

The Collaborative for Building After School Systems: Measuring the Success of After-School Programs and Systems

INITIATIVE ONE

GOAL:

To identify and develop standard measurement tools that hold programs accountable for quality, that test the productivity and success of programs, and that have the potential to demonstrate after-school's contribution to the successful development of all children and youth.

RATIONALE:

In order for more children and teens to benefit from participating in high quality after-school programs, the after-school field needs a set of practical and cost efficient measurement tools to gauge the effectiveness of programs. These must relate directly to the goals and objectives of after-school programs. They must be easy for local systems to adopt. They also must be judged trustworthy by organizations which fund after-school programs.

If the after-school field fails to establish its own standards and tools for evaluation, programs will continue to be evaluated using the standardized test scores by which academic success is judged in schools. This form of measurement neither acknowledges nor tests the important social and developmental benefits of after-school programming. It's important for the after-school field to establish its own set of measurements – separate from those imposed by schools – to demonstrate how after-school contributes directly and inferentially to the success of students and their high school completion.

Gaining access to standard evaluation tools will make program providers and after-school system builders more accountable for their work and the quality of their programs. As they increase their accountability and demonstrate their benefits, after-school systems should receive additional resources.

STRATEGY:

While the development of a comprehensive set of measures is a critical step in the process of bringing quality after-school programs to scale, the task requires more time and resources than are currently available. Therefore, CBASS proposes a two stage strategy:

Step One: Gain support from CBASS partner cities for the adoption of a few practical measures of productivity and success that demonstrate after-schools' accountability, and illustrate its value to kids, families and other stakeholders. Adopt these measures in CBASS cities and other jurisdictions

Step Two: Secure resources for the development of an evaluation matrix that differentiates measures of productivity and success at the student, program and system levels, and at the elementary, middle and high school levels. This matrix will also propose indicators of success and measurement strategies.