

## Promising Practices in Afterschool

NIOST is one of six national organizations across the country that has been funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to collect promising practices in afterschool. Each organization collects practices from different geographic areas and program auspices.

NIOST's focus is identifying system building and infrastructure practices from the 20 cities across the country participating in the Cross-Cities Network. Practices are collected on an ongoing basis and are submitted to the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research where a review team evaluates the practices to ensure they are valid. Once practices pass successfully through the review process, they are posted to the [www.afterschool.org](http://www.afterschool.org) web site so that others may learn from them.

To learn more about the Promising Practices Initiative or to submit your own practice, please visit [www.afterschool.org](http://www.afterschool.org)

Or

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# Promising Practices

## Community Participation and Partnership in a Citywide Before and After School Initiative

### Background

The LINC (Local INvestment Commission) Before and After School Program serves 6,000 students in 47 schools located in the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD). Created in 1992, LINC is a community based human services collaborative led by neighborhood, civic, labor, and business leaders with an aim to improve the lives of children, youth and families in Kansas City, and Jackson, Missouri.

LINC began oversight of the before and after school programs in 1999. In years' prior, KCMSD operated the programs free of charge to families through the use of state school desegregation funds. In the late 1990's, word spread that the funding stream would be eliminated leaving the before and after school programs at risk. Members of the Kansas City community, including LINC, local business leaders and the Ewing Marion Kauffmann Foundation formed a task force to investigate how to preserve this vital community resource relied upon by thousands of families, children and youth.

The task force discovered that the program could be restructured by drawing down resources from existing state and federal funding streams for which Kansas City children already qualified but were not being utilized like TANF, Title I and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Once the anchor of public funding was in place, the task force was then able to leverage additional private funds. A sliding scale fee structure provides flexibility for low-incomes families and additional revenue to the program.

### Community Participation through Caring Communities

The before and after school program is part of LINC's Caring Communities initiative, a neighborhood-based initiative that transforms schools into community service hubs and gives citizens the power to determine what types of services they need. Development of Caring Communities into full-service sites is an incremental process. Each of the 47 Caring Communities sites

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provides a before and after school program as a baseline service and nearly half (21) provide additional services like in-school social workers or health care facilities. LINC's goal is to eventually transform every Caring Communities site as it matures, into a full service site.

LINC requires that sites demonstrate active involvement of the neighborhood citizens, parents, and schools. This is achieved by the creation of a Site Based Council at each Caring Communities location in which neighborhood citizens proactively work together to assess and respond to community needs. Each Council is organized and facilitated by the site coordinator, a full-time employee who is responsible for managing the before and after school program as well as any other services offered at the site.

The site coordinator receives special training on community organizing from LINC and recruits neighborhood residents, business owners, parents, youth, school personnel and community service providers to join the Council. These citizens plan and lead the meetings, with support of the site coordinator and other LINC volunteers and staff. The Council establishes a regular meeting schedule—usually monthly, and uses the time to raise concerns and draw up action agendas that range from eliminating the presence of drug dealers to improving community health.

LINC employs five site advisors who provide technical assistance to the 47 program sites. They also act as a conduit to ensure there is continuity between LINC's overall goals and programs'

individual goals. On the program level, site advisors answer individual calls for help from site

coordinators and participate in Site-Based Council meetings. On a macro level, they oversee an effort to license all programs through the state with the eventual goal of achieving NSACA accreditation. In 1999, when LINC first began oversight of the before and after school program, none of the programs was operating under state licensing guidelines, which now is the case for 30 out of 47.

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**“The local community (in particular, the neighborhood) is often chosen as the best place to organize service coordination and other “comprehensive” community strategies because it is seen as the place where the needs and circumstances of individual residents and families most clearly come together.”**

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Pg 42, Core Issues In Comprehensive Community Building Initiatives. (1996) Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children Rebecca Stone, editor

## Before and After School Service Partnerships

The before and after school program operates in partnership with several entities within the Kansas City community. One of LINC's operating principles is to

build on existing efforts and strengths of the school and community so naturally LINC's community involvement model includes relationships with other local organizations and service providers.

LINC serves as the administrative body with primary responsibilities for financial management and fundraising as well as overseeing and coordinating the various partner activities, all of which contribute to the program's success. The KCMSD provides the use of school facilities and other resources such as insurance, maintenance and security costs. The school district contributes further by making Title I funds available to the program under the condition that the funds are used to meet the goal of improving students' academic performance in communities with high concentrations of low-income families.

Partnering with community organizations that have already developed effective strategies for staff development and program improvement is another aspect of LINC's commitment to quality. LINC is

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engaged in a training partnership with Francis Child Development Institute. LINC recognizes that well-trained staff are critical to program quality. All program sites receive on-site staff training from the Francis Child Development Institute for 2-3 hours on a monthly basis, as well as multi-site group training and leadership development sessions. Site coordinators work with an advisor from the institute to decide the focus of training.

LINC also partners with YouthNet, a local youth worker training and professional development organization that specializes in program quality improvement. YouthNet conducts drop-in site visits each fall and unannounced quality assessments using the School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS) each spring. The results of the SACERS assessment are then reported to each site through a quality improvement planning session attended by the site coordinator, site advisor, and sometimes members of the staff and Site Council.

## Pull Quote

## Conclusion

The LINC Caring Communities model is successful because it is rooted in public will and embraces community participation. The opportunity for citizens to participate in decision making at the local level in Kansas City has created an environment in which resources and services are likely to match community needs. The anchor of site based councils at each Caring Communities location provides a structured venue for engaging community participation, developing citizen leadership and solidifying community buy-in.

## Resources:

Interviews conducted for this publication:

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## References:

For more information about LINC or the Caring Communities Initiative, please visit:

[www.kclinc.org](http://www.kclinc.org)