Afterschool Matters

Dialogues in
Philosophy, Practice
and Evaluation

about
Afterschool Matters

Afterschool Matters is a national, peer-reviewed journal published by Children and the Classics, NYC, in collaboration with Interfaith Neighbors, NYC, developed to promote professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in the field of after school education.

Our mission

To provide a forum for scholarship concerning the educational and developmental needs of our youth during the after school hours and in the community-based setting. The secondary aims are to increase academic public awareness of the field of after school education and to define the parameters which distinguish this educational arena from others. *Afterschool Matters* also provides us with much needed opportunities to encourage and train grassroots educators in articulating their ideas and discoveries for publication.

Who are our readers and contributors?

Social workers, education professionals, developmental psychology researchers, youth workers, arts educators, funders and nonprofit executives. Our contributors and advisors are among the leading lights in the areas of child development, youth development, and after school programming.

Who are our national advisors?

Our advisory committee is comprised of program developers, funders, researchers, authors, and executive directors of national organizations. We are proud to feature such a wide range of disciplines and perspectives and such a high level of commitment from our affiliates.

Who are our funders?

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• *On the cover:* painting by Aaron Gomez, P.S. 106; courtesy of The Studio in the School, New York, N.Y. •

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An esteemed scholar and recipient of numerous awards, we are honored to have such a prestigious contributor.

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editor's desk

Publishing *Afterschool Matters* represents a developmental milestone for the field of after school creators and thinkers. A journal designed purposely for those involved with children and youth during the "out of school" hours has been received with great enthusiasm, indicating the readiness of those working in this area to understand their own worth and importance and signaling their desire to reflect upon the work they do. This receptiveness to a professional journal, a forum for expression and dissemination of ideas, signifies the beginning of a more mature identity for the field.

Everyone we approached with the idea for a journal, no matter how distant or involved, was enthusiastic about the timeliness of the idea and the evident need for such an innovation. In the course of deciding who and what the journal would target, we settled upon a scholarly journal where professionals and scholars alike could discuss in theoretical or experiential terms the application of their thinking to the field of after school "education." At the same time, we were eager to generate a journal that would not be exclusionary; we wanted it to have something for all who participate in the field. We wanted to hear from those just starting out, for example: What had inspired them to enter and to remain in the field? And we wanted to serve experienced practitioners and scholars as well: How can a meaningful dialogue occur between front-liners and those in the "ivory tower?" How can they relate to and learn from each other? In many ways, achieving this breadth of participation has seemed a lofty goal, but one worth reaching for.

We have tried to capture in the journal's contents the unique position of the after school field and its impact on youth in order to show how after school programs can reflect the interrelatedness of our social, cultural, and personal universes. We are pleased that the articles we are receiving do demonstrate the cross-disciplinary understanding which makes this forum such a rich environment for youth concerns. Some of the most cutting-edge thinkers, therefore, are reflecting a dramatic change in consciousness, commenting on the need for youth to develop psychologically, socially, and even spiritually. We are seeing a re-evaluation of creative and emotional intelligences, which are being viewed now as increasingly necessary for innovative industries to proliferate.

Within this environment of global interconnectedness and rapid change, established institutions tend to lag behind precisely because they are wedded to a prior value system. Creative programming during the after school hours can play a significant role in developing new ways of mentoring, socializing, educating, and engaging our youth. In those hours which link school and family, there is a freedom which is critical to explore. It is a frontier, where opportunities for cross-fertilizing, applying, and playing with ideas are boundless as we all strive to increase our understanding of how we can best nurture our children, our social structures, and the interaction between the two.

Let the dialogue begin.

Hope G. Turino, C.S.W.
Editor

A Tale
from the
Youth Field

Using Stories to Understand Community-Based Youth Programs

by Sara Hill

A Program Tale: "Cupcakes for the Class"

In the tutoring room of the Franklin Houses[1] Youth Center's after school program, I was sitting with roughly ten children, ranging in age from seven to fourteen, and a college-age tutor working individually with a child. Throughout the afternoon, people came and went through the room en route to the office of Fen, the center director. I had noticed that several of the kids regularly hung out there each afternoon, sitting in chairs along the wall observing Fen's interactions with tutors, staff, parents, housing authority workers, and a variety of other visitors.

I asked the children around the table if anyone would like help with homework. Rose, a little girl of seven, leaned over and asked me to read a paper she held in her hand. It was a daily report from her teacher. I read it aloud to her. It said that Rose had not done her work adequately, especially during the reading lesson that day.

After I read it, Rose appeared scared in a wide-eyed, quiet way. I questioned her about what had happened. She told her story haltingly, but I made out that she had gotten stuck in her work during reading lesson, and, not knowing what to do, had stopped. Another incident occurred during the lesson, Rose explained, when she was sharing a book with a friend and the teacher grabbed it out of her hand. Rose said she was going to get

"whupped" when her mother came to pick her up from the program and saw the note.

I was at a complete loss. It appeared to me that Rose's teacher was not taking the time to find out what was going on with her, and furthermore, was downright rude. I was also aware that my knowledge of what had actually happened in the classroom was limited, and I wanted to reserve judgment until I knew more. I had the sense that Rose, a fairly quiet, shy girl, didn't articulate her side of things very well, at least to adults.

Fen, the center director, walked in, greeted me, and went to his office. I mentioned the situation with Rose and told him that I didn't know how to respond. Could he make a suggestion? Fen shook his head, saying that Rose's mother "flies off the handle," and that it was a problem.

When I re-entered the tutoring room, Rose's cousin was reading to her from a book in the "Berenstein Bears" series. An older girl walked in, turned on one of the computers and began revising a school essay. Another girl peeped over her shoulder and made recommendations. Several girls grouped around a picture book, looking at and commenting on the illustrations. They regrouped and everyone moved on to something else. In Fen's office, a child of ten was giving a slightly younger child a lesson in the multiplication tables, drawing on the blackboard next to Fen's desk.

I asked Rose if she would like me to read to her. She assented, walked around the table to my

side, and we carved out a little corner for ourselves. I asked her what was going on in the story. She wasn't able to tell me. I asked her several more questions about the story and became alarmed that she could give me no answers—she didn't seem to comprehend what had been read to her. I began to read the book aloud to Rose, starting at the beginning and stopping every so often to talk about the story and ask her questions. She answered them all. I realized she had merely needed to become more personally engaged with the text (assuming she was interested in the story at all).

After I read a certain amount and we discussed it, I wrote down what Rose told me about the story in her own words. Then I read what I had written out loud, had Rose read it together with me, and then asked her to read it independently. Again, she did well, spontaneously pointing out that I'd written the word "neighbors" several times. This showed me that she could read words in isolation.

Suddenly, the children in the room were collectively alert; Rose's mother had arrived to pick her up. Rose, very scared, asked me if I could talk to her mother. I replied, "I'm new here, and I can't say anything because I don't know your mother. If you were my regular student, I would talk to your mom." The older cousin proceeded to ask everyone sitting around the table, "Do you hope Rose doesn't get whupped?" She included me in her survey, and I concurred with the rest of the children that Rose should not be beaten.

I had to leave to pick up my son from day care. As I walked through the hallway to the entrance of the building, I encountered Fen speaking to a woman I assumed was Rose's mother. Both looked very serious. I was surprised at how quickly Fen had headed her off before she reached the tutoring room. I nodded to both of them as I passed by, and Fen pulled me into the conversation. At his request, I re-told the story Rose had related to me that afternoon and gave my interpretation of the situation. At several points during the encounter, Fen said to the woman, "If you go in there hollering, they won't listen to you." The mom ended up saying that she would go to school that night to talk to the teacher.

Two days later Rose showed me another report from the teacher. On it was a thanks to her mother for bringing in cupcakes for the class.

This event occurred during a nine-month research project I was engaged in as part of a graduate course in educational ethnography. I completed this research at an after school youth program run by a community organization in public housing, where I was a participant-observer, tutoring a twelve-year-old girl two days a week. My approach to this study was to explore a simple, open-ended question: "What is education in this context?" The event lay fallow in my fieldwork notes for some time, and I did not include a description of it in my final project report. Later, however, it appeared more significant than I originally believed, so I reconstructed it into the shape of a story, or what is called an "impressionistic tale" (Van Maanen, 1988). I believe the tale serves as a window through which to view the unique people and activities that comprise a particular youth program. At the same time, the event is wholly atypical and dramatic, creating an opportunity to think about larger questions regarding the role of after school programs and their relationships to larger institutions such as universities, families, communities, youth, and public schools. This article provides a rationale for the use of such stories as interpretive vehicles to better understand community-based organizations serving youth.

Community-Based Organizations for Youth

In the United States there are more than 17,000 organizations serving youth during out-of-school time. These range from national organizations such as Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Ys, to settlement houses, museums, libraries, and neighborhood organizations sponsored by churches and independent grassroots organizations (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). Community-based organizations (CBOs) such as settlement houses, which are distinguished by having physical sites in neighborhood communities, were begun at the turn of the century to assimilate new immigrants. CBOs have ". . .broader missions than schools. . . . While there is wide variation, these organizations tend to be smaller and more loosely structured" (Pittman & Wright, 1991, iii).

Professional staff of CBOs usually do not have educational backgrounds *per se*, often coming with backgrounds in community organizing and advocacy or training in recreation, the arts, or social work. Other staff include community residents, youth workers, college and high school students, parents, or older youth who attended the program previously. CBOs offer a wide range of activities and events for youth and their families, including the arts, sports and athletics, employment and training programs, health care and mental health counseling (Carnegie, 1992; Cibulka & Kritek, 1996).

What is called "education" at CBOs consists at minimum of homework assistance and remedial tutoring for individual students with academic problems. Sometimes educational activities are offered to all students as extensions of the school day. In other cases, educational offerings are consciously crafted to diverge from school-like activities. Activities or projects at youth-serving CBOs

Youth development programs encompass more general social, emotional, and civic aims rather than a narrow focus on behavior change.

often involve the creation of end products (plays, student publications, or photography display, for example) for wide audiences, including peers, community residents, parents, government officials, and/or funders.

Education itself is seldom the sole mission of youth programs at CBOs. Services for youth have historically been geared toward either behavior intervention, such as preventing teen pregnancy, or toward broad-based "youth development" (Pittman, 1991). Youth development programs encompass more general social, emotional, and civic aims rather than narrowly focusing on behavior change. Last, but not least, CBOs provide a space in which young people can simply socialize with their peers in a safe environment without any planned activity or adult involvement.

There is some indication that CBOs play a significant role in the lives of young people, particularly those organizations working with poor and urban youth (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993, 1994; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). Many CBOs provide young people with experiences that might not otherwise be available, "in which youngsters experience guided participation in social units that mirror the kind of social commitment expected from mainstream institutions in the areas of employment, government bureaucracy, medical care, and education" (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993, p. 9). These experiences include, among others, "caring" relationships with adults who often become mentors (Pittman & Cahill, 1992) and opportunities for youth to assume leadership roles and to be valued as resources and "positive forces" in their communities (Heath & McLaughlin, 1996, p. 70).

Such experiences are orchestrated by organizations that provide family-like supports, maintain strong links to the community, and act as "cultural bridges" between families and schools (Heath & McLaughlin, 1996). CBOs are organized in ways that reflect "a recognition of the importance of structure, belonging, and group membership to adolescents" (Pittman, 1991, p. 8). They are cited in studies of resiliency, which examine how young people growing up in environments in which they experience severe stress and adversity are able to become healthy, competent adults (Benard, 1991). In addition, CBOs are identified as important and separate contexts for socialization, primarily because many young people attend programs on a voluntary basis. Youth programs provide "non-required programs and activities" that create "a transitional link between the spontaneous play of childhood and the more disciplined activities of adulthood" (Wynn et al., 1987, p. 3).

The Setting for the Tale: The Center

The Center is located in the heart of the Franklin Houses, government housing built in the 1940s in a mid-sized city in the American South. The area is a low-income, African American neighborhood consisting of single-family homes mixed with subsidized housing. Historical African American colleges are prominent institutions in the neighborhood.

The presence of the universities may explain why the neighborhood, although low-income, is well kept. Houses are time-worn but freshly painted, with neat yards. However, as in many such areas, there is little visible outside economic investment: virtually no banks, supermarkets, or malls. The few locally-owned businesses are small under-stocked groceries and barbecue shacks. In this community, drug trafficking and gambling are active—and profitable—underground economies.

The Franklin Houses comprise four blocks of two-story red brick buildings. Each "house" contains two apartments whose entrances face a communal yard. One can stand in the entrance of one house and observe the entrances of all the other houses on the block. In fact, there is usually an older man or woman on at least one of the stoops during the day, sitting and observing people and events. A small satellite police station is situated in one of the project houses, and officers ride bicycles for community policing.

The center, an after school program under the aegis of a national youth organization, is located in the basement of one of the Franklin Houses

down the block from the police station. Started in 1988, the center currently has 136 children enrolled, all of whom are African American; 74, on average, attend each day. Most of these children live in the Franklin Houses, and most are from single-parent homes. Over half of the family incomes are below the federal poverty level (Franklin Youth Center, monthly report, March 1997).

The center is staffed by Fen, the director, and his assistant director, Perry, both African American men in their thirties, along with three junior staff members, two in their late teens and one in her early twenties. All three attended the center when they were younger. Two are high school seniors applying for college, and the third is currently a sophomore at a local state university. The center's cultural orientation is reflected both in the content of the curriculum (a heavy emphasis on culturally based offerings such as African drumming and dance courses) and in the center's relationship to other institutions. For example, the national sponsor recently instituted a new governing system whereby each site is able to establish its own board of directors. Fen has strategically developed his board by recruiting "up and coming" professionals of color who have begun to advocate for issues pertaining to black youth and issues specific to the community in which the center is located.

The center is replete with posters reflecting African Americans in history and motivational sayings pertaining to cultural pride; its small library has many books and magazines whose topics are African Americans and African American life. At a deeper level, the center reflects U.S. Southern African American culture[2]: there is great emphasis on family (nuclear or extended) and group cohesion. Young people assume a great deal of responsibility and are expected to take care of younger children. In addition, they are expected to be well-behaved and courteous, especially to their elders.

Interpreting the Data

When I first began observing activities at the center, my particular focus was on how education was occurring, apropos to my research question. I viewed education through an extremely narrow lens. Based on my history in providing technical assistance for community-based youth programs, I initially believed the program wasn't up to snuff. The environment appeared chaotic and noisy. There weren't enough books or materials, nor were there the "right" books or materials. I didn't observe activities such as "book clubs," "lessons," or "workshops." Formal tutoring took

place only once a week, was sporadic, and was provided for only a handful of the neediest children. A group of children, however, came regularly to the center five days a week, often from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., many, if not most of whom needed some kind of academic support. Young people at the Center spent most of their time either under-supervised in the tutoring room or gameroom, or hanging around outside socializing with friends, or, if younger, playing on equipment in the yard.

This initial interpretation proved erroneous. The longer I participated as a tutor, observed interactions, and interviewed people, the more differently I began to perceive things. Although I had originally viewed the program as having many deficits, I began to sense that a good deal of teaching and learning was going on; I just wasn't sure what it was. The center was a full, busy, friendly place. Young people attended regularly and voluntarily and appeared to value what they got from it. In addition, although the children were "under-supervised" by adults, I observed few, if any, behavior problems. When things went beyond a certain point—a noise level, or another kind of behavior deemed unacceptable by Fen or one of the staff—a sharp word was enough to clear out the room. These observations challenged my prevailing notion of what constituted a good program and helped me build a theory that was better aligned with what I was observing. I had to cast about for a richer, more inclusive theoretical framework from which to understand the site, particularly, education in this context.

I realized at some point that I was operating from a culturally biased conception of teaching and learning and space-time organization. For one thing, I had been imposing a structure in which space and time are segmented into "activities" or discrete units, such as "lessons" or "workshops."

This idea came from a school-based conception of learning, one that is specific to formal instruction and quite different from the nonsegmented fluidity I observed. In addition, my sensitivity to the "noise" of the program, drawn from a framework of individualistic school-based learning in which students sit in isolation and quiet, obscured my ability to see that learning could take place in a different context. Once I accepted fluidity as endemic and realized that the "noise" was the sound of learning taking place in a group and collective modality, I was able to shift my attention away from a traditional school framework to attend to other ways of interpreting events. I began to seek more appropriate theoretical frameworks, such as those of the socio-historical tradition (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Luria, 1976; Leont'ev, 1978) and theories of "everyday" learning (Cole, Engestrom, & Vasquez, 1997; Lave, 1988; and Lave & Wenger, 1991).

There is, however, a third theoretical approach to the interpretation of data: the use of stories as a framework for analysis.

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Culture, Stories, and Representation

Social science research has traditionally adopted a positivist "natural science" paradigm, in which the researcher's observations are taken unproblematically to be objective data from which universal laws and principles of social behavior can be deduced. Some basic premises at the heart of this paradigm have come under escalating criticism in recent years, one challenge emerging from the field of anthropology.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz, for example, argued that social research, especially research on culture, is not ". . . an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). For Geertz, the work of the anthropologist is to interpret what he or she observes, to make sense of "facts" and render them meaningful. Cultures can be interpreted like text (Geertz, 1983), and his work explores the "blurred" boundaries between literary interpretation and cultural interpretation.

Writing Culture (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) extends the critique of the traditional paradigm, focusing on the role of social science researchers as writers. Contributors to this collection argue that researchers are not simply observers, but authors who craft texts to convince readers of their accounts of the social world. Culture is not a given; it is constructed and reconstructed by researcher-writers whose interpretations have important political and ethical consequences, especially for marginalized cultures.

Others have challenged the way in which social science represents subjects (McLaren, 1995), in which they are stripped of context. Michelle Fine, a critical feminist, has argued that in order to create an authoritative tone, researcher-authors present themselves as "transparent." They ". . . carry no voice, body, race, class, or gender and no interests in their writing" (Fine, 1994, p. 73).

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Tales of the Field: On Writing Research

In *Tales of the Field* (1988) Max Van Maanen draws on such critiques to analyze the narrative forms in which social science research is presented, differentiating them on the basis of their underlying assumptions regarding representation. The "realist tales" of the positivist paradigm, he argues, assume that there is an objective world that can be adequately described "in a dispassionate, third-person voice."

In contrast are "impressionist tales which, rather than illustrate the typical or universal, are

about ". . . what rarely happens. . . . They reconstruct in dramatic form those periods the author regards as especially notable and hence reportable" (p. 102). Impressionist tales are "a representational means of cracking open the culture and the fieldworker's way of knowing it so that both can be jointly examined. . . it tries to keep both subject and object in constant view. The epistemological aim is then to braid the knower with the known" (p. 102).

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"Cupcakes for the Class"

The story with which I began this essay was crafted as an Impressionist tale. My intention was to join the voices of those I had observed myself, as a researcher and author, with the readers struggling to make sense of the story, creating the potential for multiple interpretations. My goal was to use this tale as a central metaphor for community-based youth organizations and to suggest what we may learn from them: their place in communities, the role of the staff who work in them, and the teaching and learning which takes place there.

CBOs and Communities

The role of staff at youth programs. One way to interpret this tale is to explore how it speaks to the key role staff at youth programs play in the lives of children and their families. Because youth practitioners often come from the community in which the agency is located, or have gone through the program as young people themselves, they are often well-positioned to be "cultural bridges" between families and other institutions such as schools. Youth program staff may know the best ways to approach or negotiate schools when there is a problem, as when Fen advised, "If you go in there hollering, they won't listen to you." Conversely, youth practitioners are good contacts for schools to approach in order to address problems with individual students or gain insight into community issues. Even if youth practitioners do not come from the community, they may have been at the program long enough to see and hear about the needs of youth in a relaxed, informal context.

The role of tutors and volunteers at youth programs. The story also points out the role of volunteers in youth programs. Many programs rely on unpaid volunteers to provide homework assistance and academic support, sometimes because severe funding constraints hinder programs from hiring full-time staff. Yet volunteers, like paid staff, can provide a bridge between programs, schools,

and families, or can negotiate and advocate on a young person's behalf, as when Fen drew me into his conversation with Rose's mother to provide my perspective on the situation. I also observed volunteers who made home visits or talked with classroom teachers on their tutees' behalf, held parties for youth at the center, and took their tutees on lunch dates and field trips.

Tutors, many of whom are of high school and college age, also provide peer guidance and nurturing relationships for youth who may be hard pressed to find comparable guidance and support in other relationships in their lives. They also offer a model of academic achievement; some of the college students bring their tutees to their home universities to use the library and other facilities.

Finally, a staff member of a youth organization who read this tale reminded me that sometimes the one-to-one relationship that tutors share with students is a good opportunity to gain insight into the academic and emotional needs of youth that may be overlooked in other group configurations. As I was able to point out to Rose's mother and Fen, Rose's poor performance with reading lessons in school seemed to stem more from her need to be personally engaged in the assignment than from a general difficulty reading and understanding the subject matter.

What Is "Taught" and What Is "Learned"

Peer education. Understanding "education" narrowly as the kind of formally structured activity that takes place in classroom settings (as I did initially during my time at the Franklin center) may obscure much of what is taught, and learned, in CBOs. The tale "Cupcakes" provides a clear example of the manifold ways that young people in youth programs may, and often do, engage in spontaneous peer education. For example, youth at the center huddle around a book and take turns reading it and supporting each others' reading process. Older children provide guidance to younger children in their reading attempts and also give the younger ones help in math and other academic subjects—recall the ten-year-old teaching multiplication tables in Fen's office. This peer education is not only stressed in the program design of the center, which has held peer group discussions in the past, but also reflects the cultural context in which the center is located. It inculcates the community value that youth are expected to take responsibility for younger members, which includes helping them with schoolwork. Being sensitive to and capitalizing on such positive cultural values in program design is a keystone of community-based education.

Career development/apprenticeship. The education taking place in CBOs may extend well beyond academic skills such as reading or math. Fen's office is a virtual "apprenticeship central station," where young people are welcome to hang out and observe him as he goes about the business of running the program. In the course of an afternoon, Fen regularly interacts with community residents and parents, housing authority workers, contractors and architects, government officials, and home office administrators. Fen displays a range of social and language skills during these interactions, which youth participate in from the periphery. This peripheral participation is key to the young people at the center becoming acculturated in a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), primarily that of the field of youth work. In addition, youth at the center are often asked to answer the telephone, run errands, make copies, and help with inventory at the small snack "store." All of these tasks are skills that will, in the future, aid them in any organizational or business-related vocations they may pursue.

At the most obvious level, the entire junior staff of the center is comprised of young people who have gone through the program as youth themselves. One of the staff members is now a college student, and two are high school students preparing to apply to college. In addition to being a vocational model and mentor, Fen provides a model of a "caring" person. As one junior worker mentioned to me in an interview, "Fen was like a daddy to me. I don't need him so much now, but I used to come to him when I had problems." Another junior worker said of Fen, "He used to observe me working with a group. And he used to be hard on me, telling me what I needed to improve." These junior staff members are crucial to the center and often comprise the bulk of staff at CBOs. Indeed, the center, and other CBOs like it, support overall community economic development; they provide career ladders for older youth and critically needed child care for working parents.

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Conclusion

Impressionistic tales provide rich ground from which a harvest of multiple interpretations of events can lead to a fuller understanding of social institutions. "Cupcakes for the Class" illuminates community-based youth programs, their role in the community, and the people who work and participate in them. The story provides a basis for observing how young people learn in these kinds of organizations and what they may be gaining in terms of their social, intellectual, and emotional development. Since writing this tale I have shared it with many youth practitioners and colleagues, and, as a result, have gained new insights and generated new questions. I believe, the strongest rationale for using stories as interpretive vehicles is this: doing so deepens our understanding of the meaning of programs in the lives of children and families and helps us formulate a principled and research-driven framework for youth policy and program development.

Notes

[1] All names used in this article are pseudonyms.

[2] While it is problematic to make statements about culture in homogeneous terms, this information was derived not only from my observations of the program, but from readers of this paper who are African American from the U.S. South. In addition, one of my readers, a doctoral student at my home university, grew up in the Franklin Houses, and is intimately familiar with the community.

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The Power of Play

A Literature-Based
After School Sports Program For Urban Youth

by TOM ZIERK

We, particularly as educators, have a tendency to forget or at least to underestimate, the significance of those aspects of education we don't control—the family, the community in all its manifestations, and all the other experiences of a young person's life outside the classroom.

—Harold Howe
(1991, p. 21)

There is a longstanding belief in American education that the physical sphere of human experience has little to do with the intellectual sphere. This helps explain why sports and physical activities are usually viewed as extra-curricular (literally, "outside" the curriculum). The message children often hear is that you can't be smart and athletic at the same time; we do not normally associate athletic endeavors with ways to promote social or cognitive development. But contrast this message with the fact that an estimated 35 million children and adolescents between the ages of six and eighteen play some sort of organized sport each year (Seefeld & Ewing, 1992).

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The Case for Sports

The kinds of social relationships that are encouraged and develop among members of a sports team greatly affect the quality of a young athlete's experience. For too many children, the sports experience is poor and eventually they drop out. In fact, by age fifteen more than 75 percent of the children who started playing organized sports at age six or seven have already quit (Wolff, 1997). The major reason for such a high attrition rate is the quality of adult leadership.

Influenced by the professional model, coaches and parents tend to focus more on performance and achievement and less on children and their developmental needs, desires, and expectations. Winning, championships, and trophies become more important than the day-to-day sports experience itself. Sports psychologist Jay Coakley observes that "the most important thing is not what the child does with the ball or what the ball does to the child, but rather how the child's interpretation of the sport's experience is mediated through relationships with others" (Coakley, 1986, p. 140).

Early adolescents are particularly vulnerable as they enter this time in their lives—when self-confidence and the need to experience and develop academic and social skills are critical. It is at this time that early social relationships help shape how children will view themselves, others, and the world around them. Issues such as friendship, fairness, and respect are some of the themes that are often played out during sports activities.

Developing Social and Emotional Skills. The single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not school grades or classroom behavior but rather how successfully a child gets along with others (Hartup, 1992). Research shows that antisocial and aggressive behavior interferes with school learning and the development of positive peer relations. One study, for example, found that 25 percent of children who were rejected by their peers in elementary school had dropped out before completing high school, compared to a general rate of eight percent (Goleman, 1995).

Success on the job also depends on social skills; in fact, studies show that 85 percent of job success can be attributed to social skills. Rarely is an employee fired for technical incompetence but rather for his or her inability to relate to peers. The Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identifies interpersonal skills—negotiating, exercising leadership, working with diversity, and participating as a team member—as essential competencies that young people need in order to participate in the modern workplace.

It is in backyards, school lots, and playgrounds where children develop the social skills that will be important throughout their lives. Especially critical are the skills needed to make and keep friends and to resolve interpersonal problems, including negotiating, role-taking, and empathy. Given that the intensity of violence among children has escalated, it has become imperative that children acquire skills to resolve interpersonal conflicts without fighting.

Promoting Social and Cultural Understanding. Conflicts often arise out of misunderstandings of racial, cultural, or religious differences. As our multicultural population continues to grow, children must learn how to work and play with diverse groups of children.

On a team, children have opportunities to discover how much they are alike, while recognizing, understanding, and appreciating differences. One study found that participation of students on multiracial sports teams had strong, positive effects on race relations, more so than teacher workshops, multiracial texts, and classroom discussions on race relations (Slaven & Madden, 1980). Sports

bring individuals together who have differences in skill levels, personalities, and social and cultural backgrounds. From this shared experience, young people learn that diversity can create stronger teams. They also become better equipped to counteract bias and prejudice.

Games are important, primarily because the target population is children in the process of developing. . .

—Terry Orlick,
Winning Through Cooperation (1978)

For one after school program, children's natural interest in sports provides the central theme around which literacy, language, social skills, and health issues are woven into a rich learning experience.

The Sports PLUS After School Program attracts youngsters in ways that connect them to school, build academic and social skills, promote health, and foster the capacity to be active participants in their own future. Ten-year-old Christina remarks, "The program encouraged me to do sports. I think, write, and read more." Jocyln, a fourth grader, says, "I learned how to read better." "What I liked about the after school program was the games we played and the books we read, like *Long Shot For Paul,* by Matt Christopher," comments Charles, a fifth grader.

The Sports PLUS After School Program was developed by Sports PLUS (Positive Learning Using Sports), located at the New Hampton School in New Hampton, New Hampshire. The program offers an alternative to traditional sports programs because it is school- and community-based. And in contrast to competitive programs, the Sports PLUS approach first develops a positive learning environment in which all children feel safe, both emotionally and physically, to explore their individual potential. Children in this interpersonal atmosphere, which includes numerous opportunities for dialogue and group interaction, are able to take risks free from ridicule and without feeling less capable than others. And perhaps of equal importance, it offers an opportunity to have fun, which is the main reason children say they play sports.

As a coeducational program, Sports PLUS offers both genders an opportunity to learn more about themselves and about equal treatment and respect. In the Sports PLUS Program, there are no bench-warmers. Maximum participation is the

rule, both in the classroom and on the field. Gender grouping is avoided as boys and girls engage in all program activities together.

Children participating in the PLUS After School Program soon learn to view sports not as something extra, but as part of their total education. The children develop a better understanding

The single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is how successfully a child gets along with others.

of diversity as they make, share, and swap their own all-star sports cards with classmates. Just like experienced Olympic athletes, students engage in relaxation training and self-talk as a way to set personal goals. For example, students brainstorm ways for three children to play basketball at one hoop in an activity called "You Make the Call." In their sport portfolios, they write what they think U.S. soccer player Michelle Akers meant in saying, "Though you can't control your dreams so they turn out like you've planned, you can always learn to adjust so you can handle them." And in the Lawrence, Massachusetts, Sports PLUS program, participants enjoyed meeting and hearing 1994 Olympic Gold Medalist Holly Metcalf read the story *Wilma Unlimited,* by Kathleen Krull. Holly served not only as a motivating force of strength and resilience but also as a model for literacy.

The PLUS After School Program encourages students to make connections from their sports experience to what they learn and how they live. Students learn to identify how the principles and skills that make them excel in sports—team play, discipline, practice, belief in oneself, responsibility, perseverance—can also lead to success in school, on the job, or in the community. The program provides a full range of developmental opportunities, focusing on the whole child rather than on a single problem behavior such as delinquency or violence.

At one Boston elementary school, for example, where this nonprofit program has been operating since 1994, about 100 boys and girls in grades 4-6 have participated free of charge. Results have exceeded expectations: Students developed a greater interest in reading and spent more time reading recreationally. Equally important, students keep coming back, and attendance is over 90 percent.

Program Goals

We have taken a holistic approach of the kind advocated by Schorr (1997) and structured Sports PLUS After School to incorporate four interrelated goals:

1. Increase reading and language development. Students participate and express themselves in group discussions, develop an interest in and appreciation for reading, respond to literature both orally and in writing, develop listening skills, build reading comprehension skills, interpret literary themes and their implications.

2. Develop social and emotional skills, including decision-making, goal-setting, communication, and emotional management; understand cause and effect relationships; predict outcomes and draw conclusions; interpret motives; make comparisons and contrasts; think of alternative solutions to problems.

3. Promote social and cultural understanding—develop perspective-taking and empathy skills, manage feelings, respond appropriately to conflict, cooperate and work in small teams, develop a greater understanding and acceptance of others.

4. Promote physical activity and a healthy lifestyle—develop an acceptable level of fitness, demonstrate skills to promote personal fitness, learn basic nutrition concepts, interpret health risks and take corresponding protective measures.

Program Components

The Sports PLUS After School Program offers a diversified curriculum that responds to differences in learning styles and developmental abilities. Lessons integrate reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills, all focused on sports. Activities are varied to address students' learning styles, such as verbal, auditory, kinesthetic, and visual. Children in the program are offered a variety of sports: basketball, soccer, floor hockey, whiffle ball, track and field, and touch football.

Sports PLUS focuses on five themes that naturally occur in sports situations: teamwork, respect, responsibility, fair play, and perseverance. Each of its five program components is organized around all of these five theme modules. As students explore one theme, they visit or revisit others. This affords children opportunities to explore the relationships among themes and to develop an integrated perspective.

Program Structure

The Sports PLUS After School Program includes five sessions:

1. Academic Session. The program features children's literature as an instructional medium to illustrate each theme. For example, Matt Christopher's *The Hit-Away Kid* is one book used in the Fair Play unit. On a fly ball to left field, Barry McGee, the "Hit-Away Kid," appears to make a great catch. While the umpire calls the batter out, Barry knows he dropped the ball. Barry must decide which is more important, playing by the rules or playing to win.

Each theme module includes two sports trade books and five activity types to choose from:

Sport Shorts—created to promote dialogue and discussion;

You Make the Call—children explore consequences and generate alternative courses of action;

Sport Cartoons—challenge children to determine what the characters are thinking and feeling;

Current Events, Role Plays, Quote of the Day—can be used independently, in conjunction with children's literature as "mini-lessons," or in warm-up and/or cool-down exercises. Students respond and react to what they read, and they complete self-selected exercises in their individual portfolios.

Sports Ledger—journals in which children record what they read, chart progress, and set goals.

2. Reading Workshop. This component provides students time to read self-selected sports books independently and/or as a group. When children choose literature they want to read rather than being told what to read, they not only become personally invested in the reading but also develop a real sense of ownership in the class.

3. Skill-Building Lessons. Within each theme module students study one of five core skill clusters:

Communication—Students practice sending and receiving both verbal and nonverbal messages, learn point of view, practice active listening skills, and build a vocabulary that gives encouragement to others.

Problem-Solving—Students focus on individual and group problem- solving by using the TEAM method: Take a time out; Exam-

ine the problem; Alternative decision-making; Make a game plan.

Conflict Resolution—Students practice the win/win model for negotiating compromise and apply different conflict management approaches to different situations.

Goal-Setting—Children practice the habit of positive self-talk and learn about long- and short-term goal-setting. They set goals using the athlete's equation for success: goal-setting= imagination + action + perseverance.

Anger Management—Students learn that anger, like conflict, is a normal part of life and can be managed in healthy, constructive ways. They explore and express feelings, practice various types of relaxation techniques, and study the physiological effects of anger.

4. Sports Session. Teachers and students select one of six major sports to include in a theme module: basketball, floor hockey, soccer, flag football, track and field, or whiffle ball. Game strategy, rules, basic skills (throwing, striking, catching, and kicking), and sport-specific stretches are outlined for each. This format is designed to provide teachers and students with flexibility in selecting appropriate sports. The variety of sports is offered to give students a chance to discover individual talents and interests. More ideas and options for other sports and games are also included.

5. Health and Nutrition Break. The health and nutrition piece is incorporated into the snack break and sports session. It addresses nutrition, exercise and fitness, health, safety, disease prevention, and drug abuse prevention.

Teacher as Coach

"How to stimulate engagement is the first question every good teacher asks," observes Theodore Sizer (1992). Like athletes, students need to be mentally and physically prepared before participating. Lessons and activities follow a warm-up, practice and cool-down. In a warm-up session, Sports PLUS teachers focus on what will be taught and state the goals of the particular activity. The session also involves tapping into the curiosity of each child and assessing and building on prior knowledge and personal experience. In the cool-down, groups reflect on how they worked together and share what and how they think. In this way, children are taught to be

conscious of their own learning, particularly interacting and learning in teams.

The emphasis is on *teaching for transfer,* or encouraging children to make connections among their learning on the field, in the classroom, and in life in general. By acting more like a coach than a teacher, instructors foster inquiry, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. This is quite different from the traditional didactic method in which the adult assumes center stage. In contrast to traditional classrooms, the student is the prime actor rather than a passive spectator. There is heavy emphasis on group discussion. Students talk about issues that are important to them and how the five themes are illustrated by behavior, both good and bad, and examples found on the playing field or in peer groups.

Support Components

Support components refer to additional program components designed to bolster the core program elements.

1. *Family Involvement.* Each family member receives a Home Court Handbook that informs them about what their children are learning and includes activities to use at home. Family members are invited to attend special events and a minimum of three family meetings each year.

2. *Role Models.* Visits from athletes and other professionals add an exciting dimension to the program. By talking about program themes, reading with the children, and/or participating in sports, these individuals serve as important role models.

3. *Field Trips.* Through a minimum of three planned field trips, participants are connected to a wider world of issues, people, and events. Children begin to see the interrelationships between schooling and the wider community. To share a common learning experience with their children and to assist as chaperones, family members are encouraged to attend.

4. *Student-Coaches Program.* Graduates of the program (7th-8th graders) are invited back to Sports PLUS to serve as student coaches, or peer leaders. They assist their younger counterparts in organizing sports activities; they demonstrate and teach specific sports skills; and they read stories and provide academic assistance. Student-coaches receive training to familiarize them with their roles and to help them develop coaching and teaching skills.

A Typical Week

The activities of a typical week in the teamwork module might include:

Tuesday: The teacher/coach announces the MVP (Most Valuable Person) of the previous week, elected in a secret ballot by the students. The criteria for election as MVP are also the themes emphasized in Sports PLUS: the qualities of teamwork, respect, responsibility, fair play, and perseverance. Either in group discussion or in their journals, students reflect on their experiences of playing basketball the previous week. Students talk about issues or problems they confronted during the game, such as what happened when some of the players hogged the ball. Students then read and discuss a chapter in the book *One Man Team* by Dean Hughes (1994). This is a story about a talented basketball player who has yet to learn what it means to be a team player.

Wednesday: Students begin by discussing a quote from Princeton basketball coach Pete Carrill: "In a team sport like basketball, every time you help somebody else, you help yourself." Students then review where the story *One Man Team* left off and discuss how the Carrill quote relates to the story. In teams, students interpret a sports cartoon related to the theme of teamwork. Students examine the character's actions and feelings and predict what might happen next. For the remaining time, they play three-on-three basketball and focus on passing skills.

Thursday: Students review the cartoon examined on Wednesday and brainstorm ideas to create their own cartoons based on the theme of teamwork. They play three-on-three basketball and finish the day by voting for the MVP of the week.

Conclusion

The variety of problems that label a growing number of children "at-risk" are often simplified with a reductionist approach. "Problems" are identified in one of three areas: the child, the school, or the family (Pinato & Walsh, 1996). And too often it is the children who are viewed as the problem. Current theory and practice tend to focus on problem prevention, rather than on youth development. As Karen Pitman, a national youth advocate tells us, "Problem-free does not mean fully prepared" (Pitman, 1994). Programs, especially the ones held during the critical out-of-school hours, need to build on children's strengths and capacities; they need to help students see the

positives in themselves and the possibilities of tomorrow.

Successful programs use and build upon the students' and families' language, culture, and experiences as a basis for learning. Children must be recognized as individuals and as part of diverse communities, not merely as a monolithic group. It is important, then, not to focus exclusively on either the child, the family, or the school, but rather to consider all three through the interaction of both an active environment and an active child. After all, learning and development are mediated through relationships with others, including family members, peers, coaches, and teachers.

Clearly, after school programs must emphasize interpersonal factors and incorporate social-support networks that sustain effort and hope. Better dialogue among schools, families, and the wider community will give children and their families more options and greater paths to success. Sports offers one alternative for making meaningful connections.

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Women's Sports Foundation.

Creating an Agency Culture

A Model for Common Humanity

by EILEEN C. LYONS

T he after school arena can pro-
vide exquisite opportunities for
mutual aid, cooperative learn-
ing, community building, and
individual growth and change that too
few settings, including schools, are able
to offer consistently and coherently.

In some after school programs, for example, the
adults with whom children develop relationships
hold to the goals of connecting with children first
and teaching children second. As a result of that
shift in priorities, many children who do not
thrive in school flourish in the after school setting,
not because of an absence of expectations, but
rather because staff practice a broad acceptance
and appreciation of children's needs, challenges,
and limitations. The emphasis on the "relational"
opportunities and obligations of the program sets
the stage for staff, children, and families to devel-
op supportive alliances in promoting the child's
overall development and learning. Indeed, when
children feel "connected" to the staff and to the
agency community, their academic performance
and interest in schoolwork show marked improve-
ment (Schaps, Lewis, and Watson 1996, p. 29).

The axiom that encourages staff to proactive-
ly address and work with the "whole" social child
similarly guides the after school practitioner as he
or she works with the child as learner. In after
school settings, staff are dedicated to doing
"whatever it takes" to help a child to learn. At its

best, the after school setting offers untold oppor-
tunities for a spirited pursuit of creative learning.
The specific life circumstances of the child will
dictate whether that learning provides an ideo-
logical counterpoint to the school day or a won-
derful extension and celebration of the school
day's learning.

The practice of after school programming is
rooted in both the progressive education move-
ment and the field of social group work. Accord-
ing to the field of social group work, it "emerged
from the settlement, Y's and community centers,
also recreation and progressive education move-
ments" (Gitterman, 1986, p. 29). It is now up to
us to identify our connections with these move-
ments and institutions, to articulate the theories
and philosophies that shape our work, and to res-
urrect the common language, theory and methods
that have heretofore intuitively guided our work.
Ultimately, the field may distinguish itself by inte-
grating the best of many fields, and in particular
by blending and melding social group work and
educational schools of thought.

Specific features that distinguish the field of
after school programs can be readily identified.
One such feature is the agency culture, a deeply
nuanced and dynamic organism that is born out
of the values, relationships, rules, practices, and
history of the organization. Its power can obfus-
cate or enhance effective practice. When skillfully
constructed, the agency culture instills myriad
positive values of community, interpersonal rela-
tionships and learning into the lives of young
people, their families and staff. Because it is
dynamic, it evolves, and can change—for better or
worse—over time. The agency milieu, like any
successful garden, requires constant and careful
tending.

The Agency Setting: A Unique Opportunity

Every after school program and youth organization has an opportunity to create a culture that values what is good and right for our children, an Eden if you will, where the best human qualities are practiced, learned, and celebrated. The culture of the agency should continually evolve as a result

ture is shaped by workers' identification with the clients they serve. For example, in the field of peer substance abuse counseling, a distinctive set of working principles is rooted in the experiences of its formerly addicted counselors. While all of these factors may influence the agency culture, and may contribute positive values, culture should not result arbitrarily as a function of the personality or profession that "wins out" or wields the most power. It should be a considered choice.

> *The culture of the agency should continually evolve as a result of the participation and conscious choices of its stakeholders and the purposeful direction and delibrate guidance of its staff.*

of the participation and conscious choices of its stakeholders—in this instance the participants in the program, principally children and family members—and the purposeful direction and deliberate guidance of its staff.

Thus described, the agency milieu becomes a defining characteristic of the after school arena. Understanding the way we create our agency environments requires us to examine our most fundamental beliefs about what helps children to flourish, related methods of intervention, and the knowledge base and theoretical frameworks that guide our thinking, decision-making, and actions. To proactively shape the agency milieu requires us to examine our core values and their application. A variety of basic issues must be explored, including: the nature of the relationship between the child and the youth worker; the potential to use the setting or community as an agent for individual, group, and social change; the stanchions that support and validate the role of the worker; and, the expectations of both the child and the worker.

The organization's staff must consciously and deliberately create a culture with positive norms, values, relationships, and challenges plus a variety of learning opportunities—developmental, social, educational, and recreational. Viewed as a whole, this medium constitutes the agency milieu. It is greater than any single staff person or participant, yet captures and amplifies the voices of all its stakeholders.

All too often, the "culture" of the agency is taken for granted. It may emerge haphazardly as a consequence of a charismatic leader, the values of the professional majority, or the neighborhood in which it is located. In some instances, the cul-

Neither is it a one-time decision. The culture of an agency, like a garden, requires constant pruning, weeding, and cultivation. At the root of many organizational problems such as staffing conflicts, low client attendance, and poorly planned programs is the powerful specter of a culture that has randomly and capriciously emerged.

Collins and Porras, discussing the corporate world, note that "companies that enjoy enduring success have core values and a core purpose" (1996, p. 65).

> Core ideology defines the enduring character of an organization—a consistent identity that transcends product or market life cycles, technological breakthroughs, management fads, and individual leaders. Core ideology provides the glue that holds an organization together as it grows, decentralizes, diversifies, expands globally, and develops workplace diversity. . . . Core values are the essential and enduring tenets of an organization. A small set of timeless guiding principles, core values require no external justification, they have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization. (p. 66)

Nine Central Principles

This paper explores nine central principles that constitute a Model for Common Humanity, a model which can be used to guide the continuing development of the agency culture. Its central tenets are derived primarily from theories of social group work that help to explain the leadership, development, and dynamics of small groups.

Regardless of the mission of the agency, its target population, cultural or other influences, the model can be used effectively. The agency culture or milieu, as defined in this model, transcends individual personalities and programming. It provides a foundation upon which all programming and relationships rest. Its guiding principles call for the active participation of its stakeholders in its ongoing evolution. Furthermore, each principle espouses core values and methods that constitute a framework to guide the relationships, interactions, and expectations between and among all people in the community.

While the nine building blocks intersect and overlap, they each address specific areas of the agency culture. For example, the **Needs Dialogue** and the **Purpose, Values, and Expectations** sections offer a method for framing an understanding of the nature of the community and its work. **Adaptation** defines the workers' responsibility to help people enter into and become a part of the community. Along with Adaptation, the **Mutuality** and **Consensus-Building** sections provide specific methods that operationalize the vision; these two building blocks guide the nature of relationships between and among the members of the community. **Seeing**, **Focus**, **Impact**, and **Dynamism** help the staff and other community members to sustain the health and integrity of the agency culture.

1. Needs Dialogue

The manner in which workers view and discuss client need dictates to a large degree the nature of the helping relationship, and, in particular, the degree to which power is shared. The needs dialogue is played out every day in the agency in the ordinary exchanges that occur between staff and children and families. Yet each of these seemingly minor dialogues can reflect and champion the fundamental mission and core values of the agency culture.

> 'What's the carrot that you use to get kids into your program?' a funder once asked me. I knew what he meant, but I couldn't find the words to respond. 'There is no carrot,' I said. 'When you address youngsters' needs, they will come on their own.' 'But what's the carrot?' he persisted. I weighed the answers that he expected to hear: Great Adventure, a stipend, basketball? 'Kids want to be here,' I finally responded, 'because we let them know that we understand why they might want to be here.' I reflected out loud. 'Maybe they're lonely, or they want to make new friends, or

they're trying to make some tough decisions, or they're unsure about sex, or their parents use drugs or hurt each other, or they feel angry about violence and racism. Maybe they're failing in school and feel stupid, or they want to express themselves better . . .' I was breathless. If you tell them about those "maybes," they'll come because they know you understand.

The funder's question illustrates an all-too-common view in the field of youth services, the notion that getting help is a bitter pill, and that workers must hide help-giving. That position suggests that young people are not capable of identifying the needs they want met and that we need to manipulate them in order to provide services. It implies that children and teens won't attend a program unless it's disguised as something other than what it really is.

Talking to a client and stakeholders about need goes to the heart of the work of youth practitioners. Need is not about being "needy," nor is it about "neediness." Need speaks to the essential core of what it is to be a human being who travels through the passages of life; it includes the range of physical human needs as well as relationships, imagination and passion. In discussing the concept of needs assessment for developing any group, Brandler and Roman state:

> The process of assessing the needs of clients, workers, and agencies is a complicated one. Evaluating population needs involves general knowledge about the population served. This includes factors related to culture, ethnicity, developmental stage, socioeconomic class, age, and special situation issues. (1991, p. 105)

While youngsters share common developmental needs, their individual needs may vary greatly. Some youth with whom we work are saddled with devastating personal problems such as the loss of a parent, divorce, abuse or neglect. Others may shoulder the burden of chronic school failure or bullying by their peers. Still others are struggling to become independent from their parents or to improve in areas of concrete skills such as sports, the arts, self-expression, or academia.

Need should be talked about in plain and simple language, in order to capture its essence. Its lines should be clean and pure, the antithesis of a "sales" dialogue. Often, because workers feel pressured to recruit children into a program, they will "sell" the most appealing aspects of the program, without talking with children and families about their core needs.

An agency situated in the heart of a neighborhood in which immigrant families lived had dif-
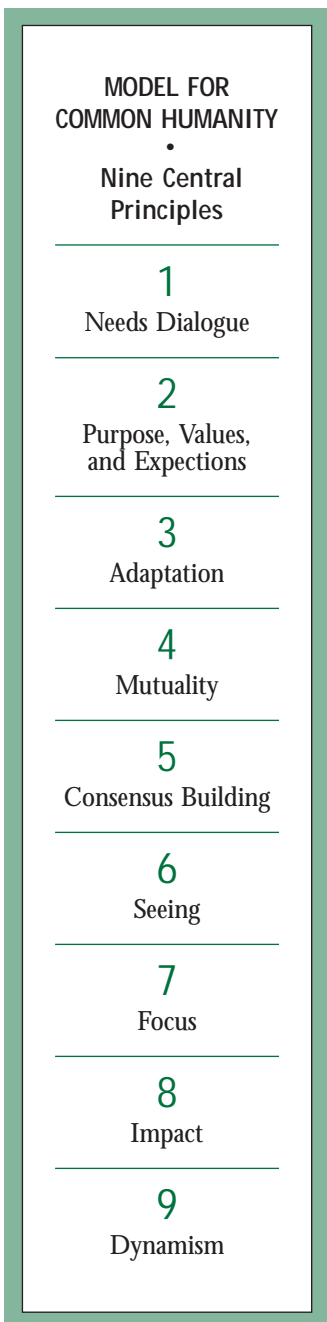
ficulty recruiting and retaining clients. Agency staff attempted to make their programs sound more and more appealing, so they offered an array of exciting recreational and art programs, stipends, and trips. Youngsters signed up, but attendance rates always fell precipitously after a short period of time.

While exploring the problem, one staff person observed that many parents forbade their children to attend because they did not trust the program. Other staff chimed in, noting that these parents distrusted many American institutions, including schools and neighborhood organizations. To counter their distrust, staff had tried to convince parents that the program was worthwhile. Assuming a different stance, staff worked together to explore the needs of the families in their neighborhood. They ultimately decided that, through the "needs dialogue," they should recognize and validate the very real tensions that these immigrant parents faced in raising their children in a place so different from their homeland. They also decided to talk with parents about their fears of losing their children to the "alluring" new culture, which included this agency.

Selling may enlist clients initially, but ultimately they may feel disappointed or betrayed. By openly discussing needs, staff can achieve a level of authenticity that establishes a firm foundation upon which to establish a continuing relationship. In the above anecdote, the staff members' capacity to recognize the compelling concerns of their client population resulted in a variety of positive outcomes. They were better able to: understand and engage clients; develop relevant programs; enlist clients as partners in the work; and, help clients to understand themselves better.

Kurland states:

Thoughtful pre-group planning would give consideration to the following questions regarding need: 'What are the needs of the potential group members as perceived by them? the worker? the agency? other relevant and/or knowledgeable persons? Can these needs be met by the group modality?' (1978, p. 177)

These questions, Kurland suggests, should guide the pre-planning efforts of the group worker and can guide the practitioner at every stage of service delivery. The needs dialogue is an important tool for assessing the needs of the population you intend to be served, planning programs, and evaluating programs. When an authentic understanding of needs is achieved, clients will have already been enlisted as partners in the design of relevant programming.

Often, in a protective role, the worker keeps the need secret, inadvertently imposing a hidden agenda. For example, as part of a basketball league, the agency may introduce workshops on pregnancy prevention. The worker may feel that unless he or she bribes participants with something special, they will not attend the program. The recruitment effort may succeed, but when the pregnancy prevention component interrupts the basketball session, participants may feel resentful and tricked. Some may feel that yet another adult has planned a sneak attack.

The question is, will young people attend a session whose purpose is to help them think about pregnancy prevention and sex? The answer is a resounding yes, if they are enlisted to contribute their ideas and reactions in an authentic way.

When agendas are hidden, the balance of power initially shifts to the worker or agency. Hidden agendas displace responsibility; they do not allow the client to chart his or her own course—to wholly participate in his or her own goal setting and decision-making. The worker acts on the client's behalf, rather than collaborating with the client.

According to group work principles, group members and the worker must develop a shared understanding of need, which, in turn, drives the

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MODEL FOR
COMMON HUMANITY
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Nine Central
Principles

1
Needs Dialogue

2
Purpose, Values,
and Expections

3
Adaptation

4
Mutuality

5
Consensus Building

6
Seeing

7
Focus

8
Impact

9
Dynamism

development of a shared purpose (Northern 1988, p. 113; Steinberg 1997, p. 8). The value of an honest and open view of need lies at the heart of the helping relationship between the worker and the client (Shulman 1992, p. 84). The worker and client join together to establish a common view of real need, an agreement to work together; their respective roles, responsibilities, and expectations begin to emerge. The worker does not have to defend an unnamed agenda or take undue responsibility for the client's life. Rather, the worker joins with the client to advance his or her goals and agenda, setting the stage for individual empowerment and indigenous group leadership. When workers assume this stance, they assert values that have a wide-ranging impact on the agency culture or milieu.

2. Purpose, Values, and Expectations

It is essential to enlist clients and members of the organization in the ongoing development of the agency milieu. That objective is achieved when, from the very first interaction with the client, agency staff frankly articulate the purposes, mutual expectations, and values of the agency. This assertion is both grand and practical. On the one hand, it reaches towards the sky, pointing towards what is possible, what is worth striving for and dreaming about. On the other hand, it provides concrete information about how things operate in the agency, as well as a preliminary frame of reference, introducing the agency, its common language and its concepts. For example, while recruiting teenagers to join a conflict resolution group, I might say:

> We're working to end racism. We think that racism is corrosive—that when you meet it, it can take a little bit of your soul. That doesn't mean that we aren't able to talk about it— that's exactly what we want to do. We want to talk to you and others about your views because we're all affected by racism. But someday, we'd like to eliminate it from our vocabulary. No more racism.

Talking about the agency's vision and mission can inspire and move people. By stating, for example, that "this agency believes that teenagers have a right to express themselves in a safe place," hope and inspiration are offered to youngsters. We invite them to join us in our vision and to voice their own.

When clients understand the values, beliefs, and motivations of the worker and agency, they are afforded the chance to make a decision whether to join, based on the facts. When the client has information, he or she has increased power and control. The worker's role is not to coerce but rather to focus on helping the client make a personal decision. Kurland explains:

> The increased clarity of purpose for the social work practitioner and the client that results from careful planning increases the client's ability to make a clear and informed decision about whether he wishes to participate in the service offered and thus lessens client manipulation and domination by the worker and increases client self-determination." (1978, p. 175)

Ultimately, in building a community, workers, staff, and other stakeholders should share a common view of the agency purpose, a view that is driven by a shared understanding of need. Providing a physically and psychologically safe place is a sine qua non of the after school program. Keeping that in mind, the practitioner can help to guide the development of positive community norms such as respect, nonviolence, acceptance, and cooperation.

Values and expectations are intertwined and should be discussed out loud from the beginning. For example, what is the agency's stand on violence or offensive language? These issues should be raised not to declare "martial law," but rather to help agency members wrestle with and establish values and norms about how to be together, how to communicate, and how to solve problems and make decisions. As staff demonstrate that it is okay to talk about truths and even difficult topics such as racism, they set the stage for open, non-judgmental discussions about values.

The articulation of beliefs, expectations, and purpose should be wholly incorporated into the overall discussion of discipline and rules. Rules without reason constitute an autocracy; articulating values, part of a basic building block, ensures that the reasoning behind the rules is rooted in a carefully developed values system. This prospect demands an enormous personal and professional commitment from staff. It requires that they also participate in open discussion to formulate the values and belief systems of the agency. Without this basic unity, the milieu will be significantly weakened and undermined.

Adaptation

Orientations that introduce children and their families to the agency of are critical importance. Yet they are only one step in a process of

"entering into" a culture that may take months for some members. A primary task for the youth worker is to help the child adapt to the agency setting and to participate fully in its activities and

or she encounters in this setting. This conflict of loyalty between those previously embraced values and beliefs and the new and different agency values constitutes a "normative crisis."

The agency's milieu transcends any single staff person or participant, yet captures and amplifies the voices of all stakeholders.

social relationships. Critical learning and growth take place as the child successfully adapts to this setting and its requirements for participation. It is important to recognize, however, that the agency setting may provide the child an experience that is dramatically different from his/her usual experiences, thus requiring the staff to aggressively help the child to adapt. This process of enabling adaptation defines a vital responsibility of the youth worker.

Helping young people to adapt to and participate in the agency community is a complicated and sometimes frustrating task for the worker. Often, when children fail to connect to the communities we have lovingly created, we wonder where we went wrong. We create an "ideal" setting at our own agency, promoting values like mutual aid, respect, belonging, consensus building, and diversity, all thoughtfully designed to help kids to flourish. Yet the kids drop out, or fight us, or re-create our own worst vision of a bad classroom. Some kids insist that they want you to behave like an autocrat—use corporal punishment, be stricter, be tougher! And suddenly you are almost convinced that theirs is the better way. Indeed, the process of socializing youngsters to the agency milieu can prove to be the most challenging one for the individual worker and the staff as a whole, highlighting the critical need for a building block-supported adaptation.

The ideal agency setting or milieu may be profoundly different from the child's life at school, at home, or in the neighborhood. Values, expectations, rules and norms may differ considerably from the child's usual frame of reference. In some cases, children will be required to develop whole new sets of behaviors and communication styles in order to adapt successfully to this new setting.

Because it is so different, the new environment can pose particular threats and evoke certain fears in children, implicitly challenging what they have heretofore accepted as true. Thus, the child who is told at home to be "seen and not heard," or to obey an arbitrary authority, may be overwhelmed and confused by the new contour of authority he

Discussing the socialization of pre-adolescents into the group culture, Malekoff describes the normative crisis:

In the style of the four questions asked during the Jewish Passover Seder, the new group member asks herself, `How is this group different from all other groups?' The exodus, in this case is from a more traditional system of values to the experience of normative shock and finally to a new set of values for a new culture. The rules and regimen of the classroom, family, club, etc., evaporate as the new group unfolds. (1984, p. 14).

All of these changes can ripple through the child's psyche, threatening the child's sense of self at the deepest level.

David left his group and sat down in the lobby right next to the exit. He appeared angry, a scowl etched across his mouth and forehead. His face was frozen—a sharp, raging contrast to the still fragile build of an early adolescent neatly dressed in a parochial school uniform. I tried for some time to elicit from him what he was so angry about. For weeks, he had tested the safety of the agency and the trust he could assign to staff. We knew a great deal about David's background so it helped us to understand his struggle. His mother had neglected David emotionally since infancy. She appeared perpetually angry with him, and, with the least provocation, withdrew her affection. She often refused to speak to him for days on end for minor infractions such as spilling milk or failing to make his bed. I sat next to David, telling him that he looked upset and reassuring him that that was okay. With hands clenched and tears spilling from his eyes, he stared straight ahead and said, 'I hate it here.' 'You hate it here,' I empathized. 'I don't want to be here,' he said. 'I hate everybody and they just make me really mad.' David had perfect attendance in the after school program. He was always the first to arrive and the last to go home. I knew that he

was struggling with a tremendous sense of personal loss and pain. Our acceptance of his emotions and response to his needs evoked powerful feelings of the neglect and hurt he had coped with at home for so long. 'We would really miss you if you left,' I told him. Then I patted him on the back and said, 'I'm sorry that you're feeling so upset with us.'"

Simply stated, we human beings are usually most comfortable with what we know. Thus, the staff might be convinced that the community is a positive one, but the members can feel wholly uncomfortable in it, and may even seek to recreate that with which they are comfortable. A major cause of the failure of agencies to sustain ideal cultures or to maintain their members is the insufficient amount of attention paid to the process of helping clients adapt to the new setting.

This process of enabling or assisting adaptation defines a critical function assigned to every staff person. As a useful analogue, the worker might view this function of the job as that of a tour guide, helping a visitor adjust to a new country. The tour guide explains the cultural norms, rules, values, and expectations, continually translating for the visitor what he or she observes—in the context of the understanding that it is different from the visitor's frame of reference.

Viewing oneself as a "helper" whose job is to help the child adapt to and participate in the formation of the agency culture is the central premise of this building block. When adaptation is embraced as a continuous process, and, in some cases, a long-term objective, it provides a benevolent framework from which to view children's struggles to fit in. Children are helped to recognize that the agency is a different culture in which, for example, safety and cooperation are requirements for membership. Staff makes clear to the child that adapting to this new culture may be difficult, and that the child will be offered help, time and understanding in order to succeed. As a result, discipline can be provided in a benevolent framework.

The worker struggles with the child in an alliance, the goal of which is to understand and embrace new values and adaptive behaviors without betraying the essential self. Helping a child to adapt may require considerable skill and time, so the adaptation itself should not be viewed as a means to an end but rather as a momentous outcome unto itself. Discussing the normative crisis, Malekoff states, "The group worker's awareness at this juncture, his empathy, allows him to gently move the group into new and ultimately more intimate territory" (1984, p. 15).

Finally, we ask, how do we know when the child has successfully adapted to the agency setting? Adaptation is reached when the child has internalized the norms and values of the agency, has developed positive relationships with some staff and peers, and is able to participate in the program. The possibilities for growth and change, as the child successfully adapts to the milieu, are limitless. The potential for the child to enrich the milieu is also infinite.

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4. Mutuality

Who helps whom at the agency? Is this a paternalistic agency in which help or aid is dispensed to the needy? How do workers view themselves and their clients or community members? At the heart of social group work theory lies the concept of the mutual aid system, a deeply held belief that people can help each other—especially when they share the same interests or compelling needs. Schwartz states:

> Ideally, any group can establish reciprocal helping relationships among its members and become a system of mutual aid wherein members extend help to each other in working out their common problems. (1961, p. 13)

Mutual aid goes hand in hand with the development of indigenous group leadership. It requires staff to use skills that help clients to help each other. As we practitioners shape this culture, we must think about how we enable our young people to understand and appreciate mutuality—the idea of giving and receiving help, support and knowledge. Unless mutuality is incorporated into curricula, into expectations of how people should be with each other, the values associated with the needs dialogue and the articulation of beliefs are meaningless.

The group leader plays an important role in the mutual aid system and one that I suggest can be transferred to the worker's role in the community. In social group work theory, the "leader" is responsible for guiding the development of the group. She or he is not the center of power and expertise; rather, the leader's expertise is helping the group members to work together, to develop indigenous leadership and to develop ways of being and working together in order to achieve these goals. This lies at the heart of mutuality. Schwartz states:

> The important fact is that this is a helping system in which clients need each other as well as the worker. This need to use each other, to create not one but many helping relationships, is a vital ingredient of the group process

and constitutes a common need over and above the specific tasks for which the group was formed. (1961, p. 13)

Mutuality reinforces patterns of communication that will be discussed in consensus-building, creating a web of support and sharing between and among members. Developing a system of mutual aid within the broader agency context is a goal that will assert its influence in a variety of ways. In

youth agencies, establishing mutual aid as an essential value and practice of the community contributes to children's understanding of their responsibilities and roles as group and community members. Mutual aid reinforces values such as cooperation, teamwork, respect, and empathy in particular.

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5. Building Consensus

The Model for Common Humanity advocates the participation of members in the life and decision-making of the community. The principle of building consensus is designed to ensure that members' participation is not gratuitously enlisted, but that a practical method for achieving real participation is established.

Often, as in the following personal anecdote, people believe that the fairest way to make a decision is to put the issue to a vote in which the majority wins:

Ten early adolescents sat huddled around the center's wide oak table, wrestling with a group decision: what movie to see on the next outing. The group leader identified three movies that fit the group's location, rating and schedule and then named the first movie. Some group members yelled out their reactions while others talked in small sub-groups. 'I already saw that last Sunday with my cousin!' yelled Arnold. 'I really want to see that,' Marie countered. Jackie jumped in, 'No, no, you got your way last time.' The group leader called out, 'Settle down, settle down. Let me finish naming the movies and then we'll put it to a vote.' The group quieted down. 'Drum roll please,' joked the group leader. 'The next possible movie is . . .' He named the movie and the group members burst forth with a volley of comments. Finally, the group leader held up his hand. 'Okay everybody, let's put this to a vote.' When the final vote was cast, Tawana turned to the leader and said, 'It's just not fair. The boys always get their way because there are more of them.' 'Majority wins!' yelled Jason. The group leader nodded, 'What's fair is fair.'

What's so fair about that? It may seem fair to the majority who "win" or rule the decision, but is it a fundamentally fair way of recognizing group members' needs?

Northern writes:

It is through methods of decision-making that conflict is controlled or resolved. Groups often control conflict through a process of elimination, that is, forcing the withdrawal of the opposing individual or sub-group, often in subtle ways. In subjugation or domination, the strongest members force others to accept their points of view. In spite of its use as a democratic procedure, majority rule is an example of subjugation because it does not result in agreement or mutual satisfaction. (1988, p. 39)

"Consensus is an ideal end to controversy and diversity among group participants" (Middleman, p. 132). It requires an appreciation and recognition of all voices as well as real power sharing. Decisions are driven not so much by the exercise of power as they are by the fundamental values of diversity, inclusion, and responsible participation. It recognizes that the single voice may offer powerful views, and that the group's effort to understand minority as well as majority views can result in its most creative outcomes. When groups and communities attempt to make decisions that work for everybody, the results are often more original and humane. It is in the process of attempting to include and recognize all voices that consensus-building puts values into practice. It transcends itself as a decision-making method to become a building block whose values and related practices are essential to the agency milieu.

First, building consensus places an equal value on the voices of all members. An equal value is placed on the right, responsibility, and value of each voice to be heard, without judging its merit. Inviting and celebrating differences, which is at the core of diversity, requires a consistent and reliable respect for all views. The value of inclusion is *a priori*. Middleman and Wood suggest:

> A concomitant skill to reaching for consensus is reaching for difference. . . . In fact, consensus is meaningless if differences are forced underground in the interest of peacefulness. A satisfying resolution to differences, whether through consensus or voting, is all the more possible if differences are aired before a direction is taken. . . . To reach for difference is to help the group participants see things from various angles, reviewing alternative points. If only positives are expressed, the social worker should elicit the opposite viewpoint. If only negative valuations are entertained, then the worker seeks expression of other possibilities. The worker helps the group see and think beyond dichotomies: right/wrong, yes/no, good/bad. (Middleman and Wood, 1990, p. 133-34)

The process of building consensus insists upon the value of participation. It requires that all participants work together to reach a conclusion and be responsible for shaping and influencing the outcome of decisions and actions within the group. They are also responsible for ensuring that all voices are heard, and that inclusion is practiced. Ultimately, this process helps all participants feel that they have a voice and a sense of ownership in the agency and the community.

Clearly, all views will not be recognized; all needs will not be met. I am not suggesting that there be no centralized authority or that either the staff group, the client group, or both together make every decision in the agency. But all participants need to feel a stake in what happens and should feel free to voice their views.

> Decision-making in a group may take place through consensus or through a voting procedure depending on size, intimacy of members, and time available. Whether the purpose of the group is problem-solving for individual members, or a social situation, it appears to be essential for direction from leadership to facilitate the process and to channel the flow of ideas and feelings (Hartford, 1971, p. 243).

In American society, majority rule is the most common method for making group decisions. Therefore, staff and children alike will need practice and encouragement to develop and use con-sensus-building skills and, in particular, to learn to reach for and treasure differences. The worker should emphasize that building consensus helps to sustain an agency culture that is fair and safe for all members.

The final four principles also operate to sustain the health of the organization. They provide checks and balances to guard against the conformity and myopic vision that so often characterizes a closely-knit community.

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6. Seeing

Seeing constitutes the institutional capacity and norms that encourage agency members to recognize the realities and conditions of both the organization and its individual members. "Seeing" is a crucial principle of the Model of Common Humanity for two reasons. It values each member of the organization by asserting that he or she should be "seen" in the context of the realities in his or her life. Secondly, it requires staff and other organizational caretakers to actively reflect on the basic integrity and health of the agency culture. The continuing health of the milieu will depend upon their willingness and skill in accomplishing this.

When problems are ignored, and nobody dares to acknowledge or identify them, they become like elephants in the living room. In a family, for example, the elephant in the living room may be Dad's drinking problem. It's as if there's an elephant which everybody pretends is not there. By denying such a basic reality, participants sacrifice more and more of their souls, and the integrity of the institution—whether family or agency—is corroded.

Each of us may be susceptible to an incapacity to see particular problems, problems that evoke in us a personal pain or emotion. Because it feels intolerable, or makes us feel helpless or overwhelmed, we look away. Like families, agencies are subject to their own elephants in the room. Problems become elephants when staff or agency members refuse to acknowledge them, so eventually a taboo develops against speaking out. Agencies are particularly vulnerable to elephants that represent wider social problems.

> At a non-profit agency in which I worked, a two-tiered office system demarcated the professional and managerial offices from the front-line non-professional workers. The professionals held all the outside, windowed offices that formed a square on the perimeter of the building. All the front-line workers sat in the center of the square. One day, I observed aloud to a colleague that all the out-

side offices were occupied by white people, while the inside desks were occupied almost entirely by people of color. 'I never noticed that,' she exclaimed. 'I don't ever notice what race people are.'

Seeing, in the social service field, is not a matter of possessing an intuitive gift. It is a moral imperative. It requires objectivity, self-reflection, skill, and courage. It can be difficult for youth practitioners and administrators: admitting our own blind spots and fears is especially painful to those of us who have dedicated our careers to the field of youth development.

In the course of providing technical assistance, I once asked a group of experienced youth practitioners, working in an area with high rates of poverty, violence and school failure, if any of them had ever worked with a child who was suicidal. Of the dozen or so people in the room, not a single person said that he or she had ever worked with a suicidal or seriously depressed child. We moved on with the workshop, which consisted of alerting people to signs of depression and suicide. The following week, when the group returned, several members recounted the past week's events. Several had followed up on youngsters whom they thought might be depressed. One person reached out to a child who had sat in the corner of the room for most of the year. Another staffer shared that she realized her daughter was seriously depressed and that she had arranged for an immediate psychiatric assessment.

Seeing requires organizational support. "Why should we ask kids if they're feeling depressed or suicidal," asked one worker, "if we don't have a hospital or mental health clinic in our neighborhood?" In the best of all worlds, a responsive agency sends the message to staff that it will support the principle of "seeing." The supportive agency must encourage the "seeing" by supporting any attendant helplessness and frustration that the staff may feel and by being prepared to respond concretely to the findings. Thus, seeing is a core value of the agency culture that, when put into action, has an impact on the programs and activities that are offered to clients, as well as the nature of discourse engaged in by members of the community.

Finally, seeing can be difficult and painful. As an administrator, I have realized that I don't always practice the values that I preach. The old axiom, "physician heal thyself," is poignantly applicable. This potential problem can be largely avoided by adhering to the next principle, reciprocal impact,

which suggests that the lively interplay between practice and policy (practitioners and administrators) can provide a valid test of the effectiveness and relevance of both programs and policies.

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7. Reciprocal Impact

The continuing health of the agency culture depends, in part, upon the reciprocal impact of practice and policy. The delivery of services should both shape and reflect the policies, rules, regulations, and practices of the organization. This critical interplay of feedback and ideas is most effective when it is clearly understood by both front-line staff and administration. Clearly, front-line staff count on formal agency policies and guidelines to make decisions and deliver services. Conversely, based on their daily experiences working with children and families, staff should inform and refine organizational policy when warranted. Administrators should emphasize to staff that recognizing discrepancies between policy and practice is key to the continued health of the agency culture. Any "disconnect" between policy and practice alert staff to potentially problematic or obsolete policy and related practice, thus providing a useful opportunity to re-examine these areas.

Middleman, in describing the skill "Turning Issues Back to the Group," states that "A major objective of the social worker in working with groups is to help the participants take as much responsibility for their group life as possible. This imperative pilots the work regardless of group type" (e.g., committee, treatment, skill development) (1990, p. 130).

Similarly, staff should be encouraged to assume responsibility for the agency culture as well as its specific practices and policies.

When staff successfully exercise their power to make an impact on agency policy, they assume increasing levels of ownership of the program itself. Cohesion increases, as does a sense of loyalty and pride in the community. Ironically, however, a highly cohesive staff and closely knit community face the potential hazard of losing their dynamism and fluidity. The next principle suggests that maintaining a dual focus on the needs of individual group members and the group as a whole provides a safeguard against rigidity.

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8. Focus

Over time, highly cohesive cultures can become rigid and conformist. Entrenched communities lose their elasticity as change increasingly

becomes anathema. Group workers recognize that the more cohesive a group, the less fluid are its boundaries, and the less likely it is to entertain new ideas (Northern, 1988). Middleman talks about "group think," "a tendency of group participants to strive for cohesiveness and concurrence with group pressure toward conformity or efficiency." "Group

• 9. Dynamism

The final principle is pervasive. It is both exhausting and exhilarating. It holds out the notion that values are dynamic, and that com-

> *A paradox of sorts exists: The worker is encouraged to assert the values of the community while encouraging community members to vigorously examine and challenge those values.*

think," she writes, "obscures the richness of diverse thinking" (1990 p. 34)

The principle of focus proposes that the agency culture should work to maintain fluidity by focusing on both the individual and the group as a whole. As a staffer once explained to me, we all play different instruments in the orchestra. But we are all playing the same music. This principle is especially relevant when new employees join a closely-knit community. In such a community, newcomers may struggle to maintain their individuality while trying to fit into the group. While veteran staff help newcomers to adapt to the agency setting, an overriding respect toward individuality must be maintained. The newcomer's fresh perceptions of the group may unearth new insights. He or she should be encouraged to find his or her way in the group, to examine what the group offers, expects, believes in, and pursues. Northern writes:

> In social work practice, the task for the worker is to influence the development of norms that further the purpose of the group. One such crucial norm to which it is hoped members will conform is that of acceptance of differences. If members conform to that norm, then the group becomes a means to helping a person to find his own identity through a combination of support and stimulation toward change. (1988, p. 37)

The principle of focus is perhaps the most difficult to achieve simply because groups are inclined to protect themselves from the hazards and anxiety associated with change. "Focus" requires community members to foster an agency culture that values differences—including differences that may threaten the status quo. The focus then is twofold: maintaining the culture while welcoming the insights and view of newcomers.

munity members are expected to keep them alive throughout the day. As with artwork or music, values should not be set aside, securely wrapped, in deep storage. They should fill our agency lives, provoke discussion, challenge thinking, and encourage questions. When a staff person states a community value, it should not signal the end of the discussion. Rather, it should provoke a discussion, whenever logistically possible. Thus, a paradox of sorts exists: The worker is expected to assert the values of the community while encouraging community members to vigorously examine and challenge those values. Encouraging an examination of values is distinctly different from encouraging youth to disregard values, which should never occur.

The worker can use a variety of skills to ensure that values sustain their dynamism at the agency. Michelle Simon, a youth worker, explains:

> Kids sometimes interpret rules too rigidly. If you say no dissing, they think you mean that they have to be best friends with everybody. Teaching the nuance of the rules and how to cope with rules is critical. We forget sometimes that kids need help understanding what the rule really means and how it applies to different situations.

A unified team creates a culture of trust when it embraces a body of core values, vision, and expectations and predictably responds to children's behavior and struggles. Before team members can offer trust to clients, they have to build it between and among themselves by wrestling with the values, visions, and expectations of the organization. The nine principles of the Model for Common Humanity support this assertion by asking community members to engage in dynamic, thoughtful exchanges about every aspect of our agency culture.

Conclusion

The aim of this model is to create a culture that enables people and organizations to flourish. The interplay of the nine elements helps to sustain the health of the milieu while guiding members' adaptation. A sine qua non of participation is empowerment. Participants learn a variety of new skills such as building consensus, leadership, self-expression, and offering and receiving help. Youngsters also internalize a host of positive values; they are empowered to take responsibility for themselves, for others, for the group and the community at large; they realize their own and others' dignity; they take healthy risks, and they learn to embrace a benevolent view of struggle, personal growth, and change. Some youngsters learn to trust themselves and others.

The model does not provide a template for agency use. Its design does, however, encourage the emergence of distinct cultural, racial and other identities. As a result of their own culture-building efforts, each community will develop a distinct, common language that facilitates communication and understanding. Use of the principles will help communities to define work that is organic to the members of the community, the staff, and the general purposes of the organization.

Building a community is an ongoing process. While benchmarks can and will be reached, there is never a day when the work stops. As the nine principles indicate, even when a community achieves a level of safety and healthy exchange, it faces potential problems of rigidity and conformity. By definition, the work can never end.

The agency culture is a dynamic organism. Initially, the vision rests entirely with the workers who shoulder the burden of believing in a vision and sharing it with others. There is a point, however, when the agency develops a life of its own. At this point, community members share the new responsibility of sustaining this culture.

Creating a culture takes time. This past summer, for example, at a new camp funded in part to achieve educational goals, marked tension arose between the community-building and teaching priorities. It is important to realize that building a culture and enlisting children and families in that culture takes time. Consensus-building takes much longer than a quick vote. Discussing pur-

pose requires more time than a cursory camp registration slip. As one staffer said, "Children are learning; it's just a different kind of learning." But I believe that educational learning works best when children feel a vital connection to leaders and teachers and to each other.

The Model of Common Humanity asks that all members of the community work to achieve the common good of the community. For some people, taking that first step is an act of great courage. It is a step towards assuming personal power and taking responsibility for one's life and for the culture that we all share. To help our youth to achieve this remarkable goal, those of us who work with youth must walk the same path. And by raising the expectations to which we will hold our own organizations, we can truly effect wide and meaningful change.

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Cross-Fertilization in the Garden

A core mission of *Afterschool Matters* is to bring after school people together to enhance their identity as an occupational group. In addition, we aim to introduce the multidisciplinary applications from other pre-existing occupations and fields of study. For example, literacy and child development are very rich fields of scholarship and ones which many after school programs increasingly draw from, especially as funders and the community at large pressure them to increase their professional expertise in order to address complex youth issues. We have provided a selection of organizations with whom we hope you will cross fertilize with, in an effort to grow and sustain the seedlings within your existing work.

If yours or an organization you know has something to offer other after school organization please contact us with its name, address and phone number so we may consider it for the next issue.

1) The Developmental Studies Center (DSC) is a nonprofit organization conducting research and developing school-based and after school programs that foster children's intellectual, ethical, and social development. The mission is to deepen children's commitment to being kind, helpful, responsible, and respectful of others—qualities which they believe are essential to leading humane and productive lives in a democratic society. • 2000 Embarcadero, Suite 30, Oakland, CA 94606-5300, 510-533-0213, 510-464-3670 fax.

2) The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is an independent national and international policy and research center, dedicated to strengthening schools and colleges in America and beyond. The mission is to do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold and dignify the profession of teaching. • 555 Middlefield Rd., Menlo Park, CA 94025, 650-566-5100.

3) The National Directory of Children and Family Services is a leading research guide for professionals who work with at-risk youth. It includes human/social services agencies, health services, juvenile justice agencies, education agencies and related service organizations, both local and national. It is also a resource for child protection services and information referral. • 14 Inverness Drive East-D144, Englewood, CO 80112, 800-343-6681, 800-845-6452 fax, http://members.aol.com/natldircyf

4) Voyager Expanded Learning provides curriculum and staff development for public elementary and middle schools across the country. Pioneering after school learning programs, they also train teachers to implement the curricula and training methodologies. • 1125 Longpoint Ave., Dallas, TX 75247, 888-589-6350, 888-589-6351 fax, www.iamvoyager.com

5) The Georgia School-Age Care Association (GSACA) is a member-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve out-of-school time for children five or older. They provide technical assistance, training and consultation to after school, before school and summer programs. GSACA is the state affiliate to the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA). • 246 Sycamore St. Suite 252, Decatur, GA 30030, 404-373-7414, 404-373-7428 fax, gsaca@aol.com

Boston area ⑬ ⑭ ⑮

New York City ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫
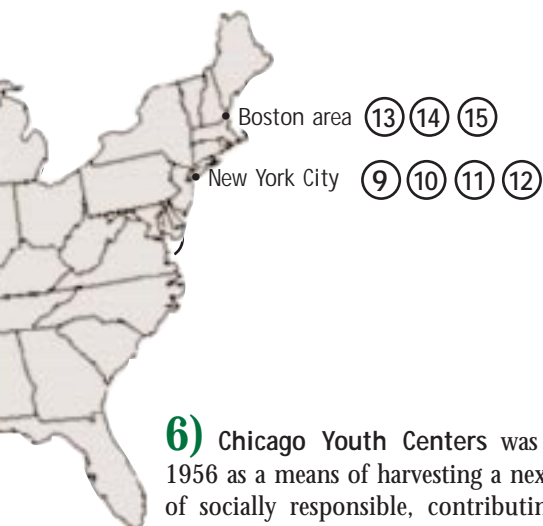
6) Chicago Youth Centers was founded in 1956 as a means of harvesting a next generation of socially responsible, contributing adults in Chicago's most underserved communities. Forty-four years later, we remain committed to our founder's vision of serving Chicago's highest need youth and communities. Through the development of research-based programming that focuses on real change and not simply motion, all CYC programs are designed as seeding processes that endeavor to fully mobilize youths' willingness and capacity to create positive change. By teaching youth they can change the choices they make, and they can no longer delegate responsibility upward, we begin to build moral character where our future truly resides, in our youth. • 104 S. Michigan Ave. #14, Chicago, IL 60603, 312-648-1550, 312-795-3520 fax.

7) The National Center for Community Education (NCCE), with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, has been providing community school training since 1963. They have approximately 700 participants a year from all walks of life—educators, community organizers, youth development workers, medical and law enforcement agencies, and students. • 1017 Anon St., Flint, MI 48503, 810-238-0463, 810-238-9211 fax, www.nccenet.org

8) Work, Achievement, Values & Education (WAVE) exists to enable youth to complete their education and lead productive lives by providing schools and youth development organizations with turnkey programs, teaching strategies, resources, professional development, and on-going support. WAVE has a national network of over 200 school and community organizations. • 525 School St. S.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20024-2729, 202-484-0103, 202-488-7595 fax, www.waveinc.org

9) The After School Corporation (TASC) was established by The Open Society Institute in 1998 to enhance the quality and availability of after school programming. Over the next five years, TASC, in collaboration with the New York City Board of Education and others, is nurturing the development of programs that enrich the lives of children and help their parents with the goal of making in-school after school programs a public responsibility. • 925 Ninth Ave., New York NY 10019, 212-547-6950, 212-547-6983 fax, www.sorosny.org

10) Do Something is a national nonprofit organization that inspires young people to believe that change is possible, and trains, funds and mobilizes them to be leaders who measurably strengthen their communities. • 423 W. 55th St., 8th fl., New York, NY 10019, 212-523-1175, 212-582-1307 fax, www.dosomething.org

11) The Partnership for After School Education (PASE) was formed in 1993 as a professional association of after school staff, directors, education specialists, and resource providers committed to promoting, strengthening and enhancing the field of after school education and youth development. PASE holds an annual conference, quarterly meetings, trainings and networking opportunities and distributes a newsletter. • 120 Broadway, Suite 3048, New York, NY 10271, 212-571-2664, 212-571-2676 fax, www.pasesetter.com

12) Studio-in-a-School (see box, p. 32) • 410 West 59th St., New York NY 10019, 212-765-5900, 212-765-7985 fax, www.studioinaschool.org

13) YouthTree USA is an on-line directory of youth family and education-related programs, on-line resources and products and services in local communities nationwide. YouthTree USA also publishes free directory pages for non-profits. • 259 Walnut St., Suite 5, Newtown, MA 02460, 617-244-8114, 617-244-8561 fax, www. youthtreeusa.com

14) The National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA) is a national organization representing a wide array of public, private, and community-based providers of after school programs. NSACA has over 7,000 members, stages a national training conference, disseminates quality standards, and grants program accreditation for school-age care programs. • 1137 Washington St., Boston, MA, 02124, 617-298-5012, 617-298-5022 fax, www.nsaca.org

15) The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) includes ongoing initiatives, trainings, projects, research and consultation. Their mission is to support all school-age children, youth and their families by promoting high-quality out-of-school time opportunities. • Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 106 Central St., Wellesley, MA 02181, 781-283-2554

Studio In A School

For two decades Studio in a School has provided New York City children, teachers, and parents with educational experiences in the visual arts. Our unique approach to arts education is centered around a professional artist who introduces the creative process to children who would not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in art-making. Studio's artists work in public schools, housing developments, childcare centers, and community organizations to ensure a meaningful place for the visual arts in children's lives. Our programs are dedicated to creating a permanent impact on participating sites by providing professional development for teachers and direct services to children from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Since 1977, Studio in a School has provided over 600 sites with visual arts programs, serving over 32,300 students and 2,670 teachers this year. Through three main programs, Studio provides arts programming to general- and special-education students and at-risk youth.

Long-Term Art Studio Program. In the Long-Term Art Studio Program, Studio collaborates with public elementary schools to create long-term partnerships and sustainable arts programming that will have a lasting impact on their communities. The multi-year program creates a place for the visual arts within the curriculum and culture of a school by placing a professional artist in the school for a minimum of five years, enabling the entire school to benefit from the working artist's experience.

Early Childhood Program. The Early Childhood Program makes the visual arts an integral part of young children's education by placing professional artists in public schools, childcare centers, and transitional housing facilities to introduce the creative process and expand the children's perceptions of and engagement with the outside world. During a three-year residency, artists develop close collaborative relationships with students, teachers, and parents through in-class instruction as well as special staff development sessions and parent workshops.

Special Programs. The Day Program pairs professional artists with classroom teachers to provide 6- to 17-year-old students with sequential, age-appropriate art lessons that lead to a final product, displayed at a closing exhibition. The After-School Program gives small groups of students the opportunity to work closely with a Studio artist on activities designed to stimulate critical thinking, foster social interaction, and encourage rich language use. In the Staff Development and Mentoring Program, Studio provides a specially trained artist to instruct and mentor four teachers for a minimum of 8 half days. At our Westside Art Studio, Studio offers programs for elementary and adult students in partnership with nearby community organizations and schools.

Shirley Brice Heath

Making Learning Work

Two widely different worlds quietly developed parallel ideas during the final decade of the twentieth century. Within post-industrial societies since the mid-1990s, both worlds—business and youth-based community organizations—have begun to join their theory and practice, with surprising implications for making learning work. Both private profit-making enterprises and after school youth organizations have developed similar philosophies of creativity, collaboration, and communication.

This paper examines the significant link between these two worlds and illustrates through the case of one urban youth theater program how their theories operate in practice. Of central importance here is that young artists play multiple roles—as both *dramatis personae* and organization members—and work with a sense of agency, or the power to act outside given structures.

Concluding this examination is a summary of ways that civic and business leaders in countries such as Great Britain, Japan, the United States, and the Scandinavian countries are building a strong movement to take learning and organizations in new directions.

The intention of this paper is to help those who work in school- and community-based after school programs see new partnerships and programs as not only possible, but also profitable in a host of ways.

Work as Learning

A recent publication of the Harvard Business School bears the subtitle, "Work is theater and every business a stage" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The volume draws heavily upon performance theory (previously best known to academics in departments of English and drama), Christian philosophy, economics, and entrepreneurial promotion. Endorsements for "the experience economy" and the benefits of thinking of work as theater come from CEOs of established corporations as well as entrepreneurs. And, the fundamental ideas in the volume are fairly typical of books found in the business section of bookstores, compatible works with titles using words or phrases such as "connexity" (Mulgan, 1997), "fifth discipline" (Senge, 1990), "common sense" (Atkinson, 1994), "a simpler way" (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996), "soul of the workplace" (Briskin, 1998), and "the dance of change" (Senge, 1999). These publications repeatedly emphasize perpetual novelty, creative spirit, transformative experience, and freedom to explore ideas with smart, tough fellow innovators and critics in the workplace.

The content of these volumes meshes with the ethos and practice of youth organizations judged as effective learning environments by young people themselves. Youth newspapers such as *LA Youth* echo the sentiments of business publications

and illustrate repeatedly the successful work of young people whose creative talents have been honed in community-based organizations where responsibility, local decision-making, and resourcefulness mark youth as key contributors to the life of the group.

employers, policymakers, and philosophers say will mark the future.

Moreover, students spend only about one-quarter of their time in school, and older children and teenagers have discretion over about 45-50 percent of their time unless parents take charge of

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Particular features of learning in the arts bear a remarkable resemblance to the key ideas of contemporary writings in business.

Another voice of support for changing conventional ways of thinking about learning and for addressing the importance of relationships, responsibility, and relevance comes from the school-to-work literature. This message emerges strongly from the literature that examines the connections between what is required for excellence in the arts and for success in business. Both the Goals 2000 and School-to-Work Opportunities Acts of the 1980s identify skills that relate to "workplace know-how," as does the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills or the SCANS report (Department of Labor, 1992).

As national standards in the arts have followed from federal initiatives in education, particular features of learning in dramatic, musical, visual, and media arts bear a remarkable resemblance to the key ideas of contemporary writings in business (see a prime example in "Arts and Earning a Living: SCANS 2000" at http://www.scans.jhu.edu/arts. html). Educators in a variety of fields examine ways in which new pedagogical strategies, theories of distributed cognition, and project-based learning carry strong links to the world of work. Meanwhile, critical theorists in education also caution that these innovative directions may not be as widely available in workplaces as their proponents currently believe; they also urge greater attention to how "the new work order" will affect both complex systems and specific acts of transformation by individuals and small groups (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996).

One common worry among both theorists and practitioners is that dependence on formal schooling, even in light of all the current reform efforts, will leave students short of the experience needed to establish the expertise, critical skills, and confidence which are critical to the future world of work and to the altered family and citizenship demands of that world. Schools cannot offer the extensive time for practice and participation and build-up of moral commitment and group discourse needed for students to develop all that

guiding selection of pursuits during the nonschool hours and provide transportation, fees, and support (Carnegie Council, 1992). Parents with the requisite time and finances expect their children's time out of school to support and extend learning in a host of ways, to complement what they can do as mom and dad. Moreover, they look to experience with organized religion, sports team membership, arts programs, summer camps, and museums to help build in their children a sense of responsibility, knowledge of teamwork, and understanding of the arts and sciences that adults in daily contact with their offspring cannot provide without outside organizational support.

But what happens in communities of economic disadvantage or in households where parents have neither time nor money to give such opportunities to their children? Not surprisingly, young people get together on their own, invent ways to pass the time, and look for "something to do." In the most fortunate of cases, they find their way to community-based organizations that engage them for a substantial portion of their nonschool hours in learning, playing, and working with their peers and thoughtful adults who have professional knowledge and experience in the primary activity of the group, whether that be the arts, sports, or service initiatives. A decade of research between 1987 and 1997 documented the daily life of such groups and took note of changes during the 1990s that brought them to reflect increasingly the ethos and practices of organizational change and workplace relationships advocated by business writers.[1]

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An Illustrative Case: Youth Theater

Imagine a dead-end street of a block of inner-city apartment houses. Picture there a youth theater on the third floor of a building that formerly housed a school; step into the rehearsal hall or organization office at 3:00 p.m. on any weekday.

Students move around the office, answering phones, checking rehearsal schedules, reading press releases, reviewing the file of head shots from last year's participants, and talking with the adult or college intern who is working on a grant proposal at the computer. Soon the artistic director arrives and moves into the rehearsal hall. After signing in, each student follows him and assumes the same position he has taken, either on the floor or standing. "You're a leaf floating on water; just let go and think about the water and what it gives you, how it pushes and pulls while it supports you."

What follows is a series of relaxation exercises, quiet listening to a literary or philosophical selection read by the director, warm-ups, improv or writing activities, and collaborative practice in small groups to develop a scene in response to the director's prompt. He speaks slowly, with long pauses between each sentence.

> Think of a scarf coming down through the top of your head and entering your body. . . . It pushes down across your eyes and mouth and neck. . . . As it unfolds and waves inside you, it drops across your shoulders and to your pelvic area. . . . Let it grow inside you until it touches every part of your body. . . . It's moving you, and as it does, it's bringing you into contact with others. . . . Let it carry you up and down and fill you up, your fingers and feet. . . .

From this activity, the group then shifts into the improv of Zen spaces, moving and interacting with one another to create a unified whole of movement, with individuals switching in and out of directing and pacing roles while simultaneously remaining within the moment, the act, of the group's joined movements. The director silently steps to the side and begins drumming.[2]

After rehearsing particular segments of a show currently under development, the director quickly reviews the next week's schedule and closes the session several hours later. As the time for public performance of the show draws near, rehearsals heat up, but always after a period of relaxation and dramatic exercises. Sessions close with the opportunity for group members to "decompress" to prepare for exit from the jointly created performance into the real world.

After rehearsal, some students hang around on the worn sofas or at extra desks in the reception area to do homework, while others go off to work in fast-food restaurants or home to prepare the evening meal for younger siblings and working parents. Others work with the intern or adult executive director to prepare mailing lists for announcements of a coming benefit performance.

From their entry to the theater group through the final performance, members have been engaged jointly in setting goals and identifying problems that may emerge during specific shows, within publicity and promotion, and during travel to distant sites to work with unknown audiences. They show continuously the value of the knowledge and skills they gain in school and how they assimilate these into their practical learning at the theater, particularly as they play roles in the daily operations of maintaining the group.

But they also illustrate the diverse sets of experiences individual members bring: the hidden talent of a quiet Latina who turns out to be an exceptional violinist; the special education student whose passion is drums; the straight-A student who has a knack for history. The theater becomes a place where they can take risks in letting others know what they can bring to the work and play of the group as they develop their own scripts, choreography, and music and travel to local venues as well as to European theater festivals.

The group sees itself as providing work; individuals are paid a minimum wage and docked for tardiness or absences; they go through auditions that require them to bring a piece of their own writing for dramatization; they stay on from year to year based on their sustained commitment and consistency of participation and contribution. Their experience in the theater group helps them build skills and gain knowledge through travel and contact with people they would never meet in their own communities or schools. Resistant as members can sometimes be to signing in and out or being called down severely by the director or team members if they slack off, they admit that "all this pain" matters in the long run.

Their director often insinuates that the world "out there" does not expect much of young people of color from "broken" families, "run-down communities," and sections of town with long-standing negative reputations. "No one gives a damn if you fail. Don't be afraid to fail. If you fail, well, fail gloriously. Really fail. Put everything into it and make it a glorious failure. That is something right there." The group is aware that the arts director depends on their knowing they have experienced this attitude elsewhere, and the theater group is a place that allows risks of all sorts, even those of failure, but the group expects, above all, a sense of agency, purpose, and motivation to be directing behavior. In other words, the adults at the theater know that ultimately what the young people choose to do and how they do it rests within them; all the adults can do is provide consistent

support and the strong framework of high demand, professional socialization, real deadlines, and tough, authentic critics. Ultimate success or failure rests with the youth.

This point applies not only to the dramatic performances in which young people play roles but also to the organizational life of the place. Youth members accompany adults as they pitch their work to clients who will pay for performances as products. Dramatic productions serve as educational experiences in juvenile detention centers, parent support groups, and civic clubs; they find favor with children's hospitals, cultural centers, and civic fairs.

But the characteristics of this site apply also to other grassroots youth-based organizations (YBOs) observed during this research which are housed within highly flexible and imaginative performing arts centers; differences among these derive primarily from the type of activities the group pursues. Sports groups, for example, spend more time discussing specific rules of their particular sport and sportsmanship than do arts or community service groups. Arts groups provide more time for open-ended talk with adults and development of highly imaginative ventures than do community service groups more likely to immerse participants in exploration of local civic, political, and environmental issues.

•
Playing Roles in the Arts

A close look at arts-based youth groups in - theater, visual arts, and music illustrates how work in the arts depends upon members assuming numerous roles. Whether acting as receptionists answering the phone in the late afternoon, wearing organizational T-shirts to city arts events, or mediating between two participants whose tempers have flared, youth members have to sustain everyday life in the organization.

Figure 1 provides a visual sense of how work within an arts-based YBO moves from planning and preparing to practice and execution. Through the full cycle of any project, group members frequently call on individuals to explain, self-assess, and lay out their planned next steps on a piece of work.
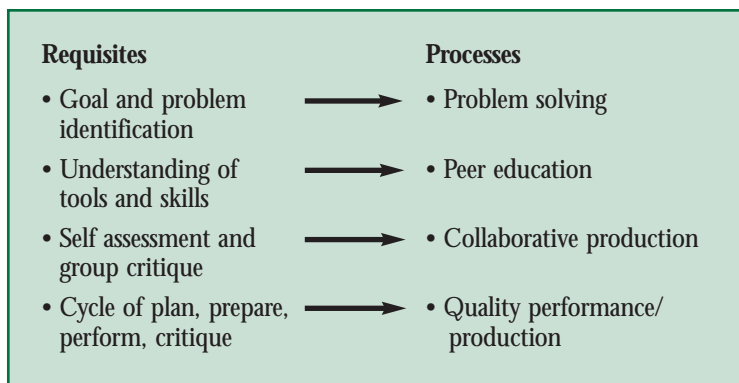
These skills parallel in large part those currently required within information-based companies that depend on collaborative project development and assessment as well as recruitment and negotiation of diverse individual talents needed for excellence in group performance. Phrases such as "continuous improvement," "bold new thinking," and "an eye to the future" appear frequently in corporate goal-setting sessions and annual reports and in the thousands of advertising forms every citizen sees or hears daily.

Such slogans reflect the fact that corporate entities today measure their assets and see their resources as residing in human capital and the availability of intelligence. YBOs live this resource reality minute by minute, knowing that their slim budgets and current favor with funders depend on their young members and the transformations of their talents and experiences into excellent products and performances. That these very skills have been identified as of prime importance in the workplace and in today's most successful businesses comes as no surprise to young artists.

One difference, however, for YBOs—especially those in the arts—is that work in any specific performance or product moves along with the expectation that each individual will also take up general responsibilities necessary to maintain the organization. For example, within theater groups, from auditions to closing-night celebrations, individuals engage not only as actors, dancers, or musicians in their performance, but also within the organizational infrastructure as receptionist, publicist, reader, scriptwriter, critic, salesperson, recruiter—tasks essential to the group's maintenance.

In the course of active participation for the first month of each season of the youth theater program described here, any student member might take on a dozen different roles for three hours per

Figure 1.
Performance/product oriented group work in the arts.

Requisites	Processes
• Goal and problem identification	• Problem solving
• Understanding of tools and skills	• Peer education
• Self assessment and group critique	• Collaborative production
• Cycle of plan, prepare, perform, critique	• Quality performance/ production

role; such roles include those noted above as vital to infrastructure as well as those more familiar in the theater. Figure 2 illustrates one week's range of roles, both organizational and dramatic. This multiplicity of roles especially characterizes youth organizations in economically disadvantaged areas because these groups rarely have a budget sufficient to employ enough adults to handle all the tasks needed to maintain the organization. Individual student members might assist with jobs like stuffing envelopes and proofreading while older members might instruct, coach, mentor, demonstrate, and reinforce ideas with younger and novice members. This process establishes the pattern that as individuals grow through the group, they shape the learning environment that supports group product and performance development.

Particularly in public relations, whether taking place on-site or in meetings with board members, potential clients or funders, young people have to assume the manner of dress and speech of characters they never play at school or with peers outside their organization. Youth members in these roles cannot fail to feel their responsibility as fundraisers or organizational spokespersons. Specific activities include: public speaking, processing information for action, writing brief notes as well as extended texts, mentally calculating numerical information, and working with printed materials for either organizational decision-making or dramatic interpretation. Those who bring academic achievement in skills such as reading, writing, editing, computing, and public speaking figure as key assets; similarly, those who know how to find information and check facts and figures or locate experts often have to deliver such help within a very short time frame.

Humorists, mediators, and caregivers are also valued for their effect on the social climate of the group, especially in times of high tension. In addition, everyone must know how to respond spontaneously to often seemingly unrelated questions. Answers from the youth cannot be flippant but must reflect their artistic, philosophical, or analytical perspective: "I look for the tension to take me somewhere" (Worthman, 1999, p. 91).

In essence, within highly effective youth organizations, members combine their resources in order to act, think, and assess. Of critical importance is that a sizable proportion of role-playing takes place alongside instruction and facilitation with an adult professional. In the case of the theater group highlighted above, such professionals available during the practice phase of one season can include a writing coach, musician, artistic director, executive director, and administrator. In addition, board members who come from all walks of life often drop in during rehearsal and serve as quasi-mentors (as well as impressive references) and role models for young people from poor neighborhoods. On most occasions when a young person takes on a new role, adults are on

Figure 2. **Role Opportunities Requiring Spoken and Written Language Uses Usually Identified Primarily with Adults**

Role Opportunities	Number of Occasions of Involvement	
Category of roles	Dramatic	Organizational
Institutional adult (associated with key institutions, such as family, school, government, or religion—such as parent, minister, nurse, mayor)	12	0
Group representative planning financial and logistical details of group travel	0	9
Organizational structural position (receptionist, publicist, dramaturg, fundraiser, etc.)	6	18

Based on calculations drawn for a sample week in practice phase of an urban theatre group of 16 young people aged 12 to 18 meeting an average of 10 hours per week during this phase of the drama season. Note that practice cycle coincides with the time of heaviest activity related to scheduling performances locally and elsewhere. The number of occasions was calculated only for those exceeding 5 minutes in length and are reported here only if they involved at least 50 percent of the group at least once during the week.

hand to monitor and support, and ample opportunities exist for practice, apprenticeship, and talk with older youth who previously held these roles or remain as adult staff members.

But what is it about playing different roles that matters? How does representing more than the individual self and one's own self-interests and

others' responses as well as the self, interpreting feedback and deciding how to respond. Such readings take place not only simultaneously with one's behavior and interaction, but also in memory and in future representations, sometimes in narrative form, voiced either internally or orally, and often through highly self-conscious artistic

> *Attractions abound among adolescents for working hard not to achieve, not to belong, resisting help, and learning to be helpless. . . . Youth-based organizations turn this risk on its head . . .*

achievements relate to learning? In particular, are there linguistic and motivational payoffs that come with all the roles and responsibilities of these YBOs?

In recent social science, no name is more closely associated with an understanding of role than that of sociologist Erving Goffman. Drawing heavily upon theatrical metaphor for his social theory, Goffman explores how we appear to ourselves and to others (1959). A sense of self-identity and of the projected self never lie entirely "within," but always in dialectical constructions of how one appears to others. Goffman illustrates the highly mimetic nature of relationships between persons. Each individual learns to become human by doing what others already do, but in incorporating this general model, each "plays," at different times and in multiple ways, a wide range of roles. It is, therefore, difficult to assume roles one has never witnessed; verbal explication and demonstration by a caring respected adult or older peer help make this possible.

Since Goffman's work, much has been made of both the multiple roles any individual assumes and of the learning impetus that comes when metacognitive language—that which stops action by commenting directly on what is happening and how language works—surrounds roles. Recent work in performance theory, in particular, has led to widespread acceptance of the idea that individuals carry at all times several different role representations as well as varying levels of deliberate awareness of interpretations of others and of the self (Schechner & Appel, 1990; Parker & Sedgwick, 1995). One's stance, character, and emotional state are all, in turn, read by interactors and audience through their prior experience. This process makes listening and viewing highly selective—often on the basis of deeply embedded prejudices and stereotypes. An individual also reads

expression (writing memoirs, painting remembered scenes or images, for example).

This awareness of self and role gets verbalized as a matter of course within YBOs, and their marginal status is felt by adults and youth members alike. A readiness prevails to identify what is going on by stepping outside an ongoing course of action by the organization in ways that occur rarely in institutions (such as schools and families) whose position within society is accepted to the point of being taken for granted. Zippy, analytic one-liners ("Let's do an improv.") insert themselves into an intense practice or serious budget meeting to break the tension of the moment and to underscore what the group knows well; even when the script or the balance sheet has been written, "improv" may be the saving action. Talk goes on about topics such as motivation ("How hard were you working to mess up that entrance?"), focus of attention, and effect of one person's behavior on the group ("Yea, if Carlo has his way, this play will become a sitcom!"). Everyone has to see his or her role as potentially transformative ("messin' up" takes the whole group down) as well as persistently transitional ("Remember: only three weeks to opening night").[3]

Such metacommentary brings linguistic payoffs in what may be thought of as "practice effects"—having repeated opportunities to engage in intense debate, push a plan of action, critique a scene, develop a group exercise. Creating future scenarios motivates group members to think about what could happen as well as what they hope will happen. Goal theory research that attempts to understand motivation—how learners' perceptions of the purposes of achievement influence cognition and behavior (Meece, 1991; Urdan, Midgley, & Anderman, 1998)—reinforces the idea that a sense of one's place within a learning environment matters. Extensive research illustrates ways that the process

of work can feed motivation when there is higher-order need and social fulfillment (Kleinbeck, Quast, Thierry, & Hacker, 1990).

If one is not committed to individual learning as a positive group resource, attractions abound among adolescents for working hard not to achieve, not to belong, by avoiding work, resisting help, and learning to be helpless, actions often found in bright students who do not want to be seen as academically capable (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Covington, 1992; Fordham, 1996). Within schools, such moves often win respect from peers, who applaud the risks individuals take by defying authority, ignoring assignments, and deflecting others from the task at hand. YBOs turn this risk on its head: Student members have authority, design assignments, and negotiate, strategize, and create with others to keep something going that they believe matters to their self- and group-image.

For these young people, ritual retellings of events in the history of the organization play vital roles for intensification of membership and for acceptable sanctions against any moves to resist the reality of deadlines, budget limitations, or cooperation even in the heat of a practical joke gone sour (Heath, 1994). Within arts organizations, scenes and characters for projects in photography, painting, dance, and script development often come from individual and group memories. Recognizing shared circumstances provides the glue that cements and sustains relationships within the group and draws newcomers toward becoming "one of us" by making them part of the creative process. A common theme to emerge is the sense that others "outside" need to understand more of what young people experience and how they feel; particularly called for is recognition from others that young people have to be many things to many people in order to survive—with intimates and strangers, peers and adults, in school and beyond.

Agency—The Power to Act beyond Structure

Within institutions such as schools, opportunities to think and act outside the constraints of the expected role of student or the structure of curricular and extra-curricular requirements come rarely. Moreover, schools in many post-industrial nations increasingly require standardization of product or outcome, determined by quantifiable measures of performance on standardized tests. Thus the agency of individuals in undertaking learning outside expected roles and structures must be submerged. Similarly, because the display of knowledge and skill within formal schooling rests primarily on written expression, individuals whose talents lie more in visual or other means of communication have limited outlets to reveal what they understand.

Youth organizations, particularly those devoted to the arts, place a high value on acting beyond structures to identify and solve problems, express and assess ideas, and create and test new processes and products. For example, in arts organizations that generate part of their financial support through sales of commodities and services, young members work directly with clients (individuals, corporations, and nonprofit agencies) to learn what clients want and to develop designs for performances and products. Much discussion and testing of ideas goes into the design process, which consistently requires reflexivity and critique. And as deadlines approach, the language of youth members in arts organizations mirrors that of physicists facing a deadline for a conference paper and thinking about ways to draw on multiple communication forms to construct and perfect the final product (Ochs & Jacobs, 1997).

Open-ended problem-setting and -solving talk, as well as narratives explaining how certain effects can be imagined and attempted, move the work along. Youth members question one another about how the current bit of work or portion being done by an individual will fit into the whole; they challenge group members to keep in mind both deadlines and relevance to the project as a whole (Soep, 1996 & forthcoming). They see themselves as capable of acting outside and beyond the expected. Such perceptions gain support from the engagement of adult professionals within the workings of highly effective YBOs. This practice is best illustrated within artistic organizations, where artists explain and demonstrate technical processes, such as videoediting, firing kilns, or selecting paint for outdoor murals. Older members who have been with the organization for several years also offer guidance and critique, but their instruction is no substitute for that of someone who actually works in art—some of whom may, of course, be individuals who have gone through the youth organization and moved into the professional world.

All arts-focused organizations studied in the research on which this paper is based included key roles for professional artists whose identity depends not only on their "day jobs" in the arts but also on their tight communication with artistic institutions. These artists never question the absolute need for young people in YBOs to have as much access to the world of fine arts as to that of practical or commercial arts. It is as reasonable to expect young actors to be able to perform on

the stage of well-known local theaters and performing arts centers as it is to want them to have tickets to performances of visiting celebrated groups.[4] Such special opportunities, as well as the daily interaction with professional artists working in their youth arts organization, strongly reinforce a sense of agency on the part of young artists.

Learning opportunities that grow from sustained contact with professional artists and a range of types of art work come with the strongly espoused view within such YBOs that learning is for sharing expertise, opinions, and information as well as for motivating action. Hence, older youth members with long records of participation in the group can take on occasional teaching roles as well as administrative and planning roles for the organization. The youth group then works not only as a community of practice but also as a community of collaborative preparation for the possibility of instructing younger members. When professional artists have to be away, older youth members take over, and after several trials they may take on roles that increasingly combine both administration of certain aspects of the program and instruction in group projects or processes. Youth members thus move back and forth between the role of young artist learning and organizational "expert" teaching.

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Widening Perspectives on Learning

A popular automobile bumper sticker in the late 1990s asserted, "Technology drives the future; the question is—who steers?" Societies around the world whose economies are post-industrial and dependent on information technology have much to learn and unlearn about work and how to make learning work. For citizens of these nations, no one denies the absolute need for continuous learning to keep pace with changing technologies and their effects on patterns of behavior, the social and ecological environments, and communication. The ability to play any role in "steering" the driving forces of technology depends vitally on knowing not only which skills, attitudes, and information must be unlearned and replaced but also how to maintain learning as a habit of mind.

Professional development and training programs for adults actively promote the idea that what is gained in formal instructional settings must be practiced and tested within actual workplaces. The same principle would apply for students: What is learned in school should "go to work" each day after school in action and reflec-

tion. Young people fortunate enough to have access to arts organizations of the sort described here in their own communities can study literature, including drama, during their English class each day and then move with this background into their after school participation. There, they not only read, write, recite, and perform, but they also learn about sound boards, professional stage sets, and theater technology during their visits to major performing arts centers.

Though educators have not always endorsed such nonschool learning opportunities as vital to academic support and career development, economists, civic leaders, and juvenile justice professionals are increasingly taking up this idea. As they do so, they speak out directly on the matter of the potential of after school hours in the lives of students for expanding, complementing, and supplementing formal classroom learning. Moreover, some leaders, particularly in nations worried about growing evidence of the ability of disenfranchised youth to disrupt civic life and dislodge public faith in the moral climate, see the civic value of such learning as vital to the moral health of their communities.[5]

Throughout the 1990s, leaders of post-industrial nations have begun to lean toward balancing concerns about school reform with attention to nonschool environments, and attention is going not only to neighborhoods labeled "disadvantaged," but to all communities. Such concerns tie in closely with the acknowledgment that late twentieth-century economics and standard-of-living expectations have produced households with two working parents or with single parents who work at least one full-time job outside the household. Both situations mean childcare for the very young by nonparents and widespread independence of older children and youth during the late afternoon. Extensive dependence on peers outside organizations such as those described in this paper shows up in unexpected ways that have strong repercussions on community life and individual learning. Young people without some involvement in creating projects with adults in joint work lack practice in cognitive and linguistic performance that reflects "the art of the long view" (Schwartz, 1991).

Whereas young children receive their language input and explanations about the world primarily during caregiving interactions with adults, older children have fewer opportunities for explication in the midst of joint process as they grow independent and interact increasingly with their peers. Precisely because the majority of these occasions for explanations occurs within tasks of work for very young children (tying a shoe lace, preparing

cookie dough, or building a castle of sand or blocks), they carry within them both action and consciousness about cause and effect and, often, also about emotive or mental states and intention. But it is this talk-with-work that older children and young people often miss in families of post-industrial societies.

ries . . . the places where the innovative advances into the learning society will take place" (Markkula, 1999, vii). Ironically, in several locations this move has emerged primarily because of dual recognitions: teacher shortages reaching crisis levels and acknowledgment that much teaching and learning, often of cutting-edge quality, occurred outside for-

> *More and more spokespersons are stepping out for new kinds of partnerships and for previously unimagined combinations.*

In the daily world of two-working-parents households and single-parent families, older children have relatively few opportunities to engage with adults in sustained tasks of joint work, particularly those involving creativity as opposed to those merely sustaining food preparation, cleaning, and doing laundry. But the practice of taking on collaborative work roles and talking about the work is greatly needed. Moreover, participation in such occasions must take place frequently enough to enable repeated opportunities to both hear and state explanations and to reveal metacognitive awareness of process and of self and other within roles that help accomplish the task at hand (Heath, 1998).

Furthermore, when adult family members and older children engage jointly in work, the young often play roles that differ markedly from those of more ordinary adult-youth interactions, such as parent-child, teacher-student, or traffic officer-teen driver. Joint work enables participants to exhibit any special talents they may have and to discuss the process and its path of success or failure. Such engagement generally means a commitment to a successful outcome; hence, intention and motivation are often brought out into the open by co-participants.

Recognizing that strong contextual changes will be needed to enable the young to think ahead, consider consequences, and act morally, some national and local political leaders in post-industrial societies have begun to locate contexts in which habits of continuous learning and assessing work for young people and adults outside the usual formal institutional dependence on family, school, or government.

In Great Britain, the Scandanavian countries, and Japan, the move to ensure "learning cities" developed in this decade from the conviction that dwelling complexes (cities, towns, and regions) would have to be ". . . lifelong learning laborato-

mal institutions of learning and without formally designated teachers (Longworth, 1999).

Several nations, simultaneously, have faced the recognition that formal institutions do not learn either quickly or efficiently; thus, school systems find it difficult to re-orient toward learning with technology, perceiving problems and designing solutions, and collaboratively developing projects—abilities increasingly called on in both the employment and civic sectors (Senge, 1990, 1999). Amid complaints about the weakening of the moral and civic values in post-industrial life, public spokespersons often call on schools to integrate such teaching into school curricula, arguing that families and communities fall short of their obligation in these arenas. However, in post-industrial nations, major efforts to reform schools from the late 1980s and through the 1990s generally produced disappointing results at great expense. Those attempting to link employer needs and school outcomes consistently pointed out how school demands and work opportunities in the post-industrial labor market rarely mesh effectively (Bernhardt & Bailey 1998; Murnane & Levy, 1996; Levy 1999).

In contrast, community organizations that young people recognize as effective learning environments provide multiple roles and responsibilities that tie closely to those businesses and civic groups identified as essential for the future. Figure 3 reproduces the Charter for Learning Cities (Longworth, 1999) and the ten actions such groups declare as their commitment. The ten points of this charter are set out for comparison with the major motivations and processes that effective youth organizations express when asked to "explain" their group.[6]

Embedded within both these lists is the view that learning is not an individual gain but a continuing communal commitment, going even beyond life work, that self-chosen work we do to

A Charter for Learning Cities	Youth-Based Organizational Goals
We recognize the crucial importance of learning as the major driving force for the future prosperity, stability and well-being of our citizens.	We recognize creativity, group process, and learning as major forces to help ensure that young people see themselves as learners and community builders.
We declare that we will invest in lifelong learning within our community by	We commit to responding as best we can to needs felt by the youth of our community and to their willingness to learn and lead by:
1. Developing productive partnerships between all sectors of the city for optimizing and sharing resources, and increasing learning opportunities for all	1. Developing collaborative partnerships among policymakers, the business community, educators, and local citizens to increase learning opportunities for all
2. Discovering the learning requirements of every citizen for personal growth, career development and family well-being	2. Working with every young person's sense of self as learner and of individual needs in preparing for careers, family building, and community development
3. Energizing learning providers to supply lifelong learning geared to the needs of each learner where, when, how and by whom it is required	3. Promoting dynamism and creativity to model on-going habits of learning, self-assessing, and project critiquing
4. Stimulating demand for learning through innovative information strategies, promotional events and the effective use of the media	4. Stimulating young people to recognize the continuous pattern of learning by individuals and groups they regard with respect and to promote their own learning through effective means of communication, including the expressive arts
5. Supporting the supply of learning by providing modern learning guidance services and enabling the effective use of new learning technologies	5. Linking young people with multilinear opportunities for further education that meet self-chosen possibilities for employment as well as avocational pursuits
6. Motivating all citizens to contribute their own talents, skills, knowledge and energy for environmental care, community organizations, schools and other people.	6. Motivating young people to assess their talents and creative gifts and to look for ways to bring these to bear in their communities with a sense of social responsibility
7. Promoting wealth creation through entrepreneur development and assistance for public and private sector organizations to become learning organizations	7. Promoting social entrepreneurship that moves human and financial resources toward opportunities for community economic development and enhanced possibilities for positive learning with all local sociocultural groups
8. Activating outward-looking programmes to enable citizens to learn from others in their own, and the global, community	8. Making possible opportunities for youth to engage as actively as possible with not only local cultural institutions but also with youth organizations and related programs in other parts of the world
9. Combating exclusion by creative programmes to involve the excluded in learning and the life of the city	9. Helping young people engage realistically with prejudicial behaviors that target youth, particularly those regarded as "different" by virtue of racial, ethnic, national, or religious identification
10. Recognizing the pleasure of learning through events to celebrate and reward learning achievement in organizations, families and individuals.	10. Relishing the pleasure and the challenge of learning by working as instructor, mentor, role model, and advisor for younger or less-experienced peers.

Figure 3. **Learning Cities & Youth-Based Organizational Goals Compared** (Longworth, 1999, p. 206)

sustain our spirit, our inner soul and those we care about (Hall, 1993). Such learning thrives on complexity and connections, on groundedness as well as vision and expansion, on flexibility and movement across learners rather than authority within fixed institutions.

Cities, neighborhoods, public-private ventures, and innovative community organizations—entities never before considered primary sites of education and learning, but rather of commerce, politics, and service—now reflect the openness and flexibility in learning for the future (McKnight, 1995; Ranson, 1994). Operating at the margins of visibility, well outside either mainstream education or politics, these constellations have yet to benefit from wealth creation at the unprecedented levels that post-industrial societies have seen during the final years of the twentieth century. But more and more spokespersons are stepping out for new kinds of partnerships and for previously unimagined combinations. Advocates of these innovative partnerships now say without hesitation that changing conventional alignments across and within organizations fits well with the rapidly increasing admission by many that what they want in work is "transforming" experience (see Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Senge, 1999, and especially Shore, 1999). "Same-old, same-old" in hierarchical organization, single-task operation and mere product delivery have little attraction for those who see the promise in contexts of collaboration and creativity.

Still ahead for these groups is serious and thoughtful consideration of the implications of these new directions for young people. Many youth, especially those fortunate enough to have worked within effective YBOs, have had extensive experience in project-based learning, widely distributed role-playing, and exposure to a keen sense of moral and civic responsibility. They have come to know that they can be successful through their work in making learning highly visible; but they also understand the importance of their mentoring and partnering as invisible teachers of one another and their audiences, clients, and funders. These youth and their organizations show what it means to engage horizontally, succeed in quickly adapting to multiple means of communication, and offer the experience of learning as transformative work. In economists' terms, these young people understand that the more intangible what they offer one another and their communities becomes, the more tangible the value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:190). The challenge is for funders and policymakers from the public and private sectors to catch up with them, join hands, and keep moving.

Notes

[1] Carried out under a grant from The Spencer Foundation to Heath and Milbrey W. McLaughlin, this ethnographic research explored macro- and micro-organizational features of youth organizations judged by local young people as desirable places to be. These ranged from local branches of Boys and Girls Clubs or Girl Scouts to grassroots groups and performing arts center youth programs. The research was carried out in over 30 regions of the United States in 120 youth organizations (centering on either athletics and academics, arts, or community service) that involved approximately 30,000 youth over the decade. Special attention in this research went to members of these organizations who remained as active participants for at least one full year with at least eight to ten hours of engagement per week. The youth researchers collected data through four primary means: fieldnotes and audiotapes documenting the organizations' activities, activity logs and journal writings of young people, reflective interviews with both adults and youth members, and statistical analysis comparing responses of a selection of these youth with the national sample of students who took part in the 1992 National Educational Longitudinal Survey. For further information on research methods and details related to selection of sites, see Heath and McLaughlin, 1993; Heath, Soep, and Roach, 1998.

[2] Our own fieldnotes, plus the work of Worthman, 1999, as well as videotapes of a two-year film project within this theater program, provide abundant illustration of the ebb and flow, pacing, and interdependence of group members. Worthman's work provides especially rich examples and extensive transcripts drawn from two years of participant-observation within this youth group that, in the early 1990s, shifted from being a drama group to being a "program" through which theater, and all that surrounded its many enterprises, enabled employment and skills development for young people.

[3] As noted above, audiotapes of language during all phases of youth organizational activities provide a large portion of the data collected by the research team working with Heath and McLaughlin. A specially designed concordance program allows analysis of transcripts of these audiotapes, so that particular vocabulary items, phrasal structures, and patterns of syntax can be traced and correlated with local circumstances; fieldnotes supplement and support audiotaped data.

[4] Such access is much more difficult to achieve for community service or sports organizations than for arts groups. Ecological service groups, for example, often have to travel great distances to visit outstanding environmental projects; furthermore, many adults who work with these groups have a passion for conservation, environmental education, and the like,

but it is rare for such adults to have their professional life or full-time work be in fields directly related to ecology. Similarly, sports groups may be spectators at professional sports events or meet players on special occasions, but rarely is it the case that the full-time coach of youth sports groups is a professional whose employment is fully within the world of sports (see Thompson, 1998, for a discussion of volunteer sports coaches).

[5] Numerous publications on teaching and learning repeatedly advocate for the power of community learning and for wide-ranging integration of knowledge from individuals whose expertise on a subject or skill strongly depends on evidence of their strong relationship to continuous learning. See, for example, chapters IV, V, and VI in Palmer, 1998. Parallel to these ideas are those reflected in publications of the Demos Foundation in London in the late 1990s; see, for example, Bentley, 1998, especially Chapter 6, 11, and 12.

[6] This generalization is based not only on content analysis of transcripts of interviews with leaders of these organizations but also on mission statements and proposals submitted by these groups for funding. Confirmation that these broad outlines for behavior actually get operationalized in daily life comes from fieldnotes and transcripts of youth at work within their organizations and in off-site gatherings of group members beyond the presence of adults (see Heath, 1996).

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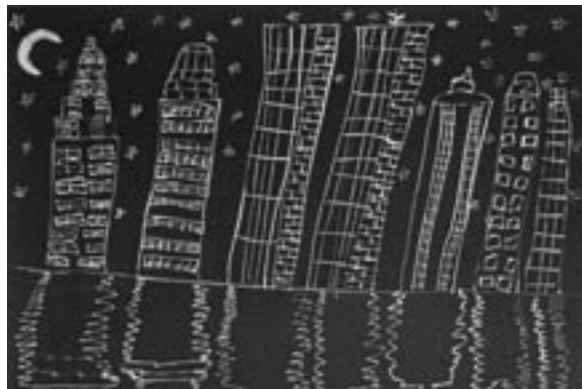
Naming Common Ground

Literacy and Community

by JONATHAN SHEVIN
and CHRIS YOUNG

Our local school district has the slogan, "Building a Community of Learners." So does yours, we'd bet. It is a ubiquitous slogan in education these days. Its popularity may reflect the hope that students will experience a sense of community in the closed and controlled environment of their classroom or education program.

Currently, youth workers make no assumption that children come to a program with an experience of community. Among the traditional responsibilities of public education has been the preparation of youth for full membership in the adult community and, while a wide range of educational styles and practices has prevailed, they have shared that goal of productive citizenship. Schools did not have to invent the community but rather had to sustain and revitalize existing ones. But now, education itself is supposed to provide the community, independent of the neighborhood's realities.

Pius XII North Bronx Family Service Center has been providing community services since 1976. University Heights, the corner of the Bronx in New York City where we are located, is ranked among the highest-risk districts for children's well-being by the Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (*Newsday*, 6/21/95). Fourteen categories were used to determine levels of risk, including: percentage of children below the poverty line, infant mortality rate, unemployment rate for teens, number of abandoned buildings, number of abuse and neglect reports per 1000 children, and percentage of students who tested below grade level in math and reading.

At our community center, we grew accustomed to children who were still reading at primary levels as they entered their teens. When the staff developed a literature and literacy program, it was children with a passion for ideas, words, and learning who surprised us. We were surprised that even adults who grew up in the neighborhood wondered aloud how these eager and inspired children got that way, as if failure was expected. We realized that we had lowered our expectations for the children by designing the program accordingly. If we were to assume that children could learn and engage, then the analysis had to shift to the services being offered, and how they failed to engage the youth. We needed to refrain from seeking to find fault with the children.

In this study, we review the changes made to our traditional tutoring program during its evolution into a theme- and community-based curriculum. This article further reviews and analyzes why we implemented these changes and the impact they had on how we view the purpose of the program, its students, and the community the program is part of. These changes were driven not only by our observations of our young people, but also by our passion to create a program that has at its core a deeper understanding of what teaching and learning mean when connected to all aspects of a person's life.

Literacy, Learning, and Community

The staff noticed the large number of students whose literacy skills improved simply from receiving some instructional and personal attention. Literacy didn't have value for the students by itself; but in communication with others it became worthwhile. We viewed reading and writing as social tools whose core goal is communication. So, we looked at the quality of communication among our youth and in our neighborhood, and we were struck by how difficult it was for children to describe common experiences. They didn't know the names of intersections near their homes or the name of that ubiquitous city bird, the "pigeon." We knew that they had all experienced pigeons; what were the implications of lacking the words to name them?

As communication is inhibited, so community is damaged. "Men live in community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to to the Revolutionary War fort on the Bronx Community College campus. Their common ground is rich with the material to communicate basic scientific, historical, and social aims, beliefs, aspirations and knowledge. We merely had to move out of our center and into the community, and consciously begin to communicate to each other all that we share in common.

But how could we begin to build true community? Not an isolated "community of learners," but a community in which education would form the skills and values of the community at large.

We need to shift the analysis to the services being offered and how they fail to engage the youth, rather than constantly imagining that we have to find fault with the children.

possess things in common" (Dewey, 1915, p. 5). Dewey went on to say that he was referring to more than the physical environment when he said "things" and did not even consider that those most basic "things" in childrens' environments would not be part of their communication. He was concerned with deeper values: "aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge" (p. 5).

But what is most basic to what we "have in common?" It is our literal common ground. We reflected on the youth we serve and their common ground, and we saw that they walk past the same bodegas with scraggly ginkos and small-leaf linden trees every day. The same rain washes their potato chip bags through the Harlem River watershed into that tidal channel and out to the Atlantic. They chase their kid brothers past the monument

What might literacy become in our center if we were purposefully engaging our youth on our common ground?

> In creating a stage for our children's stories, we make choices. We stake out the geographies of their childhoods in home landscapes, consciously or unconsciously. To do so attentively begins by thinking as a native of a region. We become part of a particular world of earth and plants and animals and humans. (Trimble 1994, p. 131)

The skill to express one's own experience is a prerequisite to literacy, and these skills are practiced with others who have this common experience. We hope our program will begin to help our

youth explore these common experiences and begin to see themselves as part of a community in which the effort of learning these essential skills is actively and consciously sought.

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The Program

The following section documents a period (1996-98) when we explored how a program can help create a community in which the sharing of stories, knowledge, ideas and nonsense is valued. We struggled (and continue to struggle) to build an after school program that responded to those "at risk," for school failure, addressing their individual skills and their need to share wisdom with others.[1] Using the theoretical framework we developed, the following segment illustrates the daily work of putting theory into practice. It is meant to be descriptive, providing documentation of one particular case of our actual work in the field, when change was attempted. It is only prescriptive with the caveat that our premise is that curriculum must be adapted locally; we state rules but they are only our rules, not universal ones.

History. Pius XII North Bronx Family Service Center began as a small neighborhood counseling center, but grew quickly, following a settlement house model. Our services include recreation, employment training, day care and education in addition to counseling at our center and at several public schools and high schools. Our services are free to neighborhood families and children.

The original model for after school tutoring was one-to-one matching of community volunteers and college work study students with elementary school students who had failing grades. This model met several extremely important needs, because students in great academic need were getting focused and consistent attention from concerned adults in a safe environment. The teaching tended to be reactive and focused on the short term: a failing report card or the day's homework assignment determined what would be studied. This arrangement had its drawbacks. Due to the level of student passivity, when a tutor/student pair didn't click, nothing happened. There were no other engaged students or engaging tutors/leaders to draw the child in. Furthermore, it reinforced the remedial model: You sit with an expert and have your problem fixed. The child was always playing catch-up. There was not much room for a tutee to be an expert on anything.

Over the years, we have shifted increasingly to working with small groups. The approach that we have come to (we don't want to say "settled on," because we aren't settled) is to have a group leader work with six to eight children; the group leader is supported by a variety of staff, so that there are usually two to four adults in the room with the children. It isn't one-to-one, but any child having difficulty with the work will find support almost immediately. In this way, the uninvolved student doesn't bring the process to a halt; the activity doesn't stop, and, we hope, the student is drawn in.

All the children in our after school program spent one day in The Program Formerly Known as Tutoring. They came with their age group, so, if you were seven or eight years old, you came to us on Monday; this was the only activity at the Center for your age group that day. (On other days, the sevens and eights might have been at gym, arts and crafts, science, computers, or cooking.)

In all our programs, the afternoon began with snack and homework help. This was a quiet study time practiced throughout the agency, and by emphasizing homework we were all agreeing that: 1) Homework is important, and 2) Someone else should deal with it. Then each program could go back to doing what they do best. Time in our education program was reserved for our curriculum, not the schools' agenda.

Curriculum. Our groups worked with themes and core curricula We found that the most satisfying themes emerged from the natural sciences, so we could include labs and experimentation. We learned about comparative biology, waste recycling and forest ecology by maintaining a worm bin. We believed that you don't "know" it until you've put your hands into it, because experience is learning.

We prevented the learning from becoming too esoteric by making it local, so the children encountered it routinely. The forest ecology module was based in University Woods, a block from our Center. We began studying the American Revolution by visiting the site of a British fort across the street. Why did they put a fort here? Who was fighting? What were they fighting about? Who won the war? ("The Dominicans!" an eleven-year-old shouts. Everyone cheers.)

Our tutoring program culminated in a presentation of the students' work called The Museum of the Natural History of The Bronx. Each year's exhibition has had a title: *What Survives in The Bronx?, Through The Bronx by Fin, Claw and Foot,* and *Know Your Place.* These titles reflect our guiding principles: Children learn by moving from the immediate to the abstract; children will commit to purposeful, productive work; and literacy and

learning emerge from a sense of membership in a community.

What do these principles look like in the daily operation of a program? (Toni-Ann, one of our group leaders, will comment after a philosophical speech of mine at a staff meeting, "Ok, that's very nice. It's almost 3 o'clock. What are we doing?") An example of moving from the immediate to the abstract is our mapping project. We wanted to develop a core of staff and students who could create graphics for the museum, primarily maps but also time-lines and graphs. Rather than working out of curriculum guides and worksheets, we began by mapping the rooms in our center. Even here, we found great diversity among the maps:

As communication is inhibited, so community is damaged.

different perspectives, different details, scales ranging from mathematically exacting to downright impressionistic.

This activity led to a discussion of what constitutes a good map and the inevitable question, "Good for what?" We could then look at different maps and study what the cartographers wanted to get across and who their audiences were: subway maps, military history maps, tourism promotional materials, environmental surveys. The concept of identifying an audience could then be transferred to the writing process and help in discussions of editing a working draft.

Administration. Running a program that seeks to help youth view themselves as learn-

ers and tries to validate the importance of their neighborhood, community, and themselves, historically and socially, called upon the use of many administrative skills. An important goal of our program was that none of the administrative chaos should manifest itself at the youth level of the program. Children who come to our program at 3:00 should have a room full of adults waiting to make them feel comfortable, and an afternoon of interesting and engaging projects before them. Getting to this point certainly was not easy. The program's departure from the conventional one-to-one tutoring and from drilling basic skills created both an exciting and frustrating atmosphere for staff at all levels. The three key areas in our administration were staffing, staff and curriculum development, and program materials and space.

Staffing. The program was staffed by part-time employees, college work study participants and interns from city colleges. Most of the people interested in the positions wanted to work with young people but were not teachers or pursuing a degree in education.

The program asked them to create lessons and activities based on themes provided by the local neighborhood, but the staff struggled, as did the youth, to find value or even interest in an area they had never viewed as a "real" study subject. Choosing the right people for the job is very important and this, ideally, would have been achieved with lots of time to interview candidates and explain the program. However, the pressure of securing a staff to work with the young people on day one and maintaining the proper ratio of staff to youth sometimes made choosing the right people difficult. (Our initial criteria were necessarily revamped when "we start tomorrow and have only three interviews scheduled to fill seven positions.") Still, our people had to show a passion for wanting to impact positively the lives of our youth.

Asking the question, "What are some of the reasons you believe the youth in our program are failing in school?" usually became the tool used we used to decide whether to hire an interviewee or not. The answer that shifted the blame off the child and looked at improving the child's learning environment meshed with our program philoso-

phy. "It's because the children are lazy and stupid" was the wrong answer, and unfortunately we heard it too often.

Staff Curriculum and Development. We now had a staff that was passionate about working positively with young people to create an environment of learning. The staff was also comprised mostly of young college students

The skill to express one's experience is a prerequisite to literacy.

who were working part-time, going to school, raising families, shouldering responsibilities, and trying to fit this position somewhere into their schedules. It was useful to keep a youth development perspective when supervising the young folks on our staff.

Most of the people who joined our staff had no background in education, but held a strong commitment to young people and to the value of education in these young people's lives. The program's philosophy has been rooted in the teaching of skills through the use of familiar topics, so the ability to teach basic skills is essential. Using this commitment to the value of education to offset the staff's lack of teaching skills highlights the importance of staff and curriculum development. Working with a strong outline of the year's curriculum provided a focal point for the work, but left the details and specific projects to be determined as the year progressed. This process allowed staff to develop much of the program themselves and thus gain a sense of ownership.

In staff training and curriculum development, it was important to keep two important factors in mind. The first was that local neighborhood studies were not based upon existing information and materials, so the staff had to research and create materials to be used with the youth. The second factor was integrating the basic skills—reading, writing and math—into the curriculum through applied projects such as planting, compost bins, and community surveys. We held weekly meetings during which we examined teaching techniques such as journal-writing, creating flip books, using measuring and other math skills in the context of science experiments relevant to the curriculum. Training had to be responsive and continuous. We offered curriculum brainstorming meetings in

which the staff collaborated on turning project ideas and research into actual lesson plans for their work with the youth. Helping young people to see themselves as lifelong learners and to become comfortable with the learning process extended to every person in the program because everyone was challenged to learn something new.

Reward success with employment. Whenever possible, interns and volunteers were hired as staff, and part-timers became full-timers. This was a long-term strategy that strengthened the entire program. Group leaders have nearly always been former tutors: Because they have been trained in our approach, we can count on them to "speak our language" with youth and new staff.

Materials and Space. Along with the staffing of the program and the continuing staff and curriculum development, the daily routine of attendance, statistics, time sheets, staff issues, and material-gathering was a full-time job in itself. Materials were as varied as the topics in the curriculum because materials, in this case, included everything from pens, paper, markers, and crayons to resource books, museum brochures, old neighborhood pictures, soil samples from local parks, and even native plants that could only be purchased in another state. The program thrived on the creativity of staff and youth, so we tried to provide whatever materials necessary to fuel this creativity, but finding affordably priced materials for the projects and curriculum represented a substantial amount of work.

In order to create a safe, sane, consistent experiential learning environment for youth, the administrators made it a priority that the youth remain insulated from any of the issues of staffing, staff relations, and materials. The youth were coming from chaotic situations, so they were to experience a well-prepared staff, solid lesson plans and projects with all the materials required for the highest quality experience possible. Space, in its most physical definition, would be a safe, clean room conducive to learning: Younger children have ample space to work on projects and writing without distractions; older students have a chair and surface upon which to write.

Psychological space was also important. Space, in this sense, refers to the attitude of all staff and young people in the program toward the work being done. One purpose of our program was to encourage staff and young people to work on topics and explore subjects they knew nothing about, and this kind of work required a psychological space, a place to make mistakes, feel overwhelmed and ask a lot of questions, while constantly having works in progress.

We expected our staff to understand both kinds of space concerns by being professional and by striving for an environment that highlighted accomplishment and allowed for risk-taking by the young people. The creation of this space, a safe place where learning could occur devoid of criticism, demanded much work and professionalism. Running the program meant taking responsibility for balancing all these tasks and more.

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Conclusion

Our starting point was literacy education in a community center's after school program. When we realized that a sense of disconnectedness and general passivity seemed to be the most common features of our at-risk youth, we began to seek a deeper way to examine those characteristics. Because it was such a prevalent feature, we turned to larger social factors. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of the alienation of youth from society in 1967: "The sense of participation is lost, the feeling that ordinary individuals influence important decisions vanishes, and man becomes separated and diminished . . . . When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied. . . . Alienation should be foreign to the young. Growth requires connection and trust" (King, 1968, pp. 43-4).

We began the process of change with two basic things: a real program and a reflective approach to evaluation. Having a real program keeps our theory rooted in the practical. Being reflective means that all invested members of the community, including staff, youth and parents, can envision what is possible. We must elicit all voices and perceptions to help us identify the needs of our youth if we view this as a larger community issue and not just an educational policy concern reserved for professionals. But to solicit other opinions, we are required to become a program which promotes dialogue. The sense of common ground and the ability to communicate has been a good beginning.

Our analysis brought us to this formula: Literacy requires the skill and desire to communicate; those skills and desires come from a sense of connection to one's community; instruction needs to be rooted in the local community; therefore, our program needed to move out of our confined space to engage that local community.

Like any community, our program is constantly changing to meet the needs of the people who belong to it. The staff is always involved in a continuous process of evaluation and reflection to keep the program's vision consistent with that of our changing community. Yet evaluation and reflection, as useful as they are, can also lead to distraction from the actual programming. It is essential to the success of a program such as ours to constantly re-focus staff energy towards the youth, moving reflections into actual hands-on projects and programmatic changes.

An after school education program can have its own identity, rooted in and responsive to the community it serves. It need not follow the agenda of the schools in order to provide real growth and learning opportunities. Furthermore, the administrator sets the tone with the staff that will be transferred to the youth, so fostering habits of reflection is essential, because assessment is constant. Concern for growth and learning must be central to all program components. While a dynamic program such as this can prove hectic for line staff and administrators, it should offer a stable and sane experience for the youth. Best of all, it never becomes boring.

Note

[1] Our founding director, Jim Marley, speaks of the incredible failure of local schools to graduate more than a tiny fraction of their students in four years. He says that "at risk" isn't defining anything about the children themselves, only the services they receive. "If you go to one of those schools, you are at risk."

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Art Credits: The images in this article were created by children in programs conducted by the Studio in a School, New York, N.Y. The originals are in full color; they have been interpreted in two colors for this publication. Artists are: page 47, Shawn Jones, P.S. 144; page 49, Christopher Cardonna, CPE II.

Check it Off!

A Youth Development
Approach to Staff Training

by Jessica Mates and Arva Rice

Did I leave that note for Maddie to order more basketballs for gym night tomorrow? Let's see, I'll stop by and pick up the chips and soda on my way back—

". . . Louis? Louis?"

—I suddenly realized the trainer was asking me a question. Of course, my name is Luis. But trainers never seem to take the time to get to know you anyway, because you're only with them for a few hours—then they are gone.

Let's face it, every trainer has had a session that has not gone quite as well as we hoped it would. People did not arrive on time or at all. We weren't as prepared for questions as we could have been. The time was cut short or one participant tried to monopolize the entire discussion. But clearly the loss of Luis's attention is a trainer's worst nightmare, not a situation you ever want to find yourself in.

Discovering the key elements to keeping participants engaged and making the training experience worthwhile for everyone in the room is difficult. In searching for the right ingredients we reviewed the trainings we have facilitated, those that went well and those that didn't. We thought about those times when youth workers went home rejuvenated and ready to resume their work with a greater sense of purpose. We thought about what makes youth programs work. We thought about the collaborations we have formed with practitioners to enable them to share with each other their struggles and successes. We discovered that there is no single recipe for the perfect training,

but the following checklist may help you conduct more successful trainings.

We found that there are some obvious elements of a good training. People are physically comfortable. The magic markers work. There is no construction work going on outside the window. The trainer is prepared and his or her voice is loud enough for everyone to hear, even in the back of the room. And, of course, the food is good. But even with all of these pieces in place, a training can be unfulfilling at best and, at worst, a complete waste of time.

When we developed our training recipe, or checklist, for a good training, we used a youth development perspective. Youth development focuses on assets and strengths, fostering the idea that you are not simply telling people what to do but are providing supports and opportunities so that participants can figure out what works best in their own programs. Our checklist challenges you to ask yourself whether your training provides caring relationships, engaging activities, opportunities for contribution, high expectations and continuity. When these resiliency factors are present in youth's lives, they help increase the chances that youth will survive and thrive against the odds (Connell, 1992). Structuring training around these ingredients will help participants provide better programming when they return to their centers.

In a training setting, using a youth development approach involves acknowledging the expertise "in the room," which means that training participants already have many of the answers and abilities that trainers are trying to teach and model. As a result, a primary job of a trainer is to

Checklist for a Youth Development-Based Staff Training

Caring and Trusting Relationships

___ Learn participants' names
___ Learn something about participants that you can refer back to in the training
___ Design both small and large group activities
___ Schedule time for networking and socializing
___ Establish ground rules that ensure respect and confidentiality

Engaging Activities

___ Use a variety of activities: role plays, scenarios, physical and arts activities, etc.
___ Keep track of what has worked well and what has fizzled
___ Include activities and strategies that can be utilized back at the office
___ Don't ask participants to do anything you would'nt do
___ Maintain a sense of humor
___ Use warm-ups before asking group to do an activity where they have to present or perform before others

Opportunities for Contribution

___ Conduct open question-and-answer sessions
___ Create opportunities to share successes and struggles
___ Ask for participants' opinions

High Expectations

___ Set concrete goals and objectives structured around needs of people in the room
___ Ask participants about their expectations
___ Identify what everyone can offer and what they can get out of training
___ Enable those with more experience to guide others
___ Encourage participants to identify action steps to strengthen their programs

Continuity

___ Circulate lists of participants with contact information
___ Provide handouts and other resources that participants can take home with them
___ Do follow-up such as mailing participants a copy of the letters and action plans they wrote

provide a forum in which individual talents can be uncovered and ideas shared.

Another central concept in youth development is establishing a relationship with a caring adult. Trainer, *you* are that caring adult! How can we establish a caring relationship in the limited time frame we often have as trainers? Learning participants' names and something else about them that you can refer back to in the training is one good strategy for keeping people actively involved. A practical way to do this is to write people's names down in the order that they are seated. Another strategy is to have icebreakers or name games during which participants can learn about each other. Years later, we have run into a training participant we remember well because we learned through an

icebreaker how she got her name or what three historical figures he would invite to dinner.

The other caring relationships in any training are those you want to nurture among participants. Concrete strategies for achieving this goal are designing small- and large-group exercises and scheduling time for networking and socializing. Make sure people have plenty of opportunities to talk about their successes as well as issues with which they are struggling. Friendly debates are good as long as you have established ground rules that ensure respect and confidentiality. The challenge is to give the people opportunity to express their opinions, to provide concrete information, and to offer a different perspective with-

out condemning them for their opinions or being condescending. Encourage participation without making people feel uncomfortable or on the spot.

Engaging activities may seem like the easiest item on our checklist, but in fact it involves knowing your audience, trial and error, and having a sense of humor. Role plays, games, scenarios, and

In a training setting, using a youth development approach involves acknowledging the expertise "in the room" . . .

physical activities are all good methods for keeping participants engaged. Some activities work better than others, and keeping notes about what has worked well and what has not will help your trainings improve over time. Engaging training activities should be exercises that can be used "back at the office" regardless of whether it is a youth or senior citizens' program. Remember, never ask participants to do something that you are not willing to do yourself.

People who work directly with young people are usually terrific at role plays. Administrators frequently are not but may be willing to try anyway. Asking people to act out the opposite of what they would do in a situation, rather than what they would actually do, often provides more laughs while making the same points. A group that is quiet or reserved may need some warming up before participating in a highly interactive exercise. One strategy is to have participants answer a question in pairs, then in fours, so that they get comfortable with a smaller group of people first. And humor almost always works.

Checklist items for opportunities for contribution and high expectations may include many of the above strategies. As we said, the expertise is in the room. Your challenge is to create opportunities for people to share what they know, what they think, and what they feel can help other people. One strategy for giving people opportunities to contribute is to have open question-and-answer sessions rather than lectures. The same information that you want to convey can often be elicited from participants. The more opportunities people have to contribute, the more engaging the training will be.

Every training should have concrete goals and objectives that are based upon the needs of the people in the room, although fully assessing the needs of participants prior to the training is not always possible. As a result, spending the first few moments of the training asking participants about their expectations is important. In every training there will be participants with varying levels of experience and expertise, but everyone has something to offer and everyone can get something out of the experience. Maintaining high expectations for all training participants is key.

Your misssion is to help those with more experience guide others rather than allow one participant to preach. Some of the greatest training lessons have been gained from participants who hear their peers talking about how they dealt with issues or implemented a program. Encourage participants to identify one thing they can do to make their program stronger, better, or more connected to the community. One strategy we have utilized is to have group members write letters to themselves containing their action plans. We then send their letters and plans to them one month after the training concludes.

This brings us to the final item on our checklist: continuity. Make sure that participants have a way to reflect on what they have learned and on the goals they have set for themselves, along with a way to get in touch with the people they have met. Circulating a list with all relevant contact information will give them the opportunity to continue sharing ideas and learning from one another. We put our names on the list as well and find that people really do keep in touch, even if they change jobs. Handouts are also important. Handouts and resource sheets can serve as refreshers about the topics covered in the training and can also be tools for participants to use in their own work. Continuity is especially difficult if you are only doing a half-day or a one-day training, so utilizing these strategies really will help the learning continue.

Each of the items mentioned here warrants more description. This article is offered simply as a framework for thinking about how to strengthen your trainings. A good training is like a good program: flexible, yet structured. Participants have opportunities to provide feedback, and the design is responsive to their needs. There is time for fun and the space to be serious and reflective. Finding the perfect combination of ingredients makes for a great training experience that even Luis will appreciate.

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Passion: Intense driving feeling or conviction.
Practice: To pursue a profession actively.
—Webster's Dictionary

Passion*&*Practice

by Paul Whyte

Passion is what makes us show up each day to do the best for our clients. Passion is what sustains us during the difficult times, through the funding crises, through the times you couldn't help that young person, through the moments you think it is time to hang it up and walk away. Passion is what brought me to this field and has sustained me, but on the days when passion runs thin, it's the skill in the practice that makes the difference.

This essay is a brief look at a journey that began with a passion which, coupled with practice, eventually led me to become a skilled worker. By sharing my story, I hope to encourage the strong of heart to maintain their passion for the work and seek ways to further examine their practice in the pursuit of excellence.

After school education is a complex web of numerous professional fields, including traditional and nontraditional education, psychology, and social work. Also part of this web is a mass of worker talent and an array of skill levels, professional degrees, and dedication. After school centers are staffed by all types of workers, from people working in the very programs in which they participated as members just a year or two before, to doctoral-level educators who have inhabited the field for years. People enter the field for many reasons and bring with them countless skills. As we move forward as a profession, we need continuous dialogue regarding the reasons why we are in the field and how to sustain excellence.

I first entered the field because of my passion and desire to effect change. Yet in the course of my journey, I discovered I needed greater skills. I initially plunged into the field of after school education in New Haven, Connecticut, while attending Yale University, by performing service work during my sophomore year through Dwight Hall, the community service center of the university.

During the course of my work with Dwight Hall, I became aware of the overwhelming situation facing New Haven's teenagers. They were confronted with extremely high rates of infant mortality, teenage pregnancy, and AIDS; deplorably low rates of high school graduation; and diminished employment opportunities. Learning the depth of this need, I felt I could help. I was not a trained educator by any stretch of the imagination, but I knew in my soul I could contribute. With my idealism and a conviction that I should give something back, I set out to create a program. Thus, with a strong desire to do

something, a few child development courses under my belt, and a small grant, I founded a teen program, Young Voices Initiative. This after school and summer program provided teens with skills to get jobs, inspiration to continue their education, and knowledge of their own and other cultures in New Haven.

The initial development of YVI came more from instinct than from any theoretical base. The steps seemed obvious: interview the potential service recipients, review their ideas, recommendations and suggestions, and design the program. Through many grueling hours, three college students and I developed a reading and poetry curriculum, a life skills curriculum, and an athletic program. That first summer was great. It was challenging, tiring, and exhilarating all at the same time. Yes, I made mistakes, but they were insignificant compared to the successes we had with the students. Success also resulted in greater recognition by funders. From year one to year two our funding tripled, and with more money came more students and greater possibilities.

Young people wanted evening activities, so again it became our task to provide them. Then, the most incredible thing happened. Nearly all the young people attending the day program began attending the evening program as well. We were now spending ten to twelve hours a day with the young people during the summer. It was exhausting, but my soul was filled because this is what I understood the work to be about.

It became apparent that I needed to understand more about educational currricula . . .

But as the program moved into its third year, my inspiration began to wane. My desire for the work was still as strong as it was on day one, but the ideas were not coming to me as easily. It was agonizing. I didn't know what to do.

It became apparent that I needed to understand more about educational curricula in order to continue to serve young people. This realization led me to conversations with my mentors, who agreed with me that in order to continue to do quality work, I needed to learn more about education. Out of both conviction and pride (and some arrogance) I was naturally concerned about what would happen to my program without my daily presence. I built this program from the ground up, I cared deeply about the young people; who else could take care of them? I believed that I was a "trench" worker and that I was supposed to be on the front lines.

As difficult as it was, I had to face three harsh realities: passion alone could not get the job done; other programs were better funded to do the work; and (most painful of all) some other programs were doing a better job of working with teens.

After conquering my demons, I chose to return to full-time study, so I enrolled in a master's program at Harvard Graduate School of Education. This program offered a tremendous opportunity to reflect on my past practice and to name my work, and most important, to learn new skills and concepts to shape it. I began to see why some things worked at YVI and why others did not. I was able to see where I was simply reinventing the wheel and where I was being innovative. I learned the skills necessary to build a curriculum and ways to structure a program. I learned where I did a disservice to young people and where I made the right choices. Thankfully, I think I made more right choices than wrong ones.

Up until this time, I had been a good youth worker; now, I was making the transition to becoming a skilled educator and youth expert. My distance from the daily grind of programming gave me the opportunity to reflect upon my work and to refresh myself. I stepped back from looking at my program like a father looking at his child and thinking she could do no wrong. I started to identify some real areas where the program and my practice needed improvement.

Graduate school wasn't a magical solution, but it served as a framing tool I could use to think about my work and how to do it better. Now, I am an avid advocate for workers' finding opportunities to reflect on their practices. I encourage formal settings because they offer great opportunities to learn theory, but I believe there are great benefits in any opportunity for workers to discuss and learn about the work they do.

Revitalization was another reward of seeking further training. My energy to perform the work and to examine it with new eyes emerged from my being surrounded by people interested in making a difference in education, in the well-being of young people, and in personal growth. Having a shared interest with new people is not only exciting, it has many practical advantages. Organizational structure, program development, and (of course) funding can all benefit from greater skill. Despite how much we dislike the notion of funders driving our programs, the axiom is "the greater the training of staff, the greater is the funding possibility." Knowing what has succeeded before and what is going on in the field can enhance one's own work. Furthering my education and training has greatly aided my practice. I feel that I am light-years away from where I was when I entered the field.

I am confident about knowing how to provide quality services, and passion for my work is still strong, shaping my pedagogy.

As the field of after school education struggles for definition, we as individual practitioners must strive to provide only the best. To be able to do so means knowing what is happening in education, knowing what has worked and what has not. The "best" is sharing your success and learning from your own failures and those of others.

My distance from the daily grind of programming gave me the opportunity to reflect upon my work and to refresh myself.

For far too long, the perception has been that after school education was what people chose to do only when they could not find other work, or something done on the side as a volunteer. We must alter this perception. We are passionate, concerned workers, but we are also trained professionals. Ultimately, we must be committed to excellence. Anything less constitutes a disservice to our clients. Passion brought me to the field and sustains me, but training has made me a competent worker with the renewed confidence to do great things.

Art Credit: The image on this page was created by Sandy Tejada, P.S. 152, in a program of the Studio in a School, New York, N.Y. The original is in full color; it has been interpreted in two colors for this publication.

Organizations Seeking Research Partnerships

Chicago, IL • Chicago Youth Centers is interested in developing relationships with institutions of higher learning, with the express purpose of evaluating the efficacy of our interventions and as a means of improving services. If you or someone you know is interested in conducting research to help CYC towards this end, please contact Steven Guerra, Director of Grants/Contracts, (312) 648-1550 x425.

Professional Growth

New York, NY • **A writing group** is forming for youth practitioners. If you have wanted to write, but aren't able to set the time aside or get the support and feedback you need, this group is a chance to change this scenario! A group of youth practitioners are forming a monthly writing group. The group is supported by a generous grant from the Robert Bowne Foundation. Meetings are held at the Literacy Assistance Center, 84 William St., 14th floor (corner of Maiden Lane). For information: Anne Lawrence, (212) 803-3349.

New York, NY • **Youth Literacy Services** at the **Literacy Assistance Center** assists youth practitioners and program managers in learning to integrate literacy instruction into afterschool programming. They offer a range of technical assistance from one-hour consultations to two-year professional development initiatives. Objectives include 1) building instructional skills, 2) strengthening program management skills, 3) sharpening professional development skills. Intensive institutes provide program managers with strategies on how to actively support literacy through afterschool programming. Upcoming institutes will focus on topics such as assessment and the role of technology in the afterschool program. For information: Pam Little, Coordinator of Youth Literacy Services, (212) 803-3351; pamelal@lacnyc.org.

Rosyln Heights, NY • **The Long Island Institute For Group Work With Children And Youth** promotes and enhances effective group work practices through specific educational trainings, conferences, advocacy and collegial support. In addition, they publish *HUH?!?,* a newsletter dedicated to providing information, inspiration, and support for anyone working with young people in group settings. The Institute is a program of North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center of Long Island, N.Y. For information: Andrew Malekoff, ACSW, 480 Old Westbury Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215; (516) 626-1971.

Calls for Papers

Afterschool Matters: Dialogues in Philosophy, Practice, and Evaluation is seeking articles for its next issue. *Afterschool Matters* is dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in the field of after school education. Articles from a wide variety of academic perspectives will be considered along with personal or inspirational narratives and essays, book and video reviews, notices, and announcements. Photographs and artwork are also welcome. Please write or phone for submission guidelines. For information: *Afterschool Matters,* c/o Children and the Classics, 114 W. 17th St., New York, NY 10011; (212) 206-7722.

Other Announcements

Youth Tree USA is an **internet directory** which centralizes information about youth-serving organizations and agencies providing youth-related services, or programs (including internships). They also publish free home pages for youth-related nonprofit organizations, nationwide. Find them at www.youthtreemarket.com. For information: Magic Owl Productions, 4242 Golden Oak Court, Danville, CA 94506; (925) 736-0419; (925) 736-0966 fax.

Artshow, a 52-minute documentary, is available from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The video documents life within four community organizations—two rural and two urban—whose central focus is youth involvement in the arts. Young people study and work with professional artists in each of these sites with multiple goals: to improve their own knowledge and skills in the arts, to bring younger peers

into productive nonschool experiences, and to improve their communities as learning environments. The two urban organizations are heavily entrepreneurial, earning substantial portions of the funding necessary to sustain their programs. All the groups defy the commonplace equation of education with schools only and contradict the public perception of youth as vulnerable, apathetic, and disengaged from productive challenge. Accompanying the documentary is a 120-page resource guide which details the history, operations, and business structure of each group. The guide also summarizes major findings from research carried out by Shirley Brice Health and Milbrey McLaughlin of Stanford University over the past decade on the macro and micro structures of youth-based organizations judged as highly effective learning environments by local youth. For information: Shirley Brice Heath, (650) 566-5133, sbheath@leland.stanford.edu.

Programs

The Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, is developing a training program, Building Relational Practices in Out-of-School Environments. Training opportunities will be offered at Wellesley (in Wellesley, Massachusetts)—at program sites and at conferences—that are theoretical, experiential, and process focused. The relational curriculum will teach skills through the lens of self-awareness. Participants will continually be asked to tap into and use their own experiences to understand the importance of connection. They will then be taught to use this self-knowledge as a way to build relationships with coworkers, to role-model effective group interaction and leadership. We currently envision training segments focused in the following areas: theoretical understanding of relational development, self-awareness/bringing oneself to work, leadership and mentoring in after school programs, the power of storytelling in developing relationships, building relationships within the program and in the community, addressing diversity, and evaluation.

As part of the curriculum, each afterschool program will develop a customized plan for enacting the concepts in ways that fit the specific site. Each site will also be assigned a technical assistance provider—a practitioner recognized as a leader with exceptional relational skills who has been trained by Center staff—to mentor other programs. Programs will also have access to Center resources (books, videos, contacts).

Evaluators will work closely with Center staff both to evaluate the impact of the model on programs and to assist institute staff in developing

tools for assessing relational skills on an individual and programmatic level. As part of this initiative, several publications will be developed. Possibilities include working papers on the applicability of relational theories to afterschool programs, evaluation tools, relational curricula, the process of building a relationally-based training model, and an evaluation of the overall initiative. For information: Michelle Seligson, Director, (781) 283-2554, (781) 283-3645 fax, mseligson@ wellesley. edu.

The Development Studies Center of Oakland, California, announces a new program, **The After-school Literacy (ASL) Project.** The project builds on the Developmental Studies Center's motivating classroom literacy programs which offer children opportunities to read "real" books—lots of them—or to hear these books read aloud by an adult. Project materials and approaches have been developed and piloted in collaboration with some of the country's most highly regarded after school organizations: the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the Community Network for Youth Development in San Francisco, the Francis Child Development Institute in Kansas City, the Partnership for After School Education in New York City, and the YMCA of the USA.

Using books as a starting place, children from ages 5 to 13 talk about the issues that matter to them, such as why characters behave the way they do, the choices they face, the advice they might need, and how these stories relate to their own lives. To help make these ideas stick, children explore these issues more deeply through art, drama, role-play, and journal writing. And, in the process of these shared activities, they form stronger, closer relationships with peers and the youth workers who care for them.

ASL is currently in its third year of development and testing. It will be ready for national distribution by mid-2000. For information: The Development Studies Center, 2000 Embarcadero, Suite 30, Oakland, CA 94606-5300; (510) 533-0213; (510) 464-3670 fax.

Ivelise Martinez, P.S. 30