

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 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

Or

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Promising Practices in Citywide Afterschool Initiatives

Creating Infrastructure to Provide and Support Knowledge Building Activities

About TASC

The After-School Corporation (TASC) is a capacity building intermediary organization whose goal is to leverage new public and private funding, engage stakeholders, and provide the support and technical assistance necessary to build a network of high-quality, school-based, afterschool programs in New York City and other New York counties. TASC was created in 1998 with a challenge grant from the George Soros Open Society Institute (OSI), which wanted to make a significant investment in New York City. OSI saw the need for afterschool programming and pledged up to \$125 million over a five-year period on the condition that matching funds were acquired from the public sector and other private donors on a three-to-one basis. In 2001, OSI extended the grant term for two additional years.

TASC supported programs are based in public schools (grades K-12) from 3:00 to 6:00 PM, Monday - Friday, during the academic year. On average about 30% of each school's students are enrolled in the afterschool program which translates to average daily attendance around two hundred to four hundred children and youth per program. TASC awards grants to community-based organizations that establish partnerships with individual public schools and then manage the programs. All of the programs are required to adhere to a basic TASC program model. TASC has significantly increased the supply of quality afterschool programming by supporting 148 programs in New York City and 57 programs elsewhere in New York State.

The field of afterschool draws on a wide range of disciplines including education, youth development, sociology, psychology, etc. However, there is no national consensus or agreed upon national document on the core competencies/knowledge base that is required for high quality staff. Therefore it is challenging for any citywide initiative to create their own framework of competencies/core knowledge that professionals working in the field within the citywide initiative should master for best and effective practice.

Establishing an infrastructure which supports a comprehensive and consistent system of knowledge building activities allows a citywide initiative to meet the following challenges: (1) establish broad agreement as to the knowledge and skills

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necessary for high quality program delivery, (2) provide an avenue for continuous staff and program improvement, (3) create a centralized process for accessing professional development training, and (4) craft a career framework that describes the skills/training needed for differing roles in the field.

Creating a Knowledge Building System

TASC's management strategy includes enhancing the quality of afterschool programs through staff training, professional staff

development, and technical assistance. TASC is committed to providing program staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure, strengthen, and sustain the quality of afterschool programming. Creating infrastructure to provide training and technical assistance helps to ensure that programs are delivered in particular quality ways and is consistent with research that suggests the critical relationship between a well-trained staff and the effectiveness of afterschool programs. To be sustained such an infrastructure must accomplish at least two things: (1) meet staff professional development needs and (2) provide a variety of teaching strategies to engage participants, and (3) be accessible.

Meeting Staff Needs

TASC provides a variety of training opportunities for staff at all levels of the afterschool field, including site coordinators, program supervisors, high school/middle school/elementary school coordinators, and program staff. Acknowledging the need for professional development and training at all levels of afterschool program involvement, TASC supports training for volunteers, parents, as well as school principals. TASC's training model also recognizes that program leaders and staff in the afterschool field

come to the field with different backgrounds, experiences, interests, and skills. TASC works with multiple providers to design and deliver a broad curriculum of workshops, seminars, and institutes throughout the year.

For afterschool program coordinators TASC offers the following:

- Pre-service training institute
- Intensive training institutes during the summer
- A technical support group for new coordinators
- Professional development workshops
- Train-the-trainer activities
- Orientation to TASC and Board of Education policies

For afterschool program staff:

- Core knowledge training that provides a foundation for developmentally appropriate practices, classroom management strategies, and conflict resolution
- Content training that focuses on specific areas (literacy, math, science, dance, art, and sports)
- Staff development workshops
- Site-based workshops that respond to the needs of and include key members of the school community
- A special training module for young adults that focuses on job readiness skills, specific skills for engaging children, and group management strategies
- CPR/First aid certification training
- Life-saving techniques workshop

For afterschool coordinators and staff:

- Arts
- Parent integration and volunteer engagement
- Inclusion of special education students
- Technology integration

Creating infrastructure to provide training and technical assistance helps to ensure that programs are delivered in particular quality ways...

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Accessibility and Variety of Teaching Strategies

TASC trainings use a variety of comprehensive strategies including teambuilding, networking, small group discussions, specific skill building, mentoring, train-the-trainer, and ongoing support. Providing a citywide coordinated system of training allows TASC to impact and preserve program quality through training design. Program staff and leaders citywide are exposed to the same pedagogical and youth development practices. A systemic training system gives some assurance that staff carry out program goals in particular and consistent ways. Coursework is provided using case studies and personal narratives as a basis for studying cross-cultural interactions in afterschool settings and how issues of diversity can culture affect staff members, children, and families. Other trainings explore the ways in which educators and recreational specialists can more successfully include children with special physical, health, emotional, and learning needs in after-school programs. TASC supports its programs by providing training that would otherwise be outside the programs' budgets.

Stipends are provided to hourly program staff that attend TASC-sponsored training events outside of normal afterschool work

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What Needs to be in Place

To build and sustain an infrastructure that supports comprehensive and continuous knowledge building activity, two of the many key elements that need to be in place are (1) funding source and 2) partnership with training providers. TASC has been highly successful in engaging public and private funding partners. In its first four years it secured nearly \$120 million in matching funds. In addition to OSI, TASC receives funding from the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, New York City Department of Education, state and federal

funds, as well as private foundations and corporations. Because TASC's original funding was given as a challenge grant, creating financial partnerships has been crucial to TASC's sustainability. Accumulating private and foundation funding gives TASC additional leverage in soliciting more public support. Its success in building a broad and deep funding partnership has allowed it to expand the number of programs supported and to enhance capacity and quality building activities such as training.

TASC continuously seeks out new partners to help strengthen the resources and services available to afterschool professionals. TASC develops partnerships with leading curriculum and resource providers and then makes these programs available to its afterschool sites through pilots and special curriculum initiatives, that allow sites to receive intensive central and site-based training to key staff along with coaching and technical assistance for ensuring successful implementation. The Partnership for After-School Education (PASE) and Bank Street College of Education are primary partners in designing and developing training curricula.

TASC also establishes partnerships with other organizations/providers that enhance TASC's resources and services available to afterschool staff. Partners assist TASC with the design and development of core curricula for the training of afterschool professionals. TASC also collaborates with several higher education institutions to support professional development, evaluation, and improve the quality of instruction in participating afterschool programs.

Resources:

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References:

Web Site:
www.tascorp.org
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Corporation Training
and Technical
Assistance, 2001
Bulletin