

Mapping, Monitoring and Research

The State of Cities

Effective city-level systems for mapping and tracking activities during the out-of-school hours are few and far between. In many cities, only the roughest estimates of the number of programs or number of dollars invested are available. Obtaining information about the ages of young people served, the days and hours of operation, and the range of services, opportunities and supports provided by programs is even more difficult. Data linked to individual young people — either about their out-of-school experiences or their progress in achieving basic

developmental benchmarks — are almost never available outside the academic outcome measures collected by schools. While data is often available from the larger, publicly funded programs, it is often kept and reported in distinct formats for distinct purposes, not lending itself to macro observations or consistency across sites or delivery systems.

If basic information on programs, young people and funding streams is unavailable in most cities, substantive research horsepower addressing quality, replication and other issues is even scarcer. Few local organizations are positioned to repackaging

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

How well are cities able to keep track of the range of information relevant to the out-of-school hours — related to young people, dollars, programming and outcomes?

How can cities increase their information tracking and sharing capacity?

What research horsepower do and should cities have in place to support their work?

The GRASP project is a time-limited, focused effort to help four cities — Chicago, Little Rock, Kansas City and Sacramento — document the opportunities and infrastructures that support young people in the out-of-school hours, and to develop “big picture” plans for better supporting children and youth. GRASP was initiated by the Forum for Youth Investment with the support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.



7014 Westmoreland Avenue
Takoma Park, Maryland 20912
T: 301.270.6250; F: 301.270.7144
www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

Tolman, J., Pittman, K., Yohalem, N., Thomases, J., & Trammel, M. (2002). *Moving an Out-of-School Agenda: Lessons and Challenges Across Cities*. Takoma Park, MD: Forum for Youth Investment.

CITY SNAPSHOT: CHICAGO'S CHAPIN HALL CENTER FOR CHILDREN

Most cities have limited research horsepower relevant to out-of-school programming. Yet, incorporating a research presence in a city's program development, implementation and evaluation can add to the information and ideas available at every stage. Chicago has had the benefit of such a research presence in the form of Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Chapin Hall has been involved in a number of projects designed to increase the supply, accessibility and quality of after-school options for young people in Chicago.

In the late 1980s, Chapin Hall researchers developed a framework for reconfiguring services and supports for children and youth, one that emphasized the healthy development of all young people, and the promotionally oriented, usually community-based, programs committed to achieving this goal. The Chicago Community Trust adopted this framework for a major grant-making initiative in 1990, committing \$30 million to be disbursed over ten years. Researchers provided technical assistance to the initiative's seven grantee organizations as they implemented the conceptual framework and documented the progress and problems of the initiative in the seven communities.

In the mid-1990s, Chapin Hall researchers were commissioned by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds to evaluate the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) initiative in three cities — Boston, Seattle and Chicago. Researchers were able to shed light on some of the most important issues in funding for out-of-school time, including the disparity between costs incurred and revenues generated and the instability of funding. Quality of programming was also a major concern; in response, the researchers provided information on such topics as staff training and compensation and the challenge of maintaining or improving program quality while attempting to increase supply. The outside view provided by Chapin Hall researchers was particularly useful in looking across institutional jurisdictions to create a more systematic approach to out-of-school services in each of the participating cities. Chapin Hall's evaluation documenting the experience and results of MOST continues to provide guidance to other cities that are trying to implement a systems approach to improving program quality and access.

Currently, Chapin Hall is working with After School Matters, a major new initiative in Chicago. Chapin Hall researchers worked with the program's developers on approaches to supporting youth development and is developing a dual-purpose research agenda to run in parallel with the program. The aim of this applied research is to directly inform the operation of the program on one hand and, at the same time, to address basic issues of interest to the constituencies involved in youth development in the out-of-school hours.

and disseminate the results of new national evaluation and research efforts in accessible formats. And few cities are benefiting from the attention and close analysis that come of having research horsepower in their own back yard.

While in short supply across the board, access to data collection and research horsepower does vary significantly across cities. In cities like Chicago, Seattle and Baltimore,

CITY SNAPSHOT: PHOENIX

Out-of-School Time Data System

With the help of a half-time information technology specialist and an able assistant, Deborah Dillon, education program director for the City of Phoenix, has brought information, order and insight to the city's youth planning efforts. Starting with programs funded by the city, her team created a database that catalogues programs and tracks who they serve, what they offer, where and when they offer it.

The database has Geographic Information System software as its core, allowing users to pinpoint the location of populations, facilities and services. It can tell you how many and what types of programs are available in each of Phoenix's 134 separate school districts. It can produce graphs that show how opportunities match population needs. It can give you the capacity and actual enrollment of the programs. It can overlay crime, poverty and population data to show connections and trends.

Why the excitement? First, there's powerful thinking behind the design. Building a database that separates the "who" (organization/program) from the "what" (services and opportunities) is a huge step forward. It allows communities to track variations within similar organizations and to acknowledge and access organizations that do not have "youth" in their titles. Tracking the "where" and "when" is equally important. A neighborhood's youth-focused opportunities may look very different from 3 P.M. to 6 P.M. than from 6 P.M. to 10 P.M., or very different during the school year than the summer.

Second, there's quiet power behind the data. For example, seeing that a school had multiple programs operating, officials began questioning whether all were needed. By running the data by age, time and activities and services, the team was able to show that the programs were serving different populations and different needs.

Third, the system is being built to last. Data comes in through processes that are (or are being) institutionalized. It can be updated annually, and information on individual programs or organizations can be updated as needed.

Source: Pittman, K. (2001, April). "Paint by Numbers." *Youth Today*.

involvement in the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) initiative or the Robert Wood Johnson Urban Health Initiative has contributed significantly to the local capacity to conduct evaluation activities and to draw on the increasing body of knowledge related to out-of-school time. In Little Rock, while select individual programs have pursued evaluations independently, "there is no single entity that has assumed responsibility for monitoring the availability or quality of programs citywide," according to that city's GRASP report.¹ Sacramento has a structure in place to gather data specifically about out-of-school time activities, the Community Services Planning Council. However, the data it collects have yet to be used as a catalyst for changing the out-of-school time system by tracking trends to determine the impact that programs have on the community. In Chicago, the presence of local research activity has certainly influenced the programming landscape. Chicago — home to the Chapin Hall Center for Children and Robert Halpern of the Erikson Institute — houses more research horsepower than perhaps any other city. Yet, even in Chicago there is still no way to get an accurate, big-picture sense of what is going on in the out-of-school hours, due to fragmented data-collection systems and a large number of players.

The challenges inherent in setting up such systems were echoed consistently throughout our conversations with city leaders. So was the fact that having such a system in place is critical in that it enables cities to engage in productive planning and decision making, to advocate for the importance of after-school opportunities, and to ensure access. Unlike the child care field, there is no national structure that is charged with tracking and monitoring out-of-school programs, such as the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. The GRASP process clearly indicated the need for additional data collection and research resources at the city level.

Critical Issues, Lessons Learned

Several cities have made significant progress in setting up and coordinating information systems at the city level. Their experiences point to several key issues that deserve consideration as cities and municipalities take on this challenge.

¹ All of the city reports generated through the GRASP process are available online at www.forumforyouthinvestment.org.

WHERE ARE THE DOLLARS?

Building an adequate out-of-school information system involves far more than knowing how many out-of-school slots are available at a given time — though assembling this information is itself a daunting task. One critical piece of the information puzzle: dollars. The GRASP cities found it incredibly difficult to add up the various out-of-school funding streams — private and public; local, state and national — into an adequate answer to the question, “how much are we investing?”

Several cities around the country are addressing part of this challenge by developing youth budgets — systematic accounting of the investments of local government in children and youth. A children’s budget was a centerpiece of a successful campaign for sustained out-of-school funding by Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco. It is a critical contribution of Philadelphia Safe and Sound to that city’s ongoing out-of-school planning efforts. And the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research has supported a number of cities around the country in taking this basic audit of investments in youth.

Cities need to make a focused investment in data collection infrastructure. One of GRASP’s most important functions was to reveal the need for additional data-collection horsepower in cities around the country. A handful of cities — Philadelphia, Seattle and Baltimore, for instance — have made significant headway in building this horsepower. These cities have engaged in significant data collection efforts — via phone calls, surveys, merging existing data sources and other strategies — to create substantial online databases and print guides to programs, publicly accessible information on how young people are faring, and the like. Addressing the issue of sustainability — how the data will be managed and maintained over time — is one of the primary challenges facing these cities that have a tracking system in place or are developing one. While initial funding to create a database might be available, planning for an ongoing updating process is critical. One of the soundest strategies to ensure sustainability is to create a permanent position charged with this responsibility; Little Rock is currently working to build such a position into its city government.

Investments in information and research dissemination infrastructure are also critical. It takes concerted efforts to get information collection and research results to those who most need them: parents, providers, advocates and young people. Work by the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research and others is beginning to unearth how

to best disseminate research-based information and data — and is resulting in innovations like street kiosks and call-in lines that allow for access to a wealth of information about opportunities for young people. An investment in multiple media — Web sites like that run by Baltimore’s Data Collaborative, fact sheets like those created by the Afterschool Alliance and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, print guides to programs like those created in Philadelphia and Seattle, and the use of opinion leaders as research disseminators — is likely the best route to accessible information.

Knowing the purpose of the data collection effort from the start is vital, as it fundamentally shapes each stage of the data collection, analysis and dissemination process.

Cities are motivated to collect data for a number of reasons: planning and decision making, advocacy and “making the case” efforts, linking young people with opportunities, monitoring and ensuring program quality. For planning and decision-making purposes, information systems can allow decisions about resource allocation, program development, public awareness campaigns and other issues to be made more intelligently. For advocacy purposes, data can help make the case for increased quality and quantity of investments or more focused investments, particularly if they include information about program availability and status of young people. For linking young people with opportunities or access purposes, tracking systems can help young people and families identify programs that meet their needs and interests. In the context of scarce data collection horsepower, it is vital that up-front planning focus on the multiple uses of data, so that a single effort can serve multiple purposes in an economical manner.

There is a huge data need. Do we know who is involved with what in the out-of-school hours? We don’t know that. Who are the actors? Who’s out there, able to engage kids, including the grassroots places below the radar screen, that ought to be thought about and included? What do we know about the range of their size, their financial resources, their needs for facilities or administrative support?

— A leading out-of-school researcher

National research can provide city-relevant information on key infrastructure challenges. While local information-gathering work is vital, there is also concerted work to be done in making the results of national research and evaluation efforts available to cities. The 21st Century

Community Learning Centers evaluation has the potential to generate much-needed evidence that quality programs during the non-school hours can indeed make a difference. At the same time, other large-scale evaluations like those being conducted on the MOST and Extended-Service Schools Adaptation initiatives paint a somewhat daunting picture of the current reality of out-of-school time opportunities at the city level. These studies describe significant unmet demand for programs, transportation obstacles, programs that cannot retain staff, and directors who cannot offer professional development because no one can afford the upfront registration fees — serious problems requiring serious attention. Efforts to improve program quality and outcomes for young people will likely fall short in a system struggling primarily with operational challenges. Until systemic challenges related to infrastructure and sustainability are addressed, questions of effectiveness are not necessarily less important, but somehow elusive.

Unfortunately, long-term research efforts are critical but too slow to influence current on-the-ground momentum. While rigorous longitudinal research is

critical to advancing the field, we do not necessarily have time to wait for the answers. The out-of-school momentum is upon us, and practitioners and policy makers are currently struggling with the questions of quality, scale and access that researchers are working on. We need to develop reasonable predictions that anticipate and use some inkling of the answers to the questions posed by studies like the 21st Century evaluation or, by the time it is completed, something will happen and the pendulum will swing the other way.

There is a need for further research on issues of scale and replication. Particularly as cities and other localities look comprehensively at addressing the needs of children and youth during the out-of-school hours, it is critical that questions of scale, sustainability and replication are considered. As the numbers of young people spending time alone continue to increase and demand builds for out-of-school time options, efforts to bring programs to scale could occur at the expense of quality and responsiveness. This is the one place where national research efforts could prove critical.

Contact Information for Local Efforts

Safe and Sound: Baltimore's Campaign for Children and Youth

(for information on the Data Collaborative)

Hathaway Ferebee, Executive Director
2 East Read Street, 3rd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
Tel: 410.625.7976; Fax: 410.332.4752
Email: info@safeandsound.org
Web: www.safeandsound.org

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

Shelly D. Yanoff, Executive Director
Seven Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Sixth Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Tel: 215.563.5848; Fax: 215.563.9442
Email: info@pccy.org
Web: www.pccy.org

Seattle MOST

(for information on Seattle's Database of Out-of-School Activities for Children and Youth)
c/o YWCA School's Out Consortium
801 23rd Avenue S, Suite A
Seattle, WA 98144
Tel: 206.323.2396; Fax: 206.323.7997
Web: www.ci.seattle.wa.us/MOST/

City of Phoenix

Deborah Dillon, Education Program Director
Office of the City Manager
200 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85003
Tel: 602.495.0314

Contact Information for National Resources

The AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research

supports communities engaged in Community YouthMapping — efforts through which young people gather and analyze information about things to do and places to go in their communities. It also helps cities design systems that track investments in young people, make information about programming available to the public and tackle related challenges. For more information, contact:

Center for Youth Development and Policy Research
Academy for Educational Development
1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-5741
Tel: 202.884.8267; Fax: 202.884.8404
Email: cyd@aed.org
Web: <http://cyd.aed.org>

The Chapin Hall Center for Children and Families

engages in a variety of research projects relevant to out-of-school programming, focusing on school-community collaborations, young people's use of time, evaluations of major out-of-school initiatives and the like. For more information, contact:

Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
Tel: 773.753.5900; Fax: 773.753.5940
Web: www.chapin.uchicago.edu

United Way of America has developed an Outcome Measurement Resource Center designed to connect United Ways, organizations and communities with outcome resources and learnings. The Resource center can be visited online at:

<http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/>