

Quality after-school and summer programs, popular with students, parents and educators alike and run by schools and/or non-profit organizations, offer children and youth experiences where they can learn and grow, in a safe, supervised setting. Over the past ten years, after-school programs have become more formal and organized, often serving as an anchor for community life and key contributor to student success. Current educational inequities in our society result in many disadvantaged children not having access to opportunities for cultural, social, athletic and academic enrichment. In fact, more than 15 million youth in America have no access to after-school opportunities. To respond to this problem, leaders of nine after-school intermediary organizations from cities and regions around the country have joined forces as a national coalition: the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS). The partners include:

- The After-School Corporation, New York City
- The After-School Institute, Baltimore
- After School Matters, Chicago
- Baltimore's Safe and Sound Campaign
- Bay Area Partnership for Children and Youth, California
- Boston After School and Beyond
- The DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation
- Providence After-School Alliance
- Prime Time Palm Beach County

The CBASS network represents longstanding partnerships with more than 600 community-based organizations representing a network of more than 600,000 youth, and the nation's largest school districts. With a relentless focus on ensuring that *all* kids have access to high-quality after-school, CBASS works to build public will and mobilize decision-makers to respond to the needs of youth and families. CBASS demands increased and sustained investments in programming. The collective scale and credibility of our work provide us with a platform to influence policymakers and practitioners across the nation.

Intermediaries Are Critical Partners in Success and Sustainability

CBASS partners are local after-school intermediaries who connect programs, schools and neighborhood organizations with policymakers and funding sources. Core functions include: brokering relationships, setting standards, convening local organizations; expanding services; improving program quality; strengthening and supporting the after-school workforce; providing research and evaluation; and promoting sustainability. The intermediary structure is itself an essential step in changing public policy to aid in the formation of a high quality, scalable after-school system.

HOW WE WORK

CBASS harnesses the collective expertise and resources of its partners and their networks to accomplish its work using a three-pronged strategy:

1. Engage policymakers, practitioners and leading stakeholders in developing policy recommendations and solutions.
2. Test the feasibility of policy and practice recommendations and disseminate the findings and tools for replication.
3. Deliver technical assistance to jurisdictions building after-school systems.

WHAT WE DO

Influence Policy: Engage policymakers, practitioners and leading stakeholders in developing policy recommendations and solutions.

CBASS policy work is grounded in the five focus areas described below.

1. Strengthen federal policy

CBASS promotes recommendations and implements a policy agenda to strengthen the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to support core principles of local flexibility, increased resources, investments in systems-building activities, reasonable accountability measures, programming for older youth and school-community partnerships. Activities include: drafting legislative language for ESEA reauthorization, responding to budget proposals, and issuing letters with broad support from the after-school community detailing our policy principles.

2. Establish a core set of quality measures

CBASS is creating a set of common measures for assessing program success, holding providers accountable to quality and improving sustainability. As an outgrowth of two national convenings, CBASS partners agreed to adopt and publicly report against a shared set of measures (e.g., school attendance, youth opportunities for activity choice). The Forum for Youth Investment featured CBASS data collection and measures work in their publication: *Speaking in One Voice: Toward Common Measures for OST Programs and Systems*. CBASS partners are tracking progress against the selected measures and examining implementation strategies across jurisdictions.

3. Strengthen connections between in-school and out-of-school learning

Through national partnerships, convenings and policy work, CBASS is working to ensure that expanded learning opportunities incorporate the best youth developmental elements of after-school. Activities include:

- Creating a resolution that called for the U.S. Conference of Mayors to increase investments in full-day learning strategies.
- Leading a national policy discussion about how to reform schools through expanded learning time at the National Press Club, featuring U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.
- Partnering with Learning Point Associates and the C.S. Mott Foundation, in publishing a series of issue briefs on expanded learning time and working with the education reform community to embrace expanded learning opportunities as an effective and cost-efficient school improvement strategy.
- Commenting on the proposed guidelines for Race to the Top, Invest in What Works and Innovation, requesting:

- Incentives for schools to harness the power of local community-based organizations (CBOs) in turnaround strategies.
- Recognition of the broad youth developmental needs of students and avoidance of extended school day.
- Programming that includes a challenging blend of learning experiences that stimulate students academically, physically, socially and creatively.
- Collaborative models that benefit from the inclusion of school and CBO staff, parents and student leaders.

4. Increase investments in high-quality programming for high school students

CBASS is working to increase resources and improve the design of high school after-school programs in order to help increase the graduation rates of urban youth. With support from the C.S. Mott Foundation, CBASS partners launched the *Building Bridges* initiative designed to create awareness and support for aligning after-school with high school reform strategies. Following two national convenings, CBASS is advancing this work by 1) advocating for policy change at the federal level to increase investments and demand for high-quality models, 2) expanding the proven models by tapping into existing public funding streams, and 3) bringing together stakeholders in multiple cities to implement action plans to advance high school reform through alignment with after-school.

5. Increase delivery of high-quality STEM in after-school

The nature of after-school programming – a less-formal structure than the traditional school day, with low student-to-staff ratios; activities that promote exploration and discovery in and out of the classroom; and exposure to positive role models – makes it an ideal setting for igniting students’ interest in science and science-related careers. Through demonstration projects, and documentation and dissemination of promising systemic strategies taking place in communities across the country, CBASS proposes to change attitudes about where kids can learn science, promote the infusion of robust ISE experiences in after-school programs, and ultimately increase engagement of young people in lifelong science learning and possibly the pursuit of science-related careers.

Build Quality Practice: Test the feasibility of policy and practice recommendations and disseminate the findings and tools for replication.

High school apprenticeships. An adaptation of the nationally-acclaimed Chicago apprenticeship program led by After School Matters (ASM), CBASS piloted the After-School Apprenticeship Program (ASAP). ASAP provides teens with opportunities to gain exposure to careers and master new skills by working with younger students as coaches, umpires, lifeguards and arts instructors. Over the two years, 187 youth in New York, Providence and Boston have completed sports or arts-themed apprenticeships and internships. TASC completed a cross-city evaluation of the ASAP initiative showing that the model is a promising strategy to engage youth, has a positive impact on identity development and prepares participants for college and career success.

Bringing STEM to scale in after-school. CBASS is piloting two initiatives to advance high-quality STEM practice in after-school: 1) *Frontiers in Urban Science Education (FUSE)*, an adaptation in the Bay Area and Providence of The After-School Corporation’s (TASC) *Frontiers in Urban Science Education (FUSE)* strategy to engage policy leaders and front-line staff in a citywide STEM strategy. 2) *Everyday Explorers*, a program that engages 87 AmeriCorps members in leading STEM activities and service projects in after-school programs in New York, Boston and Providence.

Deliver technical assistance: Disseminate promising practice and develop strategies to support jurisdictions in building after-school systems.

With growing interest from the field, CBASS is broadly communicating its interest and ability to advise jurisdictions in their systems-building efforts and disseminate technical assistance project results. Recognizing that every jurisdiction has a rich and varied local context, technical assistance activities are customized for each jurisdiction based upon policy context, assets and needs. Activities may include field research, public funding analysis, interviews with stakeholders, site visits and/or facilitation of city-wide planning meetings. For each locality, CBASS recommends a strategy for developing a system of comprehensive after-school services. The strategy is built on local resources, informed by best practices in the OST field, responsive to the needs of children and youth, and sustainable largely with public funds. Examples of three projects are outlined below.

New Orleans, LA

Informed by field interviews and knowledge of promising practices, CBASS designed a strategy for the Afterschool Partnership for Greater New Orleans (the Partnership) to expand the availability and quality of enriching activities in the after-school hours. Modeled after the quality improvement strategy of Prime Time Palm Beach County, the Partnership is implementing CBASS's recommendation to serve as a clearinghouse and connector of enhancement services for school- and community-based programs.

Racine, WI

CBASS facilitated a county-wide planning session in partnership with the Mayor's office and produced a strategic plan. The task force adopted the recommended strategies to coordinate fragmented services by building a county-wide system that connects existing quality programs operated by the school district, recreation department, and faith-based and community based organizations.

Corporation for Public Broadcasting

CBASS is serving as a national outreach partner in the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Ready to Learn project. In this role, CBASS will provide strategic advice and technical assistance to CPB-PBS partners related to best approaches to implement media properties in after-school programs.

SUPPORTERS

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