



**Forum on
National Service and
Youth Development in
Out-of-School Time**

**Boston, Massachusetts
June 10, 2004**

Forum Cosponsors:

The Afterschool Alliance
Citizen Schools
Boston Children's Museum
Massachusetts *2020*
Massachusetts Service Alliance
Massachusetts Campus Compact
National Collaboration for Youth
The Afterschool Corporation
Corporation for National and Community Service
Tufts University Center for Children
Tufts University College of Citizenship and Public
Service

About ICP:

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a non-profit social change organization that provides expertise, ideas, information, and advocacy support in the United States and around the world to develop and strengthen policies and programs that promote political and civic engagement through service. In 2003, ICP hosted a forum in Washington, D.C. on the impacts of national service on three critical social issues -- youth development in out-of-school hours, rural development, and helping seniors live independently. This year, three leadership conferences are planned to focus on service as a strategy in each of these issue areas, culminating in a Congressional policy briefing in December 2004.

This report was prepared by Deborah Jospin and Shirley Sagawa, sagawa/jospin.

Cover photo courtesy of Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL).



Introduction

On June 10, 2004, Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) and its cosponsors brought together leaders in the national service and youth development fields for a day-long forum held at the Children's Museum and Citizen Schools offices in Boston. The Boston meeting built on the work that began in May 2003, when a smaller group of leaders in these two fields began talking about the impact national service has had on providing opportunities for young people during out-of-school time.

The goal for the Boston meeting was to take this rich dialogue to the next level – to illustrate the potential of service as a strategy for youth development; encourage the youth and service communities to exchange information about what works; and inspire leaders in the two fields to work together more closely. An equally important goal was to develop a set of policy recommendations on national service and youth development in out-of-school time. These recommendations will be presented to Congressional policy makers at an ICP-sponsored forum in December, along with recommendations on national service and rural development, and national service and independent living for seniors that are being developed at similar leadership meetings this fall.



Opening Session

Susan Stroud, the executive director of ICP, set the context for the day's discussions. She noted that it is a well-known fact that children of all ages are more likely to engage in risky behaviors during the out-of-school hours when their parents are at work or otherwise unavailable and they are left on their own. Afterschool programs provide safe spaces for young people to be during those hours and opportunities for them to develop leadership skills and self-confidence. But high quality afterschool programs are in short supply. Twice as many parents want access to these programs for their children than are available.

Stroud posed the questions "what role should national service play in helping solve this problem? And what recommendations would the group make to policymakers and funders to expand the impact of national service on children and youth in out-of-school time?"

Eric Schwarz, the founder and President of Citizen Schools, then welcomed everyone to the Children's Museum, the home base for his program. Schwarz suggested that the key questions for consideration should be how to take successful afterschool programs to scale, and how to harness the energy and commitment of countless volunteers who can provide afterschool support and serve as mentors and role models for young people.

According to Schwarz, "study after study says the one big thing holding back afterschool from being the next frontier of education reform is staffing," a problem related to the part-time nature of the work and the low wages and negligible benefits. He sees AmeriCorps as a solution to that problem by providing trained, full-time or part-time members to "fortify" the staff and creating a pipeline for future afterschool professionals.

Citizen Schools

Eric Schwarz co-founded **Citizen Schools** seven years ago to provide an afterschool program targeted at middle school youth. Apprenticeship opportunities form the core of Citizen Schools. These are led by 2000 citizen volunteers -- lawyers, business people, architects, chefs, grandmothers – anyone with a skill or trade who is willing to commit 10 two-hour sessions over ten weeks “to do something amazing with a team of 7 or 8 middle-school kids.” Lawyers work with them to develop a mock trial; architects help them to redesign public spaces; chefs teach them to create gourmet meals. Projects are designed to benefit the community. In addition to apprenticeships, the program includes homework support and explorations around the city, including college campuses, as well programming to build writing skills and data analysis skills.

At ICP’s May 2003 Forum, Eric Schwarz discussed the staffing challenges his afterschool program had faced. Initially the program was led by “typical afterschool program staff, which is to say part-time, low wages, no benefits, and high turnover,” according to Schwarz. Today the program is staffed by teaching fellows in a program designed to make part-time jobs into full-time jobs by marrying the position with a second part-time job. Through this new model, 35 people have been hired full-time – many of them supported by AmeriCorps. In addition to serving in the afterschool program, they work in the morning at a museum or school. As a result, they enter a full time-career track with benefits. The program has added a master’s degree component for the teaching fellows through a partnership with Lesley University in Cambridge, MA.

Schwarz set out the three questions forum participants were asked to think about throughout the day:

- How can we create pathways to youth professions from youth service programs?
- How can we best use service as a strategy to improve the quality and quantity of youth programs operating during out-of- school time?
- How can we use youth service as a tool for promoting positive youth development?

Forum participants would have an opportunity to explore those questions in depth later in the afternoon.

Panel of Experts

Well-respected program directors from around the country participated in a panel discussion moderated by Marta Rosa, Executive Director of the Cambridge Child Care Resource Center. The panel members shared information about how their programs leverage national and community service resources to increase their impact. For example, Hands On Atlanta’s partnership with AmeriCorps has enabled it to place 145 full-time dedicated and well-trained tutors, mentors, and volunteer coordinators into Atlanta’s public school system. These AmeriCorps members also coordinate service learning

Panel members:

Marta Rosa
Executive Director
Cambridge Child Care
Resource Center

Gary Turner
*Deputy Executive
Director*
Hands On Atlanta

Mary Gunn
Executive Director
Generations
Incorporated

Cynthia Billings
Chief Executive Officer
PlusTime New
Hampshire

John Reiff
Director
Community Service
Learning Program at
Commonwealth College
University of
Massachusetts/Amherst

Steven Spaloss
Deputy Director
City Year/Boston

opportunities for middle and high school students, helping to foster a sense of self in the students, as well as an ethic of service and civic responsibility. PlusTime New Hampshire's AmeriCorps*VISTA members provide afterschool programs in New Hampshire with fundraising assistance, technical assistance and training. PlusTime's partnership with AmeriCorps*NCCC has helped afterschool programs throughout the state maintain, and in many cases improve, their physical spaces. The other program directors had equally compelling stories to tell about the power of service to transform the work they do in the out-of-school hours.

The program directors also answered critical questions from the moderator and audience:

Can your programs be replicated?

Yes, by taking a community approach and making sure that programs address needs within the community. It would be a mistake to assume a "cookie cutter" approach to replication. At the same time, there must be a set of core elements that the programs share. It is also important for programs to share tools and information to help shape the newer sites. Replication works best in places with strong local community support and a strong service infrastructure.

How do you construct programs that address the needs of youth when the youth themselves don't want to participate?

You start with a powerful, well-trained staffing structure that looks like and includes people from the community. In

addition, programs should be different from school. Programs must be designed to provide the young people with positive experiences and stable relationships. In some cases, you need to go where the young people are – to the parks and community centers where they congregate and play during their out-of-school time.

What are the challenges of integrating staff with paid staff members working side by side with service volunteers?

This is a staff training issue. It is important for full-time volunteers to be treated as equals to staff. At the same time, there are issues that arise when, for example, a 10-month AmeriCorps member steps into a setting where other community members have worked for years. Clarification of roles and a thoughtful appreciation of everyone’s contribution to the greater good will help meet this challenge.

How do you reconcile funder outcomes with community-based needs?

It is all about developing and sustaining long-term relationships with the funders. Most importantly, make sure you have done your homework by researching funders in the community. No matter what their offers of support, you must be clear that their needs and goals align with your needs and goals. Negotiate and be clear about each party’s needs and outcomes. Finally, look to your funders as a resource for becoming stronger.

How do your programs access mental health support services for the youth that need it?

Collaborate with organizations that provide mental health services. Connect with other programs that do this work.

City Year

City Year’s Young Heroes program uses 100 of its 18 to 24 year-old AmeriCorps members to lead more than 1,000 middle-school age youth in 12 cities in service-learning activities over 15 Saturdays. A typical Saturday program provides an educational workshop on an issue – such as homelessness or domestic violence – and then engages the youth in a related service project. In addition to providing all the staffing for the program, the young AmeriCorps members serve as positive role models for the “Young Heroes” they lead.

Hands On Atlanta

More than 52% of all Atlanta elementary school students read below the national norm. Georgia ranks last in the nation in the percentage of students completing high school.

Since 1994, **Hands On Atlanta** has worked to address these issues and to improve the quality of education for metro Atlanta's public school students through direct citizen involvement.

With 145 AmeriCorps members of all ages, HOA hosts the largest AmeriCorps program in the Southeast. Its members serve as teaching assistants, tutors, mentors, service learning coordinators and volunteer coordinators at Atlanta's elementary, middle and high schools.

Commonwealth College, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Over the past four years, students in Community Service Learning (CSL) courses at the **University of Massachusetts, Amherst**, have been involved with a broad range of afterschool programs with children and youth. In the courses, students learn about such issues as child and adolescent development, mentoring relationships, and violence and conflict resolution.

In their community service, students have worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, structured afterschool programs at elementary and middle schools, created an informal after-school program at the Town of Amherst's community center, and developed a program for young men of color run by the Men's Resource Center.

These programs have been partially supported by funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and Massachusetts Campus Compact, including AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers provided through **Massachusetts Campus Compact**. A course on mentoring is being designed for Spring 2005 which will be taught by staff of Big Brothers Big Sisters and will place students as mentors in that program.

Experience Corps

Experience Corps has done much to change the face of “senior service.” Operating in 13 cities across the country, Experience Corps members (over the age of 55) serve as tutors and mentors to children in schools and in afterschool programs, teaching the young people to read and to develop the confidence and skills they need to succeed in school and in life.

Research shows that Experience Corps boosts student academic performance, helps schools and youth-serving organizations become more successful, and strengthens the ties between these institutions and the surrounding neighborhoods. In Boston, for example, Experience Corps members and young people often serve together, cleaning up neighborhoods, participating in national days of service, and performing other community activities that bridge the generations and strengthen community institutions.

PlusTime New Hampshire

The founders of **PlusTime New Hampshire** are passionate about helping programs, communities, and individuals create and sustain high quality programs for school-aged youth during the out-of-school hours. PlusTime helps communities throughout New Hampshire identify the needs of their young people and mobilize local resources by providing direct support, consultation, training, information, and funding assistance.

Thanks to its partnership with AmeriCorps, PlusTime has greatly expanded its impact in the state. PlusTime AmeriCorps members often work directly with young people, acting as mentors, running homework labs or drop in centers, and helping them engage in their communities.

In the past two years, PlusTime AmeriCorps members have created a youth chorus, involved youth in food drives and soup kitchens, and organized local community celebrations. AmeriCorps members also help host sites become more involved in their communities by recruiting local volunteers to help with programs. Members serve on local coalitions, and talk with school groups and community groups to increase the visibility of host-sites and promote program involvement with the entire scope of the community.



Public Private Partnerships

Massachusetts is an acknowledged leader in both national service and afterschool programs, actively engaging its colleges and universities, state and local government, faith-based groups, entrepreneurial nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. What helps create this rich climate? Chris Gabrieli, co-founder and Chair of Massachusetts *2020* and Chair of Boston's Afterschool for All Partnership, addressed the forum, sharing what works in Massachusetts. Gabrieli believes in the power of national service and afterschool programming, saying that "mystical things" happen with kids when the two are combined. He attributes the great success of afterschool programming in Massachusetts to the following:

- A commitment to collaborative public/private partnerships;
- A fertile environment for social entrepreneurs;
- Intentionality about program outcomes and replication;
- A strong field of afterschool programs that benefit from national services resources, all of which believe that schools alone are not enough for successful youth development;
- Community networks in which the civic leaders know and trust one another, and in which afterschool programming is a civic priority; and
- A connection between afterschool initiatives and education reform.

Gabrieli noted one added benefit from engaging certain volunteers in afterschool programs – the creation of new advocates for children. "Some volunteers think that they will change lives just by being in the room with them," he said. "But others see that these are good kids who are not getting the same chances as my kids."

Massachusetts 2020

Massachusetts 2020 is a non-profit foundation focused on expanding educational and economic opportunities for children and families across Massachusetts. The demand for afterschool programs in the state far exceeds the supply, with parents of at least 52,000 children wanting more afterschool programming for their children. Founded in 2000 by Chris Gabrieli, a civic and business entrepreneur, and Jennifer Davis, former Executive Director of the Mayor of Boston's 2:00-to-6:00 Afterschool Initiative, the foundation brings an entrepreneurial spirit to addressing the problems facing children and families.

Massachusetts 2020 has built a network of public and private collaborations, and assembled a dedicated team of people from diverse professional and personal backgrounds to implement its projects. For example, its Middle School Initiative expands Citizen School's afterschool apprenticeship model to communities throughout the state. This five-year initiative will launch 10 school-based programs serving as many as 2,500 students by 2007 in communities including Worcester, Framingham, Lowell, Malden, Springfield, and New Bedford. The foundation's Keeping Kids On Track campaign is a partnership with five United Way Organizations across the state, designed to increase the public's commitment to afterschool, making sure that civic and political leaders see this programming as a top civic priority.



Small Group Discussions

In the afternoon, the meeting participants were divided into three smaller discussion groups. The hour-and-a-half sessions were designed to tap the brainpower of the participants to enhance the knowledge base about service as a strategy for youth development during out-of-school time.

Each participant received briefing memos on the three small group session topics that included background information, program models, and strategies suggested at last year's Forum. The task for these small group sessions was to determine: Are these the right strategies? What other strategies make sense? Which strategies are most promising? What concrete steps could happen right now to move this agenda forward? What could your organization do to help? At the end of the afternoon, the three groups met together to report out their findings, and to share their thoughts for the future.

Group 1 participants:	Group 2 participants:	Group 3 participants:
Nicole Boothman-Shepard, <i>Rhode Island Service Alliance</i>	Cynthia Billings, <i>PlusTime New Hampshire</i>	Mal Coles, <i>Corporation for National Service</i>
Barbara Canyes, <i>Massachusetts Campus Compact</i>	William Casey, <i>The After School Corporation</i>	David Crowley, <i>Generations United</i>
William Dandridge, <i>Lesley University</i>	Amy Cohen, <i>Learn and Serve America</i>	Elaine Fersh, <i>Community Matters</i>
Gail Daughtry, <i>Young Scholars Program</i>	Ellen Gannett, <i>National Institute for Out-of-School Time</i>	Deborah Hirsch, <i>Boston Higher Education Partnership</i>
Toni Franklin, <i>Peace Games</i>	Megan Hookey, <i>NRTA</i>	Melinda Hudson, <i>America's Promise</i>
Adrian Haugabrook, <i>Citizen Schools University</i>	Deb Jospin, <i>sagawa/jospin</i>	Suzanne Le Menestrel, <i>AED Center for Youth Development</i>
Sally Herrick, <i>New York State Office of Children and Family Services</i>	Susan Kirwan, <i>Massachusetts 2020</i>	Claudio Martinez, <i>Hyde Square Task Force</i>
Deborah Scire, <i>New Hampshire Campus Compact</i>	Don Mathis, <i>Boys & Girls Club of Harford County, MD</i>	Kristin McSwain, <i>Massachusetts Service Alliance</i>
Lisa Ulrich, <i>Citizen Schools National Teaching Fellows</i>	Debra McLaughlin, <i>Boston's After-School for All Partnership</i>	Dishon Mills, <i>Boston Public Schools</i>
Nancy Wilson, <i>Tufts University College of Citizenship and Public Service</i>	Elyse Rosenblum, <i>Civil Society Institute</i>	John Reiff, <i>Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst</i>
	Gary Turner, <i>Hands On Atlanta</i>	Julie Ryder, <i>Office of Sen. Edward Kennedy</i>
	Ronnie Mae Weiss, <i>The Harvard After School Initiative</i>	Shirley Sagawa, <i>sagawa/jospin</i>
		Eric Schwarz, <i>Citizen Schools</i>
		Lois Wainstock, <i>Tufts University Center for Children</i>

Creating pathways to youth professions from youth service

The challenge: While high quality afterschool programs offer important benefits to young people, too many youth programs are staffed by individuals who lack the training and experience that are important to quality. Studies of the human service workforce suggest that this condition is particularly the case in programs that serve low-income children. This situation is likely to get worse instead of better, according to research, as low pay, poor benefits, and burnout drive people from the profession – resulting in 40 percent turnover in child care programs. Almost half of human service workers describe their co-workers as only somewhat or not too qualified, and surveys of college students suggest interest in the field is low. Experts predict that the United States could soon face a critical shortage of quality workers who serve youth and others in need.

The opportunity: Each year, thousands of young people are introduced to the field of youth work through national and community service. The opportunity to explore future job and educational interests is the second most common reason given for joining AmeriCorps, and as a result of their experience, many Members' career plans become more community-oriented. Learn and Serve Higher Education initiatives build the knowledge and skills of the students who serve in the community. Even elementary and secondary students may be influenced by their service experiences to learn more about a future career. Service has helped improve the quality of staff in youth programs by:

- exposing talented young people to the youth field;
- organizing education and training opportunities for other staff;
- providing incentives, such as education awards, that encourage professionals to enter shortage professions; and
- freeing professional staff from routine or administrative tasks.

The question: Can we do more to use service as a strategy to encourage young people to enter careers in fields experiencing shortages – and give them the training they need to be successful? Can national service help support career paths in the field necessary to retain staff?

Strategies: National Service offers participants an intensive, experiential opportunity to learn about careers in the youth development field. These individuals have already shown their interest and commitment to helping others, and will have a realistic picture of youth work. More effort should be made to help these individuals stay on the path to

careers in youth development. At last May's Forum, participants suggested these strategies to use service to create pathways to careers working with youth:

- Creating a national "professional corps" focused on out-of-school time through which hard-to-fill positions are designated for qualified AmeriCorps members who are paid regular salaries and receive education awards as added incentives.
- Combining the training of teachers, social workers and youth development workers within a community.
- Encouraging the Corporation for National and Community Service to work with the Youth Worker Apprenticeship program at the Department of Labor.
- Weaving together existing national efforts on career ladder, training, workforce development, vocational education, etc.
- Promoting careers in national service that go beyond two years.
- Building better pathways from service to careers in youth-serving professions.
- Expanding the number of advocates for positive youth policy by reaching out to over 200,000 national service alumni who served in a youth-related field; strengthening the civic training provided through national service programs; creating stronger partnerships between policy and advocacy organizations and national service programs and alumni groups; and expanding leadership training opportunities for promising national service participants interested in remaining in youth-related fields.

Discussion: The group agreed that a "pathways" strategy appropriate for the youth service sector needs to be developed. However, they questioned how they would invent a common language about the field. For example, what knowledge base and skills are essential for entering this field? While youth professionals need to know what teachers know, they also need to know how to deliver it in a different way.

Barbara Canyes encouraged the group to recognize how far states like Massachusetts have come in supporting such pathways. Ms. Canyes pointed to the fact that 90% of Massachusetts Campus Compact's AmeriCorps*VISTA members are on career paths that include active citizenship – they are working directly in their communities. That said, the group felt that not enough has been done to professionalize or legitimize the work that afterschool programming entails.

The group questioned what higher education institutions are doing in the area of teacher preparation related to youth service. "We need to be more explicit around education and preparation. We need to create bridges for those who gain field experience during school and want to go into youth service as a profession." The group voiced support for internships and cooperative educational experiences. Colleges should be encouraged to develop degree programs geared toward civic engagement. This would inspire students to stay involved in this field of work.

The group discussed the need to credential people in a way that values field-based work. However, concerns were raised that as afterschool programs become more focused on "results," the focus on leadership development would dwindle. "We can't lose the leadership focus as we worry about credentials," cautioned one participant.

Part of the brain drain away from this field is because much of the administrative work is not fun and not easily connected to the mission of the program, according to another participant.

Many in the group want to see stronger alliances between the in-school and out-of-school communities. In this vein, the definitions of “educator” and “classroom” need to be broadened. The question remains, “how do we credential non-traditional educators within the structure of the system?” Some voiced support for tracking interested high school students, which would require working directly with the local school systems. If skills can be developed at an early stage, then there is a great wealth of energy and enthusiasm that can be captured and focused on youth service work.

Models of “what works” need to be shared. Over 60% of national service participants work in education-related fields. Participants suggested that there is a need to characterize more clearly what out-of-school time “gets done” as a focal point for what national service can do.

**Service as a strategy to
increase the impact of
afterschool programs**

The challenge: Afterschool programs offer a time for youth to learn in ways that are not possible during a tightly scheduled, standards-focused school day. Unfortunately, too many youth are unconnected to positive learning environments afterschool because programs are unavailable or unaffordable, are of poor quality, or offer limited services and opportunities. Challenges include:

- Limited programs during out-of-school time, a particular problem for many young people and their working families. Experts note that as many as 15 million children have no place to go at the end of the school day and school year, leaving them exposed to unnecessary risk and without opportunities to use this time productively. Afterschool and summer child care programs are scarce in many communities, while programs for teenagers who are too old for child care are often nonexistent. Children of better educated, middle-income, or suburban parents are more likely to participate in afterschool programs than children of less educated, low-income, or inner-city dwelling parents.
- Even when programs are available, their quality may be weak, with poorly trained or too few staff, inadequate resources, and unsafe facilities. Instead of offering an enriching experience, these programs may dampen motivation, or even be harmful.
- In addition to a safe place to spend time, young people need access to a range of services and opportunities that are often unavailable.

The opportunity: National and community service participants have helped by:

- Expanding youth programs by staffing afterschool programs or other youth-serving programs.
- Improving staff quality by exposing talented young people to the youth field; organizing education and training events for staff; providing incentives, such as education awards, that encourage professionals to enter shortage professions; and freeing professional staff from routine or administrative tasks. [see discussion group I]
- Serving as tutors and mentors working one-on-one with students needing extra support.

- Increasing the range of services available through schools, youth centers, and afterschool programs, such as recreation programs, support groups, computer help, arts workshops, conflict resolution training, and clubs.
- Recruiting and organizing other community members to volunteer with youth.
- Providing youth with opportunities to serve by leading younger students in service. [see discussion group III]
- Becoming lifelong advocates for positive youth policies.

National and community service programs can play a significant role in improving the quantity and quality of afterschool programs for youth, and could be even more effective with thoughtful collaboration by the service and youth development fields.

The question: How can we best use service as a strategy to improve the quality and quantity of youth programs operating during out of school time?

Strategies: Youth programs in partnership with AmeriCorps, volunteer organizations, higher education institutions, and service organizations can expand the opportunities and services available for the young people who participate. Areas for exploration include:

- Increasing the strategic use of volunteers to expand youth programs.
 - Involving full-time or part-time national service volunteers in fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management, and other capacity building activities.
 - Evaluating and replicating the successful practices of youth programs that involve national service participants.
 - Using national service participants to free up professional staff to perform services only professionals can deliver.
 - Extending the reach of youth programs by forming stronger family and community connections.
 - Encouraging “cross-age” service-learning where older students (including those who have not excelled academically) tutor younger students.
- At the May Forum, participants suggested these additional strategies to use service to increase the impact of afterschool programs:
- Broadening the goal of education to include building a democratic society, and using service-learning as a way to achieve this goal.
 - Providing a link between in-school and out-of-school time by cycling staff through both.
 - Engaging citizen volunteers in schools and out-of-school time programs.
 - Developing new metrics for student success.
 - Using AmeriCorps as a vehicle to bridge the silos of federal funding.
 - Developing and disseminating quality curriculum, activities, materials, and supplies for afterschool programs.

Discussion: The group endorsed the concept that partnerships between afterschool and service programs would benefit the afterschool field in many ways, including increasing the number of afterschool programs and improving their quality. However, Debra McLaughlin cautioned the group to have realistic expectations of what the partnerships can yield, given limited resources and growing demands, and the lack of a unified voice on what is meant by youth development: “The outcomes we want to affect include school success and personal safety, but we also want young people to become more civically engaged.” Amy Cohen commented that most afterschool programs offer arts and recreation opportunities but not community service opportunities that support students’ civic education.

Members of the group agreed that afterschool programs should do more than “test practice and academics,” and that a partnership with AmeriCorps and other service programs would provide the platform for a broader vision of success. Bill Casey spoke about a programming model that focused on a range of skills, including leadership, citizenship and problem solving, “a commitment to supporting the success of the whole child.” Don Mathis stated that providing quality afterschool programming takes a lot of work and a great staff. For successful programming, “you don’t need 40 outcomes for kids. Afterschool programs affect kids in many ways without ever hitting a single outcome. We need to tell the afterschool story better.”

Other issues were raised, including the need to understand the legislative resistance to funding afterschool programs. Turning that around, how do we articulate the value of afterschool programming at the state and national levels? How do we get away from defining afterschool time as “test prep” time? Or how do we turn “test prep time” to our advantage? Susan Kirwan stressed that links need to be built between the school day and community service programs, and that AmeriCorps*VISTA can help to build these links. Ronnie Mae Weiss suggested a strategy of placing VISTA members in governors’ offices and in universities, to efficiently coordinate the activities and place members and volunteers with programs. Placing VISTAs in governors’ offices gives the governors a critical sense of ownership over the programs.

Elyse Rosenblum felt strongly that the corporate community really wants to be more involved in afterschool programming, and pointed to the commitment of Legos Corporation. She stated that the “coolness” factor of AmeriCorps members helps engage more young people in afterschool programs – the youth will want to come to the programs.

**Youth service as a
tool to promote
positive youth
development**

The challenge: Experts agree that adolescents benefit from spending time in structured programs that provide supportive relationships and opportunities to belong; encourage positive social norms and skill building; empower youth by allowing them to make a difference in the community and be taken seriously; and integrate family, school, and community efforts. However, too few young people have this experience. Young adolescents, in particular, are too old for traditional afterschool programs and too young for many other opportunities, increasing the chance that they will engage in risky behaviors. In fact, only 10% of the youth in organized afterschool programs are middle school students or older, despite the fact that teens themselves desire safe, constructive environments afterschool.

The opportunity: Service-learning not only helps to enliven the educational process and improve student motivation and achievement; it also helps youth develop assets such as connectedness, feeling valued, attachment to pro-social institutions, the ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts, commitment to civic engagement, good conflict resolution and, planning for the future skills, a sense of personal responsibility, strong moral character, self-esteem, confidence in one's personal efficacy, a commitment to good use of time, and a sense of a larger purpose in life. In fact, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy includes two service-learning models on its list of programs that have been proven effective at reducing teen pregnancy. More than 80 percent of parents in a national survey said their child would benefit from an afterschool program that offered community service and 95 percent of teens agree that it is important to volunteer time to community efforts.

The question: Can we do more to provide young people the opportunity to participate in service-learning programs during out-of-school time and during the summer?

Strategies: National and community service, especially opportunities involving service-learning, can help young people develop in positive ways – academically, emotionally, and civically. These opportunities could be more available with thoughtful collaboration by the service and youth development fields. Suggested strategies include:

- Incorporating service-learning into afterschool programs, recreation centers, clubs, and other places where youth can be found during out-of-school time.
- Creating partnerships between community organizations and schools to offer youth service-learning opportunities after school that enhance their academic learning.

- Encouraging AmeriCorps and higher education service programs to engage their volunteers in leading younger youth in service.
- Expanding support for youth service corps, particularly those that offer summer programs for school-age youth.
- Creating new youth service programs that operate during out-of-school time.
- Setting a goal that every young person will have the chance to participate in a “summer of service” during the early teen years.

Discussion: Group participants voiced support for the goal of engaging youth in service as a strategy to promote youth development. Moderator Lois Wainstock encouraged a broad approach, to go beyond the middle class to include low-income youth and those who are facing significant challenges themselves. For example, the Green Chimneys program in New York engages children with disabilities in the rehabilitation and care of injured animals.

The group also supported providing new afterschool options attractive to older youth, and agreed that service should be one focus. Melinda Hudson stressed that this approach would help address the “deficit focused” approach many funders and policymakers take when it comes to older youth. “Early childhood up to age eleven is all asset-based,” she noted. “You get to be twelve, and in their eyes you are doped up, knocked up, on the street, mouthy, and expensive.” Rather than focusing solely on the problems of youth, programs for teens ought to give youth ways to show – and learn – what they have to offer. Youth themselves should play a role in directing their activities, and, to promote youth development, programs should “give youth voice” and a leadership role, according to Lainy Ferish.

Other participants raised concerns that afterschool programs are becoming too connected to academic requirements, instead of supplementing the school experience with opportunities for youth to learn about civic participation, leadership, and other important skills. “As other values get crowded out of the school day, I would hate to see afterschool be just about academic training,” noted David Crowley. Eric Schwarz added that a recent study of successful executives conducted by Citizen Schools found that leadership, teamwork, and perseverance were essential skills that these individuals had learned largely through out-of-school experiences. Others agreed that afterschool programs should not just be an extension of the school day, but rather provide opportunities to learn “soft skills that have hard outcomes,” according to Eric Schwarz, and experience the “real world.”

Finally, participants discussed the value of a rite of passage for youth as they reach adolescence. Deb Hirsch and Lainy Ferish noted that many cultures have such traditions, but that many young people could benefit from the chance to serve as a way to show that they have achieved an important milestone. Once they have completed their service, they are a full member of the community. Such service should not be considered a one time responsibility, but instead, open the door to a future of civic engagement.



Summary of Policy Recommendations

Build better pathways from national service to careers in youth-serving professions by:

Encouraging higher education to support the work that afterschool programs entail through teacher preparation programs, internships and cooperative educational experiences for both high-school and college-aged students.

Creating a national “professional corps” focused on out-of-school time through which hard-to-fill positions are designated for qualified AmeriCorps members who are paid regular salaries and receive education awards as added incentives.

Encouraging closer connections among schools and community programs by combining the ongoing professional development of teachers, social workers and youth development workers within a community.

Examining the way that individuals are credentialed for youth-serving professions to emphasize the value of field-based work.

Encouraging closer coordination of existing national efforts on career ladders, workforce development, vocational education, and national service.

Expanding the number of advocates for positive youth policy by reaching out to the over 200,000 national service alumni who served in a youth-related field; strengthening the civic training provided through national service programs; creating stronger partnerships among policy and advocacy organizations and national service programs and alumni groups; and expanding leadership training opportunities for promising national service participants interested in remaining in youth-related fields.

Use service as a strategy to improve the quality and quantity of youth programs operating during out-of-school time by:

Evaluating and replicating the successful practices of youth programs that involve national service participants.

Involving full-time or part-time national service volunteers in fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management, and developing partnerships that will help afterschool programs and expand their networks.

Defining success for youth in ways that go beyond academic success, including building a democratic society, with service-learning during out-of-school time as a way to achieve this goal.

Expand service-learning opportunities for adolescent youth during out-of-school time, by:

Setting a national goal that every young person will have the chance to participate in a “summer of service” during the early teen years and provide funding for states and national organizations to expand these opportunities.

Expanding the definition of educational success to include important life skills, including citizenship.

Providing incentives for youth programs to incorporate service-learning opportunities, and encouraging partnerships between community organizations and schools to offer youth service-learning opportunities afterschool that enhance their academic learning.

Encouraging AmeriCorps, senior service, and higher education service programs to engage their volunteers in leading younger youth in service.

Expand support for youth service corps, particularly those that offer summer programs for school-age youth.