Starting an Afterschool Program Toolkit

Community Outreach and Partnerships Guide

When considering partnerships, there are two areas of focus to start with:

- School-after school partnerships
- Community-after school partnerships

Each provides its own benefits and challenges, and each is essential to success in creating a high-quality program. School-After school partnerships help support program logistics, aligned goals and positive guidance strategies, sharing of expertise, and more. Community-After school partnerships allow for relevance to the surrounding community. How are local businesses being invited to take part? Either through donations, employee volunteerism, or in an advisory capacity for example. Being a partner in the community allows children and youth to be more civically engaged beyond their years in the program.

School-after school partnerships typically have a couple common entry points (Main office/Attendance, Custodial, Teacher/Staff, and Administration). After school programs can play a critical role in supporting student success and expand learning beyond the classroom. Research shows that engagement in after school programs in schools that have a sense of partnership between each party result in increased student achievement, overall attendance, and social and emotional development. This means doing more than the typical, intentionally co-create the sense of partnership and building from there.

Here are a few resources to get started:

- Partnering with After School to Accelerate Students' Learning and Recovery
- Creating Holistic Partnerships Between School and Afterschool
- Aspects of Holistic Partnerships
- Evidence of Impact of Partnerships on Protective Factors
- Teen 'Photovoice' Sparks a Community Health Revolution
- Building an Action Plan for Partnerships

CONNECTICUT AFTER SCHOOL NETWORK

Partnering with After School to Accelerate Students' Learning and Recovery

The Opportunity

The American Rescue Plan provides Connecticut school districts $995 million to remedy student learning loss and provide additional support to help young people thrive, both in and out of the classroom. Districts must spend a minimum of 20% of their funds on learning recovery, which explicitly calls out summer and after school programs as an allowable use. Nationwide and across our state, schools are using those funds to team up with after school and summer program providers.

And states are dedicating learning recovery dollars to after school, too. In 2021, Connecticut allocated $11 million in federal relief funds to expand access to high-quality summer learning opportunities through the AccelerateCT grant program. The state also used relief funding to support Expansion and Enhancement Grants for comprehensive after school programs and is expected to launch another grant competition for Innovation Grants in the summer.

Partnering with organizations like the Connecticut After School Network and local programs in your district help serve the community and support holistic student success.

Impact of After School

After school and summer enrichment programs reinforce what students learn in school and provide extra support to students who are struggling academically and/or socially or have special needs. Programs provide more time for deeper learning, creative spaces for hands-on projects, and opportunities for students of all ages to explore careers.

Decades of research proves students who regularly participate in quality after school:

- Gain self-control, confidence, and social skills
- Improve school attendance, work habits, and grades
- Make gains in reading and math
- Have higher graduation rates
- Explore career paths and gain workforce skills
- Build healthy relationships with their peers and adults

How can we save you time and money?

Connecticut's landscape of after school and summer learning providers includes before school, after school, summer enrichment, and other out-of-school time learning programs like the Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and community-based organizations that collaborate with libraries, museums, colleges, faith-based centers, and local recreation and parks sites.

The Connecticut After School Network has the relationships and expertise to help schools build robust community partnerships that accelerate students' academic and social-emotional learning. The Network offers:

- Strong connections with after school and summer learning programs and families
- Experience leveraging community partners and volunteers
- Deep reach in underserved communities
- Tools to improve the quality of after school and summer programs
- Training and professional development opportunities for after school professionals

Research spanning several states shows that every $1 invested in after school programs saves at least $3 by:

- ⇧ Kids' earning potential
- ⇧ Kids' performance at school
- ⇩ Crime and juvenile delinquency

This is Comprehensive After School

- Youth-led learning and social activities
- Wrap-around and emergency supports for families
- Hands-on, project-based learning
- STEM, arts, and music
- Academic enrichment and support
- Planning and preparing for college
- Physical activity and healthy food
- Trusted, responsive community resource
- Culturally-relevant
- Career awareness, exploration, and preparation
- Service learning and community projects

Program Spotlight: Middlesex YMCA, Middletown

The Middlesex YMCA worked tirelessly to support the children and families in their community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools first closed in March 2020, the Emergency Childcare Program opened to provide kids a safe place to be during the day while their parents went to work. The program was offered free of charge to children of essential workers thanks to a grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education, which was crucial in helping the YMCA cover staffing costs. During the virtual school day, kids used their Chromebooks to complete their lessons online with help from staff, followed by a break in the afternoon to play outside. Later in the day, kids could engage in fun programming in STEM, the arts, and mindfulness. YMCA staff regularly connected with families to see if they were in need during this time of great financial instability. Program staff put together care packages of groceries, Walmart gift cards, and arts and craft kits for children. As the pandemic has shifted schooling and work schedules, the program has continued to adapt to meet the needs of the community.

Let's Do This!

After school is an underutilized resource that can help schools in every community. These programs operate at the nexus of families, schools, and communities and are uniquely positioned to help schools accelerate students' learning and recovery.

Reach out to your local after school programs to:

- Provide space for their programming during the school year and/or over the summer
- Offer to include advertisements for their programs in your emails and newsletters to schools
- Develop a deeper sense of partnership to support the holistic needs of the students including connecting beyond daily attendance and discipline referrals

Engage your statewide after school network to:

- Provide data on programs across the state
- Identify programs serving under-resourced communities
- Facilitate conversations between schools and community providers
- Provide trainings and quality supports for programs that receive funds
- Join the movement to help reach the goal of after school for all

CONNECTICUT AFTER SCHOOL NETWORK

75 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT 06143
203.483.1846
info@ctafterschoolnetwork.org
ctafterschoolnetwork.org

@CTAfterSchoolNetwork
@CTASN
@ctafterschoolnetwork

Creating Holistic Partnerships Between School and Afterschool

Kenneth Anthony and Joseph Morra

According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2010), schools need collaborative partners to help children and youth thrive. For over a decade, afterschool programs have been positioning themselves as viable partners. After all, afterschool programs challenge students' thinking, teach collaboration, and help children and youth find their passion.

Furthermore, in 2008, 56 percent of afterschool programs were located in school buildings (Parsad & Lewis, 2009). Intentionally designed school-afterschool partnerships can have positive academic results (Bennett, 2015), increase social skills (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007), and improve attendance (Chang & Jordon, 2013). Addressing these factors could help our educational system close the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers. The depth of partnerships between afterschool programs and schools has been shown to improve student academic outcomes (Bennett, 2015).

However, school-afterschool partnerships are more often promoted (and included in grant proposals) than fully realized. Current partnerships are often limited to daily attendance and behavior reports. School leaders accept that afterschool programming is important, even

KENNETH ANTHONY, EdD, is the director of professional development and research with the Connecticut After School Network. He holds a doctorate in education from the University of Hartford and a master's degree in human services, with a concentration in organizational management and leadership. He has presented at local, regional, and national conferences on leadership and creating effective partnerships and collaborations.

JOSEPH MORRA is a senior project manager of expanded learning at United Way of Rhode Island's Afterschool Leadership Circle, which is the statewide afterschool network. He manages the network's professional development work and a statewide summer learning initiative. Joseph was a White-Riley-Peterson Policy Fellow in 2013–2014. He is pursuing a library science degree at the University of Rhode Island.

as they discount its worth by treating it as entirely separate from the school. Meanwhile, afterschool program leaders may be pulled from full partnerships with schools because of the immediacy of program needs, among other reasons. Educators on both sides are missing opportunities to go deeper, to improve student achievement by connecting students to afterschool experiences that complement their learning during the school day.

To identify what stands between schools and afterschool programs and what can connect them, the lead author, Ken Anthony, conducted an exploratory study in three schools in a southern New England city. In all, 18 interviews were conducted with school and afterschool staff. Following a framework proposed by Bennett (2015), this exploratory study focused on three specific aspects of school-afterschool relationships: sharing of academic resources, sense of partnership, and communication structures. Together, Ken and co-author Joseph Morra developed recommendations for the field based on the findings of this limited, small-scale study. We aim not to provide definitive conclusions but to enter a conversation about how schools and afterschool programs relate to each other. Our status as afterschool practitioners, though it could be seen as a source of bias, gives us a realistic perspective on what happens "on the ground" in school-afterschool partnerships.

Perhaps our most salient finding was a disconnect between school and afterschool staff. However, school and afterschool staff described informal structures and opportunities that could contribute to more substantial connections.

Perhaps our most salient finding was a disconnect between school and afterschool staff. However, school and afterschool staff described informal structures and opportunities that could contribute to more substantial connections. The findings reinforce what afterschool practitioners have often identified as avenues for improving school-afterschool partnerships.

The State of School-Afterschool Relationships

Substantial research has shown that, in order for communities to reap the academic and social benefits of afterschool education, schools and afterschool programs must collaborate (Bennett, 2013; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Pierce, Auger, & Vandell, 2013; Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). The Harvard Family Research Project (2010) asserts that "in-school and non-school supports [should] collaborate as equal partners to work toward a shared vision for children's learning" (p. 2).

School leaders would seem to agree. In a nationwide survey (Daniels, 2012), 82 percent of school superintendents said that afterschool programs are important, citing the social-emotional and academic benefits; 75 percent reported that they encouraged principals to work with community-based organizations to offer stronger afterschool programs.

However, developing partnerships between schools and community-based organizations takes time and effort (Wallace Foundation, 2010). The perceived difference between youth development and formal educational approaches can impede conversations. Romi and Schmida (2007) assert that the two philosophies are inextricably linked; with good communication, practitioners of both can share their craft and art. Both partners need to be thoughtful about the process, designing and building the system together and adjusting the relationship to keep it sustainable (Yohalem, Devaney, Smith, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2012) in order to build trust and a common vision. This common vision begins with "identifying and recruiting stakeholders from multiple backgrounds" representing all aspects of a child's life (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008, p. 166).

Our work is based on a framework proposed by Tracy Bennett (2015), which in turn builds on two studies by Gil Noam and colleagues. The first of these (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausey, 2003) defined a bridging continuum of school-community partnerships, from *self-contained* programs, which make little attempt to collaborate with schools, through *associated, coordinated, integrated,* and finally *unified* programs. The last represents a seamless learning day, with little differentiation between the school and afterschool environment (Noam et al., 2003). The second study (Noam et al., 2004) identified "four Cs" of successful afterschool programming: collaboration, communication, content, and coherence.

Bennett (2015) refined these structures into a framework measuring alignment between schools and afterschool partners. The framework has three key areas: sharing of academic resources, sense of partnership, and communication. Bennett surveyed school principals and afterschool staff in 78 schools in 11 southern California districts about the extent to which they perceived align-

ment between the school and afterschool program, defining *alignment* as "specific collaboration practices between afterschool programs and schools that attempt to coordinate student learning as they transition from the regular school day to the afterschool program" (p. 1). She defined sites in which both school and afterschool leaders had high levels of agreement on all three scales as "highly aligned," and sites where school and afterschool leaders showed substantial disagreement as "misaligned." Bennett then examined more than 8,000 student standardized test scores to find that students at highly aligned sites performed better than did students at misaligned sites.

Instructional misalignment can result from lack of meaningful communication between school and afterschool personnel. Harris (2011) calls on educational leaders in schools and community-based organizations to identify curriculum linkages in order to translate classroom rigor into real-world relevance.

Methods

Our research involved a limited study of three afterschool programs located in schools. They are typical cases of expanded learning opportunities in out-of-school time, representing varying degrees of school partnership. Such cases can be useful for research purposes (Lichtman, 2013) because they may be representative of common practices and experiences among school and afterschool personnel and can help researchers identify practices that warrant further study.

Three K–6 school-afterschool sites in one urban school district in southern New England were chosen at random for study. Site A was located in a lower-income neighborhood and served families with significant needs. Site B was located in a more affluent area of the city but drew students from a nearby housing complex. Site C was also in a low-income area, but the neighborhood had more single-family homes and less crime than did Site A's neighborhood. The afterschool programs studied at Sites A and B offered such typical programming as homework help, physical activity, and academic enrichment. Site C hosted a theater program that had a long relationship with the schools it served. All three programs were just one of many in their sites, sharing the school with as many as five additional program providers.

All three programs received a mix of funding, including state grants, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, and local philanthropies. Typically these funders require school districts to partner with a community agency. The district and community supported the alignment of learning through initiatives funded by a community network of afterschool providers and the school district (Whipple, 2014).

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A total of 18 individuals were interviewed, six from each site: the principal, the afterschool program director, the afterschool site supervisor, one afterschool front-line staff member, and two school teachers. School district staff helped to identify appropriate interviewees and provided contact information.

The primary data collection tool was an 11-question interview guide based on Bennett's (2015) framework. Every interview question addressed one of Bennett's three areas: sharing of academic resources, sense of partnership, and communication. Questions asked respondents to describe the relationship between school and afterschool programs, the communication with the school or the afterschool staff, and any sharing of academic resources. Other questions focused on the depth of the relationship, for example, the level of engagement of the principal and school leadership, afterschool staff training in curriculum delivery, and afterschool alignment with the school day.

One-on-one interviews were conducted in private offices at either the school or the community-based organization. After all 18 interviews had been conducted, the data were analyzed through an open-coding method that allowed for codes to be refined and themes to be developed.

Staff Perceptions of the Relationship Between School and Afterschool

The first finding emerged during data collection: The length of the interviews was linked to the respondent's relationship to the afterschool program. Afterschool program directors gave the longest interviews. They expanded on basic responses to discuss, for example, the academic and social goals of their programming. School staff generally and principals specifically gave shorter interviews. Many reported little or no knowledge of the programming occurring after school. However, staff members and principals who had been involved in an afterschool program, either in the past or currently, gave longer interviews than those who had not. Though initially troubling, the brevity of responses emerged as a finding that reinforced all interviewees' perception of a disconnection between school and afterschool.

The iterative coding process revealed 25 codes in the data, 22 of which appeared in responses from all three sites. These 25 codes fell into five major themes:

- Misalignment
- School administrative support for the afterschool program
- Informal structures and opportunities
- Program elements
- Barriers

Misalignment

Interview responses that were coded *disconnection, collaboration and coordination, need for meetings,* and *need for communication* fell into the category of misalignment.

The code *disconnection* was particularly salient; it appeared in all 18 interviews. All three afterschool directors emphasized this disconnection. The Site B director said, for example, "I think half of the time, some principals don't even know what some afterschool programs … provide." Similarly, the director at Site C stated, "No one from the school staff would check back in on what we were doing, sometimes not even responding to invitations … to come see what the kids are doing." The Site A director described a lack of involvement with the school and its teachers, saying that she had no idea what went on in classrooms or staff meetings. School teachers also described a lack of connection. A teacher from Site B summed it up: "There is no partnership at all…. We don't have any interaction with [the afterschool program]." A Site A teacher said that student performance might trigger communication, "but beyond that, it's really separate."

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Lack of collaboration and coordination was evident, for example, when the Site C principal insisted that "anything that happens within the building afterschool needs to go through me." This assertion sounds more autocratic than collaborative. This same principal was open to increasing collaboration between school teachers and afterschool staff if "their educational piece in the afterschool" were "linked to what we do here."

School and afterschool staff talked about the need for meetings and better communication. Afterschool staff wanted ongoing dialogues to help school staff better understand the afterschool program. The principal at Site C seemed to agree that regular meetings could improve communication, seeing such meetings as a way to bring grade-level teams together to create targeted interventions that could bridge the school and afterschool environments. In terms of communication systems, the Site B principal suggested a streamlined system that would target student needs, such as a check sheet or other method of informal communication, suggesting that otherwise afterschool staff might inundate teachers. The afterschool director at this site suggested that email would be an efficient method of communication "if we had even just the email list provided by the school for the children in our class, who their teachers are." No consensus emerged about modes of communication, nor was there evidence that any of these suggestions would be followed through.

School Administrative Support for the Afterschool Program

The theme of school support for the afterschool program includes such codes as *administrative-level communication* and *depth of principal involvement.* The relatively large number of responses related to administrative communi-

cation and follow-up suggest that communication about such day-to-day concerns as homework assignments did take place at the study sites. The afterschool director at Site B reported, "Our staff gets the attendance from the day to ensure that we get the proper kids for the afternoon that were in school."

Evidence of deeper communication beyond purely administrative tasks was rarer. Four afterschool and one school respondent talked about the importance of shared academic goal setting. However, they did not indicate that such sharing actually took place at their sites. The afterschool directors at all three sites said that they had initial meetings with their school principals at the beginning of the year. The principal at Site B noted that she had little communication with the afterschool program, "other than behavior concerns or that type of thing." However, she reported that she had regular contact with a school-afterschool liaison whose position was funded by the state. The afterschool director at this site, by contrast, did not mention the liaison. She indicated that she met with the principal as needed but described a substantial connection with the school secretary on logistical issues.

The afterschool front-line staff seemed to perceive an informal and generally supportive relationship between the program and school administration. The Site B staff member said:

> They always tell us that if there's any issues—anything we need whatsoever—don't hesitate to contact them. If I'm at the school and I run into the vice principal and whoever, they're always asking how things are going. They're very concerned.

The afterschool staff member at Site A had a similar assessment: "The assistant principal pops in once in a while. She'll … say 'Hi' to the kids and see how everything is going."

The principal at Site B described how the school helped to recruit children into afterschool programs by asking teachers to identify students who could benefit. She also described her lack of involvement in the community-based program, saying that she got involved only in "logistic things" such as busing and parent pick-ups. The principal at Site C was disappointed in a lack of communication about student recruitment: "I didn't have a whole lot of say on how they were inviting kids to participate, and that was a problem." This principal said that the letter sent by the afterschool program to parents about the child's status in the program was misleading. She concluded, "I think that next year I would like to look over what they write." She wanted to work with teachers to recruit children who could benefit most into the afterschool program.

According to Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000), the creation of partnerships outside of the school is the responsibility of the school principal. A hands-off approach on the part of school principals does not set a tone of collaboration between school and afterschool staff.

Informal Structures and Opportunities

The theme of informal structures and opportunities included interview responses that were coded into such categories as *homework* and *informal relationships,* among others. Nearly all afterschool staff members described having informal connections with the school teachers. The afterschool director at Site B described a typical situation:

> If there is something that's going on with the child, and he doesn't understand homework or forgot their homework in the classroom, our staff takes the kids to the teacher. They go and ask for help, ask for clarification, or go get the homework … so they're always visiting with the school-day teacher.

Some afterschool staff said that they ascertained what academic content children were studying by looking at their homework. School teachers did not discuss homework-based links with afterschool staff. However, the principal at Site B said that afterschool staff might "ask questions on how to assist the kids with their homework" or check on children who say they don't have any homework.

Three afterschool staff members described using informal connections to work around lack of information shared about students due to confidentiality rules. The front-line afterschool staff member at Site C said, "If the student comes from a home of abuse or neglect, or … is

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an easy on-off switch for having a crisis, we're not given that information. We're only given medical info." She then spoke about "having … school staff on site" and knowing school personnel from previous experience, saying, "I can talk to them."

The idea that these informal connections were working is reinforced by the finding that afterschool and school staff who worked directly with children were more likely to agree with one another than were the afterschool and school administrators—particularly in this area of informal structures but also in responses to other questions. The reason may be that these front-line staff enjoyed more informal connections than the administrators did. More intentional connections could facilitate deeper communication about student needs.

Program Elements

The theme of program elements includes interview responses coded as *curricular components,* among others. One of teachers at Site B exemplified teachers' typical view of afterschool programming as "a good extracurricular activity for the students. It's more of a relaxed atmosphere…. It's something that [students are] interested in." The principal at Site B said that the afterschool programs were "not specifically teaching academic content…. Like the martial arts [program], they're not teaching academic content, they're teaching the self-discipline piece." This principal revealed a bias toward academic programming as she contrasted the martial arts program with the literacy program, noting that the staff were "automatically … more academically aligned."

By contrast, the afterschool director at Site A talked about the academic content in her program: "[Participants] have spelling quizzes and spelling tests…. They…identify what the words are, define them, do riddles, things like that." The afterschool front-line staff member at Site B spoke of alternating social-emotional supports with academic instruction:

> In planning with my colleague, we know that our students need help with blended words, they need help with fluency, they need help with sight words—and then they also need social and emotional awareness. So one day, we teach an intervention; the next day we teach a social-emotional skill.

These afterschool respondents believed that their programs were facilitating important learning, whether the content was strictly academic or also social-emotional.

Along those lines, the afterschool director at Site C outlined the substantial credentials of program staff:

> All of the lead teaching artists have either degrees—in some cases a couple of advanced degrees in theater or in education—or extensive, 10 or 20-plus years of experience working in theater, especially working with children in theater, writing, directing, performing. So I'm working with theater professionals.

The afterschool director's perception of staff qualifications encompasses the diverse experience afterschool practitioners bring to their work.

Barriers

The theme of barriers included codes for *professional development, expectations and qualifications for afterschool staff,* and *territorialism.*

School staff addressed training as an indicator of afterschool program quality. One teacher cited the importance of "how well the personnel is trained and how well they can work with kids." The principal at Site C and the teacher at Site B both raised issues about how the afterschool staff managed student behavior. The teacher said that "one of the afterschool programs had a lot of difficulty with handling some of the kids, and so they had to bring in … more structured staff." The principal at Site C seemed to have some respect for the training of the afterschool staff: "The onsite coordinators go through quite a bit of training on how to manage peers of their own age, because, I mean, they are young…. But they all go through quite a bit of training."

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Some responses, particularly from afterschool staff, indicated openness to joint professional development; one said, "I think if they maybe had a professional development with us at their school, it would be helpful." A teacher from Site C said that the "young kids" working in the afterschool programs might want to "look for help" from the school staff. "If they put that out there, I'm sure the people in the building would be more than willing to give them a hand." A teacher at Site B, by contrast, said, "Even if [afterschool program staff are] trying to commu-

nicate with us about what they're working on or things that they have coming up, I don't necessarily know if all the teachers would be accepting of it." The teachers seemed to feel that they had something to offer the afterschool staff but that some teachers might not be willing to accept initiative coming from the afterschool side.

Both school and afterschool staff described issues with sharing space. Territorialism on the part of teachers was cited, for example, by the afterschool staffer at Site C, who ran an activity out of the teachers' lunch room. "Something that was said that maybe we shouldn't be in there because, if a teacher has to come in and use the telephone, they don't have the privacy that they wanted." The afterschool director at Site A spoke of how the principal needed to know exactly where in the school each afterschool activity was taking place at what time. Even the principal at Site C perceived territorialism on the part of her staff: "The sharing of space, classrooms—teachers can be very, very possessive of their materials and … the cleanliness of their room, or the organization of their room." Lack of trust about something as basic as space use does not help to build the relationships needed to align goals and work together to serve children.

Samuelson (2007) describes the roles principals can take in creating school-afterschool connections: facilitating regular communication, serving as liaison between school and afterschool staff, and supporting the afterschool program as an integral part of the school.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Review of the interview responses led to five conclusions related to the five themes into which the interview data fell: misalignment, school administrative support for the afterschool program, informal structures and opportunities, program elements, and barriers. For each of these conclusions, we offer recommendations based on our experience in the field.

Recommendations on Misalignment

The first conclusion is that school and afterschool leaders and staff experience substantial misalignment that impedes collaboration. One way to foster coordination is shared planning, starting with shared meetings. Afterschool directors could ask to report at school staff meetings and request that their staff be invited to teacher planning meetings. They could pay staff members who are able to attend out of professional development funds. In turn, teachers—especially those whose classrooms are used by the afterschool program—may find it beneficial to attend planning sessions at the afterschool program. Even with differing missions, school and afterschool staff can complement and build on each other's work and share their expertise.

A hands-on approach by the school principal may facilitate collaboration (Newmann et al., 2000). For example, the principal can arrange for the schedules of some staff, including teachers and counselors, to be staggered slightly so they can welcome the afterschool staff and discuss the major events of the day. Samuelson (2007) describes the roles principals can take in creating school-afterschool connections: facilitating regular communication, serving as liaison between school and afterschool staff, and supporting the afterschool program as an integral part of the school.

Recommendations on School Support

Our second conclusion is that the degree to which school and afterschool personnel perceive that the school supports the afterschool program is affected by the relationships between members of each group and by individuals' personal experiences.

Being aware of the social fabric of the school can help afterschool programs build more school support. For instance, if the school places a premium on particular values, such as citizenship, spirit, or compassion, afterschool staff can create programming that supports these values.

Another possibility is to request that the principal schedule visits at key points during the afterschool program to take a "learning walk" (Russo, 2006). Such observations can be an opportunity to show the principal how the afterschool program contributes to the academic, social, emotional, and physical growth of students.

Recommendations on Informal Structures and Opportunities

Our findings suggest that, even without formal administrative support, school and afterschool staff develop ad-

hoc connections related to homework and attendance. With more intention, these connections could be the basis for expanding collaboration. Sharing space can be a challenge, especially when the individuals using the same space have never met or can connect only in passing. Informal relationships can help to ease the tensions. Formalized agreements, such as memoranda of understanding, are no substitute. When school and afterschool staff develop informal relationships, trust may naturally follow. School staff may learn to see afterschool staff not as infiltrators but as collaborators.

Recommendations on Program Elements

Another source of tension between school and afterschool personnel is differing goals: Schools tend to focus on educational attainment while afterschool programs often emphasize personal development. Looking at youth holistically may help to bridge this difference. The skills youth need form a triangle: academic, social-emotional, and essential (21st century) skills. Take away one side, and the triangle is no more.

Admittedly, getting all of the adults who work with a group of children to foster growth in all three areas is easier said than done. One potential strategy is joint professional development. Social-emotional learning may be a key entry point (Moroney & Devaney, 2015). The facilitators of joint professional development should have a foot in each realm; they should be translators who can build community and trust by keeping the idea of youth success at the forefront. Professional learning communities comprising mixed cohorts of school and afterschool staff can provide both formal and informal support that leads to positive change in practice (Public Profit, 2015). The Connecticut After School Network (2016), for example, has created multiyear learning communities that include both school and afterschool professionals.

Recommendations on Barriers

The chief barrier to school-afterschool cooperation that emerged in interviews was school personnel's perceptions of the qualifications of the afterschool staff and their difficulty in sharing space with the afterschool program.

School educators must hold a degree in their field; most are also certified. They may look down on afterschool staff, some of whom do not have degrees and many of whom hold degrees in unrelated areas. However, an increasing percentage of afterschool workers are seasoned professionals. A workforce survey by the National Afterschool Association (2015) found that 38 percent of the workforce had been with their current employer for 10 or more years.

Over time, the perceived professionalism of afterschool staff will improve with the increasing trend in higher education of offering credentials or degrees in afterschool and youth development in schools of education, as in, for example, the University of Illinois at Chicago (2016), Rhode Island College (2016), and University of Minnesota (2016). Formal and informal education degrees can influence one another and even overlap—to the benefit of all educators-in-training, whether their careers take them to schools or to community-based organizations.

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In our experience, afterschool and school educators have much to offer one another. Afterschool staff can ably teach how to respect youth voice and choice, foster social-emotional development, and build community connections. School teachers can ably share learning on such concepts as Common Core, Next Generation Science Standards, and curriculum development. As noted above, professional learning communities including both school and afterschool staff is one exciting strategy. Another is exemplified in the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative in Rhode Island, which requires planning and implementation teams to incorporate both school and community-based staff in the design of summer learning programs.

Such networks can help to break down barriers and decrease territorialism, if school and afterschool professionals will both reach out to one another. The only way to break down barriers is to intentionally embed collaboration into the way schools and afterschool programs conduct their business.

Limitations

This study had three major limitations. The first is sample size and selection. Findings from interviews with 18 edu-

cators from one school district can suggest avenues for action but cannot be generalized. A second limitation is that all information was self-reported and therefore subject to bias. The actual state of the relationship between the school and afterschool programs cannot be verified without observation. The third limitation is researcher bias. Ken Anthony, who conducted the interviews and did the analysis, has been in the afterschool field for 21 years and has shared the experiences of many of the afterschool respondents. The analysis may have amplified the perceptions of the afterschool providers, while discounting the perspectives of the school educators.

Given these limitations, this study must be considered as exploratory and suggestive only. The findings cannot be generalized but do suggest conclusions and recommendations that are consistent with previous research. Larger studies could explore differences in pedagogy and practice while highlighting communication structures that work to bridge the gaps between school and afterschool personnel.

The Need for Communication

Coordinated systems that bridge in-school and out-of-school learning can support the holistic development of students. This study highlights the opportunities and barriers faced by afterschool programs housed in schools in one community. It highlights steps toward dialogue that can created a shared vision of student learning, particularly around informal relationships, principal leadership, fuller dialogue, and shared professional development. Both school districts and citywide coalitions need to provide the infrastructure that would support ongoing communication and encourage sharing. Conversations between school and afterschool partners need to be founded on trust, not speculation or notions of inability. We owe our students innovative learning experiences that are not limited by the school walls or by lack of coordination among the institutions that seek to educate them.

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Aspects of Holistic Partnerships

1. Partnership with the Community

- Is there a sense of partnership? Does the program operate in isolation or are they visible in the community?
- What does communication look like? Is there regular bi-directional conversations between the program and other aspects of the community?
- Does the district share any academic resources with afterschool staff? Is the program and school connected (along a continuum from self-contained to unified)?

2. Social and Emotional Support

- Are staff asking open ended questions (inquiry) to learn more about the children?
- Are needs identified shared with other community providers to best support the families in the program?
- Is there a social-emotional component of the program that is consistent across settings?
- Is the program personal and relevant to the children and families?
- Are there opportunities to connect with other professionals that interact with the children (sense of partnership and communication (informal/formal)?

3. Parent Communication

- Are community resources shared with parents of the afterschool program?
- Do all staff share in the responsibility of communication
  - Parents/caregivers
  - School Staff
  - School Administration
  - Community partners

4. Engagement

- How does the program know what to offer?
  - Do you survey the children/families/community?
- Informal conversations?
  - Discussions with school staff/administration?
- Are staff actively involved in the activity with the children?
  - In place of dictating directions, work alongside the children and do the activity with them

5. Youth Voice/Youth Choice

- Is there a role for the children in running the activity?
- Does the program provide opportunities for leadership (parents/children)?
- How are families involved in meaningful ways and does it connect to the larger needs of the community served?

Ken Anthony, Ed.D. (2017)

Evidence of Impact of Partnerships to Bolster Impacts of the Protective Factors

Ken Anthony, Ed.D. and Heather Williams

50 STATE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

What are the protective factors and how do they affect community outcomes?

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to echo in the hardest hit communities across the country. Children and families have experienced loss, trauma, and faced adversity not seen in generations. Over the past few decades, prevention research focused on resilience identified certain protective factors that net positive impacts on children, families, and communities. These protective factors contribute to the positive development of children and youth, and buffer negative or traumatic experiences.

A June 2021 report by WestEd[1], Promoting Protective Factors in California Afterschool Programs, commissioned by the California AfterSchool Network, Austin, Wendt, and Lucyna provides a framework that allows some of the conditions described by Benard[2] to be actionable across settings.

The Protective Factors Framework addresses three distinct elements:

01 Caring Relationships (having a caring adult in a child's life),

02 High Expectations (providing encouragement, support, and pathways), and

03 Meaningful Opportunities for Participation and Contribution (engage youth in decision making and allow pursuit of interest areas).

According to the report, when these factors are present in any setting (home, school, out-of-school time program), the combined effect of the protective factors allows for "resilience and positive youth development" (p. 2).

When these protective factors are in place, people (children, families, and youth) are:

- More likely to feel connected to school, society, and/or family (social bonding)
- Develop critical social and emotional competencies (self-awareness, empathy, problem solving, and emotion regulation)
- Avoid engagement in risk behaviors and take part in positive academic, personal, and healthy behaviors[3]

The report suggests that afterschool programs "can positively impact a youth's sense of school support, safety, and connectedness, leading to more positive school behaviors, academic motivation, and other positive outcomes" (p. 7). In their study, they examined if state funded afterschool programs in California may be contributing to school-based protective factors for participants compared to peers who were non-participants.

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[1] Austin et al., 2021
[2] Benard, 2004
[3] Austin et al., 2021

The results showed that students who attended afterschool programs reported significantly higher levels of meaningful participation in school compared to students who did not attend the afterschool programs. This positive effect was true for both school levels (i.e., students in grades 7 and 9 / 11). There was also a greater difference in ratings for this indicator between afterschool participants and non-participants among high school students as compared to the younger students.

Participants in afterschool programs at both school levels also reported significantly greater levels of school connectedness, caring adult relationships, and high expectations, as compared to non-participants. The effect size was largest for high school students on these measures, indicating meaningful differences between afterschool participants and non-participants, with participants showing higher degrees of engagement in these areas.

Afterschool, expanded and summer learning sites as a hub for fostering partnership to enhance the impact of protective factors

What can communities do to amplify efforts to support the protective factors? Creating intentional partnerships can boost the impact by addressing the protective factors from a holistic perspective. Establishing a sense of partnership is contingent on perceptions of reliability, trust, joint planning, and information dissemination and sharing between community based organizations, school districts, and cross-sector partners that support the family and children. The depth and scope of relationships between these partners begin with trust and integrity between the school and afterschool program.

In many cases we know that afterschool staff not only are more likely to represent the diversity of the student population they serve, but typically come directly from the communities they are working in. They are often run by community based organizations that are responsive to the unique needs of the community. Their relationships to the students, families, and communities extend well beyond the typical 3 hours of dedicated afterschool hours per day, resulting in stronger, more trusting relationships. This sets a solid foundation for our afterschool and summer programs to serve as a hub within the community.

The reality in many communities is that school-afterschool partnerships are more often promoted, or included in grant proposals than fully realized. School leaders accept that afterschool programming is important, even as they discount its worth by treating it as entirely separate from the school. Meanwhile, afterschool program leaders may be pulled from developing full and sustainable partnerships with schools because of the immediacy of program needs, among other reasons[4].

[4] Anthony & Morra, 2016

In stopping this cycle of disconnection, opportunities for deeper learning, more meaningful relationships, and a true sense of partnership and community could be created. Using the Protective Factors Framework as a starting point for common language opens channels for communication that moves beyond the transactional to the transformational. Taking efforts from the singular to the collective requires coalitions of willing partners and open minds.

There are several successful models that have used local partnerships to begin dialogue to create change in their communities. Initiatives in Connecticut, California, Tennessee, and North Carolina are highlighted below. While the bright spots identified in this paper highlight how using a protective factors lens can help create partnerships and opportunities, there are many other examples across the country that show promise as well.

In New Britain, Connecticut the Coalition for New Britain's Youth and the Consolidated School District of New Britain's partnership have created a citywide Summer Learning Program[5]. Over the past 11 years, district and community partners have developed an award winning program that supports academics, social-emotional learning, life skills, and family support. With over 700 children per summer, the program has shown gains in attendance and academic success. Parents talk about how their child never wants to get up for school during the school year, but wakes them up at 7:00 to get to the Summer Learning Experience.

It is the relationships between partners and the families they serve that keeps the children engaged and coming back. Instead of focusing solely on academic outcomes, the planning team (which begins meeting two weeks after the close of the summer program for the next year) intentionally develops strategies and programs that can support and enhance the Protective Factors. This happens through a co-taught model of school district classroom teachers and community-based organization staff. This has been an evolutionary process as the community learns together to improve the next iteration.

In California, the Quality Standards for Expanded Learning[6] embed principles of social emotional learning (SEL), positive youth development (PYD), and generative protective factors. All of the state's publicly funded Expanded Learning programs participate in a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process. The process focuses on building Quality Expanded Learning environments that are "Safe and Supportive," facilitate "Skill Building" and "Healthy Choices and Behaviors" through "Active and Engaged Learning" that surfaces "Youth Voice and Leadership" in a context that is equitable and accessible to all. The state supports quality and CQI efforts through a System of Support for Expanded Learning. Additionally at the state level, an alliance of statewide intermediaries are coordinating to build a Technical Assistance infrastructure to support statewide adult capacity for positive youth development, and trauma-informed, culturally relevant approaches to programming that boost physical, social, emotional, and cognitive health of participants.

[5] Consolidated School District of New Britain, Summer Learning Experience
[6] California Afterschool Network, Quality Standards for Expanded Learning

Moving down to the regional level, the COVID-19 Pandemic surfaced more acute needs for positive youth development, and in one example, emerging efforts have been taking place in Sacramento County with the goal of ultimately providing mental health and wellness clinicians at each school. Of the first schools selected for the county-wide mental health initiative, 10 of 11 had publicly funded Expanded Learning programs. Sacramento County Office of Education Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Providers collaborated with leaders of the County Mental Health Initiative to provide Technical Assistance (TA) about Expanded Learning programs, and how to potentially leverage Expanded Learning partnerships to promote mental health. As part of this, Expanded Learning technical assistance providers expressed the possibility of providing more intensive intervention after school, in partnership with the Expanded Learning program and the possibility of cross-training for mental health clinicians and Expanded Learning site coordinators. Additionally, Expanded Learning technical assistance providers have convened forums for District Leaders to engage with their mental health clinicians, and have provided contact information for all stakeholders across roles, so that all stakeholders could engage Expanded Learning agency leaders and Site Coordinators in partnership to support the mental health of students.

In a more local example, following school closures during the pandemic, in a small town in the greater Sacramento area, many students were struggling with mental health. A parent reached out to the Expanded Learning site coordinator because they had an established relationship, and the site coordinator had a relationship with the child. The child was experiencing a great deal of challenge and was expressing suicidal ideation. The Site Coordinator was able to engage the school counselor, and even though the school was closed and the counselor was not technically “on duty” the school counselor was able to unlock the mental health services to support that youth in crisis. School and Expanded Learning leaders collaborated to support the critical needs of a child during the summer because, “mental health does not take a vacation.”

In creating these local coalitions, afterschool and summer program providers, community and district leaders, mental health professionals, and others came together to discuss the current state of afterschool in the city and what were the academic and social-emotional needs of the students. The consensus was to use the afterschool programs as a vehicle for engaging students and providing valuable supports that fostered positive relationships and resiliency. With afterschool programs being positioned as a community hub that can link people with needed services, they and the children they serve are less likely to fall through the cracks.

Having been hard hit by the opioid crisis, the Tennessee Afterschool Network in partnership with the United Ways of Tennessee, developed an evidence based toolkit to help guide programs and communities in their prevention efforts. In addition, the United Ways of Tennessee joined in creating a broader effort called United We Heal Tennessee. This effort reaches the 34 United Ways from across the state and connects cross-sector partnerships that creates a fabric of community. These efforts bolster proven, evidence-based strategies that support and employ the protective factors.

According to the United Ways of Tennessee, "Tennessee is one of the states most deeply impacted by our national opioid crisis. Our state experienced 1,186 overdose deaths in 2016; 13,034 non-fatal overdose outpatient visits in 2015; and 7,092 non-fatal overdose inpatient stays in 2015. In 2017, 6,879,698 painkiller prescriptions were filled in Tennessee, and we only have 6,716,000 people living in the state"[7]. Through relationships, they have been able to facilitate work with community partners, focused on treatment, help support the protective factors in children, and find ways that schools and community-based organizations can play a role in addressing the crisis. Some examples of United We Heal Tennessee efforts include offering drug take-back events; corporate assistance and support; public education; anti-stigma campaigns; tools for seniors on storing and disposing of medications; training in ACES (adverse childhood experiences) and trauma-informed care; as well as preventive interventions and social and emotional support for children and youth[8].

The Tennessee Afterschool Network identified several factors that impacted children across the state as a result of the opioid epidemic. The Afterschool Heals Tennessee initiative, "help(s) programs be intentional about building resiliency, prevent drug misuse, and strengthen relationships with youth, caregivers and community partners' "[9]. In 2019, the Afterschool Heals Tennessee Task Force was created by the Tennessee Afterschool Network to examine how afterschool programs could address the opioid epidemic and other substance abuse disorders in their community. Research indicates that children that participate in afterschool programs are less likely to abuse drugs[10] and have increased academic and social success[11].

The Tennessee Afterschool Network - Afterschool Heals Tennessee Toolkit highlights evidence-based steps afterschool programs can do to support the protective factors and help children thrive. The Toolkit is broken down into four areas; Getting Started, Building Resiliency, Prevention Education, and Expanding Wellness Focus. In addition, there are several resources to help people get started in the work and learn more about the issue.

The progression through each of these areas helps to create buy-in and tangible results that can be seen in the program and throughout the community. Getting Started involves building awareness and being prepared for an overdose, both of which involve the community (Task Force, Medical). In learning these practices, afterschool programs and partners have the ability to see the potential impact they have with helping children not fall victim to opioid and drug abuse as a result of the relationships they have formed with them.

In the area of Building Resiliency, the protective factors are listed as an element and outlines steps leaders of programs can take to help support children that have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in their lives. Explicitly listing these steps provides programs with a starting point for understanding how to create a trauma-sensitive environment where children can feel safe and cared for. Likewise, the toolkit outlines a step-by-step approach to Service Learning that builds resiliency and sees youth as partners, involving them in decision making about the program.

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[7] United Ways of Tennessee, n.d.
[8] United Ways oi Tennessee, n.d.
[9] Tennessee Afterschool Network, n.d.
[10] Peterson, 2018
[11] Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007

The Prevention Education component of the toolkit provides evidence-based curricular resources that address varying aspects of opioid addiction such as medicine safety, positive decision making, social and emotional learning, and resources afterschool programs and partners could use. Additionally, peer connections are highlighted as a way to share information about the dangers and realities of opioids in their communities. Another aspect of prevention education is around connecting with caregivers. This includes social media posts, email messages, and other ways programs can connect with families and the community.

Finally, the fourth section focuses on Expanding Wellness Focus. This area goes beyond drug prevention and teaches children about healthy eating and exercise. Use of the National AfterSchool Association Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) is highlighted for planning how to create a healthier environment overall. The section concludes with a link to role modeling and tips staff could use to be they are making healthy choices as well.

Within each of the four sections, the toolkit is broken down into three distinct areas; Ideas for Action, Pro Tips, and Resources. The ideas for action section provides leaders with a sequence of steps that will help staff learn about the issue, and support evidence-based strategies to help ameliorate the impact of the personal trauma children have experienced. Together, the toolkit and the Tennessee Afterschool Networks' Afterschool Heals Tennessee webpage provide communities with the resources to help combat the opioid crisis in their state.

With afterschool in many ways acting as a hub of the community, multiple threads converge to support the children and families in their lives beyond the school day and the afterschool program. Efforts such as the United We Heal Tennessee, led by the United Ways of Tennessee, dovetail with the Afterschool Heals Tennessee initiative. These partnerships allow a broader community to help build protective factors around children including schools, business, municipalities, and community members and providers.

The North Carolina Resilience and Learning Project, an initiative of the Public School Forum of North Carolina created the Anonymous Trauma-Informed Project. The project, according to Dr. Sheronda Fleming, Director of the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs who developed the model says, "[it] is a collaboration between university, community, and school partners to create a whole-school, trauma-informed approach built around two critical mechanisms of change: (1) training and support for all school staff to address knowledge and perspectives about trauma responses, and (2) implementation of school-specific policies and practices to shift school culture and proactively promote student resilience"[12]. Some of the methods employed by the model include topics such as staff wellness, school climate, staff-student relationships, social-emotional and self-regulation skills, disciplinary practices, and connection with families and the community. Additionally, project coaches meet regularly with a core group of staff to monitor strategies, support implementation, and modify action plans as needed. The model provides strategies for developing supports for ACEs in the classroom using the a tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) model that allows broad supports for most children and more narrow and targeted interventions for tier 1 and 2 children and youth. A model like this transcends classroom walls and can help create a seamless transition for children between the school day and afterschool program.

[12] S. Fleming, personal communication 9/29/21

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can have enormous impacts on educational outcomes at both the child and school levels. As a student's reported number of ACEs increases, so does that student's likelihood of challenges with attendance, behavior, academics, and social-emotional functioning. It is not surprising, then, that schools in communities facing high levels of adversity are the most likely to have low test scores, chronic absenteeism, high suspension rates, and high rates of teacher turnover.

While this evidence-based Anonymous Trauma-Informed Schools Project has been successful in schools, as noted in the first chapter of the book *Alleviating the Educational Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences: School-University-Community Collaboration*[13], the focus is about helping educators understand the role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and addressing the overwhelming nature this can potentially bring to the learning space. The introduction addresses both the foundational research and the practical implementation of the model. Dr. Fleming and her colleagues Elizabeth DeKonty, and Dr. Katie Rosenbaum, have developed training modules and protocols to help schools learn and implement more trauma-sensitive practices as part of the project.

Taking this model to community-based providers to inform practice for afterschool professionals on ACEs and teach strategies to support programming that is trauma-sensitive is the next step. Recently, they have introduced afterschool programs to professional development offered through the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs to teach these same practices to practitioners working directly with children and youth. According to Dr. Fleming, "The Anonymous Trauma-Informed Schools can also be leveraged within out-of-school time programs as students with ACEs also attend programs before school, after school and during the summer months. Within the OST [out-of-school time] context, the two critical mechanisms of change are adopted in the following manner: (1) training and support for all program staff to address knowledge and perspectives about trauma responses, and (2) implementation of program-specific policies and practices to shift program culture and proactively promote student resilience."[14]

Working with afterschool practitioners, the project addresses topics with staff on trauma-sensitive strategies including approaches to staff wellness, program climate, intentional relationship building between program staff and youth program participants, social-emotional, self-regulation and co-regulation skills, promotion of predictability and consistency, limiting exclusionary practices and connection with families and the community. Creating a sense of community and partnership between the school and afterschool program has innumerable benefits. According to Bennett[15], when there is a sense of partnership, sharing of resources (curriculum, planning, etc.) and having meaningful communication and relationships, children show an increase in test scores. Conversely, when there is little sense of partnership, children actually have a decrease. Creating points of connection that support evidence based practices such as this can help with the pervasive disconnection that often impedes successful partnerships[16] that impedes the full actualization of the protective factors within the community served.

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[13] Rosenbaum, K.,DeKonty, E., & Fleming, S. (2020). Alleviating the Educational Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences: School-University-Community Collaboration[8] United Ways oi Tennessee, n.d.
[14] S. Fleming, Personal Communication, 9/29/21
[15] Bennett, T. (2015).
[16] Anthony, K. & Morra, J. (2016).

In addition to communication strategies, creating a sense of partnership and community also involves breaking down competitive barriers between afterschool programs within the community. How can we more effectively share resources (curriculum, websites, best practices) as well as staff and compliment the strengths each organization brings to the table? Are there age groups that are more suited for certain agencies? Who can take the lead and who can step back? Partnership is never easy and requires compromise and understanding to move forward, especially if some partners do not use the same language or jargon. The most important attribute to consider is aligning to a central vision of what could be, weaving the elements of the protective factors framework into everything with intention.

How do we collectively advocate for cross-sector collaboration that contributes to community-wide support?

We have seen in many places unprecedented dollars pouring into education and other youth-serving systems. In some places we have seen unique, innovative, child serving solutions, and in other places, in a rush to get dollars out the door and spent, institutions revert back to the default practices that meet the bare minimum of the requirements but ultimately do not center the needs of the key people in the system (students, families and staff). And in some cases we have even seen school districts, particularly small/rural districts, turn down money because in the midst of COVID, the top priority is trying to figure out how to open a school and figuring out how to do anything else can feel overwhelming.

So we must consider - what are the conditions of the system that allow for these unique and innovative child-serving solutions? How do we nurture these conditions in other places? How do we provide support and resources beyond just dollars so that we not only meet the most immediate and pressing needs, but simultaneously begin to reimagine the systems that support our children and youth?

In short, we know the answer is that we must collaborate - and not only within our systems but we must advocate for intentional partnerships that create a web of supports that can help lift children and families out of poverty, address the inequities that pervade systems, and create opportunities for growth and development that encompass a comprehensive strategy for implementing practices that amplify the protective factors. This is not an easy task, nor one that regularly has the political or societal will.

It is easier to maintain the status quo, to do what we've always done. Formula grants, parallel programming that is often duplicated within the same community by another agency, and more. It takes bold leadership and willing partners to create this vision. The good news is that it is possible and that, in response to the pandemic, the social, emotional, and academic wellness of children is being looked at more critically in multiple sectors using the available evidence-base. In many locations, for at least the next few years the new education funding in the American Rescue Plan (ESSER III) in many districts and communities is sufficient to help bring together partners and weave the tapestry of a community with a holistic approach and common language grounded in the protective factors and student success.

What are some recommendations for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers?

Practitioners

- Recognize the unique set of **assets** and **expertise** you bring to the table - these are important in supporting our students and families well being in any context, but are critical during crisis and in the COVID-19 era.
- Remain committed to the **core tenets of positive youth development and student success** as the foundation for your program, whether virtual, in-person, or hybrid:
  - [> Providing safe, calm, and predictable environments for youth.
  - [> Identifying and meeting the varying needs of students. Each is unique and meeting our students where they are is crucial to help them navigate the layers of trauma many of them are currently experiencing.
  - [> Prioritize opportunities for connection amongst students and caring adults - A single positive, trusting relationship with a caring adult can make an enormous difference in the ability of children to overcome a host of negative life experiences.
- **Make Sure You Are At the Table!** Cross-collaboration doesn't happen if folks aren't in the room when decisions are being made. If you're not already invited into those spaces, find out when and where they are happening and make the case to be included. Don't come empty handed or simply with a list of requests, it will often be easier to secure your spot if you can articulate the assets you bring and actionable ideas to collaboratively support students.

- **Build and Leverage Partnerships** - now is not the time to go it alone. With significant dollars pouring into education and youth services it might be easy and tempting to return to our silos, but that often is not in the best interest of our students. Partnerships and collaboration are much like a garden - they don't happen overnight and require thoughtful and ongoing cultivation. So consider how you might start a small garden of partnerships and grow it over time. Do you have existing partnerships you can reinvigorate or strengthen? Have you been talking about a potential partnership but never made it actionable? If an entire organization/ agency isn't willing to collaborate, are there individuals you can partner with? Consider what's the one next thing you can do to build and leverage partnerships.

Researchers

- **Expand Research Partnerships:** Partnering with community based organizations can allow researchers to gather data from multiple sources. Being able to understand what adversity families face and what systems are needed could help in the implementation of the protective factors framework across a community.
- **Cross-Sector Research Teams:** Taking a multidisciplinary approach allows researchers to offer different perspectives and possible solutions to problems that are identified in a research study. This would allow multiple stakeholders to benefit from the research being conducted.
- **Identify Local Champions:** When partnering with communities, researchers could consider who are the local champions. Is there a funder that wants to know more about their community and how they can direct grants? Is there someone from a community based organization or a municipality that wants to take a lead in connecting research to practice? Is there a local coalition that can help shepherd the research being done on the ground to ensure it connects with the voices most in need of being heard?

Policymakers

- **Flexibility and Accountability:**
- **Invest Resources:** Funding is unprecedented but also needed. To ensure funding resources can be well utilized policy makers must also invest in coordination and collaboration efforts. Much of the funding encourages collaboration but does not invest into the structures and coordination efforts needed to ensure true collaborative work occurs. Collaboration is often treated as a box to be ticked off and completed through something like a once-a-year stakeholder survey. True collaborative work requires time, intentionality, and staff to support coordination - if resources are not invested into these supports then funding will often be spent the way it always has been.
- **Invest in Staff:** Our staff cannot care for our children and youth if they are not themselves well cared for. Throughout COVID their workloads have doubled and tripled and the workforce has faced shortages as have many others. We must invest in our staff, invest in their health, safety, and well-being, and recognize their work with appropriate pay. We must also invest in the development of emerging, and cross-sector leaders. We must provide them with the supports they need to thrive in their roles and their careers.
- **Focus on Safety:** The focus on safety must be multi-dimensional and consider the physical, emotional, and mental safety of all of our students and staff.

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Ken Anthony, Ed.D.- Associate Executive Director
Connecticut After School Network

As the Associate Executive Director for the Connecticut After School Network, Ken has 29 years working in and with afterschool and summer programs as a line staff, site-supervisor, program director, district coordinator, and the past thirteen years with the Network. He oversees professional development, school and community partnerships, consultation, quality advising, and research efforts. He has a Bachelor's from Southern Connecticut State University; a Master's in Organizational Management & Leadership from Springfield College, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Hartford and was a White-Riley-Peterson Policy Fellow in its inaugural year in 2012. His research includes practices that build sustainable partnerships between school and afterschool programs and developing research-practitioner partnerships.

Heather Williams - Program Director, Policy and Outreach
California AfterSchool Network

Heather joined the California AfterSchool Network (CAN) team as the Policy and Outreach Director in December 2018. She previously worked for the Expanded Learning Division at the California Department of Education where she oversaw the development and implementation of strategic plan efforts that reshaped the Division to focus on providing high quality expanded learning opportunities for California's youth. She currently oversees CAN's work around advocacy and policy, data and research, communications and events, and other outreach efforts. Heather has over 14 years of publicly policy experience starting with her participation in the California Executive Fellowship program, and specifically over 10 years supporting afterschool/expanded learning programs. Heather received her BA in Political Science from CSU Fullerton and was part of the 8th cohort of White-Riley-Peterson Policy Fellows.

Resources/References
Evidence Base for Summer Enrichment and Comprehensive Afterschool Opportunities

Building an Action Plan for Partnerships

Caring Relationships. A single positive, trusting relationship with a caring adult can make an enormous difference in the ability of children to overcome a host of negative life experiences.

Current Activities & Partners		
What do you currently do to foster this protective factor?	What partners currently support this work?	How might you strengthen this work?
Potential Activities & Partners		
What else might you do to foster this protective factor?	Do you have potential partners that could support this work?	How might you go about engaging these partners?

High Expectations. Youth need to experience high-expectation messages that convey adults believe the youth can and will succeed, that they won't give up on them but will encourage and help them to do their best,nurturing each youth's unique strengths and pathways to success.

Current Activities & Partners		
What do you currently do to foster this protective factor?	What partners currently support this work?	How might you strengthen this work?
Potential Activities & Partners		
What else might you do to foster this protective factor?	Do you have potential partners that could support this work?	How might you go about engaging these partners?

Meaningful opportunities for participation and contribution. Youth need to be engaged in activities and decision-making opportunities that contribute to their sense of autonomy and control, give them voice,increase their involvement in school/community, and engage their interests.

Current Activities & Partners		
What do you currently do to foster this protective factor?	What partners currently support this work?	How might you strengthen this work?
Potential Activities & Partners		
What else might you do to foster this protective factor?	Do you have potential partners that could support this work?	How might you go about engaging these partners?