Building a Coordinated Afterschool System in St. Louis

White Paper Prepared by the
St. Louis Afterschool For All By 2010 Task Force

In response to a report issued by *St. Louis For Kids* that stated only 10 percent of the children ages 5-13 in the City of St. Louis have access to everyday afterschool programs, Mayor Francis Slay convened the *2005 Afterschool Summit I* to address the unmet needs of our children. Over 200 area political, business, religious, civic and education leaders, youth services providers and parents learned that the current fragmented, uncoordinated delivery system is not conducive to significantly increasing access to afterschool programs. Summit I participants identified the need for a coordinated system and listed leadership, coordination, adequate and sustainable funding, accountability, public support and quality programs as the key elements of the system.

Following Summit I, the Mayor accepted the challenge from the National League of Cities for "Afterschool for All by 2010." The Mayor established St. Louis' *Afterschool for All By 2010 Task Force* to oversee the development and implementation of a strategic plan so that:

> **"By the year 2010, the City of St. Louis will have a coordinated system of high quality, non-school hour programs that will provide every child with the opportunity to meet their full potential as a productive citizen."**

Since Summit I, the *2010 Task Force* researched best practices, conducted site visits, and participated in national conferences on afterschool programs in an effort to fully understand what is required to design, build and implement such a system. The purpose of this paper is to inform stakeholders on key elements of a coordinated system and to assist in the development of a strategic plan.

Benefits of a Coordinated System

In cities with a coordinated system, afterschool program participation rates approach or exceed the national average of 22 percent in five day-a-week programs. This confirmed what Summit I participants intuitively knew: children and families in communities that have coordinated systems have greater access to high quality afterschool programs.

Coordinated systems maximize scarce resources by reducing program duplication. Funding streams can be leveraged and blended. This efficiency increases program access, affordability and continuity, all factors that serve the needs of working parents and benefits the community as a whole.

Program and staff quality is enhanced through the use of standards and alignment of priorities. On-going assessment and monitoring measures community-wide progress towards meeting common goals and quality standards. The results are families who are informed consumers, funders who are outcomes-focused investors and providers that are delivering higher quality afterschool services.

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Recent Favorable Developments

To support a community-wide planning effort, the *2010 Task Force* assessed the current situation in St. Louis. While many of the foundational elements necessary for a coordinated system do not currently exist in St. Louis, three activities underway, now linked through the *2010 Task Force*, signal important and immediate favorable signs for development of a system in St. Louis.

➤ In 2004, city voters approved Proposition K, a "Children's Tax" to be administered by the City of St. Louis Mental Health Board (MHB). MHB is working with the St. Louis Public Schools to start a number of new afterschool programs over the next year. The *2010 Task Force* is working with both parties in the initial phase of building a coordinated system in St. Louis.

➤ In St. Louis, *ARCHS* (Area Resources for Community and Human Services) and *St. Louis For Kids,* each with complementary skills and tools, serve as intermediaries. Intermediaries are third parties providing value added services between system sectors. In St. Louis intermediaries facilitate between families and providers, and between funders and providers to assure that afterschool programs are accessible, high quality and equitably distributed. *ARCHS and St. Louis For Kids* are nearing a formal partnership agreement to coordinate intermediary functions and leverage resources and expertise.

➤ Interchange, led by the *Center for Creative Arts* (COCA) and funded by the Ford Foundation has recently been launched. This partnership of more than 30 arts and cultural institutions will integrate the arts into the St. Louis Public Schools and will likely involve some non-school hour programs. Efforts are underway to formally link this initiative with the afterschool system.

Key Elements of a Coordinated System

While each city has its own unique systems-building model, Proscio and Whiting[a] have identified six key elements in successful afterschool system-building efforts in cities:

➤ An intentional plan to extend services to a broad number of children, neighborhoods, and schools
➤ Recurring and stable funding
➤ Quality standards, capacity building and support to meet standards
➤ Centralized support, regulation and governance
➤ Shared goals and programs designed to fit them
➤ Political will and public support

Key Elements and Current Status: *Afterschool For All*

The initiatives that are underway in St. Louis are important signs that there is interest and momentum in moving an afterschool agenda forward. In order to do so in a systematic fashion, it is first necessary to define the key elements and to understand the current status of afterschool programs. This white paper contrasts the key elements of a developed coordinated system with our current situation in five foundational areas: **supply and access; quality standards; accountability; public support and funding.**

[a] *Proscio, T & Whiting, B. (2004) Afterschool Grows Up. New York, NY: The Afterschool Project RW Johnson Foundation.*

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Supply and Access – *Developing an adequate number of program slots and ensuring the equitable distribution of programs.*

By 2010 we want to see:
➤ Daily afterschool programs in every school and/or community center within easy access of schools or children's homes
➤ Comprehensive programs offered 5 days-a-week, 3 hours per day (until 6 pm or parents pick up from work)
➤ Adequate transportation home for children attending programs
➤ Programs equitably dispersed geographically throughout the city
➤ Programs in low income neighborhoods available in proportion to the child/youth population

Our current situation:
➤ The 2000 Census reports that in the City of St. Louis there are approximately 46,000 children between ages 5 and 13; 39.4% live below poverty (18,000); more than 50% minority; an estimated 31,000 elementary school age children have no parent at home afterschool
➤ 48 of 86 public and parochial elementary schools offer a 5-day-a-week Monday-Friday program:
  - o 24 SLPS and 24 parochial schools serve 2,500 elementary students
  - o 17 elementary schools report less than 3 days per week of programming
  - o 8 SLPS elementary schools have no afterschool programming at all
➤ 100-125 licensed child care centers serve 1,700 children

Less than 10% of St. Louis City children have access to a comprehensive 5 day-a-week program; 5,600 more slots for children are needed to reach the 22% national average

Quality Standards – *Ensuring programs have common objective measures to assess quality and use of best practices so that expected outcomes are assured.*

By 2010 we want to see:
➤ Services are coordinated, with equitable and standard implementation
➤ Definitions of quality have been agreed upon, accepted and supported by providers and funders
➤ Evaluation of outcomes is accepted as a determinant of high quality delivery of services and utilization of best practices in programs
➤ Professional development of staff will be an integral component of program improvement
➤ Ongoing assessment of critical areas (i.e. staffing, equipment, curriculum and activities, parent involvement) will be ongoing

Our current situation:
➤ Quality standards for afterschool programs were developed in 2001 by *Vision for Children at Risk* and have been published and promoted by *St. Louis For Kids*
➤ *St. Louis For Kids* has utilized the quality standards in providing technical assistance to 50 agencies
➤ The State of Missouri is developing a quality rating system for afterschool programs
➤ There is presently little incentive for many providers to utilize quality standards in their programs

Afterschool For All By 2010

Accountability – *Ensuring the development of a common information and data collection system to verify program outcomes and to support planning, decision making, investments, program development, evaluation and advocacy.*

By 2010 we want to see:
- ➤ Providers understand and embrace the goal of a systemic and integrated approach
- ➤ Providers share a common language and understanding of what is required for data collection, monitoring and evaluation protocols
- ➤ Providers share a common understanding of quality programming and standards
- ➤ The coordinated system will have a standard for the collection, analysis and dissemination, of data and progress reports; all programs will have equal access to data collection systems

Our current situation:
- ➤ Presently, few programs collect, monitor and evaluate their afterschool programs on a systematic and on-going basis
- ➤ Very few programs use such information to improve their planning and processes on an on-going basis

Public Support – *Developing an information, communication and afterschool advocacy infrastructure to build support for increased investment from multiple sectors of the Greater St. Louis community.*

By 2010 we want to see:
- ➤ Afterschool programs have a high profile advocacy group in place, comprised of representatives from various sectors of the community that champions the cause at the local, state and national levels
- ➤ Strong internal communication system between providers and supporters
- ➤ Afterschool programs have a parent/community engagement dimension
- ➤ A structure will exist to assure appropriate quality and sustainability of programs

Our current situation:
- ➤ "Children's Tax" that included support for afterschool expansion in the city was passed in 2004
- ➤ Afterschool programs promote themselves individually
- ➤ There is little systematic advocacy, support or engagement for afterschool programs
- ➤ The public is not generally aware of the contributions that afterschool programs make to positive youth development

Funding – *Ensuring adequate financial resources -- public, private, state, local and national -- are assembled to ensure that afterschool programs have sufficient and stable resources to achieve the 2010 participation goals.*

By 2010 we want to see:
➤ A significant increase in investment from diverse sources (public and private) to increase the number of current afterschool slots in the City of St. Louis to 10,100 (22% national average) from the current system estimate of 4,500 (10%)
➤ Funding resources pooled, re-allocated and leveraged
➤ A coherent funding allocation system in place aligned to common outcomes
➤ Policies that support the development of effective, sustainable afterschool opportunities

Our current situation:
Most afterschool programs in St. Louis are currently funded through fees and governmental sources. The infrastructure by which resources from multiple funding sources can be pooled to ensure alignment and innovation does not currently exist. *Current funding sources are:*

➤ St. Louis Public Schools
➤ City of St. Louis – general operating budget, CDBG
➤ Local foundations
➤ Local businesses
➤ Parent fees
➤ State of Missouri - 21st Century Grants, DESE, DSS
➤ Federal –AmeriCorps, various discretionary grants

Possible Sources of Additional Funding:
➤ St. Louis Mental Health Board of Trustees
➤ Ford Foundation Arts Integration Grant
➤ Federal Government grant (HUD, HHS, DOJ)
➤ Local, Regional and National Foundations
➤ Local Business/Civic Community
➤ State of Missouri

Funding Goal:
In order to reach the national average (22%) participation of children/youth in daily structured afterschool programs by 2010, St. Louis would need to expand services to an additional 5,600 children. This will require an average of 1,120 new slots per year for each of five years. In St. Louis, the average cost per child for a school year program (9 months) is about $1,500. *$1,680,000 in funding (new and reallocated) will be required each year over the next five years to reach this goal.* The **annual** investment required to maintain the system once in place will be **$8.4 million**. By working in collaboration and partnerships, it will be possible to pool funds from these diverse sources to achieve the *Afterschool for All by 2010* vision.

Challenges & Opportunities

Potential conflicts exist when resources are scarce. Serving a large number of children must be balanced with ensuring quality. Installing school-based programs may conflict with the interest to expand community-based programs. Increasing elementary programs may contradict a community's need to address concerns with at-risk teens. The *2010 Task Force* and Summit II participants must tackle the afterschool resource issues by establishing funding priorities with timelines, redeploying existing resources to match the priorities and then seek required funding.

Next Steps: Planning Begins By Building on Existing Efforts

Develop a phased, multi-year plan that includes strategies to increase the supply and access, and ensures the overall quality, accountability and support for out-of-school programs to reach our goal of Afterschool For All by 2010.

This plan will unite existing efforts, redeploy assets to unmet needs and systematically target gaps. The *2010 Task Force* is offering Summit II participants an opportunity to join and provide input into one of five "workgroups" focusing on:

➤ **Supply and Access**
➤ **Quality Standards**
➤ **Accountability**
➤ **Public Support**
➤ **Funding**

Each workgroup's valuable input will be integrated into the *2010 Task force* strategic plan which will be distributed to all key stakeholders for review. The task force's final plan will be unveiled in early Fall 2006.

Afterschool for All By 2010 Task Force: *A special thanks to the following organizations and individuals for their insight and leadership:*

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For more information:
www.stlarchs.org
www.stlouis4kids.org

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