Afterschool Programs: Bureaucratic Barriers and Strategies for Success

Effective Strategies of the Key Players

Why Afterschool?

What Are the Barriers?

Where Can You Go for Help?
School leaders can no longer see their responsibility as merely a 9 to 3 issue. What happens to children after school has a direct impact on how they learn and grow. This issue of School Governance & Leadership is about afterschool programs — a powerful tool that has not been fully tapped in our efforts to guarantee children not just access to school, but success through high achievement. This document is a companion piece to the May 2005 issue of The School Administrator, which focused on afterschool programs, making it clear that afterschool programs are worth the effort. As Terry Peterson, national afterschool advocate and former counselor to Secretary of Education Richard Riley, asks, in light of the hard financial times faced by many districts and the hard work of sustaining quality afterschool programs: “Is it fair to wonder if we are on the verge of missing a unique, even historic opportunity to fill the hours immediately following the end of the school day with a treasure chest of academically enriching activities and expanded learning opportunities. I believe that it is worth the effort, and it’s worth the money, even if we have to struggle to find it.” As An-Me Chung and Eugene Hillsman of the C.S. Mott Foundation point out in The School Administrator:

Afterschool evaluations have shown that not only do afterschool programs provide a safe place during the non-school hours, but students who consistently participate in quality afterschool activities over a period of time have better grades, greater student engagement in school, increased homework completion, reduced absenteeism, less tardiness, greater parent involvement, lower truancy rates, increased civic engagement and reduced crime and violence in the non-school hours.

AASA has been an advocate of quality afterschool programs since the early 1990s, when we collaborated with schools across the country to develop and support afterschool programs for young adolescents facing multiple challenges to school and life success. These programs blended enrichment, supportive relationships with caring adults and academic support, and they were staffed by teachers, parents and community members. I encourage you to consider recent research, promising practices and the variety of resources provided in this document and to call on local, state and federal funds for afterschool programs. I encourage you to think about the many non-academic personal, social and intellectual skills that contribute to successful learning and adult life that lucky children acquire through family-arranged and -supported afterschool activities. And I urge you not to miss this “historic opportunity” to more fully serve the children in your school districts, especially those most in need.
“We must make sure that every child has a safe and enriching place to go after school so that children can say ‘no’ to drugs and alcohol and crime, and ‘yes’ to reading, soccer, computers and a brighter future for themselves.”

— President Bill Clinton from “Safe and Smart,” 1998, the Mott Foundation
Lawmakers Form First-Ever Congressional Afterschool Caucuses

In a move designed to raise public awareness about the need for more afterschool programs and increase resources for quality afterschool care, members of Congress have established the first-ever Afterschool Caucuses — one in the Senate and one in the House of Representatives. U.S. Sens. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.) and John Ensign (R-Nev.) and Reps. Nita M. Lowey (D-N.Y.) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) will serve as co-chairs of the newly formed, bipartisan Caucuses.

“Afterschool programs are cost-efficient because they keep children out of trouble and give them the opportunities they need to learn,” Senator Ensign said. “These programs are a good investment in the future of our children, families and communities. I am proud to co-chair the new Senate Afterschool Caucus.”

Dodd and Ensign have circulated a letter to their Senate colleagues encouraging them to join.

The founding members of the Senate’s Afterschool Caucus are Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine); the founding members of the House Afterschool Caucus are Reps. Randy Cunningham (R-Calif.) and Dale Kildee (D-Mich.) For more information, visit the Afterschool Alliance website at www.afterschoolalliance.org/news_events.cfm.

Acknowledgements

The American Association of School Administrators is grateful to those who shared their wisdom and expertise with us for this SG&L issue on afterschool. We acknowledge the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for their support, the superintendents who participated in the study and those who met with us in focus groups, answered our surveys, responded to our interviews and cheered us on. A special thank you goes to Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood, former AASA staffer, who selected the school districts and initiated much of the original research in this study and to Liz Griffin, for her whiz-bang copy editing. We appreciate the work of Debbie Berger of the Unlimited Group and Elizabeth Burnett of SchlegelBagel Design for their research and graphic design. And finally, a special tribute to AASA project directors Rebecca Nelson and Nancy Miller, who shepherded this publication from idea to final product.

— Sharon Adams-Taylor
Associate Executive Director
Why Afterschool?

The opportunity for school administrators to transform the quality of education that students receive today in public schools may be as close as the growing focus on afterschool programs.

ASA’s magazine, The School Administrator, thoroughly developed the case for afterschool programs in its May 2005 issue. Well-structured after-school programs effectively expand learning time for students, provide opportunities for collaboration with the broader community, and constructively fill those hours that, at best, are spent idly and, at worst, entice unsupervised youngsters into delinquent or high-risk activities.

While the Bush Administration’s No Child Left Behind legislation primarily promotes the academic/tutoring aspect of the afterschool picture, other organizations and individuals have taken a more expansive view of the possibilities, suggesting that afterschool programs not only bolster the academic agenda but also provide — within a structure that differs from the regular school day — time for social, emotional and physical skill building that students must have to achieve life success.
This broadening of the mission, much different than just expanding the course offerings, was the subject of comments by Karen Pittman of The Forum for Youth Investment in a Youth Today column. She explained how a group of hand-picked educators, practitioners and policy experts, attending a conference at the behest of the U.S. Department of Education, were attempting to identify outcome indicators for improved achievement that could be used to evaluate after-school programs.

“Our brainstorming session netted more than 50 outcome indicators, ranging from reduced violent episodes to increased enthusiasm about learning,” she wrote. “Some were specifically about school, such as attendance. Others focused on non-academic goals, such as interacting with youth from other backgrounds.”

“The connections became clear,” Pittman continues. “Academic achievement is dependent on engagement, motivation, behavior and attendance. All of these are dependent on youth feeling safe and supported and are reflected in literature on academic achievement, and achievement in general.”

“We decided that after-school programs should first define their full set of goals in each outcome area and then agree to be measured against academic indicators — but only after they create program activities connected to those goals. . . . The tension between academics and youth development did not materialize. The groups affirmed the notion that both goals are equally attainable. Former U.S. Department of Education Sec. Roderick Paige, C.S. Mott Foundation President Bill White and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced our progress in a press conference immediately following the summit,” Pittman said.

Policy analyst Richard Rothstein, in his 2004 book Class and Schools, sees after-school programs as a way to balance the inequity that exists between poor and middle class students, not only in terms of academic achievement, but also in the enhancement of critical personal skills. When middle class students leave school in the afternoon, he points out, they have a host of places to go, such as Girl and Boy Scouts, religious groups, Little League and classes in art, music and dance. Less-advantaged students are more likely to watch television or play informally. Thus they miss out on the structured activities that help students learn social responsibility, improve academic proficiency and develop the organizational skills and discipline that make them more effective.

The National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST) notes that older students don’t participate in after-school activities as much as younger children. They identify several possible reasons for this: (1) it is more difficult to attract high school students to programs; (2) high school students are less likely to want to stay in the school building; (3) high school students have busier schedules (i.e., family, sibling or home responsibilities); (4) high school students are less likely to attend a program several days a week; (5) high school students often need to work to earn money and contribute to family income; and (6) high school students are more independent and mobile, so they vote with their feet. (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003)
Another perspective is more holistic and addresses studies in child development and education that link afterschool attendance to better grades, peer relations, academic equity, emotional adjustment and conflict resolution skills (overall resiliency). Thus, constructive use of out-of-school time is a protective factor for youth that has been associated with: (1) academic achievement (higher grades and grade point average), recovery from low academic performance, and an interest in furthering their education; (2) a stronger self-image; (3) positive social development; (4) reductions in risk-taking behavior; and (5) better school behavior and fewer absences.

In short, when youth participate in high quality afterschool programs, they are likely to benefit in a myriad of ways. They receive personal attention from caring adults, explore new interests, receive academic support, develop a sense of belonging to a group, develop new friendships with their peers, take on challenging leadership roles and build a sense of self-esteem independent of their academic talent.

It is not surprising that afterschool programs are an easy sell for parents and the community.

- The parents of more than 15 million youngsters say that their children will participate in an afterschool program if one is available in their community. (Afterschool Alliance Poll, 2004)

- Nearly 90 percent of Americans support funding for quality afterschool programs in low-income neighborhoods as an important aspect of welfare reform programs. (David and Lucile Packard Foundation Poll, *Public Views on Welfare Reform and Children in the Current Economy*, February 2002)

School leaders, of course, are equally interested in valid research and evaluations of afterschool models before committing scarce resources to them.

The research and literature is growing, although, as Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) researchers point out in a 2003 report, many of the studies of outcomes done since the 1980s are not rigorous in their methodology and have issues such as the inherent difficulty in finding true control groups of children and the common failure to describe treatments and dosages. Many experts warn that afterschool programs should not be pressured into over-promising results they do not have the resources to deliver. As Robert Halpern, chair of the Research Council of the Erickson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development, says in his 2002 study of afterschool programs:

Not infrequently, one or another child-rearing institution has taken on a role out of a conviction that others were not fulfilling their responsibilities. Afterschool programs, like other institutions, have periodically felt themselves to be a support of first and last resort. Afterschool programs can work as a developmental resource and support for children only to the extent that they are allowed to work from a modest and reasonable story line. And they will only be able to fulfill some of their potential if they themselves are adequately nurtured, supported and protected.

While research and anecdotal evidence exist to suggest that afterschool programs are a positive factor in student achievement, some countervailing reports, most notably the controversial Mathematica evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC), reached a number of negative conclusions about afterschool students’ academic achievement and behavior.

According to the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010, the methodology used in the Mathematica study was highly suspect . . . as are the findings. While the study found that African American and Hispanic students, as well as girls participating in 21st CCLC’s afterschool programs, showed academic gains, in general the results focused on negative outcomes, prompting the Bush Administration to cut FY04 funding from $1 billion to $600 million.

Other critics of the study’s methodology note that the findings are based on just one year of data, collected very early in the life of the original 21st CCLC initiative; the study evaluated a very small number of grantees; and the study failed to be representative of the afterschool population.

The rollout of a new evaluation system in 2005 should help to put to rest some of the criticism by ensuring that States have data on the performance of each of their grantees, according to Robert Stonehill, 21st CCLC director. In addition, the National Partnership for Quality After-school Learning, which is funded by the Department through a contract with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, is identifying promising and exemplary programs, activities and materials that can be adopted by state and local providers to provide rich academic content in afterschool programs that differ from the regular school day but are still standards based.
Knowing that after-school programs are, conceptually, a good idea and actually implementing them successfully in your school district may be worlds apart. There are a multitude of issues that may arise: funding and sustainability, equity (which populations to serve), quality programming, coordination between the regular teaching staff and the after-school staff, attendance, community collaboration, transportation, staff turnover and more. Sometimes these issues become barriers.

With a grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation, AASA initiated a project to identify the bureaucratic barriers that can compromise after-school programs. The initial results of the research were published in the August 2003 issue of *The School Administrator*.

AASA conducted a literature review and convened focus groups at its 2004 National Conference on Education to discuss these findings. Among the barriers that emerged: funding, staffing, leadership, engaging students and program quality. In this publication we will examine those barriers and suggest strategies and resources to help you overcome or effectively manage them.

**The AASA Study**

In 2001, the American Association of School Administrators began a study seeking to understand how barriers to effective after-school programs could be overcome by school superintendents. The issue is well-known anecdotally, but, to date, had not been researched. School leaders (superintendents, central-office personnel and principals) tend to agree that after-school programs, even when academically sound, face obstacles in their efforts to implement and sustain them.

With the help of expert advisors, AASA selected 10 districts geographically clustered (Pacific Northwest, Midwest and Mid-Atlantic) with ongoing after-school programs and examined what challenges they faced and how they addressed them. AASA research included on-site interviews with superintendents, after-school directors, site coordinators, building principals of schools where programs were housed, central-office personnel with oversight responsibility for the after-school program, grant writers who had sought funding, school board members and participating community agency representatives.

**No Lack of Barriers**

The findings and analysis revealed that barriers to implementation tend to be related to unclear roles and responsibilities, unclear reporting lines and coordination, and the overall grind of a district’s bureaucracy through its many offices and functions. Besides these challenges, district and school leaders struggle with major issues of funding and staffing. They also must cope with external...
pressures from individuals and agencies that see educators as bureaucrats and view themselves as child advocates. Some school leaders may decide against implementation entirely to avoid potential conflict, or they may consign the program to one of low expectations. When they choose the latter course, they doom it to a few years that likely will be frustrating for many of the stakeholders involved. One particular concern to school administrators when implementing a new program is the issue of raising parental and community expectations that cannot be fulfilled or sustained. This is particularly true when a program is grant-funded and its sustainability is uncertain after the grant expires.

Perhaps the most lethal barrier encountered in the study is the entire issue of sustainability in an era when fiscal cutbacks to states and districts imperil even the basic, regular school day. Other obstacles include the absence of committed leadership that may exist at several levels of the district; a lack of accountability for the afterschool program as well as insufficient support for it both externally and internally; and poorly trained and paid program staff who are highly transient.

**Lessons From Those Who Made It Work**
Of the 10 districts studied, half had successfully responded to the common challenges, primarily through proactive leadership and practices by the superintendent and central-office staff. Here are some of the strategies they used:

- **The superintendent is visible.** He or she makes occasional, unannounced visits to the afterschool program. This has symbolic value to staff and encourages their continued commitment to the program.

- **Central-office personnel and building principals are aware of the superintendent’s commitment to the afterschool program.** The superintendent communicates clear expectations of programmatic success and holds all staff accountable to ensure effective programming.

- **The role of the afterschool director is clearly defined throughout the district.** This role has been communicated fully to all staff involved in any aspect of the afterschool program: central-office administrators to whom principals report, building principals where the program is located, site coordinators and the afterschool director.

- **The afterschool director is “district savvy.”** This means that he/she has the expertise to negotiate the district’s administrative structure. This is whether the director already works for the school system, is hired from outside the school system, or works with a community agency.

- **Afterschool personnel are well-qualified.** In the most effective districts, afterschool personnel were enlisted from nonprofit community agencies and from district instructional staff. The instructional staff received their usual salaries and benefits.

- **Clarity about roles, extending from the central office to the building sites, is monitored so that central-office personnel are aware of the program’s progress, including any snags in program delivery.** Central-office personnel are included in planning for the program before they are brought in only to manage a crisis.

- **Effective programs have specific, clear reporting lines.** The AASA interviews and analysis revealed that a lack of coordination and clear reporting lines between site coordinators, district management of afterschool programs, and building principals creates significant problems and tense relationships. Site coordinators should report to the afterschool director, and the afterschool director should report to a cadre of building principals.

- **Teachers and other instructional staff are informed fully and their participation is encouraged.** Goals for the program as well as activities are communicated by afterschool personnel on a regular basis. Every effort is made to mesh the academic component of the afterschool program with the instructional goals of the school day. Poorly coordinated programs can be disruptive to the regular instructional staff and consume large amounts of a busy principal’s time “putting out fires.”

- **Effective administrators are committed to an academic portion of the afterschool program and understand that part of the program must be devoted to youth enrichment and development activities.** While administrators do not believe that afterschool programs should consist only of academics, they do expect the afterschool program to be congruent with the daily school program, and that some time should be available for academic support. However, to warrant sustainability, the program must have clear academic goals that extend beyond a study hall situation.

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The following profile is a composite story of the leadership practices of five superintendents — based on interviews conducted by AASA from 2001 to 2003. These district leaders overcame the common barriers to effective afterschool programs and were willing to keep chipping away at those they could not resolve.

**Non-Negotiable Sustainability**
When one successful superintendent looks to the end of the afterschool program’s grant — and thinks of a transition to the program’s next phase — three facts are critical: He (or she) (1) speaks of the next phase in matter-of-fact terms, not of the possibility of discontinuing the program; (2) knows that transportation will be the most critical issue; and (3) is planning already, in the first year of the grant, for the end of the third year when the external funding expires.

He has made an ironclad commitment to the afterschool program. Although it has begun through 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) money and has a three-year run, he is determined to absorb the most positive strands of the program — as well as its winning staff — into the “regular” extended day program offered by the district in the future.

The grant, the superintendent acknowledges, was only the first step to creating a healthy program. Now, he says, the program addresses broader student interests. “We offer students all sorts of activities. We even have a skateboard park. Self-concept figures very largely in the whole program. Students are involved in activities that stretch them, that build connections to school, that make them more positive about themselves and school.” The sustainability of the program, this superintendent says, is simply non-negotiable. It is far too important to neglect. It might mean the link to schooling that saves a student from dropping out. “It might mean one adult-to-student connection. It might,” he emphasizes, “make the difference between success in life and failure.”

**Hiring the Right People**
To ensure this, another successful superintendent has hired top-quality staff for the afterschool program. This superintendent is willing to invest top dollars in her afterschool staff. Her site coordinators include a former principal of an alternative school, skilled in working with “at-risk” youth, and a social worker with an MSW, who works half-time in the district as a social worker and half-time in the afterschool program. Both are assured their positions will continue when the CCLC monies dry up.

This district’s afterschool director is skilled at community relations, and comes to the program with many years of experience volunteering with the Red Cross as well as her background as a parent in the district. The director seems to build positive relationships within the district wherever she goes. No favor is too great for business office staff to do for her, for example, because of her pleasant, reasonable personality.

Rather than approaching district personnel as adversaries, the director works with them as comrades through mutually shared dilemmas. Her openness to suggestions garnered her high praise throughout the district. Faces broke into smiles when her name was mentioned. Clearly, the choice of of afterschool director was an inspired one that pointed to the superintendent’s ability to hire the right people for the job.

Equally high praise was bestowed on the other staff members of the afterschool program. “They’re just great,” one principal confided. “They know what they’re doing, they do it and that’s that.”

**Propelled by Commitment**
The superintendent points to access as one of the key barriers to any new program. “If it isn’t transportation,” he says, “it might be the location. Can the kids come? Or it might be the time of day, and how that affects parent-kid schedules. Or it might be that the program is set up in a way that the kids have no time to do their homework. We work homework into our program so that it is one less hurdle later in the evening.”

The state formula that affects school budgets is burdensome, a bureaucratic nightmare all its own. While the superintendent deals with that nightmare, he keeps in sight the programs he is not willing to lose. One of those programs is clearly the afterschool program, because of the connections it builds to students at risk of academic failure and at risk of greater failure in later life. “I don’t know what it will be yet, but there will be a plan,” he says of the time when the afterschool program must exist without the CCLC funds that currently sustain it.
What do the leaders across various levels of management with successful afterschool programs have in common? Analysis of interviews by AASA revealed commonalities in the ways that the district, school and program leaders thought and acted with regard to the afterschool program. Embedded in these shared characteristics is the essence of their beliefs, commitment and strategies.

Superintendents
- Commit to the philosophy and get involved early in the process;
- Have a vision for the afterschool program;
- Engage in hiring high-quality and well-paid staff;
- Set clear reporting lines, accountability and oversight;
- Advocate visibly and frequently.

Building Principals
- Accept responsibility for the program in their buildings;
- Encourage the afterschool director to build relationships with site coordinators and parents;
- Inform district executive staff about progress and seek their assistance with problems;
- Help the afterschool director steer through bureaucracy and advocate visibly and frequently.

Program Directors
- Hire the best staff available;
- Report frequently to central-office personnel and ask their help with problems before they escalate;
- Work within the district bureaucracy, rather than against it;
- Seek programmatic support from the superintendent, building principals, site coordinators and parents and
- Maintain good relations with building principals.

Creative strategies for program continuation are devised in the most successful districts. A site coordinator may be budgeted half-time with an existing district program and half-time with the afterschool program. In times of fiscal constraint, if a district relies solely on grant money to operate the program, there are plans to merge existing activities into currently funded positions to ensure adequate, well-prepared staff.

Strategies for sustainability are communicated clearly, from central office to site coordinators. Ineffective sites typically have no plans for sustainability of grant funds in effect until the final months of grant money.

Districts that had afterschool programs along with grant funds merge the two from the beginning of the grant period. This strategy ensures that accomplishments of the grant period can inform the existing program.

If funding is particularly constrained, the afterschool program does not employ an afterschool director (depending on the size of the district). Districts of medium to small size streamline reporting lines and eliminate that layer of management. In these cases, site coordinators report directly to the building principal in the schools where they work.

Discipline is consistent. Principals maintain a coherent discipline policy that is in place during both the regular school day and the afterschool program. Central-office personnel are informed fully of disciplinary infractions or inconsistent disciplinary practices before a situation escalates. Afterschool personnel are aware of and respect the principal’s authority over student discipline.

— Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood, former issues analysis director, American Association of School Administrators; Interim Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, June 2003.
ASA is a valuable source of information on current issues in afterschool and how it relates to school leaders. In addition to our research and collaboration with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, we have a wealth of resources and links to websites to share. Additionally, this document is part of a toolkit to help school leaders address some of the barriers associated with this issue. Please feel free to contact AASA with questions or for more information on this important issue. Rebecca Nelson, AASA project director, can be reached at rnelson@aasa.org.

■ Funding and Sustainability

The ability of school districts to develop funding sources to initiate and sustain afterschool programs is, as became clear in the AASA study, perhaps the biggest barrier to their development and institutionalization. Even if districts secure outside resources to initiate programs, those funds eventually expire.

In reviewing 13 different federal funding streams, as well as various state, local and private sources, child development researcher and professor Robert Halpern and colleagues found a system that is “fragmented and categorical, unpredictable and
Help?

often unreliable and that places programs that should complement each other in competition for scarce resources." Public funding for afterschool efforts is consistently described in this manner. Public resources are not only seen as inadequate to the need, but they bring with them a tangle of bureaucratic requirements that often are at odds with one another. Constant staff time and resources (both in short supply in afterschool programs) must consequently be directed towards fundraising, noted Beth Miller in Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success (2003).

While Title I Supplemental Educational Services (SES) funds, part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2001, offer possible funding for afterschool services, experts predict that there will be many challenges. These include the required approval process at the state level, uncertainty of duration of funding and the strict accountability requirements.

The Finance Project, created in 1994, offers a broad range of services to a variety of public- and private-sector clients and provides expertise in developing short- and long-term financing strategies. The Finance Project disseminates an array of published resources, including papers related to financing, governance and management in education. The project will analyze the development of statewide afterschool networks focused on furthering sustainability policies.

Websites and Resources


The Finance Project offers technical assistance on financing and sustaining out-of-school time initiatives. www.financeproject.org

The Afterschool Alliance also offers funding information on its website. www.afterschoolalliance.org/funding_main.cfm

The Harvard Family Research Project provides a listing of web documents that detail federal funding streams for afterschool programs and related programming alongside their accountability requirements and evaluations. Funding streams are classified as major or minor depending on the amount of money they make available for afterschool efforts.

Help?

Another major barrier to afterschool programs involves the issue of program quality and poses questions that have not yet been adequately answered by research. What characteristics are part of a strong program? What are appropriate outcomes? How can they be measured? Is it appropriate for academic outcomes to take priority? What connections should exist between in-school programs and afterschool activities? Desired outcomes vary dramatically across programs, notes Beth Miller in her 2003 report Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success, and so do the approaches taken to reach various goals. There is little clarity about what afterschool programming should look like, although Miller notes that “there is a general consensus that afterschool programs shouldn’t look like more school.”

Superintendents of successful afterschool programs understand that students want something markedly different from their afterschool program, even when such programs are academically focused. Without it they simply won’t come.

At the same time choosing and delivering program content that
enhances engagement in learning and improves academic achievement in the short term is still an area that requires much research.

While that research is under way, however, many school districts are developing thematic and project-based strategies to combine academics and other developmental skill and knowledge sets.

**Websites and Resources**


Resources for Afterschool Programing (including beyond the Bell Toolkit), North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. www.ncrel.org/after/


**Staffing**

School administrators and education experts agree that staffing can be a real challenge for afterschool programs. Often staff is part time or volunteer; there may be difficulties coordinating afterschool programs with the regular school day. Without really strong staff, administrators point out, the students won’t come, especially those in middle and high school who have other demands on their time.

During a focus group of superintendents held during AASA’s 2004 National Conference on Education™, the discussion turned to how to address staffing issues.

“We made sure we had some pretty dynamic teachers who were well liked by the students. We went after the very best teachers and through them we got the kids to come,” Philomena Pezzano, superintendent in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., points out.

For Bexley, Ohio, superintendent Michael Johnson, ongoing staff development proves essential. Site coordinators often receive little guidance and must rely on their own experience and expertise in designing programs. Since these positions are usually a low salary level, and not fulltime, the responsibilities of site coordinators can be overwhelming. Researcher and afterschool pioneer Michelle Seligson agrees that staff development is important, but the kind of staff training that she believes is necessary is a step beyond what many districts provide.

Unfortunately, she says, much staff training doesn’t address the core issue of how students learn. “There is a body of knowledge on how kids learn that is not informing policy decisions in education.”

Teachers need to understand social/ emotional development if they are to teach young people successfully, she continues. “What is so often lost is the humanistic approach, and this is even more important in afterschool programs.” Researcher J.B. Grossman would agree that “having a high-quality staff is a key — perhaps the key — to success.” In one study that looked at four indicators of program quality, “relationships between adults and youth was consistently the strongest” indicator. In high-quality programs, “staff worked hard to make time with youth both fun and meaningful” and exuded a natural fondness for young people (Walker et al).
In fact, school districts that are cur- wise valuable resources on pro- and policymakers don’t wish to grams that aren’t working; neither, for that matter, do school leaders!

current or potential grantees of the comes has become critical. Funders need for evaluation of program out-

time field. These documents draw on HFRP’s research work in out-of-school time in order to provide practitioners, funders, evaluators and policymakers with information to help inform their work. In addition to these briefs, HFRP has launched a set of short, user-friendly “snapshots” of methods, evaluation approaches, indicators and findings.

The Project’s evaluation periodical, The Evaluation Exchange, addresses current issues facing program evaluators of all levels. Designed as an ongoing discussion among evaluators, program practitioners, funders, and policymakers, The Evaluation Exchange highlights innovative methods and approaches to evaluation, emerging trends in evaluation practice, and practical applications of evaluation theory. The periodical is free of charge to subscribers.

An-Me Chung and Eugene Hillsman of the C.S. Mott Foundation pointed out in an article in the May 2005 edition of The School Administrator that much research remains to be done in supporting continuous improvement and identifying effective afterschool practices and programs. Examples of future research include:

- What are the processes behind how activity participation and student outcomes influence each other? Given the increasing interest and time devoted to academic activities, what is the magnitude of impact that might be reasonable to expect?
  - How much program participation is enough to produce beneficial outcomes for participants?
  - What program qualities are associated with student outcomes? How do we measure, assess, and develop programs to improve a range of outcomes for participants?
  - Many of the existing studies are examining one program at one point in time. More rigorous research designs such as experimental, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal studies are needed to truly understand the impact of afterschool programs. Measuring impacts should be considered only after programs have had an opportunity to appropriately implement activities.

Websites and Resources


Evaluation

As the numbers of afterschool programs have expanded and more and more districts turn to the federal government or other outside sources for funding streams, the need for evaluation of program outcomes has become critical. Funders and policymakers don’t wish to waste valuable resources on programs that aren’t working; neither, for that matter, do school leaders! In fact, school districts that are current or potential grantees of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers already know that the evaluation process is mandated for those resources.

But evaluating the outcomes of afterschool programs is markedly different than evaluating the outcomes of the normal school day. Perhaps because of the newness of the field, there is still much to learn about afterschool best practices, program implementation, cost effectiveness and program impact.

The Harvard Family Research Project’s (HFRP) Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation briefs are short, user-friendly documents that highlight current research and evaluation work in the out-of-school time field. These documents draw on HFRP’s research work in out-of-school time in order to provide practitioners, funders, evaluators and policymakers with information to help inform their work. In addition to these briefs, HFRP has launched a set of short, user-friendly “snapshots” of methods, evaluation approaches, indicators and findings.

The Project’s evaluation periodical, The Evaluation Exchange, addresses current issues facing program evaluators of all levels. Designed as an ongoing discussion among evaluators, program practitioners, funders, and policymakers, The Evaluation Exchange highlights innovative methods and approaches to evaluation, emerging trends in evaluation practice, and practical applications of evaluation theory. The periodical is free of charge to subscribers.

An-Me Chung and Eugene Hillsman of the C.S. Mott Foundation pointed out in an article in the May 2005 edition of The School Administrator that much research remains to be done in supporting continuous improvement and identifying effective afterschool practices and programs. Examples of future research include:

- What are the processes behind how activity participation and student outcomes influence each other? Given the increasing interest and time devoted to academic activities, what is the magnitude of impact that might be reasonable to expect?
  - How much program participation is enough to produce beneficial outcomes for participants?
  - What program qualities are associated with student outcomes? How do we measure, assess, and develop programs to improve a range of outcomes for participants?
  - Many of the existing studies are examining one program at one point in time. More rigorous research designs such as experimental, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal studies are needed to truly understand the impact of afterschool programs. Measuring impacts should be considered only after programs have had an opportunity to appropriately implement activities.

Websites and Resources

A Decade of Results: The Impact of the LA’s BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance. LA’s BEST and the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, June 2000. www.lasbest.org/resourcecenter/uclaeval.pdf


The Rand Studies, Foundations Inc.


Additional Links on Afterschool Programs

The federal government sponsors a website that connects people to federal resources for information on strategies to support children and youth during out-of-school hours. The site includes a searchable database of federal government funding sources; ideas on networking with others in the field; links to organizations and publications that focus on youth issues; and websites designed for kids and teens.

www.afterschool.gov

The Afterschool Alliance is a coalition of public, private and nonprofit organizations dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children. Visit their website to get information about Lights On Afterschool, download media tools, and get the latest information on recent legislation related to afterschool.

www.afterschoolalliance.org/

The American Association of School Administrators provides information on current issues in afterschool and how it relates to school leaders. www.aasa.org

The C. S. Mott Foundation has provided more than six decades of support for community education. In 1997, the Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) entered a multi-year public-private partnership in support of 21st Century Community Learning Centers. www.mott.org/21/

Family Education Network provides free local school connections for teachers and parents — both e-mail and web pages. FEN also links to a variety of resources for adults who work with students. www.fen.com/

The Forum for Youth Investment’s support for Out-of-School Time focuses on including all young people, all settings, and all learning opportunities.

www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/

Foundations Inc. sets up and operates afterschool, extended day and summer programs. Foundations also trains program staff, provides ongoing professional development and assess program effectiveness. www.foundations-inc.org


Both the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) and North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) have websites to provide assistance on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant Program. www.mcrel.org www.ncrel.org

The National Child Care Information Center from ERIC and the National Child Care Bureau serves as a mechanism for supporting quality, comprehensive services for children and families. www.nccic.org/

The National Community Education Association provides national and regional training conferences to assist the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. www.ncea.com/


The National Network for Child Care offers e-mail discussion, a database, newsletters, contacts, support and assistance for those interested in family child care, center-based care, and school-age child care. www.nncc.org/

SERVE is the lead Regional Educational Laboratory in the area of expanded learning opportunities (ELO). As such, SERVE’s website provides resources for ELO programs across the nation. www.serve.org/