

Learning Partnerships in Out-of-School Time

A Literature Review

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Learning in Communities / Providence

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TO: Learning in Communities / Providence Leaders
FROM: RI KIDS COUNT and Community Matters
DATE: October 2, 2003
RE: Learning Partnerships in Out-of-School Time

This memo details key lessons and promising practices from around the country in the development of learning partnerships in out-of-school time (OST). It is a companion to the PowerPoint slide deck that follows.

Education and Learning in the Out-of-School Hours

Schools, families, and communities today are struggling to educate students to the standards that the public and the 21st century workforce demand of them. At the same time, recent polls and research clearly show that parents want their children engaged in constructive learning activity when they are not in school, that the public enthusiastically supports learning in after school, and that out-of-school time programs offer a wealth of learning opportunities.¹ These factors, coupled with the fact that students are in school for only 20% of their waking hours, have led many to the conclusion that out-of-school time programs can and should play a significant role in meeting the educational and youth development challenges facing our nation.

In fact, over the past several years, a fairly broad consensus has emerged in the OST community and the public at large that OST programming should promote learning, in some form, among its participants. There is also agreement that learning taking place after-school should be fun, engaging, and distinct from the academic work that takes place during the regular school day.²

Nevertheless, there remains much debate about the precise role that learning and academics should play in the out of school hours. While few advocate that no academic work of any kind take place, and few endorse a steady, unremitting diet of academics alone, there is a broad spectrum of views on this question. Families, students, educators and OST program providers across the country seek to understand and achieve the proper balance of academic support and other forms of learning for children and youth in the out-of-school hours.

There is another important reason to examine the role of learning when children are not in school. Out-of-school time programs frequently have the opportunity to engage students in ways that schools are ill equipped to do. OST programs often have a “learner-centered” culture and a smaller, less bureaucratic structure, which allow them to engage students in a way that schools cannot. Their broad mandate and program flexibility allow them to teach to a range of intelligences and learning styles.³ Additionally, while arts, sports, and cultural programming have been crowded out of many school schedules by the pressure to perform on standardized tests, these are areas in which out-of-school time programs can excel. In short, out-of-school

¹ Afterschool Alliance

² Gil Noam, Gina Biancarosa and Nadine Dechausay, *Learning Beyond School: Developing the Field of After-School Education*, Cambridge, MA: Program in Afterschool Education and Research, Harvard University, 2002. http://icommons.harvard.edu/%7Egse-h281/syllabus/Learning_Paper_1.3.pdf, p. 12.

³ Beth Miller, *Critical Hours*, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, 2003. <http://www.nmefdn.org/CriticalHours.htm>, p. 15-24.

time programs are ideally suited to fill a significant void in children's education and development.

There is a growing movement to link after-school learning to in-school learning. This happens in many programs through homework help sessions. It can also be done through the intentional alignment of OST curricula with school programming, so that the two complement one another. Care must be taken to ensure that out-of-school programming is not simply adding a set of school-like academic tasks. Nearly all parties agree that an after-school environment rich in learning opportunities should *not* be an extension of the academic school day.

A growing body of literature and analysis encourages the idea of blurring the boundaries between schools, OST programs, families and other supports and resources for learning and development. In this view, schools are regarded as the "anchor points of a learning continuum," with which out-of-school time programs and other community assets can be aligned and mutually reinforcing.⁴

Learning is OST is important for another reason. Positive out-of-school learning experiences have the potential to alter a child's approach to learning in general, and schooling in particular. Improved test scores, grades, and school attendance are all reported by leading programs backed by experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation designs.⁵ The most effective OST programs are those which infuse in children a passion for, and confidence about, their capacity to be learners. When everything works as it should, children who have had such an experience are able to bring this approach to other areas of their lives, including their work in school.

Finally, it should be noted that this entire conversation – an examination of the role of learning in out-of-school programs – is a new one in the U.S. The past several years have produced a large volume of new research- and practice-based analyses discussing the educational benefits of out-of-school time programs and learning in OST. This outpouring of interest is major change in the history of out-of-school programs. Good OST programs have long been a place for caring, community and connection, factors which often can create a good learning environment. With few exceptions, however, until very recently, OST programs have done little to define or frame their work as educational or focused especially on learning.⁶ This is not to suggest that current OST practitioners would wish to cede -- to schools, or families, or any other venue – their important role of providing a positive learning environment. To the contrary, many in the OST field think – with fairly good evidence to support their belief – that the work they do in their OST settings can play a critical role in the successful learning of children and youth.

⁴ Karen Pittman, Nicole Yohalem, and Joel Tolman, "When, Where, What, and How Youth Learn: Blurring School and Community Boundaries," Issue Editors Notes, *New Directions for Youth Development, Spring 2003*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003. <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/papers/newdirsp03notes.pdf>

⁵ For one such example among many, see "Promoting Learning and School Attendance Through After-school Programs: Student-level Changes in Education Performance Across TASC's First Three Years," Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, October 2002.

<http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/Year%203%20Follow%20Up%20Executive%20SummaryWEB.pdf>

⁶ Robert Halpern, "A Different Kind of Child Development Institution: The History of After-School Programs for Low-Income Children." Erikson Institute for Graduate Study in Child Development. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002.

Bridging: Building Connections with Schools

Bridging refers to the establishment of clear communication and alignment between an out-of-school time program and the school or schools that serve its children.⁷ Creating bridges between programs and schools allows all of the adults working with a child to communicate and best support his or her academic, social and emotional development. The rationale for bridging is that after-school workers who clearly understand the content and culture of schools – and the experience of the children in school -- will better be able to support student learning. Reciprocally, teachers who understand the purposes and effects of OST programs, and who work with OST staff regularly, will feel positively supported, and will treat the OST program as a valued learning resource for students.⁸

Gil Noam and his colleagues at Harvard Graduate School of Education's Program in Afterschool Education and Research (PAER) have defined four types of bridging between schools and after-school programs, ranging from programs that have little contact with school to those with close alignment and frequent, well-coordinated communication.⁹

- **Self-Contained** programs make little or no effort to collaborate with schools around learning goals. Programs are usually either “second school” type programs that develop and use their own curricula, or specialty themed programs such as arts or sports. In many cases, programs view schools as dysfunctional, threatening or unnecessary to their operation, and therefore eschew collaboration.
- **Associated** programs reserve a role for school engagement in their mission, but do not have a strong connection to schools. Often these programs have reached out to schools, but many have found it difficult to establish and maintain strong school partnerships. The majority of OST community-based programs fall into this category.
- **Coordinated** programs maintain consistent connections to one or more schools. Often these programs have the same spirit of collaboration as associated programs, but a full-time director has an ongoing presence in the school, and has established lines of frequent communication.
- **Integrated** programs have a “systemic” and “organizational” relationship with the schools. Each party sees the other as a key partner in the education of the students they serve. After-school directors are usually part of the school team and facilitate communication between in-school and out-of-school staff about students and curricula. Programs and schools with integrated bridging relationships have integrated their core philosophies and missions as well.

The **San Francisco Beacons Initiative** is a community schools model that transforms public schools into “neighborhood centers of opportunity.” Through these public/private

⁷ Bridging can also strengthen the connection between families and OST programs. This paper explores the school-OST connection in greater depth, but the authors recognize the importance of strong home-school-OST ties.

⁸ Miller, p. 74-75

⁹ Noam et al, p. 12-28.

partnerships, community agencies and social service providers enter the school building and work with schools to provide educational opportunities, social services, and other activities to promote healthy development of youth, families and communities. Beacon Centers seek to bring neighborhoods together by empowering them to coordinate the services supports and opportunities the foster development.

Beacon Centers are located in schools, but they are managed by a local community-based organization to ensure that the center is responsive to the needs of the particular community where it is located. Centers provide activities in five core areas: educational supports, arts and recreation, career development, leadership development, and health/mental health services.

Unifying a variety of services in the same building creates bridging opportunities among staff from the school and other education and social service providers. For example, teachers can easily talk to OST staff about a student's progress completing homework, confer with social workers about students' family situations, or touch base with any of the other providers present at the center. The centers also create greater home-school linkage by offering adult programming that draws parents to the school as well.¹⁰

Challenges to Bridging:

- **School personnel do not understand the role of OST.** School personnel often do not fully comprehend the value of OST and do not believe that programs are making a difference in student learning.
 - Principals often view after-school programs as either an extension of the school day or a time filling “add-on” that has little to do with learning.
 - Most bridging relationships are the result of outreach from the OST program to the school. Schools often require extra support and encouragement to become active and equal partners.
- **Few OST staff have hours that overlap with the school day, which impedes communication with school personnel.**
- **High OST staff turnover rates make relationships between school and OST personnel difficult to create and maintain.**
- **Little knowledge of bridging best practices has been shared or disseminated within the OST community.**

Strategies Leading to Successful Bridging:

¹⁰ Karen E. Walker & Amy J.A. Arbretton, *Working Together to Build Beacon Centers in San Francisco*, Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 2001. www.ppv.org/pdf/files/beacons.pdf. See also the website for the Richmond Village Beacon www.ppv.org/pdf/files/beacons.pdf

- A full-time after-school director working in the school can build relationships with teachers, attend cluster meetings, and promote reciprocal communication between programs.

At the **Jackson-Mann School** in Boston's Brighton neighborhood, the full-time after-school director has the absolute support of the principal. She knows the teachers well and invites them to recommend areas of additional support for specific children. A full 90% of teachers have taken her up on this offer to coordinate assistance.¹¹

- Hiring in-school staff to work in the OST program, either teachers or paraprofessionals, infuses a wealth of school knowledge into the OST program's planning capacity.
- OST programs provide resources to the school during the school day.

San Diego's **6-to-6 Extended School Day** program builds bridges by placing its staff in schools to support teachers. After-school staff members arrive one hour before the end of the school day to support the teachers whose rooms the program uses. While this program was begun as an incentive for teachers to volunteer their classrooms for the after-school program, it has the additional consequence of creating a natural link between the staff of the two programs.¹²

As OST programs seek to become more involved in students' learning and are held accountable for increasingly rigorous results from funders and other stakeholders, the establishment of successful bridging relationships becomes pivotal to their success. Building a bridging relationship takes a great deal of work on the part of a program director, but these efforts yield large rewards in terms of increased ability to support the academic and social growth of program participants.

Homework

Homework completion/tutoring is the most common program element present in after-school programs. Parents and teachers alike place a very high priority on it. Nearly all programs offer time for students to receive help with homework.¹³ Again, Noam and his colleagues define a typology for strategies that after-school programs use to support student learning as they support homework.

Approaches to Homework:

- **Homework as Task Completion.** Some programs treat homework primarily as a task to be done. It stands alone, with little connection to any other program element in the after-school program. Noam and his colleagues found that many otherwise high quality after-

¹¹ Noam et al, p. 18.

¹² Deborah Ferrin and Steven Amick, "San Diego's 6-to-6: A Community's Commitment to Out-Of-School Time," *New Directions in Youth Development*, Gil Noam and Beth Miller (eds.), No. 94, Summer 2002, p. 109-117.

¹³ In 2002, 96% of programs in Boston offered homework help, up from 80% in 1998. Noam et al, p. 30.

school programs fall into this category, having an aloof attitude towards homework.

- **Homework as an Opportunity for Relationship Building:** Many programs view homework time as an opportunity for staff to offer students mentorship and guidance as well as help completing their homework. The mentorship helps students build relationships with adults and encourages them to focus on completing high quality assignments. Programs with the greatest success cluster students in small groups, and with the same students and staff, during every session. Students who finish their homework can engage in another educational activity such as reading or writing.
- **Homework as a Springboard to Enrichment:** Some programs not only support students on the completion of their homework, but also engage them in activities which extend the learning beyond the assignment. One-on-one tutoring on topics related to the subject of the homework is often a feature of this type of programming. Reference materials may be available for students to do research beyond the scope of their assignment.

The **Boys and Girls Club of America** uses a “Power Hour” curriculum to support students’ homework completion and engage them in variety of learning tasks. Staff actively assist students in completing their homework. Students work in groups with volunteer tutors. When they have completed their homework they work on enrichment activities called Power Pages. An incentive system called Power Points -- redeemable for prizes -- encourages engagement and active participation in Power Hour activities.¹⁴

Challenges in Homework Support:

- **Using Volunteers:** Many programs use volunteers, particularly college students, to provide homework support. However, the cost – in time and money – of adequately training volunteers on content, behavior management and pedagogical techniques can strain the resources of many programs.
- **Homework Help vs. Tutoring:** Programs must be clear whether the mission of their homework time is to complete homework or to tutor students to build understanding. Parents often demand completion of assignments, yet many programs are more inclined to offer tutoring to ensure a deep understanding of the topic. The difference between these is subtle, but one about which both programs and staff must be clear.
- **Lack of resources:** Many programs struggle to hire and retain qualified staff with a good understanding of homework content areas. Often, programs cannot afford supplementary materials, or lack access to technology. Such constraints severely affect homework help.

Strategies for Providing Successful Homework Help:¹⁵

¹⁴ Noam et al, 34.

¹⁵ All recommendations from Noam 37-43, except where otherwise cited.

- Create rituals around homework. Be consistent, offering similar space, time, environment, partners, expectations, and staff support for every session.
- Create a dedicated, customizable and appropriate space. Homework space should provide a variety of options appropriate to the activity, such as comfortable chairs for reading, individual desks for solitary work, tables for group work, etc.
- Wait a while before you start. Young people often need a break from academic work right after school. Many programs have found that homework time is most productive if it is not the first part of the afternoon.¹⁶
- Allot a developmentally appropriate amount of time to homework. A guideline is the “Ten Minute Rule” where the ideal amount time for homework is the child’s grade multiplied by 10 minutes.¹⁷
- Communicate about students’ homework with their parents and teachers.
- Create staff buy-in. If the staff views homework time as an imposition on the program they will create a negative atmosphere around it.
 - Schoolteachers bring a wealth of curricular knowledge, but may need help creating an atmosphere that differs from school, and helps children transition.
 - Youth development workers may need help understanding how to balance homework with physical, social, and emotional learning.
- Empower staff to connect homework to enriching curricula that help students to understand ideas present in homework, in engaging and exciting ways. For example, use a science kit that explores the same concept as a worksheet students are working on.
- Make sure young people understand that doing your homework helps them do better in school! Students often do not understand that homework influences their grades.

Learning Curricula

Based on extensive provider interviews, Noam and his colleagues generated a list of common themes about the styles of learning best suited for OST programming. While programs take a wide variety of approaches to learning, the following ideas ran through the responses of many of his research subjects.

Learning at OST program should:

- Focus on exploratory experiences and be relevant to student’s lives.
- Engage and capture children’s imagination.
- Teach to a broad spectrum of learning styles.¹⁸
- Connect to “basic skill” (math, reading) development and “soft-skill” (teamwork, leadership) development.¹⁹
- Acknowledge student’s cognitive, moral, spiritual, physical, social, and emotional needs.

¹⁶ Miller, 74.

¹⁷ Harris M. Cooper, “Homework for All -- in Moderation.” *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 58, No. 7, p. 37.

¹⁸ Howard Gardner’s “Multiple Intelligences Theory” was frequently cited.

¹⁹ For more info see Richard Murnane and Frank Levy, *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, Free Press, 1996. The authors explain the skills necessary for students to learn to succeed in the modern workplace -- hard skills such as math and reading, and soft skills such as teamwork and problem solving.

Even within these parameters, there exists a broad range of curricular and learning options that after-school programs are successfully using. Below is a discussion of several approaches and types of curricula that have been successful around the nation. OST curricula are enormously creative and often do not fall neatly into categories or boxes. For that reason, many programs will fall into several of the categories listed below.

Project-Based Learning

Many after-school programs have successfully engaged students in learning in the out-of-school hours using “project-based learning,” through which students work as a team over a period of time to create a final product of meaning and significance. This enables a program to develop each of the desired attributes of learning in out-of-school time, as listed above. A project-based approach can be particularly successful with students who are not engaged by the teaching techniques traditionally used in schools. It shows students that learning can be interesting. By working with aspects of intelligence, such as creativity and teamwork, that are not typically valued highly in the school environment, project-based learning can help students who may not be successful in schools to feel “intelligent.”

Project-based learning is a term that escapes precise definition. Steve Seidel and Laura Aryeh of Harvard’s Project Zero cite these most common attributes:²⁰

- A series of activities with a sustained focus, and outcomes of significance
- A group effort with implications beyond the program
- Learning goals that embrace academic, social, and meta-cognitive dimensions
- On-going assessment and opportunities for feedback

The best project-based curricula connect students’ hands and minds. Students learn by doing, through their experiences. This is typically more engaging than a “transmission” model of learning. The experiential aspect of their work, coupled with a meaningful final product, helps students understand the relevance of their work, connect more deeply to its content, and retain the knowledge that they acquire.

A project-based approach allows students to build valuable “real-world” skills needed for success in the modern workplace. These include: sustained work on a project over time, teamwork and collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking, and attention to both the work process and the final product.^{21, 22}

Project-based learning has been adopted by many of the leading advocates, researchers, and practitioners in the out-of-school time sector as the way the field can best incorporate learning. It achieves real impact for young people while respecting a core tenet of the field: that OST programming should nurture the growth of the whole child. Some sample projects used in after-school programs have included: studying the history and purpose of museums and then creating

²⁰ Steve Seidel and Laura Aryeh, *Project-Based and Experiential Learning in After-School Programming*, Cambridge, MA: Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, September 2002, p. 12.

²¹ See Murname and Levy for a discussion of these skills.

²² Seidel and Aryeh, 11.

a museum exhibit; studying songs before writing and performing one's own; exploring principles of buoyancy and then having a boat race.²³

Apprenticeships

Several after-school programs have used “apprenticeships,” a particular form of project-based learning, where adult *experts* work with and guide young *apprentices* in learning the skills and terms of a complicated endeavor. Young people crave a sense of mastery and lack regular opportunities to develop it. By working with an experienced adult who can “scaffold” the activity for learners and create supported situations for them to try new things, young people can develop skills incrementally. The adult experts offer on-going supervision, and can take over particularly challenging parts of a task when necessary. Through this process, young people often identify with the area of study, find motivation toward greater mastery, and connect their learning to a “possible future.”²⁴

The cornerstone of **Citizen Schools**, an after-school program with 20 sites around the nation, is its apprenticeship program.²⁵ They recruit adult volunteers from the community to teach 9-14 year-olds about a topic in which they have passion and expertise. The volunteers, called Citizen Teachers, work with staff to design and teach a 10-week curriculum on a topic of their choosing. All apprenticeships end in a “WOW,” a final product, performance, or presentation where students demonstrate their new found mastery of a subject. Some past WOWs involved conducting mock-trials at a Federal Courthouse, building a community garden, and designing a website for a local hair salon.

Through the apprenticeships, students are exposed to career options, and often change their career goals. Because of Citizen Schools’ widespread and successful mock trial program, a disproportionate number of students express a desire to become lawyers. Additionally, the program builds social capital among youth and adults who likely would not otherwise come in contact with each other.²⁶

Gallery 37, which serves over 4,000 youth in Chicago, is a job training program where young people between the ages of 14 and 21 earn a paycheck while creating visual, literary, culinary, performing and graphic art under the direction of professional artists. This program provides students with enriching and engaging employment that can help them advance their career goals. The program has spawned two offshoots, Technology 37 and Sports 37, which are part of After-School Matters, an initiative of the City of Chicago heavily supported by Maggie Daley, the wife of Mayor Richard Daley.²⁷

²³ Ibid, 13.

²⁴ Charles E. Schlegel, *Bridging Difference: Interaction and Learning Through Civic Work*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2003, p. 9-14.

²⁵ www.citizenschools.org

²⁶ Schlegel, p 159-164. Social capital building through Citizen Schools apprenticeships is the focus of Charles Schlegel’s recent doctoral dissertation at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

²⁷ Renae Ogletree, Tony Bell, Natasha K. Smith, “Positive Youth Development Initiatives in Chicago,” *New Directions in Youth Development*, Gil Noam and Beth Miller (eds.) No. 94, Summer 2002, p. 50-52. See also, www.gallery37.org

Literacy

Literacy is the perhaps the most important hurdle a young person must clear on the path to becoming a successful student and worker. After-school programs have increasingly adopted a literacy focus because of the number of students who fail to become strong readers. This focus is a relatively new one, and the field does not have a unified view of what literacy in the out-of-school hours should look like. OST programs are exploring a variety of activities as they support schools in the challenge of creating a universally literate population.

Among the promising practices after-school programs are using to promote literacy are:²⁸

- **Independent reading.** Independent reading is usually unstructured. Some students read during spare moments in the program. Others are assigned to read after their homework has been completed. These assignments can be met with varying degrees of responsiveness from students. Where reading is assigned, students respond well when staff choose literature that connects to children's daily lives. A commitment to supporting and respecting any reading activities that children choose to engage in increases the impact of independent reading activity.
- **Attention to vocabulary and language** through the program can boost literacy and make language fun. Students play word games such as Boggle, Scrabble, and Mad Libs. Staff designate a word of the day, post riddles on the wall, or compare words in different languages to help students build facility with language.
- **Book groups** are increasingly common, though they are a difficult activity to implement well. Students often have varying levels of engagement with the literature and many staff members have little experience leading these discussions. Promising practices in this area include having students read aloud, write, draw, and act out stories. Selecting literature that is culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate is critical to the success and engagement of students in this activity. Literature choices may be tied to other program activities such as field trips or arts and crafts.
- **Connecting literacy and the arts.** Some programs use song writing, cartoons, photography, or another art forms as a pathway to improving literacy.
- **Create a comforting environment** that is flexible and suitable for the activities at hand. For example, child-directed reading activities can be held in "cozy corners" or "reading lofts."

Afterschool KidzLit is a literacy curriculum for students K-8 designed by the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland in partnership with the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.²⁹ Students read books and engage in activities detailed in the teacher's guides. Through the program they gain a love and understanding for literature by role-playing, writing,

²⁸ Julie Spielberger and Robert Halpern, *The Role of After-School Programs in Children's Literacy Development*, Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2002.

²⁹ http://www.kidzafterschool.org/kidzlit/kidzlit_program.html

creating music and art, even playing physically active games while they build vocabulary, learn discussion skills, gain insight into different cultures, and connect with their own community. Extensive professional development opportunities for staff, including on-site training and well-documented manuals, are available for this curriculum.

Math, Science, and Technology

Across the country, after-school programs have turned their attention to building students' quantitative and analytic skills to support students in these crucial areas. Many of the strategies used to deliver high quality literacy programming in the out-of-school hours carry over for math and science instruction as well. As often as possible, references to math and science should be both formal and informal, and woven throughout the curriculum.

Math education in out-of-school time should be “relevant, appealing and useful” both in and out of school.³⁰ Often, project-based curricula, where the math is a means to an end rather than an end itself, helps children build math skills while avoiding the didacticism that is common during in-school math classes.

In 2001, **Citizen Schools** apprentices embarked on a *Data Music eXperience*, where they conducted a marketing survey for local record stores of children and youth in the neighborhood around their school. They tabulated the survey results and presented their findings to the stores, which then reported an increase in sales as a result of the student analysis.

Many situations lend themselves naturally to math problems, such as voting on activities and dividing supplies among groups. Taking advantage of these “teachable moments” to encourage students to perform mental (or written) math helps students develop skills, confidence, and a sense of identity as mathematicians. Staff should explain the ways they use math in their daily lives and encourage students to think mathematically outside of school and the program.

Innovative science education and quality OST programs often share a similar pedagogical approach. Both seek to engage students in hands-on activities that allow them to make their own discoveries. Many museums and science centers have interactive kits that after-school programs can use to build science curricula around. Programs have also successfully used an interdisciplinary approach to science in which students write stories and create artwork about the scientific topic they are studying.

The **Museum of Science** in Boston works with programs to deepen their science curricula and ensure the successful teaching of science. For programs that do not have a dedicated space, they encourage the use of science kits that the museum provides, where all material can be packed into the box at the end of the activity. Other programs set up a science corner with experiments, or a terrarium where students can observe natural phenomena during unstructured activity times. The museum also encourages programs to help students develop scientific thought processes such as generating hypotheses and making observations through stories.³¹

³⁰ Marlene Kliman, *Making Math Meaningful Outside of School*, Cambridge, MA: TERC, 2002, p. 3.

³¹ Interview with Maria Cabrera, Museum of Science, Boston, by phone, September 22, 2003.

Some out-of-school time programs are at the forefront of the national effort to close the digital divide. Schools that serve low-income students rarely offer technology education sufficient to ensure that students are computer literate when they enter higher education or the workforce. This places students who do not own a computer at a distinct disadvantage. OST programs are a key venue to providing the experience and training in technology that will open high tech opportunities to low-income youth. Additionally, computers and technology can be a great tool for programs to use in attracting students, promoting engagement in activities, or empowering them to advocate for community change.

The **Global Action Project (GAP)** and the **Educational Video Center (EVC)** in New York City empower teens to create change in their communities through videography and media literacy training.³² Both programs work with high school aged youth enabling them to use technology to express themselves and bring youth voices to the attention of the adult world. They also have a strong commitment to developing the skills and leadership qualities of youth. GAP helps graduates find jobs as apprentices to professional filmmakers, and EVC strengthens the critical thinking and public speaking ability of its youth filmmakers.

Both programs serve youth who are often underrepresented in mainstream media. EVC is housed at an alternative public high school and it is a credit-granting program for students, many of whom struggle academically in their schools. One of GAP's programs works specifically with refugee youth in New York, and another pairs youth from New York with youth filmmakers from around the globe to make documentaries about cultural conflicts in Jerusalem, Croatia, Northern Ireland and other international locations. The films by the youth of these two programs are highly regarded by adults, have been shown on all three major American television networks, and have been screened at the Sundance Film Festival.

Cultural Programming

OST activities have historically been a strong source of cultural education for youth. This has become truer as budget cuts and testing pressures have forced many schools to cut back on funding for the arts. Strong arts and cultural programming can support the social, emotional, and intellectual development of children. It can provide them access to meaningful mentorship and interaction with adults. The act of performing or presenting their work boosts confidence and connects students to their communities. Engagement in the arts has been shown to improve students' engagement in school, leading to higher academic performance and test scores.³³

Sports

³² Tolman, J., & Pittman, K., with B. Cervone, K. Cushman, L. Rowley, S. Kinkade, J. Phillips, & S. Duque. (2001). *Youth Acts, Community Impacts: Stories of Youth Engagement with Real Results*. Community & Youth Development Series, Volume 7. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation, <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/cydseriesyouthacts.pdf>, p. 65-71. <http://www.global-action.org/> and <http://www.evc.org/>

³³ Boston After-School for All Partnership, *Strategies for Success: Strengthening Learning in Out-of-School Time*, Boston, MA: Boston After-School for All Partnership, June 2003.

In the last decade, a new type of sports program that links athletic success to academic and life success has arisen. Sports teach students life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. The programs strive to help students strengthen their use of these positive qualities on the field or the court and in their academic and school lives.

The **America Scores** program uses soccer to promote literacy and life skills. Scores programs exist in eight cities, and several regions around the nation, including New England Scores, with two more sites scheduled to launch soon. The program helps students use the teamwork and leadership skills they learn on the soccer field to support each other in the classroom as poets, authors, and volunteers in local community service efforts. The program boosts students' confidence, allowing them to excel on the soccer field, in poetry slams, and in volunteer activity throughout their communities.

Youth Development & Youth Leadership

Research has increasingly shown the youth engaged in learning or leadership activities outside of school perform better inside school as well. Positive youth development leads to academic success. The youth development approach, stressing the capacity, responsibility, and leadership of youth, has been increasingly adopted by OST providers, including many of those profiled above, as a framework around which to structure programming. For a more in-depth discussion of how these types of programs impact youth and contribute to learning, please see the Community Matters paper and slide deck, *Positive Youth Development: A Literature Review*, August 2003.³⁴

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