

The Collaborative for Building After School Systems: Strengthen Connections Between School and After- School Learning

INITIATIVE TWO

GOAL:

To strengthen the connections between school-day activities and outcomes and the out-of-school learning experiences of children and youth.

RATIONALE:

As they work to increase the number of high quality after-school programs, after-school systems must partner with schools to ensure that after-school activities reinforce and complement, but do not replicate the experiences of the school day. Research shows that in order to thrive, children need a continuum of learning experiences that are challenging, varied, and mutually reinforcing. Schools acknowledge that they can't provide this alone. High quality after-school programs create student environments that are distinct from the school day, with less formal opportunities for kids to do hands-on work and creative thinking. These programs provide children with the variety of social, emotional, physical and intellectual learning opportunities and supports they need to complete high school and succeed academically.

To provide the full range of experiences all kids need, after-school system builders must partner with schools to promote greater coordination and alignment around after-school program content, staffing strategies, and logistics such as transportation and space sharing. As school systems invest in reform efforts (i.e. NCLB, extended day, small schools, charter schools, community schools), this is a critical time for after-school systems to redefine themselves in relation to these efforts.

STRATEGY:

In order to strengthen the connections between the school and after-school experiences of children and youth, CBASS partners will embark on a three-step strategy:

Step One: Conduct research, in CBASS partner cities and the field, in three areas that influence connections: after-school program content, staffing and logistics.

Step Two: Convene from two cities a taskforce of stakeholders (including education leaders, elected officials, funders, and after-school providers) who will review research findings and make recommendations on proposed strategies

Step Three: Create guides for the field that show how to strengthen connections around program content, staffing and logistics.