IOWA AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE

IAA

IOWA'S BLUEPRINT FOR AFTERSCHOOL :

Five Strategies for Ensuring Access to Affordable High-Quality Afterschool in Iowa for Children and Youth Ages 5 - 17

SUMMER 2008

Introduction

Advocates, policy leaders, parents, and communities have been undertaking extensive efforts for several years to improve educational outcomes for Iowa's youth and maintain Iowa's consistent ranking at the top of national education ratings. To prepare students to be competitive in our global economy, more rigorous standards are being adopted across school districts, often leaving a void of cultural, recreational, and civic opportunities. Additionally, with almost three-fourths of mothers of school-age children in the workforce nationally (The Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force, 2007), students, more than ever, need a safe place to go after school. Afterschool programs offer enrichment opportunities outside of traditional classroom instruction, while providing youth a safe place when school is out and parents are still at work.

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA) recognizes the value of stakeholder input in the process of identifying afterschool priorities and effective strategies for change in the state. Since its inception, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance has conducted an active outreach campaign to engage communities and learn how afterschool programs are provided around the state. The IAA has sponsored a Governor's Summit, provided advocacy trainings, facilitated the formation of local afterschool alliances, and conducted numerous one-on-one meetings and community forums to better inform the direction of the IAA's policy efforts. Additionally, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance receives countless e-mails and calls regarding afterschool programming, financing, and access. Conversations from IAA-sponsored Lights On! Afterschool events, community Blueprint Forums, and advocacy trainings have also provided tremendous insight into the design and implementation of Iowa's Blueprint for Afterschool.

Iowa's Blueprint for Afterschool is intended to start conversations, raise awareness and provide a plan for next steps for afterschool around the state. This will require individuals, communities, and policy leaders to work together to overcome barriers in providing accessible, high-quality opportunities for children and youth when they are not in school.

This Blueprint is ultimately designed to serve as a tool for policymakers to use in partnership with local stakeholders to identify the core elements of effective delivery of quality afterschool programs in Iowa so all youth and families have access to such opportunities in their community. It is important to recognize that afterschool cannot "fix all that is broken." Rather, afterschool is one ingredient in the recipe for success in improving Iowa's education and youth development system.

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA) is a statewide afterschool network with a membership of over 750 individuals and organizations operating in its fifth year with primary support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and additional support from the Iowa General Assembly, a variety of state agencies and non-profits. The IAA is staffed by State Public Policy Group, Inc., a Des Moines-based policy consulting firm. The Chrysalis Foundation, a foundation that serves women and girls in Central Iowa, serves as its fiscal agent.

Youth development is defined by the Center for Youth Development Policy and Research as "a combination of all of the people, places, supports, opportunities, and services that young people need to be happy, healthy, and successful."

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The IAA Board represents afterschool in its many forms and the diversity of afterschool stakeholders in the state. They are:

- **Jeff Anderson, Iowa Department of Human Services (Ex-Officio)**
- **Margaret Borgen, Iowa Association of School Boards**
- **Sam Carrell, Iowa Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs**
- **Terry Clifton, Iowa School Age Care Alliance**
- **Amy Croll, Division of Criminal Juvenile Justice Planning (Ex-Officio)**
- **Emily Dvorak, Iowa City Community School District 21st Century Community Learning Center**
- **Amy Friedrich, The Principal Financial Group**
- **Adam Lounsbury, Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (Ex-Officio)**
- **Emily Hajek, Office of the Governor (Ex-Officio)**
- **Dennis Haney, Iowa Department of Public Health (Ex-Officio)**
- **Terry Hernandez, Chrysalis Foundation**
- **Jean Keuhl, Community Corrections Improvement Project**
- **Joelle Kleihauer, YMCAs of Iowa**
- **Kevin Koester, Iowa Community Education Association**
- **Joe Herrity, Iowa Department of Education (Ex-Officio)**
- **Bill Roach, Iowa Attorney General's Office (Ex-Officio)**
- **Dan Smith, School Administrators of Iowa**
- **Keli Tallman, Iowa State University 4-H/Extension**
- **Felicia Van Dusseldorp, Vermeer Manufacturing**
- **Ruth Wright, United Way of Central Iowa**

Executive Summary

Iowa has a responsibility to its children, families, and communities to provide access to high-quality, affordable afterschool for all Iowans. The provision of these opportunities ensures access to cultural, civic, recreational, and educational opportunities that can effectively provide Iowa's young people the tools needed to develop skills to be competitive in the global economy and life. The successful provision of afterschool opportunities for all Iowa's youth will only be realized through the coordinated implementation of the following five strategies:

- **Develop policies and sustainable funding to construct a statewide infrastructure that systemically strives to increase the accessibility and quality of afterschool programming**

  This statewide system will engage leadership to spur changes in statewide policy, funding, administration, oversight, and quality outcomes

- **Ensure afterschool is community-driven**

  It is important for afterschool programs to be designed and sustained by meeting the needs of the community in which it serves

- **Develop and implement common standards of quality**

  As a larger statewide investment is made in afterschool programming, it is imperative for common standards of quality to be instituted to ensure that appropriate outcome measures are met

- **Promote effective collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders**

  Local collaborations and partnerships can create opportunities for the highest quality programming at the lowest price: pooling resources and opportunities

- **Provide technical assistance and resources to communities, families, and afterschool programs**

  Technical assistance should be offered to programs to promote program success and sustainability in the form of staff development, curriculum development, and quality and safety standards

These five strategies can only be sufficiently realized with the combined work and coordination of all key afterschool stakeholders: parents, youth, advocates, and local, state, and Federal leaders. Without the cooperation of all stakeholders around the Five Strategies, Iowa's youth and families will continue to struggle to access quality opportunities for safe, enriching, and engaging afterschool programs that provide youth the tools needed to develop the necessary skills for a productive and fulfilling adulthood.

History of Afterschool in Iowa and the Iowa Afterschool Alliance

Iowans have historically looked to their education system as a source of pride, noting the state's high graduation rates, college entrance exam scores, and well-known institutions of higher education. Beginning with the first farm-related industries developed in the 1870s, Iowa's economy has experienced a gradual increase in business and manufacturing operations. Accompanying this gradual shift, the portrait of families around the state has changed from farming families with only a single parent working outside the home, to a high incidence of rural flight and a shift to households with both, or the only parent, working outside the home. In spite of such shifts in the workforce and family structures, education and other youth enrichment opportunities have stayed relatively consistent in structure over time; even while policymakers and public opinion call for improvements in public education to prepare students for competitiveness in a global economy. With time after school and in the summer months no longer dedicated to farm chores for many, Iowa's youth need new opportunities for growth and preparation for adult life.

Early afterschool programs around the state responded to acute community needs most aptly identified by local law enforcement in urban areas. This at-risk approach left programming up to the local school district, with afterschool vying for funding alongside drug and alcohol abuse prevention programs. This presented problems, as afterschool should not compete against these much-needed programs. Rather, afterschool programming is designed to benefit all kids, not just those labeled at-risk. With available funding limited, programs in Iowa continue to be financed primarily by parents, with programs leveraging much-needed funds from multiple sources. Without an established structure of business and non-profit organizational support, rural afterschool programs sprung up more slowly around the state, with limited options for community support. As programming continued to evolve, funds and curriculum development tended to concentrate on the at-risk population receiving assistance, with enrichments and enhancements to youth experience and development left on the back burner. This model for afterschool labeled programs as the answer to meeting the needs of those labeled most at risk. When families and education leaders began to agree that children not only needed a place to go when they are not in school, but also the time could be used productively, the notion of afterschool began to change one community at a time.

In 2001, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation commissioned a study of the afterschool landscape in Iowa. The study noted "direct opposition to afterschool programs is weak, but so is support (State Public Policy Group, 2001)." Barriers included bleak

state financing, state human resource challenges, and awareness of afterschool needs and benefits recognized only by stakeholders.

In the years following the 2001 study, a formal network began to develop through the work of the national Afterschool Alliance and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The Afterschool Alliance began to engage organizations in policy discussions with a goal of creating a state afterschool network that could affect the development of formal statewide policy and funding for afterschool in Iowa. Education stakeholder groups, including the Boys and Girls Clubs, Child and Family Policy Center, Iowa Association of School Boards, Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa State Education Association, School Administrators of Iowa, and Youth Policy Institute engaged in conversations convened by State Public Policy Group (SPPG). Iowa State University Extension, additional afterschool program coordinators, the Iowa Department of Human Services, and YMCAs joined in the discussion as well.

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance was formally created in 2003 with program and fiscal management provided by the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII). Primary support was provided by a three-year grant received by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The first three years of the grant concentrated on initial network and identity development, as well as information gathering and coalition building throughout the state. The IAA also collected baseline data about programs and effective afterschool practices currently in use. At the end of the first year of the grant, the IAA included over forty organizational members and launched a website. The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) was closely engaged in the early stages of the Iowa Afterschool Alliance development. This provided an opportunity to keep relevant state agencies apprised of the issues regarding afterschool policy in Iowa. Activities in the following years included network development and partnership building. Advocacy training and policy development services were provided under contract with SPPG.

In 2006, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance hosted a Governor's Summit on Afterschool. The IAA, by then a maturing organization ready to have a strong voice in education policy, made strategic adjustments in their organization and priorities to begin to implement key strategies and activities. As the organization set priorities to focus on advocacy, research, and quality, the IAA contracted with SPPG to provide project management services, recognizing their capacity and experience in providing similar services in education, training, and coalition building. The Chrysalis Foundation was also asked to serve as the IAA's fiscal agent due to its 20-year history in Iowa supporting research and policy analysis as well as programming to girls in afterschool programs in the Des Moines metropolitan area. Primary financial support for the Iowa Afterschool Alliance is provided by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation through a second round of grant funding with financial and in-kind support from the Iowa General Assembly, a variety of state agencies and non-profit and for-profit organizations.

Since 2006, the IAA has worked to promote an afterschool policy framework that includes significant state leadership in policy and additional state funding for afterschool. The IAA has made deliberate strides in promoting the need for access to programs and program quality when designing and providing funding for aftershool. The Iowa Afterschool Alliance is led by a Board comprised of representatives of key stakeholder organizations that provide overall coordination of Alliance activities.

The IAA:

- **develops an annual policy agenda and assembles grassroots coalitions to support it,**
- **identifies barriers for afterschool programs in policy and funding,**
- **works with appropriate partners to resolve barriers,**
- **determines research priorities and assists staff in analysis of existing data,**
- **develops research instruments and methodology,**
- **disseminates data about afterschool,**
- **provides basic resources for programs to track outcome data,**
- **advocates for increasing coordinated quality efforts across systems,**
- **identifies best practices, core competencies, and program models, as appropriate; and creates opportunities for professional development.**

Iowa has historically supported afterschool programs using a ground-up approach emphasizing local service delivery. Programs are typically started by local stakeholders who have recognized an acute need in their community and have designed specific programs to meet those needs using local resources. The Iowa Afterschool Alliance recognizes that although these community-based investments are extremely meaningful and important, this structure does not consistently provide financial sustainability of model programs, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLCs) that require significant public-private investment matches that local program providers often struggle to accomplish. Additionally, with a piecemeal structure of Federal and state funding in place and communities operating individual programs with little assistance or oversight, it is often difficult to demonstrate, much less achieve, programming of quality.

The state has made significant advances in supporting afterschool in Iowa with a first-ever appropriation in 2006 and increased funding in 2007 and 2008, totaling $1 million, to fund high quality, affordable programs that provide a safe place and enriching activities for youth. This funding has provided support for innovative programs that not only assist students with academic issues, but also help them develop career paths, build social skills, and become engaged in their local community.

The Case for Afterschool in Iowa

Corporate Voices for Working Families estimates that parents' average work week outlasts their children's school week by as much as 25 hours. Iowa continually ranks among the states with the highest percentage of parents working outside the home. The 2006 *Iowa Youth Survey* found that 73% of sixth graders and 85% of eighth graders say they spend at least one to four hours unsupervised each day. Given the gap between parents' work schedules and children's school schedules, the need for safe opportunities for children and youth during out-of-school time is becoming more and more evident. The United States Department of Justice Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention reports that teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are three times more likely to use marijuana, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, and engage in sexual activity. In addition to providing safe environments for children and youth, afterschool programs are proven to expand student learning and success. The U.S. Department of Justice alse reports that teens not involved in afterschool programs are five times more likely to be D students, as compared to students involved in afterschool programs, 75% of whom are A or B students.

The Current State of Afterschool in Iowa

Current funding for afterschool in Iowa reflects the lack of comprehensive investment of state and Federal stakeholders in out-of-school time learning opportunities for youth. Currently, there are no formal systemic mechanisms in Iowa for ensuring school-age youth have access to the tools required for appropriate development and skill-building outside of the K-12 public education school system. The state has experienced notable achievements in the past few years that should be applauded, although there is far to go. In 2006 and 2007 the Iowa Legislature appropriated about $1 million to before and after school grants. Administered through a competitive grant process, these grants served more than 1100 students at 13 sites statewide in 2006. The greater need, however, is evidenced in the total dollars requested in 2007: over $4 million was requested by programs – four times the actual amount of funding available.

It is clear that while Iowa has realized a number of noteworthy achievements, the state still has a lot of work to do. In an informal 2007 professional development survey conducted by the Iowa School Age Care Alliance, current afterschool programs indicated that funding and grant opportunities were a significant and ongoing concern for them. Currently, only one Federal funding stream is devoted to afterschool programs: the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. These Federal funds are meant to supplement, not supplant, state funding for afterschool. However, until 2006, no state funds specifically supported afterschool programs in Iowa. Unlike many other states, Iowa relies heavily on parents to fund before and afterschool programs - about two-thirds of the costs of afterschool programs are paid by parents in Iowa (The Afterschool Alliance, 2006). Grant funding is innately unsustainable, and without a formal, state-level mechanism for afterschool funding, programs will continue to rely on such unpredictable funding sources.

[From Iowa Afterschool Alliance discussions across the state, communities have expressed loud and clear that ensuring youth are provided safe, enriching places to go after school should be a top state priority.]

This lack of significant Federal and state financial investment shifts reliance for funding programs to parent fees and unsustainable year-to-year private dollars. As expressed in the Iowa Afterschool Alliance statewide community forums, parent fees can help communities and families feel invested in afterschool programs. However, stakeholders also communicated the need for afterschool programs in the poorest of Iowa communities- where parents have less income and where parent fees present a significant barrier in providing afterschool opportunities for their youth. Additionally, parent- or student-assessed fees are less feasible for programs serving older youth in middle and high school, when students and parents are much less likely to pay fees if they feel that youth otherwise could stay home alone unsupervised.

State Trends and Momentum

As noted earlier, Iowa has enjoyed a historically superior education system, which has served as a model for other states. Iowa continues to face challenges in the field of education as the needs of students become increasingly complex and multi-faceted. Below are some of these challenges, to name only a few:

- With the changing face of student populations, there is a greater demand for English as a Second Language education. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Iowa's Hispanic population increased by nearly 40,000 people between 2000 and 2006. Pew also reports that nationally during this timeframe, in households that spoke a language other than English at home (which make up 97% of Hispanic foreign-born homes in the United States), 58% of children under 18 spoke English in the "less than very well" category.
- Physical education has suffered significantly with increased focus on academics during the school day. Today, Iowa faces an increased prevalence of childhood obesity. According to Shaping America's Youth, an initiative of Shaping America's Health Association for Weight Management and Obesity prevention, 37.5% of the sampled 3rd to 5th graders in Iowa are at risk for becoming overweight. ("Iowans Urged to Come Together..." August 6, 2007).
- Iowa faces a skilled workforce shortage, with 21st century skills becoming more important as demand for skilled workers rises. Iowa Workforce Development estimates that Iowa will add more than 204,000 new jobs by 2014. Additionally, the workers to fill these jobs are aging; almost 38% of employees in 2006 were 45 years of age or older, which further contributes to the need for young people to be prepared for the workforce.

Afterschool programs are the product of creative thinking in education and youth development. Current programs offer a wide range of programming options that include physical activity to combat childhood obesity and a variety of sports choices to teach children about the value of cooperation, hands-on activities in science and school-linked subjects to engage children in enrichment activities, and arts and cultural education through direct participation in community events and performances. These innovative programming ideas have gained momentum quickly because they are not only new and exciting, but also necessary as the education community continues to struggle to meet the educational needs of today's students. In some communities, former foundations of high school education such as shop and family and consumer science that teach real-world skills are now only offered in out-of-school time opportunities. Even gym class is slowly being pushed out of the traditional school day.

In 2008, the Iowa Legislature established the Healthy Kids Act which requires the Department of Education to adopt rules establishing nutritional content standards for foods and beverages sold or provided on the school grounds of any school district or accredited nonpublic school during the school day. It also requires that all physically able students be required to engage in regular physical activity; a minimum of thirty minutes per day for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and a minimum of 120 minutes per week for students in sixth through twelfth grades.

Iowa's support for afterschool has strengthened significantly in a relatively short period of time. The introduction of grant funding to support the building of a statewide afterschool network from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has allowed the issue of out-of-school time to move forward in the arenas of public policy and community support. Although financial support for before and afterschool grants and statewide network development has increased in the recent years, there is currently no statewide infrastructure for afterschool in a regulatory capacity. Although the Iowa Afterschool Alliance acts as a convening group for building capacity and providing basic technical assistance, there is currently no vehicle for implementing quality standards and professionalizing afterschool.

Through the work of the afterschool movement, there has been recognition of the need for additional support for afterschool by stakeholders. These stakeholders include parents, teachers, and community members with a vested interest in youth. With the implementation of the Five Strategies by these important stakeholder groups, the future development of afterschool will continue to gain momentum.

How Do We Get There?

Five Strategies for Ensuring Access to Affordable High-Quality Afterschool in Iowa

Iowa cannot continue to address the needs of youth and families in its historically piecemeal structure of service delivery and funding. Federal and state leaders, parents, youth, and local stakeholders must work to implement investments in afterschool that meet the comprehensive needs of our children, acknowledging that they are Iowa's future parents and workforce that are in need of 21st Century skills to thrive in adulthood.

In order for Iowa to best prepare its students, we must implement the following five strategies:

Develop policies and sustainable funding to construct a statewide infrastructure that systemically strives to increase the accessibility and quality of afterschool programming

An investment by the state of Iowa will benefit afterschool significantly in a number of ways. One necessary component of a statewide strategy for afterschool is the engagement of prominent leadership at the state level. This will require the creation of a state-level leadership system and significant policy infrastructure building. This state leadership system must engage high-level decision makers from those state agencies that represent the interest of children and families. This state-level commitment will require a change in statewide policies to encourage stakeholders to think beyond their individual roles. These leaders will focus on eliminating traditional organizational and policy barriers that stifle opportunities for access to afterschool programs (such as rules and regulations that discourage collaboration or innovations). The leadership "team" will be tasked with making recomendations about policy, funding, and quality outcomes.

A state-level infrastructure of policy, funding, administration, oversight, and leadership will present opportunities to partner and leverage other state priorities such as school day educational initiatives, and drug and alcohol prevention. The institution of funding streams that promote sustainability and quality programming are also necessary. Policy leaders also must assess barriers to the provision of quality afterschool in Iowa by conducting an analysis of assessment and outcome models to ensure success. When funding is not consistent, and creativity is put on hold as programs scramble to locate funding, the provision of quality programming can suffer. With state leadership and investments, quality afterschool programs will thrive with specific goal and outcome requirements. The implementation of accountability standards helps demonstrate success for ongoing and new funding opportunities.

State Level Infrastructure:

- **Representatives from state agencies which work to support children, families, and communities**
- **Creates policy for afterschool programming**
- **Creates and manages funding streams that provide continuous, sustainable options for programs throughout the state**
- **Creates and manages quality standards and assessments for afterschool programs**

Ensure afterschool is community-driven

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to designing afterschool programs. To be effective, programs must be supportive of the unique needs of the community in which it serves. It is important for afterschool programs to be designed and sustained at the local level to ensure that each community's unique needs are being addressed to ensure maximum success and sustainability.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Transportation needs for rural areas**
- **Bilingual staff for areas with a high population of students learning English as a second language**
- **Extended service hours in areas where parents work varying shifts**
- **Providing afterschool opportunities for high-school age youth in communities where other options do not exist.**

Additionally, service delivery at a local level provides for strategic partnering opportunities and linkages for schools, community-based organizations, and businesses that may not be realized at the state level. These types of partnerships increase opportunities to best leverage Federal, state, local and private resources, while at the same time meeting the individualized needs of the community.

It is also important that afterschool programs are driven by the community, and recognizing the individual needs of the communities in which they serve. The Jabari Gamba afterschool program at McKinstry Elementary School in Waterloo serves African-American children entering the 3rd grade with an identified family history of alcohol and/or drug use. The students remain in the program through the 5th grade. Students are taught and modeled 10 core skills to help them achieve classroom success. African history is also taught alongside the core skills. Primary components of the Jabari Gamba philosophy are pride, self-discipline, effective school skills and study habits, love and understanding, and healthy lifestyle choices. The belief is that these basic skills will develop healthy and confident children, with less dependence on substances, safer neighborhoods, less delinquency and violent crime, and better schools.

Develop and implement common standards of quality

Iowa's youth are faced with many demands and challenges – more rigorous academic standards are expected within the current school day, and in Iowa, most parents are out of the home working for several hours after the school day is over. Therefore, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance promotes high quality programming for youth that leverages the learning day and links with the greater community. Afterschool programs not only provide a safe environment for kids when parents are not home, but they are in a unique position to foster relationships among youth, parents, and their communities to maximize learning opportunities.

Promote effective collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders

Many communities around the state note a lack of partnerships and collaborative efforts as major barriers to getting new programs off the ground, as well as keeping doors open. Effective collaboration among stakeholders can provide superior funding and programming opportunities. By maximizing economies of scale in communities, organizations can pool resources and experience to coordinate assets and accumulate additional capital as needed. This idea of true collaboration ensures the highest quality programming at the lowest price, made possible by combining funding sources, equipment, infrastructure, staff, and supplies. This collaboration also promotes the opportunities for the maximum number of students to be served, ideally limiting barriers to access and pertinent programming. It is important to recognize that building goodwill and true collaboration takes time and effort, however, these effective partnerships have been shown to provide a sense of pride for entire communities as they work together to promote the success of their youngest residents.

> "[A program with] outcome measurements [is a quality program]"
> - Parent

To ensure programs are achieving desired outcomes for youth and families, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance recommends development of common quality standards for all afterschool programs in the state. According to the National AfterSchool Association, there are five components that define quality afterschool programming:

1. Positive Human Relationships – Programs should promote positive relationships between young people and adults, and young people and their peers. Programs should have a ratio of adults to youth no higher than 1:15.
2. Effective Programming – Programming should be tailored to meet the needs and interests of parents, youth, and their peers. Activities should be youth-centered and age-appropriate, and should include academic and youth development goals and outcomes.
3. Appropriate Environment – Programs should be welcoming and safe with the appropriate furnishings, supplies, and materials.
4. Strong Partnerships with Young People, Families, Schools, and Communities – Programs should utilize appropriate strategies to engage all stakeholders. This includes developing regular communication with parents, connecting with teachers, and engaging community organizations and businesses.
5. Effective Staff and Administration – Programs should provide ongoing training opportunities for their staff and volunteers, have sufficient and sustainable funding, and have clear policies for everyone involved in the program.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Bureau, 2006.

Afterschool programs around Iowa often benefit from community support and collaboration. One example is how the Galaxy Youth Center of Grinnell, Iowa has succeeded in utilizing community partnerships to offer a variety of beneficial programming to the youth it serves. The program brings in staff from the Faulkner Gallery and Grinnell College monthly to expand the artistic and cultural experiences of their youth participants. A partnership between the Iowa Department of Human Services, Juvenile Court Services, and Grinnell/Newburg School District provides an Aggression Replacement Training and Skill Streaming course offered free of charge to parents and teens. In addition, partnership with Grinnell Eagles Lodge #2545 has allowed the Galaxy Youth Center to expand its programming capacity to serve all Grinnell youth in grades 5-12.

> "We are fortunate because we have a lot of organizations around us that have helped us succeed. Each agency and everything you touch has resources that we try to use"
> - Des Moines Afterschool Provider

Provide technical assistance and resources to communities, families, and afterschool programs

As programs are developed and maintained at a community level, certain best practices and models should be employed to encourage success and sustainability. Many communities have an interest in providing afterschool programs, but lack the expertise and supports to start and sustain effective programming. Early in afterschool program development, it is important to provide access to resources and technical assistance to assist programs in achieving desired outcomes as well as providing training and information to families and community stakeholders on how best to support the new initiatives. Technical assistance and resources may be provided in a variety of forms including staff development, curriculum development, and quality and safety standards. Afterschool quality training and technical assistance should align appropriately with other generally accepted child-serving indicators, such as the Youth Program Quality Assessment and others used throughout the afterschool and school age care fields. In order to maximize opportunities to provide quality programming through school day linkages, afterschool providers should be trained as educators and taught to function as part of an education team, providing a continuum of learning and development opportunities.

True change can only be realized with parents, youth, local, state, and Federal stakeholders initiating significant efforts. All stakeholders must commit to recognizing barriers to accessing high-quality, affordable afterschool programming for all youth (no matter their age) and work together to overcome these barriers. With coordination of this collaborative effort and technical assistance provided by the IAA, important policy changes can be implemented and the positive effects on youth and communities almost immediately realized.

The Role of Parents

Parents have plenty of reasons to be interested in the implementation of the Five Strategies to increase afterschool opportunities for Iowa's youth. Afterschool programs not only provide a safe place for kids to go when they are not in school, but participation in programs is shown to improve academic and other development outcomes for kids, something acknowledged and valued by parents. Programs assert that when parents are connected to the afterschool program, the child is more likely to stay involved and make progress. Parents of children not participating in afterschool programs have also acknowledged that their own children have benefited from their peers' positive development. Afterschool and other education stakeholders assert that parents staying involved in kids' lives and experiences are another key requirement in providing meaningful afterschool opportunities. Parents must also recognize the importance of their role and voice in the process. Without parent advocates that are willing to tell their story, voice their support and recognize their family's afterschool needs, sustainable, continual sources for afterschool funding will continue to elude our communities.

In addition, parents want to be involved in their children's learning, but often face barriers such as transportation and availability. Afterschool programs often offer parents a more flexible opportunity to be involved in their children's educational activities. According to the Afterschool Alliance, "research shows that parent involvement in afterschool programs provides the same benefits to children, families, and programs as parent involvement in the regular school day" (The Afterschool Alliance, 2008). Parental involvement in afterschool not only improves the school relationships and outcomes, but afterschool can link families with other services and supports in the community. This is especially important for underserved populations, such as immigrants, low-income families, single-parent households, and others intimidated by the traditional educational structure.

According to the Afterschool Alliance, the benefits of collaborations between afterschool programs, school, and the community include:

- **Greater relevance of curriculum for students**
- **Increased student responsibility for learning**
- **Improved linkages between school and community**
- **Improved problem-solving, teaming, higher order thinking, time management, and other vital skills that benefit students' school achievement and workplace readiness**
- **Expanded learning environments**
- **Greater motivation of reluctant learners**
- **Enhanced problem solving and conflict management skills**
- **Reduced behavior and truancy problems**

- The Bridge Connecting Schools and Communities, 2007.

> "If you ask parents for their money, they want organization and discipline in a program. They look at these things before they lay out their money. We need this point of quality to continue to get community support"
>
> - Eastern Iowa Provider

> "We have face-to-face meetings with the families and discuss what they want to see in our programming. We look at the assets that the families have and then try to move in that direction"
>
> – Central Iowa Provider

Afterschool in the Community

Afterschool programs have historically developed partnerships within their communities to survive and thrive. These partnerships usually involve school districts, community centers and faith-based organizations. As afterschool programs become a greater part of the solution to the educational and developmental challenges that Iowa youth face, there will be an even bigger need for collaboration that is broadened to other parts of the community that have been involved in afterschool at a lesser degree in the past. These potential partners may include, but are not limited to: law enforcement, mayors and city council, and businesses. All of these entities stake a claim in the importance of healthy and safe youth development. Afterschool programs will benefit greatly from the collaboration and new perspectives that public safety, city government, and the business community will bring to the table.

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance promotes efforts to meaningfully engage parents in afterschool programs. Programs can incorporate various strategies and practices to support and encourage parent participation, including regular communication, an open environment that welcomes parent feedback, collaborations with community organizations, and linkages with the school (The Afterschool Alliance, 2008).

The Role of Iowa's Youth

The true experts in identifying and implementing the future direction for afterschool in Iowa, and the largest group of stakeholders directly engaged in afterschool programming are Iowa's youth. It is the responsibility of Iowa's youth to create awareness about their needs and experiences. It is up to all other stakeholders to truly listen to the youth in their communities and provide opportunities for these youth to engage in community leadership. It is important to ensure that opportunities for youth to be leaders in afterschool planning for the state are meaningful and beneficial to those that are giving their time and energy to the process. In the youth involvement and development field, youth participation and involvement in education and community decision-making is often seen as a value-added educational approach. In partnership with Des Moines Public Schools and Des Moines Parks and Recreation, the Children's Center of Mercy Hospital in Des Moines operates a program focused on the physical fitness of youth. Activities are determined by student surveys at participatory middle and elementary school sites in the Des Moines area. Hip-hop dance, basketball, and yoga have been popular activities.

When is student involvement meaningful?

- **When students are allies and partners with adults in improving schools.**
- **When students have the training and authority to create real solutions to the challenges that schools face in learning, teaching, and leadership.**
- **When schools, including educators and administrators, are accountable to the direct consumers – students themselves.**
- **When student-adult partnerships are a major component of every sustainable, responsive, and systemic approach to transforming schools.**

When is student involvement not meaningful?

- **When students are regarded as passive recipients in schools, or as empty vessels to be filled with teachers' knowledge.**
- **When the contributions of students are minimized or tokenized by adults by asking students to "rubber stamp" ideas developed by adults, or by inviting students to sit on committees without real power or responsibility.**
- **When student perspectives, experiences or knowledge are filtered with adult interpretations.**
- **When students are given problems to solve without adult support or adequate training; or students are trained in leadership skills without opportunities to take on real leadership roles in their school.**

– *Meaningful Student Involvement Guide to Students as Partners in School Change, 2005.*

"For cities and towns across America, these unsupervised hours after school ends mean both heightened risk and missed opportunities"

- National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, 2007.

The Role of Local Leaders

In setting strategic direction for the expansion of afterschool opportunities for Iowa's youth, the most common, yet surmountable barrier is a lack of community collaboration. Schools, community-based organizations, elected officials, businesses, and faith-based organizations must work together and share information in order to create real opportunities to progress toward a common goal. Even in small communities, local leaders often speak what seems like different languages when it comes to youth and community priorities, but only when a commitment is made toward true collaboration, can the entire community flourish. It is up to these local stakeholders to become leaders in community engagement and establishing policies. This task does not just fall on the shoulders of leaders that are offering services or have known capacities to assist those offering services, rather it also extends to Mayors, Police Departments, City Councils, Public Works, Museums, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, City Clerks, Public Health, local Workforce Development, and other municipal leaders that have a responsibility to make children, youth and families a community-wide priority. Local leaders also have access to flexible funds that can leverage additional resources that typical youth-serving organizations do not have when responding to these community needs. It is important that these leaders recognize that opportunities to positively impact youth do not just occur "bell to bell," when participating in a community activity, or during church functions, rather youth are constantly learning from those around them through the opportunities provided. The creation of connections and reciprocal relationships will provide the framework for the implementation of model opportunities and funding for afterschool programming.

The Role of Federal and State Leaders

Federal and state policy leaders have a tremendous responsibility in providing policy leadership that reflects the importance of afterschool opportunities. This requires a true understanding of afterschool programs around the state and the unique issues that affect Iowa's families and communities. State and Federal policy leaders also are responsible for recognizing and acting upon meaningful data about afterschool and education when designing policy and funding frameworks. It is the responsibility of these leaders to maximize opportunities to implement afterschool programming as a vehicle to provide youth development services. Additionally, leaders must work in conjunction with other priorities such as prevention, "bell to bell" education, and child care, and create a single, sustainable source of funding for afterschool. At the same time that new and efficient funding streams are being established, it is important to maintain the current institutional funding for afterschool, as it is the only public source of funding that many communities understand and count upon. By designing new policy and funding frameworks, state and Federal leaders will set an example by instituting policy supports for community-led afterschool.

The Role of the Supporting Student Success State Leadership Team

Supporting Student Success (S3) is a policy-focused effort that brings together top-level state officials with the goal to institutionalize afterschool policy and funding for all Iowa children with a specific focus on middle and high school aged youth. The S3 State Leadership Team consists of representatives from the Office of the Governor, Iowa Afterschool Alliance, Iowa Community Empowerment, Iowa General Assembly, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Attorney General's Office, the Iowa Department of Human Services, and Iowa Workforce Development. The work is supported in Iowa by the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governors Association and National Conference of State Legislatures, with financial support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The vision of the S3 State Leadership Team centers on the notion that the state of Iowa must play a strong leadership role in future afterschool efforts statewide. The S3 State Leadership Team recognizes that it is critical to develop an approach that focuses on community, family, and youth leadership, and that the state has a responsibility in establishing a sustainable governance structure that includes goals, accountability measures, standards, and a common vision that ultimately leads to extended learning opportunities for all children and youth in Iowa. The S3 State Leadership Team will align their work with the Five Strategies to assist in creating a policy framework at the state level to institutionalize afterschool policy and funding.

The Role of the Iowa Afterschool Alliance

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance best serves as coordinator of the initiative to raise awareness about afterschool in Iowa. It is extremely important that all of the traditional and contemporary partners stay informed about afterschool opportunities, challenges, and overall policy in the state in order to stay connected and supportive of a statewide effort. The IAA can have conversations and move efforts in ways that others cannot, thanks to its structure and built-in networks. In the coming years, the IAA will focus on the coordination of the implementation of the Five Strategies by parents; youth; local, state, and Federal leaders; and the S3 State Leadership Team. The IAA will be charged with creating pathways for information sharing between all stakeholder groups and providing leadership and support to monitor and produce outcomes to continually expand the breadth of the effort. The Iowa Afterschool Alliance will also partner with agencies as appropriate to provide necessary technical assistance to programs.

Themes from the Iowa Afterschool Alliance Blueprint Forums held in Council Bluffs, Des Moines, Iowa City, and Fort Dodge during 2007 and 2008:

- **Youth of all ages face nearly universal risks when left unsupervised after school, but there are limited opportunities for older youth in middle and high school.**
- **There is high demand for afterschool programming, but a number of factors such as parent-assessed fees and lack of transportation present barriers to access.**
- **To be successful, programs must have community buy-in and parental involvement.**
- **Funding for programming is competitive and many programs struggle to find sufficient and sustainable sources to fund high quality programming.**
- **Public-private partnerships are integral to sustaining programming.**
- **Program quality is inconsistent across the state and across programs.**

Next Steps

The Blueprint for Afterschool is intended to be used by afterschool stakeholders as a tool to transform afterschool policy at all levels. Successful implementation of the Five Strategies and providing 'afterschool for all' depends upon shared ownership and leadership by all stakeholders that recognize the importance of afterschool to Iowa's future. No one stakeholder group can successfully implement and sustain any of the Five Strategies by themselves. True change will require the dedication of parents, youth, community leaders, and local, state, and Federal leaders, with the assistance of the Iowa Afterschool Alliance and the Supporting Student Success State Leadership Team. Despite the need to have all stakeholders involved, it is imperative that decision makers provide early commitments toward funding and policy changes for afterschool, indicating future support.

Additionally, the Five Strategies should not be considered mutually exclusive, but rather symbiotic. Each strategy works in tandem with the others to transform the policy landscape of afterschool in our state: if one strategy is ignored, the implementation of the other strategies will be adversely affected.

An over-arching strategy for building a clear, distinctive coalition voice must be coordinated with the implementation of the five strategies. This should combine the work of the Supporting Student Success State Leadership Team, the strength of the existing Iowa Afterschool Alliance network, and the strong voices of parents, youth, community stakeholders, and supportive state, local, and Federal leaders. This coalition support will jumpstart the policy transformation that is the goal of the Five Strategies.

It will be important for advocates to consider the implementation of the Five Strategies to be an ongoing process toward building a solid foundation for afterschool in Iowa. This will require several years spent developing strong partnerships and advocacy networks. It will be fundamentally important for advocates to avoid splintering any messages from the Five Strategies; otherwise, continued piecemeal progress will endanger the larger movement striving to provide afterschool for all. Only when the state of Iowa's policymakers, families, communities, and youth commit to working together to create positive solutions for access to high quality, affordable afterschool programs, Iowa's goals of public safety, academic achievement, and the next generation's preparedness to lead our nation in the global economy be realized.

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IOWA AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE

Iowa's Blueprint for Afterschool is intended to start conversations, raise awareness and provide a plan for next steps for afterschool around the state. This will require individuals, communities, and policy leaders to work together to overcome barriers in providing accessible, high-quality opportunities for children and youth when they are not in school.

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