PERSPECTIVE

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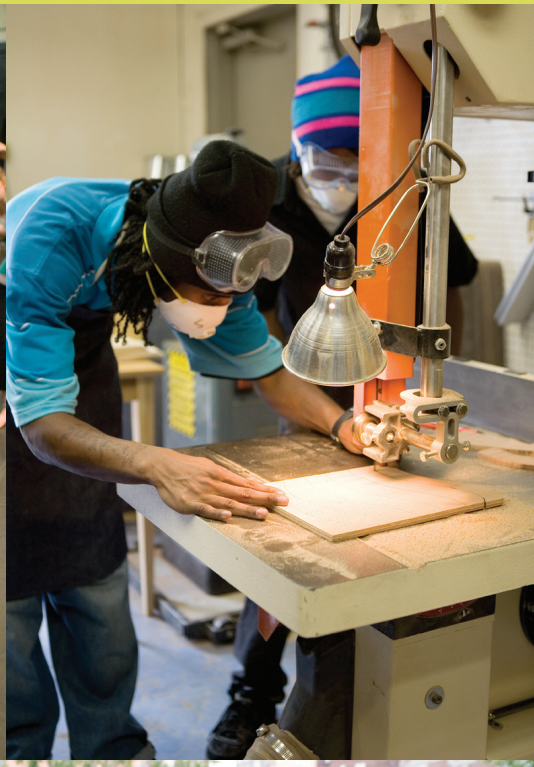
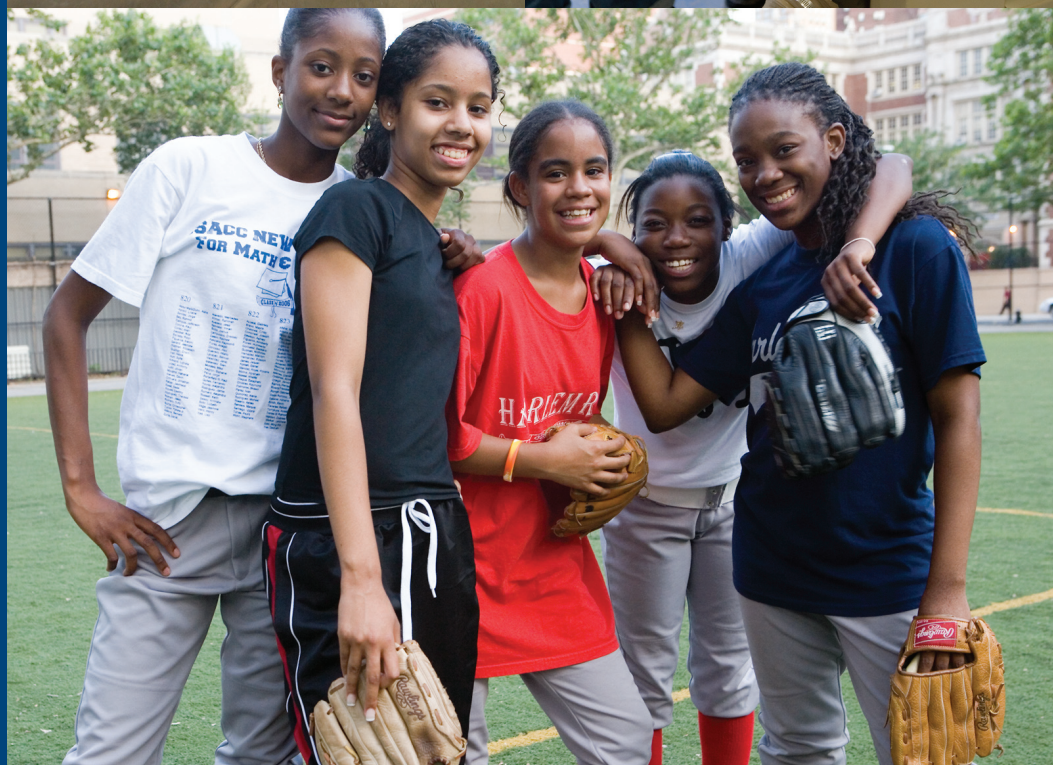
A PLACE TO GROW AND LEARN

A Citywide Approach to Building and Sustaining Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities





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This publication was produced as part of a commitment by The Wallace Foundation to develop and share knowledge, ideas and insights aimed at increasing understanding of how cities can plan and implement strategies that enhance participation in high-quality out-of-school time learning programs so that children, especially those with the highest needs, attend often enough to gain learning and developmental benefits. The ideas presented in this paper represent the collective efforts of the Foundation's program, research & evaluation, communications and editorial staff.

This and other resources on out-of-school time learning can be downloaded for free at www.wallacefoundation.org.

A PLACE TO GROW AND LEARN:

A Citywide Approach To Building And Sustaining Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities

Since 2003, The Wallace Foundation has supported a range of initiatives in five cities to develop and test new, coordinated approaches to making high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities available to more children. While much remains to be learned, we believe a coordinated approach holds considerable promise for building and sustaining improvements in OST opportunities on a wide scale. In this paper, we describe the basis for our working hypothesis for expanding the quality and reach of out-of-school time learning opportunities. And we identify six "action elements" that can help other cities get started with a coordinated approach to OST improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, some 40 million American children and teenagers occupy their non-school hours with supervised activities that can reap them lifelong benefits – from perfecting a curve ball to memorizing a Shakespearean soliloquy or mastering multiplication tables.[i] The idea that learning and enrichment cannot and should not end with the school bell is hardly new. Organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs date back some 150 years,[ii] and the out-of-school time learning movement grew rapidly in the early part of the 20th century with the Progressive Era, when settlement houses and children's clubs offered young people, often the offspring of immigrants, a place to learn language and culture and explore a variety of endeavors.[iii]

In recent years, after-school programs have attracted a new burst of interest and funding. More than 500 municipal leaders surveyed by the National League of Cities ranked after-school programs among the most pressing needs for children in their communities.[iv] More households have working mothers, with the resulting need for a safe, wholesome place for children after school,[v] and families are increasingly looking to after-school providers for academic help or to compensate for cutbacks in arts, sports or other enrichment activities at public schools.

To David Cicilline, mayor of Providence, RI and a leading national advocate for better out-of-school time (OST) programming, the benefits are clear. "There's no greater gift than that kids have a safe, enriching, high-quality place to grow and learn all day," he says. "I mean, there's nothing better that you can do."[vi]

Despite such enthusiastic endorsements, many questions remain about these programs: their costs, how to boost participation, the actual benefits for children, and what "quality programming" looks like. But their potential rewards are now widely seen as promising enough that OST has attracted significant new funding in recent years. The federal government is spending about $3.6 billion annually for out-of-school time learning, chiefly through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and the Child Care and Development Fund. California has spent hundreds of millions of new dollars on OST as a result of the passage by voters of Proposition 49 in 2002. In New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg has

overseen an increase in public out-of-school time programming funding from $47 million in fiscal 2006 to $109 million in fiscal 2008.

But with additional funding and attention has come the challenge of lifting the quality of these programs and expanding their availability. The fact is that as many as 20 million young people in the United States today[vii] are not participating. For many of them, the time after school, on weekends and over vacations signals boredom and risk. Children in lower-income families in particular are far less likely than their more affluent peers to have access to, or participate in, out-of-school offerings.[viii] That means they miss out on activities that may cultivate talent, lift self-confidence, improve social skills, increase engagement with school, and decrease the likelihood of risky or self-destructive behavior.

Since 1990, The Wallace Foundation has supported a range of initiatives to help change that picture. Past efforts most often centered on expanding and enhancing out-of-school time opportunities in specific venues such as urban parks, libraries, museums, arts organizations and schools.[ix] Anxious to extend the reach and impact of this work, we adopted in 2003 what was then, and remains, a novel approach to creating better OST opportunities for more children. We selected five cities – New York City and Providence first; Boston, Chicago and Washington, D.C. a couple of years later – to develop and test a city-wide approach that brought to the table top leaders from government, schools and the OST provider community to plan well-coordinated ways of providing high-quality OST to more young people, especially those with the highest needs.

THE FIVE CITIES IN WALLACE'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME INITIATIVE

- BOSTON – Partners for Student Success, administered by the not-for-profit Boston After School & Beyond organization, seeks to assist struggling public elementary school students with enrichment activities and academic help. *http://pss.bostonbeyond.org/*
- CHICAGO – Chicago's Department of Children & Youth Services is working with After School Matters, a private nonprofit organization that features teen apprenticeships, to increase access to OST services for high school students and track participation. *http://www.afterschoolmatters.org/*
- NEW YORK CITY – The city's Out-of-School Time Initiative, administered by the Department of Youth and Community Development, aims to improve and expand OST opportunities in a range of school and other settings for children K-12. *http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/afterschool/out_of_school_time.shtml*
- PROVIDENCE – The not-for-profit Providence After School Alliance (PASA) has created a network of neighborhood OST hubs, known as AfterZones, offering homework help, sports, arts and other programs to middle-school students. *http://www.mypasa.org/*
- WASHINGTON, D.C. – Project My Time, run by the not-for-profit DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corp., offers underserved middle school students a variety of sports, arts and academic OST programs. *http://www.projectmytime.org/*

The five cities were selected by Wallace for reasons that included their previous track record in OST, the relative variety and strength of their OST providers, and their leaders' demonstrated commitment to enhancing opportunities on a wide scale. These cities have begun to yield lessons we believe could guide other cities interested in getting started in expanding the quality and reach of their OST opportunities. The purpose of this

Wallace Perspective is to discuss the basis for this citywide approach and to describe six interrelated "action elements" that we believe are central to its success and sustainability.

The six action elements are as follows:

- **Committed leadership** – including top political, school, community and OST leaders, to secure funding and other resources and shape policies;
- **A public or private coordinating entity** – to manage the development of plans, link disparate OST players, build citywide attention and support for OST, and ensure that plans and performance stay on track;
- **Multi-year planning** – to set goals and priorities, develop ways to hold key players accountable for results and identify necessary resources;
- **Reliable information** – to document the needs and wishes of parents and children, track participation and identify underserved neighborhoods and families;
- **Expanding participation** – to reach more children and ensure that they attend often enough to benefit; and
- **A commitment to quality** – because quality programs are likeliest to benefit children and therefore scarce OST funding should be directed to delivering high-quality programming.

These action elements make up the building blocks of our working hypothesis for improving OST opportunities for many more children. That hypothesis is as follows:

1. ***Children and youth can gain learning and developmental benefits by frequent participation in high-quality programs; and***
2. ***The best route to providing such high-quality services to more children is to adopt a citywide, coordinated approach that is sustainable.***

WHY A CITYWIDE APPROACH?

If the goal is to expand high-quality opportunities for more children, then the first reality cities must confront is what longtime OST researcher Robert Halpern has called the "heterogeneous, decentralized and fragmented"[x] shape that has defined OST since its earliest days. Unlike public education, there is no model for building an effective OST system. Indeed, defining what a well-functioning, coordinated OST "system" consists of – and how to plan, operate and sustain it – remains very much an early work in progress in the five cities in our initiative.

The typical decentralized pattern of OST provision has advantages worth preserving, Halpern and others point out – most notably, a diversity of activities and approaches from a wide variety of community, cultural and arts providers. But it also poses serious challenges for those who want to make OST better and more equitable on a wide scale. In very few cities has any leader or organization assumed permanent responsibility for planning the changes required or ensuring the necessary resources.

Even where such leadership exists, the information needed to guide planning and implementation is typically unreliable, irregularly gathered and of little use for monitoring program participation or quality. And the more usual program-by-program approaches to improving OST frequently leave entire neighborhoods with little or no programming, while sending scarce funding to organizations that may not consistently deliver quality service.

"When it's not coordinated, the poorest kids lose out," says Mary Ellen Caron, who as commissioner of the Department of Children and Youth Services in Chicago helps oversee the Wallace initiative in that city. "Someone has to be on the ball to figure out where programs are and to be able to get them to the poorest children."

Halpern also writes that the field's current lack of coherence stymies development of strategies to enhance OST broadly: "Thus, for instance, the tasks of increasing supply and strengthening program quality are often complicated by lack of citywide capacity for collecting and analyzing information, planning, and priority-setting. Providers cannot find, and sometimes are unaware of, resources that would be helpful to their work. Potential funders may not be sure where or how to focus their investments."[xi]

For many, the time after school, on weekends and over vacations signals boredom and risk.

The citywide, coordinated approach takes time and has many unanswered questions. It also faces numerous obstacles – not least, the often limited organizational capabilities of OST providers to act on demands for better quality. It involves new, unaccustomed activities for cities, such as sustained planning. It requires broad, durable support from top public and private leaders. And its long-term success will require more resources than are typically available.

Despite such uncertainties and questions, we are confident that a coordinated, citywide effort, which informs the whole community about the value of OST and brings together a range of different interests, has promise as a means of expanding the benefits of OST. Furthermore, we see a sizable "market" among the nation's cities and their leaders for learning more about such an approach. Some 220 cities are connected to the National League of Cities' Afterschool Policy Advisors Network, which is working with Wallace to share information about OST.

By "embedding" the idea of high-quality OST into the life of the city, we believe that sustainable, coordinated efforts will ultimately be a pathway for making good programming that's available to all children a staple of urban life.

GETTING STARTED WITH CITYWIDE OST IMPROVEMENT: SIX ACTION ELEMENTS

So where should cities begin? Research and the early experiences of the five cities in our initiative suggest six elements need to be in place if such coordinated efforts are to be built and sustained.

Element one: Committed leadership

Broad-based, committed public and private leadership is "the price of admission" for getting started on citywide OST improvement. Such leadership must begin at the earliest stages and needs to include the mayor (or whoever has executive municipal authority), given his or her unique ability to forge connections among the leaders of public and private agencies and to

use the bully pulpit to increase public support for OST. In short, committed leadership is fundamental to securing necessary public funding and influencing policy affecting OST.

Experience has shown that strong mayoral leadership is a powerful driver for progress in OST improvement. In New York, Mayor Bloomberg led a reorganization of the city's OST programs for increased quality and more accountability, and substantially increased spending on OST. In Providence, Mayor Cicilline's backing has been "essential," says Hillary Salmons, director of the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), the organization created by the mayor with Wallace's support to plan and manage that city's OST improvement efforts. Cicilline deemed the development of quality after-school activities a top priority during his first mayoral campaign in 2002, and he has personally participated in planning meetings for his city's OST initiative. His support led to a first-time OST municipal appropriation in 2007, and to unprecedented partnerships between OST programming and key city agencies, including the recreation department, to develop a new neighborhood-based system of OST opportunities for middle-school youth.

The best route to providing high-quality services to more children is to adopt a citywide, coordinated approach that is sustainable.

School superintendents and principals also play a key role in coordinated OST efforts, which often depend on public education to provide everything from after-school space and personnel to bus transportation and exchanges of ideas and information. School involvement is also important if the OST goals are to make learning in and out of school more seamless. "We feel like we can't not be at the table," says Erica Harris, who represents the local public school system in Chicago's initiative.

Other leaders are needed as well. In Providence, the chief of police helped make possible a new program that organizes officers to work as coaches and mentors for youth. Chicago's OST efforts, which are targeted at high school students, enjoy the support of a leading business group that is also working for expanding citywide coverage.

The essential point is that public and private leadership support for OST improvement has to go beyond a single individual so that it is broad enough to survive transitions in city administrations.

Element two: A public or private coordinating entity

To plan, implement and sustain a citywide effort, a coordinating entity, called an "intermediary" by some, has proven to be essential in the cities participating in Wallace's initiative. The coordinating entities vary widely. For example, given the relatively large sums of municipal funding involved, New York City planners decided it made sense to keep the coordinating function within a government agency, the Department of Youth and Community Development. A citywide OST effort can also be coordinated by a not-for-profit that receives private support as well as varying degrees of public funding. Examples include the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, which oversees Washington's Project My Time out-of-school time initiative, and PASA, which coordinates Providence's neighborhood-based "AfterZone" strategy.

What do these coordinating bodies do, whether or not they are governmentally or privately run? Initially, they are charged with planning. They also gather the data necessary to inform important decisions by city leaders, such as where program dollars can best be spent. In some cases, such as PASA, they actually allocate funds based on program performance and family needs. Equally important, because they are promoting high-quality programming, they lead the development of quality standards. They then determine the necessary steps to help programs achieve better quality and participation.

The coordinating bodies also serve a key communications role. They inform parents and children about OST options and program locations, and oversee efforts to build and sustain broad support for OST. "The hardest part," says Greg Roberts, who leads the initiative in Washington, "is being the entity that's responsible for a lot of moving parts."

Element three: Multi-year planning

Multi-year planning is more than just a document. To be sure, it does commit to paper a rigorously thorough description of the OST effort's goals, a roadmap for getting there, specific roles and responsibilities of key players, funding needs, and hoped-for results. It also provides a means for organizers to know at each stage whether they are succeeding or going off-track.

But to serve its true function, planning has to be a continuing, multi-year process that keeps public and private leaders engaged – and coordinating bodies need to factor in the time investment it will require of themselves and city leaders they wish to involve. Experience suggests that planning documents should generally plot a three- to five-year course and plans should be regularly updated as initial assumptions change or the unforeseen arises. New York revisits its plan monthly. And Salmons recently found she had to adjust budget estimates in the Providence plan after Rhode Island tightened requirements for child care subsidies.

Washington's 43-page planning document has enabled Roberts to look beyond day-to-day needs of Project My Time. It details a six-year work schedule beginning with a 22-month planning and early implementation period, and continuing with a four-year period of "rollout and scaling." By 2012, the goal is to make programming available to children in all of the District's public middle schools. "Business planning takes an organization through a process in which you have to do some deep strategic thinking," Roberts says. "Typically, we raise money for a year, at best 15 or 18 months out. Now we have to be four, five years out with incremental benchmarks. It makes you think about the outcomes you have set out to accomplish and what it will take."

Element four: Reliable information

Accurate information about OST programs is indispensable for planning, but in most cities, decision-makers and funders have relied more on anecdote than fact. As a result, they have often lacked credible information about such issues as which neighborhoods are underserved, how often children are attending and whether programs are of high enough quality to attract children and be effective. The five cities in Wallace's initiative have taken a range of steps to fill those knowledge gaps. Several have carried out first-ever "mapping" projects to determine which neighborhoods need OST as well as where OST resources are plentiful or scarce.

Several have also conducted market research to identify the OST preferences of children and families so that resources can be directed to address them.

Beyond collecting those information basics, all five cities have been establishing "management information systems" designed to gather reliable, up-to-date OST program attendance data which, in some cities, can be combined with school records to determine whether after-school programs are affecting school attendance, student attitudes and academic performance. Such systems for tracking OST are far from the norm among U.S. cities.

Mapping citywide OST service distribution

To identify underserved neighborhoods or populations, several of our innovation sites juxtaposed the location of OST programs with demographic and other data. The results were telling. Chicago researchers found that because programming had failed to keep pace with residential changes, including a burgeoning Hispanic population in some neighborhoods, the city had more teen OST activities in areas that were losing population than gaining.[xii] New York discovered an abundance of programs in relatively affluent areas, such as lower Manhattan, and a dearth in low-income neighborhoods in the Bronx and elsewhere. Using that information, New York began to allocate more than half of its funding to areas identified by zip code that needed OST most.

Data gathering could help answer important questions about the effectiveness of out-of-school time programming for cities and the OST field in general.

Determining what families want

Attendance at OST programs is generally voluntary, yet cities have rarely collected reliable information for determining if existing programs meet the needs and wishes of children and parents. Through focus groups, surveys and other market research, the five cities in Wallace's initiative have been listening to, and been influenced by, what the "customers" say. Such market research has revealed, for example, that safety is a bedrock concern for parents. Washington, D.C.'s market research revealed powerful parental support for arts and culture along with homework assistance. Providence, on the other hand, has decided to put more emphasis on sports programming based on its market research.

Tracking participation

Attendance data can provide crucial insights into the responsiveness, accessibility and quality of OST programs, but in most cities, there is no means for centrally collecting or analyzing this information. Wallace and its partners cities have invested heavily in computer systems that can, for the first time, gather attendance figures and related information into a single data base where participation in programs throughout entire cities can be monitored and

assessed. Why does such information matter? For one thing, attendance data show which programs are drawing children consistently, and which are not. This can be an indicator of program quality, or the lack of it, and can help cities better direct OST resources.

We have learned, however, that data gathering can be a significant challenge for cities and OST providers. Data entry can be daunting to OST organizations that are short-staffed or that juggle the reporting requirements of numerous funding agencies that may not use the same software. Chicago has had to consider the lack of computer skills among some of that city's OST organizations as it has implemented a new management information system.

Still, success in data gathering could eventually help answer important questions about the effectiveness of out-of-school time programming for both the city and the OST field in general. For example, several cities have worked out agreements allowing researchers access to school data that, when correlated with program and attendance data, might eventually show whether coordinated OST efforts have an impact on graduation rates or school attendance.

Element five: Expanding participation

Increasing participation has long been a goal of OST providers and advocates. It is also one of the most difficult and frustrating challenges if participation means something more than having children occasionally show up. Indeed, some OST programs have such low attendance that they over-enroll to ensure that a sufficient number of children are served daily. The goal, however, is not simply to add enrollment, but to have children attend often enough to realize learning or developmental benefits. And the experiences in Wallace's partner cities and elsewhere show that this challenge only gets harder as children grow older and have competing job or family responsibilities, other possibilities (good or bad) for occupying their time, or little idea that OST programming can be engaging.

Expanding participation means not only adding enrollment, but having children attend often enough to benefit.

The challenge facing cities that want to expand participation that results in benefits to children is two-fold: "intensity," or the number of days and hours per week or year that children attend programs, and "duration," or the span of time over which they take part.[xiii] Given the differing challenges among various age groups, this has led some OST planners to conclude that they should "shift the focus from unbridled growth to promoting participation of targeted youth, and at levels sufficiently high to benefit them," as *Making Out-of-School Time Matter*, a Wallace-commissioned study by RAND, puts it.[xiv]

In fact, this is what most of the five cities in Wallace's initiative have done. Chicago, Washington, D.C. and Providence are focusing primarily on expanding participation among middle-school students or teens. Boston's initiative aims at reaching struggling elementary students. New York City, by contrast, is working to build participation across the entire age spectrum.

A CITYWIDE APPROACH TO BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, HIGH-QUALITY OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITIES: ELEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

The premise:

- Children and youth can gain learning and developmental benefits by frequent participation in high-quality programs; and
- The best route to providing such high-quality services to more children is to adopt a citywide, coordinated approach that is sustainable.

Elements

COMMITTED LEADERSHIP
- Mayor
- Local legislators
- School leaders
- Agency heads (parks, police, libraries, etc.)
- OST leaders
- Private funders
- Business leaders
- Community leaders

COORDINATING BODY
(public or private)

responsible for

MULTI-YEAR PLANNING
- Securing funding
- Setting priorities
- Defining roles & responsibilities

RELIABLE INFORMATION
- Identifying neighborhoods' needs, service shortages
- Tracking participation & analyzing program results
- Evidence of benefits

PARTICIPATION-BUILDING
- Setting targets
- Monitoring progress
- Removing barriers
- Creating incentives to attend
- Communicating to families

PROMOTING QUALITY
- Developing standards
- Strengthening OST organizations
- Adopting assessment tools, monitoring progress

which promote

Outcomes

MORE HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS
- Clear mission
- High expectations
- Safe environment
- Qualified personnel
- Appropriate content
- Frequent assessment

MORE PARTICIPATION
- Intensity (# of days/hours children attend)
- Duration (how long they remain in programs)

MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE OST RESOURCES
- Funding to programs that meet participation & quality objectives
- OST services that reach underserved children & neighborhoods

resulting in

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN
- Learning/skill building
- Social skills
- Better attitudes toward school
- Less risky behavior
- Self-confidence

and...

A SUSTAINABLE CITYWIDE OST SYSTEM
- Adequate funding
- Supportive policies
- Broad leadership
- Wide public support

Cities are testing a variety of strategies to promote attendance. Providence, for example, removed a key barrier by securing additional late-afternoon school bus transportation for OST participants. Chicago's After School Matters teen apprenticeship program pays stipends to all participants and they are required to regularly attend – resulting in unusually strong weekly attendance rates for that hard-to-retain age group.

The citywide information made possible through market research and management information systems is opening new avenues for building participation. New York City monitors participation in programs receiving city funds and reduces funding for those that fail to meet targets. With market research revealing that teachers are major influences on Washington teens, OST organizers have asked faculty members not only to work in programs, but to publicize them in their classrooms. And making sure parents and children know about available programming is so important that cities are using new websites, online program locators, print materials or other means to get the word out.

"It can't just be babysitting, and it can't just be school either – and that's not easy."

Finally, all five cities are beginning to take steps to increase program quality on the premise that this will entice more children to attend more frequently. A New York City OST official put it this way: "It can't just be babysitting, especially for kids older than second or third grade, and it can't be just school either – and that's not easy."

Element six: A commitment to quality

One of the pillars of our working hypothesis is that lifting the quality of OST programs is crucial if they are to attract children frequently enough to realize benefits. But achieving that goal on a broad scale faces continuing, long-standing obstacles. The first is that quality costs – and many OST organizations are chronically strapped for resources. As a result, many programs have facilities problems, limited management expertise, and part-time or underqualified staff who may get along well with children but aren't well-prepared to maintain structure or discipline. A second common obstacle is that the field has tended to invest more in increasing program enrollments than in ensuring consistent enough attendance for children to benefit.

A commitment to quality has to begin with some understanding of the program characteristics that are likely to contribute to benefits for children. Drawing on existing research on youth development, education and other relevant areas, RAND's *Making Out-of-School-Time Matter* listed some of those basic conditions: a clear mission; high expectations and social norms; a safe environment; supportive emotional climate; small total enrollment; stable, trained personnel; appropriate content and pedagogy; and frequent assessment.[xv] Existing research still leaves many unanswered questions about the attributes of OST quality and how they relate to the realization of benefits for children.

Notwithstanding the obstacles and knowledge gaps, the stakes for raising OST quality have gone up significantly in recent years. State and federal funding have increased sharply, and

with those added tax dollars have come higher expectations for ensuring that children benefit, accompanied by more calls for standards and accountability to ensure that OST providers deliver on those expectations.

Those higher stakes were laid bare in a series of evaluations of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.[xvi] The researchers found that despite rapid growth in funding for such programs nationwide, the 21st CCLC programs they studied had few impacts on student achievement among elementary and middle-school children in low-performing schools. Additionally, participants were slightly more likely to engage in negative school behaviors.[xvii] A likely explanation is that many of the programs studied suffered from critical problems in quality, including content and staffing matters.

"I'd walk a mile for a quality program, but I wouldn't walk across the street for a bad one."

Still, the question remains: if quality is a must for the ultimate goal of achieving benefits for more children, how might a more coordinated, citywide approach help many more programs reach that objective?

An important initial step Wallace sites have taken to date is codifying the meaning of quality through standards, adopting program assessment tools, and then working to get programs to meet the standards. Providence's standards, for example, concentrate on five areas: health and safety; relationships among staffers, volunteers, young people and their families; programming and activities; staffing and professional development; and administration.

Wallace-funded cities are also beginning to provide a range of support to programs to enable them to meet quality guidelines. To date, these have included training for both program managers and frontline staffers on issues ranging from staff retention to the emotional development of adolescents. Washington, D.C. organizers have been working with small groups of providers to help them meet the standards of, and then receive accreditation from, the National AfterSchool Association. In New York City, youth workers can receive scholarships for college courses leading to a youth worker certificate. Further steps will undoubtedly be needed to address the range of common organizational capacity weaknesses.

New citywide data collection systems have made it possible to pinpoint and address quality problems more precisely. In Providence, a drop-off in attendance in one performing arts program led to the discovery, and replacement of, an uninspiring teacher.

It's too soon to say whether such efforts will result in substantial and widespread improvement in OST programs. But one Providence student, Ben-Oni Jean-Pierre, neatly summarized the stakes: "I'd walk a mile for a quality program," he said. "But I wouldn't walk across the street for a bad one."

SUSTAINING THE SYSTEM, ACHIEVING THE BENEFITS

The six action elements described in this paper are means to much larger ends. The first is *sustainability* – ensuring that the efforts to expand and improve OST opportunities are adequately funded and survive changes in city leadership. The second and paramount objective is to have more children realize the benefits of participation in high-quality OST programs that are responsive to their needs and wishes. This ultimate goal remains elusive for millions of children.

The five cities in our initiative have made real progress in putting in place the action elements of a more coordinated approach. But if we have learned anything in our work to date, it is that a coordinated approach takes time to plan and establish. It takes the sustained commitment of leaders to shape policies and ensure adequate resources. It requires evidence that children are, in fact, participating and benefiting – evidence that the new management information systems could eventually provide. In the long run, it will require support from the general public and a commitment from government, public schools, business and other private leaders, and from OST organizations themselves, to work cooperatively.

Building public support for high-quality OST is a key to making citywide out-of-school time efforts sustainable.

For Harold Richman, founding director of Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago and a key adviser to the Chicago initiative, "sustainability is the elephant in the room." Few cities have developed what he calls "a dedicated funding stream" for high-quality out-of-school time ventures. "Unless we can get one," he says, "a lot of what we are trying to accomplish gets put in jeopardy."

Our innovation sites are trying to address these needs in a number of ways.

In Providence, OST organizers are attempting to sustain citywide coordination by, among other things, establishing a high-level "alignment work group" that represents the key OST players – including city hall, the police department, the schools and OST providers – and that meets regularly. The purpose is to familiarize group members with one another's projects and then to explore ways to align them. In Chicago, the process of building a new citywide OST management information system has been a unifying enterprise for city agencies and community-based organizations – fostering a sense of "electronic belonging" to a new system.

Building public support for the value of OST is another key to sustainability. New York City's business plan contains a detailed communications strategy for reaching groups ranging from policymakers to parents. When the city invited business leaders to attend an "OST Update Breakfast" with Mayor Bloomberg last year, one of the messages was that high quality OST programs can help keep employees focused and productive by reassuring them that their children are engaged in wholesome, well-supervised activities after school.

Sustaining high-quality OST services on a scale to meet the need will take stable and, most likely, increased financial support. Whether it will come, and from where, are open questions. New York City has allocated more local tax dollars for OST. Others, like Providence, are working with OST organizations to help them gain access to available state and federal funding sources such as child care vouchers and 21st Century Community Learning Center grants. In general, building and maintaining adequate public and private funding streams will likely remain a struggle when OST is arrayed against other competing public spending priorities.

The ultimate key to sustainability may be how well OST programs convince the public and funders that they're meeting parents' and community needs.

Philanthropies and the private sector are the other possible source of funding. Washington, D.C., for example, has raised nearly $4 million in non-government support for its OST initiative. But to date, private funders have generally been more inclined to support individual OST programs than citywide improvement efforts such as the development of information systems, especially because such approaches are still relatively new.

Still, the ultimate key to achieving sustainability may rest with how well OST programs convince the public and various funders that they are meeting the needs of parents and the community and are providing children with places to learn and grow after the school bell rings.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE OST SYSTEM: STILL A LOT TO LEARN

This Wallace Perspective has described our working hypothesis for expanding and improving OST opportunities. While we are confident that this approach holds considerable promise, we also recognize that it is still in its infancy and there are many unanswered questions about its complexities and effectiveness. A key purpose of this report is to prompt further discussion and debate about the validity of this approach.

Here are some of those unresolved questions and issues:

1. How often and deeply must children take part in OST to start seeing benefits, and how will we measure whether programs are achieving those benefits?
2. What are the most difficult barriers to increasing participation and what are the best strategies to overcome them?
3. What outcomes can the public expect from OST participation? Has the potential of OST been overstated?
4. What are the costs of sustaining high-quality programming, and what are the potential tradeoffs of funding only programs of demonstrable quality?
5. How should cities identify and address the most serious organizational shortcomings of OST providers, and where will the resources come from to do so?

6. How can cities forge and sustain more productive bonds between schools and OST providers?
7. How might the growing interest in extending the school day affect city plans to build OST systems that operate outside of public education?
8. What will it take to significantly improve the staffing of OST programs given the limited available resources?
9. Are there other approaches that might be as effective, or more so, than the coordinated approach discussed in this paper in promoting wide-scale improvements in OST?

Whatever the answers to these questions, they need to be driven by the idea that providing children and youth with wholesome places for learning beyond the school day is a worthy goal for all cities to pursue. "We'd like every teenager in Chicago to do something meaningful, purposeful and fun," says Chicago's Maggie Daley, wife of the city's mayor and co-founder of After School Matters. "Five-and-a-half hours is not enough."

ENDNOTES

[i] A survey of parents conducted by the National Survey of Children's Health 2003 found that 39.5 million 6- to 17-year-olds participated in at least one organized activity, such as athletics or clubs, during the 12 months prior to survey. NSCH Data Resource Center. http://www.nschdata.org/

[ii] "Boys & Girls Clubs of America had its beginnings in 1860 with several women in Hartford, Conn. Believing that boys who roamed the streets should have a positive alternative, they organized the first Club." Boys & Girls Clubs of America web site. http://www.bgca.org/whoweare/history.asp.

[iii] Robert Halpern, "A Different Kind of Child Development Institution: The History of After-School Programs for Low-Income Children," *Teachers College Record*, Volume 104 Number 2, March 2002, 178-211.

[iv] "Afterschool Programs a Top Municipal Priority, NLC Survey Finds," *Nation's Cities Weekly*, National League of Cities, May 17, 2004. http://www.nlc.org/Newsroom/Nation_s_Cities_Weekly_v2/Weekly_NCW/2004_v2/05_v2/17_v4/3161.aspx

[v] By 2006, fully 74 percent of women with school-age children (6- to 17-years-old) were employed in the civilian labor force, a dramatic a shift in scarcely two generations. In 1950, less than one-third of married women with school-age children – 29 percent – worked outside the home. "Employment Characteristics of Families in 2006," Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, press release, Table 5 May 9, 2007; Elizabeth Waldman, "Labor Force Statistics from a Family Perspective," *Monthly Labor Review*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, December 1983, 18.

[vi] "Providence Reshapes Its Out-of-School Learning System," *Report '04*, The Wallace Foundation, 21. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/NR/rdonlyres/FB325391-7AF2-4878-9FB5-807B2CEFA220/0/Wallace_Report04.pdf

[vii] It is difficult to determine exactly how many American children are not well occupied in their out-of-school hours. Estimates range widely – from 6 million to 20 million young people – depending on such factors as the age span of the children under consideration, how the question is framed and one's view of what "well occupied" means. What can be said is that millions of children and teenagers spend at least part of their time after school, on weekends and during school vacations without supervision, and millions do not regularly participate in athletics, the arts, tutoring or other potentially beneficial opportunities. In a 2003 report, the U.S. Census Bureau found that 20 million school-age children – or about 41 percent of 6- to 17-year-olds – did not, at the time of the survey, take part in sports, in after-school or weekend lessons in subjects like "music, dance, language, computers or religion," or in any clubs or organizations, such as scouts, religious groups or a Boys or Girls Club. [Terry A. Lugaila, *A Child's Day: 2000 (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)*, U.S. Census Bureau, August 2003, 10-11] The Census Bureau has also found that 15 percent of 5- to 14-year-olds – or just over six million children in this age group – regularly take care of themselves during a typical week. Among the older children, those 12- to 14-years-old, fully 33 percent care for themselves regularly. [Julia Overturf Johnson, *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Winter 2002*, U.S. Census Bureau, October 2005, 12-13.]

[viii] Jane Lawler Dye, Tallese Johnson, *A Child's Day: 2003 (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)*, U.S. Census Bureau, January 2007, 13.

[iv] Past Wallace initiatives in this area include: Youth ALIVE! which sought to establish adolescent programs in children's and science museums; Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST); Public

Libraries as Partners in Youth Development; Extended-Service Schools; the Urban Parks Initiative; and Parents and Communities for Kids (PACK).

[x] Robert Halpern, *The Challenge of System-Building in the After-School Field: Lessons from Experience, Critical Issues in After-School Programming*, Discussion paper produced by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, October 2003, 1.

[xi] Ibid.

[xii] Robert Goerge, John Dilts, Duck-Hey Yang, Miriam Wasserman, Anne Clary, *Chicago Children and Youth 1990-2010:Changing Population Trends and Their Implications for Services*, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2007, 26.

[xiii] Harvard Family Research Project, *Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs*, August 2004, 2.

[xiv] Susan Bodilly, Megan K. Beckett, *Making Out-of-School Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda*, The RAND Corporation, 2005, 107.

[xv] Bodilly, 73

[xvi] Susanne James-Burdumy, Mark Dynarksi, Mary Moore, John Deke, Wendy Mansfield, Carol Pistorino, *When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st Century Learning Centers Program: Final Report*, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Services, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2005.

[xvii] James-Burdumy, xxv

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