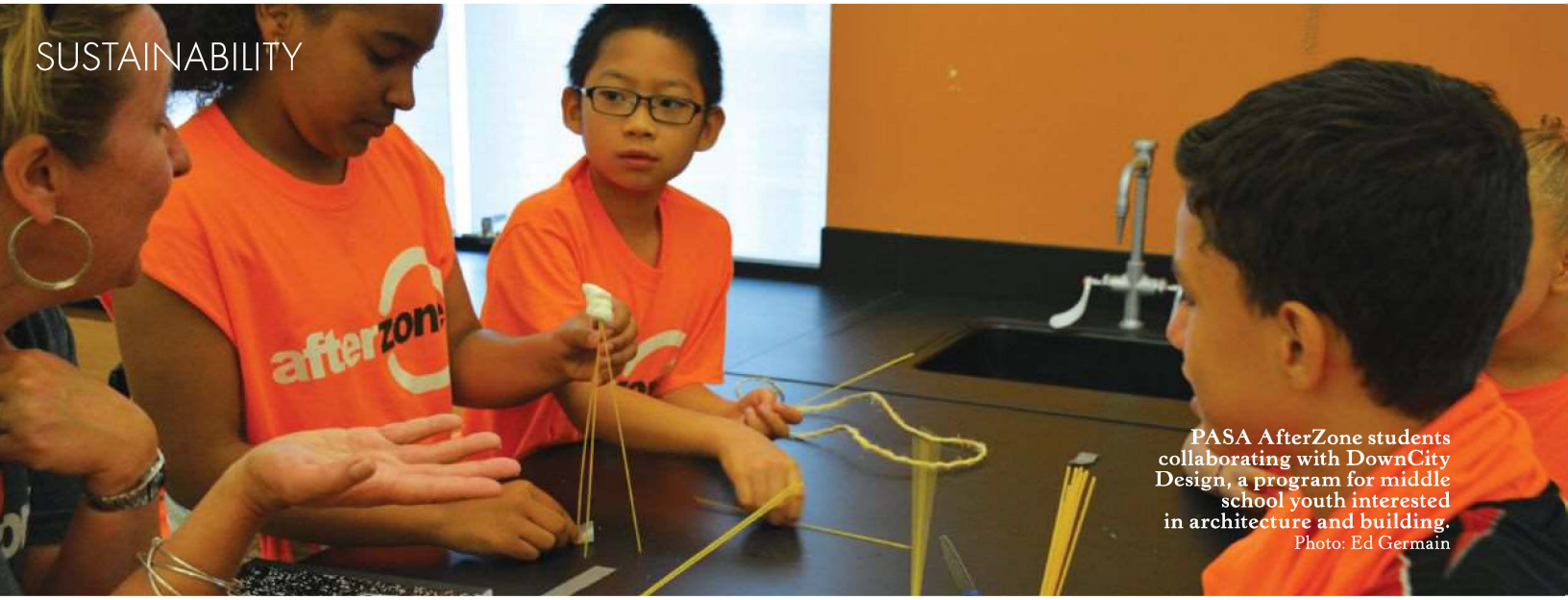
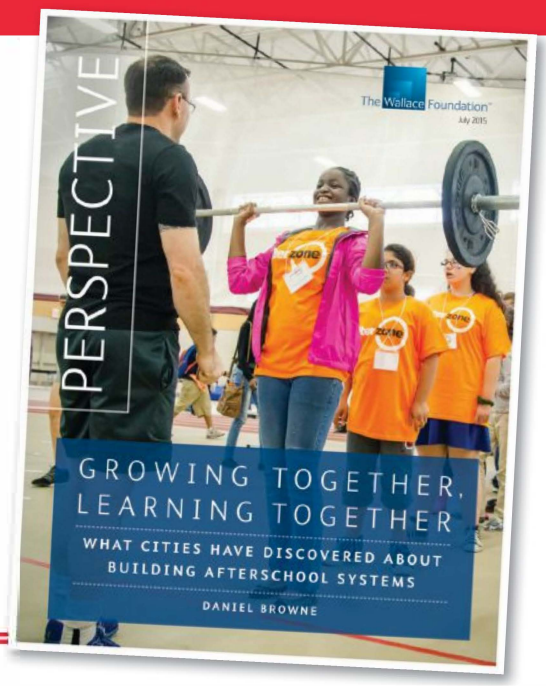


PASA AfterZone students collaborating with DownCity Design, a program for middle school youth interested in architecture and building.
Photo: Ed Germain

IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

HOW CITIES ARE SUSTAINING THEIR AFTERSCHOOL SYSTEMS

BY DANIEL BROWNE



In 2003, The Wallace Foundation began helping cities coordinate efforts and resources to bring young people afterschool opportunities that otherwise might be out of reach. At the time, a few cities were pioneering this approach, but it was still a novelty. The afterschool system-building field has grown and learned much since then. At least 77 of the 275 largest U.S. cities have put in place one or more key strategies to coordinate their afterschool programs. In 2014, Providence's system celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Cities with more advanced systems, like Providence, are now developing strategies to ensure their work thrives over the long haul. But even for those just starting out, it's not too early to begin thinking about sustainability. A new Wallace report, *Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered About Building Afterschool Systems*, highlights some key considerations that go into sustainability planning.

THE MAYOR IS NOT ENOUGH

There is no substitute for the leadership of a committed mayor or county executive, especially in the early stages of getting a system off the ground. At the same time, system builders have learned an important lesson: All leaders eventually step down. Whether due to term limits or other factors, mayors come and go, as do important civic figures beyond city hall. For school superintendents, the time in office can be particularly brief: In its first decade, the Providence After School Alliance has worked with no fewer than five superintendents.

Thus, the committed leadership of a top-level executive such as a mayor or superintendent is necessary for successful system building, but it is not enough. For a system to survive, all the major players—from city agencies, private funders, and schools, to program providers and the families they serve—need to "own" the effort.

EARNING A SEAT AT THE "COLLECTIVE IMPACT" TABLE

Moreover, a number of cities are now launching "collective impact" initiatives, rallying an array of civic institutions around a common goal. It is important that afterschool system builders earn a seat at the table. Not only could they make a vital contribution to any initiative that involves the education and well-being of young people, they could also participate in a citywide, multisector

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partnership to help embed an afterschool system in the public consciousness and policy agenda.

Such is the case in St. Paul, Minnesota, where Sprockets, the afterschool coordinating entity, works with Generation Next, a public-private partnership that seeks to close the achievement gap between white students and students of color from kindergarten through college. Similarly, the Louisville, Kentucky, afterschool system is a partner in 55,000 Degrees, a collective impact initiative positioned primarily as an economic development project, with a goal of adding 55,000 post-secondary degrees to the city by 2020.

MOVING TO A NEW HOME

In some cases, a civic leadership transition may lead an afterschool system to seek a new institutional home. The Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) started life in 2009 in the office of Mayor Karl Dean, the city's chief champion of afterschool system building. Within a few years, NAZA was facing a dilemma: Because of term limits, Dean would leave office at the end of 2015, and there was no way of knowing whether the next mayor would consider afterschool a priority. The solution: Move the operation out of the mayor's office and into the Nashville Public Library, a stable home with its own public and private funding sources.

The Fort Worth, Texas, afterschool initiative, SPARC (Strengthen after-school Programs through Advocacy, Resources and Collaboration), originally resided in Fort Worth's Parks and Community Services Department. After deliberations led by Mayor Betsy Price, SPARC formed its own nonprofit organization so it would endure after Price's administration ended.

AND SO MUCH MORE

Preparing for a supportive mayor's departure is just one aspect of sustainability planning. Securing reliable funding streams; grooming the next generation of initiative coordinators, intermediary CEOs, and the like as the first generation moves on; making the system story as compelling as possible so systems don't get lost in in a crowded policy landscape: These are all challenges maturing systems are facing.

The years ahead will no doubt bring many more insights, as cities across the country continue to grow and learn together. NAA

Daniel Browne, a staff writer at The Wallace Foundation, is author of Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered About Building Afterschool Systems *(2015: Wallace Foundation, New York).*

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CHARITY FOR CHANGE: Take a minute to inspire

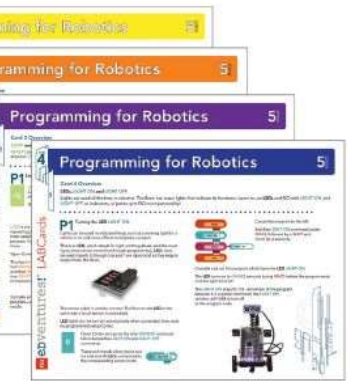
EMPATHY. COMPASSION. SELF-EFFICACY.

All children, regardless of socioeconomic background, deserve to know the feeling of giving and helping others. Take a minute to remember how you felt the last time you gave time or money to help someone in need. The Charity for Change Giver Program integrates service learning and character education into a standards-based math and character education curriculum.

Students are powerfully captivated by the interactive online mascots, while earning money from Charity for Change that is given to charities the students research and select. Charities demonstrate the impact the students are making by speaking at the afterschool site.

"The students' enthusiasm for giving and learning through the Giver Program is palpable," said Florida State Representative Kathleen Passidomo. "This Program should be available to every afterschool program in the country!"

PCS EDVENTURES: LABCards Curricula Series



Looking to bring more variety to your afterschool program? PCS Edventures recently created a series of curricula perfect for afterschool settings, clubs, and more. Known as LABCards, these newly developed units cover topics ranging from exciting robotics and programming to 3-D printing, computer coding, and more. LABCards were designed with the needs of afterschool instructors in mind, by being extremely granular and easy-to-understand, as well as student-driven.

Each unit of LABCards comes with four distinct levels differentiated by color, and each level contains five cards full of projects, challenges, and design activities. This unique way of creating projects for kids in grades 4 through 8 has made it easy for instructors to encourage learner independence and foster confidence in their students. LABCards also naturally progress from level to level, which reinforces concepts and skills from early projects throughout later challenges and activities. To learn more about these exciting new afterschool products, head to edventures.com!

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