OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME:

LEVERAGING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR QUALITY

FEBRUARY 2010

TASC
THE AFTER-SCHOOL CORPORATION

Made possible by the generous support
of The Atlantic Philanthropies

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For citation, Foundations Inc., Moorestown, NJ and The Center for Afterschool Excellence at TASC, New York, NY. February 2010.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was made possible through a generous grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies. Over the course of two meetings organized by the Center for Afterschool Education at Foundations, Inc. and The Center for After-School Excellence at TASC, as well as ongoing dialogue over the course of ten months, a committee of experts shared their experiences, insights, and questions about collaboration between the field of out-school-time and institutions of higher education. Without both the committee members' groundbreaking work in this emerging field, as well as their feedback and ideas, this report would not have been possible. While all participants shared their experiences and views, they are not responsible for, nor necessarily endorse, the paper's content or recommendations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 6.5 million youth nationwide participate in some type of out-of-school time programming. Between 1998 and 2009, funding for afterschool from the US Department of Education, via the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, increased from $40 million to over $1 billion. As funding increased, so, too, have expectations and accountability for a range of social and academic outcomes. Recent research shows that positive outcomes for children are being achieved in out-of-school (OST) programs, but research also indicates that results are achieved in high quality programs. This paper explores why and how partnerships between institutions of higher education and the OST field can strengthen the quality of children's educational opportunities beyond the school day. Based on two convenings held in 2009 with leaders across higher education and the OST field, it considers the evolving landscape of higher education addressing OST; challenges and promising strategies for serving OST staff; and potential guidance points for developing credit-bearing professional development or similar linkages between higher education and OST providers.

A consistent feature of 'quality'—effectiveness in reaching goals—is, as in school, the skill of staff and leadership. While a clear system of higher education exists to train and develop school teachers and administrators through graduate programs, student teaching, leadership, coaching, in-service professional development, and curricular and testing materials, OST staff and leaders are not necessarily connected with such education or related systems. Yet, higher education can be leveraged to help develop the skilled staff needed to produce positive youth outcomes. And, by linking with afterschool, colleges of education and others can develop new arenas for field work with children, for student teaching, family counseling, and other practice-based skills. Further, as schools increasingly emphasize project-based learning, service learning, experiential, and community-based learning, possibly in the context of extended learning time, summer programs, or longer school days, existing afterschool programs offer valuable sites for teachers and leaders to build skills in these methods, which are not covered in typical teacher education.

Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) have begun to link with the afterschool arena through certificate programs, OST-focused courses, and OST-based practicums integrated into existing IHE courses. Higher education faculty are beginning to recognize OST as an educational space with distinct methodologies, materials, parameters, and outcomes, calling for a specifically trained workforce, as well as an area for education research, both applied and theoretical. Further, there is a growing population of students interested in issues, practices, and research in out-of-school time, afterschool, and non-formal education, giving rise to opportunities for IHEs and OST to benefit from more robust interface and partnership. By engaging with OST, IHEs can broaden offerings for students in education, gain enrollment of non-traditional students, increase opportunities for interdisciplinary courses and programs, and establish venues for engaging with their local communities. And a more highly skilled OST staff and leadership coupled with advancing research into diverse education strategies and models would improve children's educational opportunities. This more robust system of skill-building and professional development, of which IHEs would be part, would introduce individuals to career pathways linked with a network of related fields.

Challenges to such partnerships include the lack of an established set of competencies for different levels of staff, and standards of program quality. While such standards have been produced, and to some extent validated through research, no centralized official body exists to adopt, publish, implement, or hold programs accountable, nor are there licensing or staffing requirements for individuals, as exist in school systems. Without incentives of increased pay associated with additional education, or as part of a career path, OST staff typically lack financial motivation to pursue additional coursework, especially courses with high tuition price tags. At the same time, IHEs must balance limited resources and time to ensure the financial viability of

new courses or programs of study. Nevertheless, various IHEs have effectively launched OST-relevant coursework and programs, often working with OST organizations, community-based organizations, intermediaries, or others to develop coursework, design program sequences, teach, and to recruit students, with IHEs taking innovative approaches with respect to scheduling, scholarships, and use of online and blended methods.

Expanding children's educational opportunities through OST requires a system of professional expectations and education for staff and leadership, of which IHEs are a critical part. To make it effective, OST leaders and funders must clearly value more skilled staff, and must encourage and systematically support professional development. OST intermediaries can reach out to local IHEs and workforce development offices to explore partnerships, may help broker field research, and assist in bridging research and practice. Intermediaries, education and OST organizations, and community organizations can collaborate on degree, certificate, or program formulation design, or teaching, articulating OST content with coursework in education and related disciplines.

The concept of creating additional settings and programs for learning outside the classroom walls, and beyond the boundaries of the traditional school day and year, has gained tremendous traction over the last decades. Systems to build and ensure the quality of such programming are beginning to be built at local, state, and national levels. As IHEs become explicit parts of such systems, avenues for children's learning, education, and healthy development will expand and grow more robust.

INTRODUCTION

Afterschool Scene 1: Maria hurries down the hall from her 2nd grade classroom over to the afterschool program. Eighteen 2nd through 5th graders crowd in, grab a snack, chatting—some in English, some in Spanish, some in Chinese. Most form noisy groups, a few sit alone, tired, one almost in tears. Maria is a good teacher in school, but what does she do now? Homework time–but how does she help English learners and the upper grade children? How does she get them on task, when they're tired from a full day of school? They're struggling with reading and math, but Maria thinks they need some fun and down time.

Afterschool Scene 2: Brian, a college student majoring in Phys. Ed., is working his way through school. It's his first month with kids. He's got a kickball game going, but what else?

Afterschool Scene 3: Asha, mother of two, is working in afterschool until a full-time social work job opens up. Her training allows her to see that many of her middle school children are grappling with challenges in relationships with peers, teachers, and parents, but the afterschool program emphasizes worksheets and test preparation. What can she do? Is it worth trying to change things if she's going to leave?

Sixty percent of children's waking time is spent *outside* classrooms. Across the country, programs in schools, community centers, libraries, cultural institutions, and elsewhere are tapping that time to advance children's healthy development and expand learning. More important than location, however, is the fact that the adults who structure, lead, and interact with children during that programming determine the quality and outcomes. While curriculum and trained teachers structure classroom time, afterschool[1] is wide open, with highly diverse staff, illustrated by Maria, Brian, and Asha. How do we fully develop the opportunities available in out-of-school time, especially for children most in need of academic, social, and emotional supports to succeed in school?

Research has shown that just as good teachers correlate to children's success in school, so too are out-of-school time staff integral to making afterschool an enriching educational space. And as institutions of higher education (IHEs) are essential to the education system for schooling, so too may they have a role in preparing and training the highly diverse workforce of afterschool. Institutions of higher education provide a developed infrastructure for education and professional development of students in the current and future OST workforce. The OST arena offers an educational space for practice, research, and diverse methodologies.

In 2008, the Center for Afterschool Education at Foundations, Inc., and the Center for Afterschool Excellence (part of The After-School Corporation) convened two meetings of leaders across higher education and the OST field to discuss challenges and opportunities for partnering. This paper reflects those meetings, considering the evolving landscape of higher education addressing OST; challenges and promising strategies for serving OST staff; and guidance points for developing credit-bearing professional development or similar linkages between higher education and OST providers.

[1] We use afterschool and out-of-school time (OST) interchangeably to denote those organized experiences and programs available to youth in formal and informal settings. While many of such programs operate after traditional school hours, we recognize that out-of-school time extends to initiatives that occur on weekends, during the summer, during school calendar breaks, and before the school day.

OST EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Over the last several years, out-of-school time has gained prominence in national discussions on education. No longer considered simply a place to keep children safe, out-of-school time programming has earned recognition as a potentially robust space for academic, social, and emotional development. Recent increases in public funding in excess of $1 billion reflect the growing public recognition of the potential of OST to provide additional learning opportunities for children and youth. Studies showing positive outcomes for children and youth participating in out-of-school time programming underpin the expanded understanding of education as including time and space beyond traditional hours and classroom walls (Granger and William T. Grant Foundation, 2008; Lauer, et al., 2006; Vandell, et al., 2007).

Further studies underscore the point that skilled staff are central to the effectiveness of OST in reaching developmental and/or learning outcomes (Grossman, et al., 2007). Effective staff—including front line, supervisory, directors, and organization leaders—need skills that cross boundaries of education, youth and community work, child and youth development, adult education, management, public relations, budgeting, and workforce development. OST programs with skilled staff retain youth at much higher levels than programs with untrained staff (Pearson, et al., 2007), and staff with strong training have shown better capabilities to respond to the needs of young people, to engage them in arts, sports, science and other activities in ways that promote social, academic, and emotional development, and operate programs with greater benefits for children and youth (Grossman et al., 2007). As expectations and demands grow for OST staff to work as skillful, professional, and specifically OST educators, practitioners, and leaders, the need for effective professional development systems becomes clearer.

KEY TERMS

Professional development in OST refers to adult education, often in-service, that builds participants' knowledge of core concepts, strategies, methodologies, and practices that lead to more effective work with, or on behalf of, children and youth and organizations that serve them. Formats or modes include workshops, conferences, on-site technical assistance, manuals and books, apprenticeships, peer mentoring, professional memberships, and college coursework.

Training typically refers to a focused practice, content, skill area, or topic, presented in sessions which may include single or multiple workshops, online, on-site sessions, etc.

Coursework is usually associated with academic credit and standards/ requirements for earning credit, content structured and sequenced across many hours over time, covering a complex topic in depth, with documented assessments of learning.

Unlike school systems with a workforce of front line teachers and levels of administrators who have gone through fairly uniform education, credentialing, and licensing systems, typical afterschool and out-of-school time staff have no such shared base or career ladder. Staff across the field include school teachers, college students, youth workers, high school students, community members, parents, retired professionals, artists, and many others (Nee, et al., 2006), and it is likely to stay this way for the foreseeable future. The knowledge, experience, skills, talents, and perspectives this mix brings to OST often strengthen the afterschool landscape but is a challenge for professional development. Staff with varied interests, educational backgrounds, levels of experience, and work, college, or career paths, have different professional development needs and interests and will respond differently to various modes of professional development, related to aspects such as individual learning styles, time demands, costs, and perception of benefits.

Some believe existing teacher education programs can address the professional development needs of a more skilled OST workforce. While teacher education offers a great deal, fully maximizing teaching and learning time outside the school day requires additional OST-specific knowledge and skills. Teachers themselves who work in OST report that the operating parameters of afterschool demand different methodologies from school, and hence, require specialized professional development. A recent brief by *Child Trends* notes, "Although working with teachers has many benefits (such as, extensive content knowledge, experience working with youth in formal settings), classroom teachers may have less experience working with youth in informal settings or with young people who are disaffected from school" (Metz, et al., 2009). In a study conducted for the American Federation of Teachers, certified teachers working in afterschool requested training that fit the mix of ages in afterschool, addressed academic subjects outside their expertise, taught non-formal teaching styles, and offered strategies for better relationships with children and parents (Belden, et al., 2006). The OST arena offers many assets and opportunities distinct from and complementary to those in the school day or within the classroom setting. Staff need to learn how to capitalize on those opportunities to expand children's learning for success in school and beyond.

In part, because the *educational* role and potential of OST is a more recent focus, professional development for OST staff is not, typically, well-developed either at the program- or system-level. National education organizations such as Foundations, Inc., Center for Afterschool Education, the Center for Afterschool Excellence in New York, and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, have created and provided a range of professional development options, in conducting applied research into afterschool education and the associated workforce development needs, and partnering with and supporting work of the US Department of Education in their training and professional development efforts. Several states—including Georgia, New Jersey, California, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and others—have worked from the state level to strengthen professional development focused on OST educators, especially for programs receiving 21st Century Community Learning Center funding.

Most training for afterschool staff, however, remains targeted to compliance, safety, and basic operations. If time and funding allow, additional training may be provided on topics such as classroom management, homework support strategies, or youth development and leadership activities. While the nature of OST calls for professional development in non-formal education and in management and leadership of OST organizations, that is not the type of training most often provided. On the program level, time and financial limits tend to direct efforts to the most basic for keeping the doors open and children safe. High frontline staff turnover limits the incentives of directors to invest in deeper staff training; limited professional development and workplace or career benefits feeds high turnover. Developing OST as part of the *education* landscape—broadly understood—for children and youth, requires integration with higher education for more sustained and deeper learning opportunities, and for articulation with career pathways and networks.

EMERGING PARTNERS: OST AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

SHARED BENEFITS

IHEs provide a well-developed base for improving the quality of OST as a key learning and development arena for children and youth through research, coursework aligned with the demands in the field, and broadening approaches to education as reaching beyond the classroom and school day. OST programs provide research and practice sites, student teaching and internship opportunities, and access to potential new students. Community colleges and four-year institutions are both well-positioned to develop the knowledge base, and the practitioners and leaders, for OST and non-formal education.

Precedents set by other professional fields demonstrate the role higher education can play for OST education. Nursing, technologists, early childhood caregivers, and others have codified their knowledge bases and best practices by establishing core competencies for practitioners, creating either association- or university-based programs to teach those competencies, and developing certification processes to document the acquisition of differentiated levels of knowledge and skills. Such systems of knowledge and skill frameworks, coursework, and certificates or certifications, offer the advantage of widely recognized, permanent, portable evidence of experience or attainment. Credit-bearing courses also help those without college degrees to enter or advance along a college and career pathway.

Across the country, colleges and universities have begun contributing to local OST workforce development initiatives, offering credit-bearing coursework, hosting training programs, and partnering with OST programs for field practicum placements, federal work-study, and student service learning projects. Higher education has also played an essential role in advancing research and developing a knowledge base that defines OST as a field, whether as a distinct field or as a subset of education. In tandem with workforce development, research and scholarship scope and shape the content, methods, processes, and practices that make OST effective, meaningful, and worthwhile beyond the obvious values of safety. More research is not needed into how to keep children safe. It is needed, though, in how best to provide engaging, non-formal learning within a range of settings, program structures, and staffing, into identifying appropriate outcomes to target, and into assessments of non-formal education, best ways to add time to school days or the school year, differential impacts for different groups of students, and other such issues. As IHEs build and recognize OST education and practice, they may also gain the benefits of higher enrollment of non-traditional students, new opportunities for cross-departmental and community collaborations, expanded opportunities for practicum placement and service learning, and greater opportunity to connect with local communities, families, schools, and other organizations.

From the standpoint of programs, OST staff and leaders, and individuals interested in alternative and non-formal education, availability of coursework, certificates, and IHE-OST partnerships can help stabilize turnover, attract skilled professionals, create job advancement or career pathways, open doors to college, develop leadership, bridge worlds of education theory, research, and practice, and efficiently connect with other professional education opportunities.

GROWING PRACTICE

While a small number of IHE programs supporting OST professional development have existed since the 1980s, partnerships and credit-bearing professional development options[2] have increased in recent years. State and local credentialing and certificate programs are emerging in community colleges under the headings of "afterschool," "youth work," and "school-age care." Four-year institutions now offer credit-bearing coursework at the graduate and undergraduate levels,

[2] The Next Generation Youth Work Coalition ("NextGen") is currently working to compile a searchable database of HE programs aimed at OST staff. To date they have identified at least two dozen nationally.

or include OST as practicum and service learning placement locations. Programs are housed in a variety of academic departments, including education, social work, community education, psychology, allied health, and communication.

A growing body of scholarly work has facilitated the development of OST-related coursework. The American Education Research Association established a special interest group on OST, now involving more than 100 scholars meeting annually to share development of theory and research. The Society for Research in Adolescence regularly features sessions on afterschool and youth development at its annual conference. Journals such as Harvard Family Research Project's *Evaluation Exchange, New Directions in Youth Development,* Princeton-Brookings' *The Future of Children, Child Trends, Afterschool Matters,* and others publish research, opinion, and review articles specific to OST learning and leadership. Organizations, such as the Wallace Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The W.T. Grant Foundation, and others have commissioned reports on the field and position papers on a variety of promising strategies.

Emerging national networks including NextGen's Higher Education Working Group and the National Community Education Association's Higher Education Taskforce strengthen IHE/OST connections and seek growth strategies for the field. Associations and networks of organizations, such as the Collaborative for Building Afterschool Systems (CBASS), are exploring how members can form partnerships with local IHEs.

As resources for OST programming have grown over the past decade, a small but important group of funders has supported professional development for the workforce. The Atlantic Philanthropies is a notable leader, providing support to afterschool, OST, youth development, and youth-serving organizations to develop, deliver, and assess professional development, to expand access to training, and to partner with higher education to integrate OST education with college degree work. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has funded a broad range of initiatives to build the quality of professional development for OST, and to leverage that into sustainable systems for professional development. The Afterschool Alliance, a national advocacy organization committed to helping all children access quality afterschool options, is currently proposing an increase from 2 percent to 5 percent in the allowable portion of 21st Century Community Learning Center funds which states may allocate to professional development. Some states now use a portion of their Child Care Development Block Grants to support training of school-aged child-care workers, including reimbursement for relevant college courses. In California, the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002 created opportunities to expand and improve systems of professional development for building the quality of afterschool programming.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE OST FIELD

- **Community Colleges**
  - Workforce development
  - Associate degrees
  - Continuing education
  - Certificates
- **Four-year Institutions**
  - Bachelor and graduate degrees
  - Continuing education
  - Certificates
  - Practicums and field-placements
  - Research

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

From full certificate programs, to offering one or two afterschool-focused courses, to adding OST related practicums or service learning to existing courses, many IHEs are connecting students and OST. A closer look at some of the universities offering OST coursework reveals commonalities and differences. All those examined offer flexible scheduling options; all partner with an afterschool-related organization to increase student recruitment and attendance and to ensure coursework relevance. Differences are rooted in the variety of resources, individual faculty interests, eagerness and effectiveness of the OST partner organizations, student interest, and extent of demand from in-service teachers, volunteers, or staff. The following examples illustrate a sampling of innovative IHE/OST partnerships, offering ideas for additional collaborations.

Arcadia University (Glenside, PA) and Foundations Inc, Center for Afterschool Education

In 2008, the Center for Afterschool Education at Foundations, Inc. and Arcadia University launched a 15-credit graduate certificate for OST. Designed by Foundations in collaboration with Arcadia, the certificate leverages existing education courses offered by Arcadia online. Students attend a three day, on-campus intensive course taught by the Center, earning three credits upon completion of a series of follow up readings and a substantial practicum project. Credit may be earned at a graduate or undergraduate level (with different requirements), and does not necessarily need to be part of the Certificate program. The additional 12 credits for the Certificate are earned through a choice of online courses addressing human development, instructional methods, grant-writing, organizational management, and community and educational partnerships. Arcadia and Foundations share responsibilities for recruitment, management, development, and evaluation. They are developing policies and practices for Arcadia to grant credit to participants in Foundations' in-service professional development. The Center's extensive experience in OST practice, research, and professional development nationwide helped Arcadia better shape a credit-bearing program fitting the needs, interests, and goals of OST staff; the Center can reach more practitioners with deeper courses of study and diversify professional development options for the field.

Charter Oak State College (New Britain, CT)

Through collaboration with the Connecticut After School Network and Connecticut Charts-A-Course, (a statewide professional development organization), Charter Oak offers an After School Education Credential for professionals serving youth ages 5-15 in out-of-school environments.

Credential requirements include four online courses focused on afterschool and childcare foundations and principles, curriculum and program environment, child and adolescent development, and supervision and leadership. The certificate also includes a field experience practicum focused on individuals putting their course learning into practice. Certificate courses may also be applied to a bachelor's degree with a concentration in Child and Youth Development. The certificate goals include creating a program environment and staff dedicated to supporting and advancing youths' academic and social-emotional development, as well as promoting increased professionalism and accountability throughout the afterschool field.

Harold Washington College (Chicago, IL) and Chicago Youth Services

With funding support from Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Harold Washington College's (HWC) Youth Developement Practitioner Certification Program (YDPCP) has offered youth service certificates and degrees since 2003. YDPCP offers a basic and advanced certificate for OST frontline staff seeking enhanced professional knowledge and also provides an Associate Degree in Applied Science in Social Work, with a Youth Work concentration for professionals seeking OST expertise beyond the certificate level. Over 300 community-based organizations (CBO) have partnered with the program, and major OST providers continue to send front-line staff and supervisors. Strong CBO relationships have assured a high participation rate in HWC's credit-bearing courses and helped the program adapt course content to the needs of the ever-evolving youth services field.

University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development (Minneapolis, MN)

The University of Minnesota's system for youth worker preparation and professional development begins with affordable non-credit training in the community and extends through degree options at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Extension Center for Youth Development's Youth Work Institute takes the lead on the community-based professional development aspect, collaborating with community agencies and partners and teaching at community sites. The Extension Center is developing its eight Signature Programs for interactive web-based delivery to increase access for youth workers statewide. Classes and trainings on over thirty topics from program quality assessment to culturally responsive youth work combine research and practice and emphasize hands-on learning approaches. Its goal is to have the signature programs available with a graduate credit option by late 2010. The Extension Center also brings national and international perspectives and expert voices to the community; it fosters the design and delivery of nonformal educational curriculum and resources for MN 4-H and other youth programs.

Figure 1: Examples of Higher Education and OST Partnerships

Institution of Higher Eduction	OST Partner(s)	Unique Program Characteristic(s)	Promising Practices
Arcadia University	Foundations, Inc., Center for Afterschool Education	• Arcadia utilized the Center's OST knowledge and national networks to craft course content and reach interested OST professionals. • The 15 credit certificate program combines a weekend on-campus institute followed by online courses.	• Flexible schedules • Online courses or segments • Practicums • Learning cohorts • IHE and PD provider partnerships • Faculty collaboration on course content; wrap-arounds • IHE partnerships with CBOs
Charter Oak State College	Connecticut After School Network and Connecticut Charts-A-Course	• Charter Oak provides a combination of online courses as well as flexible field experience practicum options to fit OST workers busy and non-traditional schedules. • The certificate program also acts as a gateway program into one of Charter Oaks Bachelor's Degree programs focused on Child and Youth Development.	
CUNY Campuses: Kingsborough and Hostos Community Colleges, Medgar Evers, York, and Hunter Colleges	The After-School Corporation	• With guidance from TASC, the five CUNY campuses grouped and modified various existing courses into afterschool certificate programs. • Flexible course schedules and scholarship opportunities have increased and sustained attendance and enthusiasm.	
Harold Washington College	Over 300 Chicago Community Based Organizations	• HWC uses city funding to pay participants' course fees. • The Youth Developement Practitioner Certification Program's courses draw from the social work, psychology, and business domains to help students navigate the interdisciplinary nature of the OST field.	
University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development	Youth Community Connections (Mott Network)	• Extension Center for Youth Development offers low cost non-credit classes, cohort experiences, public symposia, research forums, issue conversations, networking events and a "go-to" web presence statewide. • College of Education & Human Development offers an undergraduate Youth Studies major, a Youth Development Leadership M.Ed., Ph.D. options and a certificate in learning in community. • Extension Center works to build a cohesive collegiate and practitioner faculty to co-teach and ground credit and non-credit programs in the reality of practice.	

City University of New York (CUNY) and TASC

Since 2006, five CUNY campuses have offered year-long, credit-bearing certificate programs designed for front-line and supervisory afterschool staff. These campuses, including community colleges, senior colleges, and one graduate school, have developed the programs in partnership with the Center for After-School Excellence, the training and research arm of the New York City-based intermediary, The After-School Corporation (TASC). All five campuses' certificate programs offer their courses in the mornings and on weekends to accommodate afterschool staff schedules. TASC has continued to serve as an important partner to the CUNY campuses by offering scholarships to youth service workers and exposing CUNY education, psychology, and social work faculty to afterschool theory and practice. In the end, the partnership supplies CUNY programs with students and gives TASC an outlet to better train afterschool staff and offer them pathways back to college.

The programs mentioned, as well as many others, illustrate the growing number of dynamic partnerships between IHEs and the OST field, adding to the array of avenues to build skills of OST practitioners and leaders, as well as to broaden opportunities for college students (and in-service teachers seeking additional professional credits) in education, child development, social work, youth services, or related fields. Successful partnerships help each involved organization fulfill its mission, leverage their respective assets, and collectively make best use of resources from financial, mission, and impact perspectives.

PARTNERSHIP AND FIELD-WIDE CHALLENGES

Leveraging higher education to help build the quality of OST and expand children's learning opportunities nationwide, especially for the most vulnerable populations, requires scaling up from existing examples. To do so requires consideration of challenges, as well as identification of promising strategies. Challenges include:

- *The interdisciplinary nature of OST and multiplicity in terminology makes defining the field difficult.* Called 'non-formal education,' 'life-long learning,' 'youth work,' 'community education,' 'learner-centered instruction,' 'experiential education,' and more, the concepts and methods for fostering learning outside of formal education have a long and rich history that touches several disciplines. The organizational development and business management aspects of developing, marketing, leading, and sustaining programs with complex and multiple stakeholders brings in another set of educational needs. A truly interdisciplinary practice, the applied and theoretical research base for effective OST can be found across academia, in education (from curriculum and instruction, to leadership and administration), psychology, social work, recreation, health, organizational development, and other departments. Is OST content best integrated into other courses, should OST programs be comprised of courses from across departments with some additions or wrap-arounds, is there enough unique substance to make a 'field'? What distinctions should or could be made with respect to more applied versus research degrees or with respect to appropriate levels of rigor?

- *Absence of a nationally endorsed framework for program quality hampers prioritizing of core and more advanced coursework.* While field-wide standards of quality have emerged, based on research in education, child and youth development, and OST practice, they are not yet aligned with coherent systems of professional development, education, or program development and assessment. At least a dozen states have developed frameworks of competencies for front-line staff, and some have now established sets for supervisors as well. In March 2009, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation published its proposed matrix of staff competencies and in April, published a list of trainer competencies as well. Both competency frameworks were developed by national cross-sector teams, spanning in-school

education, OST practitioners and leaders, OST organizations, parents, evaluators, and others over the course of two years. This framework provides a base for developing courses and programs in OST, but no national body exists to officially 'endorse' it. The federal office of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, within the US Department of Education, might be such a body; or, the field will 'self-regulate' and eventually acknowledge a consensus. As such consensus develops over what, and to what levels and ends IHEs should be teaching, degree programs or certificates will be more consistently understood, building acceptance, portability, and meaning across institutions and in the workplace.

- *Institutions may not recognize credits and credentials from other institutions.* To the extent that OST coursework is locally grounded, credits may not be readily recognized across higher education institutions. Universities and colleges are increasingly establishing prescriptive programs with little room for electives or credit transfers, particularly at the graduate level. With less flexibility in waiving courses, and limits on the number of transfer credits, students may end up paying for extra courses and/or find themselves in courses that repeat content or lack relevance.

- *With limited external incentives, such as pay or career advancement, OST providers—particularly direct-service staff—hesitate to invest personal time and resources in credit-bearing programs.* Providers, stretched financially, resist investing or providing incentives to encourage staff to pursue professional development. Doubtful that the individual will stay on board after their training, many OST managers put dollars only toward short-term operational training, rather than longer-term individual skill-building. In turn, in the absence of financial incentives, individual staff members may lack motivation to pursue more extended training, or ultimately, to stay with the program and field.

- *The academic skills for IHE coursework differ from the skills needed in OST practice.* Standard requirements and priorities in higher education coursework may pose barriers to in-service staff seeking credit for their job-related OST professional development. Staff who may have superior skills and talents in engaging and working with children and young people, communicating with families, parents, or teachers, or to effectively problem-solve on the spot, may not be valued in courses, and may be overshadowed by the need for college-level skills in academic writing, analysis, and presentation. Admissions criteria and other academic challenges may hamper the efforts of less academically-prepared staff to take advantage and benefit from college courses. When remedial coursework is necessary, costs increase, and motivation may dwindle.

- *The costs of IHE programs impede enrollment.* Though some states direct percentages of OST funds to professional development, such funding does not typically translate into support for individuals paying tuition for college credits. Even when subsidies exist, participants are not always financially able to continue in higher education, thwarting the college's use of OST as an entrée point for earning college degrees.

- *Creating new university courses, concentrations, or certificate programs can be onerous, and adapting existing courses is not always feasible.* The availability of and demand for coursework in OST gains momentum every day; nevertheless, university procedures can hobble efforts to nimbly respond. OST is a practice-based field, with a need for applied research that builds on theory. Faculty may well be ignorant of the cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary content, lack experience of practice and methodologies, and have limited understanding of potential students and their motivations and interests. This is a chicken-and-egg scenario. More courses are needed (or additional course content) to produce more theory to inform practice, but they will not, typically, come about through ordinary university channels. Partnerships between IHEs and OST organizations are essential at this stage of development—but it is a challenge.

- *Credentialing concepts and value are still unclear.* While staff at all levels arguably benefit from college-level training, a tension exists between the recognition that more skilled staff—often, but not exclusively associated with more education—are associated with more effective OST programs, and the broad consensus on the value of maintaining a staff with diverse backgrounds. Many consider the varied experiences, perspectives, and knowledge bases of OST staff and leaders—the lack of standardization—a strength in forging OST as a complementary learning and developmental space where children can be engaged in ways not typically possible in school. Some staff may have college degrees, others may be on a degree track, or may be seeking a few course credits or continuing education units over time to meet state requirements or maintain credentialing. Some may want college coursework, but cannot enroll at the time.

Should OST push for greater emphasis on college coursework? Would certificates or credentialing strengthen OST broadly, or undermine one of OST's great assets: employing staff, often from the community, who can form meaningful relationships with children and families? One approach suggests credentialing as an individual choice rather than a requirement, which may then be recognized and valued by employers, along with other factors and qualifications. Unless credentialing brings higher compensation or provides a distinct advantage in hiring, it is questionable whether individuals would seek certification or coursework.

Another approach suggests looking at the complete staff pool rather than individuals. Programs would be required to have some percentage of credentialed front-line staff, and may require that leadership positions be filled with credentialed staff, or require a percentage. Applying standards at the program, rather than individual, level would allow greater hiring flexibility to create the best staff for meeting the needs of the program and the children.

Questions about professionalization and standardization are being explored and include:

- Should the field advocate for regulations that require higher education coursework, perhaps based on competencies?
- Should the field move toward professionalization, seeking higher levels of education and pay? Can professionalization occur in conjunction with maintaining the workforce diversity which gives the field such dynamism?
- Is there a need for centralized infrastructure for formal OST-focused professional development work?
- What funding sources can be tapped to increase enrollment in standards-based professional development for OST? Is there sufficiently compelling evidence to convince policymakers that investment in professional development of OST will produce high quality OST experiences which, in turn, will yield improved youth outcomes?

MOVING FORWARD: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SYSTEM-BUILDING

Expanding children's learning opportunities beyond the school day requires system-wide action; professional development is a key component. The current widely varied construction of out-of-school time as extended learning opportunities, youth development programs, summer learning, and afterschool education, happening in diverse settings with different mixes of funding, children, stakeholders, and accountability, demands a different scope and content of professional development than does the more highly standardized field of in-school education. The nature of the workforce, with wide variations in educational backgrounds, job roles and motivation, and career or workplace goals, demands that professional development be accessible and affordable, practical, and relevant to individuals' personal and professional goals. Institutions of higher education have a great deal to offer in building the infrastructure for high quality out-of-school time, particularly in partnership with organizations engaged in the OST field. The following points and recommendations may help advance such partnerships.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- *Tailor coursework to the needs of OST staff*—OST staff need courses and higher education programs clearly relevant to practice and to core competencies, knowledge bases, and skills. Basic courses in psychology, program management, or teaching techniques are relevant and important, and underpin competency, but explicit links to OST through examples, readings, and projects are often needed. To attract students who are currently working as staff, coursework and theory need to immediately help them better understand children, parents, and the workplace to enable them to do a better job. This framing is akin to workforce development initiatives that seek to align college-based training with industry expectations. IHEs who don't already do so should consider the use of practicums, service-learning, simulations, and projects as teaching and learning methods, and to model the non-formal, experiential education approaches integral to OST.

- *Prioritize access*—Traditional course scheduling may be incompatible with the work schedules of OST staff. Alternative methods of course delivery, such as synchronous and asynchronous online teaching, field-work, or weekend intensives, may provide potential students with greater access than classes held once or twice weekly. Restructuring courses to accommodate different formats or schedules demands flexibility in the course design process and credit requirements.

- *Partner with OST experts for content and methods*—In a practice-based field such as OST, knowledge and experience in and from the field is extremely valuable in scoping and shaping courses and programs of study. IHEs should work with OST experts, leaders, professional development providers, and practitioners for both development as well as delivery of curricula. Articulating in-service professional development offered to staff with credit bearing courses in higher education may be an effective strategy for helping students advance in their degree programs; such an approach may also bring students into college programs who might not otherwise have attended.

- *Work with local providers*—Partnering with local OST programs helps IHEs reach area staff, and, if IHEs can offer directly relevant professional development, helps build local program quality. Such partnerships can lead to faster adoption of desired program changes and may assist programs who are seeking funding or accreditation.

- *Work with college students*—Partnering with local providers also can provide college students with experience in non-formal education and working with groups of children and youth. The current National Service program calls for all college students

to engage in a minimum of 100 hours of community service in exchange for tuition tax credits. IHEs can pursue placement of work-study students into OST programs, particularly for literacy and math tutoring, where salaries are entirely supported by Federal work-study funds. Proposed new work-study rules are increasing requirements for community service hours. Through practicums, work study, and service learning projects, partnering with local organization allows IHEs to expand options for their students seeking knowledge and practice in non-formal education; opportunities may also emerge for student-teaching placements. Regular communication, clearly detailed joint agreements, and transparent accountability are necessary to ensure quality, coupled with on-site technical assistance or training that may be needed for program staff, faculty, or students.

- *Partner with other IHEs*—Credit articulation is a constant challenge and its effects can be more pronounced in emerging fields or subject areas such as OST. OST staff pursuing coursework at the university level must know that credits they earn will fulfill degree requirements and will transfer to other institutions. While guaranteeing credit recognition is beyond the scope of most institutions, local or regional consortia of IHEs can agree that OST-related courses meet established standards for degree requirements and cross-institution articulation.

- *Support research about OST*—Robust academic offerings in OST, especially at the graduate level, require further development of the field's research base. Universities should engage faculty, research fellows, and graduate students to address the field's many critical questions from several disciplinary perspectives, and see OST as a fertile area for continuing interdisciplinary study.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

- *Reach out to IHEs*—Actively pursuing partnerships with universities can benefit OST programs in several ways. First, IHEs may be willing to provide training specifically tailored to a program's needs and objectives. With increased access to college coursework, OST programs can raise expectations for the training and competencies of current and future staff, and can adopt broader, more wide-reaching professional development as part of the program's infrastructure. Key to the success of such efforts is the deliberate assessment of needs, capacities, and resources for program quality improvement. Second, college students can provide valuable staffing. In addition to improving staff-child ratios, college students bring content knowledge, energy, and an understanding of youth culture. OST programs can contact faculty members to arrange a practicum, reach out to work-study offices, and work with student organizations dedicated to service. Setting clear expectations for regular staff and the college students, and requiring on-going training, will help ensure the partnership benefits all—faculty, college students, programs, and children.

- *Invest in staff*—By committing to improving program quality through staff development, program leaders are also committing to providing the infrastructure for implementation, including:

  - Allocating sufficient time for training

  - Helping each staff member establish a long-term professional development plan, so each understands that training is essential to achievement of career goals

  - Providing funding either for direct contracts or in compensation for individual staff tuition and fees

- Providing supervisory support for adoption of new approaches and content
- Adopting hiring policies that give preference to staff with college degrees, credit, or more advanced professional development
- Creating an internal job advancement and compensation structure

Nothing encourages professionals to seek training more than a workplace or career ladder with clear rewards for educational credentials. Recognizing the constraints of most afterschool budgets, programs should consider salary differentiation to incentivize staff to pursue relevant educational and professional development opportunities.

OST INTERMEDIARIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDERS

- *Broker relationships and resources*—Many major cities now have local afterschool intermediaries (e.g., The After-School Institute in Baltimore, the Providence After School Alliance, Prime Time Palm Beach County), which can assist in brokering relationships between OST and IHEs. Many currently provide or partner in offering professional development, provide links to local professional development and training opportunities, and are recognized by providers and practitioners as critical resources. Intermediaries can advocate to local policymakers and national funders for funding and other support for IHE programs, and are well-positioned to engage with university leadership in their cities to facilitate development of new coursework or programs. With connections to local OST providers, intermediaries can also support recruitment of staff into relevant degree-bearing programs, and promote awareness of diverse professional development and college-based options.
- *Bridge research and practice*—The disconnect between the growing body of scholarly research on OST and program practitioners remains; at the same time, researchers need ongoing contacts with the field. Partnerships and close working relationships help translate research into practice, test theory in practice, and speed information dissemination and feedback loops. Intermediaries and OST organizations play an important role in bridging these arenas.
- *Offer content expertise to IHEs*—Partnering with IHEs supports development of courses and credentials that will truly build the quality of all types of OST for children's learning and healthy development. The world of non-formal education—its actuality and its potential—is not necessarily well understood by experts of traditional educational research. At the same time, the parameters of college-level teaching and learning are not necessarily well understood by OST organizations and professional development providers. Partnering supports improved quality across both sectors.

FUNDERS

- *Invest in knowledge and skill development; demand skilled staff*—OST funders have tremendous leverage for improving the quality of OST nationwide through research, infrastructure development, and improved staff and leadership skills. Through targeted grantmaking, funders can directly foster partnerships between IHEs, OST programs, and OST organizations, support applied and theoretical research, and advance credit-bearing professional development systems. Public and private funders each have roles to play: private philanthropy can support innovation in the field; government resources and infrastructure can take strategies to scale.

Program funders raise expectations and accountability for hiring, retaining, and developing skilled staffs by, for example:

- Designating portions of program operating grants for professional development
- Allowing tuition support as professional development expense
- Awarding extra points or preference to applications that show robust professional development plans
- Including professional development and/or competency requirements in funding proposals
- Supporting provider efforts to create pay incentives or compensation differentials for higher education coursework, credentials, and/or advanced professional development
- Recognizing improved staff skills as a valuable intermediate outcome

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING

- *Build knowledge from diverse sources; disseminate in diverse ways*—Research and knowledge-building are essential to the infrastructure for creating and sustaining effective OST for children from pre-school through high school graduation. Such work may occur and grow through, for example:
    - University student and faculty research projects
    - University research and dissemination partnerships with OST
    - Applied and field research by OST organizations
    - Publication of white papers, studies, field examples, and reports by intermediaries and OST organizations
    - National convenings to advance IHE-OST partnerships, common certificate parameters, and advocate for national policy changes (e.g., in financial aid rules)
    - Outreach and dissemination through webinars, websites, electronic publications

QUALITY MATTERS

We cannot afford to waste the opportunity OST offers for children's learning and healthy development. Effective programs engage children in dynamic learning projects and activities, support positive social and emotional development, nurture talents, foster discovery, and connect with parents, creating a support network across school, family, and community. To realize this potential, OST staff and leaders must be skilled in practices spanning disciplines of education, social work, management, public relations, and business. Such a workforce does not simply appear: it must be developed. Partnerships between institutions of higher education and the OST arena play a vital role in expanding and diversifying the world of learning for children and youth.

Given the position of OST at the intersections of education, schooling, child and youth development, and social work, creative approaches are needed from higher education, both in addressing interdisciplinary content, as well as in working effectively with new configurations of non-traditional students. At the same time, teacher education sequences may well benefit from providing traditional students with diversified opportunities to work directly with children and to develop a richer range of pedagogical methods.

OST leaders, practitioners, and funders recognize that to produce outcomes supportive of children's success through school and in life—which may blend socio-emotional development, affective factors, and cognitive development—staff and leadership must possess skills beyond effective caregiving, as fundamental as that skill is. Frameworks for competencies have been developed with broad input, reflecting that complexity of skill and knowledge. But how are those frameworks to be made part of the infrastructure for ensuring the quality of OST nationwide? It is a question that is being asked and addressed by several higher education and OST partnerships around the country, but further, bolder action is needed if competencies are to translate into widespread quality-building.

Higher education and OST leaders also need to reach a shared understanding about defining the OST area of study as part of an existing field—such as education—or as a distinct discipline. Certificate programs are most typically constructed, for example, within colleges of education. It seems realistic, given the current configuration of OST as fairly low-paying and largely part-time work, to articulate OST coursework with other disciplines and fields, allowing students to be part of a 'career lattice,' with the ability and credentials to move into and out of OST to and from classroom teaching, youth work, social work, or other related careers. Yet whether OST courses and certificates live under one umbrella such as education, or are established as cross-disciplinary, may not need to be standardized, and can be designed depending on the particular institutions and programs.

Strong examples of OST-higher education partnerships are growing. Strategies are being developed, piloted, assessed, and tweaked; emerging partnerships can draw upon and learn from existing efforts. But the impetus to expand such efforts has to come from educators and leaders across sectors who are driven to mobilize every resource possible to support children in underfunded school districts and communities. Children and young people struggling to succeed despite poverty, language barriers, overcrowded classrooms, and associated obstacles most need out-of-school time programs to keep them safe, to create important supportive relationships, to help them realize their full potential, and make it through to high school graduation. By expanding opportunities for staffing programs with caring, capable, and skillful adults, we increase the likelihood that our children will grow into caring, capable, and skillful adults themselves.

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The Center for After-School Excellence at TASC is dedicated to ensuring that during the critical hours beyond the school day, young people are served by well-trained staff in high-quality after-school and summer programs. We work to achieve this goal by building a professional development system for the field, grounded in robust research and evaluation. The Center is part of The After-School Corp. (TASC), which is working in New York and the nation to change public policy, expand public funding, and demonstrate successful models so all kids from all backgrounds can have high-quality experiences beyond regular school hours that support their intellectual, creative and healthy development. www.tascorp.org