GETTING SCHOOL-BASED AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING OFF THE GROUND

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School-aged children have much to learn: to read, write and think clearly; to interact in socially appropriate and, hopefully, in personally fulfilling ways; to observe the rules of society, becoming a good citizen and productive members of society. In short, they must develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, morally and physically. They will do so, both in and out of school, by finding and creating opportunities to grow and learn.

As schools focus their curricula more sharply on preparing our youth cognitively for the challenges of the information age, attention is turning increasingly to children’s experiences receive out of school. After-school programs offer many opportunities that can complement, enhance and expand on what children learn in school. Indeed, after-school programs are increasingly becoming the solution policymakers suggest for all sorts of youth problems—poor academic achievement, gang participation, violence and drug use.

Unfortunately, while the need for enrichment opportunities exists everywhere, their availability is limited. Too many poor youth do not have access to youth-serving organizations like Ys, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Scouts, because there are none located in their neighborhoods, parents are concerned about their children’s safety getting to and from the organizations or they cannot afford the program’s fees. In contrast, all young people have access to schools. For the most part, parents are familiar with the schools and are comfortable sending their children to them.

Keeping schools open longer and transforming their facilities into youth and community centers expand the benefits derived from investment in these public buildings. Before- and after-school programs provide young people with opportunities to develop the skills, roles and relationships essential to their ultimate success, as well as sheltering them during a time of vulnerability. Locating such programs in schools is particularly sensible in low-income communities where there are few other available resources that children and their parents can use for educational and recreational purposes. As a result, many politicians—from the President to mayors—are calling for more school-based after-school programs, especially in poorer neighborhoods.

The most visible of these new initiatives are the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, for which, in fiscal year 1998, the federal government provided $40 million dollars to schools. The budget rocketed to $200 million in fiscal year 1999, then more than doubled to $450 million in fiscal year 2000 and, for fiscal year 2001, the administration is spending $850 million. Similarly, state and local governments have been expanding their investment in after-school initiatives. For example, in school year 1999, New York increased funding for Advantage Schools after-school programs from $500,000 to $10 million. Kentucky now spends $37 million on extended school services. Maryland’s legislature recently passed an After School Opportunity Fund of $10 million. Wisconsin provides $20 million for after-school programs. Bills before the Pennsylvania legislature propose to allocate $15 million for after-school programs. At the local level, in 1998 the Soros Foundation established The After School Corporation in New York City to increase the supply and quality of after-school programs there; as of Winter 2000, over a
hundred programs were funded. In 1998, Boston’s mayor launched his “2:00 to 6:00 initiative” that now funds after-school programs in 57 schools. Chicago’s Lighthouse provides after-school services to 363 elementary schools. Congress and the President, the National League of Cities, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors’ Association have all helped to mobilize support for out-of-school activities. Clearly this is one of the fastest growing areas of youth programming.

For the most part, both programming and the policy discussions surrounding these initiatives focus on improving academic performance and providing children with adult supervision while their parents work. While these are important goals, children’s lives can also be enriched and improved in many other areas by well-implemented after-school programs. The Wallace-Readers Digest Funds wanted to encourage and promote programs that take on a broader developmental agenda, delivering a wide range of quality cultural, recreational and academic services, as well as involving the community in supporting the overall broad positive growth of children throughout their formative years.

It was unlikely that the best strategy for achieving these broader goals would be the same for all cities and all schools. The needs, resources and constraints of communities differ and thus so will the strategies they choose. Thus, the Funds wished to learn about a range of strategies more generically. Despite the growing popularity of school-based programs, little is known about how best to implement them in school buildings. Thus, the Funds believed that a study of programs using several high-quality models would generate general learnings about the key components of promoting strong youth development in school-based program and what components can and should be adapted to a community’s situation. After several years of investigation and development, the Funds created the Extended Service Schools Adaptation Initiative (ESS) to extensively explore the potential and feasibility of school-based youth development programs.

The ESS Initiative

Designed to support four to six years of programming in 17 different communities across the country, ESS programs encompass school and community-based services for youth, families and community members. While, for simplicity, we refer to these services and activities as after-school programs, they also include before- and during-school programming, summer activities, adult programs, social services, and weekend and holiday activities. The programs are based on school-community partnerships that include between five, and in some cases up to 20, different collaborators. Organizations leading the collaborations include universities, the United Way, the

1Approximately a third of ESS programs offer adult activities to community members and parents. While the range of adult offerings is wide, the number of programs run in any one school are typically limited to one or two. Classes include ESL, GED, parenting, computer technology, citizenship and wellness.

2Only a few programs provide social services to youth and families in their communities. Services consist mainly of health and mental health care, legal aid and immigration support.
Urban League, Catholic Charities, Ys and Boys & Girls Clubs. Public schools are key partners, and a wide variety of community-based organizations make substantial contributions of time and resources.

Each community is adapting one of four nationally recognized extended-service school models:

1. The Beacon, a collaboration of a school and a community-based organization (CBO);
2. Bridges to Success, a collaboration of a school, several CBOs, and a local United Way;
3. Community Schools, a collaboration of a school, a CBO and a university; and
4. West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation (WEPIC), a collaboration of a school and a university.

The initiative has funded between three and seven cities to adapt one of the four models. Within each city between one and nine schools are involved in the project.

While the four models share a commitment to youth’s broad sense of well-being and positive development, they differ in which organizations are involved, what they emphasize, how they are organized and managed, how involved the community is and how integrated they are with school-day activities. For example, their formal missions differ. The Beacon model hopes to provide school-based safe havens for youth in the nonschool hours to promote youth development (including in the academic area) and resiliency, and to do so on a large scale within cities. The Bridges to Success model aims to increase students’ academic achievements by meeting their noneducational needs and better linking families and schools. The Community Schools model aims to transform the institution of the school by integrating school-day and extended-day services seamlessly to meet the community’s needs and achieve academic excellence. The WEPIC model hopes to improve academic performance through curricular changes, training and additional human resources, provided by university students and faculty.

All four models offer youth development activities in poor communities during nonschool hours, have much broader goals, including fundamental change in the way the school and the community interact, making the interaction much more collaborative. Thus, the evaluation affords us the opportunity to learn not only after-school programming, but also about school/community collaboration.

Focusing the evaluation on the adaptation process and on the underlying lessons about after-school programs and school/community collaborations are unique to ESS. The ESS evaluation provides us with an opportunity to examine how program strategies from a variety of models adapt to new environments. It provides the opportunity to explore in detail the choices that communities face as they plan their initiatives, the inevitable trade-offs and negotiations that ensue, and how local opportunities and constraints shape local initiatives. In sum, the ESS

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3 The initiative is therefore referred to as either the Extended Service Schools Adaptation initiative or just ESS. We will use ESS in this paper, but the reader should keep in mind that all the cities are adapting and modifying the models to their local circumstances.
initiative and its evaluation is intended to provide practitioners, funders and policymakers with a richer set of lessons about how local school-based collaborations unfold and what they do.

The Purpose of This Paper

While the project and evaluation are ongoing, we felt it important to share the early learnings from the planning phase and first full year of program implementation. Many communities and schools wish to start similar programs and could benefit from learning what it takes to get a community-oriented school-based after-school program on the ground, and what early challenges are likely to arise and how have others dealt with them.

In particular, this paper addresses two sets of questions. The first set relates to what it takes to launch these types of school/community initiatives:

1. What factors influenced the success of city-level collaborative efforts?
2. How were the schools chosen? How was the early program’s content determined?
3. How did programs finance their early implementation period?

The second set relates to what the programs achieved within the first full year of operation:

1. In the first year of operation, how were programs managed?
2. What types of activities were put in place?
3. Who were attracted and recruited into these new programs?
4. What were the common early implementation challenges facing the programs?

While future reports will address the question of how these programs affected the lives of their participants, this paper discusses how cities begin the process of opening up schools to children, youth and adults. We examine the cities’ planning and piloting efforts and continue through their first year of implementation.

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Data used in this paper were collected from late 1998 to late 1999, a period covering the first full year of operations for most of the programs. The data come from interviews with program staff, activity providers, leaders in the efforts to implement the initiative, local funders and school district personnel; observations of activities for youth; surveys of ESS school coordinators; and early enrollment figures. For a full discussion of the ESS sites’ planning and early implementation period, see Extended Service Schools: Putting Programming in Place. Karen Walker, Jean Baldwin Grossman and Rebecca Raley, with Glee Holton and Veronica Fellerath. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. December 2000. [www.ppv.org] The ESS evaluation is scheduled to end in early 2002.
GETTING OFF THE GROUND

To assist the programs in getting off to a good start, The Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds funded a six- to nine-month planning period. During this period, cities were expected to pull together collaborative partners, conduct needs assessments, select schools, plan their programs and assemble the needed financial and nonfinancial resources.

Forming a Collaboration

ESS encourages strong collaborations among providers, funders, schools and government agencies to ensure that unnecessary duplication of services does not occur, that the new initiative can benefit from additional expertise and resources and that the city has access to increased financial resources during and after the initial grant period. Considerable relationship-building needed to be done before a well-functioning collaboration was possible. The planning period provided the partners with time to define roles, negotiate the control of resources and adapt the model to address their concerns.

Several factors helped facilitate early collaboration efforts. First, if key partners had previously collaborated successfully, this experience eased the initial start-up phase and the transition to implementation. However, previous experience did not eliminate the challenges of negotiating and compromising on roles and responsibilities with new partners, nor did the lack of a pre-existing collaboration prevent a city from assembling an effective collaborative within the first year. Second, decision-making processes that included all key partners were important in allaying the fears of reticent partners. Third, the assistance of the national intermediaries in mediating early disputes helped the partners find compromises and solutions to problems that may not have otherwise occurred to them.

The Needs Assessment

Sites conducted their needs assessments in many different ways–some held focus groups, some held open meetings, some did surveys. Needs assessments proved to be a powerful tool for building support for the initiative. To a lesser extent, the results were useful during the first year of implementation, but only when they were available on a school-by-school or community basis. Given the short period between the assessment and implementation, planners were not often able to arrange for desired activities in the first year. With more time, though, coordinators hope to meet more of the stated needs.

School Selection

School selection has a profound effect on the type of children who are served by the program, the cost of the program and the type of programming. To ensure that the program would reach needy children, the Funds required that the selected schools serve disadvantaged youth. The cities operationalized this requirement using a combination of criteria such as the academic
performance and economic backgrounds of the school’s population, but collaborations also added other criteria, such as principals’ support or geographic considerations. Cities hoping to build broad-based political support for their local initiatives selected schools across cities. Some cities were able to avoid transportation costs by selecting neighborhood schools, although cities that bus large proportions of students did not have that option. Principals’ support was almost always a key consideration because planners assumed that supportive principals would ease implementation. Although the assumption proved accurate, the cities discovered that high principal turnover (nearly 25 percent between planning and implementation) undermined the usefulness of this selection criteria in many schools. School coordinators, instead of being able to take principals’ support for granted, learned they had to work to establish and maintain this support.

In the end, the schools selected to participate in the ESS initiative served a diverse group of low-income youth (the median percent of students receiving free or reduced lunches was approximately 80%).

Assembling Resources

Assembling the resources to start and sustain the programs was and still is a major challenge. The strategy each city used was uniquely related to the city’s specific context and past experiences. If the ESS program grew out of a previously existing after-school program, the old funders generally continued their support. If the school had a family or parent center, some of these resources were often tapped. If there were organizations that conducted satellite youth programs, such as libraries or museums, these resources could often be brought into the ESS programs.

While a full cost study is planned for next year, we learned that the financial resources the programs directly controlled were only a fraction (between a half and a third) of resources it took to run the program. The most common and largest in-kind resource provided to all the programs was the office and program space donated by the school. The other types of resource were supplied by redirecting existing resources, such as reassigning school or youth-serving organization personnel, or using volunteers. We learned that the financial resources raised from foundations (specifically here from WRD Funds) served as a catalyst for leveraging many other resources, some monetary (from local United Ways or community foundations) but many donated or redirected resources.

During the planning period each city had to develop a budget for the program. Estimated annual per-school start-up budgets varied across and within models from a low of $80,000 per school to $300,000. These estimates are not budgets for operating a mature program because they include expenses associated with start-up, such as additional staff, executive oversight time and technical assistance. The magnitudes of the budgets reflect both differences in the intended intensity and size of the programs, but also which redirected resources were listed in the budget and which were not. As a result, per-school budgets varied as much as 100 percent across cities within
model. We will have to wait until the full cost study is completed before fully understanding what it costs to start an extended-service school.

EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

New programs take time to establish themselves. Not only does the entire program’s infrastructure need to be put in place—new staff hired and trained, management and reporting structures determined, activity providers located and engaged—but the programs must advertise themselves, establish a reputation among students, parents and volunteers, and recruit participants. They must learn to adapt to the school and their local environments, build key relationships and weed out unreliable providers. Despite the enormity of the tasks facing them, we were impressed with the first-year performance of the ESS programs. They got on the ground quickly. They engaged a very committed group of staff and partners. Many of the activities we observed were quite innovative. And they all attracted many students.

Management and Governance

In examining the decision-making structures cities set up, we distinguish between governance and the day-to-day management decisions of school programs. Day-to-day management includes scheduling and coordinating activities, enrolling youth and finding space, as well as overseeing operations. Governance includes making higher-level decisions such as the types of activities to be offered, staffing policies and plans for sustaining the programs.

All cities hired a coordinator to manage the day-to-day programs in a school, a daunting and multi-faceted job. School coordinators spent far more time fulfilling their responsibilities than their supervisors had expected prior to implementation. At the beginning of implementation, many cities began running two to three hours of after-school programming a day. Many coordinators were thus hired only for half-time (20 to 25 hours a week). It was expected that they would be providing or managing activities for approximately 15 hours a week, leaving them with 5 to 10 additional hours a week for communication and planning. Almost immediately, however, programs recognized that it is extremely difficult to start an after-school program and run it well with a half-time school coordinator. Along with identifying, creating, staffing and scheduling activities, supervising providers and ensuring that the programs are running smoothly, the coordinators also have to focus on custodial issues (even going so far as to do some cleaning themselves) and transportation.

In response, many programs made the decision to switch part-time coordinator positions to full-time. When the program included both before-school and after-school activities or served many youth, the coordinator’s time was often supplemented with an assistant (in four Bridges schools).

The school coordinators were not solo operators, but were rather embedded in one of three types of school-level governance structures. Governance was either shared by a lead agency and a
school-level council; by a small team of three to five key stakeholders including the principals; or a lead agency and its staff.

Cities chose shared decision-making by a council and a lead agency because they hoped to increase the community’s involvement in and commitment to the program. In general, this configuration was effective in generating community interest, especially early on. On the other hand, a council/lead agency governance structure proved difficult to sustain as implementation progressed over the first year. In some cases, that was because the agendas of the existing school-level councils were already full and the groups lacked the time to oversee activity selection. In other cities, the community-based organizations or local intermediaries did not have the time or resources to adequately recruit, train and support such councils; attention was focused more on getting the program up and running. As a result, almost all the schools with this governance structure shifted by the end of the first year of implementation to relying more heavily on lead agency staff to make most decisions.

In contrast, having lead agencies oversee activities (as in the Beacon and in some Bridges cities) or having small governance teams (as in one Bridges city, the Community Schools cities, and the WEPIC cities) appeared to be more stable school-level governance structures. Cities that had only a single ESS school used small teams to govern the local initiative. Small governance teams tended to have relatively harmonious relationships and appeared effective in planning and overseeing activities. Further, they included the principal in a close relationship with other partners which proved important for gaining the support of other school personnel. The teams, however, face potential disadvantages as they face questions about how to sustain their programs over the long term. Their members may lack both the time and expertise to identify and garner public funds.

Cities that have multiple schools involved in the adaptation (Bridges to Success and Beacon cities) tend to have city-level oversight committees to coordinate policies and activities across the schools. These oversight committees are composed of executive and administrative staff from funding agencies, school districts, government agencies and CBOs. Having senior staff sit on the committees enhances the group’s ability to troubleshoot problems at the schools. It also proves useful in thinking about sustaining the initiative beyond the grant period, since the staff on the committees often has experience in identifying funds.

To date, it appears that collaborative organizational structures offer important advantages. Small team governance strengthens school participation in the local initiative, which may serve to create and sustain strongly integrated school/community partnerships. Oversight committees provide important human resources to the initiative, helping to resolve specific problems in the school programs. Perhaps more importantly, the oversight committees are considering how to get public funding to sustain their work. Identifying and getting public funds is an ambitious undertaking, and the oversight committees are more likely to have the resources to commit than are other groups.
Programming

Even though the four ESS models emphasize different goals, what practitioners tried to achieve in their programs is remarkably similar: to enhance the academic performance of the children, provide them with positive peer and adult relationships, and give them something productive to do in a safe environment. Given the similarities in local goals and the pressures to serve children quickly, it is not surprising that during the first year the activities operators ran were in fairly similar categories—academics, enrichment, sports, and creative and cultural classes. During the past school year, approximately 40 percent of activity hours were academic, 20 percent were cultural or creative enrichment activities, 20 percent were athletic, and the remainder were various. A strong and consistent commitment to academic work was present across programs in all models. We speculate that this occurred the first year because of the relative ease with which academic program, particularly homework help, can be set up, and the agreement among most partners (including parents) that academic support is of primary importance. Summer program offerings were evenly split among these four areas, reflecting the reduced urgency of academic pursuits during the summer and youth’s desire to be more physically active.

While at one level the programs were fairly similar, which model the cities adapted does exert an influence. Community Schools and Bridges programs offer somewhat more academic activities than do the other types of programs, while the Beacon programs offer more athletic and cultural opportunities, consistent with their strong youth development emphasis. Thus, during this first year of implementation, the specific activities and services offered were affected both by the model the city was adapting and what appeared to be fairly standard goals and concerns. As the adaptation process progresses, we will examine whether model differences become more pronounced as the cities refine their programs.

The Participants

Located in poor neighborhoods, the ESS programs are reaching thousands of racially and ethnically diverse low-income children. We were impressed that, even though this was the first year of operation, most programs served a hundred or more children. The Beacon centers enrolled even more, averaging almost 275 children per center, perhaps because they had more resources to hire staff and activity providers.

Typically, the less needy children and their families are the ones who first learn about and walk through the doors of any new program. So, too, it appears in ESS—but this is not to suggest that many needy students did not enroll. Approximately two-thirds of the first cohort of enrollees qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Rather, coordinators realized that they needed to use more targeted recruitment strategies to reach the needier or least involved students and their families. Over time, as the coordinators have more time for recruitment, even more hard-to-reach students will be drawn into programs. The evaluation will continue to follow this key issue.
Demand for the program was strong in the first year of operation, but not overwhelming in most cities. A number of factors contributed to this. Probably most important is that the programs were fairly new: they had not yet established strong reputations among the parents and teachers of the school. Because word-of-mouth referrals are the most effective, we expect that, over time, recruitment will become somewhat easier. Second, programs must reach not only the children but also their parents because the adults must enroll the children. Communication with parents is challenging and often requires direct contact. Third, older (middle school) youth and their parents appear to be less attracted to the program than are elementary school children, and several cities focused on older children. Lastly, transportation issues limit demand for the program. Many parents are unable to pick up their children at the end of the day and feel uncomfortable about having them walk home alone at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.

Although the programs faced many challenges during their first full implementation year, they developed many creative strategies for recruiting youth. We have no doubt that over time more of the students in the schools will join in.

PROGRAMMING CHALLENGES

In order to deepen the field’s understanding of what it takes to establish these school/community collaborations and help others who are thinking of following suit, we focus on the challenges the ESS cities faced during this early period and discuss the strategies cities used to deal with the inherent complexities of operating in a school system. The programming challenges faced during implementation have three major commonalities: they were formidable; they were typically unanticipated during the planning stages by local personnel; and they occurred with consistency across programs, regardless of model type. Each of the programs we examined in depth faced at least one if not all four of the main challenges. They include gaining access to programming space, arranging for the maintenance of that space, providing transportation to and from programs for participants, and ensuring sufficient staff support to run the demanding programs. These issues readily rose to the top of programs’ agendas and pressed programs to work in committed and creative ways to develop solutions.

Space

The availability and type of program space fundamentally affect the type and quality of activities that can be offered. In the beginning, as newcomers to the school, some programs found they were the first to be denied a scheduled use of space if the school had a last-minute request from a teacher for the room.

Even when school space is available, it is not always ideal. Many ESS activities require open, multipurpose classrooms that can accommodate activities like aerobics or karate. Traditional classrooms crowded with 30 to 50 desks are ill-suited for such classes. The number of such activities is thus constrained by the availability of appropriate space. Multipurpose and special rooms are often already in considerable demand in schools and therefore, when possible, must be
reserved in advance. School coordinators report that it is difficult to run several concurrent activities—homework help, story time and a dance class—in just one multipurpose room, such as a cafeteria.

In most cases, good relationships with key school personnel (principals, teachers and custodians) was at the heart of gaining access to school space. Our data show that schools and CBO staff typically shared a similar set of goals for ESS programs, although they are not aware of it. Yet, there were practical gaps in the level of trust schools staff had in the program. Program staff often recognized the need to be patient in developing their relationships with school staff and to explore the use of alternative facilities. Some programs also discovered that involving school principals in the hiring of ESS school coordinators and choosing staff who were already known to the school smoothed communication issues and facilitated access to school space. School coordinators gained the trust of key teachers by paying them to provide services, quickly responding to complaints and helping them out when they needed assistance (for an after-school event or with supplies). In most cases, access to school space increased over time, as schools grew more comfortable with the programs and program staff. Yet, each time a new principal came on board, trust had to be reestablished. Finally, while trust is critical, in schools burdened by overcrowding, space remains a scarce commodity no matter how good relationships were.

Custodial Services

The scheduling of room cleaning surfaced as a pressing issue for programs. School custodians have set work schedules that enable them to clean all the needed school spaces in their allocated time, assuming most of them are empty at the close of the regular school day. The presence of ESS after-school programs means that classrooms are not empty at their usual time. Thus custodians have to juggle their cleaning schedules and often have less time to clean. Similarly, in the summers, custodians traditionally rely on a block of time when school is out of session to conduct a comprehensive cleaning of classroom spaces. The presence of a summer program means that less of this type of maintenance takes place with the given level of resources.

The problems are primarily ones of money and logistics. If the program uses space not in use every day, or uses it for more hours, the schools face additional cleaning demands. In addition, since the programs operate outside of normal school hours, the schedule of cleaning must change, which often has cost implications. Each ESS collaborative has to determine how these costs will be shared. Second, in trying to minimize these extra costs, school coordinators often curtail activities earlier than they want to or do not offer adult activities in the evening when more adults and parents can attend so as to have rooms empty for cleaning during the hours that custodians normally work. Lastly, issues of liability and compliance with custodial union rules are entwined with these practical concerns.

Ensuring the maintenance of school space, like securing space, was another issue eased by the careful development of relationships with school staff, particularly custodians and principals who might serve as intermediaries. In the day-to-day operation of programs, the main concern was in
coordinating the ESS use of space with custodians’ cleaning schedules. Programs dealt with increased cleaning demands in similar ways. Often they attempted to stretch resources, having the custodians clean more in the same number of hours. At one school, custodial staff stay for an additional unpaid hour to support the needs of the ESS program. Many ESS staff also informally take on cleaning responsibilities. But in the larger context of implementing ESS programs, the most pressing issue is ensuring that schools can sustain the increased wear and tear on their facilities’ infrastructures resulting from the additional hours of use. As programs and schools face the challenge of locating additional funds to cover the costs of custodians’ longer work days they readily recognize that meeting maintenance needs is central to sustaining programs.

Transportation

The third challenge, transportation, was perhaps the most formidable because its remedy required the most of extra funding and its consequence was that some youth, often the most needy, simply could not participate in ESS activities. The immediacy of the transportation issue pressed programs to develop solutions during the first year. Some strategies are temporary, while others may be sustainable in the long term.

In some circumstances, school districts are able to offer monetary or in-kind support for late busing. In Jacksonville, the school district already had late busing in operation for other school activities, which they could then extend to ESS youth. In Boston, the principal lobbied the district for a year to provide late busing; it finally agreed, with the stipulation that buses leave the school before 5:00 p.m. In Minneapolis, the ESS summer program strategically dovetailed with summer school classes so that summer school students who stayed for ESS would return home on school district-funded busing.

In other cases, programs turn to community partners for transportation support. An ESS school in Minneapolis developed a partnership with the Community Education program whereby they split the costs for late busing during the school year. A school in Missoula collaborates with the local Head Start program to share busing. Other programs capitalize on their relationships with the YMCA or a partnering university to gain the occasional use of vans for off-site trips. Coordinators of the Savannah ESS program curried the support of a local car dealership, which sold them a van at cost. In a few sites, staff use their own vehicles to transport youth.

As programs continue to work toward creative solutions to these transportation difficulties, the evidence suggests that long-term solutions rest in the capacity of cities and school districts to shoulder financial responsibility for extended service programs.

CONCLUSIONS

After a six- to nine-month planning period, all 17 cities were able to implement activities and attract children. Across the schools, thousands of low-income children participated in a wide range of activities–academic, enrichment, athletic, creative and cultural. What did it take to
achieve this? At the simplest level the answer is–some money, a school and a school coordinator. However from the early phase of our investigation, we have learned that the initiatives must have committed partners who are willing to dedicate resources as well as time, persistence and creativity to make the program happen.

The pressing questions of who would make decisions and control resources led to tensions in all cities. Yet, given partners (especially executive level staff) who were willing to put in the time to resolve issues (often more than they had originally expected), the tensions may be viewed as developmental difficulties that face collaboratives in their early periods. One factor that stakeholders reported as very useful to forging effective collaborations was the assistance of national experts in mediating early disputes. The experience these experts brought from other community/school collaborations helped find compromises and creative solutions to problems that may not have occurred to the ESS partners.

The most critical relationships for the programs overall were between the CBOs and the school district (when there were multiple schools) and between school coordinators and principals. For the day-to-day operation, relationships between program staff, the custodial staff and teachers were critical. Having the time and skill to communicate well were essential qualities for school coordinators and directors in the development of effective working relationships and meeting the inevitable challenges that arise in operating a collaborative school-based program. While we would not expect every community to successfully navigate the challenges, the ESS experience is a promising example of how to overcome even the most difficult ones.

Policy Implications

Our early investigation of the ESS programs has raised several critical issues that cities should consider in planning to use schools as a venue for nonschool programming. We conclude with a discussion of them.

Location in the school building provides a program with several important advantages. First, the facilities are appropriate for a wide range of activities. Gyms, libraries, auditoriums and computer labs all provide unique equipment and space difficult to find elsewhere. Second, the school provides coordinators with ready access to potential participants, namely the student body. Third, the school offers the program legitimacy; parents might hesitate to allow their children to participate in programs elsewhere.

But using schools as a venue for after-school programs is not as easy as it would appear–and for several concrete reasons. First, the current notion that school buildings are underused resources, open for only six or seven hours during the school day and not at all in the summer, is too simplistic. We observed that at least some parts of the schools are often heavily used after hours: teachers prepare for their next day’s classes and provide extra help to selected students; students use the libraries and computer labs to complete their assignments; sport teams practice; outside organizations—such as Scouts or private day-care providers—use the facilities. Even in the
summers, the buildings are used, primarily for summer school programs that have become much more prevalent in reaction to the current movement to improve academic achievement. The result is that ESS programs often have to compete for prime space, such as the gym or computer labs.

Second, limited resources for maintaining the school’s physical facilities and equipment also lead administrators to limit the building’s use. Anything depreciates with use–cars, equipment, schools. For the most part, coordinators are able to keep the rate of facility deterioration down to the usual school-day strain, but when facilities and equipment are used, they wear out and break. Given the tight budgets that the principals in this study operate under, it is not surprising that there is tension between schools and ESS coordinators around the use of the building, student behavior and custodial issues. Breakage means that school-day students, as well as after-school participants, have to do with less. Having to buy or repair a computer means that some other purchase has to be foregone. School/program tensions are often perceived by program staff as created by school distrust of the program. Our investigation reveals that the fundamental issue is not one of turf or control, but of resources. More public funds are needed to maintain school facilities if they are to be open for longer hours and used more intensively. Turf and control issues do arise, but can be resolved over time as trust builds; the resource issue will not go away without the public’s greater awareness and support.

Third, using schools as the venue for after-school programs accentuates the challenge of transportation and increases program cost. Although more cities are turning their elementary and middle schools back into neighborhood schools, a significant number of youth are still bused. Many of the coordinators with whom we spoke expressed both frustration with the difficulties of recruiting bused students to the program, of coordinating activities with late bus schedules, getting youth home from other after-school activities and arranging transportation for field trips. Relying on parentally provided transportation is a serious barrier for the most economically disadvantaged youth, whose parents do not have cars or who work second-shift jobs. Even if resources (in kind or financial) exist to pay for transportation, the program’s costs rise. To be a prudent investment, the benefits of the program need to be greater if they are to outweigh the true costs.

Fourth, preliminary data suggest that while the programs reach thousands of children who live in very disadvantaged circumstances (two-thirds of the enrollees qualify for free- or reduced-priced lunches), more effort is needed to draw the most disadvantaged students into school-based after-school programs. School coordinators indicated that their programs are less successful in recruiting children who are behind in school, poor attenders, prone toward detention, lacking support at home, and from nonEnglish-speaking and poor families. Transportation, the difficulty of contacting parents and the students’ own dislike of school are barriers the programs need to address.

Final Thoughts
School-based after-school programs are promising strategies for engaging youth and children in a variety of positive social, recreational and academic activities. As often happens with promising interventions, people have very high and broad aspirations for after-school programs. Some hope they will keep children safe and provide them with basic skills they will need to succeed in school and as adults—such as social competence, anger management, persistence, responsibility, leadership, entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Still others hope they will reduce neighborhood crime and increase schools’ and children’s ability to achieve higher academic standards. Policymakers and funders, however, must balance optimism about their potential with some degree of caution. It is important to keep in mind that the programs face very real challenges in finding adequate resources—especially the space needed to house them and the transportation needed to take participants home. Expectations for the programs should be tempered by grounded knowledge about what youth programs can and cannot achieve. While we will have evidence on the effectiveness of these programs for youth in our next report, we can speculate on the likely effects of the program.

One expectation is that school-based after-school programs will increase children’s academic performance. Academic activities are a substantial part of all the programs, regardless of which model is being adapted. The academic support directly expands children’s learning opportunities, but in addition the program’s nonacademic activities help meet some of their other needs, enabling them to be more attentive learners during the school day. Yet, obtaining academic impacts will be an uphill battle for the programs. First, many have opted to serve more children less intensively (programming one or two days a week for each age group) rather than fewer children more intensively (three to five days a week). Second, mobility is quite high in these low-income neighborhoods and many of the enrollees leave the program too soon to benefit. Third, even if the program does intensively serve its participants, it is unlikely that, at their current levels of funding, they will increase a school’s test scores dramatically; the proportion of students in a school who attend these programs is now relatively small. However, academic impacts may be achievable goals for those who attend frequently.

Many hope that school-based after-school programs will reduce youth crime. ESS’s effect on crime is not likely to live up to advocates’ dreams, but may still be positive. Most juvenile crime is committed by older youth, who, we saw, are less likely to attend after-school programs. Neighborhood delinquency and vandalism, however, may decline because they are perpetrated by younger children. Several principals mentioned lower rates of vandalism since their ESS program had begun. By providing children with a supervised after-school environment, rates of youth victimization may also drop.

Another commonly cited benefit is that after-school programs will provide children with a safe and supervised place and opportunities to use their time constructively. We observed that the programs did actively attract and engage thousands of children and youth who have few other positive options for filling their after-school time. They also spoke warmly of the staff. Our next report will more closely examine students’ participation patterns and their experiences in programs. We speculate that programs are providing frequent participants with meaningful adult
relationships, opportunities to interact with their peers, and the chance to learn new skills and refine old ones.

While this discussion may be sobering for some, it is meant to focus attention on the real benefits after-school programs can have. We have long known that children and youth need to have access to developmental opportunities over the course of their childhood and adolescence. Ongoing support makes a difference. In addition, beneficial cross-pollination may occur by locating youth development programming in schools. Because schools are inherently developmental, they meet children and youth where they are and, through a series of increasingly challenging activities, encourage young people to reach higher levels of achievement. Locating after-school programs in schools may encourage youth programs to emphasize the importance of stretching youth. Conversely, schools may also be affected when teachers see other talents and behaviors in their students.

Since the end of school year 1998-1999 when data collection for this report ended, we have continued to examine how the programs continue to evolve. They have all grown stronger and many now are serving more children. Over the next few years, we will explore how the children participate, how it affects their lives and how much the programs cost.
APPENDIX:
DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUR EXTENDED-SERVICE SCHOOL MODELS

THE BEACON

Originally implemented in New York City Public Schools, primarily in middle schools.

**Mission:** To develop and operate school-based community centers; to create “safe havens” for youth and families in poor neighborhoods; to promote youth development and resiliency.

**Activities:** A diverse array of youth development activities in five core areas: education, recreation and enrichment, career development, leadership development, and health. Activities take place during non-school hours and emphasize several factors important to youth resiliency: caring adult relationships, engaging activities, high expectations, youth’s opportunity to make a contribution, and continuity.

**Governance:** Each Beacon Center has a lead agency that manages all activities at the school. A local organization provides technical assistance in organizational development as well as youth development practices. An oversight committee, consisting of school district staff and executive staff from key CBOs, provides general policy and management oversight. Each school has a school-level decision-making body that includes parents and other community representation.

BRIDGES TO SUCCESS

Originally implemented in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Mission:** To increase the educational success of students by better meeting the non-educational needs of children and their families through a partnership of education, human service and community service delivery systems, with a long-range vision of establishing schools as “lifelong learning centers” and focal points of their communities.

**Activities:** Vary according to site, but each site has an overarching goal of promoting positive youth development during non-school hours. Activities include educational enrichment, career development, arts and culture, life-skills, counseling, case management, health and mental health services, and recreation.

**Governance:** The Local United Way agency acts as lead organization and fiscal agent. A local governance structure made up of United Way, school district, social service and community representatives develops citywide programming strategies and oversees implementation. School-level councils assess the needs and assets of the community, and design and implement program interventions. The councils include a program coordinator, school principal and other school staff, parents, students and local partners.
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Originally implemented in elementary and middle schools in the Washington Heights section of New York City.

**Mission**: “Educational excellence, combined with needed human services, delivered through school, parent and community partnerships.” “Seamless integration of school-day activities with extended-day programs.”

**Activities**: A wide range of youth development programs during the school day and in non-school hours. Social services, such as on-site clinics, legal assistance and case management, are also provided. Parent education is an important component of the Community Schools.

**Governance**: Co-management of school facilities by the school and a community-based organization. Management staff from the CBO have space in the school administrative offices so they can interact frequently with school principals.

**Additional characteristics of the ESS national adaptation**: Local universities play a key role in technical assistance and planning. An oversight committee, consisting of university staff, executive staff from key CBOs, and school district staff, provide general policy and management oversight. In addition, each school should have a school-level decision-making body that includes parents and other community representation.

WEST PHILADELPHIA IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (WEPIC)

Originally implemented in Philadelphia.

**Mission**: A school-based school and community revitalization program to produce comprehensive, university-assisted community schools that serve, educate and activate all members of the community, revitalizing the curriculum through a community-oriented, real-world, problem-solving approach.

**Activities**: Academically-based community service, such as graduate and undergraduate interns working in schools to provide educational assistance and mentoring to youth.

**Governance**: School principals and staff play key decision-making roles, such as deciding what substantive areas will be addressed through the initiative. Community councils provide guidance on program content.