

## Welcome

I was fortunate this past summer to visit the Summer Learning Program at the Boston Nature Center, a property of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. I found 35 students about to launch their self-designed kites. I was struck by how little string the youth afforded their kites. While they had plenty of room in a clearing and a reasonable wind, for 20 minutes I saw only a lot of running, limited string, and low flying. When a teacher's kite started to edge higher, all eyes focused. The teacher challenged the youth to let go a little. She circulated to help the students while keeping her own kite high in the sky. Forty-five minutes later, the sky was full to the tree tops with colorful flyers.

While watching, I recalled Nevitt Sanford's (1967) student development theory of challenge and support. We need both challenge and support in order to fully develop and progress. Having a kite, a string, and a goal was not enough for the youth I observed. They moved out of their tentative caution when a teacher offered modeling, challenge, and support in the context of an engaging activity. The fact that the teacher was excited and enthusiastic over her own kite was not insignificant.

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* includes a special look at the experiences of English language learners (ELLs) and immigrant youth in out-of-school time (OST) programs. Over the last few years, OST programs have increasingly been expanding their role in supporting school learning. Many ELL and immigrant children have used OST program experiences to safely "try out" language skills, get tutoring in school subjects, strengthen relationships with peers, and build their ability to manage multiple cultural contexts and value systems.

In this issue, Julie Maxwell-Jolly argues that, though time is a major barrier to progress for language learners, some emerging research on OST programs serving ELLs shows promising results. Jhumpa Bhattacharya and Jimena Quiroga remind us that we still fall short in intentionally designing our programs to support ELL and immigrant youth and need to provide resources and professional development opportunities to support the work. Our own study at NIOST (p. 52) notes that more exploratory research is needed to identify the OST program practices and characteristics that best support immigrant youth and families.

ELL and immigrant youth participating in our OST programs are surrounded by challenges inherent in their situation between cultures and languages. They are waiting for support to let their strings go. We hope that all the articles in this issue will help to clarify important directions in which to invest time and funding in the OST field. We all intend for all youth to soar.



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Sanford, N. (1967). *Self & society: social change and individual development*. New York, NY: Atherton Press.

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