AfterSchool Today

The Official Publication of the National AfterSchool Association/naaweb.org | Winter 2013

Project-Based LEARNING to Teach Science

Helping Children and Families Live a Better Future

7 Ways to Build Strong Relationships With Your School District

STEAM: "A" Is For Arts Education

Florida Afterschool STEM Collaborative

Published by Serendipity Media, LLC Volume 3 Issue 4

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– Unit Leader

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Gina Warner
Executive Director, NAA
gwarner@naaweb.org

CORRECTION:
In the Fall 2012 issue of *AfterSchool Today*, the Collaborative Leadership Fellows article on page 7 was written by Margo Herman, Extension Educator and Assistant Extension Professor in Education Design and Development at the Center for Youth Development, University of Minnesota Extension.

At this past summer's Affiliate Leader meeting, I took the opportunity to share with the gathered leaders a fascinating book called *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, by Simon Sinek. It's primarily a book targeted to business leaders, but it has tremendous implications for nonprofit work as well.

I'll use NAA as an example and lay out the premise: Too often we talk about WHAT we do. (We have a great national conference and lots of people come!) A lot of the time we talk about HOW we do our work. (We're the "voice of the after school professional.") But rarely do we talk about WHY we do what we do. Sinek's reasoning is that truly successful leaders (and organizations) motivate their staff and supporters around the concept of WHY—a single purpose, cause, or belief that serves as a unifying, driving, and inspiring force.

At the summer affiliate meeting we had a lot of lively discussion about the WHAT and the HOW of NAA. We even spent a lot of time considering the WHO. (Kids? Afterschool professionals? School leaders?) And while we did make some great progress, I think we all agreed we didn't have the clear and concise WHY we were looking for.

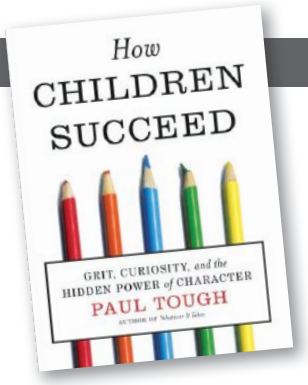
Little did I know I didn't need to look any further than our own 2012-2013 AA Platform, to find the perfect WHY: *NAA believes that a diverse, professional, and educated workforce is the key to high quality afterschool programming.* It is NAA's commitment to supporting, building, and engaging a "diverse, professional, and educated workforce" that is our WHY—the single purpose, cause, and belief that serves as our unifying, driving, and inspiring force.

Throughout this issue you'll find articles that will help you build your skills as an afterschool professional, whether it's organizing a site visit to promote your program, building stronger partnerships with your school district, or drawing closer connections to school-day learning. We also have inspiring stories of afterschool leaders and organizations that keep us focused on the WHY of our work. Whether it's supporting Vietnamese-American children and families in New Orleans, using project-based learning to teach science in Philadelphia, or extending school enrichment in Carmel, Indiana, children and families around the country are benefitting from NAA's dedication to supporting a diverse, professional, and educated workforce.

What's most exciting about WHY we do our work? How about that fact that we've been doing it for twenty-five years! This year marks the 25th anniversary of NAA, and we hope you'll make plans to join us in Indianapolis on April 7-10 for our annual conference and a celebration of our contributions to the growing field of afterschool. You won't want to miss this opportunity to attend cutting-edge workshops, participate in panel discussions with thought leaders from our field, and network with colleagues from around the country.

Thanks for your continued support of our mission. We look forward to seeing you in Indianapolis!

Gina Warner
Executive Director
National AfterSchool Association



HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED

GRIT, CURIOSITY, AND THE HIDDEN POWER OF CHARACTER

By Paul Tough

FOR YOU AND YOUR PROGRAM:

In *How Children Succeed*, author Paul Tough derails the usual train of thought on childhood and success—the thought that intelligence is all-important, and that success comes to those who score highest on tests, throughout their school career. Tough opines that qualities of character might matter more, and looks toward conscientiousness, curiosity, optimism, perseverance, and self-control as more profoundly affecting a child's success. He asks why some children succeed, while others fail.

Educators and researchers who view childhood and children in a different light are slowly learning the answers to the questions of character's influence. Through the stories of the children they champion, Tough paints a picture of the effects of early stress on their later success—something scientists have come to realize may actually alter brain development.

Potential is out there, everywhere. Tough visited low-income neighborhoods and wealthy private schools, and met with people from all walks of life as he studied the effects of character on children's success. He noticed common ground developing amongst the economists, educators, medical doctors, scientists, and others studying why children succeed or fail. Tough uses real-life examples of educators and mentors who started out low before taking themselves, their careers, and the children they work with to new highs. He shows us students and student teams who routinely best competitors from intellectually elite schools in games of skill and thought. He highlights how parents are and aren't preparing children to become solid adults; he offers a new look into supporting impoverished children; he presents success stories of children who achieved great things after extremely rough starts in life; he incites us to view and understand childhood differently.

The words in these pages could make people think. They could provoke new child-rearing thoughts, and help us better safeguard youth. They could make a difference in how schools and educational programs are designed and taught. They could change someone's world.

PANCAKES, PANCAKES!

By Eric Carle

FOR YOUTH (GRADES K–2):

All afterschool programs should have books. Ideally, children should read them. Books could enhance afterschool programming, by connecting children with school-day learning and providing enriching play. Afterschool has more time to spend in "book world," and could help to build avid readers and teach how books could be used for escape and exploration.

Pancakes, Pancakes! by Eric Carle is popular with young children. In the book, Jack wakes up wanting a very large pancake. His mother sends him to collect the ingredients, and they make the pancake together. In the end, Jack enjoys an enormous pancake covered with strawberry jam. Your afterschool group could enjoy a pancake (or other activities), too. Read *Pancakes, Pancakes!* in a small group. Ask children if they'd like to make a pancake, like Jack did. Try to make pancakes according to the book. (Have instant mix on hand.) Explore math concepts; practice measuring, and multiplying or dividing the recipe to serve the number of children eating. Explore healthy foods and taste and texture; create toppings or make syrup.

If cooking isn't possible, get cooking tools and act out making pancakes in a pretend cooking show. (Have microwave pancakes to eat, if able.) Explore and make a list of foods beginning with the letter "p"; have children cut out pictures of them and write them on a large flip chart.

Provided by Sarah Cruz

Shirlene Justice

| BY AMY L CHARLES

Shirlene Justice is afterschool coordinator for ACE-Austin (Texas), a program funded by sources including the 21st Community Learning Centers Grant Program. ACE-Austin began in 2001, and Justice has been there all along. It serves twenty-three schools—twelve elementary, eight middle, three high schools—and seven thousand students. Programs are offered fifteen hours weekly during the school year, and up to eight hours weekly for four weeks during summer.

ACE-Austin has many welcome features: tutoring and homework help, enrichment activities, college and career readiness, and family engagement. But ask Afterschool Coordinator Shirlene Justice about it, and she'll talk about the strengths, partnerships, and support taking the program further.

ACE-Austin focuses on quality, with help from the David T. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. YPQ offers a validated assessment tool, evaluating quality at point of service—where youth leaders and youths meet. ACE-Austin continually assesses actions, plans for improvement, and reassesses.

Quality comes from fifty-four community-based partners and organizations. "Children need to be exposed to a variety of experiences," said Justice, and these supporters provide that through lacrosse, film, theatre, health and fitness, youth development, jewelry-making, outdoor education, robotics, aviation, rock climbing, bicycling, and beyond. "Kids have lots of opportunities to participate in things they wouldn't be able to otherwise do themselves."

Justice mentions Creative Action and its professional teaching artists: "Cool, inspired, creative, energetic people who really relate to kids." The group brings art to ACE-Austin and takes participants to it, with film studio visits, set tours, conversations with actors and directors, and more. Media Communications helps students find summer internships. Student projects based on their passions are presented to local business leaders for judging.

Quality comes from strong partnerships with the schools, which pair certified teachers with the organizations and instructors who align school-day learning with the program. Quality comes from a University of Texas teacher education program partnership, providing instructors who work with ACE-Austin while being mentored. Instruction quality will improve at ACE-Austin, which will in turn help to train future teachers.

ACE-Austin participants go many places and do many things. Important to ACE-Austin's quality is Voice of Choice, where all ages offer suggestions and input: Kindergarteners might choose paint colors; high school students a study trip destination.

Family engagement takes many forms: volunteering and teaching opportunities, social activities, events to learn about home activities to do with children, English as a Second Language, family-friendly games and sports teams, and more. ACE-Austin has strong family advocates, and strives to foster program ownership.

ACE-Austin tries to stay up on trends. Site coordinators are "pretty cutting-edge," notes Justice. "They have their fingers on the pulse of what's happening." Classes are "tweaked" in response. Student leadership teams let program staff know what children like and want to do, and are taken seriously. "We try to create a culture that kids buy into and own; that they identify with," Justice said, adding it often means letting them create that culture—with help. That might explain how middle school students developed a clever hip-hop song and video about state standardized testing.

Quality and partnerships are ACE-Austin hallmarks. Justice notes that when a program starts out, it's critical to nurture partnerships. "At first, you give a lot more than you get," she said, mentioning the heavy investment in training people and partners coming in. But as partners learn how to work with children, and function in a classroom setting and the school environment, they wind up giving far more back.

The schools are partners as well, and knowing what students do during their school day helps ACE-Austin better serve everyone. While the afterschool program supports academics, it may also support social and emotional learning. Justice reminds afterschool coordinators that they are experts on their campuses, and should be confident that what they do is as important as what children learn during school.

The bottom line is quality—at all levels. "Who you hire, what you pay, how you train" is important. "The focus has to be on quality," Justice said. "Without quality, there's no outcome. And without outcome, there's no quality." •

TEXAS
AFTER SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

FLORIDA AFTERSCHOOL STEM COLLABORATIVE

BY JOE DAVIS

There has been a great deal of national momentum regarding informal science education. And Florida is no exception, as we have seen this focus increase recently through K-12 statewide school initiatives. However, as many have noted, without connecting the momentum to existing infrastructure and developing a collective framework across partners, the excitement will not translate into sustainable outcomes for youth. Over the past ten months, the Florida Afterschool Network (FAN) utilized a STEM Planning Grant from the Noyce Foundation to survey the needs of afterschool practitioners and has embarked on creating the Florida Afterschool STEM Collaborative.

Through the Afterschool STEM Collaborative, FAN, the Florida After School Alliance, and key afterschool STEM stakeholders (e.g., NASA, Lockheed-Martin, the National High Magnet Field Laboratory, etc.) have committed to developing a comprehensive system of support to afterschool programs throughout the state, with a specific focus on increasing the quantity and quality of STEM activities provided during out-of-school hours.

The primary purpose for the development of our Afterschool STEM Collaborative is to create more opportunities to interest youth in STEM careers. FAN's corporate and business partners have enthusiastically embraced the need to support the education and afterschool communities to increase the number of students participating in STEM related afterschool activities; particularly, when those activities are a part of the unique, expanded learning environment, which afterschool programs offer our youth.

The Collaborative fosters expanded learning practices in which students participate in fun, hands-on, engaging experiences that have foundations in the core academic principles taught during the regular school day. The programmatic objectives of the project boldly include Partnership and Leadership Development, Policy and Communications, Professional Development and Workforce Education, Program Quantity and Quality, and Youth Participation and Impact.

Operationally, the Florida Afterschool STEM Collaborative will soon be an interactive online community of STEM professionals and corporations, each coordinating efforts and information with the goal of accelerating student achievement and enhancing Florida's workforce. The Collaborative will include initiatives such as Core Academic STEM Competencies, Statewide Standards for Quality Afterschool STEM Programs, a Quality-Based STEM Self-Assessment and Improvement Guide, Field-Specific Resources for Developing Future Professionals, Integrated Corporate Resources (e.g., co-ops, internships), and Direct Links to Florida Afterschool STEM Collaborative Partners.

Collectively, the efforts of the Collaborative underscore the tremendous responsibility that afterschool professionals have in connecting expanded learning opportunities to the regular school day, while still maintaining a positive, enjoyable atmosphere within their programs. Today's students are craving experiences that are more relevant to their immediate world, as well as those that offer insight into fascinating new career possibilities. And the beauty of afterschool is that it's the perfect setting for exploration—exploration without penalties. With the absence of required grades and tests, students have a freedom to learn that is not typically found during the regular school day. This freedom to learn is what separates afterschool and defines it as a wonderful selling point to parents and investors. Simply put, there is ample evidence to show that quality afterschool programs are accelerating student achievement.

Equally important, the business community needs a better-prepared workforce. Quality afterschool and expanded learning opportunities are quickly becoming an obvious choice in which they can invest funding and resources. Afterschool programs are seeing the benefits of having tailored curricula and activities to local or state business and industry needs. The rewards come in the form of new partners and additional support to enhance the quality and quantity of afterschool programs. •

| Joe Davis is the chief operating officer at Florida Afterschool Network.

YOUTH WORK *is professionalizing!*

BY MARGO HERMAN

Youth work is professionalizing! Perhaps not everyone sees this, but with competency frameworks, certificate programs, and college degrees in youth development burgeoning countrywide, growth is noteworthy as youth work becomes a recognized field. There is a perceived need for and specific advantages to being recognized, yet challenges accompany this trend. One challenge: a common understanding of what "professionalizing" means. Another challenge: "Why" and "how" we support professional development as a means toward professionalizing.

"Why" could be, briefly, a desire to retain staff and to enhance quality youth programming. Youth work has rich lessons learned, and important retention and quality research. (But let's hold that for another time.) At the April 2012 National Afterschool Association conference in Dallas, NAA released the significant NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals document, outlining ten competency content areas (*see sidebar*), each with five levels of youth work expertise. The document provides helpful definitions:

Core knowledge refers to topics describing the knowledge needed by professionals to work effectively with school age children and youth. Competencies are concrete, observable, and achievable; they establish standards of practice that strengthen the profession. Both core knowledge and core competencies are used to define professional development curricula. *—Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center 2005*

Defining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for providing high-quality afterschool and youth development programming and for supporting child and youth learning and development is a tangible step, and provides substantial progress toward developing the profession. Articulating effective afterschool and youth development practice to those in and out of the field helps to further define and influence youth work.

Professional Development and Leadership (NAA pages 70-74) includes these three competencies:

- Displaying Professionalism in Practice
- Ongoing Professional Growth
- Leadership and Advocacy

Here are three ideas on "how" to approach the levels of expertise defined for Ongoing Professional Growth:

Create a deeper understanding of the core competency and knowledge required for Ongoing Professional Growth. Interact with other youth development professionals, create a professional development plan (for individuals and staff team); practice self-reflection and self-assessment; continually look for professional development opportunities and resources, and adapt those resources for specific, suitable staff use.

Attend conferences, workshops, and webinars. Affordable training opportunities are limited for this under-resourced field. But webinars are often free, and sometimes intermediaries offer funding to reduce costs or provide scholarships for workshops and conferences. Be resourceful in seeking resources and affordable professional development opportunities.

Create internal professional development opportunities. Use staff meetings to provide small, frequent learning circles for sharing resources and best practices. Build staff expertise by sharing and processing dilemmas about day-to-day realities with colleagues—both internal and from organizations doing similar work. Use your expertise to create coaching; always think of yourself as a coach and mentor to youth workers. Use professional development ideas from the Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals document, and consider these ideas for bringing them to life.

Youth work is professionalizing, and provides new opportunities! •

| Margo Herman is the Extension Educator and Assistant Extension Professor at the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development.

mnAEYC mnSACA
Supporting Professionals and Promoting Quality

Core Competencies are Grouped Into Ten Content Areas:

1. Child and Youth Growth and Development
2. Learning Environment and Curriculum
3. Child/Youth Observation and Assessment
4. Interactions With Children and Youth
5. Youth Engagement
6. Cultural Competency and Responsiveness
7. Family, School, and Community Relationships
8. Safety and Wellness
9. Program Planning and Development
10. Professional Development and Leadership

NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals (2012)

www.naaweb.org

Visit to http://www.naaweb.org/default.asp?contentID=694 to read or download a copy of the National AfterSchool Alliance Core Knowledge and Competencies.

7 WAYS TO BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS *With Your School Districts*

BY DEB MERDINGER

Successful relationships are forged by common interests, trust, and mutual understanding. The deeper the relationships, the more sustainable the results. This could not ring more true than it does in the relationship between school districts and out-of-school professionals. Sound complicated? Not really. Seem simple enough? Not without planned focus.

Would you agree that in today's fast-paced world, encompassing early childhood education and school-age children, competing priorities are our reality? We need to frequently remind ourselves that our school administration is on the same team we are—or, more accurately put, our school partners need to be oft reminded that we are on the same team and share a common goal: to enrich the lives of children. How could we increase our effectiveness in our messaging? Start by understanding, and then follow through by listening.

UNDERSTAND YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT'S CULTURE. School websites are a valuable resource. More than likely, their mission is not dissimilar to yours. How could you align your messaging with their mission, goals, and vision for their children?

SHOW A VISIBLE INTEREST. Spend time at your district's school board meetings. Demonstrate your interest by taking notes, and then follow up with a message to your superintendent. Challenge yourself to find something inspirational that you could draw upon in your follow-up communication.

TRULY KNOW YOUR PARTNERS. Take the time to understand the culture and the support base of the families in your program. This will undoubtedly add depth to your relationship when you are able to link families' interests and intent with that of your organization. What matters most is what matters to them.

UNDERSTAND THAT PARTNERSHIP IS LONG-TERM. Continually reach out to your district partner. Share learnings from your program, adjustments you have made, and successes you want to celebrate.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION. Keep the lines of communication open at all times, at all levels. Anyone may speak to anyone. If the partnership is not transparent, it will not be sustainable, it will not grow, and it will not have depth.

BE FLEXIBLE. School district partners have varied needs. The bad news: A cookie-cutter approach will not work. The good news: All you have to do is ask. "What do you need from me? How can I help?" You will be surprised what candor will do to deepen and sustain the relationship. Ask more than you tell.

LISTEN. Listen with your mind and your heart. Hear what is spoken and what is not.

By taking the time to create a deeper relationship with your school district partners through frequent, meaningful communications, you will experience sustainable results and secure future successes. With some planning and practice, it will start to feel more natural and satisfying. •

| Deb Merdinger is the regional manager of Champions, Burr Ridge, Illinois

LIONS QUEST
Skills For Adolescence For Out-Of-School Time

Some young people just seem to get it: They share, they listen, they empathize. They're good students, good friends, good kids. Some young people don't get it: They struggle with school, with relationships, with life.

The truth is, all young people need help and guidance—even "good kids."

We know that character matters, but we've also learned that it's possible to teach it. Studies show that students who participate in high-quality social and emotional learning (SEL) programs get better grades, graduate at higher rates, have more positive peer relationships, and demonstrate empathy, caring attitudes, and positive social engagement.[1]

Lions Quest *Skills for Adolescence for Out-of-School Time* (SFA for OST) is an afterschool SEL program adapted from Lions Quest's evidenced-based middle school curriculum. The program features easy-to-use, sequential lesson plans, and planning and tracking tools to monitor student participation and effectively coordinate implementation. Supplemental energizers, application activities, and a student activity book provide additional opportunities for reinforcing SEL skills and having fun.

A service-learning unit provides step-by-step lessons for planning and carrying out meaningful, hands-on service projects, which allow young people to assume leadership roles and make a real difference in their afterschool program or community. Lions Quest also offers an optional four-part webinar series and a one-day workshop designed to provide program support and professional development opportunities for implementers.

SEL programs like Lions Quest help young people "get it." Adopt an SEL program today, to help make sure every young person does. •

(1) Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). 2008. Social and Emotional Learning: A Framework for Success in School and Life

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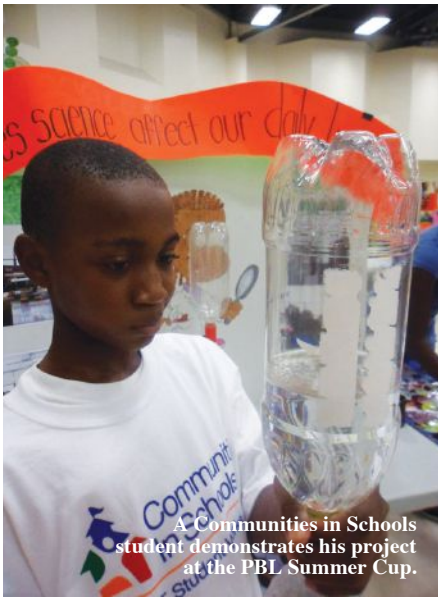
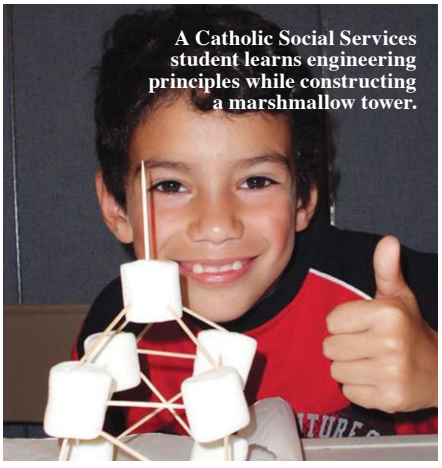
To learn more about Lions Quest and *Skills for Adolescence for Out-of-School Time,* visit www.lions-quest.org or call 800-446-2700.



A Communities in Schools student demonstrates his project at the PBL Summer Cup.

USING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING to Teach Science

| BY JASON SCHWALM



A Catholic Social Services student learns engineering principles while constructing a marshmallow tower.

For fourth graders at the Catholic Social Services-De Paul Out-of-School Time (OST) program, it all started with a question. Confused by a news report on TV, the students asked, "How do the police use DNA to catch criminals?" From this question, a project was born. Students spent the summer investigating DNA and exploring its role in police work. As their inquiry deepened, they researched the relationship between DNA, genetics, and human characteristics such as hair texture and eye color. Ultimately, they presented their findings to other students at the program.

Little did they realize that middle school students at the Episcopal Community Services-Feltonville Arts and Sciences OST program were having a similar conversation. In their project, "CSI: The Experience," youth explored forensic science and crime scene investigation. They studied handwriting analysis, fingerprinting, DNA, and other sources of crime scene evidence, and used these skills to investigate a mock crime scene created by program staff.

What both programs found was that when hands-on activities were presented in a real world context, students were excited to study science. These programs and their students excelled by applying the Project-Based Learning (PBL) method to science exploration.

PBL emphasizes hands-on activities, driven by student interest and authentic inquiry. At once rigorous and flexible, PBL classrooms engage students with new learning while preserving the fun and freedom of afterschool programming, making PBL an ideal vehicle for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) content.

In PBL, all projects begin with a Driving Question. This question should be based on the interests of students, and should draw on children's natural curiosity about the world. If a group of first-grade students watches the movie *Finding Nemo*, they will probably have questions. Do fish sleep? How can Nemo breathe underwater? Do fish have babies? These questions, and other expressions of interest by students, should be the foundation of any project.

A Driving Question is open-ended enough to sustain many weeks of inquiry, and should feel authentic and relevant to students. Questions with concrete, finite answers or questions that use jargon and fancy words could be dull or alienating. In the *Finding Nemo* classroom, the Driving Question might read, "What would my life be like as a fish?"

Throughout a project, activities flow naturally from the Driving Question and emphasize the same kind of hands-on exploration and investigation that drive the scientific method. Students could observe and record the habits of the classroom's pet fish. The teacher could purchase a whole fish from the market, so students could study the fish's gills and scales up close. Trips to a local aquarium or a Skype chat with a professor of marine biology could add real-world context.

Ultimately, the project concludes with a Culminating Event or Culminating Product. Students in the *Finding Nemo* group might, as their Culminating Event, write and perform a play called "A Day in the Life of a Fish," or turn the classroom into an aquarium and invite family members to visit. In the Culminating Event, whatever it is, students present their "answer" to the Driving Question.

This process of deliberate questioning and focused exploration is the difference between thematic projects and high-quality Project-Based Learning. The PBL framework helps afterschool programs avoid isolated, theme-based activities like

the ones most of us did in school. We made a birdhouse from a kit, or a volcano that erupted. The projects were teacher-driven and had only superficial elements of choice and student interest—perhaps what color the house would be painted. But ultimately, we followed prescribed directions. No critical thinking was required, and if the finished product didn't look like the teacher's example, we had failed.

Project-Based Learning is different. The PBL methodology encourages students to be creative and to find their own answers. PBL offers students a chance, not usually found in thematic projects, to think critically and engineer solutions to problems. Rather than merely following directions and making a birdhouse, students in a PBL classroom determine what qualities make a good birdhouse and design one themselves. Additionally, staff members use rubrics to hold students to high academic standards, but without the routine of worksheets, quizzes and tests. PBL has the potential to engage students in critical thinking and deep learning through the exploration of real-world problems and solutions.

This has been the experience in Philadelphia, where PBL is required of all 180 city-funded OST programs. Program specialists at Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC), the intermediary for the Philadelphia Department of Human Service's OST network, have observed an increase in STEM activities since the advent of PBL in Philadelphia. At the 2012 PBL Summer Cup, a PBL competition held annually in Philadelphia, projects incorporating STEM content featured prominently. Students studied natural disasters, plant life, genetics, and other topics, and demonstrated their findings through a number of exciting performances and presentations.

As educators and administrators continue to emphasize learning outcomes like the Common Core Standards, STEM integration is a great way for OST programs to demonstrate their value to schools. Using the PBL method, afterschool programming could remain fun and engaging, while still providing valuable instruction in math and the sciences. Rigorous enough to deliver new learning and academic content, flexible enough to incorporate STEM with other disciplines like art and literacy, and engaging enough to capture student interest and give learning purpose and meaning, Project-Based Learning is an ideal teaching method for STEM content. • | Jason Schwalm is an OST Program Specialist at Public Health Management Corporation.

STEAM

"A" is for Arts Education in Afterschool

BY ALICE H. HALL, PhD

Elementary art and music teachers are often the first positions eliminated during school budget cuts. Yet growing evidence indicates that participation in the arts relates to higher academic achievement. If the arts must be cut, afterschool programs are an optimal venue for children to pursue an aesthetic development. Many educators are familiar with the cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional development domains, but may not be as familiar with aesthetic learning, involving communication, cognitive knowing, processing information, and creativity—the most complex level of thinking. The aesthetic domain goal is "for children to become aware of beauty in nature and art, to appreciate and participate in creative arts to achieve pleasurable and meaningful ends" (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2011, p. 263).

Kostelnik, Soderman, and Whiren (2011) divide the arts into performing, useable, visual, and literary categories. Performing arts include singing, dancing, playing instruments, dramatics, and puppetry. Useable arts include weaving, ceramics, knitting, and jewelry making. Visual art we create, or buy to display—painting, mosaic, drawing, sculpture, collage. Literary arts are stories, poetry, plays, commercials, jokes, skits. The authors also emphasize two aesthetic learning processes: producing art and enjoying art. We must teach children both.

RESPONSIVE EXPERIENCE SUGGESTIONS

Responsive experiences are often left out of the afterschool curriculum. Children need exposure to various arts categories, to develop preferences. Some children may love action adventure movies; others prefer animation. Do children prefer country or hip-hop music? Music preferences require exposure to different radio stations, performers, and songs. Dance preferences could range from ballet to break dancing. *Dancing With the Stars* has educated viewers on different dance genres—Argentine tango and fox trot, for example.

Aesthetic development involves the senses. We create art to please and entertain others; we respond to how art makes us feel. Front-line staff might want to begin with an activity exploring the aesthetics of the children's bedroom, neighborhood, living room, favorite stores—even their school. Lead a discussion about how aesthetics matter to people. Children's rooms are decorated differently, reflecting their identity and appealing to them. Classroom teachers, doctor's offices, and retail businesses work hard to make spaces appealing to students and customers. Interior designers create environments that make people feel good. Next, ask children where they like to relax or go on vacation. Do they like the beach or mountains? Perhaps an amusement park? People choose a location based on how it makes them feel. Adults especially want to feel relaxed on vacation. Amusement parks are busy, crowded, and loud, and might be more about thrills.

The school-age years are often when children begin dance and musical instrument lessons, and sing in church, community, or school choirs. Lessons are expensive, and may not be an option for all families. Theater performances are expensive; many children may never be exposed to them. If afterschool programs make arts education a priority, children of all socioeconomic levels might be able learn the guitar or see The Sound of Music. The first time I took my daughter to see a play, she asked when "halftime" was. She had obviously attended more sporting events than theater productions. Exposure was how she learned the difference between "intermission" and "halftime."

PRODUCTIVE EXPERIENCE SUGGESTIONS

Front-line staff plan and implement arts and craft projects daily, but may not fully understand and support all that is involved in arts education and facilitating children's aesthetic development. Art is a visual communication form, but drawings could also indicate a child's age. Front-line staff could improve on art education by examining real art.

Bring in watercolor, oil, pencil, photography, and graphics samples, and let children create with those mediums. Look for the artist's signature; ask if the artwork was named; talk about why prints are signed and numbered. Emphasize the importance of signing and dating art. Research famous artists, such as Normal Rockwell, Leonardo Da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, and Andy Warhol. Study famous photographers, such as Ansel Adams and Annie Leibovitz. Start a photography club so students could learn techniques.

Ask children to search their or their grandparent's house for collectible items, and to brainstorm why people collect art. Where do they put it? Is it valuable? Longaberger baskets, handmade in the USA, might cost $40; a similar basket could be purchased at Wal-Mart for $19.99. Ask why prices differ. Better yet, ask children to examine and analyze the baskets' differences, and offer a basket-weaving club.

Art museums allow children to see different types of art and how it could be displayed. Most artists have a sampling of creations. Plan an art exhibit in your afterschool program, giving students time to complete several samples beforehand. Create a display area, make signs and programs—even serve refreshments and invite families to attend.

Study literacy arts by examining children's literature, including picture and chapter books. Look at the artwork in and on Eric Carle books. Study authors such as E.B. White (*Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*) and J.K. Rowling (the *Harry Potter* series). Form a book club to study and analyze literary preferences. Allow children to write and illustrate their own books. Younger children will have more pictures than text, and older children could write chapter books or poetry on the computer. Reading is a lifelong leisure activity, and talented writers could become journalists and authors.

Bring in sewing and needlework samples. Show how counted cross-stitch, embroidery needlepoint, knitting, and crocheting are different. Start a knitting club, and encourage a service project by donating knitted hats to cancer and chemotherapy patients. Start a drama club to practice and perform plays. Create a puppet show. Teach children about music basics: intervals, the musical alphabet, scale, and chords. Teach videotaping and let children create videos, load them on YouTube, and see how many "views" their visual art gets.

Afterschool programs are a viable means of facilitating children's aesthetic development. Front-line staff plan and implement productive art experiences, but might not include as much education as possible. Allow children to create more than arts and crafts projects; introduce photography, knitting, writing, and videography. Responsive art experiences require exposing children to visual, performing, and literary arts. Allow the children to make judgments and form preferences. •

| Alice H. Hall, PhD, is an associate professor of Child and Family Development at Georgia Southern University.

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The following fifteen purpose and goal statements will help front-line staff expand the aesthetic programming in their programs *(Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2011)*.

AESTHETIC DOMAIN PURPOSE AND GOALS

As children progress toward the goal, they will:

» Become aware of beauty in nature.
» Experience various art forms (visual art, music, dance, and drama).
» Become familiar with different types of each art form (e.g., types of dance, such as ballet, tap, folk, and square).
» Use a variety of materials, tools, techniques, and processes in the arts (visual art, music, dance, and drama).
» Recognize and respond to basic elements of art (e.g., line, color, shape, texture, composition, balance, pattern, space).
» Recognize and respond to basic elements of music (e.g., beat, pitch, melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, form).
» Talk about aesthetic experiences.
» Participate with others to create visual art, music, dance, or drama.
» Recognize that music, dance, drama, and visual art are means of communication.
» Recognize themselves as artists.
» Participate in aesthetic criticism (describe, analyze, interpret, and judge).
» Contribute to the aesthetic environment.
» Begin to recognize the arts as a lifelong pursuit.
» Begin to appreciate the arts in relation to history and culture.
» Begin to make the connections between the arts and other curriculum areas.

EXTENDED SCHOOL ENRICHMENT

West Clay Elementary School

| BY AMY L CHARLES

West Clay Elementary School in Carmel, Indiana, is among eleven Carmel Clay Parks and Recreation Extended School Enrichment (ESE) afterschool sites. What began in 2006-07 as a program for children with nowhere to go after school became much more to West Clay families.

The West Clay program averages more than two hundred enrollments yearly. Students kindergarten through sixth grade enjoy enrichment programming, homework help, snacks, and activities such as origami, basketball, puzzles, magic tricks, a Turkey Bowl football game, an annual gingerbread building event, and helping charities. Teachers and schools provide information to better assist students. A before-school program sees about twenty children daily. And when school isn't in session, camp is.

Character development is a big part of ESE, with children learning teamwork and cooperation. Students learn that winning isn't everything, and playing a game, offering congratulations, helping others, and reading to each other are important. "We try to do more than simply entertain," Site Supervisor Jennifer Hammons said. "We try to teach students to become good members of the community."

The program allows children to work out social skills. They're together after school, with children of different age groups. They learn to make decisions. They learn how to share, problem solve, and get along with others they might not normally spend time with. Day-to-day interaction gives them opportunities to tackle challenges, Hammons notes, and "they do a great job with it."

The West Clay program is there for parents, too. "We want their feedback," Hammons said. "We want to know how things are going, what they want to see. We try to listen to what they have to say—they're our customers, and we want them to be as happy as the children." An open-door policy means plenty of chatting when children are picked up. Parent meetings are held bimonthly. An upcoming Parents Night Out gives adults a chance to get away while children enjoy a pajama party, with a DJ and movies.

Hammons is proud of the West Clay program, staffing team, and students. She's proud of the program's effect on students: Some return later as volunteers, often through a counselor internship program, or for jobs. Younger students who no longer have to be there miss the welcoming environment of their home away from home, or want to be part of a particular activity day. A lot of students "grow up with the program."

"The staff really love kids," Hammons said. "They take to heart what they're trying to teach and instill in them. It's not just a job. They're trying to raise them the right way. They think of them as their own. You need to have your heart invested in it, and the team does a really good job with that." The staff constantly "thinks change." The program is different each year, as is the number of students involved. Staff is aware of what does and doesn't work, and is always trying to assess, develop, and improve.

The walls in Hammons' office are plastered with photographs of and things made by students from the program. While all eleven ESE sites are well run, she likes to think of hers as the best. "Every program in every school has strengths. They're all a little bit different, all individual." She feels lucky to have good feedback, connections, and staff. And she truly appreciates the support of the school, team, parents, and students. "Children let us know what they want," Hammons said. "It's like a big democracy over there!" •

THE EFFECTS OF *Consideration, Cardboard,* AND *Caring*

BY LISA M. LINDEMAN

How did an afterschool program and a cardboard space shuttle help heal my son's heart? As a parent and psychologist, the emotional well-being of children and youth has been at the forefront of my personal and professional experience. Before joining Prime Time Palm Beach County, an intermediary organization dedicated to supporting high quality in afterschool programs, I conducted psychological evaluations of school-age children for The Journey Program in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The program uses story, myth, and metaphor to improve the emotional health of children in local schools and homeless shelters. I interviewed teachers, children, parents, and school administrators to identify and describe any emotional disturbances, which ranged from depression and anxiety to anger and grief.

At the same time, I observed how afterschool programs affected the emotional well-being of my two boys. What I witnessed as a parent paralleled what I encountered as a psychologist. Teachers and school administrators were not always in an ideal position to manage emotional health, particularly when distress led to class interruptions. In contrast, afterschool programs offered a precious window of opportunity.

A positive emotional climate is listed as one indicator of a supportive environment, which is one of the four major areas defining high quality in the Palm Beach County Program Quality Assessment tool used by Prime Time to evaluate afterschool programs. A positive emotional climate is demonstrated when supportive staff welcome children with encouragement, active involvement, camaraderie, inclusiveness, mutual respect, friendly gestures, and a warm tone of voice.

During my first week as a researcher at Prime Time, I was eager to tell my boys about my new job. Before I even opened my mouth, however, my youngest son coincidentally repeated a familiar refrain. He reminded me of an unpleasant experience with a provider he stayed with after school for only a few weeks. Although nearly three years had passed, he asked, "Why did you take me there?"

The warmth of a supportive environment had been lacking. The provider took little time to listen to stories about my boys. She did not know that their father, a NASA scientist, just left the country for a job in Europe. Nor did she know that my boys were struggling with grief, shame, and anger as a result, and she scarcely realized what an impact she could have on their healing process.

In another afterschool program from which I withdrew my boys after only one week, activities included a full hour of television and two hours of play in a small, Spartan enclosure with little staff involvement. The perpetually sour staff member expressed no interest in either the happiness of my children or their background stories. When my boys arrived home, they were irritable and bored.

In contrast, in a high-quality afterschool program, my boys took part in engaging activities with strong involvement on the part of staff. Family involvement was welcome and encouraged every day, and within a week, every staff member knew the full story behind the distress that my boys were experiencing at that time.

They knew that my oldest son coped with stress by building things out of random materials. The staff created a special corner filled with cardboard boxes, construction paper, pieces of plastic and fabric, aluminum foil, scissors, and tape. When they discovered that my son's dad once worked for NASA, they brought in empty two-liter soda bottles and helped him use them as booster rockets. Over the course of three weeks, with their supervision and encouragement, my son constructed a six-foot model of the space shuttle, complete with a NASA decal, and explained the work of his dad.

The effects on my children were remarkable. I observed what I could only describe as a deep, inner sigh of relief in my children. As their emotional needs received appropriate response, they showed evidence of abating grief. They became more social. They smiled more.

In answer to the rhetorical question of my youngest son, I said with a smile, "Well, guess what! Mommy's new job is to help afterschool programs be amazing." He smiled, silent and content.

A positive emotional climate, a supportive environment, family involvement, and engagement offer potential pathways for improving emotional health and resilience in children. Kindness, understanding, responsiveness, and genuine caring on the part of afterschool staff have the power to transform emotional distress in ways that parents and teachers cannot achieve alone. • | Lisa M. Lindeman, PhD, is a research associate with Prime Time Palm Beach County.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS *With Policymakers* ORGANIZING A SITE VISIT

BY AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE

Inviting policymakers to visit your afterschool program is a powerful way to help them understand the value your program brings to the community. In fact, site visits have had a definite impact on many afterschool programs. Below are suggested steps, a timeline, and a sample schedule for the event, courtesy of the Afterschool Alliance. Check the Congressional schedule to see when members of Congress will be on recess and back in your community; typically, members return home around all major holidays and for a summer recess.

STEP 1: Find the home district address and phone number for your elected officials.

Visit www.house.gov/writerep or www.senate.gov to find contact information. Most senators and representatives have more than one district office. Select the office closest to you. If you do not have access to the Internet, look in the blue government pages of your local phone book.

STEP 2: Identify a few dates during the next congressional recess when you could host a tour of your program.

Using the date that is optimal for you, write an invitation letter. This will be helpful to have on hand when you call the district office.

STEP 3: Call the district office.

Tell the person who answers that you would like to schedule a tour of your afterschool program for the policymaker. You may be connected with a legislative aide or a scheduler.

TRY FOR THE TOP. Ask if the policymaker could attend a tour during the next congressional recess. Provide options for dates and times, if your first selection does not work. Be sure to mention that staff and parents will be on hand for the visit, and offer to invite media as well. Point out how your program relates to the policymaker's interests (literacy, improving academic achievement in public schools, keeping communities safe by decreasing juvenile crime, helping working families, etc.). Offer to send your "invite letter" and more information about the program and who will be at the visit. Encourage the policymaker to bring staff members. Establishing a relationship with staff is equally important, especially when you need a quick quotation or response.

BE FLEXIBLE. If a policymaker is not available, see if a staff person could make the visit instead. If you are successful with the policymaker, keep in mind that elected officials' schedules could change without notice. Several days before the visit, call to confirm the event and be prepared to reschedule.

MAIL OR FAX YOUR PERSONALIZED INVITATION LETTER. Be sure to send along a program profile, brochure, or some background materials about your program.

STEP 4: Before the visit.

Identify youth, parents, program staff, school officials, and community partners who would be convincing spokespeople for your program. Ask them if they could be available for the visit and give them any background material you have on the policymaker, so they will feel comfortable meeting them. Share the basic schedule for the visit and clarify their roles. Make sure to invite your school's principal and consider inviting school board members. Send a media advisory to invite press, and prepare a news release for the day of the event.

STEP 5: The visit.

On the day of the visit, be sure someone waits outside of the building to greet and direct the visitors to the right location. Be sure to have program brochures or copies of a program profile on hand. You may want to make copies of any articles, youth essays, parent letters, awards, or other documents that demonstrate the community's support for your program. Be sure the policymaker gets to hear from the youth. Let the policymaker ask the youth questions or facilitate a discussion about what youth gain from the program. Ask parents to share their perspectives on the program's value; have your principal talk about students' increased attendance and improved behavior; invite community members to comment on how the program keeps kids out of trouble.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

3:00 P.M. : Policymaker arrives at the program and is greeted by the program director or other lead host.

3:05-3:15 P.M. : Lead the policymaker on a tour of the facilities. Let him or her see what activities the youth are engaged in.

3:15-3:30 P.M. : Afterschool snack time! Let the policymaker enjoy a snack and talk with the children about their favorite parts of the program. Ask the kids where they would be if they did not attend afterschool or what their friends do after school.

3:30-3:45 P.M. : After the snack, facilitate a discussion between parents and policymakers. Ask the parents to explain how the afterschool program helps their families.

3:45-4:00 P.M. : Ask the principal or superintendent to talk about schoolwide improvement attributable to the afterschool program. For example, ask the principal to show the policymaker the school's improved assessment scores.

4:00 P.M. : Thank you and goodbye!

STEP 6: Send a "thank you" letter.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE (prior to visit)

1 MONTH: Invite policymaker.
3 WEEKS: Invite parents, community members, school officials, youth.
2 WEEKS: Develop schedule for the day, identify roles.
1 WEEK: Finalize program agenda.
3 DAYS: Call policymaker's office to confirm visit.
2 DAYS: Invite the media.

The Afterschool Alliance works to ensure that all youth have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs.

Visit http://afterschoolalliance.org/reachPolicySiteVisit.cfm for media tips, letter-writing examples, and additional links and information related to this article.
Visit http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Toolbox/SiteVisitCaseStudies.pdf for a case study showing several examples of the effects of site visits on afterschool programs.

HELPING CHILDREN & FAMILIES LIVE A BETTER FUTURE

| BY AMY L CHARLES

Three hours of sleep is typical for Cyndi Nguyen: wife, mother of six, and co-founder and executive director of New Orleans-based Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training—an organization that provides afterschool programs, serves as a resource center, and develops economic and educational training programs for minority residents. From VIET's start in a storefront to its eight-acre home with gardens and a playground, "Miss Cyndi" has been there to help.

When Cyndi arrives at VIET, she's been up for hours—working at home, helping with homework and school prep, getting her triplet toddlers situated. She finds an hour for herself each day: "I have to be healthy for my kids."

In the Vietnamese culture of Cyndi's family, women leaders are uncommon. Education was important, yet language barriers made it difficult. Cyndi was kicked out of two schools and planned to drop out as a junior. She was a rebel. "I have a little spunk in my personality." A woman who helped sponsor her family's 1975 arrival in the States convinced her to move to Iowa. She thrived with her sponsor's family, graduating as a junior and attending Loras College, where she fell in love with social work.

As a college senior, Cyndi was pregnant with her first child. She was determined to receive her degree and give her child a good future. She returned to New Orleans, finding a disconnected, isolated community. Helping others became a goal, and her dedication and commitment to helping children was born.

In 2001, Cyndi and co-founder Tina Owen began VIET, focusing on children while helping the community. Many Vietnamese American children are raised by family members who know little English, so homework suffers. VIET's afterschool Expanded Learning Time offers enrichment activities and makes homework assistance a priority, helping to "connect" what children don't learn at school. The Summer Adventure Program began in 2002, and even Hurricane Katrina didn't stop it from offering activities in a structured, organized, fun learning environment.

Cyndi notes many families aren't able to regularly feed their children, who eat breakfast and lunch at school. Through a partnership with Second Harvest, children eat a nutritious meal and a snack before leaving VIET. In VIET's gardens, children grow cabbage and okra for their families; Cyndi hopes within five years, children will pick snacks from VIET's quickly growing fruit trees.

Children help VIET with their eyes, hearts, and honesty. When told she was "old," Cyndi realized children listen to peers: The resulting Healthy Young Voices program has eight- through thirteen-year-olds developing healthful activities. Let's Move Again, based on first lady Michelle Obama's program, keeps children and community members active. When children spoke of grandparents who stayed home all day, or out-of-work parents, the Senior Program and other adult resources were developed.

Cyndi is big on family and safe activities. Halloween trick-or-treating used to take place at a mall, where candy often ran out before children did. VIET held its first Halloween event last year, bringing families together for treats and fun. This year's event drew almost seven hundred children. And the fun isn't done. Through a generous partnership, eighty people will soon travel to Disney World, where they'll build friendships and trust, and be active outside of their "normal" life. Next year, the Senior Program will involve a similar trip to Washington, D.C.

Cyndi is gladly part of every VIET program and event, and acknowledges her family isn't the only one important to her. She watches children grow up. She receives wedding invitations from some of them. She knows her work with children and others keeps her young, and she states that there's never a dull moment at VIET.

"I really have one of the best jobs in the nation." •

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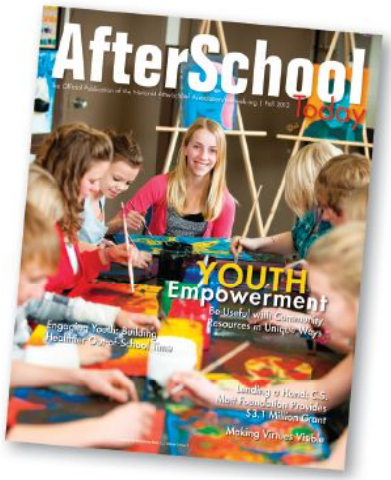

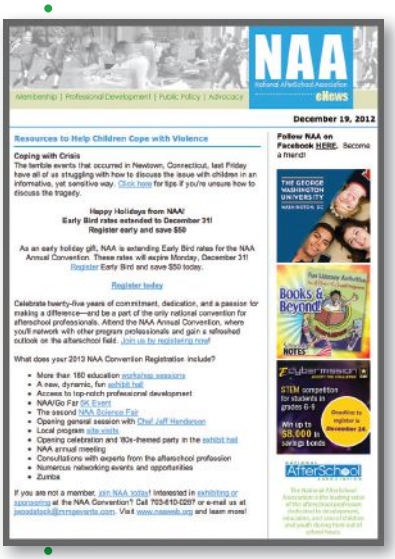

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