Partnerships for Learning:

Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports

Harvard Family Research Project

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Introduction

Grounded in research and supported by public policies and private funding, education and youth development fields are increasingly embracing the idea that multiple learning settings—from schools, to afterschool and summer programs, to physical and mental health services—can provide more opportunities for and benefits to children than schools alone. Out-of-school time (OST) programs in particular play a key role in children's learning; an extensive body of research suggests the academic, social, health, and other benefits of such programs and makes a strong case that they create important pathways to learning, particularly when they work closely with schools to support student success.[1]

In recognition of the belief that schools cannot do it alone, education innovations call for a more intentional focus on aligning school and non-school supports for children through such means as the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, which, for the past decade, has called for schools to work in partnership with community and faith-based organizations to support children's learning.[2] This policy momentum has led to tremendous growth in programs and initiatives aimed at developing and sustaining intentional partnerships between OST supports (such as afterschool and summer programs) and schools to support children's learning and development. In addition, many local and national initiatives are creating and supporting efforts to institutionalize these connections, including those that rethink the use of time across the school day and year, and across the developmental continuum.[3] These efforts are referred to by a number of terms, including *integrated*, *expanded*, *extended*, or *complementary learning*. While these terms have somewhat different (but often overlapping) definitions, they all share one element in common: they seek to develop *partnerships for learning*.

What are Partnerships for Learning?

In partnerships for learning, in-school and non-school supports collaborate as *equal partners* to work toward a *shared vision* for children's learning. These partnerships can be structured in a number of different ways and involve a variety of partners, including schools, OST programs, physical and mental health services, and other community resources. The key element of these partnerships is that the relationships are not merely transactional in nature. Transactional relationships tend to be exchange-based and utilitarian, and are most interested in satisfying immediate needs. Instead, partnerships for learning aim to create transformative relationships, that is, relationships that are mutually beneficial, transcend self-interests to create larger meaning, and have a focus beyond utilitarian needs.[4] In transformational relationships, partnering entities work together to *integrate* and *complement* their services in support of children's learning. Through fostering these connections, partners are able to create

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[1] Little, P. (2009). *Supporting student outcomes through expanded learning*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems.

[2] See, for example, Weiss, H. B., Little, P. M. D., Bouffard, S. M., Deschenes, S. D., Malone, H. J. (2009*). The federal role in out of-school learning: After-school, summer learning, and family involvement as critical learning supports*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

[3] Harvard Family Research Project. (2005). *The Evaluation Exchange, 6*(1). Cambridge, MA: Author.

[4] Definitions of "transformative" and "transactional" from Enos, S., & Morton, K. (2003). Developing a theory and practice of campus-community partnerships . In B. Jacoby (Ed.), *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

a web of supports in which the linkages add up to more than the sum of their parts. These connections provide a more seamless approach to learning that addresses the complex conditions and variety of environments in which children learn and grow.

About this Report

The past 10 years have witnessed tremendous growth in programs and initiatives aimed specifically at developing and sustaining intentional partnerships between out-of-school supports (such as afterschool, summer, and arts and cultural programs, and health supports) and schools in order to support—but not replicate—in-school learning and healthy development, and many promising partnerships for learning now exist from which important lessons can be harvested.

This report aims is to share with OST program leaders, decision-makers, funders, and schools lessons from successful efforts to forge partnerships between schools and OST programs to support children's learning and development. Primarily offering lessons for OST programs and intermediaries (the majority of informants for this research represented the program perspective), this report also highlights lessons for schools when appropriate. In many cases, the lessons apply to both programs and schools in their partnering efforts.

Information for this report comes from interviews conducted by Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) with senior staff at eleven national organizations that work to support the learning outcomes of children and youth.[5]   As the table to the right shows, these organizations represent different service models. KIPP, for example, brings a school perspective about how to support youth academically, socially, and emotionally through an extended-day model that can include partnerships with other organizations. Communities in Schools and Children's Aid Society offer a range of services that are integrated with schools both during and after school. The Youth Development Institute acts as a technical assistance provider for afterschool and school

National Organizations in the Sample

Model	Organization
Extended Day	• Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)
School-Based Integrated Services	• Children's Aid Society (CAS)/Carrera
	• Communities in Schools
Technical Assistance	• Youth Development Institute
Afterschool and Youth Development Organizations	• After-School All-Stars
	• Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
	• Breakthrough Collaborative
	• Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)
	• Citizen Schools
	• Higher Achievement
	• National Indian Youth Leadership Project

partnerships with community-based organizations. The majority of these organizations, however, are afterschool and youth development organizations that work to bridge the afterschool/summer and typical school-day learning environments by forging connections to schools and school districts.

From these eleven organizations, three local sites were selected for more in-depth data collection, which involved interviews conducted with school staff (e.g., principal and teachers) and OST program staff (e.g., site coordinators and activity leaders). The three sites include Citizen Schools at Bedichek Middle School

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[5] Information for this brief is drawn from HFRP's ongoing evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies Disadvantaged Children and Youth Integrated Learning Cluster. For a more detailed description of the methodology used to generate this report, see Appendix A: Our Review Approach.

in Austin, Texas; After-School All-Stars at August Boeger Middle School in San Jose, California; and KIPP SHINE Prep elementary school in Houston, Texas.

Organization of the Report

The report is divided into four sections. Section 1 begins with a description of the benefits of OST–school partnerships for children, schools, and OST programs. Section 2 presents five research-derived principles of promising school–OST partnerships, offering specific strategies and examples for each. Section 3 contains profiles of "on-the-ground" partnership efforts, based on the in-depth interviews conducted at the three selected sites. Section 4 concludes the report with a discussion of conditions for optimal success in developing partnerships that will be sustainable.

I. Benefits of Partnerships for Learning

Youth, schools, and OST programs can all benefit from strong partnerships for learning. These partnerships can serve to strengthen, support, and even transform individual partners, resulting in improved program quality, more efficient use of resources, and better alignment of goals and curriculum. Below are examples of the key benefits of forming partnerships for learning.

A. Benefits to Youth

Improved social and academic outcomes. Evidence is mounting that sustained participation in quality OST programs that have strong connections to schools yield the biggest improvements in social and academic outcomes for youth.[6] For example, the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study found that afterschool programs with stronger relationships with school teachers and principals were more successful at improving students' homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior, and initiative than those programs with weaker (or non-existent) relationships with school staff.[7]

Continuity of services across the day, year, and developmental cycle. Partnerships for learning enable youth to have full-day and/or year-round, rather than piecemeal, learning opportunities. OST programs can also offer consistent adult support and programming from year to year to help students negotiate transitions and be more prepared as they progress through different grades and schools (from elementary school to middle school to high school). Helping students and their families understand the new structure and expectations of middle or high schools, OST programs can also help to maintain support services for youth at times during the year when schools are not in session (i.e., summers, school-year vacations and holidays, and weekends).

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[6] Little, P. M. D., Wimer, C., & Weiss. H. B. (2008). *After school programs in the 21st Century: Their potential and what it takes to achieve it*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

[7] Intercultural Center for Research in Education and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2005). *Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school: Massachusetts After-School Research Study* (MARS) report. Boston: United Way of Massachusetts Bay.

More diverse and comprehensive learning opportunities. OST programs tend to provide a wider range of services and activities, particularly enrichment and arts activities, than are offered during the school day. Because schools are under pressure to increase test scores and thus are devoting less time to enrichment and arts activities, OST programs are critical partners to help schools "fill the gaps" in their instructional offerings.

Access to additional community resources. Not only do strong partnerships for learning connect OST programs and schools, such partnerships can also act as a magnet to attract other partners and resources to support student learning. Schools and non-profits alike can make referrals and coordinate services so that youth and their families can take advantage of other programs and services to support student learning and growth.

B. Benefits to Schools

Improved teaching and learning in the classroom. Although equally important, the skills required to work in OST program are different from those required to work in schools. Partnerships for learning can leverage program skills to in-school instructional practices so that what happens in the OST setting impacts what happens in classroom settings. The first evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, for example, found that teachers who worked in OST programs reported that this additional professional experience helped them improve their teaching skills, build stronger relationships with students, and try new teaching strategies in the classroom.[8]

Support transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school. Schools benefit from partnerships for learning because OST programs can prepare and support students as they make transitions between schools and grades. As children and their families transition to new schools and classrooms, OST programs bridge that transition through recruitment at "younger" schools (e.g., middle school programs may recruit from elementary school student populations), summer programs, and consistent staff and programming from year to year. Through these efforts, OST programs help students and their families understand the new structure and expectations of middle or high schools by providing lessons and site visits.

Reinforce concepts, values, and skills taught in school. With a shared vision in a partnership for learning, OST programs can reinforce some of the key concepts, values, and skills taught during in-school hours. This consistency not only helps students, but also benefits schools that want to ensure they are instilling lessons that are applicable to real-life situations. Partnerships for learning are critical to helping schools teach their students by providing new, exciting ways for youth to reinforce a newly-learned concept or to apply what they have learned to different settings.

Improve school culture and community image. Especially when schools partner with non-profits that have a proven track record of success, schools' culture and reputation improve to

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[8] U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st-Century Learning Centers Program, First Year Findings*. Washington, D.C: Mathematica.

reflect the raising of expectations for their staff and students. Informants in this study all agreed that school image benefited due to the partnership practices between schools and OST programs.

Gain access to additional staff and resources to support in-school learning. School staff benefit from investing time in communicating with and supporting OST programs because they can access additional people and resources to help ease workload burden, improve efficiency, and share important student information. OST staff and volunteers represented in this study played a variety of roles in supporting in-school learning, including tracking student progress, identifying additional partners for the school, and teaching classes for the whole school that had been particularly successful in the OST program.

C. Benefits to OST Programs

Gain access to and recruit groups of students most in need of support services. OST programs can benefit from partnerships for learning by gaining access to schools with high percentages of the programs' target population, including youth who come from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds. By working with school and district leaders, OST programs can identify schools with high potential to form promising partnerships because school leaders want specifically to support certain groups of students and are looking for partnerships with OST programs to help meet the needs of these children and youth that cannot be met by the school alone.

Improve program quality and staff engagement. Just as in-class instruction can improve from strong partnerships, so, too, can OST program quality and staff engagement improve. For example, an evaluation of Supplemental Educational Services (SES) found that program quality suffered without effective partnerships between schools and SES providers. School staff were needed to help coordinate SES and identify and recruit participants; without the partnerships, SES providers were less able to align their supplementary education with in-school learning needs.[9] Increasingly, partnerships for learning are seen as a core component of OST program quality.

Optimal use of resources such as facilities, staff, data, and curriculum. OST programs stand to gain tremendously from the resources and expertise offered by schools. Cost-sharing agreements can help lower per-pupil expenditures for OST programs while still offering more supports for students. Similarly, partnerships for learning can help ensure that resources are allocated "smarter, not harder" so that money, staff, and equipment are used efficiently and efforts are not duplicated between schools and OST programs.

Given the multiple benefits of creating partnerships for learning, why don't more school-OST partnerships exist? The answer is very simple: Forging partnerships is hard work. It takes time, resources, and a commitment from both sides to making it work. The next section of the report offers a set of research-derived principles to help schools and districts forge sustainable OST–school partnerships, providing specific strategies for how to implement them.

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[9] U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2004). *Early implementation of supplemental educational services under the No Child Left Behind Act: Year one report.* Washington, DC: Author.

II. Key Principles to Promote Partnerships for Learning

At the heart of successful integrated learning opportunities are sound, sustainable partnerships among OST program providers and schools working together to support learning. While partnership development does not happen overnight, over time, effective partnerships move from being transactional to transformative in nature.[10] That is, partners move from operating as separate entities with separate goals and outcomes to working in conjunction with one another to create an expanded learning system with a shared vision, mission, and outcomes.

This study identified five strategies to support movement toward transformative, sustainable school–OST partnerships[11]:

    A. A shared vision of student learning and success, with explicit focus on supporting academics

    B. Blended staffing models that enable crossover among staff

    C. Partnerships at multiple levels within the school and district

    D. Connections to family and community resources

    E. Regular and reciprocal collection and sharing of information about student progress

The data collected for this report reveal something beyond the individual capacities of the partners. What clearly emerges is that effective partnerships share principles that transcend the capacities of individual partners and become the collective responsibility of the school and the programs alike. Each of these principles is described below, including key strategies that are linked to successful partnership efforts.

A. A Shared Vision of Student Learning and Success, with Explicit Focus on Supporting Academics

Having a shared vision of learning, which acknowledges the roles of both school and OST program in supporting and assessing student success, helps lay the foundation for partnerships for learning. A broader vision of learning helps schools to recognize non-school supports as critical in redefining what students need to be successful; it also helps OST programs better understand what they need to provide to complement in-school classroom instruction. Without this shared vision, competing agendas can cause school and OST programs to work at cross purposes. To create this shared vision of learning, OST programs and schools need to implement the following strategies.

> "I think the best relationships that we have with schools are where principals share our mission, share our values, share our philosophy that all children can learn at high levels. Then they see the entire community as their resource. Because they see that they cannot do the job alone, and that there are talents outside of their school building that can help them."
>
>   *– OST program director*

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[10] Enos & Morton, 2003.

[11] These principles were derived from interviews conducted by the HFRP evaluation team with senior leadership of eleven of Atlantic Philanthropies' direct service grantees. Data were augmented by a literature review on partnerships and collaboration.

1. **Start with schools and programs that are open to the partnership.**

While this may seem to state the obvious, programs and schools both need to be really willing to work together to create a true partnership of equal partners. However, too often this willingness is taken for granted, and partners end up in a struggle for power and ownership of the partnership, rather than creating something that is truly co-constructed.

For OST programs, creating a shared vision for learning begins with identifying schools that are most likely to understand the value of non-school supports and to see community partners as allies in their work. To find such school partners, programs often use specific criteria. For example, as a way to identify promising partnership schools, the Children's Aid Society conducts a due diligence process to select school partners that have a set of goals and beliefs that are in line with those of the program.[12] These and other OST programs are purposeful in selecting partners because they recognize that their ability to achieve program outcomes is affected by the level of investment and support from their school partners.

> "Our core belief is that the after-school or extended time program should be a full partner. We're looking for school partners who recognize the value that we can bring. We want to amend the traditional paradigm, or the presumption that the after-school program is a "tenant" who will erase the blackboards and put the chairs back where they were. At its best we will be seen as a partner that shares the same goals—of advancing learning and expanding opportunity for kids—and brings special talents, resources, and competencies that are distinctive and that the school may not have. The key to a good school partnership is finding the right partner, and we're looking for folks who are broad-minded."
>
> *- OST National Organization Leader*

At the same time, OST programs must respect the school's existing vision, and be willing to work with schools to create a structure that works for schools as well as for the programs. As one OST program director noted, "we have to produce a high-quality product for them, too, and let them see that we're really organized and really together and we understand the culture of schools." In order for their partnerships with schools to flourish, OST programs need to be seen as team players in the life of the school, so they are not seen, in the words of one OST program director, "as a one-way relationship—the 'we need, we need, we need.' We can 'give, give, give' too."

When OST programs show schools that they are willing to work cooperatively with them, schools are more likely to see programs as beneficial potential partners. For example, the San Jose After-School All-Stars director noted that the program is attractive to school districts partly because it provides mandatory homework time and funds the school's sports program. Programs can also demonstrate their value to schools by offering activities to schools that fill a need, rather than duplicating existing services—which can create competition for students and little to no added value to the school—or offering

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[12] Brigham, R. A. & Nahas, J. (2008). *Children's Aid Society/Carrera Integrated School Model: Documentation of early implementation in four schools*. Cambridge, MA: Brigham Nahas Research Associates.

services in which the school is not interested. For example, the KIPP SHINE school chose to partner with a soccer league instead of a football team because the principal wanted its boys and girls to have a more gender-neutral sports experience (soccer tends to attract both boys and girls, while football tends to attract more boys).

2. **Inventory and explicitly address partner goals, roles, and measures of success.**

OST programs and schools work best together when they are explicit about their goals, what each partner will bring to the table, and how they will know when they are successful. As one OST program director noted, "ultimately, it's a matter of people understanding that it's mutual accountability— that we're both accountable for youngsters' success, and then figuring out together the role that each one plays and where you can go." By asking "What matters to you?" and "How can we help you?" during the early stages of collaboration, partners signal their intent to work collaboratively with a shared purpose and sense of responsibility.

Issues of partners' roles and goals can be addressed formally through a written Memorandum of Understanding or informally through regular communication, and require negotiation about what the partners hope to achieve and how they will work together. For example, the After-School All-Stars program works with schools to co-construct a mission and service delivery model, informed in part by surveys administered to school leaders about their school-wide goals and priorities. OST programs often seek access to space, students, and data from schools, while schools often want to ensure that programs will help them achieve their goals for students (e.g., academic achievement), without creating more work for their staff. To avoid creating more work for either schools or programs, partners need to develop coordinated operating procedures, for example, creating a shared set of guidelines for handling discipline and behavioral standards so that youth have one set of rules across the two settings.

Partners also must align how they define success in their efforts. Schools tend to focus on academic achievement as measured by test scores, while OST programs tend to focus on the value of enriching and fun activities as measured by youth engagement. Both schools and programs need to respect the priorities of each partner, and take steps to ensure that their own efforts don't conflict with the goals of their partner. Specifically, data suggest that successful OST programs most successfully partner with schools when they address academic achievement in some way, either through academically-focused program offerings such as homework help, or non-academic program offerings that indirectly support academic achievement, such as activities promoting positive behavior that can help students to better focus in the classroom. OST programs can also better understand school goals and priorities by tying their activities to state academic standards. Higher Achievement, for example, includes training on state academic standards, achievement tests, and instructional strategies as part of its annual staff orientation. This training allows program and school staff to have a common language and understanding when communicating with each other about students. It also helps the program to connect and align their OST activities with the school curriculum throughout the school year.

3. **Be intentional and explicit about the contrast between school and afterschool environments.**

> The past decade of evidence makes it clear that effective out-of-school learning environments complement, rather than replicate, in-school learning and development. In fact, a common thread among recent studies demonstrating the academic impact of OST programs is that effective programs not only intentionally tried to improve academic performance by offering academic support, but combined this support with other enrichment activities to achieve positive academic outcomes. Thus, extra time for academics by itself may be necessary but not sufficient to improve academic outcomes.

> However, balancing academic support with a variety of engaging, fun, and structured extracurricular or co-curricular activities that promote youth development in a variety of real-world contexts appears to support and improve academic performance.

> Because afterschool and summer programs are not regulated by time blocks and class schedules, they are able go into greater depth on specific topics and skills, offering students options and choices to pursue individual interests, and thereby strike the balance that the research suggests is necessary to achieve impact. But in addition to these structural differences, converging evidence suggests that out-of-school-time learning can and should "look and feel" fundamentally different from in-school learning environments and points to some specific aspects of effective out-of-school learning experiences. It is crucial for partners in learning to understand and respect a variety of pedagogies and approaches to learning across the day and across the year.

> | "Sometimes schools tell us that they would like our mentors to do nothing but academic tutoring. So, we have to work with them to show them the results of the mentoring research that indicates that the types of activities that work best in bringing about academic outcomes are not strictly academic activities, because the kids see that as more school." |
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> | *- OST National Organization Leader* |

4. **Reinforce relationships through regular communication and follow-through.**

> A shared vision for learning guides partners' goals, activities, roles, and measures of success, but once put into practice, these guidelines need revisiting and adjustment to reflect what is working and not working. Such necessary adjustments require regular communication about the shared vision and the strategies to support partnership efforts. At the outset of developing a shared vision and laying out each partner's expectations and measures of success, schools and OST programs should decide when and how they will communicate regularly about their successes and challenges.

> To ensure that programs and schools are able to open these lines of communication, partnerships must provide mechanisms by which they can connect with one another and keep informed of each other's progress. OST programs can encourage school staff to visit, participate in celebratory events, and read the programs' annual evaluation reports. Partners can also participate on each others' coordinating or advisory committees to keep abreast of important changes in partner priorities and reinforce their mutual interest in working together: School staff can sit on program boards or advisory committees, while program staff can sit on school governance teams or curriculum committees. BELL, for

example, encourages staff members to sit on school- and grade-level design teams. Through this participation, one of their sites learned about changes in the partner school's math curriculum and were able to work with school leaders to train program staff in the new method. OST program staff can also get involved with teacher-level committees and teams to build relationships with teachers, become familiar with the curriculum, and learn about student progress and challenges. Ultimately, participation in these sorts of structures helps partners consistently align their work to support their shared vision.

B. Blended Staffing Models that Enable Crossover among Staff

To help strengthen and maintain partnerships, programs and schools often create staffing structures that intentionally blend roles across school and out-of-school time, resulting in staff who work in both settings. A major benefit of this blended staffing is simply giving the partnership a visible presence in the school. This presence, in turn, allows school and OST staff to better coordinate between the two settings, since these overlapping staff are often the ones to implement and enforce consistent rules and expectations, or at least are in a position to point out any inconsistencies between the two settings. Blended staffing also benefits youth in providing consistent adult support spanning school and non-school hours. A benefit to the staff in such overlapping roles is that they are able to see the full picture of the children they serve—how a child's behavior, academic performance, and any other issues that arise during the school day may affect out-of-school time, and how what happens in the program can also affect the school day. Programs and schools use several blended staffing techniques that seem to be particularly successful in building and strengthening program–school partnerships, as outlined below.

1. Hire staff who can serve in both program and school settings.

Staff of the partnering entities need to be able to understand the bigger picture of their work, as well as the challenges and opportunities their partners face in their own learning settings. At the most basic level, OST programs need to ensure that someone on their staff has work hours spanning some in-school learning time in order to facilitate the principles and strategies involved in successful partnership-building.

From a program perspective, this blended staffing means hiring staff—often licensed teachers who "speak the same language" as school-day teachers— who have legitimacy in the school building and who are skilled at building relationships with school staff. Higher Achievement, for example, hires teachers from the school sites who become "bridges" enabling the program to make connections to the school. Blended staffing also means hiring program staff who have other duties and roles in the school building. Program staff at CAS/Carrera and Citizen Schools, for example, also serve as substitute teachers at the school.

> "Effective partnerships generally involve ways of building good feelings between the two different professional staff and strategizing on how to cross the lines of the professionals."
> *- OST program director*

From a school perspective, blended staffing means encouraging school-day teachers to consider working as part of an afterschool or summer learning team, so that they can

bring their content expertise to bear on supporting and reinforcing the development of critical learning skills. The dual roles of these teachers also facilitates information-sharing and forges connections with other teachers who might not otherwise make time for "outside" programs or services.

Blended staffing can go beyond teaching staff. Programs and schools sometimes jointly employ, or at least jointly benefit from, nonteaching staff such as counselors, safety officers, and custodians. For example, at one After-School All-Stars site, a safety officer provides services both during the school day and after school, and is employed by both the school and the afterschool program. The partnership between KIPP SHINE and Houston Achievement Place (HAP) involves a HAP staff person at the school two days a week helping students develop social skills that can transfer to the classroom. The staff person knows the school very well and incorporates school values into her trainings with teachers.

2. **Assign specific staff to be responsible for "on-the-ground" partnership efforts.**

Staff time and responsibilities must be allocated to partnership efforts to ensure that these efforts are well-managed and maintained. OST programs also often hire a full-time site coordinator who is responsible for communicating and building relationships with school day staff. The responsibilities of this coordinator may vary; they can involve such tasks as coordinating resources among partners and creating individualized learning plans for students based on those resources. Examples of other such staff positions employed by OST programs include (a) a full-time site manager who participates in all aspects of the school, including attending school leadership councils, meeting with and sharing data with classroom teachers, and going to school-based trainings (BELL); (b) full-time "community organizers" who track data on student absences, which the program then feeds back to the school (CAS/Carrera); and (c) a "Dean of Values and Culture," who is responsible for developing and nurturing community relationships, and ensuring that the partners' services align with the school's goals (KIPP SHINE).

3. **Build staff capacity to link to and understand partner goals.**

Regardless of who their staff are and where they come from, partnerships for learning recognize that each partner needs to understand the mission and goals of the other. Furthermore, as discussed above, addressing the differences between school and non-school learning contexts is critical. To do so, OST programs must offer their expertise to school staff and they must also build their own capacity and fluency in discussing the academic context that affects how principals and teachers make decisions and support student learning.

> "We're trying to build a sense of ownership for the program within the school that goes beyond just the principal, or one or two staff or faculty who are involved in working with us."
>
> *- OST program director*

A key strategy in building capacity to understand school goals and priorities is learning about state academic standards and being able to tie OST activities to those standards. The Higher Achievement Program, for example, provides training on state standards, achievement tests, and instructional strategies as part of its annual summer orientation

for staff. In turn, when OST staff have conversations with school staff, they share a common understanding and language for communicating about students. This professional development helps give OST program staff credibility in the school building; more importantly, it also helps them connect to and align their OST activities with the school curriculum throughout the school year.

C. Partnerships at Multiple Levels within the School and District

To be strong and sustainable, partnerships must include relationships built at multiple levels (e.g., district, school, and classroom) and among multiple school staff, including district and non-teaching staff. Working with partners at different levels helps the OST program to become infused into the daily life and culture of the school at all levels, from the principal to the custodian. In addition, relationships at various levels can help to mitigate the effects of staff turnover at other levels; for example, strong relationships with teachers can help to sustain the partnership in the event of a change in principals. Lastly, relationships at multiple levels provide a series of complementary benefits and opportunities that help ensure a more sustainable partnership. Ways that programs and schools build and maintain relationships at various levels follow.

1. **Build relationships at all levels, from leadership to support staff.**

   Programs' relationships with principals tend to be paramount in the success of the partnership. According to the evaluators of CAS/Carrera:

   > The most important element to making the right match and successful implementation is having the full commitment of the head of school. As the school leader, he or she sets the tone for expectations and determines the 'place' of CAS/Carrera staff within the school. Teachers look to the principal for guidance on how to (or whether to) work with staff and what the implications are for their own work and jobs.[13]

   Building relationships with teachers is also critical to support partnerships for learning. Teachers can help OST programs to gain access to students (e.g., for program recruitment) and student data (e.g., on academic progress), garner support and involvement of other teachers, and ensure that the program curriculum aligns with and complements in-class instruction.

   While relationships with principals and teachers are necessary to build partnerships, they are not sufficient. Relationships at other levels provide different and complementary benefits. At the district level, OST programs can work with district staff to negotiate relationships with schools, access school and student data, provide in-kind resources, and advise on program implementation and evaluation. Further, relationships with non-instructional staff, including bus drivers, custodians, administrative support staff, guidance counselors, and lunchroom workers, are also essential. For example, OST programs may leverage these relationships to get advice on how to approach district and

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[13] Brigham & Nahas, 2008.

school leaders, troubleshoot logistics such as scheduling or maintenance, and learn about community events and resources.

Many OST programs could use a grasstops approach to supporting partnerships for learning. They can use relationships with district staff to

- Negotiate relationships with potential partnership schools
- Access school and student data including student achievement data
- Provide in-kind resources such as transportation
- Advise on program design, implementation, and evaluation

Programs' relationships with principals tend to be the most crucial to the success of the partnership. By targeting principals and other school administrators, OST programs can

- Gain support from teachers
- Arrange agreements for resource-sharing, including having access to physical space
- Access student data, including report cards and school attendance records

Building relationships with teachers is also critical to support partnerships for learning. Teachers can help OST programs to

- Gain access to students for program recruitment
- Learn important information about students, including their progress in class
- Garner support and involvement of other teachers
- Ensure that the program curriculum aligns with and complements in-class instruction

Relationships with non-instructional staff, including bus drivers, custodians, administrative assistants, guidance counselors, and lunchroom workers, are also essential to partnerships for learning. OST programs may leverage these relationships to

- Get information on how to approach district and school-based staff
- Troubleshoot logistics such as scheduling or maintenance
- Learn more about community events and resources

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2. **Identify and leverage champions and early adopters.**

As OST programs and schools consider how to get buy-in from school staff for partnership efforts, partnering entities often cultivate a "coalition of the willing," targeting school staff who seem particularly enthusiastic about the program and actively seeking their support in promoting the program to those who are more skeptical, and who may be wary of efforts from outsiders (i.e., the program staff) to promote the program.

The most influential staff are not always obvious. Although principals are the positional leaders in schools, administrative assistants, bus drivers, custodians, and teachers are also often powerful voices among their peers, senior leadership, families, and community partners. One OST program director noted that when the program entered a new school, program staff first identify the "elite group" of school staff who seem to hold the most influence in the school, because: "Once you do, you create a chain reaction because they all talk to each other." Through these efforts, programs can cultivate school-based champions who can help "sell" the program to others at the school.

3. **Use strategic communication techniques to build relationships.**

One of the biggest challenges in partnerships for learning is for OST programs to get on the busy schedules of school staff. Principals and teachers, especially, have very little time to devote to their non-immediate job priorities, making strategic communication necessary to ensure that school staff will make time to build these relationships. Because OST programs may also face a credibility gap—partners do not always understand the role and value of out-of-school time learning—OST program staff may also have to work particularly hard at making sure their invitations for partnerships and messages are well-received. Effective communication is often personalized so that e-mails, flyers, or notes, all of which are easy to ignore, are followed up with face-to-face conversations in which the recipients of information can identify who is reaching out to them and why.

OST programs that participated in this study noted that in order for their partnerships for learning with schools to flourish they needed to be seen as team players in the life of the school. They needed to ease the workload of teachers and principals, rather than add to it. As one program leader noted, "So it's not seen as a one-way kind of relationship—the 'we need, we need, we need.' We can 'give, give, give' too." In partnerships for learning, partners are goal-oriented and offer solutions during their conversations, rather than focusing on complaints alone. They offer expertise and insight into challenges and provide each other with new ideas about how to approach and strengthen their shared vision for learning.

4. **Maintain relationships through multiple avenues and systems for communication.**

OST programs that communicate through multiple methods tend to be particularly effective in building relationships, especially with teachers. Furthermore, systems for communication help ensure that partners have a two-way dialogue and can share information readily with one another.

Formal communications structures, such as participation in school leadership teams or newsletters addressed to a specific audience, ensure that OST program staff have a regular way to communicate with district staff, principals, teaches, and non-teaching staff and can share feedback with one another. Citizen Schools staff, for example, leave cards in teachers' classrooms after they use the space asking them to assess the quality and condition of the room. Not only does this send a message that the OST program wants to honor the space they have been lent, but it also provides a drama-free way to communicate about any issues as they arise. OST programs may also want to develop relationships with certain stakeholders and can use their own governance structures to do so. For example, Breakthrough has the school superintendent on its board in one of the districts that the program serves.

Outreach and informal correspondence also help maintain these connections through such means as inviting school and district staff to do a site visit or to attend special events, conducting outreach through other teachers and school staff, staying connected by e-mail and phone, and meeting with teachers in the "crevices" of non-instructional time, such as before school or during teachers' planning periods. For example, OST programs may

hold breakfasts and lunches for teachers at times when they know that teachers are in the school building, since teachers are less likely to participate in program activities during afterschool hours.

D. Connections to Family and Community Resources

Family and community engagement is a critical component of partnerships for learning; both schools and OST programs are an important part of families' lives, of communities, and of education. Successful partnerships between schools and OST programs are bolstered when each can bring a set of additional relationships, and experience leveraging those relationships, to the partnership. OST programs and schools that have connections, information, and resources that the other partner cannot access on its own are attractive partners.

Through fostering these connections, partnerships for learning can expand to other people and institutions to build shared missions and goals, share resources and ideas, build stakeholder buy-in, and provide more coordinated services. This creates a web of complementary learning supports in which the linkages among many partners add up to more than the sum of their parts. By working across multiple people and institutions, these connections can also provide a more seamless approach to learning that addresses the complex conditions and variety of environments where children learn and grow.

1. Engage families in the life of the program and in their child's learning.

A strong body of evidence suggests the benefits of family engagement in schools from birth through adolescence, including positive outcomes for schools, families, and youth themselves. In addition, a small but growing evidence base also points to the value of engaging families in OST programs, the roles that families play in children's non-school experiences, and the variety of strategies that OST programs can use to effectively engage families in the life of their programs.

Programs that hold events on school campuses can attract large numbers of parents and family members. However, in order to reach high attendance levels by families, OST programs must have the relationships and systems in place that promote positive communication with families. Engaging families in OST programs starts by valuing the contribution of all families and defining family involvement through a set of beliefs and expectations that program staff share. For example, Citizen Schools staff contact the families of their youth participants at least once every two weeks. Program staff are then evaluated on this communication through parent surveys at the end of the year.

> "I just think people often have a notion of involvement that doesn't fit the reality of how a lot of our parents think. And so, their involvement may look different or sound different than what a middle class person would expect. I think it's one of the issues the public perceives that these parents don't really don't care. But they make sure their child is at school every day, on time, for what is a long day; that they did their homework; and then they are there when they are needed and ready to engage."
>
> *- OST National Organization Leader*

2. **Act as a broker between families, schools, and programs.**

Schools often report that they have difficulties engaging families, and OST programs can provide an avenue by which they can do so more effectively. Family members who do not understand schools, or feel intimidated by them, may be more comfortable communicating with OST program staff, who often live and work in their own communities. In turn, OST programs that have successfully accessed and supported families in their own work are well-positioned to be a liaison between families and schools.

OST programs can provide training and ongoing support to parents to help them navigate and improve the ways in which they are involved with schools and communicate with school staff. Some OST programs directly address the barriers that many families face in being involved in the educational life and decisions of schools and school systems. The National Indian Youth Leadership Project, for example, offers parent advocacy classes to help parents feel less intimidated by schools and feel more comfortable attending parent-teacher conferences. Programs can also coach parents with tips and tools that can help them more effectively communicate with school day staff, offering guidance on which school staff to contact, the best methods to do so, and questions to ask of school staff.

> "We've got a whole program element that's devoted to being in touch with families. Most schools either don't have the resources or the culture to be calling parents regularly."
> – *OST program director*

OST programs can also support teachers and other school staff in figuring out how to involve families. For example, the Youth Development Institute supports Beacons afterschool programs in their ongoing conversations with schools about how to integrate family and community voices into their decision-making. Program staff often have detailed information about their students' home lives—for instance, factors that may contribute to behavioral problems, or the neighborhood context where the family lives— that they can share with schools and teachers. On a personal level, program staff can communicate with school staff about when and how to best reach out to families about their child's progress, as well as providing additional information, often gleaned from families, about student strengths and challenges. Some programs also act as liaisons coordinating meetings between families and school staff.

3. **Help access community and other resources.**

In addition to their connection to families, OST programs may have access to additional resources that provide an incentive for schools to prioritize partnerships with them. OST programs can act as a "convener of partners," both at the local and national level, to help coalesce resources to address additional school needs beyond the scope of their direct partnership. For example, Higher Achievement works with a corporate sponsor to provide computer upgrades at all of its partner school sites every two years. This investment in the school's infrastructure serves all of its students, not just those participating in the OST program.

Programs and schools are especially effective in engaging additional community partners when they adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach to provide a suite of services (e.g., physical and mental health) to meet the needs of their students and their families. Communities in Schools, for example, hire staff members to provide in-class instruction, mental and social services, and employment opportunities, among other services, into the traditional school day. In some cases, schools take responsibility for coordinating these multiple services while in others, OST programs provide staff and funding to bring together multiple partners.

E. Regular and Reciprocal Collection and Sharing of Information about Student Progress

Consistent sharing of data between programs and schools provides value in partnerships for learning whether that data involves information about student well-being, academic outcomes such as grades or test scores, or program evaluation results. Both schools and OST programs are becoming increasingly data-driven, especially given increased accountability requirements for educational systems and program funders. However, while data sharing is one of the most critical ingredients to supporting student success, it is also one of the most difficult resources to negotiate. Turf issues, privacy concerns, and limited time can prevent information flow across partners. As such, it is particularly crucial for programs and schools to be strategic and savvy in their data sharing methods. Many of the strategies described throughout this report, particularly those related to building relationships at multiple levels, lay the foundation for effective data-sharing. However, there are several additional strategies that help partnerships to more effectively share data, as outlined below.

1. **Create and use data collection systems that gather the "right" information.**

    Both schools and OST programs need to have the internal capacity to get and use information in an effective way. They do not collect data "for data's sake," but instead do so purposefully and strategically. This means that partners typically have thought about what information they need, for what purposes, how easily available the data are, and how much time and resources they are willing to invest in gathering that information. Data-sharing serves three major purposes in partnerships for learning.

    First, shared data can be used to identify and address student needs across learning settings. Schools, parents, and programs need to see "the big picture" of what is happening in a child's life across the many people and places with whom the child engages. By communicating about what kinds of learning and experiences a child is getting and when, partners can identify gaps and additional needs for particular students. After identifying these needs, they can leverage the best strategies and services to address them. In addition to looking at the spectrum of services a child is receiving, sharing attendance records is also important to understand more about what students are doing throughout their day and to ensure that OST

    > "We would like to be getting as much information about the students as we possibly can in order to support them. The way we frame that with the schools is that we are trying to support these students to achieve as highly as they possibly can, and the only way we can do that is if we have all of the necessary information in a timely manner in order to attend to whatever the issues may be coming up."
    >
    > *– OST program director*

program participation is adequate to make an impact. Beacon programs, for example, use their attendance data to connect with schools to see if particular youth have been attending school regularly and whether there are any issues the programs should know about. They also use these data to reach out to families about their children's participation.

Second, data sharing is used to assess quality and improve partnership efforts. Partnerships for learning regularly assess whether the services provided are achieving what they intended and how they can be improved to ensure that they are deriving the maximum benefit for youth. Through regular and ongoing evaluation and discussion about what lessons partners are learning, OST programs and schools use data sharing to understand partnership quality and to engage in a continuous learning process to better support youth. Data from the CAS/Carerra program evaluation, for example, suggest that teachers use information about students provided by program staff to help with classroom management.[14]

Third, data sharing is used to demonstrate program or partnership results and accountability. Partners need access to data that can help them to understand their individual and collective impact. This is particularly important for OST programs, which often report that they face challenges in proving their value to schools. The National Indian Youth Leadership Project, for instance, gained credibility with several principals who are now their main advocates in the district by sharing data that provide evidence of the program's positive impact. In addition to ensuring that partners understand each other's added value, data sharing also helps show other stakeholders, including funders, families, and the public, what the partnership is achieving by collaborating.

2. **Engage in data-sharing agreements at multiple levels.**

    Developing multiple methods of obtaining information is a primary tactic for schools and OST programs in accessing and using data. These multiple methods provide a constellation of data sources that can feed into the partnership's efforts to support students, improve programming, and demonstrate accountability. School districts and local education agencies are a key entry point and lever for OST programs to access information. Rather than having to negotiate with individual schools, they can develop district-level agreements and then negotiate access to schools through the district. At one Breakthrough Collaborative site, for example, the program director spent significant time developing relationships with district staff so the program could use the district's data system. Access to this portal provided the program with weekly updates on students' progress, rather than the less frequent updates by semester that grades provide.

    In addition to district-level agreements, partnerships can tap into other school-level and program-level data sources to get more timely information. For programs, this includes gaining access from schools to attendance information, report card grades, and disciplinary referrals. For schools, this includes gaining access to data on program

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[14] Brigham & Nahas, 2008.

attendance and student-level data collected by the program about their youth participants. Another important source of information is parents and family members, especially if school or program partners are unwilling or unable to share information. Higher Achievement, for example, requires that parents sign a contract to bring in their child's report cards each quarter.

3. **Ensure transparency and reciprocity in data-sharing.**

Successful data sharing goes both ways: programs share data with schools, and schools share data with programs. Sharing data between partners requires a sense of trust amongst partners, which can take time to build. Partners need to work together to build this trust, which can be fostered through a clear sense of how data will be used, and an understanding that both partners will share data with one another. There are two ways that partners can facilitate this process.

First, partners must communicate clearly what they need from each other and how that information will be used; busy program staff, teachers, and others are more likely to take the time to share information when they know what purpose it serves and understand the value of how the data will be used. For example, Citizen Schools staff let teachers know that they need a few minutes of their time to discuss an individual student's progress so that they can be sure to address those needs in their program.

Second, partnerships for learning use a feedback loop so that there is a give-and-take relationship. This reciprocity helps schools and OST programs build trust in each other and provides mutual benefits to programs and schools. For example, after Citizen Schools staff get information from a teacher about a discipline issue with a student, they then go back to the teacher to describe how they addressed the issue in the program. In many cases, OST programs, unhindered by some of the administrative and bureaucratic constraints affecting schools and districts, can be innovators in how they gather and use information to inform their day-to-day work and can then transfer these strategies to schools. BELL's partner schools in one district, for example, had to wait months before student achievement test scores were returned. In response, BELL invested in a new platform to assess achievement test data that returned scores within 24 hours. They then shared this information with teachers when they met to discuss student goals for the year.

4. **Credit and celebrate partners' roles in achieving outcomes.**

Partnerships for learning are collaborative efforts, and recognizing the value and contributions of each partner helps validate the challenging and time-consuming work that goes into maintaining these partnerships. Some programs such as Higher Achievement build a strong base for partnerships by acknowledging that their positive outcomes (e.g., increased test scores) are only possible with the contributions of their partners. This recognition may happen in the form of written reports, end-of-year celebrations, support letters for grants, or simply the day-to-day conversations that show appreciation. Partners that step back and celebrate their successes help motivate their staff, strengthen their partnerships, and sustain their work over time.

III. Case Studies

The site-based profiles in this document provide a snapshot of school–community partnerships in action and illustrate how diverse programs and models take advantage of five core strategies (outlined on page 8 and discussed throughout Section II) to effectively build and sustain partnerships for learning.

Each profile highlights certain aspects of how the partnerships have been applied in the day-to-day lives of schools and community-based programs. The profiles present three different approaches to partnerships for learning strategies, reflecting the diverse shapes of such partnerships in the field today. The partnerships profiled are

- **After-School All-Stars at August Boeger Middle School, San Jose, CA:** A partnership in which the school and afterschool program complement each other's strengths to achieve common goals.

- **Citizen Schools at Bedichek Middle School, Austin, TX:** An integrated partnership between a school-based afterschool program and the middle school that hosts it.

- **KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) SHINE Prep elementary school, Houston, TX:** A partnership between a charter elementary school and community-based organizations to support learning during the school day and beyond.

While each of these partnerships operates from a unique philosophy and model, the strategies and lessons are applicable to a wide range of sites and types of learning partnerships. Two of the three profiles focus on school–afterschool partnerships for learning, and one focuses on school partnerships with community institutions. We encourage readers to think about applying the lessons learned from all of these approaches to other models, including school-based partnerships with programs and organizations providing health, social service, and other diverse family and student supports.

Greater San Jose After-School All-Stars at August Boeger Middle School

"We've had an impact [on students], so much to the point where the principal wants to know how we could collaborate and get the kids as involved in school as they are in the afterschool program."
— Site Supervisor, After-School All-Stars Program (ASAS) Boeger Middle School

The August Boeger Middle School and the After-School All-Stars (ASAS) program that the school hosts have similar goals for their students. Together, the school and the program have found ways to complement each other's offerings and strengths to promote those goals. August Boeger, serving grades 6–8 in San Jose, California, belongs to one of four school districts served by the San Jose Chapter of ASAS (see program description in the textbox to the right). This chapter was founded in 1997 as part of the Inner-City Games Program through the San Jose Sports Authority, the City of San Jose, and the Division of Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services. ASAS at Boeger offers the following activities to about 160 participants (2:30–6:00 pm, Monday through Friday) during the school year:

> **The After-School All-Stars Model**
> Begun as Inner-City Games in 1993 to bring afterschool sports programs and events to at-risk youth, After-School All-Stars (ASAS) changed its name in 2003. ASAS provides comprehensive afterschool programs that include three elements: Academics, Enrichment, and Health/Fitness. The program's mission is "to provide comprehensive out-of-school programs that keep children safe and help them achieve in school and in life." ASAS programs now serve 70,000 youth annually through afterschool and summer programs in 13 cities across the country.

- Homework Center: Time dedicated to homework completion.

- Enrichment Classes: 5–6 week sessions focused on academics.

- Fitness/Health and Wellness: Games that provide exercise but are not necessarily competitive or that require exceptional athletic abilities; the games build skills such as listening, team building, and motor coordination.

- Organized Sports: A variety of sports such as flag football, soccer, lacrosse, tennis, and basketball.

ASAS program staff at Boeger include several program leaders, a site supervisor, and support from district and the ASAS management staff, including a guidance counselor who works in all 13 middle schools in San Jose that have an ASAS program. School staff, including teachers and the custodian, sometimes work as leaders of activities in the afterschool program as well. The school leadership at Boeger fully support ASAS and communicate regularly with ASAS staff to ensure that the program is aligned with the school.

Foundations of the Partnership

Partnerships with schools became a new focus of ASAS's work in 2003. At that time, the ASAS program underwent a "time of reflection" in an effort to better serve the needs of its youthful participants. As a result, ASAS shifted its focus from offering primarily summer sports programming to a school-based "comprehensive approach" that includes academics and enrichment in addition to sports. (Today, about 75 percent of ASAS programs nationwide are school-based; the rest are community-based legacy programs focused on sports.) In partnering

with schools, ASAS' primary goal is to serve as an intermediary, or bridge, that connects school, afterschool, and family domains for children and youth. A secondary goal is to ensure that children are safe after school. By working with schools, ASAS hopes, ultimately, to offer students the support they need to achieve passing grades and to graduate from high school.

At Boeger, the principal and assistant principal report several major motivations for partnering with ASAS.

First, they feel that the program provides students with a safe place to be after school. They claim that, without ASAS, "Our kids would not have anything to do after school … Since the school is occupied until 6:00, I think it cuts down on fights, vandalism … it's great to have people here, supervised, until late hours of the evening." They further noted, "It's a safe place for the students to be when there's no one at home to take care of [them]" and that without the program, "we have students hanging around at school, but with no supervision."

Second, school leaders see ASAS as valuable in providing opportunities that students would not otherwise have, and in generating enthusiasm and excitement in the participants:

> They have a culminating activity after each [session]… and I see our kids being able to share their talent, having so much fun, so excited! Things that they've learned that maybe some kids would learn from the parents, or in their neighborhood. Our kids would not have that opportunity. So the added value is all the things that the students get to do. They absolutely love to be there... I wish we could bottle that enthusiasm and get it into the classroom!

Third, they feel that the academic support that students receive through mandatory homework time at ASAS is helpful, especially for those students whose parents do not speak English and thus have difficulty helping their children with their homework.

Last, they appreciate the fact that ASAS does not create extra work for the school: "They don't drag somebody in here and say, 'You guys need to punish these kids because they were naughty in our program.' They take care of their management when this child is in their program." The school leaders added that having 150 students on campus after school did not create more work for them, because ASAS staff "take care of it."

Building and Sustaining the Partnership

A number of factors are especially salient in the ability of ASAS and Boeger to partner successfully with each other.

A shared vision for learning

> Aligning school and program goals, curricula, and rules, ASAS works with schools to ensure that their services align with each school's values and needs. As a first step, ASAS surveys potential school partners to determine their specific needs for afterschool programming and to identify how ASAS can best fill those needs. The San Jose ASAS director noted that the program is attractive to school districts partly because it provides

mandatory homework time and assistance through the program's "Homework Center," and because it fully funds the sports program for the school. He also felt that the program's required daily attendance policy (three unexcused absences result in dismissal from the program) demonstrates a sense of accountability to the schools.

Once ASAS has developed and implemented services aligned with the school's needs, ASAS staff and school staff at each site work together to develop a joint mission, vision, and goals tailored to their specific site. The ASAS site supervisor at Boeger explained that the missions and goals developed for ASAS at the school site level directly connect to the missions and goals of the schools because "We don't want to be a separate program, outside, so everything the school implements we implement as well." (See textbox this page for the mission, vision, and goals developed at Boeger.)

With these shared guidelines in place, ASAS and the school work to align their curricula and values in a way that complements, rather than duplicates, efforts. In San Jose, increasing ASAS' efforts to strengthen and support school day learning is a priority, especially to help "sell" ASAS to schools and other stakeholders. The San Jose ASAS guidance counselor explains that the ASAS staff learn the state education standards: "They're then aware of what the expectations are in the classroom, during the school day; they're able to tie in some of those standards into their enrichment classes." She also notes that ASAS has "credentialed teachers on staff that are able to look through our lesson plans, or help mentor our staff."

> **ASAS at Boeger:**
> **Mission, Vision, and Goals**
>
> **Mission**: Build trust, respect and responsibility through fairness, caring, and modeled citizenship while providing a safe environment in the community.
>
> **Vision**: See participation from staff and students, homework completion, engagement, physically fit students, responsible and respectful students and staff.
>
> **Goals**: Maintain academic excellence (hold children accountable), more parent involvement, make sure program stays engaging, and become a cohesive unit.

Beyond curriculum alignment, ASAS and Boeger build continuity by enforcing the same set of rules. ASAS staff know and follow the school's handbook and all of the rules it contains. As school leaders explain, "If we don't allow certain items of clothing, they don't allow it. If we don't allow iPods, they don't allow it. If we don't allow cell phones to be out, they don't allow it. So, they know that the kids know that the rules are the rules *all* the time that they're in school."

Multi-level relationships: Creating district and school-level relationships to ensure sustainability

ASAS creates strong relationships with schools at various levels among district staff, school leadership, teachers, and support staff. These multi-level relationships help ensure that the partnership is strong and sustainable, and are especially helpful for managing staff turnover in schools and programs.

ASAS' leadership structure builds continuity across multiple programs within a school district, which helps cement partnerships between individual programs and schools. For each school district in San Jose, an ASAS District Manager is responsible for the sites in that district and oversees the site supervisor at each school. Along with the site supervisors, each district manager meets with principals in his or her district to share ideas and program plans. Across the Mt. Pleasant school district in San Jose, ASAS programs work together closely to act as one program, with Boeger (the one middle school in the district) serving as the "glue" for the district's four elementary school programs. The ASAS site supervisor at Boeger also serves as the assistant district supervisor, further connecting programs across the district.

One of the benefits of this cross-district collaboration is building sustained participation in the OST program across age groups, even into middle school when participation often drops off. Students in the Mt. Pleasant district often begin participating in ASAS in elementary school, so afterschool participation becomes part of the school culture and allows for a natural progression from year to year. Thus, participation during middle school is more sustained. As one partner describes,

> We started off with real low, low numbers… The reason is, when you give a junior high a program like this, a lot of the kids are too cool to be in a program like this. And I think what made it stronger [is] …these kids have come up through this program, because the parents put them in the program [when they are in elementary school]. So now they get to junior high, and it's part of their school, it's part of their life now.

Another result, according to the guidance counselor, is that ASAS participants have a smooth transition from elementary to middle school: "Crossing that transition, that's unique. Sometimes, it's hard enough to break the silo of just doing your own thing, much less with schools that your children are either coming from or going to."

Beyond district-level relationships, site-level relationships between the program and the school principal are crucial to ASAS' success. The ASAS–San Jose Executive Director asserted, "No matter what I do with principals, it comes down to how my head supervisor [at the site] interacts in relationship with that principal… The stronger your relationship with the principal, the stronger your program." At Boeger, the ASAS site supervisor had been at that school for only a little over a year, but he had previously worked closely with the principal as part of a mentoring program. He felt that the school leadership at Boeger had "been working together for so long that they know their role and so they work really well together." He also felt that he and the principal: "see eye to eye on almost everything," which created a sense of trust. For example, the principal bent the rules to let a student who had been suspended participate in the ASAS football team. The site supervisor reported that, "Her comfort level with me, and my comfort level with her, she's just like, 'if you work with him and he progresses, then I'll allow him to play football'." The site supervisor and principal maintain regular communication through informal conversation as well as formal monthly meetings.

Ongoing efforts to sustain positive and open communication between ASAS and teachers also seem to go a long way in promoting strong partnerships. For example, the site supervisor at Boeger felt that ASAS staff who make an effort to interact with teachers greatly help in building the partnerships on the ground: "A simple, 'Hello. How are you doing? How's your day?' It can just change your relationship with them so quick." One of the ways ASAS staff at Boeger facilitate communication is by leaving a daily "evaluation" card in the classrooms that they use for their activities. The next morning, the teacher in that classroom fills out the card with feedback about the condition in which ASAS left the classroom, and ASAS staff pick it up that afternoon. This method, according to the site supervisor, allows for simple and quick feedback between ASAS and teachers, preventing problems from escalating: "You're able to correct your problems from the start." In these simple ways, the site supervisor felt that he was able to set the tone for his staff, and to establish truly reciprocal approachability between ASAS program staff and school staff.

The San Jose ASAS guidance counselor reported that the school custodian is one of the most important allies to the program, but often one of the more difficult to get on board: "As far as the school, obviously, your best friend has to be your custodian. So that's usually the biggest challenge for the school. It's an additional 3 hours, and they never banked on custodial work for the next 3 hours." At Boeger, ASAS successfully recruited the custodian to serve as one of the program leaders, helping with the enrichment, physical activity, and academic components. In this way, ASAS and the school ensure that the school facilities are maintained throughout the school day and after school. In addition, the custodian is able to take on an additional role after school, and has an opportunity to work with students in a manner that is not possible during the school day.

Blended staffing: A consistent presence from the site coordinator

Boeger and ASAS have established structures that allow staffing responsibilities to cross the school and afterschool hours, facilitating continuity between the school and the program. This overlap allows staff to better communicate across these settings, and to have a better sense of what is happening on the school campus both in school and after school.

For example, the ASAS site supervisor's schedule allows him to be on the school campus in the mornings two days per week. He feels that being on campus during school hours allows him "to be aware of what's going on, what might go on after school." This time also gives him the opportunity to check in with the school counselor, the principal, and teachers for updates on what happened with students during the school day. The site supervisor feels that these informal interactions keep the tone light, helping defuse any potential tension that might arise in a more formal setting. In this way, the site supervisor has been able to establish himself as a regular presence at the school, and to foster regular lines of communication between the program and the school.

Data sharing: Using student data to respond to individual needs

Boeger makes student-level school data readily available to ASAS program staff, helping ASAS to better respond to individual students. The school district uses a student data management system called Power School, which provides student data access to select individuals, including school staff, parents, and ASAS staff. These data include not only academic information (e.g., grades and attendance) but also student demographic data, including parents' contact information and behavioral data (as reported by teachers and administrators). ASAS staff are able to access these data to check whether their program participants need support for behavioral problems or failing grades.

Because ASAS has built a strong relationship with the district, the district is willing to trust ASAS with school data. However, the sensitive nature of the data requires that ASAS staff complete a formal process to gain access, including paperwork on confidentiality procedures. The site supervisor describes how he was able to get access to these data:

> I've been with this district for 9 years. So I've built a lot of relationships over time, over the years. I'm in the district office all the time, so you just start building relationships with them. And I started off as a youth leader and worked my way up. So I got to know everybody on my way up …They support you, and they help you out as much as they possibly can, as well as you do the same for them. But now it became such a necessity that we needed to know their grades that they provided all the site supervisors with it in that district.

Reflections on the Partnership

One of the strengths of the ASAS–Boeger Middle School partnership is that all parties benefit. ASAS gains access to credentialed teachers, to students, and to families. The school principal and assistant principal are able to focus on their other duties, confident that students are safe and cared for after school. Students find some continuity in the adults with whom they interact during the day and after school (e.g., the program site coordinator and the custodian). Everyone benefits from the enthusiasm that the program engenders in participants and both school and afterschool staff are actively working to transfer that positive energy into the classroom. As a school leader noted, ASAS "motivates [students] to go to school. They like to be here. They get connected to the leaders, too. I think that's another adult role model, and another adult that knows them."

Citizen Schools at Bedichek Middle School

"Afterschool is not an afterthought. You know, we're all working around the clock, and even into the summer months, to make sure that the program is as rigorous, as engaging, and valuable, time-wise, for the students."
— Citizen Schools Campus Director at Bedichek Middle School

The learning day at Bedichek Middle School in Austin, Texas looks different from the way it did a few years ago, thanks to a partnership between Bedichek and Citizen Schools. Citizen Schools, a national organization that operates afterschool and extended day programs including two in Austin, works closely with the school to provide afterschool learning opportunities to over 100 (roughly 10 percent) of its students in grades 6–8. Through this close partnership, learning is now more integrated across the school and afterschool hours.

The Citizen Schools program at Bedichek includes four core components based on the Citizen Schools national model (see text box for more detail): youth apprenticeships, exploration opportunities, academic support, and culminating "WOW!" events that showcase student learning. Bedichek's Citizen Schools program has eight staff who have "team leader" duties, which include leading and tutoring groups of 8–12 students, supporting and coaching community volunteers who teach apprenticeships, and regularly communicating with families, community members, and school staff. Of these eight program staff, three are AmeriCorps-supported teaching fellows who work an extra half-day in partner agencies in addition to their work as Citizen Schools team leaders. One of these half-day assignments is spent teaching at Bedichek during the school day. The Bedichek Citizen Schools program is overseen by a campus director and by a Citizen Schools deputy director at the district level who works with all participating schools from the Austin Independent School District.

> **The Citizen Schools Model**
> Citizen Schools is an interactive afterschool program that was founded in Boston in 1995 and currently operates 44 program sites in seven states. Citizen Schools seeks to inspire middle-school students and eventually transform public education by expanding the learning day, providing more relevant learning experiences, and supporting youth with more caring adults. The Citizen Schools model includes
>
> - Apprenticeships taught by community members
> - Exploration sessions including community field trips and service opportunities
> - Academic support and instruction
> - Culminating events, called WOW! projects, that allow students to showcase what they have learned in their apprenticeships to staff, families, educators, and community members.

Foundations of the Partnership

The Citizen Schools national office, which actively seeks partnerships with schools, initially identified and targeted Bedichek Middle School as a potential site in 2005. In addition to Bedichek's high-need Title I population (which matches Citizen Schools' target demographic groups), Citizen Schools staff were attracted by the fact that the school had a veteran principal who had led Bedichek for a full six years, had frequently worked with afterschool programs, and was known for being a strong advocate and partner in community schools.

When Citizen Schools staff approached the principal about a potential partnership, she initially hesitated to adopt the program. Having recently completed a long grant-writing process to obtain

21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funds and committed to working with another afterschool provider, she was not sure Bedichek had sufficient resources to fund and manage another afterschool partner. She was also skeptical about whether there was enough demand for additional afterschool services.

Citizen Schools staff won her over, however. From experience, Citizen Schools staff had identified persistence and patience as essential in developing partnerships with schools. They created as many opportunities as they could to demonstrate—politely and respectfully—how they could add value to Bedichek and how the school's and program's values could align and strengthen each other's work.

One of Citizen Schools' strategies for winning support from school administrators involves leading site visits for principals and other school leaders to existing Citizen Schools sites. When the executive director of Citizen Schools' national partnerships led Bedichek's principal and a district community schools liaison on a site visit to one of Citizen Schools' Houston campuses, it marked a turning point for the partnership. During the visit, school and district staff toured the school, sat down with the principal to ask how the program was working, and met with school staff, family members, and Citizen Schools staff. They also attended a WOW! event and the principal remembered:

> As we went around to the different apprenticeships, the students were dressed nicely and they were explaining what they had learned in their apprenticeship, who they worked under, why they chose the apprenticeship, what they hoped to do with it, and how it might impact them. We were wowed, because we could tell that these children were like our children and that they had evolved to an additional level that we didn't have our kids at.

Following the site visit, Bedichek's principal commented, "I was able to come back with [the district community schools liaison] and really articulate to my teachers and my staff what I had seen, and what I was so excited about." In other words, she was able to communicate with Bedichek's staff about how Citizen Schools could complement their goals for their students.

The principal ultimately was convinced that Citizen Schools was a good fit for Bedichek for a number of reasons. First, she was impressed with how the program could complement Bedichek's in-school learning through the use of apprenticeships. Second, she liked the fact that Citizen Schools had a built-in infrastructure that allowed for ongoing, quality offerings, unlike some of the school's past afterschool programs, which had relied on teacher volunteers and operated on drop-in, rather than sustained, student participation. Finally, she was attracted to the program by the additional 20 hours of in-school support it offered her through a shared teaching fellow, which allowed the school to "connect what we're doing in the day time to the afterschool program in a much stronger way."

Building and Sustaining the Partnership

While the foundation for an integrated approach to learning was laid when Citizen Schools and Bedichek selected each other as partners, core strategies have helped to cement a long-term collaborative relationship.

Multi-level relationships: Communication at the core

At the heart of the partnership effort between Citizen Schools and Bedichek is a commitment to communication among all parties involved. Since the initial site visit to Houston, the Citizen Schools' national office has continued to communicate regularly with Bedichek's principal. Although this communication includes a formal Memorandum of Understanding, both program and school staff believe that it is their regular and informal discussions that have "held the partnership together."

In addition to building a strong working relationship with the principal, Citizen Schools staff are in regular contact with school-day staff, particularly teachers. The Austin deputy program director emphasizes how staff approach teachers strategically to let them see how Citizen Schools can help them: "These teachers already have their plates full and are being given so many directives that working with us has to come across as something that takes more off their plate, rather than is more work for them." Similarly, while the principal played a role in helping Citizen Schools gain initial access to teachers, she points out that it is up to the program to continually prove itself:

> You can stand up and give a song and dance and say to your staff, 'I want you all to do...' but it's not going to maintain or sustain itself unless the program is truly helping the teachers and following through with what they're saying… [When Citizen Schools staff seek and share information with teachers] the teacher begins to go, 'Whoa!...This is something that is going to directly benefit me.'

Citizen Schools staff and Bedichek teachers engage in a two-way information-sharing loop. Communication happens in multiple forms: by email and written notes, at quarterly breakfast meetings sponsored by Citizen Schools, and through face-to-face conversations before and after school, during transition times, at lunch, and during planning periods. Sometimes this communication is formal and staff set a time and place to touch base about specific students, while at other times the communication is informal and occurs spontaneously because the staff and teachers share space. One of the teaching fellows recommends communication with teachers that is short, goal-oriented, and in-person: "I ask, 'Are they missing assignments? Is it just a matter of them not doing well on tests? Is it a behavior issue?'"

The Citizen Schools staff are committed to strategic advocacy for their program at the school level. "Whenever we do something that has an impact on the school, it's important for our success and our recognition in our partnership at school that the people who see it know who's responsible for it," a teaching fellow emphasizes. Thus getting the new principal "on board" has also entailed cultivating champions among other school staff, particularly other school leaders, who have relationships with the principal. The Austin deputy director says, "[We want] to ensure that those folks know our program inside and out, know us inside and out, work hand in hand with us, so that by the time the principal is hearing about the things that we're doing, we're already aligned to things that the school is working on and moving toward."

This has been a particularly important strategy to help Citizen Schools maintain its focus and credibility in the building when the principal who originally brought Citizen Schools to Bedichek retired and a new principal took over in 2008. Citizen Schools staff note that they are working to adapt their approach to the new principal's style and priorities by asking what the new principal would like to see that would benefit the school community.

Blended staffing: Prioritizing professionalism and seamless scheduling

Among school staff, Citizen Schools has earned a reputation for having a highly professional staff. As a result, school staff respect Citizen Schools program staff and have increased their commitment to the partnership. Citizen Schools staff are seen as more than child care providers and instead are perceived as a group of professionals with their own expertise to offer. For example, when Citizen Schools first started and needed to share classroom space with one of the teachers after school, the teacher recalled "[they] would debrief after a session, and THAT is what initially really impressed me, besides what was going on with the kids. They would be very honest in their evaluations and ask, 'Okay, well, how did this go?'"

To promote professionalism, Citizen Schools has developed a clear set of expectations for its staff and its program, measures work against these standards, and shares feedback with school-day staff about how the program is doing. The site director explains, "Our standards are really matched to the professional level of the school, from what we wear, to how we communicate, to the hours we work, to being able to have full-time staff members." During the summer, Citizen Schools staff participate in two weeks of training that emphasize state and local education standards as well as classroom management skills. They also have the unusual opportunity to participate in joint professional development with school faculty. One Citizen Schools administrator explains, "We make sure that we're able to recognize school-wide goals within our program. For instance, the standardized test improvement goals that the school has are integrated into the elements of our program, so we are building a case for ourselves." This training helps give afterschool staff some fluency in the pedagogy and issues that school-day teachers address.

Another strategy of Citizen Schools is to make its staff visible within the school building and the school day. In addition to communicating with teachers, staff create bulletin board displays and engage in lesson planning linked to school curricula. A teacher comments, "They are very visible… and always around… I pull in a lot of weekend hours. But, I tell you what, [Citizen Schools staff] put in a lot of weekend hours, too, because they're always preparing for the next thing." The school makes this presence and accessibility possible by granting Citizen Schools staff open access to school space, including dedicated office space and use of teacher classrooms for afterschool programming.

Some Citizen Schools staff are especially visible and integrated into the life of the school because they fill professional roles during the school day, and some even cross the traditional boundaries between school-day and afterschool teaching. For example, one of

the teaching fellows teaches a peer mediation class during the school day, which began at the request of an assistant principal who had seen the success of a Citizen Schools apprenticeship around conflict resolution. Some team leaders are also regular substitute teachers. Bedichek has also hired former Citizen Schools staff members as teachers in the school.

Strong connections with families: Building bridges among school, afterschool, and families

Family involvement is an ongoing commitment for Citizen Schools and is a central strategy for partnering with school staff, because school staff value and benefit from the program's ability to connect with families. The Austin deputy program director points out, "We typically bring 150 family members to the school for our events, and that can be on a monthly basis. We had a 98 percent family attendance rate for our WOWs! last Spring. So we're really getting the families to the school at a much higher level than many of the school events that are attended."

One reason for high family attendance at these events is the purposeful relationships that Citizen Schools staff have built with their students' families. Citizen Schools team leaders are responsible for contacting the families of their students at least once every two weeks, and all program staff are evaluated on this communication through parent/ guardian surveys at the end of each semester. Because of this regular communication, Citizen Schools staff are able to act as liaisons who connect families with school staff. For example, Citizen Schools staff are often asked to participate in special education and intervention meetings to share their expertise, help coordinate services with other organizations, and act as advocate or facilitator for families. The Austin deputy program director describes one of the most powerful experiences in her work as setting up teacher/family conferences in which she facilitated the communication and scheduling to bring Citizen Schools, families, and teachers together: "We're all sitting there together and, finally, we can talk about how to get this child to engage in his math class, or find ways for the parent to help practice these language arts skills at home."

Citizen Schools staff have begun receiving calls from families of students in their program who want to know how to support their children, and they have connected these families to the appropriate people in the school building—a process that is not always self-evident or easy for families to manage on their own. "It's a big school, and there's about 1,300 students, so it can be really difficult, especially for families for whom English is not their first language. Navigating the whole process of finding your child's teachers can be just daunting," the deputy director points out. Staff members provide families with tips and tools for supporting in-class learning. One of the teaching fellows says that afterschool programs have to

> consistently try to reach [families] and, when you do reach them, or even leave a message, talk about actual useful, concrete information about the student's grades— 'Last report card was this and it's ten points lower now. I talked to the teacher and she said she's missing this assignment, this assignment, and that assignment. He has until Friday to make it up. I need your help to make sure that when he's at home, he has finished that assignment.'

Just as Citizen Schools staff help answer questions and make connections from families to schools, their staff also help teachers figure out how to involve families. Often, because of their regular phone calls and check-ins with families, Citizen Schools staff have detailed information about their students' home lives, from knowing the personal factors that may be contributing to behavioral problems, to knowing what time adults are typically available for phone calls from teachers.

Data-sharing: Leveraging both student and program data

Citizen Schools is committed to gathering and using data for continuous program improvement at both the individual student level and the program-wide level. This data-sharing helps strengthen relationships, open avenues for communication, and build good will towards the afterschool program.

Information-sharing about individual students is essential to the school–afterschool–family communication process. Bedichek shares information with Citizen Schools and vice versa through the use of a database that tracks student information, including attendance, class lists, and grades, as well as real-time classroom information such as homework assignments. The campus director recently helped add Citizen Schools' information into the database and trained teachers on how it could be used to facilitate communication. In an email and then in person at a breakfast meeting, she described how Citizen Schools staff can know whether students are on task after school by checking homework assignments and student grades that the teachers had entered in the database against what students said they had to work on during the academic support component of the program. Similarly, the campus director showed how the teachers could view their class lists in the database to see whether any of their students were in the Citizen Schools program and, if so, which staff member should be their primary contact. In other words, the data-sharing process is truly reciprocal—school and program staff each share *and* receive valuable information.

At the program-wide level, evaluation supports Citizen Schools' commitment to partnerships and also helps build a strong organizational capacity that can then unhook other promising practices, from staffing to communication. Each semester, Citizen Schools' national office conducts an evaluation that assesses each campus on a quality rubric, measures gains in academic performance for math and language arts, and surveys parents/guardians, teachers, students, and staff about the impact of the program and suggested improvements. Importantly, both Citizen Schools program staff and school staff are asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of communication and collaboration practices, so partnership is not only an espoused goal of the program, but one on which all campuses are expected to evaluate their success. Citizen Schools staff discuss the impact of their program and share evaluation information with their new principal. The campus director elaborates:

> Especially [with] the data on the satisfaction surveys, we can show that students might say, 'I'm more likely to come to school because of Citizen Schools,' or, 'I enjoy doing my math homework,' or, 'I feel that people at my

school care about me.' And so we can show [the principal that] through participation in Citizen Schools… 'This is how we're impacting the greater population,' as well as by showing him the kind of the projects that we do that benefit the school. Many of our apprenticeships are beautification projects, so we have a couple murals, a couple garden beds that have been built and maintained by Citizen Schools that, just again, demonstrate our commitment to really being a part of this community.

Reflections on the Partnership

Citizen Schools and Bedichek Middle School both benefit from their strong partnership held together by strategies to build and maintain relationships, share a common belief in professionalism, engage families, and share information and data. In 2007–2008 Bedichek was Citizen Schools' highest performing campus across its national evaluations; school and program staff alike credit their partnership with contributing to this success. For Citizen Schools, working with Bedichek has meant that they are better able to implement their program and meet its goals. School staff point to the many outcomes that the program has helped their students achieve, including increased student achievement, improved confidence, and better attitudes toward school and learning. As the school principal emphasizes, the partnership leads to "quality and sustainability" for all involved.

"We in the school have the responsibility to develop and ensure that the academics and the creativity and the character of our children are all being nourished and nurtured through partnerships. We can provide them opportunities and a different context…to apply everything that they're learning here and to see that what they're learning here can be not only applicable to other places, [but] can help them achieve greater and higher results than they ever could imagine."

<div align="right">– KIPP SHINE Prep founder</div>

At KIPP SHINE Prep, a charter elementary school in Houston, Texas, community partnerships broaden students' learning experiences both within and outside of the school day. Encompassing a range of strategies and activities both at the school and at community institutions, these partnerships are integrated into the school and intentionally connected to its core values and curriculum. This profile focuses on two of KIPP SHINE's partnerships, those with the Houston Zoo and Houston Achievement Place. Although they have very different purposes, these two partnerships share the goal of supporting student learning at KIPP SHINE.

Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Model

The 66 KIPP schools form a national network of college-prep public charter schools based on the "five pillars": high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, the power to lead, and a focus on results. KIPP began in 1994 as a fifth-grade program in Houston. Most of the schools now are middle schools, but KIPP is expanding to elementary schools, including KIPP SHINE, as well as high schools. All have a longer school day and year than typical public schools. KIPP brings together parents, students, and teachers through the Commitment to Excellence, a pledge that focuses on support for student learning.

KIPP SHINE, founded as KIPP's first elementary school and now encompassing PreK–third grade, is built on five values that create the acronym SHINE: Seek, Honor, Imagine, Never give up, and Everyday. To support these values, KIPP SHINE's founder built community partnerships into his school design plan. Today, the school has a Dean of Culture and Values who oversees the school's partnership work, including staff who serve as "values coordinators" at each grade level.

Foundations of the Partnership

Community partnerships to support learning were an integral part of SHINE from the beginning. SHINE's founder, who had previously run a nonprofit arts center in Texas, had seen what community partnerships could offer low-income students and believed that they could foster the five SHINE values for his students. In addition, one of SHINE's mantras is "leave your mark," and school staff teach students that what matters most is how they conduct themselves outside of school. SHINE's partnerships help students do this by connecting with the school's values and providing opportunities to have a positive influence on their communities.

SHINE's founder and other school staff believe that the most important benefit of partnerships is providing youth with opportunities such as an introduction to the symphony and ballet, the chance to create a theater production, and field trips to the zoo. SHINE also partners with organizations, including Communities In Schools and Houston Achievement Place, to support the social and behavioral needs of its students. All of these opportunities are particularly important for children who would not otherwise have access to them. As one SHINE staffer

explained, these opportunities can help overcome, for example, the vocabulary deficits with which many children enter SHINE. She and other staff work to "give students life experiences that will give them a rich vocabulary and help them build on experiences from which they can begin to express themselves verbally, in writing, in conversation, in reading."

The partnerships benefit SHINE, but they also benefit the partners. Organizations are not just providing services to SHINE; the school plays an active role in translating and leveraging partnership work to benefit both partners. With its partners, SHINE wants to communicate that "as a partner in return, [we] will really implement your ideas, your work. Our kids will respectfully honor your community and your environment, and we'll be able to take what we've learned and apply it to other settings."

Both partnerships highlighted here—with the Houston Zoo and with Houston Achievement Place—began in the first year of KIPP SHINE. From the beginning, the school wanted to find partners who would support students' academic, social, emotional, and cultural growth and connect to SHINE's values. Both partnerships are integral to the work of the school, but they represent two different types of organizational relationships. The Houston Zoo partnership, which began with a five-year commitment, developed out of a personal relationship between SHINE's founder and the Zoo's Director, but does not have a formal contract. The relationship with Houston Achievement Place (HAP) is contractual, with the school paying for HAP services.

The Houston Zoo. Every February KIPP SHINE students study the H in SHINE: the Honor value. One of the ways they do this is through a partnership with the Houston Zoo, through which students learn ways they can honor the animals at the zoo and in their community. Each grade level studies a different animal (for example, the Atwater Prairie Chicken, frogs, and big cats) with activities at both the school and the zoo, and with both school and zoo staff. School staff structure activities around the chosen animal—writing and learning a song for an endangered bird, for example—and classes talk about conservation and what it means to respect other living creatures. Zoo staff visit the school to teach students about the animals. The animal study culminates in a trip to the zoo to visit with the animal and sometimes present student work. The zoo provides the field trips and zookeeper visits at no cost to KIPP SHINE; the school is responsible only for the students' transportation on the field trips.

According to zoo and school staff, everyone benefits from the partnership. The Houston Zoo aims to be a "zoo for all." Working with KIPP SHINE is one way the zoo can act on this goal, and its relationship with KIPP SHINE has in fact been a more feasible way to reach students than would a partnership with the Houston Independent School District, which would require the zoo to work with many more schools that it has the capacity for. The zoo also hopes that through the partnership with SHINE it can continue to "promote connections to the natural world through different learning experiences." According to SHINE's school leader (referred to in most traditional schools as the principal), students are more engaged in their learning as they go through the layered process in their animal studies. Students become invested in the animals they study and are able to understand their field trip in a deeper way than they would have without the preparation.

Houston Achievement Place. Mornings at KIPP SHINE might start off with teachers introducing a social skill of the day as part of their partnership with Houston Achievement Place, an organization that runs residential care programs for youth and foster care placements and that has also been running social skills training through Project CLASS since 1997. Staff from Houston Achievement Place work with the KIPP SHINE community to help students develop the social skills that are crucial to students' learning. A HAP staff member is on site two days a week to do trainings with teachers as well as to meet with groups of students to work more intensively on social skills. Staff also conduct parent trainings to help families support children at home. Houston Achievement Place, which works in many schools around Houston, has tailored its teaching to the SHINE values. Its staff are dedicated to making their training applicable to the SHINE community by demonstrating to students how the behaviors they focus on fit with each of the SHINE values.

Working with HAP staff to develop social skills helps SHINE students feel successful in the classroom and gives them a sense of belonging, particularly for children whose behavior has alienated them from their peers. For SHINE's founder, one of the motivations for partnering with Houston Achievement Place was its focus on creating positive behaviors rather than fixing negative behaviors. According to the current school leader, the environment at SHINE would be very different without Houston Achievement Place.

Building and Sustaining the Partnership

Three principles in particular help to explain the strategy and success of the partnerships among KIPP SHINE, the Houston Zoo, and Houston Achievement Place.

A shared vision for learning: The precursor to partnership

Finding the right partners is a top priority for KIPP SHINE. Many organizations have contacted SHINE about partnering, but the school makes sure that the organization's values and vision are in line with its own before embarking on a partnership. According to the school leader, the partner needs to "help us meet our goals in terms of preparing our students for college." In addition, she notes,

> I think it's really important for people who are interested in working with us to understand why we built the school, what our goal is, what are the challenges our students face, what are the things we hope for our children…The work that we're trying to do is really [meant to be] a joint venture and not a particular partner trying to get an experience out of a school.

The Houston Zoo partnership works for the school because the partnership supports the school's Honor value. Similarly, the Houston Achievement Place partnership helps student develop skills that support all of the SHINE values.

SHINE's partners also have expectations of the school. Houston Achievement Place (HAP) has a "strong expectation" that teachers will use HAP's language to talk about social skills in the classroom. And Houston Achievement Place staff note that they were

impressed by how KIPP takes the time to develop a behavior plan for students. Each partner has made efforts to integrate its vision with the other's.

Blended staffing: Staff, partners, and students all learning together

SHINE's partnership culture depends largely on the integrated relationships of the staff at the school and its partner organizations. This culture is facilitated, in part, by the Dean of Culture and Values, part of whose job is to determine "how [I] can bring what I know will be amazing into the school while honoring teacher time [and] other components of our program." A significant part of this is working across school and nonschool staffs. As the school's founder notes, "the challenge of partnerships is that they really do depend on the people and the relationships that have been built." With modeling and support from school leadership, school and partner staff respect and see each other as integral to student learning. For instance, according to one school staff member, the Houston Achievement Place trainer/consultant has become "an incredible part of the [SHINE] team… She's not a member of our staff but certainly we think she is." At the same time, school staff also see her independent status as an asset. She can give advice to teachers in a non-threatening way because she is not evaluating teacher work. Teachers, in turn, "understand that she is really invested in the success of our students and in our school, but… she's a very neutral person."

To sustain these relationships and ensure the success of the partnership, communication and feedback are crucial. Strong staff connections allow school and organizational staff to share honest feedback and modify activities and plans accordingly. For example, the school staff's feedback loop with the Zoo and the comfort level of Zoo and school staff with each other has allowed them to talk through which activities were successful and which needed to change, and has ultimately created activities that support student learning by creating engaging, aligned, and complementary experiences.

Preparing staff for partnerships is also key. SHINE's leadership believes that staff and students must all be prepared and goal-oriented in order to make added learning opportunities meaningful. School staff conduct several lessons and activities leading up to field trips to the zoo, visits from members of the local opera company, and other opportunities. Already busy with a full curriculum, teaching staff need support to do this work, and they receive it from SHINE's Dean of Culture and Values. She provides tools and resources, communicates frequently with teachers, solicits their feedback and ideas, and even helps facilitate lessons. She also encourages teachers to suggest new partnership ideas, building on her own experience connecting with the local ballet and opera companies while she was a SHINE teacher. These efforts to prepare staff, she believes, pay off. Among the benefits she reports, teachers enjoy learning something new along with students, and everyone brings a high level of enthusiasm to learning.

In building school–non-profit relationships, some staff have noted that this emphasis on partnership needs to be part of the "mindset" of school staff. The partnership has to operate as a core part of what the school wants to accomplish and school staff need to be comfortable with having other organizations influencing the learning taking place at the

school. This mindset at SHINE has carried through from the founder's early focus on building partnerships to the current SHINE leadership who are very intentional about their choice of partners and design of partnership activities.

Strong connections with families and other community resources: Leveraging support from multiple institutions and stakeholders

KIPP SHINE was founded with the intention of leveraging the many community resources in Houston, in turn educating students to be active and engaged members of that community. SHINE's many partnerships speak to these goals and commitments, which have proven crucial to the success of the partnerships. Organizations that KIPP SHINE partners with, in addition to the Houston Zoo and Houston Achievement Place include

- Communities In Schools

- Fotofest

- Houston Ballet

- Houston Symphony Orchestra

- Houston Grand Opera

- Jump Rope for Heart

- Young Audiences Houston

These partnerships generate interest and support from the community. While SHINE had to go looking for partners in its first year, it now has many more organizations showing interest in partnering than it can accept. The durability of some of its partnerships also deepens support; for example, zoo staff note that, since they have been working with SHINE for so long, they "get to see the success along the way."

Connections to families have also been key to making partnerships work for SHINE. Parents, for example, sign a Commitment to Excellence to show their support for their children's education. Partners build on this connection to families. Zoo staff note that in their work with KIPP SHINE, "by reaching the children, we're also reaching the parents."

SHINE sees the ripple effect of strong connections to the community and multiplied benefits for their students. For example, the zoo has prioritized relationships with SHINE whenever possible. When it sent out a city-wide call for applications for low-income students to attend its summer camp on scholarship and did not receive enough applications to fill all its openings, the zoo went back to their SHINE partners to offer more spaces to them. These strong connections in the community are ultimately helping more of SHINE's students in meaningful ways even beyond the SHINE-sponsored activities, and are thereby supporting the school's goal of expanding learning opportunities for its students.

Reflections on the Partnership

KIPP SHINE staff point out that building partnerships isn't always easy, but it has been worth the effort. One of the challenges—as in any learning partnership—is that, in the words of one SHINE leader, "the status quo is still the preferred path." It takes work to find the right partners who will develop a shared vision for learning and even more work to sustain this vision across organizations. Partnership needs to be part of the "mindset" of school staff, and school staff need to be comfortable with having other organizations influence the school's approach to learning. This mindset at SHINE has carried through from the founder's early focus on building partnerships to the current SHINE leadership who devote significant time and attention to partnerships. The school's continuing efforts to choose appropriate community-based partners, make partnerships work, and align them to the learning goals of the school helps integrate community strengths into the school program and give students opportunities and experiences they otherwise would not have. The school, the community organizations, and most importantly the students, are all benefiting from these efforts.

IV. Conclusion

Partnerships for learning are unfolding in a complex and dynamic era of education reform. Consensus is building that schools alone are insufficient to close the widening achievement gap and there is increasing interest in turning to OST supports such as afterschool, summer learning, health services, and economic supports as promising additional strategies to support school and lifelong success. However, competing political and educational interests create a context where partnership for learning approaches are not viewed as "education as usual." Thus, while OST program informants for this inquiry were very clear about what it takes to develop strong partnerships with schools to support a partnership for learning, they were equally clear about the contextual issues that must be considered in designing and implementing on-the-ground partnership efforts.

This closing section of the report offers a description of three key contextual issues that cut across the principles described throughout this report:[15] (1) the capacity of schools and OST programs to develop and sustain partnerships for learning; (2) the funding and policy climate in which programs operate; and (3) the support and buy-in of school and district leadership.

1. Organizational Capacity to Develop and Sustain Partnerships for Learning

As a prerequisite to partnering, OST programs and schools alike need to operate with high impact and efficiency. Across the board, OST program leaders felt that in order to be effective partners they had to have their "own houses in order." Anecdotally, HFRP has heard that this is also true of schools; that the most successful school-community partnerships occur when there is a strong school leader, stable and well-trained school staff, and good mechanisms in place at the school for sharing data. Specifically, several elements associated with high-performing nonprofits are perceived to help create high-performing partnerships:[16]

- Partners must have **basic operational functions** in place, such as solid accounting, a functional board, and strong leadership. OST program leaders also discussed the role of their national office in supporting local sites, particularly around evaluation and sharing best practices.

- Partners must have strong **data collection systems** for continuous learning and improvement, including the use of benchmarking, quality rubrics, and rigorous evaluations to determine their impact and identify best practices. OST program leaders also reported strategies to support those practices, including offering trainings and facilitating learning communities among their national and local sites, as well as investing in data management systems.

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[15] Interestingly, these two challenges were also identified as "impediments to integrating school and afterschool time" in a scan of 20 key informants conducted by The Atlantic Philanthropies in September 2007. Nagle, A., and Griffiths, S. (2008). *NCLB reauthorization: Prospects and opportunities for the afterschool field. New York: The Atlantic Philanthropies.*

[16] The Wallace Foundation recently commissioned a set of papers on strengthening OST nonprofits. For those interested in more information about the features of high-performing OST nonprofits, see: Weiss, H ., & Little, P. (2008). *Strengthening OST nonprofits: The role of foundations in capacity building.* New York: The Wallace Foundation. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/Out-Of-SchoolLearning/StrengtheningOutofSchoolTimeOrganizationsThreeViews.htm

- Partners must conduct **strategic planning for growth and sustainability**. OST program leaders noted that during strategic planning it was important to set up systems to assess program costs and to identify the features of schools and districts that would help partnerships succeed. A few OST program leaders reported conducting cost-benefit analysis to assist them in scaling with quality while still being cost effective.

- Partners must **strategically advocate for their programs** to multiple stakeholders. OST program leaders reported employing strategic communications techniques focused on branding their efforts and marketing their program, often using evidence of program effectiveness from their evaluation data, to demonstrate their value to partners, funders, the public, and policymakers. They also produced written reports that positioned them as field leaders.

2. The Support and Buy-in of School and District Leadership

Ensuring that school and district leaders recognize OST supports as credible and legitimate can be a major challenge to partnership efforts. As discussed earlier, OST programs must be strategic in their communication with schools and districts to get buy-in from key school staff, given that such buy-in is crucial to the success of their partnership. OST programs encounter few barriers to partnering with schools and districts when the leadership already supports partnership for learning goals. However, OST programs face more resistance where the school and district leadership have a "fortress" mentality and are only interested in what happens in the classroom during school hours. As one OST program director put it:

> Some schools have been very supportive and the program obviously works better in those schools where the school administration really supports the program, and we've had others where it really bombed because it didn't have the support and we were constantly competing with different programs and different teachers for kids. And certain teachers will punish their kids because they didn't get their homework done, by not allowing them to go to our program.

This sentiment is not unusual. In addition to using the principles described in this report, informants in this study commented that leadership by the philanthropic, research, and policy communities were necessary to help build the buy-in and support of school and district leadership. OST program and school leaders both commented that more work was needed to help school and district leadership understand the potential value-added of OST program participation to in-school success and the opportunities and strategies for successful partnerships for learning.

3. The Funding and Policy Climate in Which Partnerships Operate

Funding issues and the local policy climate influence partnerships for learning. It takes time and resources to invest in and sustain partnerships for learning. Informants for this study suggested some promising efforts to promote partnerships:

- Some school and district funds include budget line items and set-asides to support partnerships, either through hiring liaison staff or through ongoing communications strategies. When these line items are in place, schools are more likely to seek partnerships with OST programs.

- District-level relationships are valuable in providing access to district-level funds, which tend to be more secure than local level funds.

- Communities and schools in which there are very few resources are often more likely to partner with OST programs, motivated by the desire to access resources that they are otherwise lacking.

Across the set of informants, however, all agreed that funding for partnerships for learning is seldom on the radar of most school districts—much less a priority in their budgets— and that more investments were needed to help staff and structure these partnerships.

Acknowledgements

About HFRP

Harvard Family Research Project researches, develops, and evaluates strategies to promote the well being of children, youth, families, and their communities. We work primarily within three areas that support children's learning and development—early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education. Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision making, learning, and accountability. Building on our knowledge that schools cannot do it alone, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and nonschool supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed. To learn more about how HFRP can support your work with children and families, visit our website at www.hfrp.org.

APPENDIX A: Our Review Approach

In June 2008, HFRP interviewed senior leadership from eleven OST/nonprofit organizations about their strategies and challenges in building partnerships with schools. The purpose of these interviews was to examine promising practices shared by these organizations in partnering with schools toward the goal of developing partnerships for learning. Specifically, these program leaders were asked to reflect on places where schools and programs were working together to improve student outcomes, and had some preliminary evaluation results that the these efforts were improving outcomes for youth and potentially improving the learning environemnts of either or both partners (transforming school culture, enabling access to abroad range of students, accessing resources to support partnerships for learning, etc.).

Direct Service Grantee	Interview Conducted With
After-School All Stars	Ben Paul, President & CEO; Aaron Dworkin, Director of Programs
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America	Joe Radelet, Vice President, Mentoring Programs
Breakthrough Collaborative	Mialisa Bonta, CEO
Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)	Earl Martin Phalen, CEO
Children's Aid Society	Michael Carrera, Director
Citizen Schools	Eric Schwarz, Founder & President
Communities in Schools	Dan Cardinali, President
Higher Achievement	Richard Tagle, Executive Director
Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)	Richard Barth, Executive Director
National Indian Youth Leadership Project	McClellan Hall, Founder & Executive Director
Youth Development Institute	Peter Kleinbard, Executive Director

From these eleven organizations, three local sites were selected for more in-depth data collection, which involved interviews conducted with school staff (e.g., principal and teachers) and OST program staff (e.g., site coordinators and activity leaders). At least four individuals from each site were interviewed (two school staff and two program staff).

- Citizen Schools at Bedichek Middle School, Austin, TX: An integrated partnership between a school-based afterschool program and the middle school that hosts it.

- After-School All-Stars at August Boeger Middle School, San Jose, CA: A partnership in which the school and afterschool program complement each other's strengths to achieve common goals.

- KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) SHINE Prep elementary school, Houston, TX: A partnership between a charter elementary school and community-based organizations to support learning during the school day and beyond.