school programs grow and change

The Young Scholars program at Johnston has undergone a number of leadership transitions. The original principal departed just after Johnston was selected to receive a Young Scholars grant. The position changed hands again when Gardner Bridges replaced Linda Allison. And, the program has seen three coordinators. Yet, Young Scholars continues to flourish. How has the program managed to weather all of these changes successfully? From the outset, Young Scholars had the buy-in of Buncombe County Schools' administration and the principal at Johnston. Allison helped to draft the Young Scholars proposal, and therefore was intimately acquainted with the proposal before she became principal. Once she assumed the principalship, she found a coordinator with the skill and initiative to get the Young Scholars program off the ground—someone who understood the importance of high academic standards, could get buy-in and support from teachers who were initially skeptical about the program, and had the talent to really reach students and their families.

When Gardner Bridges was hired to replace Allison, he agreed that the Young Scholars program was an important part of Johnston's educational offering. He consulted often with Allison and gave McGiboney his full support. When McGiboney left the program, Bridges looked for a coordinator who could pick up where McGiboney left off. "Dawn really built this program," he explains, "She developed the curriculum, gained the trust of students, families, and teachers alike. I needed to find someone who would add to what Dawn built." Bridges also wanted someone who was interested in the administrative aspects of the program, such as tracking student progress and creating a staff manual. He found that person in Chandler.

Even after-school programs that serve a small number of students can make a school-wide difference

Though Young Scholars only serves 35-45 students each year—a small percentage of Johnston's population—it has made a big difference. By helping students succeed, it has changed the perceptions of Johnston on the part of teachers, parents, students, and the county school system. Test scores have gone up across the board. And, students' perceptions of themselves have changed. "They see themselves as successful, and others see them that way as well. Young Scholars are viewed as school leaders," notes Bridges. The project-based learning model has been integrated into many of Johnston's classrooms, as have group ups. "Since this program was initiated," notes Allison, "we all have a different view of what is possible."

After-school programs can significantly boost school-family connections

When the Young Scholars program was launched at Johnston, no one knew quite how the family involvement piece would work. "Parents are busy. They are working hard just to put food on the table. We wondered if we were asking too much of them," notes Allison. But, to everyone's surprise and delight, the program worked much better than anticipated. "The program gave us the opportunity to spend quality time with parents, while working on projects or going on field trips, that we never would have had



continued from sidebar page 66

- All group ups must come to a resolution, even if the resolution is "I apologize for the situation happening."

Group up Procedure

- The first student says, "I don't like it when _____, because it makes me feel _____."
- The second student says, "I apologize for _____, because it made you feel _____."
- The first student says, "I forgive you for _____,"
- Both students shake hands.

Group ups have been very successful. So successful, in fact, that a "group up culture" permeates the Johnston community. Students use them at home, and faculty members throughout Johnston have adapted them for use in their classrooms as well.⁴

otherwise,” say Bridges and Allison. “Parents relished the chance to spend time with their children working on fun and creative activities. It transformed their relationship to the school.”

One parent, for example, helped students plant a garden at Johnston. “She lived in a trailer park across from the school. One evening she saw some students pulling up plants. She ran out, asked them to stop, and explained to them why it was important to let the plants mature,” explains Allison. “She took it upon herself to watch over the garden.” Allison and Bridges also note that since Young Scholars began, school vandalism has all but vanished and discipline referrals at the school have decreased for students participating in Young Scholars. “We have not had a single incidence of vandalism, and this used to be a serious problem at Johnston. Now, both the students and their families take pride in the school grounds.”

Post-Script

Young Scholars has boosted academic achievement across its sites.

One key to Johnston’s success is the Young Scholars model itself, which requires schools to include a few core program elements in their programs (e.g., an emphasis on boosting students’ academic achievement, a research based curriculum, experiential learning, or parent involvement), but also provides them with considerable flexibility. Young Scholars has boosted student achievement at every site involved in the project. NAESP’s decision to focus on the program at Johnston was based on our interest in demonstrating how a school can successfully integrate several changes in leadership. The Young Scholars story, however, is a broader one about the success of a focused and well-designed after-school initiative. Other statewide after-school initiatives will find that elements of the Young Scholars model lend themselves to adaptation in a variety of settings.

¹ According to Linda Allison, former principal of Johnston Elementary.

² Young Scholars program brochure

³ Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Young Scholars Program Information and Application Form, p. 5.

⁴ Adapted from “Group up Rules and Procedures,” Johnston Elementary School Young Scholars Program



BENNINGTON, VERMONT

MOLLY STARK SCHOOL

Program Snapshot

The after-school program at Molly Stark School has united the community and played an essential role in the school's transformation into a full-service community school. The program was started seven years ago as a way to provide fun and enriching activities for a group of students who would otherwise have no place to go at the end of the school day. The program now serves more than 250 students each year, more than half the school's population. Students participate in a variety of activities, such as mural painting, fishing, Tae Kwan Do, dance, computer skills building, reading, cooking, and environmental exploration, which are taught by classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and community members. Kids also participate in homework, reading, and math clubs. Parents serve as after-school coordinators, increasing their connections to the school.

- Serves 350 students (grades PreK-6); 250 regularly participate in after-school
- Rural/Small City—
Bennington, VT (Population approximately 16,000)
- Site Visited during the
2002-2003 academic year

Is it good for the kids? Then we can find a way to make it happen.

– Sue Maguire, Principal

The Setting

Bennington is a picturesque New England town, home to Bennington College (a small liberal arts college that encourages learning through independent study), the site of Robert Frost's grave, and the birthplace of Walt Whitman. Yet, the veneer of beauty masks considerable poverty.

Molly Stark School is located literally “across the tracks” from the more affluent part of town. Ninety-five percent of the students are white and many are poor. More than 50 percent receive free- and reduced-price lunch. Until recently, many townspeople viewed Molly Stark as the “worst” school in Bennington—a place “where you would not want to send your children.” Teachers were reluctant to admit that they taught there.

Attitudes have changed remarkably in the last few years, however, as Molly Stark has become a full-service community school. Today, the school boasts dental and medical care for students and families who would otherwise not have access to care; a preschool; before- and after-school child care (in addition to the after-school enrichment programs described in this case study); mentoring and family support services; state-of-the-art professional development programs for teachers; and perhaps most important, students who appear to be faring better than their predecessors did on a variety of indices.

The turnaround at Molly Stark is a result of a number of factors, not the least of which are the efforts of a committed principal and staff, as well as community members who cared about the school and wanted to see it become a better place. The development of the after-school program has been an integral part of this change process. In many ways, it mirrors the development of Molly Stark itself.

Key Elements of the Program

ORIGINS

Sue Maguire became principal of Molly Stark School in 1995, having served as a teacher there for 15 years and as assistant principal for two years. After one particularly stressful day, Maguire and a few staff members began talking and agreed that things needed to change, perhaps radically, at Molly Stark. Maguire invited interested staff and three community members, including a pediatrician, a child psychologist, and a local police detective, to join a focus group. The group met regularly to learn more about the needs of the children, their families, and the surrounding community. Their work was guided by several key questions: “What is our job as a public school? What does our school need to create in order to provide opportunities for success for children and families? What are our beliefs regarding our school's role in the lives of families?”²

The group spoke with teachers, parents, and community members. They examined data on dropout rates, teen pregnancy, absenteeism, and discipline referrals. Finally, they looked at the existing connections between the school and community services, determining what was available, when, and to whom.

As the focus group's work proceeded, Molly Stark joined the Yale Schools of the 21st Century program, which enabled group members to visit schools that had a child-and-family-service approach to education. Once site visits were completed, the focus group (now an action planning team) developed a planning grid that mapped current and future services Molly Stark planned to offer to meet the needs of children and families served by the school.

Throughout the yearlong planning period, staff, students, parents, and community members were included in the process. Maguire and the other team members communicated regularly with each group of stakeholders, asking for input and sharing ideas. One of the first things they heard from parents was that many of them were concerned about their children's free time after school and during the summer. The planning team recognized this as an issue they should address right away, and the after-school program at Molly Stark was born.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

The Principal

When the after-school program opened in the fall of 1997, Sue Maguire found volunteers to teach four small classes. The program now serves from 200-250 students during each session. There are at least eight classes taught in any one session, in addition to the homework club and other after-school clubs. How does Maguire manage all of this? She has a lot of help. Today her role is largely one of coordination and fundraising. She helps to organize the program, writes some grant proposals, manages the after-school budget, and hires parents to run the bulk of the program as after-school coordinators.

After-School Coordinators

As the after-school program grew in popularity, Maguire and her staff recognized the need to create an administrative support structure. Maguire hired first one, and then two, parent coordinators who are paid an hourly wage of approximately \$10, and who typically work 2-10 hours per week per session. There are three sessions—fall, winter, and spring—each of which lasts eight weeks.

Parent coordinators identify teachers, staff, and community members to teach classes; secure classroom space; order supplies and snacks; and troubleshoot issues such as training community members to work with children or providing substitute teachers. Maguire has found this is an excellent way to involve parents in the school. They earn some extra money, get to know the teachers and staff, and see their children learn and grow.

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Members

The after-school program at Molly Stark provides a unique opportunity for teachers, school staff, and community members to explore extracurricular interests of their own while providing a very useful service to students and the community.

Challenging the Roots of Poverty

“We have always been led to believe that a child can rise above his or her bleak life of poverty through a strong education. After all, that is the American dream. But over time, what has become apparent to us at Molly Stark is the difficulty of equalizing the huge imbalance in opportunity between poor children and their more affluent peers. We have found over and over again that many children lack the fundamental support network necessary to thrive in school. They become “at risk” the minute they are born: at risk for low literacy skills, at risk for school and job failure, at risk for a continuing life of poverty. Clearly, parents raising a family in poverty love their children, but their dreams and hopes for them seem to diminish over time. Many of these children enter adulthood not ready to participate in a meaningful way as members of their own families and communities. And so the cycle continues.”¹

“We started small (four activities that lasted for four weeks), found four volunteers willing to be facilitators, used already available classroom space, and watched things happen. As interest soared and the momentum increased, this small beginning grew into a multifaceted program in which facilitators are paid and children have an array of choices.”⁴

After-school teachers are paid a small stipend of approximately \$100 per session, or a little over \$12 for each one-hour session. They are encouraged to offer unique learning opportunities for the students. This system allows teachers to showcase their talents and students to see their teachers in an entirely different light—imagine learning Tae Kwon Do from your fifth-grade math instructor, or making clay beads with the cafeteria chef. It also brings the community into the school. As Sue Maguire says, “I went to get a haircut, and a hair care club for fifth and sixth graders was soon started; I sat with a retired administrator at a high school basketball game, and she was soon quilting with a group of our students. No matter where I am in the community, I find myself recruiting people with hidden talents.”³

A number of classroom teachers and school staff are also involved with coordinating and teaching after-school activities that are offered on a continuing basis, such as the homework and reading clubs (see the Programming section for more information on each of these clubs). In one instance, the school has contractually negotiated a flexible schedule with the Title I instructor, which allows her to work from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. instead of 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. She is now available when the school day ends to run the after-school reading club.

The Students

Students at Molly Stark play a key role in helping to determine the classes that will be offered. They make suggestions to the parent coordinators and after-school teachers who plan each session’s programming. Students are also regularly asked for their input on specific classes. Did they like the class? Would they want to see it offered again?

PROGRAMMING

Enrichment Programs

The once-small program has now grown into an after-school academy, with classes to meet just about every student’s needs and interests. After-school enrichment classes vary from session to session. The most popular, such as cooking and computers, are repeated each session, while others are scheduled on the basis of facilitator availability and talents, as well as student interests. During the Spring 2003 semester, students participated in fishing (a fifth grade teacher’s weekend interest); twigs and trees (exploring the outdoors with a second grade teacher originally trained as a naturalist); mural painting, crocheting, computer skills building, and soccer. Many register for multiple classes so they will have something to do almost every day after school. Students are charged a minimal fee of \$4.00 for each eight-week session to help pay for supplies and ensure their commitment to participating.

After-school begins as soon as the last bell rings. Kids congregate in the lunchroom for a snack, then proceed to their selected activities, which may be held in regular classrooms, the gymnasium, or another activity center. When classes end, teachers escort students to the drop-off and pick-up area in front of the school. Children are either picked up by their parents, or they walk home. Each student has a signed parental permission form on file with instructions for how she or he will get home after school.

Most of the after-school enrichment offered at Molly Stark is not designed to raise student test scores or grades, but rather to provide learning opportunities that complement what is taught during the school day. Enrichment classes also provide access to activities (such as dance or Tae Kwon Do) that many families could not afford otherwise.

Homework, Reading, and Math Clubs

The after-school enrichment program had been in operation for a couple of years when a teacher suggested starting a homework club to offer extra help and one-on-one assistance to students. There are now several after-school homework clubs. Two are run off-site by students from Bennington College, with one located at a housing project directly across from the school. There is also a reading group and a math group. Teachers work with the clubs to help the students complete assignments and improve their math and reading skills. Clubs meet three times per week, with no fee for participation.

STAFF TRAINING

As part of the full-service community school approach, professional development opportunities are offered to Molly Stark teachers and staff on an on-going basis. This helps everyone stay up to date on the latest innovations in teaching and learning. Since most of the classes offered after school are designed and taught by classroom teachers or paraprofessionals, there is minimal need for additional after-school staff training.

Community members who teach in the program are occasionally paired with classroom teachers or paraprofessionals who help prepare them to work with small children. Community members such as dance instructors, who are already used to working with youngsters, integrate into the after-school environment quite easily.

Prior to each session, the after-school coordinators meet with their teachers to answer any questions and distribute detailed instructions on such topics as what to do in the event a teacher is unable to teach a scheduled class, or how to handle absences and discipline issues. One of the coordinators is usually on-call during each afternoon session and can help handle any challenges that may arise.

FUNDING

As the after-school program at Molly Stark grew, Sue Maguire knew she would need assistance in coordinating the program. She also felt that it was important to pay teachers and other after-school staff a small stipend for their time and efforts. She turned to outside funding sources for support.

Maguire applied for and received a grant from the Terrell Fund in New Jersey, which provided approximately \$14,000 for school year 2002-2003. This enabled her to pay the after-school coordinators and teachers, and to cover miscellaneous costs associated with the program. She used government subsidies to help with costs for items like snacks.

Maguire has found creative ways to supplement her budget, such as the contractual arrangement that provides for the Title I teacher to delay her arrival until 9:00 a.m. and then remain after school to supervise the reading club. Finally, she and the staff decided to charge students a nominal fee of \$4 for each enrichment class to cover the cost of supplies.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

The after-school coordinators survey parents and teachers to gauge the effectiveness and value of various after-school classes. They also solicit input from students. Classes are adapted and changed according to determined needs. “We know when a particular class or a teacher is not working,” Maguire explains. “The kids are not afraid to tell us.” The after-school coordinators play an important role in the evaluation process, simply by their daily presence at the program. They check in on the classes regularly and make sure that things are going well.

Molly Stark commissioned a formal assessment of its various community school programs in 2001. Conducted by the Collaborative for Integrated School Services at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the assessment focused on a variety of factors in the development of Molly Stark as a full-service community school. Researchers interviewed parents, teachers, administrative staff, and students. They also reviewed student test scores and detention referrals.

Results

The Harvard evaluation found that, over time, parents have become more involved in their children’s education, that students are generally performing better on developmental reading and writing tests, and that there are fewer detention referrals. While the study notes it is difficult to tease out the direct role of after-school programming on these results, Molly Stark students are doing better than they were in the early 1990s on a number of indices.⁶

The Principal’s Point of View

A school-community planning process focuses everyone’s attention on what really matters—the kids.

By inviting teachers and community members to participate in the planning and delivery of after-school programming, Maguire found a way to engage everyone as an active partner in the education process. Each time they confronted an obstacle or heard, “it can’t be done,” “I don’t want to share my space,” or “that’s extra work for me,” they asked, “Is this good for kids?” If the answer was yes, they found a way to accomplish their goal. Maguire believes, “If you focus on the kids, you can do great things.”

Shared management is a key element to program success.

Sue Maguire played a very active role in the development of the after-school program at Molly Stark. She and her colleagues envisioned a school that would serve as a vibrant and active center for the community, providing a number of much-needed services for students and their families. Early in the process, Maguire helped to design courses, hire and supervise after-school teachers, and raise funds to support the program. Today, thanks to the administrative structure she put in place and the ongoing participation of parents and community members, she can play a more limited role. She continues to seek grant funding and helps recruit teachers and community members as after-school instructors, but the after-school coordinators handle most administrative tasks.



Involving parents and teachers in new ways strengthens their connections to the school.

After-school coordinators enjoy active involvement in running a program that also offers them a part-time job. Teachers and community members tap into skills and interests they might never access otherwise. Teachers get to know their students in different ways. Maguire has seen teacher attitudes really change as the after-school program has grown. They love being part of the Molly Stark approach to learning and innovation. And they love designing and teaching classes they simply could not teach during the regular school day. While the after-school program requires work on Maguire's part, it has brought tremendous benefits to the school and therefore made Maguire's job more rewarding.

Post-Script

When we visited Molly Stark School in the late spring of 2003, Sue Maguire was preparing to take on a new role as principal of the high school in Bennington, Mt. Anthony. Her success at Molly Stark has drawn the attention of educators throughout Vermont, New England, and as far away as the Netherlands.

As a member of the committee formed to help select her successor, Maguire is confident he shares her commitment to creating a haven for students, families, and community members. With a sound administrative structure in place, the after-school program is not dependent upon one or two key individuals for survival. Maguire is optimistic that it will continue to grow and evolve with the needs of the community.

After-School Activities Connect Students with the School

Writes Sue Maguire, "After-school programs fill many needs for children, families, and the community. They provide supervision by a caring adult, offer enriching experiences not readily available to all children, support positive peer interactions, and promote academic achievement. But an equally important result is that these after-school programs provide a hook for our students. One day I had to take a third grader home early because he had been verbally abusive to a teacher. At 3:00 p.m., when I was outside monitoring the buses, he showed up and said, 'I know I was bad at school today, but can I go to Tae Kwon Do if I promise to be good tomorrow?' We had found something that would make this child who was disconnected from both school and life in general, want to be at school, and that was a good thing. Our hope is that if we can offer a good variety of after-school programs, each child will find something to shine in, something that encourages exploration in new areas of skill and interest. Although it is great for all kids, it is most important for those children who would otherwise never have the opportunity to participate in some of these activities."⁵

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- ¹ Dryfoos, Joy and Sue Maguire. *Inside Full-Service Community Schools*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. 2002. p.14
 - ² Dryfoos, Joy and Sue Maguire. *Inside Full-Service Community Schools*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. 2002. p.29
 - ³ Dryfoos, Joy and Sue Maguire. *Inside Full-Service Community Schools*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. 2002. p.80
 - ⁴ Dryfoos, Joy and Sue Maguire. *Inside Full-Service Community Schools*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. 2002. p.43
 - ⁵ Dryfoos, Joy and Sue Maguire. *Inside Full-Service Community Schools*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. 2002. pp. 80-81
 - ⁶ Collaborative for Integrated School Services, Harvard Graduate School of Education. "Preliminary Evaluation of the Molly Stark School-Linked Services Model," 2001.
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alexandria, Virginia

Mt. Vernon Woods Elementary School Computer Learning Centers Partnership

- Serves just over 550 students (grades PreK-6); more than 100 students participate on a weekly basis in the after-school computer program
- Suburban—Alexandria, VA (located just off the Route One Corridor)
- Site visited during the 2003-2004 academic year

Program Snapshot

“If you build it, they will come,” says Sandra Stiner Lowe, the visionary behind the Computer Learning Centers Partnership (CLCP) program in Fairfax County, Virginia. Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School is the site of one of the county’s first school-based CLCP labs and after-school programs. From an archaic school computer lab, stocked with outmoded computers and obsolete software, the county partnered with the school system to build a state of the art computer-learning center. The CLCP program enables Mount Vernon Woods students to improve their technology skills, complete project-based literacy activities, participate in homework labs, go on tech-based field trips, and take part in service-learning projects. They can even earn their own home computer. All involved agree the CLCP initiative at Mount Vernon has been a transforming force for the school, improving student and teacher morale and raising the school’s standing in the community and the district.

I was amazed at the turnout once the program was up and running. The kids were lined up outside when I arrived to open the school on Saturdays! They could have been home watching cartoons—instead, they were here.

– Reginald Romaine, Principal

The Setting

Mt. Vernon Woods Elementary is located just off of Route One in Alexandria, Virginia, about 10 miles from Washington, D.C. Known as the “Route One Corridor,” this section of highway is populated with fast food joints, auto dealers, and discount retailers. The elementary school is located a few blocks off Route One, sandwiched between a group of Section 8 garden-style apartments and single-family homes.

Eighty-seven percent of the students at Mount Vernon are eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch, despite the fact that they live in one of the richest counties in the nation—the median household income for Fairfax County is \$96,000 per year (the national median is \$42,000). The area is home to America Online and other technology giants, yet it is estimated that only five percent of Mount Vernon students have computers at home.¹ This contrast between haves and have-nots is part of what drives the CLCP program at Mount Vernon.

Mount Vernon’s student population is diverse. For the 2003-2004 school year, 49 percent of students were identified as Hispanic, 38 percent as black, 7 percent as Asian/Pacific Islander, 4 percent as white, and 2 percent as multi-racial.² The school’s African-American and Caucasian populations have decreased in the past few years, while the number of Hispanic students has increased. This reflects a change in the overall student population in Fairfax County, where the number of Hispanic students has risen dramatically, due to growing numbers of immigrants from South and Central American countries, such as El Salvador.

Almost half of the students enrolled at Mount Vernon Woods are in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. At home, students speak Spanish, Farsi, Urdu, Korean, and Vietnamese, as well as English. This rich ethnic and linguistic diversity creates both challenges and opportunities for the CLCP after-school program.

Key Elements of the

After-School Program

ORIGINS

The CLCP program had a serendipitous beginning when the Fairfax County Office of Partnerships was looking for a way to expand the program beyond its original locations in low-income housing and neighborhood centers. Mount Vernon Woods Principal Reggie Romaine attended a district meeting in which CLCP staff members were presenting. He immediately expressed interest in bringing the program to his school.

After months of meetings on details and program planning, CLCP began setting up shop. Originally, discussions focused on placing the computer center in a trailer. CLCP Director Sandra Stiner Lowe and Reggie Romaine, however, believed the center should be an integral part of the school. After a survey of the building, including the school's existing computer lab, CLCP staff suggested a retooling of the lab. They disassembled the old lab, brought in new computers, and set up a cutting-edge computer-learning center. As a stipulation of the space-sharing agreement, Mount Vernon Woods uses the computer lab during the day. Now, every class spends one hour per week in the lab. Teachers sign up for training time every week.

The lab opened quietly in the fall of 2001. Other Centers in the CLCP network had opened with great fanfare, press conferences, and celebrations. In this case, everyone wanted to give the Center at Mount Vernon time to develop. Once the program had been up and running for about a year, it was clear the partnership was a resounding success. Mount Vernon faculty loved the new computer lab and the after-school program was a hit with students, parents, and community partners.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

Fairfax County Office of Partnerships—CLCP Program

The Fairfax County Office of Partnerships is housed within the Office of the County Executive and administers six county-wide partnerships that address health, education, and welfare issues, including the Computer Learning Centers Partnership (CLCP). The goal of the CLCP program is to “level the playing field in the area of technology access and skill development for children of low-income families living in Fairfax County.”³ The first Computer Learning Center opened at a low-income housing unit in 1995. Since then, the County has opened 14 Centers at housing complexes, community centers, a church, and at schools, including Mount Vernon Woods.

Sandra Stiner Lowe heads the County's Office of Partnerships. CLCP Program Managers Paulette Armstrong and Karen Fuentes share oversight responsibilities for the CLCP sites. They hire site directors and work with them to develop curriculum, evaluate programs, and provide training to Center staff members. Karen Fuentes supervises the Mount Vernon site. CLCP has a Memorandum of Agreement with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) that both parties review jointly twice a year. Lowe and Fuentes meet bi-monthly with a team consisting of FCPS administrative and information technology staff, Mount Vernon Woods staff, CLCP staff, and other corporate and community partners to discuss long-range goals, program planning, budget, and collaboration topics for all school-based CLCP sites (currently two, soon to be three, sites in operation).

The Principal

Reggie Romaine initiated the establishment of the CLCP program at Mount Vernon Woods, and he continues to play an integral role in the after-school program. He has daily contact with Site Director Maritza Mulready and meets with her regularly to discuss programming issues. He also meets quarterly with Mulready and Karen Fuentes to review space, equipment, and community relations concerns. In addition to securing space for various after-school components of the program, Romaine also attends CLCP events, reaches out to parents, recruits teachers to work in the program's after-school homework lab, and drops by regularly to see how things are going.

Ensuring Digital Equity

“The mission of the CLCP is to ‘provide technology access and training to assure digital equity and increase overall literacy for underserved children.’

The program began in response to the widening gap between children who had computers and Internet access and those who did not.”⁴

In a county known for its rich technology sector, it was clear to many that significant numbers of children were excluded from the opportunities technology promised. The CLCP program was started as a way to remedy this inequity. By creating centers close to where children lived and learned, the CLCP program aimed not only to give children access to technology, but to help them learn to use and enjoy it as well.

CLCP Centers are funded through a combination of public and private funds (see the Funding section for more detail). This unique combination has allowed the county to apply creative approaches to building and equipping each of the Centers, and to growing the program with the support of community partners.



The Site Director

Maritza Mulready runs the CLCP program at Mount Vernon, supervising Assistant Site Director Jehan Marshall, work-study students from George Mason University, and Mount Vernon teachers. She also helps design the curriculum and teaches in the after-school program. As with all Center site directors and staff, her hiring process included a background check.

During the school day, Mulready serves as part-time computer lab supervisor. She works with teachers and students to identify Web sites and other Internet resources that support the school-day curriculum. Teachers consider her a colleague, which has helped to integrate the CLCP program into the school.

Like other after-school coordinators featured in these case studies, Mulready works long hours. She loves the opportunity the position affords her to help build students' technology literacy and competence. "Watching the kids learn, seeing their excitement," is her favorite part of the job. She is also fluent in Spanish, which helps her connect with students and parents alike.

The Staff

In addition to the site director, each CLCP site is staffed with two work-study students from nearby George Mason University. CLCP has a cooperative arrangement with the University, which allows service-learning students to receive funds from the Federal Work Study program for working at a CLCP site. Their starting salary is approximately \$11.50 per hour for part-time work that involves teaching and providing individualized support for students in the program.

CLCP also employs classroom teachers to teach in the Homework Lab. With a grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation, CLCP pays two Mount Vernon teachers to work two days per week, for two hours per day. Teachers are paid approximately \$20 per hour. They provide students with additional assistance and help ensure that their homework is completed on time. Parents and volunteers occasionally provide additional assistance in the lab.

Community Partners

Housed in the Fairfax County Office of Partnerships, the CLCP program has the support of more than 100 partners, including:

- America Online
- Cox Communications
- Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
- Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department
- Fairfax County Public Schools
- George Mason University
- Golfzilla
- Joy of Sports
- Microsoft
- National Science and Technology Education Partnership (NSTEP)
- Reading is Fundamental
- University of Virginia
- Women in Technology (WIT) CLCP Women in Technology Partnership Group (WTPG)⁵

- Xybernaut (Mount Vernon Woods' CLCP Sponsoring Partner)
- WIN-WIN Strategies Foundation
- UNITECH Solutions

Partners play multiple roles. Some provide funding for CLCP sites (with support of approximately \$35,000 per year). They also serve on an advisory board to help guide the growth of the Centers, provide staffing and training for CLCP sites, and donate equipment, service, and technology support.

At Mount Vernon Woods, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department helps teach special sessions in which students learn to rebuild computers. Eventually students are permitted to take the rebuilt computers home. The Heritage Fellowship Church Youth Ministry rebuilds computers for CLCP TECH Club students under the age of 12. The University of Virginia helps train Center staff, while the Women in Technology Partnership group meets with Mount Vernon students, and hosts a bi-weekly girls' technology club.

Students/Parents

Students and parents are encouraged to be active partners in the CLCP program. Since the program has a technology focus, students can use technology to explore their own interests. They also help design and carry out an annual community service event. All CLCP centers participate in Make a Difference Day and National Youth Service Day. At Mount Vernon Woods, kids planned and completed a schoolyard clean up. They also planned a beautification project, soliciting donated flowers and planting them in front of the school. Each year, they create Valentine's Day cards for veterans as well.

Parents volunteer in the lab and accompany students on field trips. Several annual events, such as Reading is Fundamental (RIF) open houses, are designed to engage parents in the program. Parents are encouraged to take part in CLCP classes with their children. Parent involvement, however, is an on-going challenge, since many parents work long hours and find it difficult to participate.

PROGRAMMING

The Computer and Homework Labs

The CLCP program runs Tuesday through Friday from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. Site directors use Monday afternoons for planning time. The computer lab is also open on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

From 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., the lab is reserved for fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade Mount Vernon Woods students. From 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. and on weekends, the lab is open to younger, middle, and high school students as well. Students register to attend the Center each year, and their attendance is monitored daily. The lab only holds about 27 students at one time, so site directors are encouraged to follow-up with students who do not attend regularly.

Students may also work in the Homework Lab, a room adjoining the computer lab that provides worktables and three computers for homework-related research. Mount Vernon Woods teachers staff the homework lab two days per week. On other days, it is staffed with work-study students and volunteers. Average daily attendance per session from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. is 20 to 25 at the Center and 15 in the homework program.

The TECH (Take Earned Computers Home) Program

The TECH program lies at the heart of the CLCP program's effort to redress technology inequities. The program enables students to earn their own home computer and receive an Internet account.

TECH is composed of two parts: one program for students 12-18 years of age, and another for children 11 and under. Students 12 and up can register for a one-week course, taught annually by volunteer computer specialists at each Center. Students learn to build and maintain a computer. Once they have successfully completed the class, they earn the computer and an Internet account. The accounts are "content limited for the protection of the students."⁶

Students 11 and under can earn a home computer by participating in the Volunteer Rebuild program. Booz Allen Hamilton, a management and technology consulting firm, trains Fairfax County Fire Fighters and other volunteers in A+ certification. The fire fighters and volunteers from Heritage Fellowship Church and other organizations rebuild computers for children too young to participate in the 12 and over program. To earn a computer through this program, students must demonstrate mastery of a certain level of technology content, which is monitored by each site director.

At the close of the school day, students come to the Center, receive a snack, and move to the computer or homework areas. They begin with "warm-ups," typing and Internet exploration exercises, and then work on projects related to the CLCP curriculum theme for the month. Staff members are paired with students, either one-on-one or in groups. They help students complete projects and develop an understanding of the software. Once they have completed work on their projects, students may explore additional interests.

After they have attended the Center for at least a month and have demonstrated an ability to use the Internet, students 12 and older receive a personal e-mail account. If they are absent from the Center for more than three months, they lose their accounts. Student use of the Internet is monitored closely and all Centers use the We-Blocker blanket monitoring software to limit access.

Student computer assignments are made on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a waiting list of more than 50 students who want to join the program.

Technology Instruction

Throughout the year, students complete theme-based technology projects aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). Each month, they use various software applications to explore different themes. They delve into topics such as financial management, world geography, women's history, and literacy. Center site directors meet with the CLCP program managers to develop themes for each year. Maritza Mulready also works with Reggie Romaine to ensure the themes support the school's curriculum.

Students use applications such as Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Publisher, and Microsoft Explorer. They also learn animation and Web page design, and become familiar with computer hardware.

Special Projects

In addition to receiving technology instruction, students also participate in a variety of special projects. Empower Girls meets bi-weekly with a member of the Women in Technology Partnership to explore technology issues related to girls and women. Mount Vernon Woods CLCP students also participate in at least three Reading Is Fundamental events each year. Students at each event receive books to take home. In 2004-2005, Joy of Sports is providing an additional project/program at the center: the Healthy Kids Club. Children from the center will participate in three, eight-week sessions that involve sports activities, nutrition education, and technology.

Private School Initiative

A number of small private schools in the area have offered to join forces with the Partnership by creating scholarships for outstanding students at CLCP Centers. Center staff members identify promising students, meet with their parents, and if the families are interested, help them apply to attend one or more of their private school partners. Although principal Romaine would like to see all of his students succeed at Mount Vernon Woods, or at the public middle school, he also believes that some students might thrive in a smaller school with better resources. So, he meets with interested parents, and along with Mulready, helps guide them through the application process.

Field Trips

Field trips are an important component of the CLCP program. Their purpose is to expose students to activities and interests beyond the computer lab—to broaden their learning experiences, but also to address equity issues. Over the past few years, for example, Mount Vernon Woods students have participated in GolfTech, a Washington-based program that teaches the game at nearby golf courses and driving ranges. The program philosophy is, “allow children to hit a few balls on the range and you get their attention in the classroom.”⁷ Sandra Stiner Lowe, Fairfax County’s Director of the Office of Partnerships, sees it as an opportunity for students to learn a game that is an integral part of America’s business community.

In 2003-2004, Mount Vernon Woods students also attended the Congressional Black Caucus and Net Generation Youth Conference in Washington, D.C., the Sally Ride Festival at GMU, and a program sponsored by Women in Technology held at PEC Solutions in Fairfax County. Student cyber-journalists reported on each of the field trips for the school community.



STAFF TRAINING

Paulette Armstrong and Karen Fuentes are responsible for hiring and training Center site directors. They host bi-weekly staff meetings, in which site directors have the opportunity to share information about student projects, receive training on a variety of topics, and network with each other.

Armstrong and Fuentes plan and carry out more extensive training sessions as well. CLCP recently formed a partnership with the University of Virginia (UVA) to train Center site directors and staff in strategies to boost students’ literacy skills. UVA training sessions focus on topics such as reaching students with different learning styles and addressing multicultural differences. Various private sector partners also provide training for Center staff.

CLCP has developed an extensive operations manual for site directors. The operations manual covers everything from performance evaluation criteria for Center staff, to how to handle questions from the media, to appropriate means of disciplining students.

Site director Maritza Mulready attends Mount Vernon Woods faculty meetings and participates in some parent conferences as well. She is responsible for training work-study and volunteer staff for the Center.

FUNDING

The cost to launch the Mount Vernon Woods Center was approximately \$300,000, and the ongoing cost is approximately \$160,000 per year. These costs are covered through a combination of public and private funds.

Staff costs account for about half of the yearly budget, including salary and benefits for the site director, wages for work-study students, and additional salaries for two teachers to work in the Homework Lab. Mount Vernon Woods provides space for the lab and pays utilities. Costs such as technology support are paid by the County’s Office of Partnerships. The county and Mount Vernon Woods cover about half of the Center’s overall budget. All Mount Vernon Woods contributions are in-kind. A Memorandum of Agreement helps govern the cost-sharing arrangement.

The remaining costs are paid for through partnerships with universities, foundations, and corporations, as well as through individual sponsorships. All partners are invited to join the CLCP Advisory Council, which helps to guide and direct the overall program.

The partnership program design allows the Center to be flexible and to develop new initiatives as needs arise. For example, as the program progressed at Mount Vernon Woods, it became clear that it would be helpful to have classroom teachers on hand to help with homework. The Office of Partnerships applied for and received a grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation to pilot the homework program. At the close of its second year, the evaluator of the homework program found that 88 percent of the children participating showed grade improvement in one to three core subject areas. The Office of Partnerships is currently seeking the means to support the program beyond the time period covered by the initial Freddie Mac grant.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

To date, the CLCP program has focused on tracking student attendance at each site, as well as evaluating mastery of the technology. Children enrolled in the program receive CLCP Report Cards twice a year. Scores are based on tests taken periodically throughout the year. They indicate how well students are learning to use various software programs and evaluate their understanding of computer hardware. The Report Card also allows Site Director Mulready to comment on student's behaviors in the lab—do they accept responsibility? Comply with established rules? Listen to and follow directions? Show improvement?

Results

The CLCP program uses the tests each student takes to develop a combined achievement score that assesses the student's computer literacy (the Computer Literacy Assessment Tool). The goal is for each student regularly attending the Center to perform at the 90th percentile or above on the Computer Literacy Assessment Tool. Students have met this goal every year since the Center opened in 2001. The homework lab appears to be making an important difference as well (as data on grade improvements listed above demonstrate).

Challenges

Since the establishment of the homework program, CLCP has made an effort to track students' grades and to get feedback from parent surveys on both individual programs and the larger Center efforts. The response to parent surveys has been small, so CLCP plans to make a number of changes in the near future, such as hosting a parent night at the Center to gather direct feedback from parents. They also plan to work with school, county, and outside evaluators to determine how CLCP students are doing on the SOLs, to look at correlations between Center participation and grades, and to compare CLCP participants' progress with non-participants' progress.

At the time of our site visit, Mount Vernon Woods was an “identified school,” meaning students’ test scores would need to climb before the school could be removed from the state’s list of schools needing improvement. This challenge has encouraged the CLCP staff to work even more closely with the school to ensure the Center does all it can to help boost student academic achievement.

The Principal's Point of View

Don't Give Up.

In the opinion of Principal Reggie Romaine, the CLCP program has done nothing short of turning his school around. Families of Mount Vernon Woods students often live high-stress lives. Parents work multiple jobs, and many are single parents. Historically, teacher morale has been low. Mount Vernon Woods test scores were in the “bottom quartile” of Fairfax County Public Schools. Many people had given up on the school, but Romaine believed in Mount Vernon Woods and, when he learned about the CLCP opportunity in the district, he fought hard to bring it to the school. His efforts have paid off in ways that he could not have imagined when the opportunity was first presented.

The school has a cutting-edge computer lab, used by teachers and classes during the day, and by CLCP students in the afternoons and on weekends. Romaine’s students, many of whom had not traveled much at all, are now able to attend events throughout the Washington area. And, the district, school board, and community are taking notice. The school is singled out as a model for other schools, and though Mount Vernon Woods is an “identified school,” test scores are on the rise. Teachers who once sought to transfer elsewhere now want to come to Mount Vernon. The CLCP program has made Romaine’s job much richer.

Computers are non-judgmental and kids love them.

Another important lesson learned by staff and private sector partners alike is that kids love computers. They often see them as cool tech toys, devices they can play with. They can explore, learn, and make mistakes in a way that is non-threatening. By capitalizing on their curiosity and interest in technology, the CLCP program allows students to learn in non-traditional ways.

Students can use computers to improve their literacy and numeracy, for example, by playing various computer games. Language barriers are not as much of an issue. Computers allow students to translate, to work in multiple languages. And, the Internet enables students to virtually explore the world.

Mount Vernon Woods is currently exploring a partnership with a local symphony, which would combine on-line music instruction with in-person music lessons. This program would not be possible if the CLCP Center had not opened at Mount Vernon.



The CLCP Partnership Model Works.

The CLCP model is an excellent vehicle for engaging the corporate and civic sector in providing quality after-school programming with minimal risk. The program minimizes the cost for any one partner while producing positive academic achievement and enhancing the school environment. Sandra Stiner Lowe has noted that the corporate sector often expresses satisfaction in being able to partner with government and the schools to benefit the community. Until the introduction of this model there were no viable, on-going options for corporate involvement in schools such as Mount Vernon Woods.

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- ¹ CLCP Founder & Director of the Office of Partnerships Sandra Stiner Lowe.
 - ² Fairfax County Public Schools enrollment figures for September 2003.
 - ³ Fairfax County Office of Partnerships, Computer Learning Centers Partnership Annual Report, December 2003, p. 2.
 - ⁴ Fairfax County Office of Partnerships, Computer Learning Centers Partnership Annual Report, December 2003, p. 3.
 - ⁵ These are just a few of the CLCP partners. For a complete listing of partners, see the CLCP's 2003 Annual Report.
 - ⁶ Fairfax County Office of Partnerships, Computer Learning Centers Partnership Operations Manual, August 2003, p. 16.
 - ⁷ See <http://www.golfacademies.com/golf-schools/browse/GolfTech.html>.



Aberdeen, Washington

Miller Junior High –

Harbor After School

- Serves just under 600 students (grades 7-8); 65 regularly participate in the after-school program
- Rural/Small City—Aberdeen, WA (Population 16,000), located on the Olympic Peninsula on the coast of Washington state
- Site visited during the 2002-2003 academic year

Program Snapshot

Harbor After School began with an unlikely 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant, and has since become an independent organization with separate 501c3 legal status and sufficient grant funding to continue for years to come. The program, like many good after-school programs, offers a variety of enrichment activities, provides mentors and meals, and creates a space for students to continue the learning and exploration begun during the school day. What is unique about this program is the way it has become firmly rooted in the community, building on the strengths of those who have helped to nurture it.

One of the best things about the growth of Harbor After School at Miller Junior High is that it has helped us to improve opportunities for our entire community, not just the students who participate directly in the program.

– Ben Talbert, Principal, Miller Junior High

The Setting

Aberdeen is a Scottish word for the confluence of two rivers—in this case, the Wishkah and the Chehalis. The town of Aberdeen is nestled on a harbor where the two rivers meet in Grays Harbor County on the coast of Washington. Like many communities in the Northwest, Aberdeen is in transition. Once a logging and fishing community boasting a significantly larger population in the early part of the 20th Century, Aberdeen has experienced the decline of both industries. As a result, the need for educational services has become even more pressing in this small community. According to the 2000 Census, 19 percent of Grays Harbor residents did not have a high school diploma or equivalent and only 12.7 percent have completed a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 24.4 percent nationally.¹ The County of Grays Harbor, along with Aberdeen, is working to recast itself as a retail center. Well-paying jobs have become harder to find, and students in Aberdeen face an uphill battle. The after-school program is designed in part to help students fight this battle.

Miller Junior High is located on the south side of Aberdeen in a residential area that is surrounded by light industrial development. The student body is approximately 80 percent white, 9 percent Latino, 6 percent Native American, 4 percent Asian American, and 1 percent black. Forty-seven percent of the students qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch.

Key Elements of the Program

ORIGINS

When the U.S. Department of Education announced the competition for the first round of 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants, administrators in Educational Service Districts 113 and 114 (Miller Junior High is in District 113) decided to apply. According to Arnel Blancas, director of Harbor After School, they quickly submitted an application for a three-year grant, believing it would be turned down but that they would receive technical assistance to successfully reapply for the next round of funding.

The group applied for funds to create a community haven that would keep students safe and occupied after school, and to provide “high quality after-school learning programs, opportunities to channel energies of youth in positive ways that benefit individuals and the community, and access to technological expertise and training so crucial in preparing for the 21st Century.”² Their 21st CCLC proposal was based on a series of needs assessments focused on middle and high school students in rural western Washington that found:

- There were few opportunities for organized high quality after-school activities;
- Students needed academic assistance;
- There were relatively high rates of student suspension and youth adjudication;
- With the decline in fishing and logging jobs, there was a need to better prepare students for the work world; and
- There were few opportunities for interactions between youth and adult or older student mentors.³

It came as a surprise to everyone when the first grant application was selected for funding. Administrators hired a director and set to work building the program. Because both the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice provided initial funding, the program had a dual emphasis on keeping kids safe and out of trouble after school and on supplementing the education they receive during the school day. It retains that dual emphasis today.

THE PLAYERS—WHO'S INVOLVED?

Harbor After School

Harbor After School provides staffing, support, training, and programming for after-school programs at Miller Junior High and two other middle schools. Director Arnel Blancas came on board shortly after receipt of the first grant.

ESD 113 served as the initial fiscal agent for the 21st CCLC Grant. As the program expanded, Blancas, various district officials, and the program's advisory board applied for 501c3 status and formed an independent non-profit organization. (See the Funding section for more information on the development of Harbor After School as a separate 501c3.) The organization is governed by a board of directors that includes the Chief of Police, the Mayor, community and school district officials, parents, and principals of the three middle schools that house Harbor After School.

The Principal

Ben Talbert, principal of Miller Junior High, has been a key partner with Harbor After School since its earliest days. He helps secure resources as co-applicant on a number of grants; provides office and meeting space for the Harbor After School administrative staff; recruits teachers to work as tutors and to fulfill other needs; serves as an advocate for the after-school program with parents, teachers, and community members; and covers the cost of items such as food, transportation, program supplies, and community events for the program. Talbert also serves on the Harbor After School board of directors, where he offers his expertise as an educator and a principal.

Miller Junior High Staff

A number of teachers at Miller Junior High help staff the after-school program. They are paid with Washington's Initiative 728 funds, which can be used to reduce class size and offer extended learning opportunities. They provide students with one-on-one assistance in math, reading, science, and other homework. The teachers' daily presence in the program has enabled them to act as ambassadors, establishing connections between the regular school day and the after-school program. They also work closely with Arnel Blancas and other after-school staff.

Harbor After School Mission and Purpose

MISSION

Harbor After School's mission is to provide a safe, positive, and enriching environment after school by pairing students with positive, older role models so that parents can work without worry.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Harbor After School is to provide enriching, engaging, and challenging activities to increase academic achievement and enjoyment, decrease juvenile delinquency, and teach problem solving skills amongst participants.⁴



Local College and High School Students

Local college and high school students also serve as after-school staff members. They design and run after-school activities and serve as mentors, helping the students navigate the often treacherous middle school years.

Miller Junior High Students

When the initial 21st CCLC grant was received, Arnel Blancas surveyed students to see what kinds of activities they would like to take part in after school. The students continue to talk regularly with program staff about their needs and interests and those needs are taken into account as various activities are planned. Instead of offering a set menu of after-school classes, the program provides students with a variety of activity options each day. Students thus have a significant degree of control over the activities in which they participate.

Parents and Community Members

Parents and community members are actively involved in the after-school program as well. They attend after-school events and serve on the Harbor After School Board of Directors. Parents are regularly asked for input about their children's participation in the program, through both registration and evaluation processes.

PROGRAMMING

After-school at Miller Junior High operates on a drop-in basis. Students register each semester and then drop in as often as they like. On a typical day, the program serves approximately 65 students, just over 10 percent of the student body.

Students register for the program with their parents' permission, and there are no fees for participating. After-school activities include tutoring, mentoring, recreation, and field trips. Parents are asked to specify what they would like their children to get out of the after-school program. Options on the registration form, available in both English and Spanish, include:

- “Homework assistance; please help in monitoring his or her homework
- A safe and enriching place to be after school, homework optional
- My child may participate at his/her discretion
- Other _____”⁵

Students are also asked to sign the form to indicate their knowledge and acceptance of the following caveat: “I would like to participate in Harbor After School at Miller Junior High. I realize that my parent/guardian has signed me up with the above mentioned expectations of my participation in the program.”⁶

After-school hours are 2:30-6:30 p.m. every day that school is in session. On a typical day, students check into the program at 2:30 p.m., then proceed to the homework/tutoring area in the library or join in various recreational and crafts activities in the student center, which is located in the cafeteria. Dinner is provided at 4:30 p.m.

Homework Assistance/Tutoring

Three Miller Junior High teachers, recruited by Principal Ben Talbert, work in the homework area. They are paid at the district's curriculum rate with Initiative 728 funds. In addition to being paid, they enjoy the satisfaction of working with students one-on-one, a rare occurrence in the regular classroom. All three teachers interviewed during the site visit mentioned how much they valued having this kind of time with the students.

A computer program enables teachers to view each student's assignments for the day and check grade and homework progress. Although the two math teachers and one English teacher primarily assist with math and English homework, they can also provide assistance with other subjects. The presence of school-day teachers in the homework room helps make a connection between school and after-school and strengthens the impression among other teachers of after-school as an important extension of the school day.

Teachers employed in the homework area provide daily assistance to the high school and college students who work in the program, making sure that Miller students are where they need to be and that they are receiving the assistance they need. Computer workstations are also housed in the library, where students can build their computer skills and play computer games.

Recreational Activities

Students participate in a variety of after-school activities, including basketball and other sports, arts and crafts, and chat sessions. Three to four college and high school students work after school in the recreation/student center each day. They meet with junior high students and decide what activities they will undertake.

Occasionally special classes, such as guitar, are offered, but often the student center operates much like a large recreation room. Some students play basketball, others make beaded jewelry, and others simply play games. Many students come to the recreation/student center after they've completed their homework.

The Harbor After School staff works to ensure all students are included. They make a special effort to listen and to act as role models and mentors. This can be a very challenging task, so staff members meet regularly to share concerns and talk about various ways of responding to student issues.

Off-site Excursions

Approximately once each quarter, students in the after-school program take part in off-site adventures, such as attending baseball games, bowling, and visiting the local YMCA. Miller Junior High and Harbor After School share the costs for many of these adventures,

Beyond 21st Century Funding

Prior to taking the job as the director of the 21st CCLC grant, Arnel Blancas worked at a variety of youth agencies in Aberdeen, including the YMCA and Aberdeen's Parks and Recreation division. He used his experience in those organizations to build community support for the after-school program. He worked with the director of Aberdeen's parks and recreation department to identify and recruit advisory board members who:

- Could get things done, who had access to money and influence;
- Had experience working with young people; and
- Would be committed to seeing the after-school program grow and thrive

The initial advisory board included: a prominent local attorney, various school district officials, the principals of the schools involved with the program, and leaders of diverse youth organizations. As the program grew, the board began meeting more regularly, job descriptions were developed, and new members—including the town's chief of police, local school superintendents, and the Aberdeen School District's business manager—were added to the board roster.

continued on sidebar page 93

STAFF TRAINING

Each of the three schools in the Harbor After School network has a site coordinator who works 40 hours per week to operate before- and after-school programs. They attend bi-monthly staff meetings to discuss shared concerns, and quarterly staff trainings organized by Arnel Blancas. (Blancas plays dual roles at Miller—in addition to being the Director of Harbor After School, he is also the site coordinator at Miller.) These trainings often include an outside trainer/counselor who has extensive experience working with teens. Staff members participate in role-playing activities and learn strategies for responding appropriately to the students. Training topics include mentoring, conflict resolution, and issues for kids in poverty.

During our site visit in spring 2003, student staff members also talked extensively about on-the-job training. Many had worked with youth organizations prior to joining Harbor After School. They found that those experiences served them well in their interactions with Miller Junior High students.

FUNDING

The initial 21st CCLC grant, awarded in 1998, funded after-school programs at three middle schools for \$375, 000, or approximately \$125,000 per year. The grant covered staff costs, training and evaluation expenses, transportation for field trips, materials and supplies, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Arnel Blancas was hired shortly after the grant was received. He immediately set to work building an advisory board, with the goal of ensuring that the program would survive and grow after the 21st CCLC funding ended. He worked hard to establish the community and school connections that would make that goal possible. By all accounts, he has succeeded. Harbor After School is now an independent non-profit organization that receives support from a variety of local and regional funding agencies and was recently awarded a second 21st CCLC grant.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Scope

As a condition of the 21st CCLC grant, Harbor After School is required to conduct regular evaluations. They contract with an outside evaluator to help them with this task. Evaluation data are collected primarily through surveys administered to the students, their parents, and their teachers. Students and parents also provide written permission for Harbor After School to access their permanent school records to track attendance, grades, and discipline referrals. The surveys, administered near the end of the school year, ask students a series of before and after questions, such as:

- When I started the program, I came
___ to get help with my homework
- ___ to have a safe place to stay after school
- ___ to have fun
- ___ to stay out of trouble
- ___ to be with friends
- ___ because my parent/guardian wanted me to

In the past month I wanted to go to school

- almost always
- most of the time
- sometimes
- not very often
- almost never⁷

Parent surveys attempt to assess parents' involvement with the program and their perceptions of how the program has affected their children's homework completion, study skills, and attendance over the course of the year. Teacher surveys ask teachers to report on students' progress over the school year on issues such as turning in homework on time, class attendance, class participation, and behavior.

Results

Students, parents, and teachers all agree that Harbor After School has had a positive affect on the students it serves. Students report that the program has helped them complete their homework assignments and improve their study skills. Parents note that the program has given their children a safe space to be after school. Teachers report that, since participating in Harbor After School, students have attended class more regularly and improved their classroom behavior.

The Principal's Point of View

Regular communication and respect between the principal and the after-school coordinator is key.

The success of the after-school program at Miller Junior High is, in part, a reflection of the strong working relationship between Principal Ben Talbert, and Director Arnel Blancas. They talk daily, and Blancas takes advantage of the invitation to drop by Talbert's office almost any time. They discuss how students are faring in the program and keep abreast of current grant deadlines.

Talbert relates to Blancas as a contributing member of the Miller Junior High staff. Blancas attends staff meetings and is very visible in the school. One of the greatest challenges Talbert faced with the growth of the after-school program was the issue of teachers' reluctance to share their classrooms with the program staff. Talbert and Blancas worked successfully to change teachers' attitudes. Teachers now see after-school as a great help. Talbert views the school as a community institution, with great possibilities for meeting needs beyond the regular school day. By working with Blancas to apply for grants together, he has brought additional resources to the school that would not otherwise be there. The entire school has benefited from these resources.

Taking an active role in after-school increases visibility for the principal and the school.

Ben Talbert has enjoyed his role on the Harbor After School Board of Directors. It allows him to participate in the community in an entirely different capacity than he would otherwise. Instead of being one more thing he has to do, board service expands both Talbot's visibility and that of Miller Junior High in the community. It has also broadened his view of

continued from sidebar page 92

When the advisory board looked at options for sustainability, they recommended that the after-school program apply to become an independent non-profit organization. If the program had remained with the district, the board feared that money would be a constant issue—after-school dollars would be pitted against those allocated for in-school learning. On the other hand, if the program became part of an organization like the YMCA or the local Boys and Girls Club, then it would be subject to the rules of those organizations. Students might be charged fees for their participation in the program, for example, or part of the program's funding might be channeled to a national office.

The organization received 501c3 status toward the end of the second year of the 21st CCLC grant, and began applying for additional funding right away. They received a few small grants (ranging from \$1500 to \$15,000) and then toward the end of the third year, learned that they would receive a \$120,000 grant from the Gates Foundation. With this grant in hand, they were able to build even more support for the program.



fundraising and helped him to connect with other community members. When Talbert became principal at Miller, he was new to the Aberdeen community, but through the Harbor After School Board, he has come to know many community members.

Begin immediately to plan for sustainability.

Strategies for surviving beyond 21st CCLC funding:

- Create a community/school support structure for the project
- Find someone like Arnel Blancas who can and will champion the program
- Have a clear vision and concrete goals
- Cultivate buy-in from students, parents, school staff, and community members
- Develop and implement a long-term fundraising plan

Though the administrators in ESD 113 were initially surprised to receive a 21st CCLC grant, they immediately set to work creating a structure to support the program. They hired a young community leader who took the lead. Arnel Blancas created a well-connected community advisory board that later became the Harbor After School Board of Directors, and immediately set about developing a long-term plan for the project. He worked with Miller Junior High and the other schools included in the grant to design individual programs for each of the schools. He cultivated a strong working relationship with Principal Ben Talbert, concentrating on how the after-school program could help Talbert accomplish his goals for Miller Junior High.

Blancas and the board also invested time in finding the best way to create on-going funding streams for the program. This paid off for both Miller Junior High and Harbor After School, as they were able to tap into funding sources they could share.

By focusing on a mission, organizational structure, and a community support system for the after-school program long before their grant concluded, Harbor After School has become an independent organization that does not have to rely upon a single source of funding.

Post-Script

For the past six years, Arnel Blancas has served as both the Director of Harbor After School and the site coordinator at Miller Junior High. In 2004, Blancas hired a site coordinator at Miller—to free up some of his time, a sign that Harbor After School continues to grow.

¹ 2000 Census Data for Grays Harbor County Washington, see www.census.gov.

² ESD 113's 21st CCLC grant application, March 9, 1998, p. 1.

³ ESD 113's 21st CCLC grant application, March 9, 1998, p. 2.

⁴ Harbor After School Fact Sheet, 2003

⁵ 2002-2003 Harbor After School sign-up sheet

⁶ 2002-2003 Harbor After School sign-up sheet

⁷ Harbor After School Student Survey

Appendix

Criteria for Case Study Selection

- **Strong Community and Family Involvement** – Is the community informed about program goals, activities, and opportunities for involvement? Are there partnerships with local businesses and community groups? Are public officials kept up-to-date on the program's needs and successes? Are family members encouraged to participate meaningfully in programming? Is the program accessible to a broad range of students and families?
- **Exemplary Programming** – Is the program research-based? Are the practices and theories that support it tied to youth development theory? Is there good quality control? Does the program meet the needs of diverse students? Does the program complement students' learning during the school day?
- **Effective Management and Administration** – Do program staff engage in short- and long-range planning? Is there an advisory board or a board of directors? Are there procedures in place to ensure that licensing, as well as space management, and safety issues are addressed effectively? Does the program provide healthy snacks or meals? Are there regular and consistent hours of operation? Is there collaboration between the after-school program and other organizations or agencies that sponsor it?
- **Excellent Staffing and Training** – Is there a staff orientation and training program? Are there professional development opportunities for staff members? Do staff members have relevant experience and appropriate qualifications to manage or deliver programming for children and youth? Does staff receive fair compensation/benefits? Are staff-to-youth ratios kept low? Are there cooperative relationships among in-school and after-school staff members?
- **Sound Financial Practices** – Are there internal control systems? Is there a business/development plan? Are procedures in place to ensure that low-income families have access to the program? Is the program sustainable over the long-term?
- **Effective Research and Evaluation Practices** – Are procedures in place for systematic and regular internal and external assessment of the program? Does evaluation include student achievement, performance, and behavior; does it measure outcomes? Do evaluation results demonstrate that the program benefits students, families, the school, and the community?
- **Active Involvement of the Principal in the Development and Management of the Program** – Does the principal play a key role in motivating staff to participate in innovative program practices; in establishing instructional linkages between in-school and after-school activities; in promoting organizational change and behavior; and in encouraging strong interpersonal relationships among all staff working for children? Does the principal ensure that sufficient space, transportation, administrative and custodial support, and school resources are available to the after-school program?

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