



History of the AfterZone

The research and discussions preceding PASA's creation revealed that Providence's middle school youth lacked sufficient opportunities for high quality learning experiences after school. As a result, PASA and its partners focused initial efforts on building a network of after-school zones – or AfterZones – that serve as "[neighborhood campuses](#)." AfterZone programs are centered around communities where youth live and go to school, and where services are most concentrated.

The AfterZone initiative was unveiled at a forum in May 2005. Representatives from five Providence areas, later to become formalized governance bodies called Coordinating Councils, learned about the proposed design of the AfterZone and discussed how their neighborhoods could create a "neighborhood campus" linked with nearby middle schools. The five groups completed applications outlining their readiness to become a campus in the AfterZone, incorporating input from non-profit organizations, middle schools, libraries, recreation centers, other community groups and families.

Throughout mid-2005, it became clear that two neighborhoods were further along in their planning and were ready to plan, develop, and implement the first two AfterZone campuses. Members of the newly formed Coordinating Councils worked together to further define the AfterZone model, create memorandums of understanding and operational guidelines for PASA and key partners, strategize about how best to build and launch their AfterZone locations, and hire coordinating staff. After leading a four-week pilot project in fall 2005, the first two AfterZone campuses in Olneyville and the West End/Upper South Providence launched in January 2006.

The enthusiasm of these teams led to the formation of other AfterZone Coordinating Councils – using the template created by the first two groups – and they began their pilot programs on the East Side in spring 2006 and in the North End and South Side that fall. Since then, the AfterZone has grown to work with seven anchor schools and has been consolidated to three citywide AfterZone locations: Olneyville, North End/East Side, and West End/South Side.

Securing Youth Engagement: The AfterZone Brand



In order to reach the youth most in need, the AfterZone needed a strong brand—a complete identity for after-school, one with personality, voice and style that appealed directly to middle school youth.



For help conceptualizing the AfterZone's "social brand," PASA enlisted [Rescue Social Change Group](#), a progressive, youth-focused social marketing firm. By asking youth who attended after-school programming, and more importantly, those who did not, what they wanted from programming, a strategy was developed: to distinguish programming from the school day and to tailor programs to the identities of middle school youth, while having the AfterZone embody an image that fuses Latino and urban hip-hop cultures. Even the term "AfterZone" was coined through student input.

In creating AfterZone promotional material, youth voices were prominent in selecting images of youth in action: dancing, drawing, engaged.

The goal of this work was to create a new image for after-school programs, creating something youth would choose to participate in. After all, youth *are* the AfterZone.

The AfterZone "brand promise" focuses on helping youth be more independent, socially mature and culturally adept. Beyond simply creating an image, however, PASA's after-school program providers deliver on that brand promise by creating programming that meets students' needs, treats them like the maturing adolescents they are, provides voice and choice, and gives them independence within a structure of caring, supportive adults.

Refining the Model

Meeting biannually since late 2006, a group of committed Coordinating Council members has helped refine policies and strategies and shape key decisions, including the development of the current AfterZone calendar, the AfterZone program grant process, and the launch of a four-week summer AfterZone.

In the spring of 2007, PASA began to explore a "site management agency" model that would allow a community-based organization to assume the day-to-day operation of the AfterZone in participating middle schools. PASA now has four successful partnerships funded with 21st Century CLC funds through the Rhode Island Department of Education:

- John Hope Settlement House/Bridgham Middle School
- Providence Housing Authority/Perry Middle School
- West End Community Center/Gilbert Stuart Middle School
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence/Roger Williams Middle School

PASA continues to work closely with the AfterZone Site Management Agencies to create standardized practices, protocols and procedures while allowing the unique culture and flavor of each of the partnerships to emerge and flourish.