

MAKING A



DIFFERENCE

*in the Lives
of Youth*

**NATIONAL
COLLABORATION
FOR YOUTH**

An Affinity Group of the
National Human Services Assembly

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff, evaluators, volunteers, parents and youth who conduct, support, and participate in the activities described in this publication deserve the greatest acknowledgement. The programs that they are a part of each day were chosen because they are making a difference for young people. I wish to express my appreciation to them for doing great work and allowing us to share it with others.

This publication would not have been possible without the generous funding from Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The findings and conclusions presented here are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Many people volunteered their time to *Making a Difference in the Lives of Youth* and only through their hard work, expertise, commitment and enthusiasm does this compendium exist. My special thanks to:

The National Collaboration for Youth/National Human Services Assembly with its 30-year history of promoting youth issues provided an ideal network for identifying high caliber programs being offered to youth in after school programs.

The Advisory Group who provided guidance, support and encouragement throughout the project. In spite of their busy schedules, they offered input into the design, direction and editing of the publication at each phase.

This compendium would not have been possible without the generosity of individuals from the 10 selected programs who graciously agreed to be interviewed for the compendium and to provide follow-up information and documentation.

Thanks also to the staff and consultants who focused their time and expertise on ensuring this was a high-quality publication.

- As primary author, Pamela Wilson conducted interviews for five of the programs and wrote and revised the publication. Her hard work and creativity has helped to bring the ten featured programs alive for readers and to document the many lessons to be learned.
- Working with Pamela Wilson, Terry Quinn contributed his editing magic.
- Shawn Newton creates design work that makes words enjoyable to read. Her color, design and formatting provide the necessary professional elements that create a high-quality finished product.
- Stephanie Artman for her editing, attention to detail and final touches to this work.
- Brian Wilson for his accurate transcription of tapes.

I am grateful for this excellent team of people. Without them I would not be able to provide you with this compendium of high-quality programs.

With much appreciation,

Pam Garza, Director

National Youth Development Learning Network

National Collaboration for Youth/National Human Services Assembly

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	7
Background	7
National Collaboration for Youth	8
The Compendium	9
How Programs Can Make a Difference	10
Benefits and Challenges of Program Evaluation	11
Case Studies	13
ACROSS AGES: An Intergenerational Approach to Drug Prevention	15
COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS (CS ²)	21
FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TOGETHER (FAST)	29
HEALTH ADVENTURES	37
JUMP-START	45
LIVING INTERACTIVE FAMILY EDUCATION (L.I.F.E.)	53
PROJECT ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION (<i>P.A.V.E. THE WAY</i>)	61
PROJECT LEARN	69
SEEDS TO SUCCESS: Youth Farmstand Program	77
WILL POWER/WON'T POWER	85
Recommendations for Conducting Program Evaluation	93
Appendices	97
Appendix A: Advisory Group	98
Appendix B: Interviewees	99
Appendix C: Methodology	102
Appendix D: Organization Descriptions	103

INTRODUCTION

“Concerns about youth are at the center of many policy debates. The future well-being of the country depends on raising a generation of skilled, competent, and responsible adults.”

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, National Academy Press, Washington DC, 2002, page 2 – Executive Summary



Youth in the United States spend about 80% of their waking hours outside of schools.¹ Unsupervised hours after school are the time when youth are most likely to engage in risky behavior, commit juvenile crimes, or be victims of crimes.² Well-designed programming can transform the after-school hours from a time of risk into a time of opportunity—opportunity for youth to form relationships with caring adults, play sports, pursue interests, make new friends, and develop competencies that will increase their likelihood of success both now and in the future.

Over the last two decades, community organizations have increasingly stepped up to the plate to ensure that all youth have enjoyable, life-enhancing, and supervised activities available to them after school. More and more, organizations are working collaboratively with other organizations, families, schools, and most importantly, youth themselves, to design the kinds of programs that are both appealing and useful to young people. More and more, organizations are specifying and evaluating their impact on youth, and as a result, we now know some of the specific ways that an out-of-school time program can, for example, help young people improve their academic performance, resist pressure to use drugs, or gain leadership skills.

The purpose of this compendium is to inform readers about the types of high-quality programs being offered in organizations throughout the country and to spell out the ways that these initiatives lead to positive outcomes for youth.

Background

The National Collaboration for Youth (NCY) is a coalition of the National Human Services Assembly member organizations that have a significant interest in youth. For the last 30 years, NCY has provided a united voice to its members in advocating to help young people in America reach their full potential. Many NCY member organizations have been providing high-quality out-of-school-time programming to youth for

¹ Noam, G.G., Miller, B.M., & Barry, S. (2002). *Youth development and afterschool time: Policy and programming in large cities*. In G.G. Noam, & B.M. Miller (Eds.) *New directions for youth development: Theory, practice, research. Youth development and after-school time: A tale of many cities*. San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

² U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. (1998). *Safe and smart: Making after-school hours work for kids* [on-line]. Available on-line at www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart/title.html.

more than 100 years. In spite of this fact, the average American does not know what these programs actually look like, or more importantly, what they can accomplish. Furthermore, policy-makers, administrators in local youth organizations, and frontline youth workers are sometimes unaware of the range of programs and their impact. To address these issues, NCY applied for and received funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to research and disseminate—in a user-friendly format—data and lessons learned from 10 model programs that are making a difference in the lives of youth. The intent is not to present an exhaustive collection of programs, but rather to illustrate the scope and impact of programming being offered by NCY member organizations and their partners in local communities throughout the nation.

National Collaboration for Youth (NCY)

Members of NCY include more than 50 national, non-profit, youth organizations. Collectively, the member organizations:

- Serve more than 40 million young people;
- Employ over 100,000 paid staff;
- Utilize more than six million volunteers;
- Have a physical presence in virtually every community in America.

Most of these national organizations work with local affiliates/members to provide youth programming in a wide variety of communities throughout the nation, and many target their services to youth in low-income communities who are most at risk. Each day NCY member organizations contribute to a wide range of positive outcomes for youth, for example, by:

- Enhancing academic achievement;
- Increasing workforce readiness skills;
- Increasing skills to resist pressure to engage in sexual intercourse;
- Increasing leadership and civic engagement skills;
- Increasing skills to avoid becoming victims or perpetrators of violence.

National youth-serving organizations are able to support local affiliates in many substantive ways, including: 1) training and technical assistance to build their organizational capacity; 2) systematic professional development efforts; and 3) research, development, and evaluation of program models—in collaboration with local partners—that can be replicated more broadly. Likewise, many effective programs are developed and evaluated at the local level and, once they have demonstrated their effectiveness, they are replicated at the state, regional, national, or sometimes, international level.



The Compendium- Out-of-School Time Programs

Format

The compendium profiles the following programs:

- ACROSS AGES: An Intergenerational Approach to Drug Prevention
- COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS (CS2)
- FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TOGETHER (FAST)
- JUMP-START
- LIVING INTERACTIVE FAMILY EDUCATION (L.I.F.E.)
- HEALTH ADVENTURES
- PROJECT ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION (*P.A.V.E. THE WAY*)
- PROJECT LEARN
- SEEDS TO SUCCESS: Youth Farmstand Program
- WILL POWER/WON'T POWER

Each of the 10 case studies profiles an out-of-school-time program in action. Readers will discover how the programs are making a difference, through individual stories and quotes from youth, parents, program implementers, program developers, and researchers. While the stories are based on actual program experiences, names of youth used in the case studies are fictional.

Each case study contains the following sections:

- The Program in Action
- Key Components
- What's Unique about the Program?
- Research Design
- Making a Difference (Program Outcomes)
- Program Tips



Beyond the individual lessons learned from each of the case studies, there is a broader set of recommendations that flow from this endeavor. The final section of the compendium outlines broad recommendations for enhancing program evaluation efforts in youth organizations. The Appendix contains profiles of those local and national organizations featured in the Compendium as well as the methodology used in developing the case studies.

How Programs Can Make a Difference

Community programs can incorporate opportunities for physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development; opportunities to address issues of ethnic identity, sexual identity, and intergroup relationships; opportunities for community involvement and services; and opportunities to interact with caring adults and a diversity of peers who hold positive social norms and have high life goals and expectations.

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, National Academy Press, Washington DC, 2002, page 8 – Executive Summary

It is widely agreed that out-of-school-time programs can achieve a broad range of outcomes that support and enhance the lives of youth, their families, and communities. Evidence indicates that these programs benefit youth by decreasing participants' risk-taking behaviors and by supporting the development of a range of non-academic competencies that, in turn, support academic learning and achievement.¹

But what is required for a program to achieve maximum impact? Program developers must be intentional about what they are trying to accomplish, and deliberate in creating program activities that will lead to targeted goals and outcomes. Programs must include evaluation as a necessary element to ensure quality and demonstrate that they are making a difference.

A recent document funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation—*Moving Towards Success: Framework for After-School Programs* (May 2005)—lays out a framework for helping program staff and evaluators “embark on a long-term strategic plan of program development, program improvement, and measuring program effectiveness.” The framework, referred to as “a theory of change” involves the following steps:

- Draw a logic model to summarize the key elements of the program and show—in a visual format—the cause-and-effect relationships between the program and its desired outcomes.
- Identify and refine program goals to meet the needs of participants.
- Select and refine program elements needed to achieve the program goals.
- Brainstorm and refine participant outcomes aligned with the program goals and elements.



¹ Hall, G., Yohalem, N., Tolman, J., & Wilson, A. (2003). *How afterschool programs can most effectively promote positive youth development as a support to academic achievement: A report commissioned by the Boston after-school for all partnership*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

- Establish performance measures, data sources, and data collection methods to assess the implementation of program elements and progress towards program goals.



- Use evaluation results to:
 - 1) demonstrate changes in knowledge, skills, or academic achievement;
 - 2) highlight improvements over time as young people participate in the program for longer durations; and
 - 3) demonstrate impacts on participants as compared with a similar group that did not participate in the intervention.

Readers will see many examples of the “theory of change” process in action when reading the case studies:

- Two of the programs—L.I.F.E. and *P.A.V.E.*—developed logic models.
- Developers drew from existing research as they designed program elements to achieve specific goals. For example, FAST staff designed specific program elements to correspond with such protective factors as “a strong parent/child bond” which has been proven to lead to positive outcomes for youth.
- There is a great variety of data sources and data collection methods. For example, PROJECT LEARN uses school-provided data on attendance, grades, and behavioral incidents; and SEEDS TO SUCCESS uses the SCANS Skills and Competencies Checklist, a behavioral assessment tool for measuring workplace competencies among special needs youth, many of whom do not perform well on paper and pencil tests.

Benefits and Challenges of Program Evaluation

Clearly, program evaluation is important. All interested parties—youth, families, schools, community and national youth-serving organizations, funders, and policymakers—want quality programs as well as evidence that these programs are actually leading to concrete outcomes for youth. As demonstrated in the case studies that follow, the ability to deliver a program that has significant positive evaluation results can lead to all kinds of benefits. Such results can help organizations improve their programs, gain new partners, increase funding, serve greater numbers of youth, and enhance their reputations in the community.

On the other hand, rigorous program evaluation can present many difficult challenges. First and foremost, it can be very expensive. Organizations must obtain the services of professional evaluators and participate actively in the demanding process of data collection and assessment. The 10 programs highlighted in this compendium each tackled the challenges of evaluation in its own unique style. In some cases, the efforts of national organizations (for example, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Girls Incorporated, and Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.) enabled local organizations to expand their programming and enhance their reputation by delivering well-respected research-based programs. In other cases (for example, ACROSS AGES and FAST), local programs were able to produce significant positive evaluation results and then put in place a training and technical assistance strategy to help other organizations replicate the model successfully. The following case studies offer many lessons on how to overcome challenges and make evaluation work.

