Afterschool Matters

National Institute on Out-of-School Time

AT THE WELLESLEY CENTERS FOR WOMEN

Photo Credits

Cover, p. 3: WeCook program in the 21st
Century Community Learning Center at West
Lincoln Elementary School, Lincoln, Nebraska
Page 1, Megan Cassidy, Wellesley Centers for
Women, Wellesley College

*See the inside back cover for the call for papers for
future issues of* Afterschool Matters.

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WELCOME

This month brought me to a milestone: my 40th high school reunion. The celebration included a tour of our high school, which inspired a great deal of recollection and reminiscence. I was struck by how many times my classmates and I talked about our out-of-classroom experiences. We threw some balls around the gym, found our signatures on an old exposed beam under the stage in the drama wing, and remembered how we had rearranged Room 202 to practice mock debates for Forensics Club.

Why were these the memories that flooded our recollections? Because our experiences outside of the classroom gave us the opportunity to stretch our skills, grow our friendships, and challenge our limits. Even after 40 years of hills and valleys, we were still rooted in the foundations we had built in high school. Our out-of-class experiences were still guiding our goals and our daily lives.

The influence of extracurricular and out-of-school time programs arguably depends less on the type of activity than on the personal encounters with caring adults—the ones who carefully craft the tasks and conversations that make up each activity. My classmates and I shared rich memories of the special adults who were there with us each step of the way.

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* opens with an interview with Ellen Gannett, who has stepped down as director of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. Ellen has dedicated the past 35 years to the quality of young people's experience after school. Her means to that end has been to focus on the professional growth and recognition of the committed practitioners who make up the OST program workforce.

One fruit of that work is the Afterschool Matters Practitioner Fellowship, which was, like this journal, initiated by the Robert Bowne Foundation and then adapted and expanded here at NIOST. This issue includes a peer-reviewed article and a reflective essay by two "graduates" of the fellowship, Jocelyn Wiedow and Sonia Toledo. Both focus on the very thing that has been Ellen's passion: empowering youth workers to do and be their best for the young people in their program.

Afterschool practitioners who *do* their best can nurture vital skills and abilities in the young people they serve. Practitioners who *are* their best build caring and trusting relationships. As Ellen has taught us, the quality of these relationships is the key to growing young adults who can make positive contributions to their families, their communities, and our world.

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System Building, Relationships, and Quality

Over the last nine months, Ellen Gannett, former director of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, has transitioned to a new part-time role as NIOST's senior strategist. Georgia Hall, the new director and managing editor of *Afterschool Matters*, asked Ellen to share her perspectives on the field and on a lifetime dedicated to raising the quality of youth experience during the out-of-school time hours.

Georgia Hall: This has been a significant transition in your career. Tell us about your work over the years in this field. How did you arrive to it, and what has it been like for you?

Ellen Gannett: Many people call me a "lifer" in the field of afterschool. I came to NIOST in 1981, but even before that, I was a practitioner for seven or eight years,

running an afterschool program in the suburbs of Boston. So afterschool has been pretty much the only thing I've done in my professional life. When I think about my career here at NIOST—it's been so many years and so many roles, with many different projects and interests, that it's hard to summarize except to say that it's been a fabulous career.

I'm close to being fully retired, but I couldn't imagine just saying goodbye to this work. So the opportunity to be semi-retired was appealing. Moving from being the director of NIOST to a streamlined part-time position as senior strategist allows me to be more selective. I can pick and choose areas where I can make a difference—things I have tried to accomplish for a long time where work still remains to be done.

Georgia: What areas of your work at NIOST have meant the most to you?

Ellen: So many! To take one: The MOST initiative was a groundbreaking experience. It was one of the first system-building efforts in out-of-school time. We were ahead of our time, before the field and the nation were ready to embrace it fully. Still, I'm proud of the work we

did because it set the stage for what became, years later, a major effort on system building at the city level. That was satisfying because we got to share lessons learned with nine cities across the country.

Georgia: You've also done significant work in professional development.

Ellen: Yes, anything to do with professional development has been my first love. Working to set up national credentials for afterschool providers, professionalizing their work, creating a sustainable system for educating providers at the college level—I feel I've dabbled in many experiments, none of which have caught on to the point where you could say, "Now we've got a system for professional development for afterschool providers." But it's been really satisfying work, and I continue to be really interested in it. Connecting the dots is so important—connecting the work so child care, education, and youth development come together as a single field rather than disparate parts.

Georgia: Is there one thing you're particularly proud of?

Ellen: I take great pride in all of the things we do here at NIOST—not just what I do, but everyone. That we were the first to develop national standards for quality. That we put together a set of core competencies for afterschool providers. We've given a lot of standards to the field—like the ones we created with the HOST Coalition on healthy eating and physical activity in out-of-school time.

I've had the privilege of working with hundreds, if not thousands, of people across the country to help them start programs or get their programs to be as wonderful as they could possibly be. That's been very gratifying. I love going back to those communities, when I can, to see the results of that work.

Georgia: What do you think are the greatest challenges facing the out-of-school time field in the next four or five years?

Ellen: How much time do we have? [Laughs]

First, sustainable funding. We're always fighting the fight for the next round of funding for this work. Our sense that we don't know what's coming next makes it hard to plan—and the result is uneven quality.

Couple that with turnover. We're not paying our staffs well enough that people can think of it as anything but a wonderful short-term opportunity—not a career.

> "There are lots of things we're on the cusp of doing better. "

When providers come in and out, that really affects quality and the relationship between the staff and children. We need to be able to raise wages and benefits.

Then you have the problems of trauma. Kids come into our programs in trouble, facing poverty, parents who are themselves troubled, housing problems, medical problems, so many problems. And many kids who are troubled are unfairly getting kicked out of programs. We don't talk about suspension and expulsion in afterschool, but it's happening, and we need to address it. We can build on the research that's out there on social and emotional learning. We have to do a better job of training staff to work with traumatized children and to help all children handle their own social and emotional difficulties.

Georgia: That's quite a list.

Ellen: There are lots of things we're on the cusp of doing better. We really need to do a better job of systematizing the field and especially our professional development so that we can get it done. Too much of our training is episodic; it doesn't go deep enough. My view is that community colleges would be a fantastic place for people to get education and professional development. And online training—let's really push out some e-learning so people can get better at their craft.

Georgia: NIOST has chosen program quality as the centerpiece of our work. Why are we so passionate about quality?

Ellen: The focus on quality has always been what set us apart from other organizations. They had their work: policy changes, say, or helping programs get started. Our work has been national standards and a national accreditation system. We were always about, "What is it like for children to be part of the program?" We keep ourselves centered on the experience of young people. That orientation is supported here at Wellesley Centers for Women, where researchers have been working for decades on relational theory. When we talk about quality, we are essentially talking about the relationships between adults and children, between staff and families. The experience of young people in the program—that's what quality is, and that's why quality matters.

A New Way to Assess Nutrition Knowledge

The Healthy Plate Photo Method

Ashley Walther, Weiwen Chai, Tara Dunker, Lisa Franzen-Castle, and Michelle Krehbiel

Out-of-school time (OST) programs serve youth from diverse demographic backgrounds. According to the Afterschool Alliance, of the 10.2 million young people in OST programs in the U.S., 24 percent are African American and 29 percent are Latinx; 45 percent qualify for free or reduced-price school meals (Afterschool Alliance, 2014). Research has shown that youth from low-income and minority backgrounds consume less healthy diets than youth from high-income families (Kant & Graubard, 2006). OST programs, whose informal settings provide opportunities for experiential learning, can address this problem by implementing nutrition and food-preparation programming to improve participants' dietary knowledge and behaviors.

Our contribution to this effort is WeCook: Fun with Food and Fitness, an OST curriculum for fourth- and fifth-grade students focusing on food preparation, nutrition, and physical activity. In the process of piloting this program, we discovered the need for a nutrition assessment that would be time-efficient, developmentally appropriate, and user-friendly. Our solution was to develop a novel tool called the Healthy Plate Photo (HPP) method, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) MyPlate guidelines (USDA, 2017).

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We used this tool, in conjunction with a conventional paper survey, to assess nutrition knowledge before and after children participated in WeCook.

HPP's innovative approach is appropriate in OST settings because it is hands-on and fun for students; it is also easy for staff to conduct. To demonstrate their nutrition knowledge, children build a healthy plate (as defined by USDA) using plastic food models. The results of our pilot study suggest that the HPP method can be a practical and useful nutrition assessment tool for OST programs to use with youth from varied socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Traditional Nutrition Assessments

Self-reported paper surveys traditionally have been used to assess nutrition and healthy behavior knowledge, behavior, and self-efficacy in young participants (Burrows, Lucas, Morgan, Bray, & Collins, 2015; Cunningham-Sabo & Lohse, 2013; Davis, Ventura, Cook, Gyllenhammer, & Gatto, 2011). As a quantitative form of data collection, paper surveys provide convenience, reliability, and validity. However, researchers face challenges when using paper surveys with many youth populations.

One challenge in using paper surveys is test anxiety. Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind in 2002, children and youth have been required to take numerous standardized tests, in addition to tests that are part of the school curriculum. Depending on grade level, standardized tests can take 6.2 to 8.9 hours (Hart et al., 2015). Meanwhile, 10 percent of school-aged youth have test anxiety that significantly impairs their performance; another 50 percent report having mild test anxiety (Segool, Carlson, Goforth, von der Embse, & Barterian, 2013). Paper surveys may seem enough like tests to some children that they may feel anxious or not want to participate.

Another issue with paper surveys is cultural and developmental appropriateness. Youth from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to be proficient at reading than youth from other groups (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Paper surveys may not accurately capture changes in nutrition knowledge in young people from underserved populations.

An alternative to paper surveys is use of qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observations. These methods enable researchers to focus on participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). However, qualitative methods have limitations, particularly the extensive amount of time needed to collect and analyze data (Creswell, 2013). This limitation can be especially problematic in OST programs, where time and staff resources can be scarce.

Some alternative assessment methods have yielded positive results. For example, a study by Leung and colleagues (2017) used Photovoice, a tool for community-based participatory research, to explore young people's perceptions related to food justice in their own community so the they could identify solutions to promote positive change. Results suggest that Photovoice could be a useful tool to enable youth to reflect on—and change—their food environment (Leung et al., 2017). However, little research has been conducted on other alternatives to paper surveys or qualitative methods to assess youth nutrition knowledge. This study seeks to address that gap.

Methods

The HPP method was developed to assess WeCook, a 12-week OST curriculum for fourth- and fifth-grade youth focusing on food preparation, nutrition, and physical activity. WeCook programming took place at 21st Century Community Learning Centers in two Title I elementary schools in Lincoln, Nebraska. WeCook was conducted as part of the 21st CCLC program twice a week for approximately 50 minutes per session. One day was dedicated to food preparation, with participants preparing snacks in small groups. The other day was dedicated to nutrition and physical activity. Nutrition activities were based on USDA MyPlate guidelines, and physical activity learning took place in fun, interactive games. In addition, the 12 weeks included three family meal nights in which program participants prepared a meal for themselves and their families. WeCook is a collaboration among academics, university extension staff, and community partners. The team consists of researchers, extension specialists, program coordinators, graduate students, afterschool program coordinators, and volunteers.

Study Design

The study was conducted from January 2016 to May 2017 with four cohorts of WeCook participants. Standard consent protocols were followed: Both participants and their parents or legal guardians consented in writing. The

> Paper surveys may not accurately capture changes in nutrition knowledge in young people from underserved populations.

Figure 1. USDA MyPlate

assessments, or participated a second time in WeCook during the data collection period. The majority of participants were female (74 percent), and the average age was 9 years. Approximately 46 percent of participants were White, 22 percent were African American, and 19 percent were Latinx. Over half (56 percent) qualified for free or reduced-price school meals.

HPP assessments and paper surveys were administered by WeCook staff at both program locations before and after the 12-week intervention to assess changes in youth nutrition knowledge. Program participants completed each tool independently, taking as much time they as needed. With the help of their parents or caregivers, participating youth also completed a demographic questionnaire covering gender, race/ethnicity, and family socioeconomic status.

Healthy Plate Photo Method

We used USDA MyPlate guidelines (Figure 1) to develop the HPP tool, which assesses the extent to which children are able to accurately identify healthy food options in each of the five USDA food groups. The materials for the assessment were paper copies of blank MyPlate templates

study was approved by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board. The four cohorts included 85 young people, of whom 69 were included in the analysis. Children were excluded from analysis if they did not have consent, did not complete both pre- and post-participation

Table 1. Foods Items Based on USDA MyPlate Food Groups

MyPlate Food Groups					Less Healthy Foods
Fruit	**Vegetable**	**Grain**	**Protein**	**Dairy**	
Orange	Baked potatoes	Baguette	Salmon	Milk carton	Donut
Banana	Peas	Oatmeal	Steak	Yogurt	Waffles
Red apple	Tomato	Wheat bread	Chicken breast	Cheese slice	Chocolate bar
Strawberries	Eggplant	Pasta	Hardboiled egg	Milk glass	Chocolate chip cookie
Pineapple slices	Sugar snap peas	Dinner roll	Over-easy egg	Swiss cheese slice	French fries
100% grape juice	Broccoli		Lunch meat		Pancake
100% orange juice	Green pepper		Beans		Ice cream sandwich
Grapefruit half	Salad		Peanut butter		Chocolate milk
Green apple	Corn				Cinnamon roll
Apple slices	Carrot				Ice cream cone
Berries	Asparagus				Pretzels
Cantaloupe	Zucchini				
	Sweet potato				
	Lettuce				

Figure 2. HPP Score of 2
Clockwise from upper left: ice cream sandwich (0), potato (1), orange juice (1), grapes (0, because the plate already has a fruit), broccoli (0, because the plate already has a vegetable)

Figure 3. HPP Score of 5
Clockwise from upper left: bread (1), green pepper (1), milk (1), beans (1), strawberry (1)

and plastic food models. Table 1 lists the food models used, divided into their food groups: fruits, vegetables, protein, grains, dairy, and less healthy options. All of the food models were placed randomly on a table for each participant assessment. Participants were instructed to create a healthy plate by placing one food model on each section of the blank healthy plate template. If participants asked, staff members were allowed to identify a food item's name but not its food group. When a participant finished building the plate, a staff member took a photograph. Each participant was asked to build one healthy plate at the beginning and one at the conclusion of the 12-week program. Pre- and post-intervention HPPs were coded with individual ID numbers to be matched with the corresponding paper survey data.

HPPs were assessed using a five-point scoring system. One point was assigned to each of the five USDA food groups, with a maximum total score of five. If a food group was represented more than once, only one point was given. Items from the less healthy food group were given zero points. Classification of healthy and less healthy foods was based on the "We Can: Go, Slow, Whoa" food system, in which "Go" foods are considered healthy and "Whoa" foods are less healthy (National Heart, Lung, & Blood Institute, 2013). Figure 2 shows a pre-test HPP with a total score of 2. Figure 3 is a post-test with a total score of 5.

Nutrition Knowledge Paper Survey

Participants' nutrition knowledge was assessed using three items from the Healthy Habit Survey, a validated paper instrument developed to assess self-reported nutrition knowledge, behavior, and self-efficacy among fifth-grade

students (Hall, Chai, Koszewski, & Albrecht, 2015). The three knowledge items we used covered healthy snacks, the benefits of breakfast, and recommended daily servings of fruit and vegetables. Results from these three questions served to confirm the results of the HPP method.

Data Analysis

We used paired *t*-tests to assess changes in HPP scores and in Healthy Habit Survey nutrition knowledge scores from before the WeCook intervention to after the intervention. Correlations between HPP scores and nutrition knowledge scores were assessed using correlation coefficients.

Results

Figure 4 shows the average pre- and post-intervention scores of WeCook participants for both the HPP assessment and the Healthy Habit Survey knowledge items. The HPP scores correlated to participants' survey scores at a statistically significant rate. The average HPP score achieved by participants significantly increased from 2.5 out of 5 before the WeCook intervention to 4.0 after the intervention. The average nutrition knowledge scores increased significantly from 3.8 at pre-intervention to 5.1 at post-intervention. In addition, statistically significant increases emerged in two of the three Healthy Habit knowledge items, on the benefits of a daily breakfast and on healthy snack choices. Scores also increased on the third item, knowledge of the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables, though the difference did not attain statistical significance.

Figure 5 shows the breakdowns of participant scores on the HPP assessment pre- and post-intervention, divided into

Note. *N* = 69.
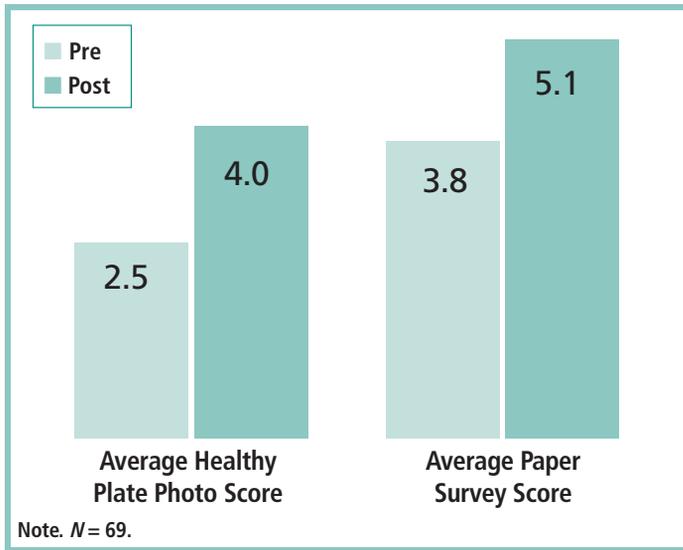
Figure 4. Changes in Healthy Plate Photo Assessment and Healthy Habit Survey Knowledge Items, Before and After WeCook

three groups: participants scoring 0 to 3 out of 5, those scoring 4 out of 5, and those scoring 5 out of 5. After engaging in the WeCook curriculum, more than half (55 percent) of participants received the maximum score of 5 points, as compared to only 33 percent before the intervention.

Measuring the Effect of Nutrition Programming

Self-reported paper surveys may not be the best way to measure nutrition knowledge among young people, who may interpret questions incorrectly or may not recall accurate answers (Janz, Lutuchy, Wenthe, & Levy, 2008). The difficulty is exacerbated among underserved youth because they are less likely to be proficient at reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). The HPP method overcomes these difficulties by enabling participants to answer an oral question using tangible objects they can manipulate to build a healthy plate. Young people thus can easily demonstrate their knowledge of USDA MyPlate guidelines without the need to read and answer questions. Although the HPP assessment needs to be further validated in future studies, the current study found a significant positive correlation between HPP scores and nutrition knowledge scores from the validated paper Healthy Habits Survey.

Our study also sought to determine whether participants in WeCook from January 2016 to May 2017 showed significant increases in nutrition knowledge. Both the new HPP method and the conventional paper survey did show such increases. WeCook includes lessons on USDA MyPlate guidelines, recommended fruit and vegetable intakes, the benefits of breakfast, and optimal food and drink choices. After participation, fourth and fifth graders significantly increased their ability to create a healthy plate according to USDA MyPlate guidelines, as shown in their HPP results. They also showed better knowledge of the benefits of breakfast and of healthy snack options, according to the Healthy Habits survey items. These results were consistent with a previous study showing that an experiential food preparation and nutrition education program increased youth nutrition knowledge (Jarpe-Ratner, Folkens, Sharma, Daro, & Edens, 2016).

Our study suggests that our novel tool for assessing nutrition knowledge among young middle-schoolers is indeed effective. HPP is well suited for the needs of OST programs because it takes little time to administer, is developmentally appropriate, and is easy for both children and adult staff to understand and use. Like the WeCook curriculum itself, the HPP assessment is experiential. The curriculum actively involved young people in learning through hands-on food preparation

Figure 5. Pre- and Post-intervention Score Distributions on the Healthy Plate Photo Assessment

Note. *N* = 69. Highest possible score = 5.

certainty that gains in nutrition knowledge were due specifically to participation in the WeCook program. More research is needed to confirm our initial promising results.

Nevertheless, our study demonstrates that the HPP method can be a practical and useful tool to assess youth nutrition knowledge in OST settings. Afterschool programs that implement healthy lifestyle curricula like WeCook are likely to be interested in such a simple method for measuring changes in children's nutrition knowledge. Ultimately, the changes we hope to bring about are ones that will help participants make healthy food choices in the future.

Acknowledgment

and interactive lessons. Then a hands-on assessment enabled them to demonstrate what they had learned by building a healthy plate according to USDA guidelines.

Our positive results must be interpreted with caution. The sample size of 69 participants is relatively small. Furthermore, we worked with only three nutrition knowledge items on the paper survey, which limits our capability to validate the HPP method. Finally, this study lacked a randomized control group, so we cannot say with

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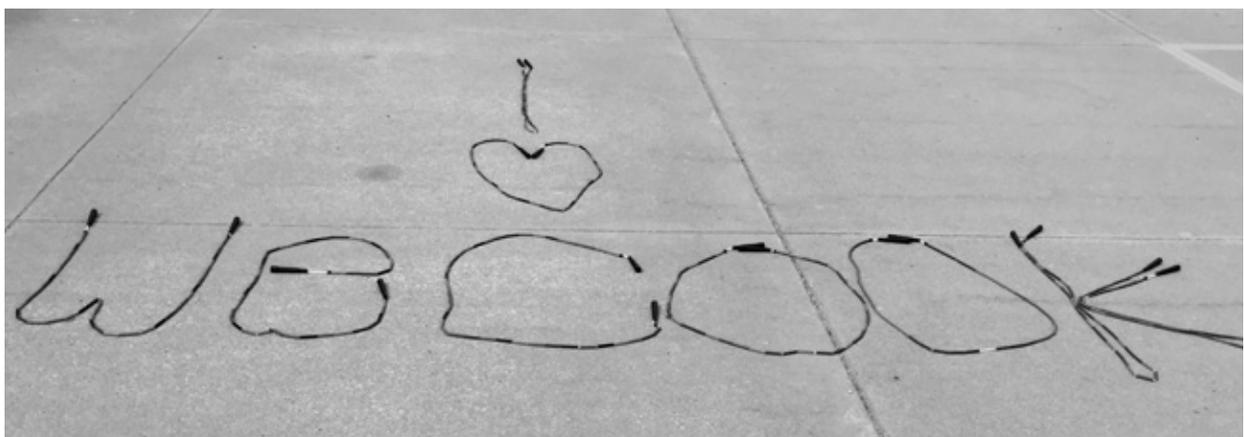
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The Micro Temporal Arc

A Practical Planning Tool for Afterschool Student Engagement

Scarlett Eisenhauer

For many youth, afterschool programs positively fill the time between school and home. Quality out-of-school time (OST) programs clearly can have beneficial social and academic effects on youth (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Vandell et al., 2005). However, these outcomes are not guaranteed (Chen & Harklau, 2017; Eccles et al., 2003). Realizing the potential for improved social and academic outcomes depends at least in part on the ways in which afterschool programs are structured.

At the most basic level, in order to gain the potential benefits of afterschool programming, young people must participate. In order to maintain participation over time, programs must "hook" young people's attention. One common strategy is to structure program activities so that they build, over a semester or a year, to a culminating end product. Larson (2000) and Heath (2001) have referred to this pattern as a "temporal arc."

My ethnographic research at a theater afterschool program builds on the concept of the temporal arc to reveal a practical concept I call the "micro temporal arc": the day-by-day version of the longer-term temporal arc. A long-term temporal arc can seem daunting when, as many practitioners can attest, youth are prone to forget what they did yesterday, let alone last week. Thinking of daily and weekly planning in terms of micro temporal arcs that feed into the full temporal arc, with its culminating product, can help practitioners to engage youth on a daily basis and thereby promote long-term participation.

Participation and the Temporal Arc

The potential for positive outcomes of OST programming, beyond simply having a safe place to be after school, is a

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function of young people's participation. Weiss, Little, and Bouffard (2005) outline three components of participation: enrollment, or plans to attend; attendance, or actually being present over a period of time; and engagement, or active involvement. Micro temporal arcs come into play only after youth have chosen to be present, so they can affect attendance and engagement but not enrollment. Weiss and colleagues (2005) point out that attendance is a necessary but not sufficient component of participation: "True, youth cannot benefit from participation if they do not attend… [but] merely being there is not what makes real improvements in youth outcomes.… [B]eing engaged enables youth to grow" (p. 20).

Having youth return day after day and keeping them engaged are interrelated challenges for OST programs. Many afterschool programs are opt-in environments; older youth in particular often can choose whether or not to attend (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). The "dose effect" implies that routine attendance affects outcomes (Bartko, 2005; Riggs, 2006). Scholars have noted that OST program benefits decline after attendance stops (Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, & Gladden, 2007). In research on schools, attendance has been used as a direct measure of participation and as an overt sign of student engagement (Lehr, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2004). The logic is that students who show up are also engaged in the academic activities and vice versa. Attendance has also been seen as an effective way of gauging engagement in afterschool programs. Participants "vote with their feet"; they attend activities they experience as engaging (Grossman, Goldmith, Sheldon, & Arbreton, 2009).

Students' personal interest and investment in activities thus can promote their continued attendance so that the programs can have a positive impact in their lives. Weisman and Gottfredson (2001) found that boredom was a top reason for young people to stop attending afterschool programs. Programs need to provide activities that "hook" participants (Weisman & Gottfredson, 2001, p. 205) and that are "engaging and motivating" (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007, p. 901). Activities can be shaped to foster youth engagement by, for example, facilitating intrinsic motivation, providing instrumental support, and building quality personal connections (Pearce & Larson, 2006).

One mechanism for encouraging participation through meaningful activities is the temporal arc. Larson (2000) and Heath (2001) have noted that collective goal-oriented work is a defining feature more readily provided by afterschool programs than by schools. The temporal arc is a way to visualize long-term work toward a challenging goal—an end product, such as a performance, that requires collective effort (Larson, 2000). A temporal arc facilitates long-term investment, development of initiative, and intrinsic motivation. Heath (2001) describes the temporal arc as being structured in phases, as illustrated in Figure 1: "planning and preparation, practice and deliberation in which trial-error learning can occur, final intensive readiness, the final culminating presentation, and a period of down time before a new cycle begins" (p. 12). The process involves cooperation, feedback loops, and a final preparation period that makes the project feel important to the participants. The activities become so meaningful that they require ongoing attendance for young people to enjoy the full effect.

Figure 1. The Temporal Arc

Culminating presentation

Practice
and deliberation

Final intensive
readiness

Beginning
of cycle

Planning and preparation

Evaluation
and down time
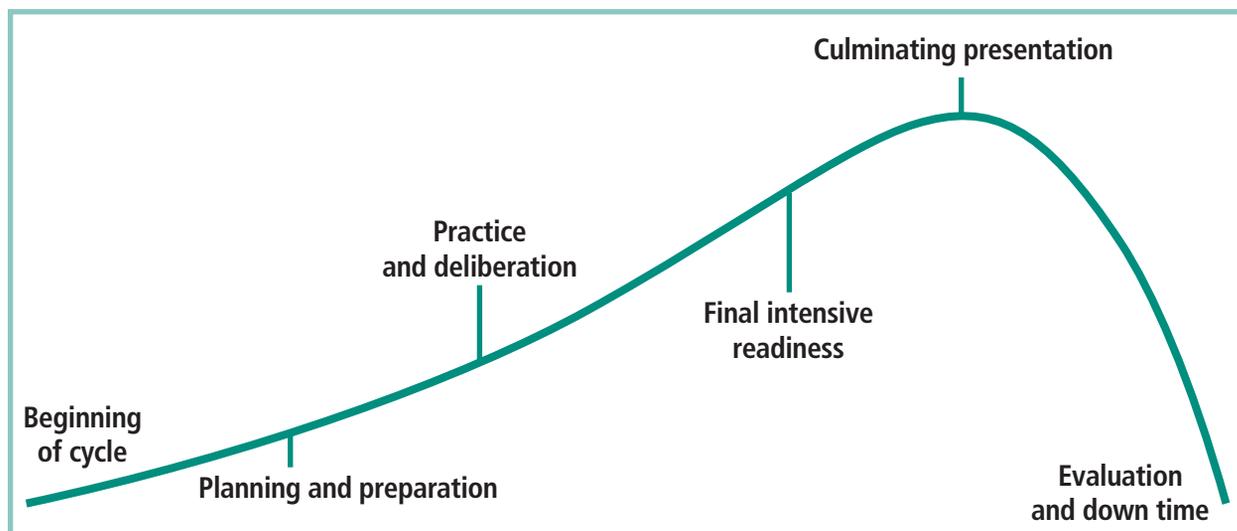
Figure 2. Micro Temporal Arcs, Participation, and Positive Outcomes
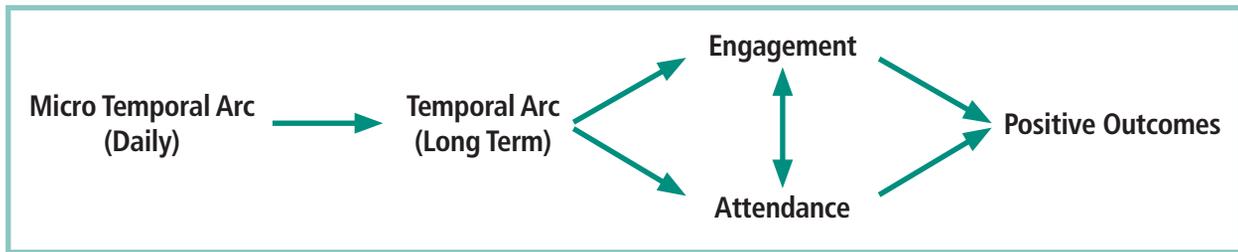
The temporal arc "demands sustained focus on the big picture of the task as well as on the intricate details" (Heath, 2001, p. 15). The process is like the deep state of absorption and focus described by Csikszentmihalyi (2009), in which the challenges individuals face are well balanced with their skills.

Meaningful activities that are part of predictable routines are the stepping stones for development because they are shaped by the necessary skills, norms, and goals and by the people present (Weisner, 2002). Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin (2003) found that different types of programs resulted in different patterns of learning opportunities. Different fields—such as performance or fine arts programs, academic or leadership development, or faith-based activities—have distinct learning structures. For example, youth in faith-based activities were more likely to engage in identity reflection and emotional regulation than youth involved in other activities (Hansen et al., 2003). The content and meaning of daily programming is thus a critical component of the long-term outcomes of afterschool programming. Larson and Brown (2007) found that specific contextual experiences at a theater afterschool program fostered long-term emotional development "occurring in response to the daily demands and affordances of specific experiential settings" (p.109).

Thus, youth must maintain their investment *daily* so that a routine can be sustained over time. Larson, Hansen, and Walker (2005) found that long-term initiative and future-oriented thinking, both of which are required in a goal-oriented temporal arc, are difficult for young people. Adult scaffolding is one way to help young people mediate between the future and the present (Larson et al., 2005). The micro temporal arc is a mechanism for fostering daily engagement in order to encourage long-term participation. As shown in Figure 2, micro temporal arcs can shape daily programming to become part of year- or semester-long temporal arcs, which contribute to positive youth outcomes by boosting attendance and engagement.

Part of the challenge is to connect self-contained daily micro temporal arcs to the full program temporal

Figure 3. Cumulative Micro Temporal Arcs
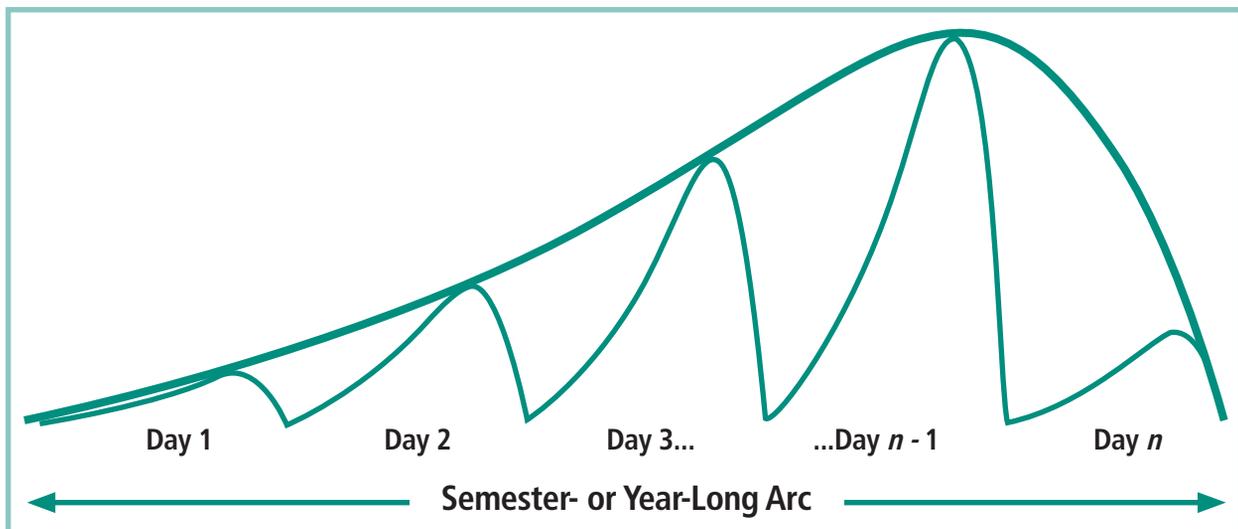
arc, whether that's a year, a semester, or a shorter period. Figure 3 represents that progression.

Methods

This article is based on my yearlong ethnographic study, consisting of over 240 hours of participant-observations during the 2015–2016 school year, at an afterschool program I'll call Green Door Theater. I chose this site for the relatively high rate at which students returned year after year, an indication that the program was doing something right to maintain attendance. I observed all of the program's age-based groups, each of which met once a week. However, I focused on the group of young people aged 14 to 18, with whom I also conducted interviews.

A typical day at the Green Door teen program went like this: After having time to socialize in the theater lobby, youth and teachers entered the black-box theater for formal programming. Sessions normally started with a series of warm-up activities including sharing good news in a "gospel circle," walking interspersed with a series of tasks, and creating short character behaviors or dialogue. The warm-ups usually incorporated a theme that would carry into the development of short scenes or skits. Most sessions ended in a team presentation or performance that solidified the day's theme.

Though each day had its own theme, on most days references were made to the theme for the year. During the year of my research, the theme was "non-recognition (change) and family." The professional show that occupied the Green Door Theater at night had a similar theme. At the end of the school year, the young people would put on a show—the culminating performance—that combined scenes and ideas they had developed with the teaching artist's direction.

All participants at Green Door knew of my role as a researcher. I dissociated myself from the role of "teacher" by, for example, wearing the T-shirts the youth wore and not answering questions normally directed at teachers. Within a few weeks, my presence had been relatively normalized. I easily drifted between participating in program activities with the youth and sitting in the house of the theater to jot field notes on physical and verbal behaviors.

> Though Addie undoubtedly had her own brand of magic, it seems to me that any instructor can create micro temporal arcs. By structuring each day's activities to culminate in a product, afterschool practitioners can engage youth in the program so that they want to attend more regularly.

The Micro-Temporal Arc in Action

Toward the end of a particular session with the 14–18-year-old group, I noticed a feeling of intense focus. The youth didn't fidget, laugh, or look around for eye contact with friends. A focused silence filled the room. The day's activities had built to produce an intense culminating experience.

My sketch of that one day's activities looked like a temporal arc. Further timeline sketches of other sessions showed the same pattern: a series of micro temporal arcs. The Green Door teaching artist, Addie, was designing daily activities so that each day culminated in some kind of product. Though Addie undoubtedly had her own brand of magic, it seems to me that any instructor can create micro temporal arcs. By structuring each day's activities to culminate in a product, afterschool practitioners can engage youth in the program so that they want to attend more regularly. The micro temporal arc thus can be one mechanism for quickly and successfully providing the "hook," or short-term trigger (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000), that promotes participation. As shown in Figures 2 and 3, these micro temporal arcs can also contribute toward semester- or year-long temporal arcs.

To illustrate how a day's activities can create a micro temporal arc, I examined the session that ended with such intense focus. This day's micro temporal arc built not toward a product or performance but toward a collective emotional climax. Micro temporal arcs can and should have a variety of possible end goals, so that the concept retains flexibility in application. The day started with the students making tableaux of inanimate objects and ended with Addie challenging students to apply their insights from the tableaux to the people in their lives, especially in their family.

This day's theme revolved around status. By the end of the session, Addie had related this theme to the theme for the year, which was family and the processes by which family members grow apart and come together. All year, activities explored the students' roles in their families. The final performance at the end of the year was about one family's change in status after winning the lottery. This day's micro temporal arc thus fit neatly into the theme for the program year.

Addie's activity design followed Heath's (2001) outline of the temporal arc: planning and preparation, practice and deliberation, final intensive readiness, culminating presentation, and down time.

Planning and Preparation: Warm-Up

Warm-ups at Green Door typically started with the young people walking around on the stage. At intervals, the teacher would clap or call "freeze." The participants would then, depending on the instructions, strike a tableau depicting a concept or story, interact with a peer, or say something out loud. This routine was consistent enough to provide structure but malleable enough to serve the purposes of a given day's plan.

On this particular day, Addie asked the students to freeze and yell out the name of one of the inanimate objects in the room. She then prompted students to represent inanimate objects with their bodies in a tableau. This seemingly strange request began the connection with objects that got students engaged with the theme for the day.

In the ensuing circle discussion, Addie tied the concept of inanimate objects to the theme for that day's class:

Addie: Relationships. What is a relationship?
Beatriz: A connection between two people.
Addie: Yes. But right now we're not going to talk about relationships between two people, but between objects. For example: toilet, bathtub, sink. What is the relationship?
Aitana: They're all in the bathroom.
Addie: Ok, so they're all in the bathroom. There's a relationship. Now, which one has more *status*?

After a bit of discussion, everyone agreed that the sink has the most status.

Then Addie had the young people look around the room to find objects that had the least status. Participants listed various items, such as beat-up sofa cushions, and discussed why they had little status. When Violet, a teaching artist in training, cited the spike tape (that is, the tape used to mark the stage floor), Addie naturally moved the group into the next phase by introducing the object's point of view.

Addie: Good. Violet, I'd like you to show us with your body the spike tape. Now argue and talk from its point of view. What would the spike tape say?
Flor: (chiming in) You just replace me.
Addie: Wow. Being replaceable! That's pretty low.

Practice and Deliberation: Building Activity

From the discussion on being replaceable, Addie transitioned into a group activity. She gave small groups just a few minutes to decide on a tableau that would represent several inanimate objects in some part of a house. This activity allowed the young people to connect with each other to come up with something cohesive to present.

As each group presented in turn, the rest of the class guessed which objects they represented. Then the class discussed—sometimes hotly—who had the most status. In one instance, Aitana ended the debate by saying, "The TV has the power to keep people on the sofa, so it has more status." Addie exclaimed, "Yes! It has the power to keep you trapped on the sofa for hours!"

After this debate, Addie had the students expand on their frozen pictures by presenting the status of their objects through a point-of-view monologue. For example, Eric, representing the rug, exclaimed, "I'm stepped on. I've had liquids spilled on me. I've been urinated on!" He went on to talk about the "world of anarchy" around him. Addie used this speech to transition into anthropomorphized *relationships* by introducing a clock, which has to convince the rug not to die. In beginning collaborative emotional work, Addie primed the next phase, which involved placing the status of one object in relation to others.

Final Intensive Readiness: Building Emotion

In this phase, Addie had participants improvise skits in which the objects they represented, with their varied status levels, talked to one another. To set up these dialogues, Addie first pushed the students to mine the individual points of view of the objects, their motives or backgrounds, and the emotional undercurrents of their relative status. Though the youth were applying themselves, they often relied on Addie to push them to speak in a way that satisfied the emotional content.

For example, Addie called Crystal onstage to continue representing a kitchen sink, which the students had agreed was a low-status object compared to the refrigerator and stove.

Addie: There are three human essentials: air, food, water. Three minutes without air, three days without water, three weeks without food. I want you to talk about your perspective as the "low status" sink, even though you provide water. Water comes out of *you*, baby.
Crystal: (hesitantly) I give you water, you come to me first when you are thirsty.…
Addie: How does it feel, to be so misused, but to see

your own value? Here you are representing the element of water and yet they treat you like this.

Crystal: I feel betrayed.

Emotional commitment reached similar crescendos in similar scenes with other students. The last point of view was Aitana as a teacup. The group had valued the teacup highly in comparison to the silverware, represented by another person. When Aitana mentioned that she has a pretty design and "you put your lips softly on me and drink," Addie summoned Sebastian.

Addie: Sebastian, you are a human, and you are going to sell this cup at a garage sale.

Other students: Aw!

Addie: You really need the cash. Aitana, convince him to keep you.

Aitana has trouble getting through this. At one point she squeezes her eyes shut and presses her fingers to the lids. She takes a breath and says "OK, OK," shaking her hands out a little. Addie eggs the pair on until this moment:

Sebastian: I have other teacups.

(Other students gasp.)

Addie: (shocked) Oh! Sebastian!

The students had become invested in the scene. They had developed an emotional connection to the issue of status, feeling bad for the lower-status teacup in relation to the human owner. Soon after, Addie called a halt and walked onto the stage. She explained that what the students had been doing was *anthropomorphizing*, making inanimate objects human. Then she explicated the emotional component.

Addie: Now, I could just feel the human emotions here. We all know what "other teacups" means. It means other women. (To Aitana) How did you feel?

Aitana: It hurt me.

Addie: Tell him.

Aitana: (turning to Sebastian) You hurt me.

Note how Addie maintained flexibility throughout the activities. She could not have planned for a student to pick a teacup or for the dialogues to enfold as they did. Instead, she worked with what the students brought to the room to move toward the day's goal.

Culminating Presentation: Heightened Emotion

Addie clapped her hands and had the students once again walk around the room, as they had during the warm-up. As they walked, Addie began narrating back to them some of the statuses they had just acted out on the stage, pulling on the emotional content specifically. Finally, she told them to think about human status. When she called "freeze," she wanted them to assume a position that represented the lowest status a human could possibly take.

Most ended up on the ground, either lying down or sitting with downcast eyes, hunched shoulders, and chins tilted to the ground. The few left standing had very caved-in torsos and hanging heads; they looked like they might fall. Some who lay on the ground had their hands reaching up as if grasping or begging. Leaning on the piano at the side of the stage, Addie asked them to hold their positions. "You guys nailed it." Calmly, quietly—even sadly—she went on, "We see [people] every day. They carry themselves because there is no one else who will. And it's hard to reach out, but they, and you, are beautiful in its sadness."

The way she spoke was intense. She let the moment sit heavy on the students in their positions. Then she snapped them out of it and had them move again. They froze in positions of middle status and then high status, with poses becoming progressively taller and more open. Then Addie moved into quick successive rounds, increasing the intensity in her voice, the reaction speeds, and the emotional charge. As they moved, she directed students to think about their own families and then strike poses: "What is the status you have in your family today, right now?" "Think about the status in our society that you will have in the future."

The last prompt went like this: "Think of a family member who is struggling right now. The path they are on is not a healthy one. Think about their status ten years from now. You can have hope for them or not. You don't have to share, but it has to be a specific person." Many of the youth ended up back on the floor. Only a few seemed to show any kind of hope. The youth were as still as I ever saw them. The heavy silence was broken only when Addie spoke: "What can you do to stop this? What caring or empathy can you give to change this status? Because this is pretty damn low." She let these questions sit in the room for a few long breaths. Then she released the tension by telling the youth to circle up for a short debrief.

Down Time: Reflection and Evaluation

Once the students were standing in a circle, Addie had them go around and say a single adjective to describe themselves in their family. The words they generated were varied: underestimated, there, important, supported, helpfulness, blissful, pupil, unique, supportive, different, middle, respected, loyal. Addie occasionally made brief

Figure 4. Addie's Micro Temporal Arc
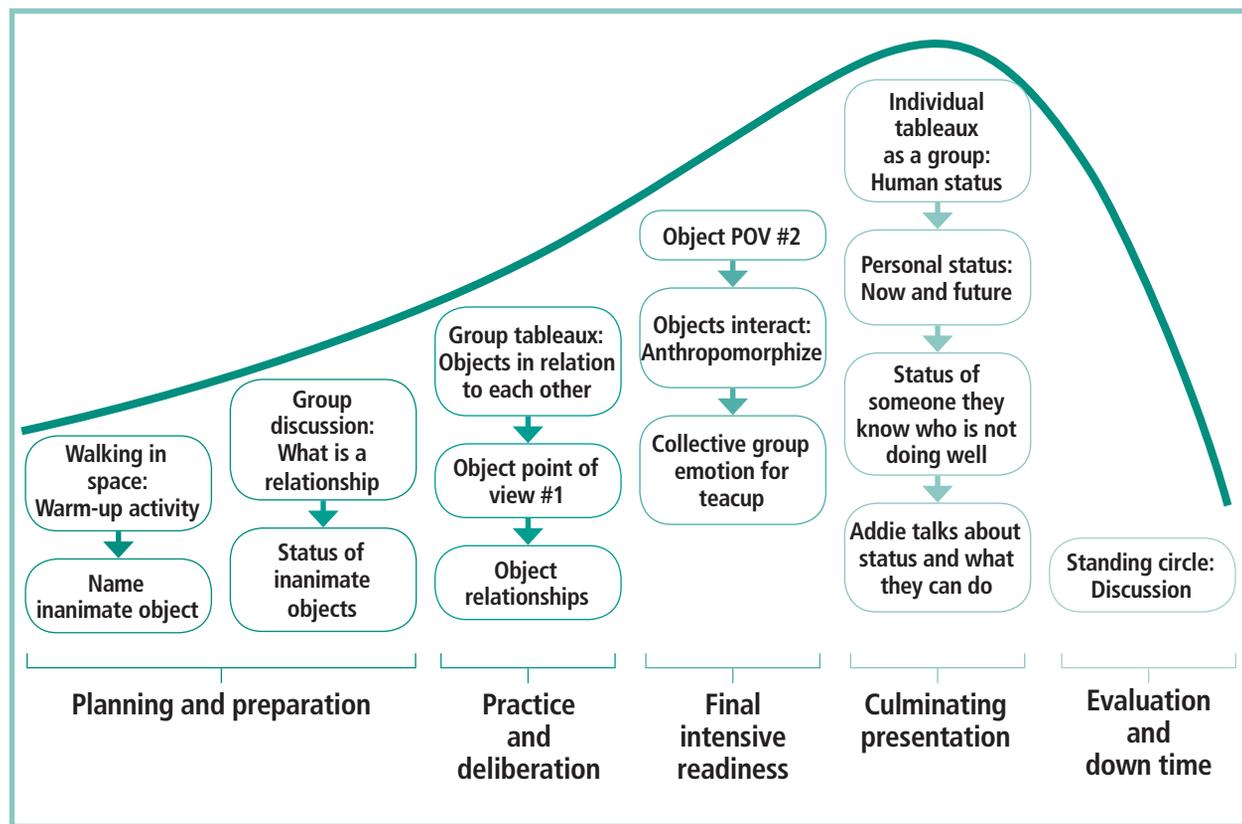
comments; for example, after *supportive*, she noted, "Interesting, we had suppor*ted* and suppor*tive*. These are very different." However, she did not ask participants to elaborate; she let them reflect on their lives in relation to the day's activities. The session ended with acknowledgement of the excellent work that day, with Addie saying, "Give yourselves a big round of applause."

The circle was the denouement or falling trajectory of the day's arc. The session had peaked with a high level of focus and emotional investment in the final poses. This trajectory, and the participants' engagement with it, were not simply accidental. Addie constructed individual activities to build on each other toward the emotional culmination. Figure 4 shows the activities of this session as part of a micro temporal arc.

Evidence of Participation

I have no objective measure of the students' engagement that day. However, my field notes emphasize that, as the activities progressed, students became increasingly invested in acting out their scenes and watching one another's work. The collective gasp from the entire audience when Sebastian said, "I have other teacups" was an example.

In the final poses, the ones focused on their families, students didn't giggle, twitch, or squirm; they kept their focus inward instead of looking to their friends. My field notes ended with the following sentiments:

> I thought about it again—through the stream of activities [there was] a golden thread. If you want to learn how to link your thoughts, activities, actions, etc., and come out with an incredibly strong statement or argument, watch Addie at work with the teens.

Speaking later to one of the participants, I said I thought the day had been interesting: "How did we go from sinks to human status?" Bianca agreed, saying it had been a really good day, but as for *how*? She shrugged and concluded, "It's Addie. She just does it." Bianca was probably right to some extent; Addie is an engaging person. However, she also took care to structure the day cumulatively, spinning out that golden thread. This structure drew students into the activities. They got engaged without necessarily knowing why and without having to consciously work for that outcome.

Though I can't provide "hard" evidence of engagement on that particular day, Green Door's attendance rates suggest that participants are in fact

engaged. The year after my fieldwork, 61 percent of the youth (not including high school graduates) returned the following year. None said that they quit because they were bored, a common reason for OST dropout cited by Weisman & Gottfredson (2001). Rather, two young people had family issues; the others had conflicting programs after school. The next school year, 2016–2017, 100 percent of youth from the previous year returned.

Micro Temporal Arcs and Participation

The micro temporal arc Addie created offers a vivid example of how activities build to produce, in this case, an emotional culmination. Other times, the culmination could involve individual work or an explicit performance. In other programs, the process will manifest in different ways, building toward a different product for the day: executing a challenging sports maneuver, playing difficult music in a group, or competing with a peer to practice newly acquired skills. The micro temporal arc gives facilitators creativity and flexibility in the kinds of activities they prepare. The point is to create a goal-oriented environment every day. Movement toward a culmination fosters collective investment in which each individual engages.

The everyday routine of an afterschool program is key to engaging youth successfully. Simultaneously, engagement needs to be maintained for weeks and months. The cumulative effort of a year- or semester-long temporal arc can be reproduced in miniature to maintain engagement and encourage attendance day after day. As at Green Door, temporal and micro temporal arcs can work in tandem to link short-term and long-term goals. Building activities into a micro temporal arc provides the golden thread that ties the day's activities together.

The micro temporal arc is one of many avenues for creating quality programming, which is characterized by safety, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, skill building, and integration with other contexts such as family and school (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002). Planning for micro temporal arcs can be part of the quality equation, simultaneously encouraging both engagement and attendance.

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Supporting Effective Youth Work

Job-Embedded Professional Development in OST

Jocelyn S. Wiedow

Youth work practitioners play a critical role in providing high-quality out-of-school time (OST) opportunities. Research shows that high-quality programs contribute to positive outcomes for youth (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2009). Beyond research, practitioners tell stories that reflect how youth worker quality affects youth experience, both positively and negatively.

Unfortunately, quality professional development is not always available to youth-serving organizations—and it isn't always a priority. The key to creating and sustaining quality is supporting the development not only of youth but also of staff (Sabo Flores, n.d.).

Challenges to developing staff quality include limited staff hours and lack of funding for training. However, even organizations that have enough time and money still may not develop their people effectively. Traditionally, organizations send staff to trainings without offering follow-up support to enable them to apply the learning (Hirsh, 2009; National Staff Development Council, 2001; Senge, 1990). To effectively develop youth worker expertise, supervisors must create a culture that allows staff to integrate their learning into practice and reflect on its application. This article outlines how supervisors can create a culture of learning by employing job-embedded professional development. It offers three models for staff learning, each supported by practical tips and real-world examples.

Creating a Culture of Learning

Supervisors—whether they are directors, managers, or coordinators, whether they have responsibility for one site or many—are responsible for the effectiveness of staff and programming. If they are supported by the organization's top leaders, they can create conditions

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that enable staff to grow as a team and as individuals. A culture of learning encourages employees to increase their knowledge and abilities and to function more productively—even when team members have a wide range of skills and experience. Personal growth is important even for the most seasoned staff members.

Supervisors can encourage this discipline by establishing continuous improvement as a norm. Continuous improvement involves ongoing development, beyond specific training days, with opportunities to practice and reflect on new skills. It encourages experimentation, supporting staff over time to try new strategies rather than subjecting them to immediate evaluation (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

A culture of learning and continuous improvement has many benefits. Organizations grow stronger when they commit to the personal growth of employees (Senge, 1990). Senge (1990) notes that individuals who are supported in their personal growth are committed to their work, take initiative, and learn quickly. Some OST practitioners come to work with this mindset; others need support to develop it. Staff whose supervisors support their learning and give them voice in decision-making are more likely to continue working with youth. When support is inadequate, staff turnover is higher, requiring supervisors to hire and train new staff continually (Hartje, Evans, Killian, & Brown, 2008). Supporting staff development is therefore a cost-effective choice for organizations.

OST-Style Support for OST Staff

For OST providers, helping staff grow should be easy. It is what we do every day with young people. In a study of five high-quality youth programs, a common feature emerged: These programs developed into learning organizations by incorporating positive youth development strategies with staff (Sabo Flores, n.d.). Like effective youth developers, successful OST staff developers:

- **Put learners at the center.** Strategies for strengthening the learning both of young people and of staff include participation, engagement, discovery, and critical reflection (Huebner, Walker, & McFarland, 2003). One common tactic is to model youth development best practices in staff training.
- **Lead as facilitators of learning, not as experts.** Youth and youth workers both bring their own perspectives and prior knowledge; both can learn

> For OST providers, helping staff grow should be easy. It is what we do every day with young people.

more when they share learning with others (Madzey-Akale & Walker, 2000). Supervisors should create space for staff to exchange ideas and knowledge. One model is formal or informal mentoring, in which staff members demonstrate specific skills for each other.

- **Incorporate reflective practices.** Youth workers incorporate reflection as a way to help youth better understand what they are learning and how it relates to their experience. Similarly, access to published research, combined with reflection, enables staff to connect their practice to theory (Huebner et al., 2003).

Elements of Job-Embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded professional development is a way to apply OST best practices to support staff. Its key elements set the conditions for a culture of learning grounded in continuous improvement. Organizations that successfully embed professional development:

1. **Incorporate learning in all job descriptions.** Organizations are more successful when the expectation of continuous learning is embedded in job descriptions (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010). Connecting development to key job functions at hiring not only sets up expectations but also demonstrates the organization's investment in staff.
2. **Allot time, space, structures, and supports** (Croft et al., 2010; National Staff Development Council, 2001). Dedicating time and resources so staff can integrate theory and practice is a vital investment (Huebner et al., 2003). One way to find time in already tight schedules, explored in detail below, is to incorporate new practices into existing staff meetings.
3. **Pay staff to learn.** Job-embedded professional development is, by definition, integrated into the paid workday. The fact that this definition is a barrier for many organizations is a strong argument for writing staff development into funding requests. Holding staff and programs accountable for positive youth outcomes means that organizations have to be accountable for building staff skills (Surr, 2012).
4. **Connect staff learning to youth experience.** Job-embedded learning is closely linked to the work environment (Croft et al., 2010). Lessons learned in professional development must be brought back to the work staff do with youth.

Table 1. Professional Development During Scheduled Work Time

Type of Activity	10 Minutes	30 Minutes	2 Hours
COMMUNITY BUILDING	• Opening prompt • Icebreaker • Spirit week • Recognitions (in person or on bulletin board) • Follow-up on earlier discussions	• Staff huddle • Team-building activity • Potluck meal • Discussion of quotes, phrases, or similar prompts • Supervisor assistance in staff work spaces	• Community tour or scavenger hunt • Field trip • Staff event including families • End-of-year staff celebration
INPUT AND PLANNING	• Coaching conversation on upcoming event, lesson plan, etc. • Brief check-in on staff-identified area for improvement • Offer of supervisor support, asking what assistance staff need	• Lesson planning using a structured template (for staff not regularly involved in planning) • Planning for staff-led special projects or events	• Lesson planning for next week or beyond (for staff not regularly involved in planning) • Planning youth activities for the semester or year • Determining action items for team or individual improvement plans
OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD OR MENTOR	• Staff-led community-building activity • Shared "mission moments": examples of staff work that illustrate the program's mission	• Staff-led lunch & learn • Mini teach-back after outside training • Staff-led volunteer orientation • Staff-led team meetings, community builders, etc. • Staff-led presentation to funders or other outside stakeholders	• Peer observation • Staff-led new-staff orientation and shadowing • Teach-back after outside training • Staff input into strategic plan or logic model • Site visits to other programs • Outside networking opportunities
REFLECTION	• Staff "graffiti wall" with prompt • Staff huddle with beginning or ending reflection question	• Coaching reflection • Authenticity circle • Learning walk • Monthly debrief	• Embedded reflection • Reflection or debrief on program data • Off-site coaching sessions on personal or professional goals

These powerful directives set a foundation for changing the culture of an organization. They can help supervisors determine what professional development processes to implement.

Process of Job-Embedded Professional Development

Professional development has two main elements: content and process. *Content* covers the things staff need to learn, whether organization-specific practices or topics in youth development. This article focuses on the *processes* supervisors can use to connect content with practice.

Sabo Flores (n.d.), in her study of five high-quality programs, emphasized the importance of process in staff development.

The value of the approach taken by these five out-of-school-time organizations lies not so much in *what* the staff members create … but in the *processes* by which they create…. It is not only the quality of the curricula and activities, but the process of developing

Table 2. Professional Development During Staff Meetings

Activity	Minutes	Description
Welcome prompt	5–10	• Ask a question: What was your favorite field trip destination as a kid? What are you looking forward to this winter/summer? What made you laugh this week during programming? What young person or staff member did you see shine? • Ask for brief responses (in one or two breaths) to keep on schedule.
Icebreaker/ team builder	5–15	• Staff lead an icebreaker that can be used in your program. • After the activity, ask reflection questions to debrief and plan. Did the instructions communicate the activity? What will participants like and not like about this activity? What supports might the facilitator need?
Bring it back	15	• Staff who attended outside training report back on two things they learned and how those learnings relate to programming. (5 minutes) • Other staff ask questions and discuss. (8 minutes) • What's next? First step to apply what was learned? Additional supports needed? Schedule a deeper discussion? (2 minutes)
Dip into data	15	• Review a piece of data from the previous week or month: attendance, survey, focus group, mini-observation. • Discuss what (the facts), so what (interpretation in your context), now what (action items).
Reflection	5	• Leader asks a question: What are you most excited about for the next week? What do you need today so you can show up as your best self? Who do you want to connect with this week? • Staff can reflect alone, in pairs, or with the full group.

the curricula and activities. It is not only the number and type of professional development activities available, but the ways in which the organization relates to staff members as learners and supports them to grow and learn.

Organizations that implement the first three elements of job-embedded professional development outlined above but do not connect the learning to experience are not fully supporting their staff. The process of job-embedded professional development enables staff to integrate content into their work. Even when staff attend outside trainings, they need time to reflect on and adjust their practices. The process enhances the content—just as when we create space for young people to connect their learning to their experience.

A Place to Start

Embedding professional development into the workday can feel overwhelming. One place for supervisors to start is to look at what the program is already doing well and what they know from their youth work practice. Table 1 (page 21) shows four elements of quality youth programming and provides examples of professional development activities supervisors can lead in each of those areas if they have 10 minutes, 30 minutes, or two hours. Some activities are stand-alone, while others can be added to an existing agenda. Any of them can move regularly scheduled staff meetings beyond updates and logistics to provide meaningful learning opportunities.

Table 2 offers detailed examples of staff development activities that can be integrated into regularly scheduled staff meetings, one or two at a time. To build leadership, rotate staff members to facilitate different parts of the agenda.

Three Job-Embedded Professional Development Strategies

The strategies for job-embedded professional development outlined here are just three of many. Coaching, professional learning communities, and peer observation can be used independently or combined. All three can be scaled to fit the structure and complexity of the program or organization. Real-world examples of how each strategy can work come from programs in Saint Paul, Minnesota, that participate in the Sprockets network.

Coaching

One way for busy supervisors to be intentional in engaging staff in professional development is to provide coaching. Coaching is an individualized approach that empowers staff members to become "self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for excellence both independently and as members of a community" (Costa & Garmston, 2003).

How It Works

Coaching can be a process of engaging staff in thoughtful examination and transformation of their thinking about their work. High-quality coaching depends on four main components:

- **Creating a safe environment.** Trust is the foundation of a successful coaching relationship. Staff may feel vulnerable about sharing their struggles with their work.
- **Asking good questions.** Thoughtful open-ended questions are a catalyst of critical thinking. Good questions allow staff to reflect on their plans and implementation; they also prompt self-evaluation.
- **Listening with intensity.** Coaches need to be aware of both verbal and nonverbal communication. They must listen for understanding, ask for clarification when necessary, and paraphrase what they hear.
- **Providing objective feedback.** When coaches share what they have seen and heard, they enable staff to reflect and make their own decisions, informed by data.

These four components can increase the effectiveness of an intentional coaching practice. Coaching isn't just making time to talk; it is facilitated conversation in a safe environment. That said, coaching interactions should be adjusted to meet staff needs. Sometimes supervisors may need to transition a coaching conversation to a problem-solving or planning conversation, all the while maintaining the intent of meeting the staffer's self-directed learning needs. Coaches must be flexible.

Besides offering structured coaching, supervisors can also look for ways to integrate coaching informally in regular staff interactions, such as during planning meetings or program time. As an organization embeds professional development in its practice, coaching can be applied to everyday interactions across roles—whether staff are working together, engaging youth, or supporting families. In every case, the learning needs of the individual being coached direct the conversations.

> For organizations, benefits included a more professional work culture, higher job satisfaction, and increased collaboration. Most importantly, coaching was associated with increased positive outcomes for young people.

The role of coach does not have to fall on the supervisor alone. Every staff person has the capacity to be a coach at specific times. When leaders make the four components of coaching common practice, staff members can coach their peers. After all, they already serve as coaches to program participants and families.

Costa and Garmston (2003) reviewed numerous studies that showed the benefits of coaching. When coaches build trust, create space for reflection, and empower autonomy, staff members can build self-efficacy, with the ability to self-manage, self-monitor, and self-modify (Costa & Garmston, 2003). Staff who receive coaching can improve their confidence and ability to work independently instead of needing to be told what to do. For organizations, benefits included a more professional work culture, higher job satisfaction, and increased collaboration. Most importantly, coaching was associated with increased positive outcomes for young people (Costa & Garmston, 2003). Coaching also benefits the coach. For many practitioners, the reason they got into youth work is lost when they become supervisors. Being a coach taps into their primary areas of expertise—listening, building trust, fostering learning—and can renew their sense of fulfillment as they engage others in growth and development.

Supervisor Best Practices

A first step for supervisors interested in coaching staff is to get training. Our system uses resources from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Development (n.d.), which

provides a full-day quality coaching training as part of its Youth Program Quality Intervention. Other training options may come from the school district, the state department of education, a local college, or a third party (Hanover Research, 2012). Coaching is most effective when it starts with the supervisor, even if peer coaching is an eventual goal. Leaders must first model best practices and demonstrate their commitment. The budget has to include regular staff time for coaching.

The frequency of coaching meetings can range, based on the context. Are there changes in programming or staff? Have new goals or priorities been set? Such changes will go more smoothly if supported by professional development. When it's time to add peer coaching to the mix, supervisors can coach staff to become coaches, demonstrate coaching skills during staff meetings, or encourage formal training, if that option is available.

From the Field

The mission of Saint Paul Urban Tennis (SPUT) is "transforming lives through tennis." Although SPUT operates year-round with a small full-time staff, its summer programming increases dramatically, incorporating a large number of high school and college-age tennis coaches at sites across Saint Paul. A few summer coordinators are hired to support clusters of tennis sites. Because these summer coordinators have limited access to the training that full-time staff attend during the school year, SPUT leaders had to figure out a realistic way for them to learn reflective coaching skills.

The solution was a brief training that shows coordinators how to use a SPUT-designed reflective conversation form with tennis coaches. They can use this form to reflect with tennis coaches during site visits or at trainings where lead tennis coaches meet with their coordinator. The form includes four questions for observation and reflection:
- How did it go?
- What went well? What made that successful?
- What would you do differently?
- What support do you need?

The form also includes prompts for the coordinator to reflect with the tennis coaches on their strengths and opportunities for improvement.

This process of empowering coordinators to coach summer tennis coaches has not only improved the quality of programming but also helped build positive experiences for the young staff. Laura Fedock, associate director of SPUT, summarized the effect this way:

The reflective conversation form has helped coordinators build community by creating the space to connect with tennis coaches in a meaningful way. Our coaches learn that SPUT cares about helping them build their skills and about equipping them to do well in their job. Feeling supported in their work has benefited SPUT, as many coaches return for summer jobs year after year. (personal communication, May 8, 2018)

Professional Learning Communities

Where coaching supports individual growth, professional learning communities (PLCs) allow staff members to learn collaboratively (Hirsh, 2009). PLCs share a common focus so that staff can learn together, tapping the range of experience, knowledge, and abilities present in almost any OST program. PLCs can be formed at multiple levels within an organization or among many organizations (National Staff Development Council, 2001). This section focuses on PLCs within individual organizations and supervisors' role in creating them.

PLCs provide a nonjudgmental network for personal and professional support. According to Hanover Research (2012), they support:
- Teamwork and collaboration through discussion of dilemmas and possible solutions
- Professional growth through sharing of knowledge and experiences, reflection on practices, setting of goals for growth, and constructive feedback
- Leadership skills through interaction with colleagues
- Productivity through building of staff relationships
- Buy-in for vision and practices through engagement in the group process

Depending on their size and the structure and context of their work, different OST organizations might choose different PLC models. Three models are outlined here.

Authenticity circles. A merger of coaching and collaborative learning, an authenticity circle is a small group of colleagues who come together for peer coaching connected to real dilemmas. At each meeting, one individual presents a dilemma. The colleagues practice coaching skills to help determine possible solutions. Authenticity circles can be helpful for staff teams at one site or for supervisors across multiple sites.

Brown-bag meetings. These informal meetings are called "brown bag" because they occur during lunch—*paid* lunch time, in keeping with the principles of job-embedded professional development. Frequency can range from weekly to monthly to quarterly. One

approach is to have staff members sign up to facilitate discussion on a topic they want to present. Staff could generate a list of topics to cover during the program year, or supervisors can bring strategic topics based on program or community needs. Informal lunch meetings are ideal for fostering peer learning and for creating safe places where staff can practice presentation skills.

Learning cohort. Typically seen as more formal, learning cohorts are groups of staff from different departments, sites, or organizations who learn together over a set period. Cohorts allow participants to learn together and build deep understanding on a shared topic of interest. Groups can decide how they want to learn together.

> In professional development as in youth development, we scaffold opportunities for participants to move from experiential learning to leadership, providing opportunities for voice and choice along the way.

Supervisor Best Practices

In professional development as in youth development, we scaffold opportunities for participants to move from experiential learning to leadership, providing opportunities for voice and choice along the way. First, supervisors should look at what is happening in the program and where the organization is in its evolution of a culture of learning. Then they can build PLCs in incremental steps. A basic PLC can take place during regular staff meetings, if time is built in for discussion of staff-selected topics. Once staff are familiar with the process of collaborative learning, supervisors can identify staff interested in leading or participating in another format, such as one of those described above. A successful PLC requires supervisor support, which could include giving time on a monthly meeting agenda or structuring staff schedules to accommodate meetings with colleagues (Vance, Salvaterra, Michelsen, & Newhouse, 2016). Like creating a culture of learning, establishing an ongoing PLC is a developmental process.

From the Field

The Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center (KAYSC) is a youth program out of the Science Museum of Minnesota. In addition to its full-time regular staff, KAYSC staff include interns, project assistants, and AmeriCorps volunteers. At any given time, these positions are typically held by 10 to 25 young adults, ages 18–24. AmeriCorps positions are one year; other positions may last up to three years, depending on the role and funding. The individual goals of these short-term staff members vary: Some want to continue in youth work, some want to work for the museum, and some are interested in science careers or in entirely different fields. KAYSC is committed to their learning.

The project manager who oversees these young workers convenes them as what KAYSC calls the Leadership Cohort once a month for approximately three (paid) hours. Because these staff members work on different projects, this is the only time for them to learn as a group. Leadership Cohort learning, based on the KAYSC program model, includes leadership in using science and technology for social justice and development of youth work skills. Processes include shared skill building, networking, and community building.

Robby Callahan Schrieber, KAYSC program manager, described why KAYSC has committed to creating a learning community with staff:

> It is part of our core values that we are a program of community, connective and reflective experiences. Young people, interns, and staff are all here for a shared experience of constant learning and growth. We work hard to write professional development time into grants…. We hear from directors that this is a huge value to support and retain staff. The work we do does not have the greatest compensation, so we want to ensure there is the added benefit of growth. This has made our department healthier. (personal communication, April 15, 2015)

Of course KAYSC also offers regular development for other staff as well. During an especially busy year, weekly cross-department staff meetings became cumbersome— but, as a learning organization, KAYSC recognized the value of gathering all staff to learn together. The supervisors therefore introduced brown-bag lunches. Each month, a different staff member presents a specific topic, often based on that person's specialty, or teaches learning from an outside training. The lunch meetings are paid time to reinforce the idea that KAYSC values shared learning.

Peer Observations

Peer observation is a strategy that can provide learning for both the observer and the observed. Though

observations are used for performance evaluations, that is not the intent when focusing on professional development. In an organization that has built a culture of learning, staff will welcome observations, knowing the intent is development and not evaluation. Two sample peer observation practices are learning walks and use of formal assessment tools.

Learning walks enable staff to observe other staff in action during program sessions. Observers and those being observed agree in advance on the focus of the observation. The program's goals often inform what observers look for. As they walk through other staff members' program spaces, the observers take notes on the agreed-upon topics. These notes should be objective: What observers see, not what they think about what they see. A variety of school-day learning walk templates are available on the Internet, but another option is for staff to develop their own protocol—in itself is a collaborative learning opportunity.

Assessment tools like those reviewed by the Forum for Youth Investment (Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, & Shinn, 2009) can help supervisors structure peer observations. Though these tools are often used by external evaluators, they also can be used for low-stakes observations as part of a continuous improvement cycle. They allow programs to measure specific staff practices including relationships, environment, engagement, social norms, skill-building opportunities, and routines or structures. Typical observations cover a full program session from start to finish. However, staff and supervisors can work together to adapt assessment tools to shorter peer observations focused on mutual learning.

Peer observations are most successful when incorporated in a continuous improvement process. Key practices, pulled from Bloom (2007) and a handbook from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (2011), include:

• Using a clear protocol that is understood by all staff
• Identifying the focus of the observation so that it is understood by both the observer and the observed
• Taking objective notes during the observation
• Reflecting on the observation, usually with the staff member observed, either individually or in a small group

Table 3 outlines some of the possible variations in peer observation structures.

Whatever the structure, the process should include planning before and reflection after the observation.

That's where the magic happens! During the planning, staff will agree on logistics and, more importantly, on the focus of the observation. The post-observation reflection depends on the purpose of the observation. In some cases, the observation benefits the observers, who reflect after the observation on the practices they observed in relation to their own work. Other observations are primarily for the person being observed, who uses the reflection time with observers to identify practices she or he wants to improve. Observers can use coaching strategies to make reflection time fully effective. For organization-wide improvement, multiple observations provide aggregate data that determines organization-wide development needs.

Supervisor Best Practices

The role of supervisors is to determine what observation strategy best fits the staff and the program. First, they must assess the extent to which the organization has established a learning culture. Do staff trust one another and have interest in learning and growing together? This foundation is critical. Being part of a low-stakes continuous improvement cycle strengthens trust. Furthermore, buy-in develops when staff are involved in setting up the process.

Second, supervisors must consider the capacity and structure of the program or organization. A thoughtful small step is better than jumping in unprepared. Will specific staff members pilot a process, or will peer observation be implemented across the whole program from the start? Another issue is the availability of tools. Does the organization or local OST system use a formal assessment tool that the program can adopt or adapt? Would someone on the team be interested in developing a learning walk protocol? Such questions can help supervisors determine the strategy and scope of implementation.

Third, supervisors are responsible for clear communication, which is necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the process—even when the observations use less formal methods. Transparency strengthens trust and helps a learning culture grow.

Finally, supervisors must encourage reflection, in which staff members make meaning of the observation data. Besides enabling observers and staff who have been observed to have meaningful conversations about findings, supervisors should also reflect with staff on the implementation of the process.

Table 3. Variations in Peer Observation Structures

Variation	Explanation
Formal or informal	Though all peer observations should be low stakes, they may be a part of a structured learning process. More formal observations might use established tools (see next entry), while observers in a less formal process might simply take objective notes to be used for reflective coaching.
Packaged or staff-created	Peer observations can be based on professionally developed assessment instruments. Alternatively, staff can write their own protocols or adapt instructor-made tools found online.
Full or partial session	Observation of a full session opens conversation about a broad range of topics. Observation of a specific element of a session, such as greeting time or an activity, enables more focused learning.
In-person or digital	In-person observation enables observes to watch the whole space, observe specific interactions, or attend to what interests them. Recording a session for later viewing enables colleagues to "visit" one another when all are facilitating activities at the same time.

From the Field

Flipside is Saint Paul Public School's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program for middle school students. Each of the 10 school sites has a full-time coordinator who manages logistics and supports the instructors.

To help these instructors grow, Flipside uses learning walks, in which small teams of two or three people float among two or more programming spaces for 15 to 30 minutes. Teams may include instructors, other site coordinators, and, in established sites, youth or parent leaders. Teams begin with an orientation to the learning walk protocol: its purpose, terms, and materials. The protocol aligns with the Youth Program Quality Assessment (David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, n.d.), which is used for formal observations. The observations focus on:

- Identifying, promoting, and celebrating high-quality practices
- Reinforcing shared thinking about what quality looks like
- Creating a feedback and learning loop through shared reflection

Recognizing that each site may be in a different state of readiness, supervisors have a three-phase approach to implementing learning walks.

- **Stabilizing:** Coordinators complete the learning walk orientation and participate in learning walks with an experienced coordinator.
- **Stability achieved:** Coordinators complete a minimum of two learning walks per year, train staff to observe, and establish a data-based reflection process to engage staff.
- **Stability being maintained:** Sites complete monthly learning walks, engaging various stakeholders as observers. Data-based reflection is built in. Non-staff stakeholders are trained to participate in learning walks.

Sites that are new or have changed coordinators often begin at the first phase. The goal in later phases is to engage all staff and even program participants in learning walks.

Supervisors Are the Key

The role of supervisors is critical to staff learning and growth. To embed professional development in day-to-day program work, they must first examine their own practice of supervision. Then they can look at ways to meet the professional development needs of staff—during paid work time, as an expected part of regular job duties. Staff meetings that communicate day-to-day logistics are not enough. Supervisors must create and sustain a culture of learning that values continuous

growth. Staff must have time and space to apply learning directly to their work.

Fortunately, OST supervisors already have the expertise they need. Youth development practices can serve as a model for professional development that engages staff in shared learning. All three strategies discussed in this paper can be effective, whether used individually or in combination. Supervisors should consider what structures are already in place in their programs for job-embedded professional development. From there, they can identify steps to strengthen what currently exists. When supervisors establish a culture of learning and strengthen job-embedded professional development, staff skills and abilities improve. As a result, staff and programs get stronger in their ability to serve program participants.

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Creating High-Performance Afterschool Programs

Sonia Toledo

In more than 25 years of training afterschool directors in New York City, I have learned that one of the greatest challenges supervisors face is developing and retaining their staff. I spend most of my energy researching best practices for afterschool and figuring out how to educate directors and make the research applicable to their work. One of the most consistent complaints I have heard is high staff turnover. Site supervisors are in a continuous struggle to develop and train new employees on the fundamental skills—managing groups, dealing with disruptive behavior, and so on—that youth workers need before they can successfully implement learning activities.

One way to break this cycle of continual on-boarding is to support site supervisors in implementing processes to build a high-performance culture in their afterschool programs. The intention is to build a culture in which staff collaborate and learn together to reach program goals. Building a culture where staff feel heard

and have opportunities to develop skills may improve the retention rate.

The idea of high-performance cultures comes from the corporate world, which may have something to teach us about stabilizing the out-of-school time workforce. One precept is that long-term success derives from an organization's capability to be consistent in delivering services to its clients (Kaliprasad, 2006). In afterschool programs, our clients are our children and youth. Kaliprasad (2006) cites major disadvantages that can keep an organization from performing at a high capacity, including (1) misalignment between staff capabilities and the skills required to deliver quality service and (2) unclear organizational systems and processes. To transform afterschool programs into high-performing cultures, we need to address these

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challenges. This essay recommends a model, borrowed from the corporate sector, for building a high-performance culture in afterschool programs at the site level. If implemented with fidelity, this model can support afterschool programs in stabilizing their workforce, improving their performance, and delivering quality services to children and youth.

Challenging Workforce

The challenges to building a high-performance culture in an afterschool program generally are related to the transient workforce. Afterschool programs typically hire community residents and college students as frontline staff to work directly with children. Most positions are part-time; the pay is usually on the borderline of minimum wage. These characteristics lead to the high staff turnover and inconsistent service delivery that plague our field (Baldwin & Wilder, 2014).

According to a survey done by National AfterSchool Association (NAA, 2006), one-third of youth workers are between 18 and 30 years old. Their stage in life contributes to staff turnover, because young adults typically are still in school themselves or are figuring out their own career paths. Furthermore, many are part-time workers, who generally transition out of afterschool work in two or three years (NAA, 2006).

Staff levels of education can also be a challenge to consistency in the afterschool workforce. Although supervisors often hold associate's or bachelor's degrees, the degrees may be in fields that are not relevant to work with children (NAA, 2006). Therefore, training and development become critical factors in building a high-performance culture for site supervisors and direct service staff.

Four Components of a High-Performance Culture

A field like ours that is still establishing its role in society needs strong systems to support growth and sustainability. Bradshaw (2015) emphasizes that afterschool program leaders usually understand the necessity of developing their workforce, but they often fail to connect the intention with actual implementation. Investment in middle managers is critical; in the long term, the site supervisors are the ones who will implement, reinforce, evaluate, and enhance program practices (Bradshaw, 2015). They are the ones who can form a high-

> A field like ours that is still establishing its role in society needs strong systems to support growth and sustainability.

performance culture at the site level.

One model for a high-performance culture that can easily be adopted by afterschool programs was proposed by M. J. Wriston in 2007. Wriston's model emphasizes four components:

1. Creating a collaborative climate
2. Building a culture of accountability
3. Focusing on outcomes
4. Having robust processes

This model can support supervisors in establishing a learning culture that benefits both staff and program participants. With its emphasis on learning as a team and building systems, it can help staff stay focused on youth and program outcomes.

Creating a Collaborative Climate

According to Wriston (2007), organizations and teams must understand the power of collaboration at every level to raise the energy of their creative activity and problem solving. Collaboration brings value to workers' actions in the workplace. To begin, afterschool leaders should have a clear process to create a shared learning culture that continuously builds the capacity of program staff to achieve the program's vision and intended outcomes. Processes should be in place to have staff learn and create together on a regular basis. Programs can train staff as a team so they learn consistent methods and strategies.

Staff might also meet on a regular basis to design curriculum that supports the program's focus. Baldwin and Wilder (2014) point out that afterschool staff who feel valued for their work are invested in doing their best. Creating an environment where staff members have input on curriculum design and work together to resolve day-to-day issues can create that sense of value and purpose. Together, staff can co-create a shared vision of the participant outcomes they are working toward. According to Wriston (2007), organizations that establish a collaborative process for team learning will benefit by establishing great synergy and a clear competitive edge for their services.

A starting point for site supervisors looking to create a collaborative climate is to bring staff into the process of writing procedures. Usually, site procedures are handed to staff, who are expected simply to implement them—though the staff are the ones who know best what

procedures do and don't work. Instead, try writing a new procedure and then ask staff for feedback on how to strengthen it. Remind them, as necessary, that procedures are action steps to fulfill written policies. When you and staff members have revised the draft together, set up a trial period to test the new procedure and again ask staff for feedback. Bringing staff into the process of creating procedures on an ongoing basis will give them ownership of program operations. The goal is to create a culture in which everyone has input. Remember to give staff time to prepare during their allotted hours, or else incorporate time for this work into regular staff meetings. Finding ways to facilitate a collaborative climate may seem difficult at first, but it will benefit staff morale in the long run.

Focus on the Outcomes

As afterschool programs are being held accountable for academic outcomes, identifying clear goals is becoming ever more crucial. Staff can't easily stay focused on outcomes that have not been clearly identified! As Wriston (2007) explains, high-performance organizations are clear about expectations at all levels; they continually emphasize their priorities to keep staff motivated.

Though afterschool programs often tend to focus on many areas, they are more likely to experience success when they focus on key areas that support their specialty, whether that is literacy, a sport, or STEAM (science, technology, engineering, and math, plus arts). In addition to specific academic or specialty content areas, programs often have social and emotional developmental goals, such as fostering team skills or self-efficacy. Most social and emotional outcomes support the learning environment of the classroom. For example, teaching children how to work as a team can support effective STEAM activities. Help your staff prioritize building a strong classroom culture while focusing on your program's specialty skills. One solution is to build outcomes on top of one another. Identifying the specific outcomes and prioritizing them for each activity— whether those outcomes are academic, developmental, or focused on the program's specialty area—will support the staff in facilitating learning activities.

The best approach is to break down the develop-

mental, specialty, and academic outcomes to help staff facilitate outcomes-focused activities. You can begin by creating goals that are relevant to the challenges your staff is facing. Make them short-term goals that can be accomplished within two to three months, so your team can experience success and feel motivated to take on another challenge. Choose one area at a time; the team can measure, for example, youth engagement, reduction of negative behaviors, or percentage of homework completed. Make it a creative process to encourage problem solving among your staff.

Culture of Accountability

As funders and policymakers are holding afterschool programs accountable, so programs can also create accountability systems for their employees. A culture of accountability supports a team by building consistency in expectations, recognition, and reinforcement of performance; it also fosters willingness to address any corrections necessary to get back to alignment with expectations (Wriston, 2007).

Holding leadership and staff accountable is not that complicated, according to Edmonds (2010); implemented consistently, accountability heightens an organization's credibility. Edmonds (2010) outlines two simple steps leaders can take to reinforce accountability among their staff: (1) conduct proactive observations regularly in all areas of the program and (2) implement a consequence management system. Afterschool programs leadership can easily implement these two steps to hold their staffs accountable by using standards to stay focused on the intended outcome and by providing support systems to build staff members' capacity if needed. Standards can support organizations in aligning with their goals (Kaliprasad, 2006) and holding their staffs accountable for the delivery of service (Cole, 2011). You can adopt the child and youth developmental standards from the Council on Accreditation (2018) or standards adopted by your state, if any. Standards give you benchmarks to measure progress in all program areas.

One way site supervisors can begin to build a culture of accountability is holding daily huddles or weekly check-ins. Meetings should be short and to the point. Bring two to three questions, based on the goals you have

> You can begin by creating goals that are relevant to the challenges your staff is facing. Make them short-term goals that can be accomplished within two to three months, so your team can experience success and feel motivated to take on another challenge.

set with staff, and ask everyone to give a quick response. Such check-ins promote team work and accountability. Regular observations are another way to build accountability. Staff can rotate to conduct observations in short 20-minute sessions. Make sure to use established standards to reflect on what you are observing. When huddles and observation become routine processes, staff will be empowered to do their very best.

Robust Processes

Staff turnover can make it difficult for afterschool programs to create and sustain robust processes. However, organizations that create a high-performance culture will reduce turnover because staff will be more invested in their jobs (Wriston, 2007). In afterschool programs, the key processes are the ones we use with participants, so that all staff deliver activities consistently. Processes that are clear and simple give staff a structure to follow but still leave room for creativity and autonomy. Wriston (2007) states that strong processes can increase staff effectiveness. When afterschool staff have a process to follow in facilitating activities, they can feel confident that they are addressing children's needs and contributing to intended outcomes.

One main role of the site supervisor in facilitating robust processes is professional development. It's easy to fall into the expectation that staff know how to, for example, facilitate art activities because they are artists. But having a step-by-step process for facilitating activities or managing behavior can help staff to feel confident and enable them to connect theory with practice. Once they have experienced success with the process, they will feel self-confident enough to create their own processes to meet the unique needs of their particular groups of children.

One common way to teach instructional processes is to engage staff in the processes as program participants will experience them. For example, you could teach your staff the 1-3-6 protocol (Teaching Channel, 2018) for building literacy and creativity by taking them through the process yourself. First, introduce a text—for children, an age-appropriate book or video; for staff, perhaps a professional article. Then go through the 1-3-6 process.

> It's easy to fall into the expectation that staff know how to, for example, facilitate art activities because they are artists. But having a step-by-step process for facilitating activities or managing behavior can help staff to feel confident and enable them to connect theory with practice.

1: Individuals freewrite for two or three minutes. (Little ones can draw.)

3: In groups of three, participants share their reflections and come up with three ideas that are similar or overlapping. They also note vocabulary words and topics to explore further.

6: Two groups of three form a group of six. Participants create a presentation that brings their reflections into tangible form, such as a mural, book, or presentation. The complexity of the project depends on the amount of time devoted to the protocol.

If you can have staff practice this process, perhaps more than once with different learning topics, they will gain confidence. Then they can implement the process with their groups. Once they feel confident with the 1-3-6 protocol, you can add another process.

Reflection

Afterschool programs can create strong high-performance cultures if they commit to processes that build staff members' abilities. Using Wriston's (2007) four-step model can help afterschool programs to achieve clear outcomes and, ultimately, gain more funding opportunities. To encourage staff to stay for two, four, or more years, afterschool programs must create a culture of collaboration and stay focused on their intention in delivering services. Then they can expect to see clear evidence of growth in children and youth.

Creating raving fans for afterschool programming begins with staff. Staff who are raving fans turn children and youth into raving fans who show up every day and achieve the outcomes for which the program is designed. Holding people accountable is necessary for momentum in the right direction—and allowing staff to feel they are part of creating goals will encourage them to feel more invested.

We need to shift perspective to realize that we are hiring not just employees but a generation of leaders and creators who will influence children and youth into the future. Developing youth workers for their worth, not just their duties, may create opportunities for our programs and our youth that we have not witnessed before.

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Youth GO

An Approach to Gathering Youth Perspectives in Out-of-School Time Programs

Sara T. Stacy, Ignacio D. Acevedo-Polakovich, and Jonathan Rosewood

Including youth in the development and evaluation of out-of-school time (OST) programs has positive effects on youth, the organizations that serve them, and the communities in which they live (Checkoway et al., 2003). Such involvement can improve young people's social competence (Hubbard, 2015), foster leadership and engagement (Zeller-Berkman, Muñoz-Proto, & Torre, 2013), and empower groups (Berg, Coman, & Schensul, 2009).

Youth provide unique perspectives on their lived experiences (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2013; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). Their clear insights are valuable contributions to the development and evaluation of OST programs. For example, incorporating a youth council can enhance OST program accountability and drive program improvement (Hubbard, 2015). Simply considering youth perspectives can not only improve OST service development and youth support but also increase service use and access (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003).

Despite these benefits, OST programs face challenges in incorporating youth perspectives. One is the perceptions of program staff, who may see youth as problems rather than resources (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004) or as less valuable or knowledgeable than adults (Langhout & Thomas, 2010). Resource constraints are another

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challenge. Many approaches to gathering youth perspectives require significant capacity, staff, time, and space (Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Zeller-Berkman et al., 2013). Program staff and administrators may not know about approaches to gathering youth perspectives that align with their resources and are easy to implement.

This article describes Youth Generate and Organize (Youth GO), a structured, developmentally appropriate approach to gathering youth perspectives designed to be implemented with the time and resources available in most OST settings. The strengths, limitations, and feasibility of Youth GO are illustrated through its implementation in an OST program to support the academic success of youth living in public housing.

Context

Students in public housing face significant obstacles to their educational success including poverty and reduced access to resources (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Currie & Yelowitz, 2000; Newman & Harkness, 2000). Their parents sometimes report feeling marginalized from academic settings, a feeling that keeps them from being involved in their child's education (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Thus, students who live in public housing tend to perform worse than others on academic achievement tests and other measures of educational success (Currie & Yelowitz, 2000; Newman & Harkness, 2000).

In response to these needs, the Edgewood Village Network Center in East Lansing, Michigan, developed the Scholars Program for middle and high school students who live in the public housing complex. The Scholars Program supports the academic success, high school graduation, and college admittance of its participants in three ways.

1. It responds to their current educational needs by providing supports such as homework help, tutor-mentors, and grade monitoring.
2. It supports life skill development through community service, job opportunities, and professional development, among others.
3. It introduces students to college culture through, for example, college tours, entrance test preparation, and summer programs.

Two part-time staff of the Edgewood Village Network Center serve as program director and assistant director to implement the program and support its capacity. A committee with representatives from the community, local organizations, and Michigan State University also supports program capacity by obtaining program funding, planning large events, and connecting the program to other resources.

Participants in the Scholars Program meet once a week for a two-hour session. During the first hour, students engage in education-related activities, such as listening to invited speakers or working with an afterschool curriculum. During the second hour, they receive individualized support, such as homework help or supplemental online learning. University students volunteer as tutor-mentors, providing individualized assistance and serving as positive role models. Community members and representatives of local organizations volunteer as speakers, lead information sessions, and provide transportation to events.

The Youth GO Approach

We developed Youth GO as an approach to gathering participant perspectives that can be implemented with the resource and staff constraints OST programs commonly face. Youth GO integrates components and principles of youth participatory action research (for

**Figure 1. Youth GO: A Five-Step Process for Gathering Youth Perspectives**

Climate Setting → Generating → Organizing → Selecting → Debrief & Discussion
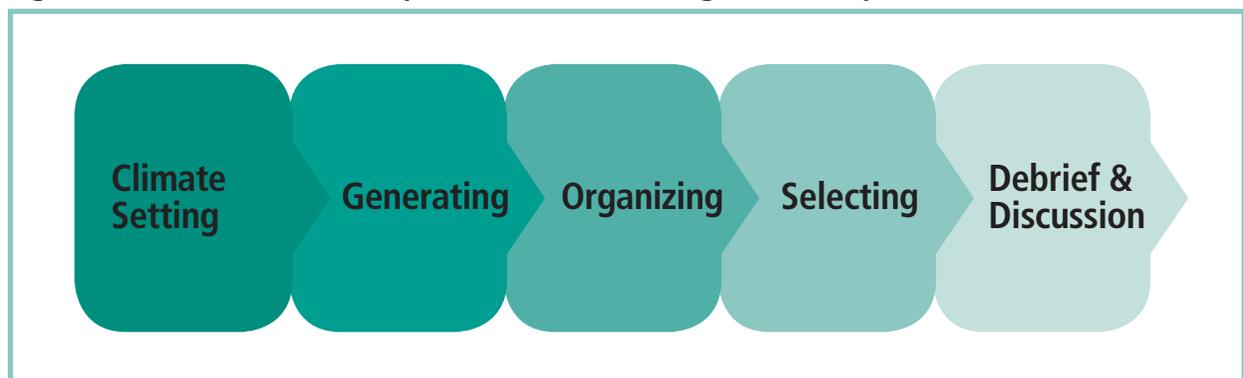
Table 1. Prompts for the Scholars Program Youth GO Implementation

Topic	Prompts
Educational Success	What are your educational goals? What things help you to be successful in school? What are some things that get in the way of you being successful in school? What do you think you need to be successful in school that you don't already have?
Scholars Program	Is the Scholars Program helping you to be successful in school? If yes, how? If no, why not? How has the Scholars Program helped you outside of school? What are the things you wish the Scholars Program had to help you be successful in school?

example, Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty, & Aoun, 2010; Vaughn, Jacquez, Zhao, & Lang, 2011) and participatory evaluation approaches (Chen, Weiss, Johnston Nicholson, & Girls Incorporated, 2010; London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003; Zeller-Berkman et al., 2013). Specifically, we combined processes from the group-level assessment approach, developed by Vaughn and colleagues (2011), with processes from the Youth ReACT method, developed by Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2010), along with our own knowledge of participatory processes.

In Youth GO, groups of four to eight young people per adult facilitator articulate and organize their perspectives on target issues, such as their OST program, a set of community issues, or their own needs. The five steps are summarized in Figure 1. During *Step 1, climate setting*, the purpose and goals of Youth GO are introduced, and participants work with the facilitator to create group rules. During *Step 2, generating*, participants individually answer prompts that will inform subsequent discussion; then they discuss their answers as a group. In *Step 3, organizing*, participants interpret the perspectives shared during Step 2 and sort them into themes. During *Step 4, selecting*, participants define meaningful categories for those themes. During *Step 5, debrief and discussion*, the facilitator reminds participants of the purpose of the exercise, highlights the importance of participants' perspectives, and guides a brief discussion about their experience.

To illustrate the feasibility and utility of Youth GO in OST settings, we describe two implementations in the Scholars Program. The first, more detailed example establishes the feasibility of using Youth GO and describes some of its effects. The second, briefer example provides preliminary evidence of how participants perceived the acceptability, appropriateness, and youth-friendliness of Youth GO.

First Implementation: Establishing Feasibility and Observing Organizational Change

Before implementing Youth GO, facilitators must define project goals, such as program evaluation, improvement, or development; they must also outline participant responsibilities in a way that is responsive to the strengths and developmental stage of the youth involved (Wong et al., 2010). To maximize the positive developmental effects, these components can be negotiated with youth and adults in a collaborative process (Wong et al., 2010).

For this first implementation, Scholars Program staff contacted a Michigan State researcher to explore ways to gather the perspectives of program participants. The researcher and program staff identified the goal of the Youth GO implementation: to explore participants' perspectives on factors that affect their educational success and on whether and how the Scholars Program contributes. The university and program staff also developed the prompts to be used in the implementation, presented as examples in Table 1. The prompts will change with each Youth GO implementation to align with the purpose and goals of that particular implementation.

To respect the structure of the Scholars Program, Youth GO was implemented during the first hour of two regular sessions for middle school participants. Steps 1 and 2 were implemented during one session, lasting about 35 minutes. Steps 3 through 5 took about 75 minutes in the second session. Because part of the exercise focused on evaluating the program, two graduate students, rather than Scholars Program staff, facilitated Youth GO. One graduate student was lead facilitator, and the other provided support such as facilitating a second small group when needed, helping individual youth with reading or writing, and making observational notes.

Figure 2. Community Agreement

Eight middle school youth, grades 6 to 8, participated in this first implementation of Youth GO. All lived in Edgewood Village and regularly participated in the Scholars program.

Implementing the Youth GO Steps

Step 1, Climate Setting

Youth GO begins with group introductions, a brief presentation of purpose and goals, and the development of a community agreement. In the Scholars Program, after facilitators and participants introduced themselves, the facilitators told participants about the purpose of the Youth GO implementation: to explore and organize participants' perspectives on how their school and the program support their education. Participants were told that this information would be used for program improvement.

Facilitators and youth then worked together to create a community agreement to guide group behavior during the rest of the process (Figure 2). The group developed six rules, which included not only courtesy guidelines such as "look at the person talking" and "don't speak when others are" but also broader principles such as "everybody shares ideas" and "be positive."

Step 2, Generating

Step 2, *generating*, uses prompts like the ones in Table 1 in a four-phase procedure:

1. A prompt is revealed and read aloud to participants, who can then ask questions about it. Each prompt is on a separate piece of flip chart paper.
2. Participants write their individual answers to the prompt on sticky notes or cards.
3. Participants place their responses on the flip chart paper corresponding to this prompt.
4. Facilitators lead a group discussion about the responses to this prompt. They may ask follow-up questions to clarify responses. For instance, in response to the prompt about what students wished the Scholars Program had to help them, one participant wrote "money." When the facilitator followed up, the individual clarified that "money" should be used to plan more college visits. Youth can add responses that come up during the discussion.

This four-phase process is repeated for all prompts. In the Scholars Program implementation, the four phases were repeated seven times, once for each prompt (Figure 3).

Step 3, Organizing

Most participatory approaches fail to give youth a meaningful role in interpreting data (Jacquez et al., 2013). When participants are not involved in data analysis, efforts to capture their perspectives can fail to account for their unique and clear insight into their lived

Figure 3. Generating Youth Perspectives
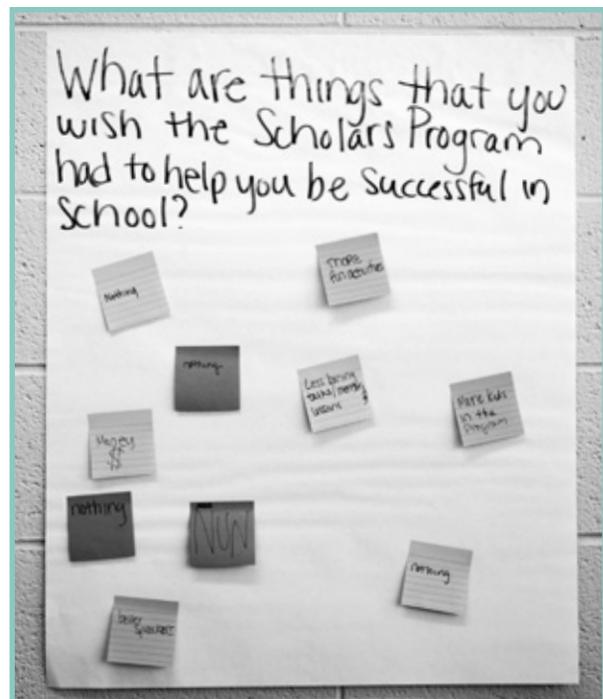
experiences (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; Jacquez et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2010). To address these concerns, Step 3 of Youth GO supports youth in analyzing and interpreting the data generated during Step 2.

Step 3 begins with a developmentally appropriate game, created by Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2010), to introduce data organization skills. This step can take place in the whole group or in smaller groups. In this implementation of Youth GO, students split into two groups to play this game with about four youth per facilitator. The facilitators then introduce the game:

> Imagine that your team owns a new store that has a small inventory of candy. Your team buys four bins to organize the candy for the customers. You must come up with a name for each bin. The names must be clear enough so that customers who can't see the candy still know what type of candy is inside each bin.

The groups are then given about 10 pieces of assorted candy and four small squares of paper to represent the bins. The facilitators support the students in working together to organize the candy into four categories and to create labels. Once this process is complete, participants are given a new direction:

> Now imagine that two of your bins broke. Organize the candy again and come up with a name for each bin. The names must still be clear enough so that customers who can't see the candy know what type of candy is inside each bin.

Students are then given only two squares of paper to represent the bins, so they must reorganize the candy and create new labels. After students complete this second task, facilitators guide a brief discussion about the organization exercise and how it relates to the next activity, which is to organize the responses to prompts from Step 2.

Next, facilitators support the small groups in organizing responses to the prompts. In the Scholars Program implementation, each small group was given three or four of the flip chart sheets containing prompts and responses from Step 2. Each group used the skills they had just learned to create themes for the responses to each prompt; facilitators assisted only when needed. For instance, one group was given the prompt, "What are the things you wish the Scholars Program had to help you be successful in school?" Responses included "nothing" (which occurred five times), "better speakers," "less boring talks/lectures in lessons," "money to visit colleges," "more kids in the program," "an amusement park or other fun things," and "more fun activities." The

Figure 4. Organizing Responses
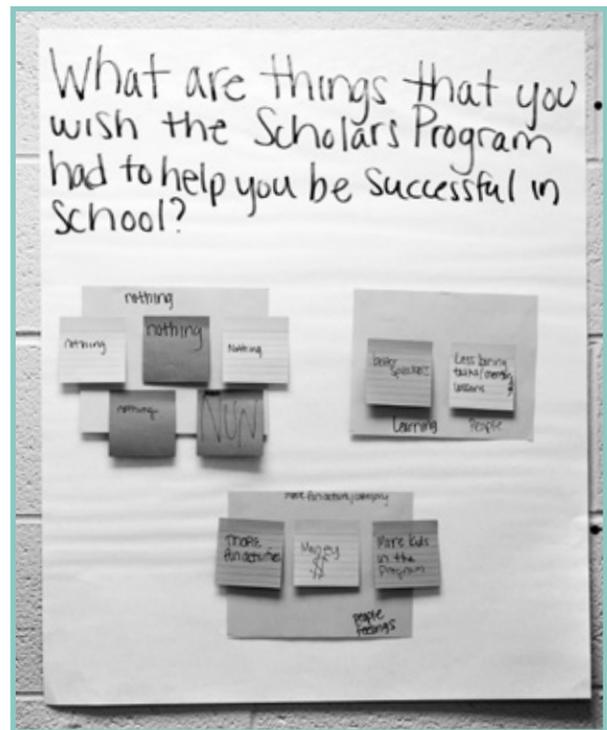
students organized these responses into three themes by placing the sticky notes onto sheets of colored paper (Figure 4). The students named these themes *nothing*, *better speakers*, and *more fun*. Each group created themes for all prompts assigned to them.

Step 4, Selecting

In Step 4, youth work in the large group to identify central categories to contain the themes created in Step 3. First, participants discuss the themes. Then they create overarching categories and examine their usefulness. Facilitators support a process in which the group discusses potential categories proposed by individuals. When group opinion on a proposed category is divided, participants vote "thumbs up" or "thumbs down." If more than 50 percent of participants agree, the facilitators write down the category for further processing.

The group then determines the usefulness of the categories by checking that all categories include at least one theme and that all themes are components of at least one category. Each theme created in Step 3 is read aloud, and then participants indicate which category, if any, best classifies the theme. If they determine that the theme aligns with a category, that category is written next to that theme. A theme may have more than one category (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Themes and Categories
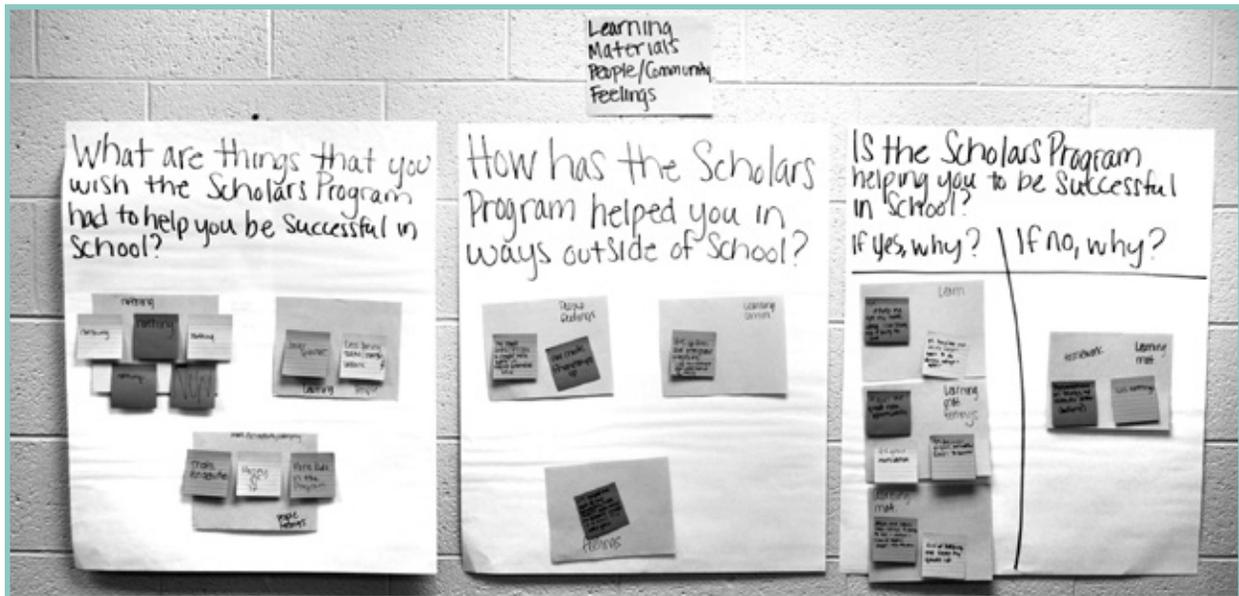
In the Scholars Program implementation, the group went through this process twice, once for the prompts on educational success and again for the prompts on the Scholars Program. For the prompts and themes related to the program itself, the group decided on three categories: *learning materials*, *people/community*, and *feelings*. Participants checked the validity of these categories by assigning all of the themes created in Step 3 to at least one of these categories. Collectively, the participants felt that these three categories captured the main components of the data that they generated about the Scholars Program.

Step 5, Debrief and Discussion

In Step 5, youth reflect on their experience with Youth GO. In the Scholars Program implementation, facilitators first reminded youth that this information would be used to help program leaders both to understand what makes students successful in school and to improve the program to better support participants' needs. Then facilitators guided a group discussion about youths' experience with the Youth GO approach. Finally, facilitators thanked participants for their time and thoughtfulness and reminded them of the value of their perspective.

Using Youth GO Results to Guide Organizational Changes

After the Youth GO process is completed, the results must be compiled so they can be used in a way that aligns with program needs and resources. Program youth could be involved in this process, though they were not in the Scholars Program implementation. In this instance, the university researchers compiled the results into a written report. After program staff reviewed the report, they met with one of the researchers, who answered their questions and checked their understanding of the findings.

Program staff then used the report's feedback to adapt the programming. For instance, a major finding from the Youth GO implementation was that students wanted more engaging enrichment activities; they asked for "more fun activities" and "less boring talks." Program staff therefore implemented more enrichment activities the next year, offering, for example, bowling nights, sporting events, and community service opportunities.

Second Implementation: Examination of Youth Perspectives

After demonstrating the feasibility of implementing Youth GO and observing its beneficial effects, program and university staff planned a second implementation of Youth GO for the next program year. This implementation, conducted during summer programing in one 90-minute session, involved four Scholars Program high school youth, grades 9 through 11. A graduate student served as lead facilitator, and an undergraduate student provided additional support and took observational notes. This second implementation of Youth GO followed the same five-step process as the first implementation, using the same prompts focused on participants' educational needs and on the supports offered by the Scholars Program (Table 1).

In addition to the goals of the first implementation, this implementation had a secondary objective of examining participants' perspectives on Youth GO itself. After participating in the Youth GO process, participants completed a brief questionnaire about their experience. This questionnaire included the Youth-Adult Partnerships Scale (Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2008), which contains measures of youth voice in decision-making and of supportive adult relationships. To these we added items assessing satisfaction and acceptability that we created for this project. Participants responded to all items using a Likert scale, ranked 1–5. The average responses for each scale are presented in Figure 6. Results show that this small sample of participants felt that Youth GO facilitators were supportive and that their perspective was valued within the group. They also expressed general satisfaction with the Youth GO approach and felt that it was acceptable for use with other youth their age.

> The Youth GO approach to gathering youth perspectives was developed with the goal of being accessible to a broad range of OST and youth-focused programs. Incorporating principles of youth participatory action research and evaluation, it was designed to be used for multiple purposes, including needs assessments and program design or evaluation.

Lessons Learned

The Youth GO approach to gathering youth perspectives was developed with the goal of being accessible to a broad range of OST and youth-focused programs. Incorporating principles of youth participatory action research and evaluation, it was designed to be used for multiple purposes, including needs assessments and program design or evaluation. The implementations described in this article reveal the strengths and limitations of Youth GO in meeting those goals.

Strengths

Four strengths of Youth GO are illustrated in its implementation with the Scholars Program youth. First, Youth GO requires relatively few resources of materials, time, and training. This feature is important because resource constraints often prevent the inclusion of youth perspectives (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2004; Foster-Fishman et al., 2010; Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Zeller-Berkman et al., 2013). The estimated cost of all materials needed for a typical Youth GO implementation is around $55. However, OST programs may already have many, if not all, of these materials—flip chart paper,

sticky notes, markers, and the like—thus resulting in little to no outright cost. In terms of time, Youth GO can be implemented in just one or two regular program sessions. In terms of staff training, many OST program staff already have the skills to facilitate a process like Youth GO.

Second, Youth GO incorporates developmentally appropriate data organization techniques for youth, as identified by Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2010). These techniques introduce youth to qualitative data analysis in an engaging manner that still encourages scientific rigor (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010). They also include youth in a process from which they are typically excluded (Jacquez et al., 2013).

Third, youth seem to find Youth GO positive and engaging. In both implementations of Youth GO, we observed participants seeming to enjoy the process. After the first implementation, participants commented that it was fun. One said, "The Scholars Program should do more things like this." In the second implementation, participants' responses to our brief questionnaire indicated that they both were satisfied with the approach and felt it was acceptable for other youth their age. Though the sample was small, this finding is promising. Youth engagement and enjoyment is often an indicator of program quality (Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010). Engagement can enhance a program's developmental, behavioral, relational, and academic effects (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010).

Finally, Scholars Program administrators later used the information gathered in this process for program planning and improvement. Using youth perspectives to improve programs can have positive effects both on participants (Berg et al., 2009; Hubbard, 2015; Zeller-Berkman et al., 2013) and on programs (Checkoway et al., 2003; Kirby et al., 2003).

Limitations

Some limitations to the Youth GO approach were also illustrated in its implementation with the Scholars Program. First, successful implementation of Youth GO requires experienced facilitators to lead discussions and manage the
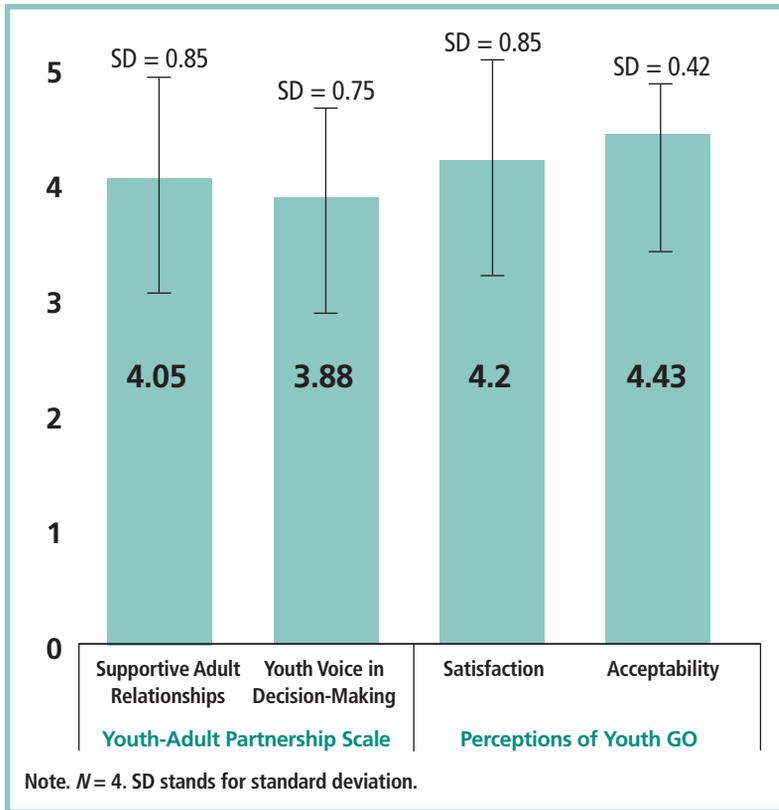
Figure 6. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Post-Participation Assessment

group. Effective facilitation requires quick and creative thinking and experience in handing group dynamics (Ozer, Ritterman, & Wanis, 2010; Wilson et al., 2007). In the Scholars Program implementation, graduate and undergraduate student facilitators had been trained in the Youth GO approach and had prior expertise in youth engagement programming and techniques. Though many, perhaps most, OST practitioners are skilled facilitators, those interested in further developing this skill before implementing Youth GO have many trainings, books, and videos (such as Garmston & Wellman, 2016) available to help them.

Second, the information youth generated in Youth GO was constrained by the prompts we presented and by the young people's current understanding of the issues. For instance, students in the Scholars Program identified the main educational barriers they faced as interpersonal issues, primarily relationships with friends and with boyfriends or girlfriends. They did not discuss broader structural or systemic barriers such as poverty or racism. Young people who are presented with a different set of prompts or who participate in programs that raise awareness of systemic issues (e.g., Cammarota, 2007) are likely to provide different information.

Considerations for OST Research and Practice

Our work here suggests that Youth GO is feasible and useful in one OST setting. Our small sample of participants found the approach satisfactory and acceptable for use among youth their age. Future research could evaluate the utility of Youth GO in additional contexts and with different groups of youth. Research could also examine whether participation in Youth GO has short-term positive development effects like those found for the approaches that informed its development (Berg et al., 2009; Checkoway et al., 2003; Hubbard, 2015; Zeller-Berkman et al., 2013). Another avenue for future research is to compare Youth GO against similar approaches on relevant variables: youth outcomes such as empowerment, implementation

variables including adoptability and adaptability, and program outcomes such as satisfaction and usefulness.

Before implementing Youth GO, practitioners must address three issues. First, they must establish that they have the capacity to use the information gathered in Youth GO to improve programs and services. Not using results meaningfully can disempower youth (Wong et al., 2010). Second, practitioners must determine whether they have the necessary time and staff to implement Youth GO effectively. Although Youth GO was designed to be implemented with the resources available in most OST settings, it does require skilled facilitators and sufficient time to implement the approach with integrity. Program leaders must also assess whether to bring in outside facilitators, as the Scholars Program did, to make sure that participating youth give genuine feedback. The presence of program staff could bias participants' responses. Third, practitioners must be clear about the purpose of their Youth GO implementation and develop prompts that correspond with the purpose. Youth GO prompts can cover a wide variety of topics. The usefulness of the results is strongly influenced by the appropriateness and focus of the prompts.

Incorporating youth as partners in research and practice is an important, albeit challenging, endeavor. Youth GO is a structured, developmentally appropriate approach to such partnership that can be easily implemented in most OST settings. By facilitating meaningful consideration of youth perspectives in OST programs, Youth GO can have positive effects on youth, their programs, and their communities.

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A Seat at the Table

Listening to Adolescent Black Girls

Abigail Amoako Kayser, Annalee Jackson, and Brian Kayser

Despite having many identified strengths, adolescent Black girls in the U.S. have historically fared poorly (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). Research indicates that, compared to their Latina and White counterparts, adolescent Black girls carry a higher risk for suffering poor physical and mental health, enduring violence, and dealing with other factors associated with living in poverty (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

In schools, many teachers perceive Black girls as loud, aggressive, and uncultured; they may see the need to silence and tame these girls (Fordham, 1993; Grant, 1984). Because of these perceptions, Black girls often are subject to more and harsher disciplinary actions, such as suspensions and expulsions, than White girls. These actions in turn are associated with greater involvement in the juvenile justice system, where, again, young Black women often receive more severe sentences (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Researchers have noted that participation in organized activities such as mentoring and afterschool programs can support positive development in adolescents (Archard, 2011, 2013; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). For example, Spencer and Liang (2009) found that adolescents' cognitive, emotional, and social growth improve with participation in mentoring programs. In the U.S. in 2011, more than 5,000 such programs served over 3 million youth (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011).

Both mentoring programs and research on how they create successful outcomes for adolescents are abundant. However, little is known about the processes that foster positive development specifically in adolescent Black

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girls from low-income backgrounds (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012). Scholars (Larson & Ngo, 2017; Simpkins, Riggs, Ngo, Ettekal, & Okamoto, 2017) have called for investigation into how the cultural assets of adolescents of color contribute to their positive development and into the ways in which race, ethnicity, and culture influence this development.

Our research responds to this call by examining mentoring programs situated in a community that has an abundance of programs for adolescent Black girls. We conducted in-depth interviews with adolescent Black girls, parents, program leaders and staff, and mentors to learn—from the people most deeply involved— what Black girls need to succeed. Three themes emerged from these interviews: that programs for adolescent Black girls need to involve families, that the girls themselves need advocates who will teach them to advocate for themselves, and that mentors should share the girls' racial identity.

Positive Youth Development and Adolescent Black Girls

The positive youth development approach (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003) operates under the assumption that, given the right opportunities, adolescents can succeed, no matter their background.

Researchers have listed various characteristics that lead to positive youth development. Our research was particularly informed by the concept of *agency* as a factor in the development of adolescent Black girls. Larson (2000) describes *agency* as the freedom to set goals and to take steps to achieve those goals. He notes that, in order to accomplish their goals, adolescents need to develop competencies. Eccles and Gootman (2002) speak of a related concept, *autonomy*, which young people develop through "enabling, responsibility granting, and meaningful challenge" (p. 90). The authors posit that, rather than being "something adults do to young people," positive youth development is "something that young people do for themselves" with help from the adults in their lives (p. 103). Connecting autonomy with agency, Eccles and Gootman note that young people are "agents of their own development" (p. 103).

> Our research highlights the need for out-of-school time mentoring programs to help adolescent Black girls develop agency. The ability to self-advocate is a vital skill that can empower adolescent Black girls to understand themselves and their needs and to seek out people and resources that can help them meet those needs.

Our research highlights the need for out-of-school time mentoring programs to help adolescent Black girls develop agency. The ability to self-advocate is a vital skill that can empower adolescent Black girls to understand themselves and their needs and to seek out people and resources that can help them meet those needs. Jones (2015) noted that Black girls have the potential to overcome the challenges they face if they have "fewer spokes-people and more servant-leaders [or advocates], those who model leadership and rise above by working in the trenches" (p. 279).

This understanding aligns with the asset-based concept of youth organizing, which suggests that youth of color from marginalized communities can be empowered to identify problems in their communities and take steps to address them (Ginwright, 2010). In addition to developing agency in youth, Eccles and Gootman (2002) suggest that community programs must work to integrate the various aspects of adolescents' lives and to foster meaningful conversations among the people who care about them. They call for a constant flow of conversations among families, schools, and communities on how the needs of adolescents are or are not being met (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Researchers including Simpkins and colleagues (2017) have pointed out that positive youth development in afterschool depends on programming that is responsive to the developing ethnic, racial, and cultural practices of the adolescents they serve. Larson and Ngo (2017) add that a culturally responsive approach gives voice to adolescents and their families by creating opportunities to respond to issues that affect them. This finding is consistent with research showing that youth voice is a significant asset in youth development (Mitra, 2004; Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2011). Sanders and colleagues point out that providing opportunities for youth from vulnerable communities to develop agency is key to their development (Sanders, Munford, Thimasarn-Anwar, Liebenberg, & Ungar, 2015).

Our research asked stakeholders "on the ground," especially adolescent Black girls themselves, about ways in which agency and autonomy, family involvement, cultural responsiveness, and youth voice were embodied in their afterschool mentoring programs.

Methods

Our study focused on how stakeholders, including the girls themselves, perceived the needs of adolescent Black girls in afterschool mentoring programs. We also examined the ways in which families, schools, and community members were collaborating to foster the positive development of these girls. We chose a qualitative research method because qualitative methods are appropriate when researchers seek to understand the processes that participants experience in a specific context (Maxwell, 2005). We sought the accounts of many stakeholders, including adolescent Black girls, program leaders, parents, and mentors, in order to correlate results.

With qualitative methods, researcher bias is always a possibility, particularly when, as in the case of our research, one of the researchers was a mentor in one of the programs being investigated. We were aware of this potential in our data collection and analysis, so, to begin with, the researcher who was a mentor did not interview participants from that program. Also, to ensure that our biases did not affect our data analysis, we employed a peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), who provided feedback and ensured that interpretation of the data was done in a highly self-reflective manner.

Participants

We collected data during the 2016–2017 school year from a convenience sample of 26 people who were involved in one way or another with community or school-based mentorship or afterschool programs in a college town in the southeastern U.S. To recruit participants, we posted flyers in the program offices; individuals who responded to the flyers were selected for this study. The sample included 16 adolescent Black girls, ranging in age from 12 to 18, who participated in one or more of the programs. We had 10 adult participants, four males and six females; six were Black and four were White. Seven of the adults were program leaders or staff. Two of these were also mothers of three of the adolescents interviewed. Three adults were mentors who were students in the local university, two White males and one White female.

Data Collection and Analysis

We conducted semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with the 26 informants to learn about the perceived needs of Black girls in the mentoring programs. Before beginning data collection, we obtained assent from all participants and parental consent for adolescent participants. Semi-structured interviews of adult respondents, which lasted 20 to 50 minutes, were conducted in locations of the interviewees' choice or by phone. Four adolescent focus group interviews, conducted at a neighborhood community center with a mentoring program, lasted about 50 minutes each. We developed interview protocols based on the literature; the protocols were open-ended so that we could ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

Interview and focus group transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo software, which facilitates qualitative data analysis. Using Erickson's (1986) method of analytic induction, two researchers independently read the interview transcripts, noted emerging themes, and selected excerpts that corresponded to the emerging themes. The researchers then reread the selected excerpts and reviewed the emerging themes together to clarify and resolve any discrepancies in the excerpts selected. Once emerging themes were identified, the researchers developed working assertions as answers to our research questions. After forming assertions, the two researchers sought evidence from the data to either confirm or question each assertion. Assertions that did not have ample evidence were excluded from the findings.

Findings on the Needs of Adolescent Black Girls

In interviews and focus groups, respondents identified three main needs:

1. Programs need to develop partnerships with parents and families.
2. Adolescent Black girls need adults who will both advocate for them and teach them how to advocate for themselves.
3. Adolescent Black girls need mentors who share their racial identity.

Need for Family Partnerships

One characteristic of programs that foster positive youth development is communication among families, schools, and communities (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). When parents and caregivers are included in conversations about the development of their adolescent children, they can accurately identify issues that affect those children (Larson & Ngo, 2017).

Our study did not find evidence of such communication and integration among the local programs that worked with adolescent Black girls. However, five of the program leaders and staff wanted to

see more parental participation. For example, one program leader said:

> There have been efforts to involve more of the parent perspective, but I think there is more room for that. I don't know what that would look like exactly, but I think that is probably a space where there is more work that could be done.

This leader was saying that the program had attempted to engage parents, though he did not specify what the program would have expected of them. Another program leader, who was also the mother of two program participants, shared her perspectives on how parents could be encouraged to participate in the program:

> You almost have to look at it like, "I'm not only going to educate the young person about this program and opportunity but also make a commitment and a need to work on the buy-in from the parent's end." Because what we're talking about are creating opportunities to improve our quality of life for the future, and the parents have to be a part of that process—and we can't leave them out of the equation.

Eccles and Gootman (2002) point out that organized programs for adolescents must not only integrate families, schools, and community but also be culturally responsive. In many of these programs, family involvement could be one way to promote cultural responsiveness, particularly in light of the fact that the college mentors had different lived experiences from those of the adolescent Black girls with whom they worked.

Need for Advocacy

Proponents of the theory of positive youth development suggest that adolescents must have opportunities to develop agency in decisions about their lives (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000). One way this characteristic can manifest in afterschool programming is by enabling youth to use their voice as a strength in their development (Mitra, 2004; Serido et al., 2011). In our data, 11 adolescent girls and four program staff spoke about the need for advocacy in afterschool programs that support youth development. One adolescent participant described an advocate as "someone who speaks up for

other people and goes to the meetings and does the research just to make sure we are exposed to things … like a middle person trying to get the resources for us."

Similarly, a leader of a college readiness program defined advocacy as:

> Working with young people … to increase opportunities for exposure and accessibility—accessibility to the arts, for example—to help them with understanding relevance as it relates to literature in the classroom [and] exposure to a college campus so they can make more realistic decisions about their future.

This respondent, while emphasizing that young people need to be aware of available opportunities, also noted that they need to use that knowledge to make informed decisions about their own lives.

In addition to wanting to expose youth to opportunities, the two respondents who were both parents and program leaders expressed the need for adolescent Black girls to advocate for themselves. In an interview, one of them said: "We as a people, whether you're a Black woman or a Black male, if we don't learn in 2016 how to advocate for ourselves going forward, we're done. We're toast."

Many participants used the words *advocacy* and *mentoring* in their discussion of the perceived needs of adolescent Black girls. One Black program leader distinguished advocacy from mentoring by explaining how she engaged in both: "I have to advocate for them within their school divisions, but I have to mentor them when they're here to teach them how to advocate for themselves if I'm not there."

This idea of supporting Black girls but also teaching them to advocate for themselves was a common thread among both adult interviewees and adolescents. For example, two ninth-grade students said that they needed opportunities to advocate for themselves. One student said, "It's like I want to do more, and I need to have the tools to do it. I just need to connect with the right people for what I want to do." The second student went on to articulate the specific kinds of support she and her peers needed: "It needs to be advocacy, and we need to be advocates for ourselves, health, our education, to be leaders…. We have got to learn how to advocate for ourselves."

> This idea of supporting Black girls but also teaching them to advocate for themselves was a common thread among both adult interviewees and adolescents.

These respondents saw advocacy as a path to helping adolescent girls develop agency. Respondents may have seen agency in afterschool programming as a way to elevate the adolescents' voices, so that they could be heard by the people in their communities who sought to support them in their development. Also, the girls could share the aspects of their lives that were important to them, thus providing insights that could help the adults who worked with them to be more culturally responsive to their experiences.

Need for Mentors of the Same Race

Deutsch, Lawrence, and Henneberger (2014) noted a mismatch between mentors and their protégés in terms of their racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds. Liang and Grossman (2007) showed that, when mentors come from the same marginalized groups as their protégés, a stronger relationship can develop.

In our study, all three White mentors and 12 of the Black adolescent girls indicated that mentors should share their mentees' racial identity. One of the White college mentors stated:

> Most of the [college students] are White, and there are a lot more males [as mentors] than females. But then when we go to the schools, most of the kids are minority, African American or Hispanic. It's a good mix when you put the two together, but when you separate them, everyone in the [mentoring program] is one thing, and everyone in the schools is another.

This college mentor recognized the racial differences between the college students and the adolescents with whom they worked. Through he did not explicitly reflect on the differences in the two groups' experiences, he seemed to perceive the difference as an area that should be addressed. Another White male college mentor noted the need for adolescents to have mentors who share their racial identity: "We are definitely missing the perspective, maybe, specifically, of young women of color. Maybe these young [students] that I'm hanging out with would benefit more from having someone there who's an African American as opposed to a White male."

The adolescent Black girls agreed with these college mentors, indicating that they preferred mentors whose racial identity and cultural experiences were like their own. One student expressed her preference for Black mentors, with whom she and other Black girls shared similar life experiences:

> I just feel like [the African American mentoring group] is very relatable. It's very nice to have somebody that's going through something that you're going to be going through in the future and tell you about the situation they're having. We relate. Their experience might be very similar to my experience, so it's good to have that.

Implications for Programs

Our findings suggest a need for adults to support the development of adolescent Black girls both by advocating for them and by preparing them to advocate for themselves. The program leaders and staff, mentors, and girls all indicated a need for adolescent Black girls to work with mentors who share their racial and ethnic background. Albright, Hurd, and Hussain (2017) suggest that one way to ensure that mentors reflect the race of their mentees is for programs to apply a social justice lens. This approach examines not only the power dynamics inherent in mentor-mentee relations but also the backgrounds and experiences of mentors and their mentees (Albright et al., 2017). Other researchers have similarly suggested that program leaders who work with adolescents and families from marginalized communities must take a culturally responsive lens to their work (Larson & Ngo, 2017; Simpkins et al., 2016).

One approach to cultural responsiveness is more of the kind of work we did: listening to the perspectives of adolescents and their parents. Once we have listened, then we can incorporate the visions of adolescent Black girls and their families into afterschool programming. Families bring cultural understandings and assets that outside groups cannot provide. These perspectives are vitally important to the positive development of adolescent Black girls. Future research should collect more perspectives from adolescent Black girls, their families, and their communities, exploring what programs look like when young people and their families are given a seat at the table.

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Afterschool Matters

Call for Papers

Afterschool Matters is a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in afterschool education. Published by the National Institute on Out-of-School-Time (NIOST) with legacy support from the Robert Bowne Foundation, *Afterschool Matters* serves practitioners who work with youth in out-of-school time (OST) programs, as well as researchers and policymakers in youth development.

The **Fall 2019** issue will include a focus on **creative youth development**. CYD is a new term for a longstanding theory of practice that integrates creative skill building, inquiry, and expression with positive youth development principles, fueling young people's imaginations and building critical learning and life skills. See creativeyouthdevelopment.org.

Suggested topics for papers include:

- Descriptions, research, and analyses of OST programs and initiatives that use CYD to support learning
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- Key aspects that define the CYD framework
- The role of teaching artists in CYD programs; innovative practices of teaching artists
- How CYD programs engage in holistic approaches and trauma-informed practice
- Family engagement in CYD programs
- Peer and adult mentoring in CYD programs
- Insights on supporting CYD program alumni to assume staff and leadership roles
- School-community partnerships that have supported CYD
- Workforce development partnerships and initiatives in CYD programs
- CYD and social justice, youth voice, or media literacy
- Strategies for increasing the number of communities or programs using the CYD framework
- Personal or inspirational CYD-focused essays for our section "Voices from the Field"

Submission Guidelines

- For consideration for the Fall 2019 issue, submit your article no later than January 15, 2019, to ASMsubmission@wellesley.edu.
- Submit your article electronically in Microsoft Word or rich text format. Submission should not exceed 5,000 words. Use 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Leave the right-hand margin ragged (unjustified), and number pages starting with the first page of text (not the title page, which should be a separate document).
- **Include a separate cover sheet** with the manuscript title, authors' names and affiliations, and the lead author's phone number and e-mail address.
- The names of the authors should not appear in the text, as submissions are reviewed anonymously by peers.
- Follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition (2009), for reference style guidelines. Present important information in the text and do not use extensive footnotes.

We welcome inquiries about possible article topics. To discuss your ideas, please contact:

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