

The commitment of all partners –
home, school, and community –



can be the bridge
of support for
youth.

State Support to After-School Programs Through the New York State Center for School Safety

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The relationship between schools and communities has been one of evolving expectations and parameters of authority. In many cases, schools have operated as distinct entities, linked to their communities through an elected board of education representing the constituent population. The responsibility for what occurs in schools is considered to be at the discretion of school leadership. School leaders, however, are increasingly recognizing that the issues they are confronting in school are ones that are not unique to the institution of the school, but are issues of the community. As such, there is growing recognition that links need to be strengthened between those working with youth in our schools, and those providing needed services in the community. Changing education policy from the federal level also highlights the need for schools to rethink strategy to ensure the optimal intellectual growth of all students.

With the implementation of a nationwide school accountability system, schools are under increasing public pressure to find ways to help students succeed. Evidence of this success is measured in terms of academic achievement, with test scores being used as the primary outcome measure of determination. Academic improvement is more likely to be achieved when combined with actions supporting the positive social/emotional development of youth, but it is difficult for this transition in thinking to occur when the pressure is on school staff to demonstrate student success through static test scores.

Building successful collaborations between schools and community organizations helps produce positive academic outcomes but requires a reexamination of organizational structures, missions, and decision-making procedures, both within schools and community organizations. All parties also need to agree on a shared vision for youth and the community, one that focuses on valuing youth and working in partnership with youth to identify strategies supporting their positive growth and development.

The impact of after-school programs on youth development and academic performance was illustrated in a study by Durlak and Weissberg (2007), in which they identified two important findings:

- Youth who were participants in after-school programs were most significantly impacted in relation to feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment and academic performance, and
- Programs that consistently used evidence-based skill training approaches were successful in providing multiple benefits for youth.

These points highlight the need for us to put attention on how to use available resources to optimize outcomes for youth, both in school and in the community. Bringing these resources together to support positive youth development requires a planned effort of all partners.

The New York State Center for School Safety (NYSCSS), a government

organization established to help ensure that schools are safe places for students to attend and staff to work, often serves in a “broker” role to bring together schools and community-based organizations to work collaboratively in providing for safe and supportive learning environments. NYSCSS, which is housed at Ulster County BOCES, serves as the home of the New York 21st CCLC Statewide Technical Assistance Center, funded to provide technical assistance and serve as an information clearinghouse on issues related to after-school programming. It has specific responsibility to work with the 192 funded after-school providers at 551 sites for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program. NYSCSS additionally has over ten years of history being a technical assistance and training provider for 83 Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Programs across the state, which are funded by the New York State Legislature.

What We Do

The New York 21st CCLC Statewide Technical Assistance Center (TAC) is

contracted by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in collaboration with the Regional Student Support Services (SSS) Centers to provide training and technical assistance to 21st CCLC grantees throughout New York State.

How We Do It

The New York 21st CCLC Statewide Technical Assistance Center (TAC) continues to expand its work in high-quality after-school programming through the following avenues:

- Building the capacity of the Regional Student Support Services Centers to provide training and assistance to 21st CCLC program providers and other out-of-school time programs;

- Ensuring the accuracy and completion of Annual Performance Report (APR) data to be submitted to Learning Point Associates, as part of the United States Department of Education's accountability system;
- Working with partnerships throughout New York State on after-school issues.

TAC provides opportunities twice a year for all after-school programs to come together for an event called The After School Experience (TASE). This event, held in the fall at a location in or near New York City, and in the spring in Albany, provides intensive professional development and networking opportunities based around the ten indicators of quality for after-school as defined by the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) Quality Self Assessment Tool

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- Assisting 21st CCLC program providers by monitoring the progress of 21st CCLC programs toward meeting their goals and objectives;
- Conducting statewide professional development activities to assist programs in creating supportive learning environments that promote youth development and family literacy;
- Promoting that the principles of effectiveness, scientifically based research, and youth development are inherent in all 21st CCLC programmatic activities;

(QSA) (available at <http://www.nysan.org/section/quality/qa>). These ten indicators, or essential elements, of an effective after-school program, include the following:

1. Environment & Climate
2. Administration & Organization
3. Relationships
4. Staffing & Professional Development
5. Programming & Activities
6. Linkages between Day & After-school

7. Youth Participation & Engagement
8. Parent, Family, & Community Partnerships
9. Program Sustainability & Growth
10. Measuring Outcomes & Evaluation

The ten indicators were gleaned after two years of extensive review of the research in the field, and field testing throughout the state by The After School Corporation (TASC) and NYSCSS, on behalf of NYSAN. TASC and NYSCSS are founding members of NYSAN, and along with many other public and private organizations, form the core of NYSAN.

TASE is also known for bringing high-quality national keynote speakers, and providing a forum for funded programs to learn and grow from each other's experiences. As a new feature last school year, TASE incorporated sessions for job-alike groups, including program evaluators and school administrators. These features will be expanded in upcoming TASE events.

It is through the concerted efforts of many organizations in New York that we are able to effectively support youth in their successful transition to adulthood. The commitment of all partners, in school and out of school, to ensure that after-school programs can be the bridge of support for youth, for their academic development and social and emotional growth, is critical for our future success as a state.

For more information about how to become a part of the movement for effective after-school programming, contact NY 21st CCLC Statewide Technical Assistance Center at nyscenterforschoolsafety.org or nys21stcccl.org, (845) 255-8989, located at 175 Route 32 North, New Paltz. ●

Reference cited: Durlak, J.A. & Weissberg, R.P. (2007), The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning.