the
# evaluation exchange

Harvard Family Research Project ▮ Harvard Graduate School of Education ▮ Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child & Family Services ▮ Vol. VII No. 2 ▮ Spring 2001

## from the director's desk

The conversation continues…

As many of you know, our Fall 2000 (Volume 6, Number 1) issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* focused on after school programs and out-of-school time. So, you might be wondering, why publish another issue on the same topic so soon after the first? Well, with so much activity in the after school field—programmatically, academically, and philanthropically—we think there is more to talk about than one issue can hold. We are interested not just in continuing the conversation, but in engaging in dialogue that broadens the scope of discussions that help to shape the future of after school programs and out-of-school time.

In the first out-of-school time issue, we outlined some of the challenges facing the after school field: building evaluation capacity; incorporating continuous improvement as a component of good practice; selecting appropriate outcomes; and strengthening the connection between outcomes and theory. As we confront these challenges, we uncover opportunities for creativity and innovation that serve as springboards for new investment in the out-of-school time field. Examples of this creativity include involving youth in research and evaluation, connecting developmental theory to after school program practice and evaluation, and including communities as agents in positive youth development.

However, the greatest opportunity that arises from confronting the challenges that face the field is that of learning through dialogue. To share and build the knowledge base for the field of out-of-school time, conversations need to cut across position and place and involve theorists, practitioners, evaluators and funders, in various locations, with wide ranging skills and backgrounds. These conversations must happen in many different venues—in person, in print and on-line—and address the important ways in which program development, data collection and performance management and program evaluation can be connected to program improvement and field development.

This conversation can begin by understanding the role that developmental research plays in setting the stage for understanding the most important element of after school programs—the youth themselves. What are the developmental benchmarks for middle childhood? For adolescence? What are the important supports that after school programs can offer to help youth through these critical years?

Evaluations of large initiatives contribute to building the out-of-school time field. These investments document and demonstrate the practices and outcomes that help smaller, local programs argue for local investment in programs and policies. In addition to informing policy on a national level, these large initiatives help to strengthen local capacity for evaluation by testing instruments that can be adapted and used by local evaluators.

This understanding in place, the conversation then incorporates local-level initiatives and evaluators. These stakeholders offer new perspectives and valuable feedback to buttress the knowledge built at the national level. Their on-the-ground, local knowledge brings to the more general, national discussion a new context for conversation.

However fruitful this discussion may be, it is incomplete without the support of funders. Investing in building evaluation capacity at the local level and building the infrastructure for information sharing and dissemination are important contributions funders can make.

We see this conversation as a form of continuous improvement for the field of after school and out-of-school time as a whole. Information gathered by one program to meet its funders accountability needs or to satisfy evaluation requirements is rich with lessons that can inform a broader audience of after school stakeholders. Lessons learned in other education and human service fields can inform the development of practice and evaluation in the field of out-of-school time. Investments in after school programs can be reconceptualized as investing in youth, in communities and in the knowledge base that informs after school programs across the country. Building the capacity of after school programs can mean more than capacity to collect data or participate in evaluation; it can mean the capacity to participate in a cross-cutting conversation in which evaluators, practitioners, funders, policy makers and other after school stakeholders learn from each other, continuously improving the out-of-school time field.

This issue and the Fall, 2000 issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* are part of our contribution to this ongoing conversation.

Heather

**Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D.**
**Founder & Director**

## in this issue

the
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*The Evaluation Exchange* accepts contributions from policy makers, practitioners and researchers in evaluation and related fields. Contributions are welcome for regular *Evaluation Exchange* columns, as well as articles that highlight the training component of evaluation practice.

Please send a query letter outlining your proposed article to:

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# > new & noteworthy

**Belle, Deborah. (1999). *The After-School Lives of Children: Alone and With Others While Parents Work.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.** Belle conducted a four-year longitudinal study of families in the Boston area who had children in after school arrangements. Her book describes types of supervision, stressful challenges to parents, children's social relationships and supports, and offers advice to parents and policy makers.

**Seligson, Michelle. *Bringing Yourself to Work: Caregiving in After-School Environments*,** is a new training model for after school program staff that places emphasis on the importance of self-awareness among caregivers. The project components are currently being developed and include a book, a staff training program and a training manual that will be available to after school programs across the country. ***Bringing Yourself to Work*** builds on insights from several disciplines, including organizational behavior, youth development and relational/cultural theory, as well as research on the increasingly popular field of "emotional intelligence." **http://www.bringingyourselftowork.com**

**Danish, Stephen J., and Thomas P. Guillotta, eds. (2000). *Developing Competent Youth and Strong Communities Through After-School Programming*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.** This compilation of essays covers topics such as the strengths and weaknesses of sports programming, the development of programs for girls, the role of arts in youth development and the use of festivals to develop healthy youth and strong neighborhoods. An examination of the elements of social competency and community characteristics that significantly contribute to the positive development of youth is also included.

**Eccles, Jacquelynne, and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, eds. (2001, forthcoming) *Beyond the Front Stoop*. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth.** This book discusses the features of programs that contribute to a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. It examines what is known about the current landscape of youth development programs for America's youth, and how these programs are meeting the diverse needs of youth. To access this publication, search for the title at **http://www.nap. edu/books/**

The topic of the April 2001 issue of ***Educational Leadership*** is "Beyond Class Time" and has several articles on after school programs. The journal, published by the **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development**, features research on life after school, solutions to challenges faced by after school programs, and collaborations between schools and community-based organizations. **http://www.ascd.org/frameedlead.html**

***Family Support Centers: A Program Manager's Toolkit.* (2000). Chicago, IL: Family Support America.** For twenty years Family Support America has provided technical assistance to family support centers; this reference publication provides answers to critical questions and offers a multitude of solutions for the social services arena. There are three volumes: Program Planning and Evaluation, Managing Ongoing Operations, and The Power of Partnership. Order online at **http://www.familysupportamerica.org**

**Gootman, Jennifer Appleton, ed. (2000). *After-School Programs that Promote Child and Adolescent Development: Summary of a Workshop*. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, National Research Council, Institute of Medicine.** This report summarizes the presentations and discussions at the workshop, "Opportunities to Promote Child and Adolescent Development During the After-School Hours," convened on October 21, 1999. The workshop was organized by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, with funding from the Packard Foundation. It brought together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to examine research on the developmental needs of children and adolescents and the types of after school programs designed to promote health and development of these young people. To access this publication, search for the title at **http://www.nap.edu/books/0309071798/html/**

***Homework Assistance & Out-Of-School Time: Filling the Need and Finding the Balance; Literacy: Exploring Strategies to Enhance Learning in After-School Programs.* Nashville, TN: School-Age Notes and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.** These two publications are combined in one book designed to give directors and staff of out-of-school programs information and tools needed to cope with the changing demands of out-of-school time for school-age children. Call 1-800-410-8780 for availability, or visit **http://www.afterschoolcatalog.com**

**Jacobs, Francine, Kapuscik, Jennifer, with Patricia Williams and Erika Kates. *Making It Count: Evaluating Family Preservation Services*. Medford, MA: The Family Preservation Evaluation Project at Tufts University.** This guide explains how to conduct feasible, affordable, and ongoing evaluations of programs at the state or local level using the Five-Tiered Approach to program evaluation. To order this publication, send a check or money order for $22.50 payable to Trustees of Tufts College, to: FPEP c/o Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University, 105 College Avenue, Medford, MA 02155.

*continued on page 16 >*

# Supporting Effective After School Programs: The Contribution of Developmental Research

*In this article, Jacquelynne Eccles, McKeachie Collegiate Professor of Psychology, Women's Studies, and Education, and editor of the soon-to-be released volume on community based programs for youth, sponsored by the National Research Council in conjunction with the National Academy of Science, shares her thoughts about the contribution of developmental research to the after school conversation and the need for an infrastructure to support this.*

After school programs are everywhere; in schools, community centers, parks and youth serving organizations. Increased concern on the part of parents, educators, researchers and policy makers about the kinds of activities youth are involved in during out-of-school time has led to this recent growth spurt for after school programs. The challenge facing these programs is to provide healthy, developmentally appropriate and enriching experiences for youth, while at the same time meeting demands to show the resulting benefits that accrue from participation. In concert with practitioners, educators, parents and policy makers, developmental researchers can help to identify the pathways that lead from fun activities to positive outcomes for youth.

## The Youth Development Field Today

Developmental research about adolescence has changed tremendously in the twenty-five years since it first came on the research radar screen. Always a hard developmental period to study because of the many and interrelated changes going on in young people's bodies and lives, we now understand that longitudinal, highly contextualized and inter-disciplinary research are the most effective approaches for studying this age group.

In the years since adolescence became a focal point for developmental researchers, we have seen our perspective within the field evolve from thinking of adolescence as a problem and conflict-ridden period to one in which positive youth development ideals are promoted. This refocusing on positive youth development has come about as a result of the work of developmental researchers, largely supported through early money targeting prevention activities. It is supported by the strong practice-based knowledge of large organizations such as Boys Scouts, Girl Scouts and the Y's as well as countless other, much smaller programs helping kids. These programs have a broad-based goal to help children and adolescents develop across a wide array of areas of their lives—skills areas, social areas, emotional areas, moral areas and citizenship areas. These strong advocates from the world of practice, in concert with researchers and policy makers, have been a voice for youth for many decades and have brought us, in large measure, to the place we are now.

Some describe the current youth development field as divided between those who promote prevention and those who advocate positive youth development; although there is this tension, I don't believe it is necessary. From my perspective, both the prevention perspective and the positive development perspective have contributed to the excellent work done on the key ingredients for successful adolescence; ingredients that we all agree contribute to healthy, well-functioning youth. Both these perspectives have their place in the development, implementation and evaluation of youth-serving organizations and after school programs.

The more important question, it seems, is whether current investments in after school programs are going to focus primarily on educational remediation or more general, positive development. I think this question is being answered in the field. If you look at after school programs on the ground, most are far more than just tutorial programs. People are interested in remediation, but they're also very interested in good places for kids to be. And they *know* youth will walk out of those places that are just tutorial. So we see programs emerging that are very broad and comprehensive. And this, I think, is very good.

*We are at a unique juncture. Politicians, practitioners, educators, employers, academics, parents and citizens have all become interested in youth and how to best provide them with the experiences they need.*

## The Youth Development Field and Accountability

There is no question that the current interest and investment in after school and other youth programs often comes with heavy strings attached: accountability demands. While accountability has always been an issue for organizations and programs that serve youth, the nature of this accountability has changed. Today, individual programs have to show that what they are doing is producing important youth outcomes. This is very different from the more general question, "do we know *in principle* that this intervention works," that dominated the field of program evaluation in the past.

In recent situations, randomized trials can and have been used to make the case for success. The Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters is one example—P/PV showed that mentoring can make a difference and it is an activity that can occur in lots of organizational settings. There were programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters that were shown to be successful through these research methods, but there were also lots of program evaluation failures due to the difficulties of doing high quality randomized trial studies in this field. Often the programs were evaluated before they had been well-implemented. In addition, the voluntary nature of participation in such programs makes controlling the exposure to the program very difficult. Consequently even large-scale, well-designed randomized trials often ended up showing very small effects.

There is a need to think about what evidence is most compelling and necessary in an era when individual programs must show that they produce important results for children and youth.

Even though randomized trials are the most scientifically rigorous way to demonstrate this, such studies are often not feasible. And the results from such studies, when they are not done appropriately, can be very misleading.

Whether these types of experimental studies help identify the best programs for youth is also a compelling question. Based on the work of Milbrey McLaughlin at Stanford University, it follows developmental theory perfectly that programs that are likely to be most attractive to youth—and to have the most positive results for youth—are programs that change over time, that accommodate the kids, and that are co-constructed by the kids and the adults in that setting. Programs like these are also heavily dependent upon charismatic individuals who care a lot about the kids. Elements that make programs great, such as charismatic staff, are impossible to study with a randomized design since the "it" is not clear and unchanging; the "it" is really an evolving relationship between all the participants in the program.

### The Role of Developmental Research

So, where does that leave an organization that has to be accountable? I think program staff need to be very thoughtful about what they think they're affecting. They need to lay out the theory that underlies their programs and they've got to measure and monitor all of the aspects of their program they believe are important over time, along with carefully measuring the adolescent "outcomes" they think their program is affecting.

The theory they lay out could come from various places. It could be based on other models of similar programs. It could be organic, deriving from the thinking and unique approaches or populations of the program itself. It could come from research.

This is where collaboration among developmental researchers and practitioners can be so productive. If a program is hoping to demonstrate that it did something, it has to have a very solid theory behind it. The field is young enough that we're still working out the models of change. We need to consider and evaluate as many of these models as possible. We need to be thinking broadly about what experiences are important for youth, and why. What outcomes would come from those experiences, and how can we measure those outcomes? The next step is to put these models and measures in place for programs.

This exchange could play out in several ways. Program people could identify the things they would like to give youth: "well, I think it'd be nice to give my kids X, Y and Z experiences, because... these experiences ought to produce change on X, Y and Z indicators of well-being." Or, "I would like my kids to be A, B, C and D. How do I get them there?"

Another important piece in this process includes deliberating and reflecting on information gathered as a means of continuous improvement. Reflective practice means that organizations are constantly measuring what they are providing *as well as* what they think they will affect. It is important to realize that programs are continually changing; they are not static. It is not possible to evaluate them, show they work and consider it done. It is important to invest in putting into place a whole system of systematic monitoring. Documenting everything from who participates and who doesn't to what participation means and what happens to those who participate.

The other challenge, or course, is that of determining the most appropriate level of expected and measured outcomes. A program that only deals with 100 kids should not be responsible for moving the whole community. If communities want to move massively, they need to think at the community level about the array of programs that are available for their youth. At the community level, it seems the model should be working together to put in place a wide range of programs that will meet those needs, holding the individual programs accountable for reflective practice, and then, monitoring at the community level to determine if trends change over time.

### Support Through Systems

We, as developmental researchers, evaluators, program practitioners and stakeholders interested in youth-serving programs, need to think systemically and creatively about how to best support this. This system would insist that people who have the research expertise participate as partners in the creation of the larger of these model programs. The hope is that these models will then filter down to the more "mom and pop" small community programs. It is important, too, to create good, easy-to-administer measures and provide workshops and on-the-job training for those who administer programs.

The model of the Land Grant colleges is a wonderful model of research-practice collaboration. The extension programs in such colleges provide staff who go out to communities and help communities think about their needs and about the type of research needed to find answers that will help the community solve their problems. There's no reason that Land Grant colleges and other colleges can't follow this model of university-community collaboration to help in the youth development field. There are some that are, through their 4-H outreach programs and other cooperative extension programs— for example Steve Small at the University of Wisconsin and Dale Blyth at the University of Minnesota. Other non-profit organizations such as The Search Institute and Public/Private Ventures and researchers and practitioners like James Connell and Michelle Gambone, Karen Pittman and Shirley Brice-Heath are working on models of positive youth development through research-practice collaboratives.

I am very excited about the emergence of such research-practice collaborative efforts. We are at a unique juncture in our deliberations about out-of-school time. Politicians, practitioners, educators, employers, academics, parents and citizens have all become interested in youth and how to best provide them with the experiences they need to have a productive and safe adolescence as well as to grow into productive, responsible adult citizens. The time is right to bring these groups together to design and then study the kinds of programs that will provide these experiences. ■

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# CORAL: A Multi-Site Initiative to Improve Academic Achievement and Build Community Capacity

## The Initiative

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) is a 10-year initiative to improve academic achievement through out-of-school activities. Funded by the James Irvine Foundation (the Foundation), CORAL is designed to build the capacity of communities to design and provide high quality programs. CORAL seeks to help communities view academic achievement as the shared responsibility of multiple sectors of the community including business, media, public and private agencies, higher education and the faith community. SRI International, a private research firm, is working with the Foundation to design and conduct the evaluation of CORAL.

Five communities in California are participating in the initiative. These communities receive financial and technical assistance from the Foundation for a pre-planning and planning phase. Funding is given to a lead agency to oversee the planning process, which involves broad representation across the community. Implementation grants that support CORAL activities for five- to seven-years are made following a successful planning period. The target age groups for CORAL programs are kindergarten through grade 8, although communities are also expected to provide some programming for high school aged youth. The communities are being phased in over several years, with the first implementation in fall of 2000.

*CORAL seeks to help communities view academic achievement as the shared responsibility of multiple sectors of the community including business, media, public and private agencies, higher education and the faith community.*

## The Evaluation

The evaluation of CORAL is based on a theory of change that was developed over a six-month period through discussions with Foundation staff and consultants, including the evaluation team. The theory of change identifies improved academic achievement as the long term outcome of CORAL. The theory also identifies the coordination of providing agencies and the broad support of communities for academic achievement, out-of-school activities, and CORAL as two critical mechanisms leading to the provision of high quality out-of-school programs. Interim outcomes include children and families having knowledge and access to CORAL programs and children and families using the programs.

The evaluation will address research questions in five areas: implementation, utilization, child and family outcomes, contextual factors and sustainability. The design includes both cross-community and community-specific components, with data for each community analyzed separately and then analyzed across the communities to portray the overall initiative. Communities also have the opportunity to adapt or individualize the evaluation design to include issues unique to their community.

In the evaluation, SRI will use a variety of data collection methods including both quantitative and qualitative measures. In order to understand issues that affect implementation, evaluators will interview participants of the governing coalition, program directors, and school administrators, conduct staff surveys and review written documentation. An important source of implementation data will be structured on-site observations and curriculum reviews. This observation and review process will provide important feedback to the program and data for the evaluation. It will be conducted by a team of representatives including, for example, staff from the program being reviewed, another program, the lead agency and the evaluation team.

One of the major data collection sources for information related to utilization will be the CORAL management information system (MIS). An MIS is being developed to assist CORAL communities to enter and store information about enrollment and participation in CORAL activities. Several options, such as a "card swipe" system, are being explored as possible ways to track participation. The CORAL MIS will produce a variety of reports for the program and the lead agency and it will provide a wealth of data for the evaluation.

The measurement of academic achievement was one of the most critical and challenging facets of the evaluation design. Much discussion during the development of the theory of change and the evaluation focused on what is meant by academic achievement in the context of CORAL. Is it having the knowledge and skills to succeed in school? Is it actually succeeding in school? What is success in a school setting? Since CORAL programs rely on project-based learning and innovative uses of technology, it is conceivable that children could succeed in the out of school setting and yet still perform poorly in school. A clear consensus emerged from discussions among the Foundation and the communities that academic achievement should not only be defined as scores on standardized tests. Scores on tests being administered as part of the California educational accountability system will be included as one outcome measure, but so will grades, teacher ratings, program staff ratings, self-ratings by the child, parent ratings, promotion to next grade level, referrals for special services, school attendance, disciplinary actions and possibly individually administered assessments of reading and mathematics. The ideal outcome is that children will see themselves and be seen by others as successful learners both in school and out-of-school. By measuring academic achievement with multiple measures from multiple perspectives, the evaluation will be able to examine how many children partially or completely achieve this ideal.

The voices of parents are also critical to the evaluation. Communities are expected to vary in the extent to which they develop programs targeted directly for parents (for example English language classes or parent support programs). The theory of change stipulates that CORAL will ultimately contribute to parents becoming better advocates for their children in a school setting. Parent surveys and focus groups will be an important source of information about how parents perceive the impact of CORAL on their child's and family's life. The family perspective on CORAL will also be explored in-depth through case studies of participating children in each community.

As mentioned, CORAL is intended to impact communities by strengthening the organizational capacity of participating organizations, including the lead agency. One aspect of organizational capacity building is the ability to use information to make decisions and to improve performance. The evaluation has been designed so it can provide information useful to both the communities and the Foundation. The evaluation team at SRI remains committed to infusing the community-based philosophy of CORAL throughout the evaluation design, data collection and reporting processes. Exactly what this means in practice is being constructed each day as the evaluation moves from design to implementation. ■

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## National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers

In any field, large, nationally implemented programs are faced with the challenge of demonstrating the effectiveness of a program model implemented in multiple locations with inherently different key elements. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the C.S. Mott Foundation (Mott) face this challenge with the implementation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program. Through an evaluation design that is as complex and multifaceted as the program it aims to evaluate, the ED and Mott hope to gather evidence on whether these 21st CCLC programs improved student performance and behavior in and out of school.

### The Scope of the Program

The 21st CCLC Program, authorized under the Federal Elementary and Secondary School Act, provides expanded learning opportunities for participating children in a supervised, safe environment through grants to local education agencies. Administered by the ED, in collaboration with other public and nonprofit agencies, the program involves about 3,600 rural and inner-city public schools in 903 communities. Federal support for the program has grown from $40 million in fiscal year 1998 to an appropriation of $846 million in fiscal year 2001.

Mott complements the work of the ED by providing technical assistance support to help grantees develop, implement and sustain high-quality after school programs; building public will for after school programs; and supporting evaluation and research work in the field.

### The Scope of the Evaluation

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (Mathematica) contracted with the ED to conduct an evaluation of both the impact and implementation of the 21st CCLC Program. In addition, Mathematica received a grant from Mott to supplement both of the ED-funded studies—impact and implementation—as well as to conduct a series of special studies that will further explore issues related to after school program access, services and best practices. Together, Mott and ED are committed to obtaining credible evidence that these programs result in improved student performance and behaviors in and out of school.

Both the ED core studies and the Mott enhancements will rely on qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. The impact study will include experimental and quasi-experimental design components, randomly sampling programs that have been implemented in the original 21st CCLC grant. The implementation study will focus on understanding the ways in which 21st CCLC programs were, in actuality, implemented. Underlying the overall evaluation plan is a logic model that lays out the five main topical areas that are central to the evaluation: (A) the context in which each after school program operates; (B) implementation of the after school program; (C) family, individual and community conditioning factors that affect (D and E) students' intermediate and long-term outcomes.

### Evaluation Design

*Impact Study.* The impact study will investigate the conditioning factors, intermediate effects and long-term effects of 21st CCLC programs that were implemented as intended.

The ED-funded component of the study will include two distinct designs, one targeting elementary school children and another, middle school children. The Mott-funded enhancement to the impact study will add up to 10 additional sites representing programs considered to be of "high quality" in order to learn more about how quality features can be developed.

Data will be collected through surveys, student records and reading achievement tests.

Mott also is considering a longitudinal component to the impact study that will provide important information about the long-term effects of after school program participation on outcomes such as course-taking and behavior in high school, high school completion and expectations and plans for post-secondary education.

*Implementation Study.* The ED-funded implementation study will examine the components of 21st CCLC programs as well as student experiences and patterns of participation. This study is meant to understand what programs look like, as implemented, documenting adjustments that have been made to the 21st CCLC model and contextual factors that promote or detract from successful implementation. The study will include 30 middle school sites and up to 20 elementary school sites and focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of a range of key implementation components.

Data will be collected through interviews, focus groups, observations and document review during two visits to each site.

The Mott-funded enhancement of the implementation study consists of in-depth analysis of up to 10 additional sites, documenting how programs foster developmentally appropriate youth outcomes, implement strong community partnerships, create and sustain parent involvement and what contributes to overall program quality.

*Study of After School Time Use.* Deborah Vandell and Associates at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are conducting this Mott-funded special study. Designed to supplement the national impact and implementation studies, this study will examine student experiences in after school programs and student engagement in program activities.

Using a technique called experience sampling, students in the study will be given "wrist watches" that are programmed to beep 15 times over a five-day period. When beeped, students will record information about where they are, who they are with, what activities they are involved in, their level of involvement or engagement and their affect or emotion.

*Surveys of Program Participants and Nonparticipants.* Surveys geared toward documenting programs' effects on participants will be administered to students in all of the Mott middle school sites in the national study as well as 1,000 nonparticipating students at Mott middle school sites.

*Surveys of Principals and Program Staff.* To complement the implementation study, surveys of principals and staff in the Mott middle school and elementary school sites will provide information about how these key actors in after school programs conduct their roles, tap resources, and coordinate regular and after school programs.

*Study of Other Mature After School Programs (non-21st CCLC).* This study, conducted by Policy Studies Associates, will examine the activities and experiences of after school programs not funded by the 21st CCLC program in order to provide an opportunity to learn about and promote practices that may benefit and help sustain 21st CCLC programs.

The national 21st CCLC evaluation represents a unique public-private partnership and commitment to ensuring that as much as possible is learned from the program and that these learnings will contribute to more effective, accessible and sustainable after school programs nationwide. ■

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## > beyond basic training: TEXAS

In 1999, the **Texas After School Initiative for Middle Schools** (TASIMS) was started to serve students age 10 to 14 at risk of academic failure and/or juvenile delinquency. Administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the goals of this initiative are to increase participants' academic achievement, reduce referrals to the juvenile justice system and increase involvement of parents and/or mentors. School districts are required to evaluate the implementation of their programs using formative and summative components. They are also required to submit a report to the TEA demonstrating that their programs have an academic-based curriculum, a character/citizenship component, involve parents and mentors and supplement rather than supplant existing programs or funds. Additional reporting requirements may include assisting in establishing equity of experience and opportunity for students, creating opportunities to build capacity for leadership in students of middle school age, establishing a safe place for students to gather and take part in a program designed to meet their needs and creating an environment in which students develop interests and abilities that assist in reducing the aggregate dropout rate. The statewide evaluation of TASIMS is in progress.

# A conversation with Jane Quinn

*Jane Quinn has been working for the past three decades to improve the quality of youth development programs and services and to increase access to them in low-income communities. A practitioner and author, Jane has played an integral role in helping to shape policies and programs in the out-of-school time field. Prior to her current position as Assistant Executive Director for Community Schools Partnerships at the Children's Aid Society in New York, Jane was Program Director for the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. She also was principal author of "A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours," a national report prepared by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Jane spoke with us about how the after school field has evolved since this report came out in 1992 and what she thinks the future holds.*

**Q What was the thinking behind the Carnegie Corporation's development of *A Matter of Time* report?**

**A** When designing *A Matter of Time* our goal was to give it a policy hook, and I think in large part we were successful. There were a lot of options for what approach to take, and it took us a while to even define the universe we were going to study and to set some fences around it. From its inception, however, we wanted it to be a study about the factors that influence and support healthy adolescent development.

Our challenge was how to get this notion to resonate with policy makers and the public. We had been talking to people about promoting kids' normal socialization and their healthy development. These were issues that the public understood, but we thought the information was going to put people to sleep because what we were trying to get at was so basic. We were also looking at community-based organizations and we knew that doing so was not going to resonate very strongly with policy makers. One option we considered was to take the risk and prevention angle, which is a valid argument, but we were really trying to make another point, about promoting opportunity for youth. Therefore, the Carnegie task force—including members of the Child Welfare League of America, Catholic Charities USA, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and public officials—and I discussed how we could present the research to policy makers and the public in a way that would engage them. And that's how we arrived at the issue of time. It took us several months to come up with that angle, but once we did, everybody was really happy with it.

**Q Since that time, in what ways do you think the after school field has changed?**

**A** During the period that we were producing *A Matter of Time*, the out-of-school time field was an under-studied, untapped, but fertile field for researchers. I think there has been a lot of good news in the research since *A Matter of Time* was published in December 1992. For instance, the 1994 evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities Program showed a host of positive results and its approach is very consistent with the core components of a positive youth development program: academic enrichment and remediation, community service, academic and career counseling, adult mentors and positive peer relationships. That study showed what can happen when you put all the pieces together for a very high-risk population. Another example is the 1995 study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) that received a lot of visibility and helped put mentoring on the map.

There's another, very different kind of study that was conducted by Public/Private Ventures, entitled *Safe Havens*. In this study, P/PV found that selected affiliates of three national youth organizations—Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Girls, Inc. and the YMCA—offered young people the kinds of experiences that are known to foster positive growth across different developmental domains. In an era where people are becoming fixated on very narrow dimensions of children's cognitive development, these programs are demonstrating that you can address multiple domains.

*I think the best evaluations are done by people who really know how to listen to practitioners, and who see themselves as having a role in informing practice. Therefore, this notion of having "a foot in both the library and the street" is really tremendously important, and it's the stance that all of us need to take.*

Another tremendously important line of research is found in the studies by Deborah Vandell which document the positive benefits of children's participation in high quality after school programs. These benefits include better grades, work habits, emotional adjustment and peer relations. These are all outcomes that society cares a great deal about and we have to keep talking about them because, in our heart of hearts, we all know it is not just about grades. It is also about work habits, emotional adjustment and human relationships.

Another landmark study is *Community Counts* by Milbrey McLaughlin. Its design is unique in that the authors started with kids as key informants, and asked them "lead us to the places in your communities that you think are good for kids." From there, they assessed what kids who participate regularly and are deeply engaged get out of those experiences. Participation and engagement are important issues because development is an ongoing process, and dosage makes a difference in development.

All of these studies are looking at multiple outcomes that matter. None of the outcomes are inconsequential. However, they are not the narrow ones that schools and policy makers are increasingly fixated on. There is no question that these are important outcomes, but they are not the only ones to measure.

Another important thing about these studies is that they all have shown that multiple positive benefits are predicated on quality. We cannot assume that multiple, positive benefits are just going to happen: we have to really invest in quality.

**Q Where do we go from here?**

A I think one of our greatest challenges is consistently applying what we already know. For example, the issue of access in out-of-school time is huge, and I don't think we as a society are paying enough attention to it. It is very important to acknowledge the fact that poor kids are much more likely to go to schools with uncertified teachers, watered-down curricula, in violent and unsafe neighborhoods and are much less likely to have access to enriching experiences or safe places in the non-school hours and to have access to everything that makes a difference in helping them achieve productive adulthood.

**Q How can we get what we know about the importance of after school into the "water supply" of public ideas?**

A I think people of good will have to keep talking about what we know. They really have to focus on this construct of children's learning and development, and then apply what is known. There are a lot of very smart, reasonable people all saying the same thing.

The public plays an important role in this, and that's why I was so thrilled to see the C.S. Mott Foundation poll on after school because it contained information that the public understands and can relate to. When the Carnegie Corporation put *A Matter of Time* out, not everyone was quite ready for it. Janet Reno took to it right away, as did a lot of the public, but the media wasn't quite as enamored because it wasn't dramatic. We made a conscious choice to not tie it to the crime rates, even though there is a case to be made for that approach. There have been numerous events since then that have helped to get these ideas into the water supply. Certainly the changes in the welfare laws have something to do with it. People's belated understanding of what was being said in *A Nation at Risk* contributed too. Public awareness of several issues is now converging in the out-of-school time field: many children in this country are not learning what they need to learn and are not developing the skills that they need to develop; parents need child care; and the juvenile crime and victimization rate rises after school. I think another factor that's helping us is that there are more women in elected leadership positions, and they understand this.

**Q Increasingly, people are realizing that to effect real change at multiple levels, it is necessary to break down the barriers that often separate policy makers, practitioners and researchers. In the past you have quoted Jane Addams as saying "effective social workers should keep one foot in the library and one foot in the street." What does this quote mean to you?**

A She saw herself as a change agent. She didn't see herself only as a practitioner, or only as a researcher, or only as a policy maker, although she was all three things. She was talking about a different way of thinking about your role as a person, as a professional. One of the things I really love about that quote, is its notion of balance. There's an intentionality in her thinking that we all need to have. The notion of being able to move from one world to another, and to bridge one world to the other, is what everybody should do.

**Q What does that mean for an evaluator or researcher?**

A First of all, some of it has to do with "what's their training? What discipline are they coming from?" The evaluators that I have worked with come from many different disciplines and I think that's a strength. What is underlying a lot of the tension is a sense that somehow, evaluation is a higher calling than practice or that policy making is a higher calling. I don't view it that way. Rather, I view it as kind of a partnership. Some of the best evaluations that I have seen have been very deliberate in thinking about their relevance to policy. For instance they ask, "if this intervention works, what are we going to do with the results?" I think the best evaluations are done by people who really know how to listen to practitioners, and who see themselves as having a role in informing practice. Therefore, this notion of having "a foot in both the library and the street" is really tremendously important, and it's the stance that all of us need to take. It isn't just advice for social workers.

The Carnegie Corporation has been terrific about bringing organizations together. We were very intentional in putting together the task force for *A Matter of Time*, to make sure that we had practitioners, researchers and policy makers represented in that group. People kept commenting how unusual that was, to have that experience of working together over a long period of time, to think a problem through together and to bring the different perspectives to bear on that. There really are very few forums for this way of working. I think we're so specialized that when we go to professional conferences we talk to ourselves. We have to be planful because this change in operations is not going to happen by itself. We have to ask policy makers, "what is it you need to know to make good policy?" I don't think that's happening very often.

**Q As you've said, there is currently great pressure for after school programs to show academic outcomes. Do you think there is a way to balance the things programs are accountable for, with a realism about what these programs can really do?**

A If we go back to basic constructs such as "what do we know about children's growth and development? What do we know about children's learning and development?" and build out from there, we're going to be okay. That's where I think developmental research is so helpful because we know about the tasks, the strengths, and the needs at various stages. We can go back to what we know, and we all have to be honest, if not modest, about the issue of what our core competencies are and be careful not to over promise, not to take on tasks that we are not qualified to take on.

But I think it's also really important to look at the balance in our out-of-school time programs, around a whole set of issues that influence children's learning and development, and not to forget the *development* part of it. Out-of-school time provides a great opportunity to work on kids' excitement about and engagement in learning, while we and schools are paying attention to the inter-relatedness of the multiple domains of development. Otherwise we are not really doing our job. ■

# Pizza, Transportation and Transformation: Youth Involvement in Evaluation and Research

"A lot of times adults think, oh, it's a teenager, they're just gonna come in here and be loud and obnoxious and annoying. And, a lot of times we're not. We can make differences and we can make decisions and we can do good things. Our whole goal was, we're gonna go out there and we're gonna show people that we can do positive things." *[young person describing her research project]*

How can after school programs attract older youth and keep them interested enough to come back? Program models and activities that work well with younger kids may flop with older youth who are becoming accustomed to making their own decisions, determining their own direction and priorities and looking to effect change in their own lives and communities. Competing with the benefits that even the most tedious teen jobs can offer—the money and the opportunity to take on new responsibilities and meet new people—is a major challenge for after school programs that are interested in providing services for older youth.

To address these challenges, a growing number of after school and other youth development programs are trying a new strategy to engage older youth: they are involving them in research and evaluation projects related to the design and implementation of youth programming.

This article is based on focus groups and individual interviews that Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) staff conducted with adults and youth involved in youth-led evaluation and research projects around the country. The goals of HFRP's research were to learn more about what it means to involve youth in evaluation and research and to compile some lessons for others. The HFRP team conducted 4 adult focus groups with 3-5 participants each (a total of 15 participants), several individual interviews, and 3 youth focus groups, with 3-4 participants each (for a total of 10 participants).

### What does youth involvement look like?

Based on what we heard from focus group participants—youth and adults—there seems to be no "typical" evaluation or research project that involves youth. Most of those we talked to grounded their work in youth development practices that are assets-based, incorporating a positive youth development focus within the context of evaluation and research work. They mentioned different frameworks for this work, including: youth development, risk and prevention, participatory action research, community development and empowerment evaluation. Those who engage in this work focus on establishing youth as partners or leaders in the research and evaluation endeavor, involving youth in determining the right questions to ask, designing and conducting the study and engaging with the community and other decision-makers in a discussion of findings and action steps.

The fourteen organizations represented by the individuals in our focus group discussions include: schools; nonprofit institutions, including youth development agencies and research organizations; and universities in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the U.S. and Canada. They involve youth in a range of activities, including community mapping, evaluation of programs and services, community-based strategic planning, education and advocacy and social change projects in areas such as the environment, health, and safety. Adults who work with youth in these research and evaluation efforts include volunteers and paid staff, community members, community-based and university researchers and evaluators, local graduate and undergraduate students and experts in different areas of inquiry. Youth from the organizations represented in our focus groups ranged from elementary school age to high school graduates and college students, as well as high school dropouts, and they come from a variety of educational, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities.

Among the youth who participated in our focus groups, several participated in the evaluation of after school programs and organizations, community service projects and drop-in centers for street youth. Some led participatory action research projects on issues of concern to youth and their communities, such as youth health behaviors, immigration, youth violence, school drop-outs and the environment. Youth indicated that they have been involved at all levels and stages: designing research projects; identifying research questions; creating data collection instruments (surveys and interview guides); collecting information; analyzing data; presenting information; and making recommendations for change. Some specific results of their work include: managing an adult-youth coffee house and "rap sessions;" creating a video project for teens about violence and substance abuse; producing a booklet on high-school dropouts; and bringing valuable jobs and positive activities for youth to the community by establishing an after school program.

### What are the benefits of youth involvement?

According to those in our focus groups, youth involvement in research and evaluation offers benefits to youth as well as to adults, programs, organizations, and communities. Benefits mentioned by youth included developing healthy relationships with mentors and peers, gaining valuable skills and making a positive impact on their community.

Adults in the group talked about how they benefit from the renewed energy and enthusiasm youth bring to the projects. Some adult focus group participants reported that youths' lack of cynicism and altruistic motivations were an inspiration to the adults around them.

From the program perspective, adults in our focus groups suggested that youth involvement can mean better research and evaluation. Adult focus group members observed that some audiences view reports *about* youth that are done *by* youth as more legitimate and much more interesting. Focus group participants suggested that young people offer fresh perspectives and new insights into data collection and analysis, and that working with youth can help adults better understand youth, thus changing perceptions and leading to greater mutual trust and respect.

Focus group members suggested that research and evaluation work provides the opportunity for youth to play a public role in the community, and in this way, youth are able to demonstrate a more positive image.

### What are some of the challenges to involving youth in research and evaluation projects?

*Clarifying the goals of the project*. Those embarking on this work are sometimes faced with the challenge of balancing multiple goals: fostering youth development and empowerment, producing a high quality product that meets rigorous standards for research and evaluation, and effecting community change. How these are balanced affects how a project is set up, who gets involved and when, how much structure is necessary, what supports are used and even which and how funding sources are identified and approached.

*Readiness*. Focus group members stressed that youth involvement is not for everyone. Adult study participants spoke about three forms of readiness: organizational readiness (is the organization one in which youth-led evaluation and research can work?); adult readiness (are the adults who will be working with the youth ready to engage in this type of a partnership?); and community readiness (is the community on board with this work and a new way to think about youth and their contribution?).

Readiness, participants stressed, is also not an all-or-nothing proposition. Some observed that one of the most effective approaches to youth-involved research and evaluation is a gradual one. Youth in Focus (formerly Community LORE), a technical assistance organization in Oakland, CA, has a model to help organizations locate where they are along a continuum of youth involvement. The point is that while youth involvement does require a fundamental paradigm shift, not everyone needs to *begin* by doing it comprehensively. In the same way that activities need to be developmentally appropriate for youth, the work needs to be developmentally appropriate for the organization undertaking it.

From the youth perspective, the challenge is preparing adults to work with youth in a different way than they may be used to. Adult participants admitted that staff need to be ready to work in honest partnership with youth—truly cooperating, and allowing youth to lead. One youth advised, "[adults] have to be ready to hear what the youth have to say. And it's not always what adults expect. So if you can, keep an open mind, and [go] in there to learn something and [be] honestly ready to learn something from youth…"

*Training and support for youth*. Providing the right training and support to staff and youth is, according to our focus group participants, absolutely critical to the success of youth research and evaluation activities. The critical challenge is how much structure and support to provide throughout the course of the project and how to make the project meet the skill levels of the youth.

*Overcoming "Adultism."* Fighting adult perceptions of youth—what one group referred to as "adultism"—is one of the major challenges cited by both adults and youth. Youth often feel they don't have representation; adults who work with youth can inadvertently reinforce this by making decisions for youth and overlooking their input. They can also do this by using technical jargon that is unfamiliar to youth. For many youth, the opportunity to change adults' images of youth is an important motivating factor for participation in these projects. Those involved in these projects must make sure that these opportunities exist.

### What makes youth involvement successful?

*Link research and evaluation to action and change*. For youth focus group members, the most common motivator for involvement in research and evaluation was the ability to use research and evaluation as a vehicle for change. These youth were not satisfied with a report to a funder that sits on the shelf; they needed to see the results of their work in tangible, immediate and important ways, either through program changes or the fact that others were willing to listen and consider what youth had to say. As one youth noted, "we saw results and it [gave us] such a feeling of like, 'oooh!' It inspires you to do more. And it makes you feel like you can take on the world and just fix everything!"

*Compensate for work*. Many focus group members stressed the importance of providing youth with rewards and validation for their work. This validation can take the form of: monetary compensation, a concrete product, utilization of results, presentation of findings to various audiences, travel to present or collect data and work with others, making an impact in the community. Monetary compensation can be key for youth that have financial need, or whose parents want them to have a job. Youth also cited the opportunity to gain skills, both practical and personal, as a form of compensation. Youth expressed a desire to be part of something bigger than themselves, and found that evidence of their impact inspired them to want to do more.

*Make it more than evaluation and research*. Youth and adult focus group members also cited the importance of making the experience of these projects be more than the "work" of research and evaluation. Youth members stressed the value of developing close relationships with peers and adults. Both adults and youth observed that these relationships extended far beyond the bounds of the research or evaluation endeavor including, for example, attending youths' sports games and recitals and getting to know parents. As one youth noted, "[a] reason why I think [our director] is so successful in what he does is he's not afraid to get involved with our lives."

*Provide food and transportation*. Adults agreed that the two main secrets to sustaining youth participation are to provide them with transportation and lots of food. Youth cannot participate if they cannot get there, and they will not be productive if they are hungry.

*This article is a shortened version of a soon-to-be published working paper on youth involvement in research and evaluation.*

**Jennifer C. Smith, Senior Research Assistant, HFRP**

## > beyond basic training: CALIFORNIA

California established the **After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program** (ASLSNPP) in 1998 to provide a safe environment after school for students in grades K-9. To achieve these goals, each program must have an academic achievement component and provide safe and healthy environments. Programs operate at schools for at least three hours until at least 6:00 p.m. on every regular school day. The California Department of Education (CDE), in partnership with the Foundation Consortium, is providing training and technical assistance to programs. CDE requires both site-based and program-wide outcome assessments. Program evaluations must measure progress in meeting goals, and must include indicators for: achievement of academic performance standards, attendance, positive behavior changes and school safety. The evaluation must be linked to collaborative partners, be integrated with existing program evaluations and include a plan for continuous improvement.

## All For Our Future

We know that each of us is in control of ourselves and what we do, but have you ever felt like what you did was wrong or what you said was useless? Through our work we have discovered that this is the way most youth feel every time they try to make a change in their community. Too many adults in the community overlook the youth. "So what?" they'd say, "Who Cares?" or even "What do you know?" Confronted by these demoralizing questions many youth give up. We knew we had to change the perception of youth, but how?

The answer was presented to us. The local community organization (Compañeros; Douglas, AZ) with which we worked, presented us with a project. We could do whatever we wanted with the stipulation that it had to be done with the organization's sister partnerships (Juntos Unidos; Nogales, AZ and Puentes de Amistad; Yuma, AZ), both of which are located on the Arizona/Mexico border.

Within a week, youth from the three sister organizations were all brought together in a central location. The youth from each group stuck to their own and didn't talk to each other. When words did start flying we were surprised to hear that we have a lot of similar problems. We knew that we wanted to make a change, but how? We brainstormed and came to a conclusion—How could we begin to make change without knowing what the youth wanted? We decided that a youth survey would best fit our needs.

Within a month we were on our way to determining what needed to be addressed. After some training on how to write a survey, we wrote questions addressing the problems we discussed at the first meeting. In no time the survey was finished. It consisted of 25 quantitative and qualitative questions covering issues affecting border teens today. From pollution to teen pregnancy, from our perspective, the survey covered it all and in two languages (Spanish/English). Now the hard part was over! Or was it?

Now that the survey was written, we had to administer it. This step proved to be more trying than we originally thought. It was decided that the survey would be disseminated to teens within the local middle schools and high schools. Resistance from school administration made this step more difficult than we thought it really should have been. Eventually our persistence paid off; the survey was given out to students ages 11-18 in four border communities in Arizona: Douglas, Naco/Bisbee, Nogales and Yuma.

Once the surveys were completed, we got together once again. We had approximately 1,500 surveys completed, and the question was what to do with them. The experts from the University of Arizona Rural Health Office trained us to input the data into the computer, using Excel to capture the data. This proved to be a long tedious task. Back home, we spent hour after hour inputting these data, and most of us gave up our summers and some activities in order to do this. Finally we were done.

Once again, we came together to receive more training. Collecting the data was one thing, interpreting it was another. The analysis of our survey proved to be both fun and exhausting. We discovered that although most youth agreed that we had problems, the priorities were much different. As we graphed the results, new ideas kept coming to our minds.

As we were completing our analysis, we received an invitation from the National Hispanic/Latino Prevention Cluster Conference to present our results. We quickly accepted the invitation. The fact that the conference was in Boston, Massachusetts weighed heavily on our decision. We were going to be the first youth group ever to present at the conference and we felt that this would be a giant step forward for youth.

So there we were, once again walking into a room of doubting adults. This was our chance to prove not only to our community, but also to adults all over the country, that youth can make a difference. We were extremely nervous, but we had a strong presentation ready. After giving up our jitters, we gave our presentation. At the end there was a long eerie silence. A clap finally broke the silence and that clap turned into many. Before we knew it the room was filled with the sound of a standing ovation.

After the applause died down, we were overwhelmed with questions about how to get other youth involved in their communities and most importantly, they wanted our opinions on real issues and problems. We couldn't believe that they wanted our opinions. It was a milestone in our struggle for a voice in our communities.

We were glad our hard work came in handy. After the survey we put the results to work. One big concern the youth who answered the survey had was lack of education. Not of math and science but of issues and situations they faced each and every day. This resulted in a presentation at the Compañeros Youth Council's Annual "Youth Learning to Lead the Future Conference." Yes, this was more work, but we feel that if youth are the future, they must have a voice in the present. ■

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The **Afterschool Alliance** is continuing to work toward ensuring that, by the year 2010, every child has access to high-quality, affordable after school programs. Their coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations educates the public through awareness efforts; engages local practitioners and community residents in outreach and advocacy; and promotes investment in after school initiatives at the national, state, and local levels. The Afterschool Alliance launched a national public service announcement campaign, "What Is A Hero?" to increase awareness of the need for after school programs and to help individuals learn more about starting after school programs in their communities. Communities across the nation are urged to participate in the second annual *Lights On! Afterschool* event to be held October 11, 2001. This nationwide celebration will highlight the programs serving families and children after school. To learn more about joining the Afterschool Alliance's Afterschool Action Hero Network, or to view the "What Is a Hero?" ads, visit ***http://www.afterschoolalliance.org***

# Logic Models in Real Life: After School at the YWCA of Asheville

The YWCA of Asheville, NC, is not a research organization. The shared vision that drives us is the empowerment of women and their families and the elimination of racism. We work hard every day for and with the people who walk through our doors: we teach them to swim, help them address barriers to financial self-sufficiency, care for their children and help them prepare for a brighter future. By and large, we are in the trenches and not necessarily at our desks.

We can see and feel that we are making a difference for women and families, but how can we prove it? This is the question that led the YWCA as a whole, and the after school program as a part of it, down the path toward using the logic model as an evaluation tool.

Several of the YWCA's programs receive generous support from our local United Way, which asked us to provide proof of our impact on those we serve. At the same time, our local United Way was accepted into The United Way of America's "National Learning Project on Using Program Outcomes."

The United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County participated in this national project by forming work groups of representatives from many local agencies. The people participating in these groups supported each other in developing logic models, outcome measurement frameworks and measurement tools for their agencies and programs. This process empowered the agency representatives to teach and learn from each other, thereby giving them a broad understanding of this evaluation tool and how it can be used in many different types of programs.

In the fall of 1999, we brought this working group process home to the YWCA, forming a similar study group within our organization that involved the leaders from the wide range of programs within the YWCA. The program staff met over doughnuts and coffee on a regular basis and helped each other think through the causes and effects of their programs. From this, the program staff came up with logic models to describe their programs.

Our internal study group's formation coincided with the arrival of our new school age director, who oversees both the after school and summer camp programs. Involvement in the study group gave her the opportunity to think through the programs she was taking on as she was learning about them. The process of developing logic models helped her to articulate what she wanted to accomplish with the programs, and what programmatic changes would be required in order to reach these outcomes.

In order to apply our after school program logic model in practice, we had to wrestle with some data collection challenges such as gaining access to report cards and convincing already busy counselors to track homework completion.

Like any program, we did the best we could with the information we had at hand. We got permission from parents, allowing us to collect report cards from the schools. We worked to get the counselors on board, and the go-getters got with the program. Our final data for the first round of outcomes measurement were a sampling rather than complete, but we thought it was an excellent start.

We have now had these logic models in place for half a year of after school programming and one complete summer camp season. Where are we now? What have we learned?

First, like good scouts, we have learned to BE PREPARED. We now have a report card permission slip in the enrollment packet, so we can easily collect grades from all the schools. As a part of the initial expectations for after school staff this year, we instituted daily homework logs for every group. We are trying to make outcome measurement an integral part of the program, rather than an add-on.

Second, we have become sensitive to the ways in which staffing issues affect outcome measurement. It is important to include outcome measurement discussions in the interview process, during orientation and training, and in staff meetings, to get buy-in and keep the momentum going. All staff need to understand the logic model process and the benefits of engaging in outcome measurement, whether they are the new director of school age programs or staff who have been with the program for years.

We asked ourselves this question: How can we have consistent outcome measurement with solid data, and still give the director the flexibility to adjust the program as she sees fit? Fortunately, logic models are both practical and flexible. The outcomes themselves are fairly common-sense and there is general agreement on what we want to get out of an after school program. There are many possible ways to get there, as many activities could lead to the desired outcomes. So it is easy for a new director to accept the pre-determined outcomes, but exercise her own creativity in designing activities to reach them. In this way, the program can be both fresh and consis-

## > beyond basic training: MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts's **After-School and Other Out-of-School-Time (ASOOST)**, an initiative both funded and operated by the Massachusetts Department of Education (MA DOE), provides quality before and after school, vacation and weekend programming for children and youth. Programs may provide academic support, enrichment, physical activity, community service, career exploration and health information. Grantees are required to provide data to the MA DOE on primary program activities, number of hours students attended program, content area in which students are receiving assistance, instructional model used in program and pre/post measures of academic improvement. Sites must conduct an evaluation of program implementation, achievements (including gains in children's performance, and increases in homework completion or school attendance) and satisfaction of stakeholders. The MA DOE currently contracts with training and technical assistance providers to support the implementation, development and quality enhancement of the ASOOST grant program. The MA DOE has hired an independent evaluator to assess the goods and services provided through the grants and to submit reports on program outcomes.

tent at the same time.

This practicality of the logic model is its greatest asset, not only for after school, but for the YWCA as a whole. We are busy people running licensed programs that already involve plenty of state, federal and grants-related paperwork. If we are going to design and measure anything, it had better be easy, and it had better make sense. The logic model meets both those criteria, and gives us excellent data to use for improving and marketing our programs. ■

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## Logic Model Basics

A logic model is a graphic that lays out the basic components of a program, illustrating how day-to-day program activities are linked to the outcomes the program is working to achieve. The process of creating a logic model allows after school programs to think systematically about what outcomes they hope to achieve and how they plan to achieve them. As a visual, the logic model can be a powerful tool for illustrating a program's theory of change to program staff, partners, funders and evaluators. Moreover, the completed model provides a point of reference against which progress towards achievement of desired outcomes can be measured on an ongoing basis.

### Step 1: The Purpose of the Logic Model

Construction and use of the logic model will differ according to the needs of individual after school programs. Purposes for logic models include:

- to structure early conversations among program stakeholders about desired outcomes and activities
- to convince funders that a program is deserving of support because it has a strategic plan for achieving the outcomes it promises
- to check that existing program activities fit "logically" with expected outcomes
- to help established programs articulate and clarify their implicit assumptions as an explicit theory of change
- a framework to guide data collection and evaluation activities

Programs should use program needs to determine the appropriate scope for the logic model. Will it focus on a specific program component or will it cover the entire program? After school programs that rely on multiple funding streams with different outcomes requirements may want to use the logic model to think about how these outcomes fit together. Or, a program may want to create a logic model focusing only on a particular outcome.

### Step 2: Identifying the Components of the Logic Model

Once the appropriate scope of the model has been determined, it is possible to begin to identify its core components:

- *Inputs*: Plans made, resources used, or collaborations developed to make program implementation possible.
- *Activities*: Steps taken during implementation of program.
- *Short-term outcomes:* Measurable changes that occur as a direct result of program activities. These changes should contribute to desired long-term outcomes.
- *Long-term outcomes:* Changes in individual behavior or community conditions that a program hopes to achieve over time. Like short-term outcomes, these outcomes should be measurable, and as specific as possible.

Existing organizational documents—strategic planning documents, mission statements, grant proposals, work plans, recruitment announcements, public relations materials, training materials, or publications—can be used to identify the specific components of an after school program's work. If desired long-term outcomes have not yet been identified, the process of constructing a logic model can become an opportunity for program stakeholders to share their expectations of the program and strategically plan to meet them.

Once the core components of the model have been identified, many programs will want to add more detail to better explain the program. The following components can be added:

- *Outputs:* Goods and services generated by program activities that make short-term outcomes possible, falling between activities and short-term outcomes.
- *Contextual variables:* Factors that may or may not be under a program's control but could impact a program's implementation and or/achievement of its outcomes.
- *Intermediate outcomes:* Coming after short-term outcomes, these outcomes are important to achieve in order for long-term outcomes to be realized.
- *Impacts:* Broader-level change that a program hopes to *contribute* to through achievement of its long-term outcomes, though it is usually impossible to prove that an individual program *caused* these changes.

### Step 3: Drafting the Logic Model Graphic

Once the purpose and components of the logic model have been decided upon, the hard part is over. Now, the logic model graphic can be made by putting program components into boxes and connecting them with arrows that show the relationships between different components. The lines of the logic model should be clean, and its content clear—abbreviations and jargon should be avoided. When a draft of the logic model has been completed, it should be circulated to different program stakeholders to review it for accuracy and readability. The draft should be revised until reviewer feedback is satisfied.

Designing a logic model is just the beginning of a process that includes data collection, evaluation and program monitoring and reporting. ■

**Based on *Learning from logic models: An example of a family/school partnership program*. Julia Coffman (1999). Harvard Family Research Project. This publication is available on-line at http://www.gse. harvard.edu/~hfrp/pubs/onlinepubs/logic.pdf**

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### Why evaluate after school programs?

With the recent increase in interest in children's activities during out-of-school hours, large amounts of federal funding are being directed toward after school programs. Educators, researchers, practitioners and policy makers are all interested in the impact of these dollars on the communities in which they are invested; evaluation is a necessary tool for the documentation of after school programs' impacts. Future policies regarding after school programs will be influenced not only by national research and evaluation investments; local evaluation efforts will also provide important information to inform the field.

Evaluation serves multiple purposes for after school programs. In addition to helping programs be accountable to the multiple stakeholders of the program—funders, schools, parents, student participants and communities—evaluation helps programs to strengthen themselves. Engaging in frequent, active evaluation is one way for after school programs to track progress toward goals and ensure that they are meeting the needs of communities.

New programs are often too busy getting the program off the ground to think forward to evaluation planning. What type of evaluation activities can new programs incorporate into their planning and implementation process?

In the first year of a program, it is not unrealistic for staff to spend a lot of their time developing the program's goals and creating the program. Engaging in formative evaluation from the very beginning will help to shape the outcome expectations for the program. While this type of evaluation will not immediately give "evidence of effectiveness" or other statistical outcome measures, such as means, standard deviations, and effect sizes pertaining to the impact of the program, it will provide important evaluation information to stakeholders of the after school program. Such formative information—including feedback on program structure and activities, descriptions of participant demographics, documentation of parent and student satisfaction, attendance patterns of the students and staff and descriptions of program successes and challenges—is essential to frame the outcomes evaluations to follow.

When incorporating evaluation into a program, the key to success is connecting the needs of the program to the goals of the program and eventually to the outcomes. In a logic model for the program, needs should drive goals and objectives, and those should be directly connected to expected outcomes for the program. In order to be able to make some claim of success, it is important to create an infrastructure for the evaluation, based on a solid logic model, that links activities in the program to outcomes expected for the participants.

The program planning, implementation and evaluation process benefits from a strong data collection and evaluation infrastructure. Creating an evaluation infrastructure first and foremost requires the organization, its staff and the evaluation team to commit to conducting a sound, rigorous evaluation. The evaluation infrastructure addresses not only the physical mechanisms that pertain to evaluation, such as data collection tools and evaluation personnel, but accounts for the non-tangible attitudes among stakeholders about evaluation. Points of accountability and responsibility from the participants in the program all the way to the evaluator and eventually the funders are highlighted in a comprehensive evaluation infrastructure. The evaluation infrastructure is a whole communication mechanism that exists between and among the various stakeholders involved in the program and its evaluation. For a strong infrastructure to exist, all of the stakeholders must be in agreement about the needs, goals and intended outcomes of the program. Building a data collection and evaluation infrastructure into the program from the very start creates an environment that will support effective evaluation efforts in the future. ■

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## > electronic resources

**InnoNet** strives to build the capacity of public and non-profit agencies to improve their overall organizational learning and effectiveness. Through consultations, trainings, workshops and diagnostic tools, InnoNet assists these organizations in evaluating the services they provide. Their on-line resource center offers free information on evaluation. **http://www.innonet.org**

The **National Governors' Association** Center for Best Practices has created the first comprehensive database containing profiles of state-level extra learning opportunities. The searchable database contains profiles of 167 state-level programs in 44 states. It offers governors and other state leaders the chance to share effective practices and expand extra learning opportunities for all children. **http://www.nga.org**

The **National Institute on Out-of-School Time's** (NIOST) Cross-Cities Network brings together leaders from 25 citywide after school initiatives in major cities across the United States. The goals of this project are to increase the capacity and knowledge of high-level leaders, to improve the effectiveness of citywide after school initiatives and to contribute to the development of a coherent vision for the field at the national level. Watch their website for activities and developments. **http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/cross_cities.html**

The **Search Institute** will be holding its annual Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth Conference, November 1-3, 2001. Designed for people who work with or care about youth, this conference will bring together people from different national and international community sectors who share the common goal of working together to promote positive youth development through asset building. For more information or to register, visit: **http://www.search-institute.org**

> *continued from page 2*

**National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2001). *Fact Sheet on School Age Children's Out-of-School Time.* Wellesley, MA.** This March 2001 update to the 2000 edition provides information on the ways children spend time after school, children's health and safety, how children benefit from high quality programs, costs of care and support for out-of-school time programs. **http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/fact_sheet_01.pdf**

**Olsen, Laurie, Amy Scharf, Hedy Chang, Lisette Lopez, and Mona Shah. (2000). *Realizing the Promise and Opportunity of After School Programs in a Diverse State: A Preliminary Analysis of Equity and Access Issues in California's After School Programs.* A Joint Working Paper of California Tomorrow and the Foundation Consortium.** This preliminary report presents an initial analysis and a set of preliminary recommendations for developing the policies and infrastructure needed to create after school programs for a diverse state such as California. For more information contact: California Tomorrow, 1904 Franklin Street, Suite 300, Oakland, CA 94612, 510-496-0220, **http://www.californiatomorrow.org**

**Richard, Mary MacDonald. (1991) *Before and After School Programs: A Start Up and Administration Manual.*** This is a policies and procedures manual with models, applications, forms, and information about starting and running a school-age care program. It includes budgets, non-profit status, job descriptions, staff and parent handbook, and staff evaluation. Order online at: **http://www.afterschool catalog.com**

**Sylvester, Kathleen, and Kathy Reich. (2000). *After-School Programs, Issues & Ideas: A Guide for Journalists and Policymakers.* Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.** A companion piece to *The Future of Children* journal issue *When School Is Out* (Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1999), this publication examines issues such as: how much schooling should take place after school, whether government should pay for after school programs and if after school programs can meet expectations. Available online at **http://www.futureofchildren.org/asp.pdf**

**U.S. Department of Education and National Endowment for the Arts. (2000). *How the Arts Can Enhance After-School Programs.* Washington, DC: Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.** This report provides a brief introduction to the role of the arts in after school programs such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Included are a brief summary of recent research findings about arts and after school programs, a description of the key elements of successful programs and some key examples that showcase partnerships between schools and community-based organizations. For more information contact the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education at 1-800-872-5327 or email partner@ed.gov

***Working for Change in Education: A Handbook for Planning Advocacy.* (2000). Plymouth, United Kingdom: Save the Children UK.** Non-governmental organization representatives from four continents developed the ideas for this handbook, which is a practical guide on how to advocate for education, from local through to national and international levels. The handbook offers a detailed framework for planning advocacy, alongside case studies and workshops for training or to facilitate analysis. For copies of the publication, price £7.50, please contact: Save the Children Publications, c/o Plymbridge Distributors Ltd, Estover Road, Plymouth, PL6 7PY, United Kingdom, tel+44 1752 202301, fax +44 1752 202333, or email orders@plymbridge.com. **http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/functions/indx_pubs.html**

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