



Building an Expanded Learning System for High School Aged Youth in Providence

Infrastructure Design Plan Overview

A CALL FOR ACTION

In 2007, Mayor Cicilline invited planning proposals to design a high school system of after-school programming for Providence, as an extension and complement to the already successful middle school system facilitated by the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) and its city and community partners. The planning team selected, The Urban Social Empowerment (USE) Collective, was comprised of youth-adult pairs from ten nonprofit organizations. What follows is an overview of their final vision and plan that the Mayor and PASA have approved for development and implementation.

THE PROVIDENCE HUB – OVERVIEW

The Providence Hub is an efficient system that lets youth know what's out there and how to connect to it. We envision youth entering high school with an orientation and tour of the Hub and a city ID—their passport to a teen shuttle system, bikes, libraries, jobs, events, hangout spaces and programs throughout the city. We envision kiosks and free internet access throughout the city where youth can find information to meet their needs, and those of friends and family. We envision businesses, community organizations, high schools, the city and members of the community invested in supporting and encouraging youth to grow and explore. We envision opportunity and connection, the creation of a fertile soil for youth engagement in extended learning, and support for the growth of a rich and vibrant youth-adult partnership in the city.

Youth Outcomes

- 1) Young people have increased engagement in their own education in and out of school and are empowered to craft unique high quality pathways to careers and/or college.
- 2) Young people have increased access to technology and are critical users of it.
- 3) Youth-focused entities have increased capacity, improved quality, and are more attractive to youth engagement, financial investment, and growth.

Expanded Learning Domains

SCHOOL	School sponsored opportunities such as: Athletics, Clubs, Tutoring, Credit recovery
COMMUNITY	Community based opportunities such as: Arts, Recreation, Leadership Development, Civic Engagement, College & Career Preparation, Faith, Service, Identity Development
EMPLOYMENT	Paid opportunities such as: Jobs, Internships, Apprenticeships
HEALTH	Health & Wellness opportunities such as: Support Groups, Health Services, Counseling, Substance Abuse Treatment & Prevention, Sex Education, Case Management, Mental Health Services
CONNECTIONS	Supportive relationship opportunities such as: Peer networks, Mentors, Advocates, Advisors

Theory of Action – Building a System

- 1) **Unite existing resources.**
An immediate action that provides a quick response to youth needs and also allows for an accurate accounting of opportunities and gaps.
- 2) **Connect young people to the system and generate data to inform development.**
Once the system is in use, important data will be generated about how it is being used, who is using it, and needs that are being met and unmet. This is pure source data that will inform quality improvement efforts, capacity building initiatives, opportunity development incentives, etc.
- 3) **Strengthen the system based on user generated data and community feedback**
Ongoing professional development of youth workers, block purchasing opportunities, policy work, and supporting a learning community of youth advocates is ingrained in this phase of the work. As well, this is the time for innovations, continued opportunity development, and further development of the core infrastructure.

FOUR KEY HUB ELEMENTS:

1. Actual Space

The **Central Hub** will serve as a visible and easily accessible location housing the Hub staff, offices, opportunity spaces (for efforts such as case management, HIV testing, job readiness classes, etc.), a cyber center, conference room, events, training, and hang out space. It will be an open public space focused on Providence teenagers, and visible from the street, serving as a gateway and connecting space for opportunity providers.

Additionally, a system of **Kiosks** will provide fast, immediate information, inspiring further exploration of the Hub. These will be installed strategically around the city near areas where youth gather, allowing young people to inquire about a service or support, and view and print daily calendars, directions, and contact information. Full skins with Hub branding, corporate or institutional endorsements, and clear instructions for use will cover the machines.

Finally, a **Network of Access Points** will ensure regular access to the Hub website (see below). This network will be a set of organizations and agencies who have computers for teen use that are willing to set their homepages to The Hub website and receive training on how to guide young people through it. Utilizing the breadth of high quality youth-serving organizations and institutions in the city, these network sites will allow increased access to computers facilitating access to The Hub. More importantly, these partners provide the opportunity to engage with dedicated staff and learn more about the high quality programs and events at each site.

2. Virtual Space...HubProv.com

The robust Hub website will connect all of the resources available in the city for young people and provide information access. It will improve technological literacy and create pathways for young people to navigate the city and its rich resources. While the Hub will be a portal and a guidepost to all of the resources a young person needs to activate on the road to healthy adulthood, the website will be a dynamic, interactive tool—a single point of entry for student-interest filtered information and access to expanded learning opportunities for young people. Shared calendar, opportunity locator, online communities and user generated content allow youth and those serving them to virtually locate, market & connect the myriad opportunities available to youth throughout the city via multiple platforms.

3. Transportation System

Physical access to resources in the city has been identified as the main barrier to youth engagement across all elements of the planning process. The cost of transportation is debilitating to student mobility. As well, young people report overcrowded buses, inefficient routes that don't match their needs, and safety concerns on buses and in the transit center, Kennedy Plaza. Young people want and deserve safe, reliable, relevant transportation in the city that allows their optimal engagement in school, work and community life.

4. Policy & Advocacy

Multiple policy and advocacy opportunities present themselves when building the infrastructure for an expanded learning system. Capacity building efforts can enhance program quality, explore innovative practices and develop efficiencies. Youth engagement in oversight and implementation ensure continued growth and relevance, while policy initiatives will create fertile ground for innovation. Policy considerations identified by the USE Collective include:

- **Credit for Extended Learning:** RIDE and/or PPSD develop a set of tools that allow students to demonstrate competency on state standards through their extended learning experiences.
- **Education Funding Formula:** Advocate to include the cost of expanded learning opportunities in high poverty districts to the list of extra per pupil costs as with ELL and SpEd.
- **After School Equity:** PPSD has an uneven amount and quality of after-school opportunities across its 11 high school. Create an opportunity:student ratio that sets the standard for a minimum of after-school opportunities that should be available to student based on school size. Also adopt through policy the RI After School Quality Standards.
- **Student Cell Phone Usage:** Given the mobile nature of communication and the essential role of hand held technology in the workplace, give high school students the right to possess cell phones during the school day. Teach workplace etiquette for technology use.
- **Online Student Reports:** PPSD explores the capacity to send quarterly progress reports to high school students and their families via email on the Hub. Include grades, attendance, test scores, and credits earned.

EXPERTISE: THE PROVIDENCE AFTER SCHOOL ALLIANCE (PASA)

PASA's mission is to expand and improve the quality of after-school opportunities for the youth of Providence by building a system of after-school supports. As a public private partnership with experience building a citywide middle school system, PASA is uniquely positioned to draw on their knowledge of standards and capacity building in quality programming, building partnerships and mobilizing resources.

Design developed by the USE Collective: AS220, College Visions, Everette Dance Theatre, The Institute for the Study & Practice of Nonviolence, New Urban Arts, PrYSM, The Steelyard, Youth In Action, Young Voices & Youth Pride, Inc.

Planning Process Facilitators: Michelle Duso & Jonny Skye Njie

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