



**Connection
Matters:
A Study of
School Districts'
Self-Interest and
Policies**

Prepared for the *Ignite Initiative*
Paso del Norte Health Foundation

Angus Mungal, Ph.D., Department of Educational
Leadership and Foundations, University of Texas at El Paso
with Susan Austin, J.D., Joseph Muñoz, M.Ed., Shari Schwartz, M.Ed.

March 3, 2017

Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the many people who contributed to this review. Our colleagues at the University of Texas at El Paso and doctoral candidates in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations gave critical feedback and helped us think through the implications Facilitated Student Group Model. We are indebted to the school administrators and staff of non-profit organizations in the Paso del Norte Region who participated in our surveys and interviews. We thank United Way of El Paso County, Ben Fresquez and Deb Zuloaga, and Ngage New Mexico and other members of the Ignite Initiative for their collaboration in addressing issues of youth connection. This work was supported by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation. We thank them and especially Bianca De León for their support and close collaboration in this project.

Connection Matters: A Study of School Districts' Self-Interest and Policies

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	4
Part 1. Why “connection” – not just academics – should matter to schools	8
Part 2. How schools provide connection in afterschool hours	13
Part 3. School district policies that impact afterschool programming	19
Part 4. School policies and actions that could reduce disconnection	30
Part 5. New Model for Facilitated Student Groups	33
Conclusion	43
References	44

Appendices

- Appendix 1. Features of Positive Developmental Settings
- Appendix 2. Summary of Facility Use/Rental Policies
- Appendix 3. Excerpts from TXPOST Program Quality Assessment Tool
- Appendix 4. Equal Access Act and Local Policy Modification
- Appendix 5. “Toolkit” for Facilitated Student Group Model

List of Tables

- Table 1. Indicators of non-cognitive factors that support academics
- Table 2. Pros and cons of Facilitated Student Group Model

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Graphic from Wallace Report
- Figure 2. Graphic from Chicago Report
- Figure 3. Impact matrix
- Figure 4. Paso del Norte Region survey results
- Figure 5. Facilitated Student Group Model

Executive Summary

Introduction

In efforts to foster youth health and development, there has been a move away from programs aimed at preventing specific risky behaviors and toward programs aimed at building resiliency through a focus on “positive youth development.” In many communities and regions, a large percentage of older children and teens are not connected to any out-of-school program or activity that could contribute to positive youth development. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation commissioned this policy study to better understand what policies or practices of public schools contribute to youth disconnection and what policies or practices of public schools might help reduce disconnection among youth ages 7–18 (Paso del Norte Health Foundation, 2015, 2017).

This report explores the following issues:

- Why should connection and positive youth development –not just academics – matter to schools?
- How do schools provide connection in afterschool hours?
- What do schools and non-profits see as challenges to reducing disconnection through afterschool programs?
- What school district policies most impact afterschool connection and school-non-profit collaboration?
- What sustainable actions could schools take to help reduce youth disconnection?

The Paso del Norte Health Foundation defines “disconnected youth” as people between the ages of 7–18 years-old who are not involved in out of school activities or participating in the labor market. For purposes of this study, “reducing youth disconnection” means taking individuals out of the category of disconnected youth by engaging them in some kind of regular out of school activity, and “connection” means youth participation in a regular out of school activity that intentionally provides at least some of the aspects of positive youth development.

Why “connection” – not just academics – should matter to schools

Research by the University of Chicago funded by the Wallace Foundation (the *Wallace Report*) describes a framework for youth development and the role played by certain “non-cognitive factors” such as academic mindset, perseverance, self-regulation, social and emotional skills (Nagaoka et al., 2015). In 2016, the United States Department of Education solicited projects aimed at developing non-cognitive factors because they “are seemingly scalable and lower-cost as compared to more conventional education interventions—and have a positive impact on students most in need (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).” According to the *Wallace Report*, adults can provide youth with experiences for their particular developmental stage and then guide them in making meaning of their experiences—the same approach taken by positive youth development programs.

The role of afterschool programming

Students develop non-cognitive skills when they “tinker” –jump in and do, negotiate ideas with others, take on different perspectives, grapple with difficult problems, think outside the box, and make

mistakes. While school day instruction may give teachers and students little room to tinker, extracurricular activities and afterschool programming can provide this opportunity. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) argues that many of the non-cognitive skills are more readily developed in an out-of-school time setting than in a school setting. Afterschool programs can incorporate the well-established features of positive developmental settings (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011). Recognizing that an afterschool program can be an effective environment for development of non-cognitive skills and that non-academic programming can have academic benefit, schools should see it as in their self-interest that students participate in non-academic afterschool programs and extracurricular activities. Reducing disconnection is an important step.

The landscape for afterschool programming at schools

Afterschool programs fall essentially into four categories: School-age care, positive youth development, extended learning, and enrichment or extracurricular activities. Programs for middle school students are sparse and tend to be about extended learning. Nationally, about 1.7 million children participate in 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) programs. This federal program, administered by states, funds afterschool and summer programs that provide academic support and enrichment activities for economically-disadvantaged students. Although the 21st CCLC program is the “Cadillac” of afterschool programs in that it provides multi-year funding for a comprehensive program and encourages schools and non-profits to collaborate, it is a very expensive afterschool model, making it difficult for school districts to sustain. The most recent grant awarded to Ysleta ISD cost \$1,422,000 per year or \$2,323 per regular attendee per year.

Despite public expectations and legislation promoting school and non-profit collaboration in providing afterschool programming, there are serious challenges. Different structures have lower or higher connection to schools and lower or higher predictability for achieving positive youth development. Three formidable challenges occur with consistency: who gets recruited and served, the actual availability of space, and transportation. A survey of schools and non-profits in the Paso del Norte Region conducted by the authors revealed similar challenges to hosting afterschool programs and to schools and non-profits working together.

These challenges can be overcome and school administrators can justify school support for non-academic programming and their cooperation with community non-profits in providing such programming at schools, because of the indirect impact on non-academic performance. However, the greater the cost, time, and effort involved in providing the non-academic programming, the greater the predictable impact on academic performance will need to be to justify the school’s support.

School district policies that impact afterschool programming

Policies that impact afterschool programming include provisions regarding non-discrimination, schools as public forums, relationships with religious activities, public information, transportation, rental of school facilities, procurement and contracting authority, sovereign immunity and liability. When non-profits formally collaborate with schools in providing programming, these policies will apply, and some will apply when non-profits simply use school facilities under a rental agreement. If non-profits understand the rule framework before approaching a school about use or collaboration, it might be easier for the parties to reach agreement.

School policies and actions that could reduce disconnection

Recommendations for sustainable actions that schools or school districts could take to reduce youth disconnection include:

- Provide training on positive youth development and non-cognitive skills.
- Recognize beneficial non-academic programs.
- Acknowledge non-profit programmatic expertise and experience.
- Issue an RFP for afterschool program services.
- Ensure that partnering non-profits are non-discriminatory.
- Relax facility rental policies.
- Help non-profit programs recruit students.
- Provide a “late bus.”
- Consider charging a program fee.
- Encourage student clubs.

New Model for Facilitated Student Groups

Participating in a student groups can reduce youth disconnection; however, few schools actually encourage participation in student groups, as opposed to traditional school-sponsored extracurricular activities. The Facilitated Student Group model uses an existing school policy known as the Equal Access Act. Students form groups around their chosen interests and meet weekly at school, all on the same day and in one area of the school building. The school provides adult supervision through adults who “monitor” all meetings at once, rather than each individual meeting. What makes a student group a “facilitated” group is that a local non-profit and/or its volunteers assist student organizers in setting up and running the group. The non-profit may also provide a pair of adult volunteers to serve as monitors.

The model is aimed at middle school, because it fits well with the students’ developmental needs. It relies on student choice and voice, both for youth development purposes and for sustainability. While students may not be building the kind of trusting relationships with adults that they would in positive youth development program, the model enables organizations to be involved with fewer volunteers and at virtually no cost. In terms of reducing disconnection, a successful middle school program could cut the number of disconnected youth in half.

Conclusion

To be academically successful in the long run, students need an array of skills, including “non-cognitive” skills like a growth mindset and perseverance. Non-academic activities in afterschool programs are the best way to develop these. A threshold step is to get youth connected to some activity outside of school. Schools and non-profits have a common interest in helping reduce youth disconnection and can do so within school district policies. With afterschool programming, they can think outside the box about how to provide students the experiences they most want. The proposed Facilitated Student Group model gives older youth the autonomy they desire and could be one of the more sustainable ways to reduce youth disconnection. While it will require schools and youth-serving non-profits to place more trust in students, who better than these to do so.

Introduction

In efforts to foster youth health and development, there has been a move away from programs aimed at preventing specific risky behaviors and toward programs aimed at building resiliency through a focus on “positive youth development” (Texas Partnership for Out of School Time, 2014). Today there is significant research supporting the importance of certain “developmental assets” and the value of providing youth with opportunities and experiences to intentionally engender these assets or skills.

Unfortunately, in many communities and regions, a large percentage of older children and teens are not connected to any out-of-school program or activity that could contribute to positive youth development. The National Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that nationally some 18% of youth age 12 – 17 do not participate (Paso del Norte Health Foundation, 2015). Not only is there a need for more programming that promotes positive youth development, there is also a need to simply get more youth connected to activities and programs that are available or could readily be established.

Public schools could play a pivotal role here. Schools are where disconnected youth can be found in concentrated numbers. In some communities and neighborhoods, the school may be the only accessible and safe facility for hosting a quality youth program. There is evidence, too, that community-based programs that have the approval of school principals and teachers fare better in recruiting youth to participate.

Recognizing this role for schools, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, under its *Ignite Initiative*, commissioned this policy study to better understand what policies or practices of public schools contribute to youth disconnection and what policies or practices of public schools might help reduce disconnection among youth ages 7–18.

This report explores the following issues:

- Why should connection and positive youth development—not just academics—matter to schools?
- How do schools provide connection in afterschool hours?
- What do schools and non-profits see as challenges to reducing disconnection through afterschool programs?
- What school district policies most impact afterschool connection and school-non-profit collaboration?
- What sustainable actions could schools take to help reduce youth disconnection?

In exploring the question on sustainable actions, the authors will present what they envision as a potential new collaborative model for reducing disconnection.

Definitions

Disconnected youth. For the *Ignite Initiative*, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation defines “disconnected youth” as people between the ages of 7—18 years old who are not involved in out of school activities or participating in the labor market (PdNHF definition, 2013).¹

Reducing youth disconnection. For purposes of this study, the authors intend “reducing youth disconnection” to mean taking individuals out of the category of disconnected youth by engaging them in some kind of regular out of school activity.

Positive youth development. For the *Ignite Initiative*, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation defines “positive youth development” as an intentional approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive. It recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths. It also promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths (Find Youth, 2013). In contrast, unintentional approaches might include activities like after school day care or programs without clearly defined outcomes.

Connection. For purposes of this study, the authors intend “connection” to mean youth participation in a regular out of school activity that intentionally provides at least some of the aspects of positive youth development.

Schools. Throughout this study, the authors refer to “schools” either as a generic reference to providers of K-12 public education or as the physical facilities where such education is provided. The term “campus” may also be used with the same meaning. The authors refer to the “principal” as the administrative head of a school.

School districts. The authors refer to “school districts” as the legal entities that adopt policies, allocate resources, and set direction for schools and students. In both Texas and New Mexico, school districts are governed by an elected board of trustees and led by a superintendent.

School policies. The authors refer to “school policies” as the governing policies that school boards adopt (or that legally apply without adoption in Texas) and that are binding on how school districts and schools operate. School policies can only be changed by vote of the school board.

School rules. The authors refer to “school rules” as both school policies and administrative regulations issued by the school district superintendent that are usually binding on school principals, faculty, and students. Administrative regulations can be changed by action of the superintendent.

¹ The term “disconnected youth” has been variously defined by researchers. For purposes of some research, including by the U.S. government, disconnected youth is defined as youth up to age 24 who are not in school and are not working (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2014; United States Government Accountability Office, 2008; youth.gov, 2017). Such research shows that disconnected youth tend to be poor, suffer academically, and may have mental health and substance abuse issues (Hair, Moore, Ling, McPhee-Baker, & Brown, 2009).

Paso del Norte Region. By this term, the authors refer to the area served by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation: El Paso and Hudspeth Counties in far west Texas, Doña Ana, Luna, and Otero Counties in southern New Mexico, and the municipality of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

U.S. Paso del Norte Region. For purposes of this study, the term “U.S. Paso del Norte Region” will refer only to that portion of the Paso del Norte Region in Texas and New Mexico. The U.S. Paso del Norte Region includes 12 different school districts in Texas with 174,079 students and 7 different school districts in New Mexico with 52,222 students as of the 2015-2016 school year. The Texas school districts are El Paso, Ysleta, Socorro, Clint, Canutillo, San Elizario, Fabens, Tornillo, Anthony, Dell City, Ft. Hancock, and Sierra Blanca. The New Mexico school districts are Las Cruces, Gadsden, Deming, Hatch Valley, Alamogordo, Tularosa, and Cloudcroft.

Afterschool program. The authors intend “afterschool program” or “afterschool programming” to mean an adult-led organized activity that takes place at a school during non-school hours (including during school breaks), but at a school location.

Afterschool activities. The authors refer to “afterschool activities” as the various activities that students could do at the school after the instructional day ends, including an afterschool program, extracurricular activities (like sports), or student clubs.

Facilitated Student Group model. The authors use this term to refer to the new model they propose for afterschool activities at the middle school level, as described in Part 5 of this study.

Study Methodology

As the methodology for this study, the authors reviewed the academic literature on disconnected youth, the developmental benefits of connecting youth to quality out-of-school programming, and the importance of non-cognitive skill development for academic success. The authors reviewed published research and reports on the most common types of out-of-school programming that takes place at schools or in collaboration with schools (referred to as “afterschool programming”), on how such programming addresses positive youth development or the development of non-cognitive skills, and on some of the challenges programs face.

Following the Institutional Review Board protocol for the University of Texas at El Paso, the authors conducted an online survey of schools and non-profit organizations in the U.S. Paso del Norte Region and follow-up interviews to get an idea of how schools and organizations are collaborating on afterschool programming and the perceptions or barriers that may be preventing more collaboration. The survey conducted to gain a general understanding of what programs are operating, the extent of school-non-profit collaboration, or how successful those collaborations are. Emails were sent to 314 school principals, asking them to complete a survey designed for schools, and to 157 non-profit organizational contacts, asking them to complete a separate survey designed for non-profit organizations. The non-profit organizations were those that appeared to offer services to children or youth.



To address school policies that impact afterschool programming, the authors first examined constitutional and federal law that impacts schools and afterschool programming across the nation. The authors then examined the specific written policies of school districts in the U.S. Paso del Norte Region, as published on the districts' websites.

The authors analyzed this information in light of the *Ignite Initiative* goals and produced a number of recommendations for sustainable actions that schools could take to reduce youth disconnection and to increase collaboration with community organizations that offer youth-development programming. The authors considered in detail how one of the recommendations—encourage student clubs—could reduce youth disconnection in a way that schools can readily sustain. Upon developing the basic framework and much of a sample toolkit for the Facilitated Student Group model, the authors convened a focus group of school administrators to provide feedback on the model and the toolkit. With this feedback, the authors adjusted the model and toolkit. Key observations from the focus group are included in the discussion of the model in Part 5 of this study.

Part 1. Why “connection” – not just academics -- should matter to schools

The Paso del Norte Health Foundation has estimated that 23% of youth age 7–18 in the Paso del Norte Region are disconnected. The *Ignite Initiative* is built on the belief that “youth who are connected to high quality out of school programs and have adult mentors are more likely to grow-up healthy than disconnected youth” (Paso del Norte Health Foundation, 2015, p. 3). While educators may appreciate the importance of “connection,” they are not necessarily aware of how connection relates to their students’ academic performance. This portion of the policy study will address the role of connection in youth development, how non-cognitive skills relate to academic performance, and how non-cognitive skills get developed.

The role of youth development and non-cognitive skills in academic performance

Schools have long recognized that students learn better when they are actively engaged in learning and there has been a huge effort to shift teachers from being “the sage on the stage” to being the “guide on the side” in order to promote student engagement in learning. A student’s ability to engage in learning may depend, however, on characteristics in the child and not just the way instruction is delivered. In April 2016, the U.S. Department of Education took a remarkable step by including a related new “priority” in its largest funding opportunity for development of school-based programs known as Investing in Innovation or “i3.”

Fourth, we include an absolute priority on influencing the development of non-cognitive factors. Non-cognitive factors may encompass many skills and behaviors, including but not limited to academic behaviors, academic mindset, perseverance, self-regulation, social and emotional skills, and approaches toward learning strategies. A promising body of research suggests that non-cognitive factors play an important role in students’ academic, career, and life outcomes. Notably, some initial interventions focused on enhancing these skills and behaviors are seemingly scalable and lower-cost as compared to more conventional education interventions—and have a positive impact on students most in need. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)

In support of this priority, the U.S. Department of Education first cites research from the University of Chicago funded by the Wallace Foundation on youth development (the “Wallace Report”), followed by research from the University of Chicago on how non-cognitive factors shape school performance (the “Chicago Report”) (Farrington et al., 2012), followed finally by research on specific interventions aimed at non-cognitive skills and their impact on academic performance. By doing so, the U.S. Department of Education effectively presented a “theory of change” for how positive youth development leads to academic benefit, providing schools with a new incentive to collaborate with non-profits in this endeavor. Embedded in this theory of change is the value of “engagement” generally, providing schools with the incentive to reduce disconnection, including through participation in out-of-school non-academic activities.

Youth Development

The *Wallace Report* puts forward a “holistic view” for how children develop into successful young adults, defining success “beyond education and employment to include healthy relationships, a meaningful place within a community, and contributing to a larger good.” Synthesizing decades of research

evidence, practice wisdom, and theory, the framework identifies three “key factors” for healthy development: agency, competencies, and Integrated identity (see Figure 1). *Agency* means taking an active and intentional role in making choices and shaping and managing one’s own life rather than being at the mercy of external forces. *Integrated identity* is a sense of internal consistency of who one is across time and across multiple social contexts, which provides individuals with a solid foundation for making choices. *Competencies* are the abilities that enable people to effectively perform multiple roles, complete complex tasks, or achieve specific objectives. Putting the three together, “Being successful means having the *Agency* to make active choices about one’s life path, possessing the *Competencies* to adapt to the demands of different contexts, and incorporating different aspects of oneself into an *Integrated Identity*.”

The *Wallace Report* distinguishes its framework from other frameworks, like that offered by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, which focuses on the “competencies” of Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity (“4C’s”) that youth will need to succeed in a “knowledge economy” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). According to the *Wallace Report*, underlying these competencies – as well as agency and integrated identity – are four “foundational components”: knowledge and skills, self-regulation, mindsets, and values. These components were chosen “because they are malleable. ...[they] can be changed by experiences and the efforts of and interactions with other people, in both positive and negative ways and then be internalized.” (Nagaoka et al., 2015, p. 27). They encompass both “cognitive” and “non-cognitive” factors. Children continually learn these components “through *developmental experiences* that combine *Action* and *Reflection*, ideally within the context of trusting relationships with adults.”



Figure 1. Three Key Factors for healthy development

The best way for adults to help youth develop the right non-cognitive foundational components is to provide them with experiences that are appropriate for and relate to their particular developmental stage and then guide them in making meaning of their experiences. For example, for middle school-aged children or “early adolescents” (ages 11–14), students at this age will tend to equate the need to work harder with a lack of ability. Rather than getting locked into seeing himself as “smart” or “not smart”, an adult could help an adolescent learn about growth mindset—that intellectual capabilities are not fixed but can grow with effort.

Non-cognitive skills and academic performance

As described in *The Chicago Report*, researchers have identified non-cognitive factors that most impact academic performance as including motivation, time management, and self-regulation (Heckman, 2008), and self-control and conscientiousness (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007), perseverance in challenging work, popularly referred to as “grit”, academic or growth mindsets, and social skills (Durlak et al., 2011). *The Chicago Report* generally categorizes these non-cognitive factors as follows:

- Academic Behaviors – observable behaviors that show students’ engagement and effort
- Academic Mindsets – students’ attitudes and beliefs about their academic work and ability
- Academic Perseverance – the ability to overcome distractions, obstacles, and challenges to complete academic work
- Learning Strategies – tactics that students use to help them remember, think, and learn
- Social Skills – behaviors that allow students to interact with peers and adults in positive and productive ways

The *Chicago Report* graphic “Socio-cultural context” illustrates how the five factors influence one another, with arrows indicating the primary direction of influence (See Figure 2). Academic mindsets and academic perseverance affect academic performance by influencing students’ academic behaviors – how inclined they are to go to class, pay attention, participate, do homework, and study. Social skills primarily influence academic behaviors in that better social skills can reduce classroom misconduct and learning disruption and help with social interactions when students work in teams.

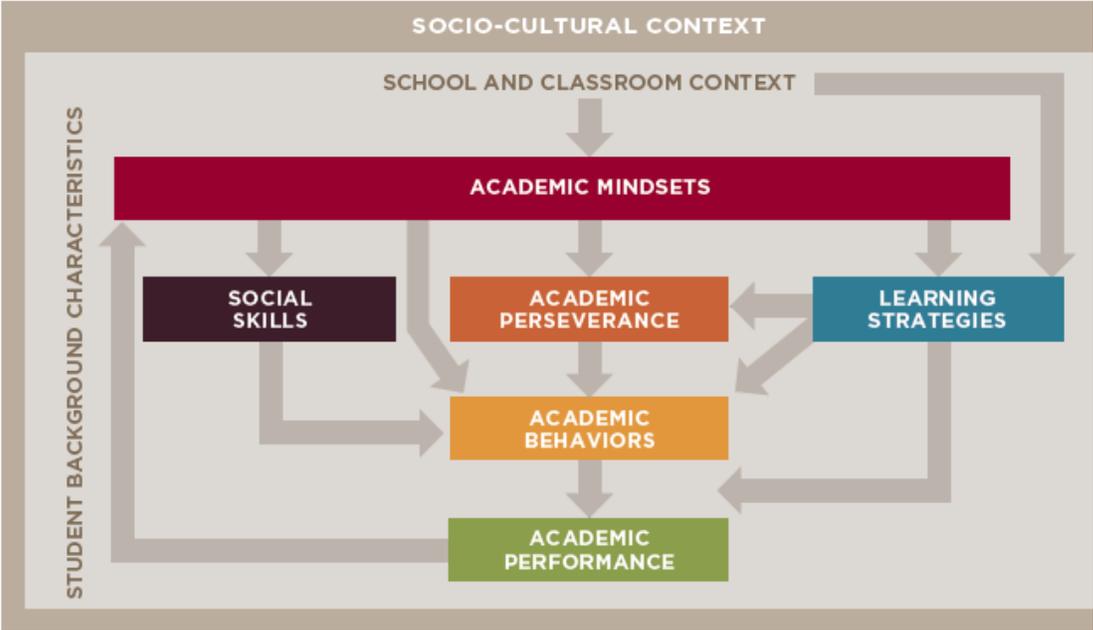


Figure 2. Socio-cultural context and five factors of influence (Farrington et al., 2012, p. 12)

The following table connects non-cognitive factors that contribute to academic performance with indicators of positive growth in such factors and ways to assess such growth. An afterschool program that is intentional about promoting positive growth in such non-cognitive factors should be paying attention to these indicators.

Table 1. Indicators of Non-Cognitive Factors that Support Academics

Non-Cognitive Factor and Indicators	Ways to Assess
Non-Cognitive Factor: Academic Behavior	
Regular attendance	Attendance record
Punctual and prepared	Visible evaluation
Engaged (Paying attention)	Observation/ Work/Discussion
Participation (instruction)	Observations
Participation contributes to discussion	Observation/ Work/Discussion
Out of Class- added value learning	Work submitted
Non-Cognitive Factor: Academic Perseverance	
Assignments completed on time	Work submitted
Assignments are thorough	Observation
Establishes/ Talks about goals	Discussion
Navigates obstacles	Observation/ Work
Shows focus through distractions	Observation/ Work
Non-Cognitive Factor: Growth Mindset	
Attitude about school	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Attitude about life	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Attitude about self	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Student belief system	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Personal motivation	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Desire to grow and learn	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Sense of belonging	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Belief that academic ability improves with effort	Discussion/ Work/ Observation
Engage in competitive activities	Work
Non-Cognitive Factor: Learning Strategies	
Recall- mnemonic devices	Observation/ Work
Comprehension	Observation/Work/Discussion
Self-monitoring	Observation/Work/Discussion
Self-correcting (one’s own thinking)	Observation/Work/Discussion
Non-Cognitive Factor: Social Skills	
Cooperation	Observation/Work/Discussion
Assertion	Observation/Work/Discussion
Responsibility	Observation/Work/Discussion
Empathy	Observation/Work/Discussion
Decision-making	Observation/Work/Discussion
Collaborative leadership	Observation/Work/Discussion

The role of afterschool programming

Schools and traditional instruction are primed to help children develop the cognitive components of knowledge and skills and academic competencies, but currently are not well-structured to help children develop the non-cognitive components (as evidenced by the i3 priority). According to the *Wallace Report*, students develop these non-cognitive skills or competencies when they “tinker” - jump in and do, negotiate ideas with others, take on different perspectives, grapple with difficult problems, think outside the box, and make mistakes. While school day instruction may give teachers and students little room to tinker, extracurricular activities and afterschool programming can provide this room. Some already-recognized benefits of afterschool programs and extracurricular activities include:

- They require students to learn how to collaborate and communicate with peers and teachers in ways that are different from regular class interaction (Sahin, Ayar, & Adiguzel, 2014).
- They can motivate students to work together and share their ideas, experiences. This allows students to take ownership of their ideas (Finn-Stevenson, 2014).
- They can help to cultivate a sense of belonging to a group. They can offer more inclusive and supportive environments to student with disabilities.
- They can be more flexible than schools in fostering family involvement.
- They can be more challenging, requiring students to use different skills and materials for projects.
- They can give students opportunities to practice skills and responsibilities that they will need after graduation or in college.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) argues that many of the non-cognitive skills are more readily developed in an out-of-school time setting than in a school setting. “Available evidence suggests that non-cognitive skill development is deeply dependent on a positive learning environment, which closely mirrors positive youth development principles. “The IGNITE Initiative urges youth programs to incorporate the well-established features of positive developmental settings (see Appendix 1). These include a structure that is neither chaotic nor over controlled and autocratic, exposure to intentional learning experiences, youth-based empowerment practices that support autonomy, and supportive relationships and guidance (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The *Wallace Report* echoes the importance if these features for early adolescents. “Creating successful contexts for early adolescents— whether inside or outside of schools—would require that we meet their developmental needs for increasing independence from adult control, extended interaction with peers, exploration with things they have interest in, and opportunities to engage in increasingly complex forms of thinking, communicating, and problem-solving.” (Nagaoka et al., 2015, p 70).

Recognizing that an afterschool program can be an effective environment for development of important non-cognitive skills and that non-academic programming can have academic benefit, schools should see it as in their self-interest that students participate in afterschool programs and extracurricular activities. In other words, reducing disconnection is an important step in the right direction.

Part 2. How schools provide connection in afterschool hours

In *Critical Hours* Miller (2003) describes the afterschool landscape as a wide variety of programs that fall essentially into four categories, each with their own origins and aims and primary target populations.

- *School-age care*, mostly offered by non-profits or for-profits, developed from the need to provide afterschool day care to young children while their mothers were still at work.
- *Positive youth development*, offered mostly by non-profits, developed from a desire to prevent problems and delinquency in older youth.
- *Extended learning*, mostly by schools, developed from the need to provide extra support to low-performing students in an era of high-stakes testing.
- *Enrichment activities*, described by Miller as “structured, voluntary activities usually led by one or more adults who provide opportunities for students to share experiences and build specific skills in the context of a group of similarly interested peers,” are offered by schools, non-profits, and for-profits.

Elementary schools often make their facilities available for school-age care and some positive youth development programs, like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Little League sports. High schools offer their students extracurricular activities like athletics, band, debate team, and school clubs. Afterschool activities or programs for middle school students are less common. Students are too old for school-age care and middle schools offer far fewer extracurricular activities. Because there is an urgency to prepare students for the rigor of high school and beyond, much of the afterschool programming for middle school students involves extended learning.

For nearly two decades there has been an expectation from policymakers, funders and the public that schools and non-profits should be collaborating in providing afterschool programs. Beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, Texas law specifically authorized school boards, at their option, to keep school campuses open after hours for academic programs and recreational activities. Texas Education Code 11.165. In 2013, New Mexico adopted the Community Schools Act to serve as a strategy for organizing collaborations that include extended learning and out-of-school-time programs, family engagement and support services, and school-based or school-linked health care. The Act also envisions that a community schools’ initiative could be used to provide community-supported strategies for implementing school reform.

Schools and non-profits have the following options for collaborating to reduce disconnection through afterschool programming:

- The school runs the program, with some advice or training from non-profits due to their expertise on positive youth development.
- The school runs the program and brings in the non-profit as a contractor that receives funding from the school to provide certain services.
- The school and the non-profit jointly run the program, whether funding transfers or not.
- The non-profit runs the program at a school location under the district’s facility use/rental policies.
- The non-profit runs the program away from school, with recruiting support from the school.

These different options have weaker or stronger linkage to schools, and in turn can have differing impact on positive youth development. Figure 3—Impact matrix—shows the authors’ view of this relationship.

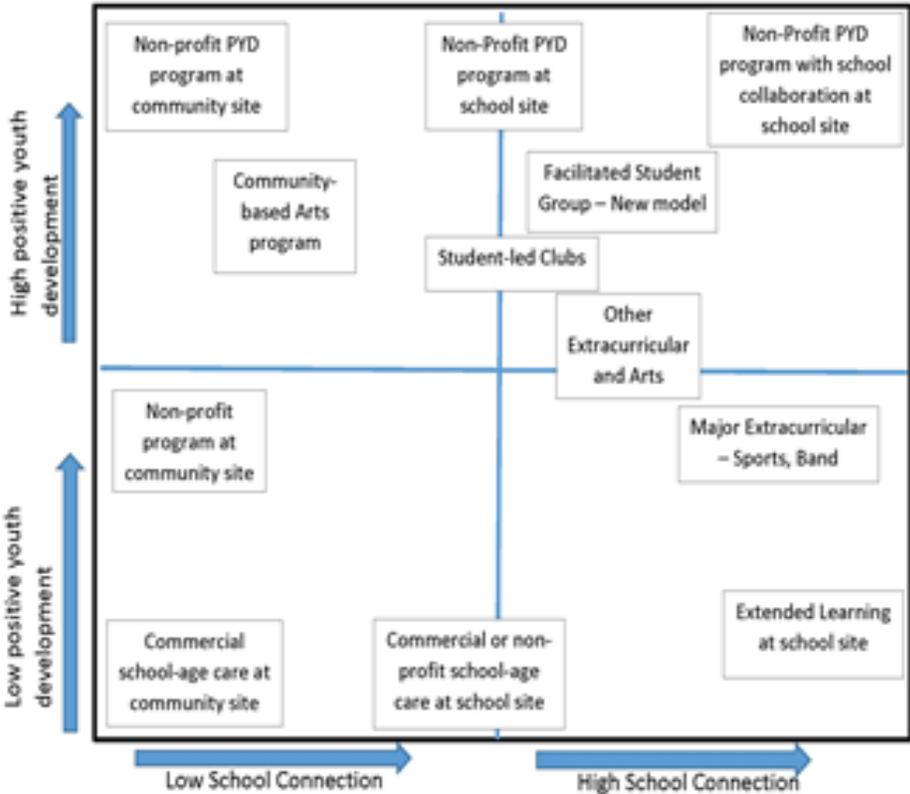


Figure 3: Impact matrix

There can be a cost difference in how afterschool programs are delivered. A cost analysis funded by the Wallace Foundation found that school-based, school-run afterschool programs cost less than school-based, non-profit-run programs, at \$16 per day per student “slot” compared to \$21 per day per slot. Explanations include that school-run programs spent less on management time, operated with fewer staff per youth, paid staff less, and received more donated administrative services (Bowden, Klapp, Levin, Shand, & Zander, 2015).

There can also be a psychological obstacle to schools truly collaborating with non-profits within the school environment. Schools accustomed to implementing academic programs on their own may not readily see a role for non-profits beyond providing funding. If school administrators are not aware of the role that enrichment or non-academic activities play in developing non-cognitive skills and how non-cognitive skills impact academic performance, then it is not surprising that they may consider non-academic activities as optional entertainment for students. These sentiments were captured within the survey comments below.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Any discussion of the afterschool landscape should include 21st Century Community Learning Center (“21st CCLC”) programs, as nationally about 1.7 million children in afterschool programming are participants in 21st CCLC programs. This federal program, administered by states, funds afterschool and summer programs that provide academic support and enrichment activities for economically disadvantaged students. Over 100,000 children participate in Texas 21st CCLC programs and over 9,000 in New Mexico 21st CCLC programs. Within the Paso del Norte Region, 21st CCLC programs operate at Hatch Valley Public Schools, Gadsden Public Schools, and Las Cruces Public Schools in New Mexico and at Ysleta Independent School District in Texas.

The 21st CCLC program could be an ideal vehicle for collaboration between schools and non-profits, as the program allows schools to pay non-profits to provide some or all the program services and even gives competitive priority to proposals that include such collaboration. However, such collaboration can still be a challenge. In Texas, the Ysleta Independent School District has found collaborating with private non-profits a practical problem due to procurement requirements and short application deadlines. Ysleta ISD interprets federal and state procurement requirements to mean that if the school district is going to be the lead grantee and distribute grant funds to a non-profit organization “partner” or “co-applicant,” it must still use a procurement process to select that partner. Such process requires more time than the district has between notice of the 21st CCLC grant opportunity and the application deadline. As a result, Ysleta ISD, and like grantees in New Mexico, is collaborating with public entities. Part 3 expands on the discussion of procurement requirements.

Although because of time constraints a school district might not be able to bring in a non-profit organization as a “co-applicant” for a 21st CCLC program, the school district can follow up with a solicitation for contractors to provide enrichment (non-academic) activities during the program, which will run for three to five years, including during summer break. The school district can also conduct a solicitation process for a non-profit partner to provide services towards the end of the grant-funded program that would continue after the grant ends under a sustainability plan. Part 4 describes actions schools could take.

While the 21st CCLC program requires enrichment activities, it does not assign them particular importance beyond generally recognizing that they are important for recruitment and retention. In Texas, the 21st CCLC program’s “theory of change” is that higher quality academic programs will increase student engagement. For this reason, many 21st CCLC programs at middle schools focus on hands-on STEM activities. As reported in the 2014-2015 Texas evaluation, however, for middle school students having a direct academic component in an activity—even a high-quality activity—will actually depress middle school student engagement and participation. To keep middle school students engaged, the program needs to include meaningful enrichment activities that do not include an academic component.

Practical challenges for afterschool programs

The report *Challenges and Opportunities in After-School Programs: Lessons for Policymakers and Funders* offered information it calls “sobering” about school-community collaborations (Grossman, Walker, &

Raley, 2001). The report relayed findings from the examination of 60 afterschool programs in 17 cities in the U.S. that aimed to offer high-quality youth development programs in school buildings through a partnership between a local school district and a community-based organization. “Locating these programs in schools brings many strengths; but ... it also brings unique challenges that should be taken into consideration as programs are planned and funded” (Grossman et al., 2001, p. 4) The examination found three “formidable challenges” occurring with consistency: 1) who gets recruited and served, 2) the actual availability of space, and 3) transportation. School-based programs, like community –based programs, have a hard time attracting and retaining older youth, for the reasons discussed below. Regarding space, the reality is that school facilities and equipment are already being heavily used after school, and afterschool programs must compete with school uses for the most appropriate or coveted space (like multipurpose rooms and computer labs). Campus principals concerned about maintenance of their facilities and equipment may not want to make everything available. Getting children home after the program – often after dark – is a real concern. Few districts have both a policy and funding for transportation home from afterschool programs, especially for academic programs that run frequently all year.

A survey of schools and non-profits in the U.S. Paso del Norte Region conducted by the authors revealed similar challenges to hosting afterschool programs at schools and to schools and non-profits working together. The authors sent out 471 electronic surveys to 314 schools and 157 organizations within the U.S. Paso del Norte Region. The schools were identified as all those within the U.S. Paso del Norte Region that had an email address for the school principal. The organizations were identified through the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, the United Way of El Paso County, and internet searches as those non-profit, community and faith-based organizations that include youth development or youth activities in their purpose and had an email address. Responses included 48 surveys (15.2%) returned by schools and 17 (14.6%) returned by organizations.

Out of 48 schools that responded, 24 said they have or have had afterschool programs at their school. Of these 24, 16 said the programs were operated by a non-profit organization and four said their program was operated by a faith-based organization. For those schools who responded that they don’t have any afterschool program, the top reasons given were 1) no organization has offered to operate one; 2) there’s no funding to operate one; 3) there’s no school personnel to supervise an afterschool program; and 4) there’s a lack of transportation. Schools gave a variety of answers about how the school came to connect with the organization, but several responded that the organization approached the school.

Of the 24 schools with afterschool programs, 20 reported being very satisfied and would offer more programming if they could. When asked about the biggest challenges the school has faced in dealing with non-profit organizations and afterschool programming, the responses were clustered around sufficient funding, transportation, conflict with school need for space, supervision and behavior management, and after-program cleanup.

Out of the 17 responses from non-profit organizations, nine responded that they offer or seek to offer programming at a school location. Responses for why they don’t offer their program at school included 1) unable to establish a collaborative partnership with a school; 2) there’s no funding for a school program; and 3) there’s no school personnel to supervise. One responder elaborated, “We have been

trying to partner at the school district level--and we have had some luck, but it takes time to build relationships. In some instances we have been able to work with staff at the school-level.”

When asked about the experience of organizations in dealing with the schools regarding their program, a number of responses were entirely positive. Some of the challenges raised included the following:

Lack of follow-through by school personnel. Lack of program space. Delayed or ignored parent flyer distribution.

They have a different focus than our faith-based community does.

Did not anticipate the administrative and school-level attitude that they were doing us a favor.

Our program requires funding and most districts don't have the extra dollars to set aside.

The constant change of personnel. You may have a leader you are working with and next year they have been moved or they left or retired.

The perception that they are the professionals, and we are just extra entertainment. When staff is involved in delivering our program, they are often pulled away by last-minute situations and don't see the need to make it up to the kids.

Many decisions are made at the district level. Every district runs and operates differently.

It's important to make sure that the schools are made aware of all program requirements prior to the program starting to ensure that the school is able to comply.

You have to have a good program that makes sense and is addressing an intervention or prevention strategy. Working on the front end to articulate expected program outcomes. Evidence-based programs are not cheap, but they are designed to achieve outcomes.

Synthesizing this information, the most attractive collaborations between schools and non-profit organizations may be ones that:

- are offered by a trusted community non-profit organization;
- include activities that students enjoy;
- do not require use of coveted multi-purpose space;
- do not require staffing by school personnel;
- do not require the school to pay the non-profit organization;
- can occur with regularity and dependability;
- provide appropriate supervision of students;
- address transportation needs;
- have clear roles and expectations for school and organization;
- offer more than entertainment for students; and
- are simple and affordable enough to be sustainable.

Schools have usually found a way to make a collaboration that includes most of these elements work if it directly addresses academics, like a summer robotics camp. Schools may not be so accommodating for non-academic programming. The authors submit that school administrators can justify school support

for non-academic afterschool programming and their collaboration with community non-profits in providing such programming at schools, because of the indirect impact on academic performance.

However, as shown in Figure 4, the greater the cost, time, and effort involved in providing the non-academic programming, the greater the impact on academic performance may need to be to justify the school’s interest.

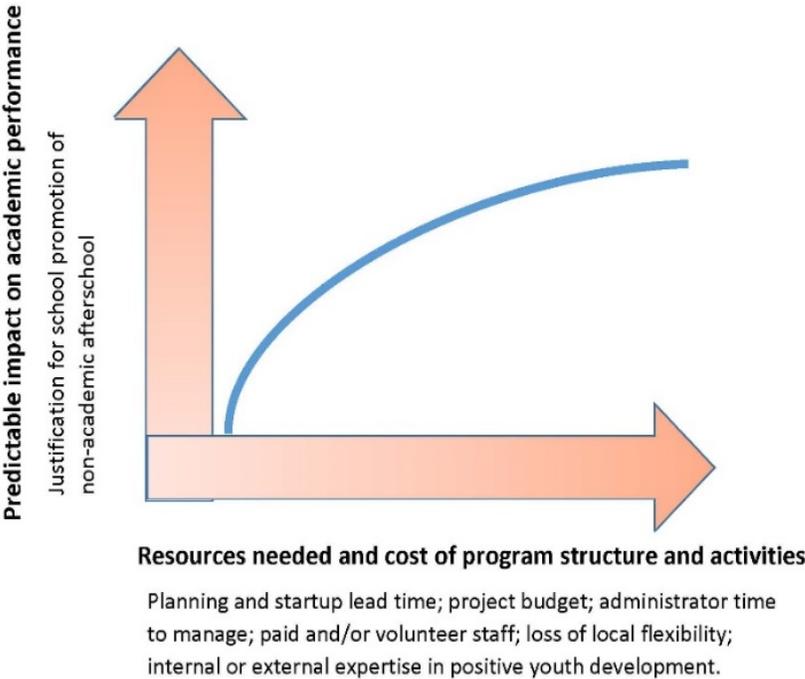


Figure 4. Cost versus impact on academic performance

Part 3. School district policies that impact afterschool programming

Afterschool programming operated by schools, by non-profit organizations at schools, or by collaborations between schools and non-profits will be subject to a host of rules and regulations. Public school districts are governmental entities operating under a myriad of laws, regulations, local policies, and unwritten practices, for underlying reasons that may be constitutional or for academic accountability, governmental transparency, school safety, or administrative convenience.

The rules that impact afterschool programming are not neatly packaged anywhere. Non-profit leaders understandably will rely on what they are told by the school about the rules; however, campus principals may not have a clear or full understanding themselves. In this part, the authors summarize and explain the policies and rules that typically apply to and most impact afterschool programming, whether by schools, by non-profits, or by school-non-profit collaborations. These include provisions regarding:

- Mandatory non-discrimination in school programs
- Schools as government property and public forums
- Relationship with religious activities and organizations
- Public information and student records
- School safety
- Transportation
- Rental or use of school facilities for afterschool programs
- Procurement requirements
- Contracting authority
- Sovereign immunity and liability

Where to find education laws and school district policies

As public entities, school districts are subject to the U.S. Constitution, federal law, state law, and policies adopted by the district's own elected board of trustees, in that priority. Federal and state law may provide parameters for the further adoption of local policy by the district board of trustees. The U.S. Department of Education website has a tab for "Laws and Guidance" which lists the major laws that impact K-12 education, with links to implementing regulations in Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations and to departmental "guidance" (including "Dear Colleague Letters").

The Texas Education Code contains most of the laws that impact public education in Texas. Independent school districts are considered political subdivisions of the state, rather than state agencies, and are also considered "local governments." The Texas Education Agency administers state education laws and regulations. Regulations are included in Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code. New Mexico has a Public Education Code, found at Chapter 22 of the New Mexico Statutes (22 NMSA 1978). Most education-related regulations are included in Title 6 of the New Mexico Administrative Code.

Both Texas and New Mexico school districts combine federal, state, and local requirements into policies that are posted on the district website, usually under the tab for the school board. In Texas, most school

districts use the online policy manual provided through the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). TASB’s format organizes policies by topic and subtopic using the alphabet, then adds a suffix designating whether the policies come automatically from state or federal law (“LEGAL”) or are adopted by the local school board (“LOCAL”). Administrative regulations (adopted by district administration, rather than the school board) follow the same alphabetic tag, adding the suffix “Reg.”

The New Mexico school districts in the U.S. Paso del Norte Region utilize a policy classification system known as the NEPN/NSBA classification system. Unlike Texas, this system does not separately classify policies that are mandatory under state or federal law. School boards still vote to adopt such policies, but under an accelerated process. New Mexico school districts also include “Regulations” promulgated as needed by the superintendent to ensure uniformity in operations.

Terminology and applicability

Federal law often refers to a public school district as a “Local Educational Agency” (LEA) and to an individual school as a “campus.” Statutes that apply only if the school or school district receives federal funding may refer to the school district or school as “recipient.” Several federal statutes apply to “every educational program or activity” operated by a recipient, including any academic, extracurricular, or other program. 34 CFR 106.2(h). This means that an afterschool program operated by a school or a school district – whether academic or non-academic – would be included, even if the program itself does not directly receive federal funding. Other rules add that the restrictions apply to activities provided by the school district directly “or through another entity,” such as a non-profit contracted to provide services.

For programs that are operated partially by a school district and partially by another entity, the same restrictions will apply if participation in the program is required by the school district or if the school district “facilitates such participation as part of or equivalent to an education program operated by” the school district. This means that an afterschool program operated jointly by a school and a non-profit will be subject to the federal restrictions.

School district policies generally use the term “curricular” or “instruction” when referring to academic activities or programs, while they use the terms “co-curricular,” “extracurricular,” and “non-curricular” in describing student activities outside of class. Co-curricular activities are activities that relate to or are an extension of an academic course or program, such as a robotics team, a debate team, a school orchestra, or a math club. As referenced in school policies, they are usually organized or sponsored by the school. Extracurricular activities are activities organized or sponsored by the school, but are not necessarily connected to academics, such as sports, cheerleading, drama groups, and service clubs.² The term “non-curricular activities” in school district policies appears in connection with a federal law known

² In Texas, certain defined extracurricular activities are governed by rules of the University Interscholastic League (UIL). The mandatory policy for Texas school districts on extracurricular activities is 12 pages long. In New Mexico, interscholastic athletic activities are regulated by the New Mexico activities association.

as the Equal Access Act (discussed below). These are activities by students that are not connected to any school course or to academics generally.

An afterschool program or activity that takes place at a school could be any of these types, depending on the facts.

Mandatory non-discrimination in school programs

As political subdivisions of the state, public school districts are subject to the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. This means that a school may limit rights or draw distinctions between groups or individuals only where relevant to a legitimate governmental objective. The more a law infringes upon a fundamental right or burdens an inherently “suspect class” of individuals, the more scrutiny will be applied to justify differences in how the law is applied. Even if a school does not intend to discriminate, an action could be considered discriminatory if it disproportionately impacts a protected group without a compelling governmental interest.

Congress has passed several laws that broaden the protections beyond those required under the U.S. Constitution. Title VI of the 1964 *Civil Rights Act* prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in any school programs, activities, or use of school facilities. Title IX of the *Education Amendments Act* of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in programs or activities of any school that receives federal financial assistance. Under Section 504 of the 1973 *Rehabilitation Act* and Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* of 1992 (ADA), schools are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of disability and must provide a free appropriate public education (Section 504 FAPE) to each qualified person with a disability who is in the school district’s jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the person’s disability. Texas state law adds non-discrimination on the basis of religion and sex. New Mexico state law further adds gender identity, sexual orientation, and spousal affiliation. All school districts have explicit policies prohibiting non-discrimination in their educational programs and are required to include their “non-discrimination statement” in their various publications.

These mandatory policies will apply to afterschool programs run by the school or run by a non-profit organization in collaboration with a school, even if the program does not directly receive federal funding. For example, a school cannot collaborate with a Little League football program that does not allow girls to play, a golf program that is held at a facility that discriminates on the basis of race, or a program held at a community facility that is not accessible to persons with disabilities.

As with most laws, however, there are exceptions. For example, Title IX expressly does not apply to the membership practices of the YMCA, YWCA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls, or to the membership practices of non-profit youth organizations that traditionally serve one sex of participants under age 19 (34 CFR 106.14). Title IX does not prohibit appropriate requirements for sex-segregated athletic teams based on competitive fairness or physical safety of the sport.³ Extracurricular activities can be single-sex, if they are aimed at and appropriate for meeting particular, identified educational needs.

³ Texas requires that students who participate in a sex-segregated sport governed by the UIL do so in accordance with the student’s sex as determined by the birth certificate.

Students with disabilities have the right to participate in a school’s extracurricular activities as much as in its instructional program. A Dear Colleague Letter (Office For Civil Rights, 2013) thoroughly describes the process for making an “individualized inquiry” into the accommodations a student may need to fully participate in an extracurricular activity, including athletics. The guidance makes it clear that when a school works with a community sports league or association, the school’s legal obligation supersedes any rule of any association, organization, club, or league that would limit the eligibility of a student to participate. “Indeed, it would violate a school district’s obligations under Section 504 to provide significant assistance to any association, organization, club, league, or other third party that discriminates on the basis of disability in providing any ... service to the school district’s students” (Office For Civil Rights, 2013)

Use of school facilities

School buildings are public facilities that may or may not be open to access by the public. When a school building is open to the public, such as for a public meeting, under federal law no person may be denied access to the facility on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Texas state law adds the status of religion and sex. New Mexico state law further adds gender identity, sexual orientation, and spousal affiliation.

A school district can reserve use of its facilities solely for school use or it can make its facilities available for community use or rental. When it makes its facilities available for community use or rental (non-school use), the school district is creating a “limited public forum.” Under constitutional law, the school district may impose restrictions on speech that are reasonable and “viewpoint neutral.” For example, a school district that rents its facilities to non-profit organizations cannot refuse to rent to a church because it is a religious organization; it cannot refuse to rent to a Muslim group while agreeing to rent to a Christian group. School boards can set reasonable restrictions on time, place, and manner of use and can charge fees for use. A school district may include as a condition of use that the group follow the same non-discrimination policy as the school while using the school facility. If so, this condition must be applied to all groups, including religious groups who prefer to discriminate for religious reasons. By uniformly applying this condition, school administrators avoid having to sort through different religious beliefs.⁴

Relationship with religious activities and organizations

School officials often incorrectly assume that religious organizations cannot be allowed to use school facilities because of “separation of church and state.” Public schools are subject to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which has two provisions concerning religion: the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. The Establishment Clause prohibits government from supporting religion or from favoring one religion over another. Thus, under the Establishment Clause, teachers, coaches, and

⁴ A law passed by Congress explicitly to expand protection for certain types of non-religious organizations in having access to school facilities, despite their beliefs or membership restrictions, is the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act (the “Boy Scouts Act” 20 U.S.C. 7905). Under the Boy Scouts Act, if a school makes its facilities available to any outside youth or community group, it must extend equal protection or equal access to “patriotic societies” like the Boy Scouts and other listed organizations despite their membership or leadership criteria, or their oaths of allegiance.

administrators cannot lead students in prayer. The Free Exercise Clause prohibits government interference in religious beliefs and activities without a compelling governmental interest. Thus, schools cannot prohibit students from praying silently.

Nothing prevents a school district from contracting with a religious organization to provide non-religious services to the school district or to district students. If federal funds are used, the activities or services provided must be non-religious in nature and must be provided in a manner that is separate from when the organization provides religious activities (Executive Order 13279). Under federal law, a religious organization that provides contracted services to the government can still hire its own employees on a religious basis.

In Good News Club v. Milford Central Schools, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that if a school district opens school facilities for social, civic, and recreational meetings, it cannot prohibit the same for religious uses, whether led by adults or students. The Supreme Court held this did not violate the Establishment Clause because the meetings were not school sponsored and the students’ parents decided whether students would attend. Similarly, courts have held that schools do not violate the Establishment Clause by permitting religious groups to distribute or post materials with a religious viewpoint in the same manner as the school allows distribution or posting of other non-school literature.

Student Clubs and Student Speech

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a state university could let religious student groups meet using campus facilities without violating the Establishment Clause, Congress passed the *Equal Access Act* in 1984 to require that public secondary schools provide similar “equal access.” The *Equal Access Act* describes certain criteria under which the speech and activities of student groups will be treated as “student speech” rather than “school speech,” and therefore will be free from restrictions that apply to schools as governmental entities. These criteria include that the groups are student-initiated, student-led, and non-curricular. The *Equal Access Act* mandates that a school give all such non-curricular groups – including religious groups - equal access to meet at school during non-instructional time.

While the *Equal Access Act* may have been designed with student Bible study and prayer groups in mind, today it equally protects groups like a Gay-Straight Alliance or a “Black Lives Matter” group. Whatever benefits or requirements a school applies to one group, it must apply equally to all groups. Providing equal access means providing space to meet and basic elements incidental to the school space, like chairs, desks, lighting, and Wi-Fi. It does not require a school to expend public funds beyond this.

In 2007, Texas adopted the Texas *Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act* (RVAA) which provides that students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, “see you at the pole” gatherings, and other religious gatherings before, during, and after school to same extent students are permitted to organize other non-curricular groups or gatherings. Unlike the federal *Equal Access Act*, this Texas law applies at elementary schools.

School authority over officially recognized extracurricular activities

According to the U.S. Supreme Court in *Board of Education of the Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*, schools enjoy “a significant measure of authority over the type of officially recognized activities in which their students participate.” School districts can adopt policies that are reasonable and necessary for activities, except to the extent they contradict controlling constitutional or statutory provisions. This means school districts can set stricter behavior standards for students when they participate in extracurricular activities or afterschool programs. Under Texas Education Code 33.081, students already must maintain a grade of 70 or above in each class in order to be eligible to participate in extracurricular activities. Under Section 22-12-2.1 N.M. Stat. Ann., a student must have a 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, either cumulatively or for the grading period immediately preceding participation. A school can set behavior standards that are stricter for students participating in school-sponsored extracurricular activities than it provides in its Student Code of Conduct applicable to all students.

Public information and student records

School districts have an obligation to comply with state open records or public information acts, while keeping student records confidential under the federal *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA). Under FERPA the school cannot release personally identifiable information from a school record without the prior consent of the student’s parent.

Under the *Texas Public Information Act* (also known as “open records”), all records maintained by a school are open to public inspection and copying upon request, unless FERPA or another specific exception applies. Except for records confidential under FERPA, a school must request approval from the Texas Attorney General’s office to withhold information. This means that if a school and a non-profit collaborate on a program, the program’s records, budget, salaries, purchases, written procedures, attendance records, evaluations, and reports would all be subject to an open records request, with personal information about students de-identified or redacted.

Under FERPA, without a parent’s permission, a school may share confidential student information with school personnel who have a legitimate educational interest in the information. Such information can also be shared with school contractors and volunteers who need such information to fulfill their duties to the school. If a non-profit organization is contracted to provide an afterschool program at a school, FERPA would permit the school to share student information with the organization, but the organization would have to keep it confidential.

Under FERPA, certain information – called “directory information” – is not considered too personal or private and the school can release such information (unless the student’s parent has categorically denied such permission). Moreover, unless permission is denied upfront, the school must release “directory information” to anyone who requests it. For example, a non-profit organization—whether or not in a collaboration or contract with the school—could request and obtain a list of the names and addresses of all students in grades 6–8, which it could use for a recruiting mailer. The list could show which students do and do not participate in extracurricular activities.

School safety

State law is the source for most school policies that concern school safety. These include what persons can be allowed on school premises, the prohibition of smoking, alcohol, and weapons on school grounds, and the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect. A school may prohibit a person from visiting a school campus if the individual does not submit a driver’s license or equivalent photo ID. The school may check the person’s name against law enforcement databases to determine whether the person is a registered sex offender.

School employment policies require the school to do a criminal background check on all prospective employees. Texas law requires outside organizations who contract to provide services to the school district to do criminal background checks on those employees who will have continuing duties under the contract and who will have direct contact with students. A contractor must certify to the district that it has obtained such background check for its listed employees and neither the district nor a contractor may permit a person to provide services if the person has a disqualifying conviction. Before entering into a contract with the school district, Texas law requires a contractor who is an individual or the owner or operator of a business to notify the district if such person has been convicted of any felony.

Texas State law prohibits smoking, alcohol, and weapons on school grounds, whether during a school activity or otherwise. Thus, an employee or a person attending a meeting of a non-profit held at a school would be prohibited from such conduct.

Texas law requires any person who has cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person to immediately make a report as required by law. A person considered a professional cannot delegate the making of a report to another person and must make the report within 48 hours of first suspecting abuse or neglect.

Transportation

In Texas, there are no mandatory policies that require a school district to provide transportation to students. Mandatory policies instead speak to what school districts must or may do if they do provide transportation, what they must do to receive a state subsidy for transportation, what vehicles may be used, and what qualifications drivers must have.

Most school districts do provide transportation on routes to and from school. None of the Texas districts in the Paso del Norte region has adopted any local policy about the times that transportation will be provided, and a school could provide a “late bus” for students who stay afterschool for student activities or tutoring. The *Texas School Transportation Manual* recognizes this by providing guidance on how to ensure that such route is not improperly double counted in determining the transportation subsidy.

In New Mexico, transportation of students is described as a privilege, not a right, except as necessary for students with disabilities. Las Cruces Public Schools Policy EEA discusses student ridership eligibility based on state law and further states, “School bus routes, location of bus stops, and the times for bus pickup and delivery of students shall be aligned with established school district attendance boundaries, school hours, and Board-approved school calendars.” It is not clear whether “school hours” would include extended school hours for school-approved extracurricular activities or afterschool programs.

Other districts' policies refer simply to transportation to and from school for students within the school boundaries.

Local policies on rental or use of school facilities for afterschool programs

Each school district has its own local policies on rental or use of school facilities. The policies adopted by the school board are usually broad and delegate much to the superintendent. Regulations usually include what facilities can be rented, what fees will be charged, how an organization reserves use of a facility, and what terms and conditions apply. These rules are usually binding on the campus principal, but sometimes can be waived by the superintendent.

Appendix 2 to this report provides a summary of the facilities rental/use policies of most of the school districts in the U.S. Paso del Norte Region, with the following elements being the most common:

- The process is more formal than just getting the verbal approval of the school principal.
- Use by non-profit or community groups is preferred over for-profit or commercial use.
- Use by groups to provide enrichment or recreational activities for youth from within the school district's boundaries is preferred.
- Use of facilities for fundraising is prohibited or restricted.
- The district may charge "rental" for the space as well as "fees" for certain services, equipment, or security costs.
- The district may waive rental charges but is less likely to waive fees.
- Facilities are available on a first-come-first-served basis. Districts prefer not to commit to regularly scheduled use or rental over an extended time.
- Districts reserve the right to cancel a rental if the school determines that it needs the facility.
- Districts will exclude from rental facilities that they think might become damaged, such as fields under repair.
- Districts can deny use if there is reasonable cause to believe that the use would result in material and substantial interference with school activities or the rights of others.
- Reserving and using school facilities requires significant lead time and paperwork.

Several school districts in the region have policies that allow the public to use outdoor unlocked school facilities during non-school hours without having to obtain permission. Reserved or repeated use still requires going through the rental process.

Some districts allow their facilities to be used for presentations by outside vendors or organizations for student-related services with written approval of the school principal, rather than compliance with the formal rental process.

Because these rental rules are geared to short-term or sporadic use of facilities, use of the school facility under these rules may not be the best way for a non-profit organization to offer a regular afterschool program at a school long-term. These rules may be good for an organization to propose a six-month pilot program, so that the organization and the school can see the level of student participation and how the program would operate. The parties can then negotiate a longer-term formal collaboration in which the school at the least provides the facility.

Procurement Requirements

If a school district is going to pay an outside entity, including a non-profit organization, to provide services or activities for an afterschool program, it must comply with school district procurement rules. If federal funds are going to be used (such as with 21st CCLC or Title I funds), federal regulations require “full and open competition” (2 CFR 200.319). Procedures include a simplified process for “micro-purchases” which are purchases under \$3,000 in the aggregate for a year, and “small purchases” which can be made by obtaining price or rate quotes from different vendors, and are under a dollar threshold which is the lesser of a federally set amount or a state set amount. Above this threshold, there needs to be a formal solicitation process. The requirements for soliciting competitive proposals are described in 2 CFR 200.320 (d). These are similar to what Texas and New Mexico state law would require, but with recent changes to the federal regulations, there are some additional requirements when federal funds are used. Most school districts will now issue solicitations (also known as a “request for proposal” or “RFP”) that meet local, state and federal requirements, so that any funds can be used.

Texas law requires use of a formal process whenever the school district is obtaining goods or services valued “in the aggregate” for the year at \$50,000 or more (Texas Education Code 44.031). This means that if the school district plans to pay more than \$50,000 in one year to all district afterschool program providers combined, it must use a formal process to select which organizations will provide the services. If the school district does not expect to hit that threshold, it can informally seek proposals from several organizations and select the one that best meets its needs, including consideration of cost.

A district could issue an RFP for afterschool program services. Using the stricter federal standards –

- no potential contractor can be involved in developing the RFP;
- proposals must be solicited from an “adequate number” of qualified sources;
- the RFP needs to describe the type and quality of services requested (not limited to a single brand name), all evaluation factors, and “their relative importance” or scoring factors;
- the district must have a written method for conducting technical evaluations of the proposals received and for selecting recipients;
- no person involved in the selection process or administration of the award can be a person with a conflict of interest;
- any response to the RFP must be considered to the maximum extent practical;
- the contract must be awarded to “the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered”;
- If stated in the RFP, the school district could use the process to approve multiple “vendors”, allowing a school to select any of the approved vendors for use in a specific program.

School district policies or regulations will set the timeline for this process and how prospective applicants will be notified. School district websites will usually post the open opportunities. Not surprisingly, this process takes time.

A school district can enter into a contract without using a competitive process if it can establish that the services are available only from a sole source or if after soliciting from a number of sources, competition is inadequate. Whether a school district truly has only one source available for afterschool program services would depend on the facts.

Contracting authority

Where funding will pass from school district to non-profit organization, the school district should require a written contract. Sometimes a school district will issue a “purchase order” under a specific solicitation (which describes the requirements), and attach and exhibit with standard district terms and conditions. If no solicitation or RFP is done, or if there are specific provisions that the parties need to negotiate, then the parties need to develop a written agreement.

The school district probably will not have a contract template that would be appropriate for an afterschool program. The contract will need to describe the parties, the length of the contract, the services to be provided by the non-profit, the duties or responsibilities of the school district, how much the non-profit will be paid and how this will occur, whether the agreement can be terminated early, who notices under the contract should be sent to for each party, a representation that each party has the authority to execute the contract, and the signature of an authorized representative for each party. It should also include that provisions that the non-profit will keep student records and information confidential, that non-profit staff and volunteers will comply with all district policies, including how they communicate with students through email, and that all staff and volunteers will need to pass a criminal background check.

Where no funding passes from school district to non-profit organization and the parties simply agree to cooperate, they can execute a “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU). Local school board policies may require school board approval of an MOU, or at least approval and signature of the superintendent or other high-level officer. Whether there is a contract or an MOU, a campus principal probably will not have the authority to sign the document or bind the district.

Sovereign Immunity and liability

As political subdivisions of the state, school districts have “sovereign immunity.” This means that the government itself (as the “sovereign”) cannot be sued or held liable for its conduct. An established exception is when the school district operates a motor vehicle or school bus. In Texas, a school district also cannot indemnify other entities, which means that the school district cannot promise in a contract to reimburse the other party if the other party is harmed or is sued for something that was the school district’s fault.

Texas law does allow a contractor to sue a school district for payment due under a contract. However, Texas law prohibits a school district from making commitments for payment beyond “current revenues.” For this reason, multi-year service contracts will allow the school district to terminate a contract going forward if the school board fails to appropriate continued funding.

School district officials receive “qualified immunity.” Under the Texas Education Code, a professional school employee is not personally liable for acts done within the scope of their employment, and which involve the exercise of judgment or discretion (except in cases of physical discipline or use of a motor vehicle) (Texas Education Code 22.0511). New Mexico law provides similar immunity from tort liability for a public employee acting with the scope of duty (Section 41-4-4 NMSA). Volunteers in schools are similarly protected from liability. The federal *Volunteer Protection Act* (VPA), passed in 1997, provides protection to school volunteers for acts of ordinary negligence committed within the scope of the

volunteer's responsibilities. In Texas, a person serving as a direct service volunteer of a school district is immune from civil liability to the same extent as a professional employee of a school district, except for intentional misconduct or gross negligence (Texas Education Code 22.053). This means that a volunteer who performs duties at a school and under the school's direction can't be held personally liable for negligence in most cases.

Less clear is whether non-profit organizations and their paid employees will receive similar protection if they provide services at a school under a contract. Whether a contractor and its employees will receive such "derivative immunity" will depend on the facts, including whether the school had a policy that required the non-profit employee to take such action.

What this means for non-profits providing afterschool programs at school is that:

- Non-profits that run their own programs simply using facility rental are unlikely to get derivative immunity.
- Non-profits that run a program for a school district under a contract or MOU may get derivative immunity, depending on the terms of the agreement.
- Volunteers who volunteer at the school will have immunity even if they volunteer as a result of an agreement between the school and the non-profit organization.
- Paid employees of a paid non-profit organization will not have the same immunity as school officials, but may have other legal defenses to liability. Additionally, the contract or MOU will probably require that the non-profit organization have insurance to cover liability.

Impact of school policies and rules

The above description of policies illustrates that schools and non-profit organizations can reasonably find it challenging to collaborate in providing afterschool programming, even when both parties are enthusiastic. The challenge is not that school district policies preclude or restrict afterschool programming, but instead that schools operate in a stringent regulatory environment. Many of the policies are imposed by federal or state law and cannot be modified by the school district; however, there are some actions that school districts could take that will reduce the burden of these policies, as described in the next section.

Part 4. School policies and actions that could reduce disconnection

The authors present the following recommendations for sustainable actions that schools or school districts could take to reduce youth disconnection.

1. Provide training on positive youth development and non-cognitive skills. At a minimum, school districts can provide information and training to teachers and staff about how positive youth development contributes to youth building non-cognitive skills. Training should include 1) how positive youth development and non-cognitive skills contribute to academic behavior; and 2) how for older youth, less direct emphasis on academics in afterschool programs could produce better academic results in the long run.
2. Recognize beneficial non-academic programs. Once schools begin to recognize that some non-academic activities are beneficial for academics in the long run, schools can consider which non-academic activities they can or should support. Schools can use a rubric to gauge the intentionality and potential benefit of non-academic programs. The authors provide a suggested rubric in Appendix 3. The research literature recognizes, however, that there are only a handful of validated assessment tools for measuring changes in non-cognitive skills. Until more tools are developed and validated, benefits might need to be measured the old-fashioned way—by observation.
3. Acknowledge non-profit programmatic expertise and experience. Schools can acknowledge that some non-profits have more experience than school administrators in running programs aimed at non-cognitive skills and positive youth development. As such, whether or not a collaboration is envisioned, schools could consult them early and involve them in program planning, not just in financing for sustainability.
4. Issue an RFP for afterschool program services. As previously described, a school district may not be able to pay a non-profit organization for afterschool program services without following a procurement process, which takes time. A school district could issue an RFP so that various non-profits could be approved to provide services for payment, if and when the district decides to offer programming. Having such organizations already approved through a procurement process would also allow the district to meet short deadlines for grant applications, such as the Texas 21st CCLC grant application. Selection criteria could include giving preference to activities that intentionally incorporate positive youth development principles or seek to build students' non-cognitive skills.
5. Create a model contract and model MOU. A school district can create a model contract and model MOU that could be used as a framework for developing an agreement for a particular collaboration. Language should be simple and straightforward, emphasizing the respective roles and requirements for each party. With such a written contract, turnover in campus leadership should be less disruptive.

6. Ensure that partnering non-profits are non-discriminatory. Schools should not assume that partnering non-profit organizations already follow the same non-discrimination policies as schools. In the early stages of planning a collaborative afterschool program, schools should review the non-discrimination and ADA accessibility requirements with the non-profit to identify and resolve any gaps. Faith-based organizations can plan to provide services and activities in a non-religious manner, following established federal guidelines. While there could be instances in which the school district and the non-profit organization would not be in full agreement on these policies, controversy may be minimized simply by keeping personal information about students confidential.
7. Relax facility rental policies. School districts could review their facility rental policies to see how they can provide more stable long-term use to non-profits that provide afterschool activities. Nothing would prevent a district from giving priority long-term use to organizations that are intentional about building non-cognitive skills or achieving positive youth development outcomes and are structured to keep students participating over a long period, even if the programs are not academic-oriented.
8. Help non-profit programs recruit students. School districts could reduce youth disconnection by simply informing students and parents about community-based non-profit programs, and indicating school approval of programs that provide connection. A school district website could more briefly describe programs, provide past data on how student participation correlated with school attendance, and include a short statement about the programs from a teacher or program leader. Schools could let organizations know if directory information on students is available, so that programs can send out recruiting mailers. Principals could invite non-profits to have an information table at school registration or to provide program literature that can be made available where other non-school literature is provided. Principals and teachers could meet organization leaders and be ready to share this fact with parents, as research shows that parents care as much about whether the people running a program are “good people” as what activities the program provides.
9. Provide a “late bus.” Schools can investigate how bus transportation might be reorganized to accommodate students staying for afterschool activities. For many schools, routes could be adjusted to provide a late bus route one or more days per week with little or no financial impact to the district. School transportation officials can determine exactly what the financial impact would be.
10. Consider charging a program fee. If needed and if not prohibited by grant funding for a program, schools could charge a reasonable fee for participation in an afterschool program. While this may seem like an additional barrier for economically disadvantaged students, schools should consider that these fees may be far less than the true cost of participating in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, like athletics or orchestra. An afterschool program with activities that students and parents truly considered attractive and beneficial could seem like a bargain at \$5 per week, especially if a “late bus” is provided. Charging a fee might also make a student feel more invested in attending. Logistically, tracking program payments may be no more complicated than tracking student lunch payments.

11. Encourage student clubs. For older youth, disconnection can be reduced by more students joining student clubs at school. As discussed above regarding the *Equal Access Act*, students have the right to form clubs and meet during non-instructional time at middle and high schools. Districts can impose regulations as needed to ensure a safe and orderly environment, as long as the regulations are otherwise “viewpoint neutral.” Student clubs can provide the variety, leadership opportunities, and peer interaction that older students crave. In the next section the authors describe what they envision as a new model for afterschool activities in which schools encourage students to meet in student-led groups that are “facilitated” and monitored by adults from non-profit organizations.

Part 5. New Model for Facilitated Student Groups

Special challenge of reducing disconnection among older youth

Most afterschool programming for older youth is either extended learning or traditional extracurricular activities like athletics. School athletics have long been seen as the vehicle for engaging older youth in a character-building extracurricular activity; however, school sports can be out of reach for many economically disadvantaged students. A National Poll on Children's Health found that only 30% of students in families with annual household incomes of less than \$60,000 played school sports, compared with 51% of students in families that earned \$60,000 or more a year. The survey also found that the average school sports participation fee was \$126 per child and that parents said they also spent an average of \$275 in other sports-related costs such as equipment and travel, for a total of \$400 per child (C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, 2015). Finally, Texas imposes a “no pass no play” rule which prevents students who are not passing a course from participating in extracurricular activities.

According to a brief from the Harvard Family Research Project, “As youth progress through middle and high school, developmental research suggests they seek more autonomy and independence, and may develop tendencies to react against authority and structure” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2011). As a result, they are less likely than their younger peers to be interested in or continue to participate in afterschool programs, which tend to be structured and adult-supervised. From surveying 300 high-retention afterschool programs in six cities, researchers found that high retention middle school programs “give youth opportunities to interact with peers, create structures and routines to make youth feel comfortable and safe, and take advantage of their participants’ willingness to try new things, particularly through peer interaction.” The program factor most often associated with high retention for both middle and high school students was offering many leadership opportunities for students.

When one hundred middle school youth from a broad range of communities in Minnesota were asked about what would make afterschool programs more attractive to them, answers included:

You don't usually want to listen to adults tell you how to have fun.

If you give a person a sense of purpose, give them a voice, then they'll participate.

It would be the coolest of cools to start our own program.

I'd like to start something with people my own age. Sometimes I crave a place to talk to my peers about, I don't know, world affairs and politics, literature, current events – whatever! Like a philosopher's coffee shop or something like that. (Saito, 2006)

Thus, an afterschool program that is engaging to middle school youth will be one that looks much like a program geared to positive youth development.

A successful afterschool or extracurricular activity for middle school youth could be one that simply gives youth more opportunity to do what they are passionate about. In *Teen Voice 2010*, which relates the findings from a survey of 1,860 15-year olds in three cities, the Search Institute describes the concepts of teen “sparks” and teen “voice” (Teen Voice, 2010)

Sparks... is a metaphor for a young person’s passionate interests—those things in life that give meaning, focus, energy, and joy... In addition to having supportive relationships and a clear sense of their own sparks, teens need confidence, skills, and opportunities to speak up about and influence the things that matter to them in their own lives, their families, their communities, and the world.(Teen Voice, 2010, p. 5)

The report goes on to describe how 80% of 15-year-olds surveyed said that they have at least one spark, and 60% said they have been in at least one leadership position in the past year.

Under existing federal law and school district policies, most middle schools and high schools in the Paso del Norte region as well as in the nation must permit non-curricular student groups to meet on campus during non-instructional time. Although student groups could be a way to reduce the number of disconnected youth, few schools actually encourage participation in non-curricular student groups, as opposed to traditional school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

Model fundamentals

The Facilitated Student Group model (the “model”) is a framework for schools to involve community organizations in facilitating the formation, support, and monitoring of non-curricular student groups, so that schools can feel comfortable about the positive impact that participation can have on students and comfortable about encouraging participation.

The model is aimed primarily at middle schools (grades 6—8 or 7—8), because it fits especially well with the developmental needs of students this age. At this age the main developmental focus is connection and identity exploration, rather than achievement. Crucial to the model is its reliance on student choice and voice, both for youth development and for sustainability.

Every Facilitated Student Group is first a “student group” that complies with the requirements of the *Equal Access Act*. This means:

- It is student-initiated and student-led;
- Its subject or purpose is non-curricular, which may include religious purposes;
- It has registered with the school and the school has approved the group for compliance with policy regarding non-school use of facilities;
- There is no sponsorship of the group by the school and no school employees lead, participate, or promote participating in group meetings.
- Non-school persons do not direct, conduct, control, or regularly attend activities or meetings of the group.
- Student membership or attendance is voluntary.

Facilitated Student Group Model

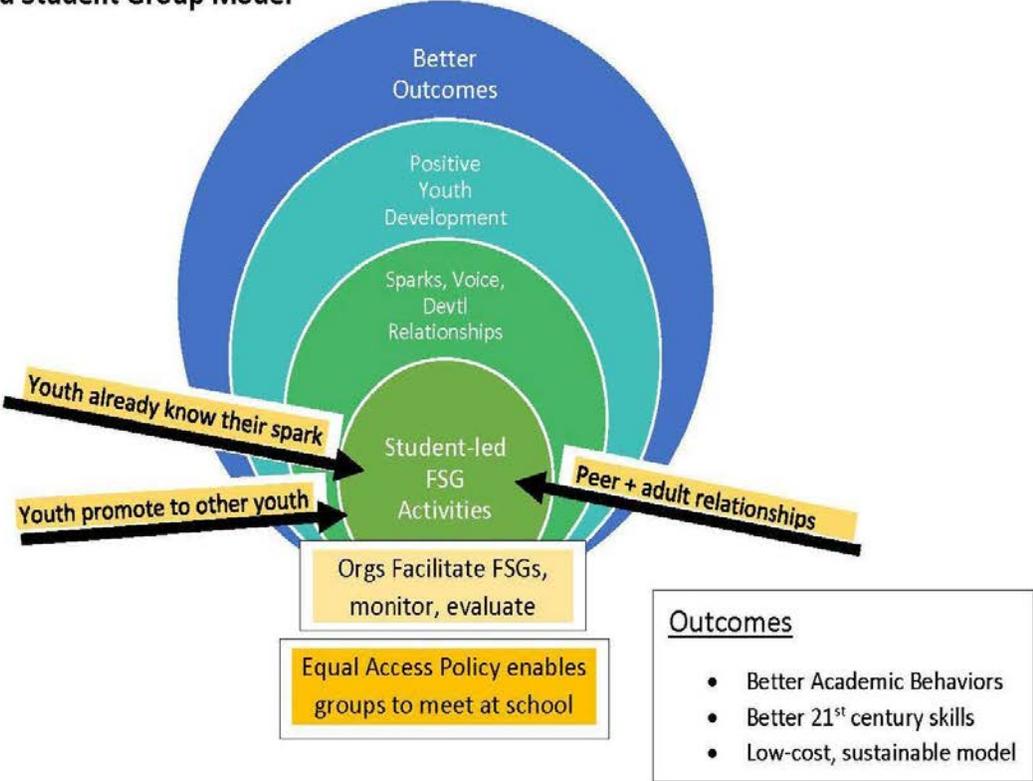


Figure 5. Facilitated Student Group Model

Under the model, the organizing purpose of all the student groups is non-curricular. This is for ease of administration, as all clubs would be subject to the same rules under the Equal Access Act, and because the aim is to create opportunities for connection that “don’t look like school.” As shown on a “club idea list” included in the toolkit, the purpose of a student group can be as simple as a hobby. While a club could choose a purpose that might be considered controversial (such as a gay-straight alliance), the authors submit that this is less likely to happen when a variety of student clubs are available.

As a result of a registration and approval process, the group is assigned a time and place to meet at school during non-instructional time, and may provide information about its activities through school bulletin boards, websites, and announcements the same as other student activities.

Under this model, what makes a student group a “facilitated” group is its voluntary participation in a process in which a local non-profit and/or its volunteers (rather than the school or school faculty) assist student organizers in setting up and running the group. All student groups are assigned to meet on the same day and in rooms that are clustered in one part of the school. The school provides adult supervision of the meetings through adults who “monitor” all meetings at once, rather than each individual meeting. The non-profit also facilitates this implementation by providing adult volunteers to serve as these monitors.

Under the model, groups are formed in the fall and meet once a week over the rest of the school year. This provides students the opportunity to meet about 20—25 times in a school year, each time for about 1.5 to 2 hours.

Qualifications and role of facilitators

Under the model, the school seeks out or connects with local organizations whose mission and experience is compatible with positive youth development or youth education. Faith-based organizations could be Facilitators. An area business that has a track record as a “partner-in-education” or in providing volunteers could be a Facilitator.

The role of the Facilitator is to generally encourage students to form student clubs with activities that will contribute to positive youth development. The Facilitator would talk with students who want to start clubs or share their “spark.” The Facilitator would encourage the student organizers to explore activities and goals that might intentionally promote non-cognitive skills or assets important to positive youth development. With an understanding of the proposed activities and goals of the club, the whether the club will be a “facilitated student group” and will include a signed form to this effect in the club’s registration packet. That form will identify at least one youth development goal or outcome that the Facilitator can evaluate with the cooperation of club members and consistent with FERPA.

The toolkit includes suggestions on how the Facilitator might interact with student organizers and with groups. The Facilitator would provide general guidance on club registration and start up and could help provide specific expertise on the focus of club activities. The Facilitator might conduct a workshop for student organizers about how to lead a group or increase student engagement. The Facilitator may agree to provide in-kind resources or to buy items that the club needs up to an agreed-upon amount.

Importantly, under the model the Facilitator is not responsible for creating or providing the activities or curriculum for the group. The group’s activities are not intended to be the Facilitator organization’s program implemented by students. While the *Equal Access Act* might permit this, the model does not promote this for several reasons: 1) it would discourage some facilitators that don’t want that responsibility; 2) more zealous facilitators might stray into “directing” the activities in violation of the *Equal Access Act*; 3) student organizers may build more robust leadership skills by creating their own activities; and 4) the model is not aimed at supplanting effective adult-led programs.

The Facilitator would be encouraged, however, to inform students about and invite them to activities and programs that the Facilitator offers in the community, especially programs that take place during school breaks. Limitations would include that Facilitators would not be allowed to proselytize and literature provided would need to follow rules for other non-school literature.

Registration and recruitment process

The model includes having all groups register with the school administration. A student organizer of the group would sign and submit the forms. The toolkit includes sample instructions for student organizers and a sample registration form, which includes the approval and signature of the student organizer’s parent. Registration would take place during the first 1—2 months of the fall semester.

During and for a while after registration, student organizers would have various opportunities to recruit students to join or attend. Students would likely use social media extensively to recruit. Teachers could encourage students generally to attend, but not promote the viewpoint of any particular group. The model envisions (although the *Equal Access Act* does not require it) that a school requirement for all groups is that they accept “all comers” and they are free, leaving try-outs, academic eligibility, and participation fees to the realm of traditional extracurricular activities. The model requires that after a certain deadline, all students need a parent-signed permission slip to continue to participate in any group. A sample permission form is included in the toolkit.

School authority, student behavior, and monitors

The *Equal Access Act* ensures and the model confirms that schools always have the authority to set viewpoint-neutral rules for ensuring student safety and welfare and an orderly educational environment. The school can prohibit activities that could reasonably be expected to interfere with either the afterschool learning environment or the school-day learning environment. The school’s student code of conduct would apply to student behavior during the afterschool activities and a student could be denied participation if he or she repeatedly is disruptive or is bullying. “Due process” for such removal may not be required at all, but could be satisfied by a school administrator holding a conference with the student in the next day or two to hear his or her side of the story.

The Monitor is an adult or preferably a pair of adults approved and designated by the school to monitor all groups while they meet after school. Ideally these are adult volunteers from a Facilitator who commit to monitor at least ten times per year, so that two teams could share and cover weekly meetings from November through April or May. The role of the Monitors is to provide the onsite adult supervision to necessary to reasonably ensure safety and order. They could take reports of student misbehavior and relay them to the school principal. They could caution students and pull them out of activities if they are being disruptive. By clustering the meeting rooms, keeping doors to the meeting rooms open, making several rounds, and having two monitors, students should recognize that the Monitors will catch or hear about material misbehavior. On the other hand, everyone should recognize that the meetings will be noisier and messier than school-day teacher-led classrooms.

While the *Equal Access Act* would permit the monitors to be teachers and for the school to pay them, the model envisions that they not be teachers and not be paid. One reason for this is that there is positive youth development value in having students see that adults other than their parents and teachers care about what they are interested in and what they think. Outside adults who are not getting paid to be there may better communicate this interest. While the Monitors will not necessarily have extensive interaction with students, it is a start. The other reason is sustainability, as discussed below.

Cost and sustainability of the model

The model is deliberately low cost. The only necessary costs are the costs of additional utilities and custodial time while the program is operating and as needed to clean up and close up, to the extent these wouldn’t otherwise be incurred. A preferred cost would be the cost of a “late bus route”, to the extent it couldn’t be covered through transportation subsidies. The school should provide some kind of afterschool snack for participants and could pay for these to ensure student welfare; however, schools likely will have the ability to use school nutrition funds to do this without any impact on the school’s

budget. With the prevalence of school-issued and bring-your-own computing devices, the program does not need to buy computers. The Facilitator, rather than the school, might provide each group (or each group that applies) a small budget for special supplies.⁵ The Monitors would need to have a background check run, but this cost is nominal. Ysleta ISD in Paso del Norte region charges \$1 per volunteer to run the check.

Unlike an afterschool program run by a non-profit that might be required to pay rent and fees for use of the school, the model program would not be affected by the school's facility rental policy, as students have the right to meet using school facilities. The school could set aside the locations and time for the program to meet and give these meetings just as much priority as any school-sponsored activity, without having to do the same for one or more outside organizations. With no funds flowing from the school to the Facilitator organizations, or funding from collaborative grant where the school is the grantee, there is no need to follow a procurement process in selecting Facilitators.

While admittedly the model does not provide the comprehensive aspects of a 21st CCLC program, it would cost a small fraction of what a 21st CCLC program costs. There is no project director, site coordinator, teachers, tutors, evaluator, consultants, or trainers to pay, no equipment to buy, no mandatory grantee trainings in Washington, D.C., and no additional data system and data entry costs. Compared to the 21st CCLC program especially, the cost of the model would not be an obstacle to its sustainability. Without a large budget to justify or academic benchmarks to meet, a program following the model could start small and build momentum. School-day interaction and social media keep students plugged into what their peers like. If students are given sufficient free range on their interests, the program won't lack for variety. If students are given the leadership opportunities they crave, students who merely participate one year will aspire to become group organizers or leaders the next year. Like traditional extracurricular activities and academic clubs, the model program would in time become part of the school culture.

How the Model reduces disconnection and supports development

In terms of reducing disconnection, a middle school with 600 students is likely to have 18—23% disconnected youth, or 100—140 students. If 50—70 of these get connected through student clubs, the number of disconnected youth is cut in half.

As described in an earlier section, community-based programs for older youth with activities that generate high retention can expect 50% of participants to attend for at least a year. Indeed, in such programs, some 70% of participants to attend at least 50% of the program days. For the model, a middle school of 600 students might expect 100 to attend activities on any given program day. If the program meets once a week from November through April or May, it could meet about 25 times, allowing for school breaks. If activities are engaging enough, 70 students could be expected to attend some 15 times throughout the year, if not more given the convenience of having the program at school. If it is

⁵ While in *Prince v. Jacoby* the Ninth Circuit ruled that the school could provide some supplies to all groups equally, including religious groups, this ruling has not been adopted by courts in Texas or New Mexico. If the school does not start out providing supplies to any group, it won't need to address the question of supporting religious groups in violation of the Establishment Clause.

reasonable to expect 70 middle school students to voluntarily attend a 21st CCLC program over 45 times in a year with activities that tend to label them as “at risk” and look like “more school”, it is reasonable to expect 70 to join their friends in attending activities that they choose and create some 20 times in a year.

In terms of building non-cognitive skills and positive youth development, the model is unlikely to have the positive impact that well-designed programs offered by community non-profits would have. Those organizations have the validated programs that include most if not all of the seven key features needed for positive youth development. Given the low cost of the model, however, the model can be added to the mix of community offerings without taking funding from the established non-profit programs.

The model offers adolescents the opportunity to “tinker” and to explore their identity, which the Wallace Report hails as essential. While students may not be building the depth of trusting relationships with adults that they would in a high-quality community-based program, the model may provide an opportunity for organizations to be involved that can’t otherwise staff a youth program, whether with volunteers or paid staff. Schools can justify the “messiness” and lack of academic focus by pointing out that these are student-led activities, that they don’t have a better way to provide such developmental experiences, and that the financial investment is extremely low.

Focus Group Input on Facilitated Student Group Model

The authors conducted a focus group with school and district administrators to present elements of the model and get feedback. There were six participating administrators from three different school districts. Three administrators were at the middle school level, one was at the elementary level, one was a high school administrator, and one was a district superintendent. The three districts represent a cross-section for socio-economic status and demographics of the region.

The comments and questions provided as feedback can be grouped around (1) oversight and supervision, (2) parent information, (3) questions on faith-based activities or facilitators; (4) upfront work, and (5) benefits of the model.

Regarding oversight and supervision, one administrator summarized:

One thing for me it’s the supervision because I do work in middle schools. So even if [monitors] are at arm’s length, if I was their principal that would probably be the deal breaker for me if I didn’t have an adult in there at all times. Even if they are not leading it but they are in the room, then I would feel more comfortable with it. Things can happen so quickly and as a principal, I would feel very liable for that. That definitely catches my eye.

One administrator brought up the issue of having to address parental concerns. Suggestions included organizing an initial parent information meeting to address any parental concerns:

Parents have to really understand the different component so that when something does happen they can’t come back and say, “I didn’t know there wasn’t going to be a monitor in that room 24-7,” or “I didn’t know a student was going to be leading it. Well that student bullied my son last year so why is that student leading it.” Probably initial parent meeting or an information meeting where parents can ask questions. I feel like if you have something like that then if you have an incident we can always say, “We covered this in the meeting and you were okay with it.”

Administrators wanted more information on dealing with faith-based organizations. One administrator reported that there were three churches across from one school,

Most likely they don't agree—that's why each have their own church—so which one of those churches do I get involved. So if I give a bible study, from which perspective?

However, another administrator responded,

They don't want to scare kids away or cause trouble...the kids are having a good time. It hasn't gone one way or another specific to churches. So far it has worked.

Another administrator mentioned a faith-based program that came into the elementary school once a week,

It is a volunteer basis, the parents agree, the students agree to go and partake in the event. None of those questions have ever come [up] because it's by your choosing. You chose to participate in that.

Several of the administrators raised practical concerns about startup time and investment. They were unanimous in recognizing the need for an individual or individuals to oversee the activities and complete all paperwork. One administrator explained:

I think this would be easier to launch if principals had some type of support system. Somebody to get this up and running. I think about my day and I think, "Oh my God there is no way I could undertake this!" Somebody could take a little more ownership than administrator. There is no way I could do it. Like a liaison that can coordinate between organizations, areas, and schools. To pair them up and coordinate activities. Someone that would organize some of the details.

Another administrator raised concerns about recruiting organizations to serve as facilitators:

I don't have time to find two or three organizations to serve as facilitators. But if there was a list of fifty organizations throughout the city of El Paso who have said they are willing to serve that would be great. For me to pick up the phone and call the local Lions Club, I don't have the time for that.

Another administrator added:

If you say this is the program and this is the person that is going to implement it, follow with all of the paperwork and program requirements, then I would be more willing to accept it if I was the principal.

Overall administrators saw the benefits that such a program could provide. Comments from different administrators included:

I do appreciate the goal of this. And I see it does, I can see the big picture. But for us, what is the cost-benefit ratio? We're lucky if we get ten kids, well if my using resources for ten kids is it really going to impact.

I think they would get their bang for their buck if they targeted schools like us in the valley. Schools from affluent families, those kids are ready, they will be successful. The real question is, are they going to be successful with our kids, our populations of kids, the at-risk kids? That would be a good starting place for them to kind of see if it works there then surely it can work anywhere else.



So, when you talk about the sustainability of it... I have Peggy who wants to run the jewelry club when she is in the 8th grade but what happens after that. Hopefully there is a 6th grader in there who then picks up the ball and wants to run with it. I can see some great things coming out of it, I am just a little afraid of the upfront work to make it happen.

I think it has a lot of potential. But in the front end, all that work that is going to be involved. If we can kind of help with that, I think it can lead to a lot of good. It can build a lot of social capital with these kids where they wouldn't get it otherwise. They don't want to go home; they are hanging out outside. It's hard for us to get them out—to go home, go home. Usually they have nowhere to go, so if we can provide something for them even though it is going to create more work for us.

Considering the developmental needs of middle school youth, the dearth of afterschool activities for them, and the comments and concerns of the focus group, the authors suggest the following analysis of the pros and concerns of the model and some responses to concerns.

Table 2. Pros and cons of facilitated student group model

Pros	Cons and Concerns	Response to Concerns
Accessible; free, no academic eligibility	No direct impact on academic performance	Indirect academic benefit
Existing Policy framework - Equal Access Act	Allows controversial expression, parents will question	Controversial expression allowed currently; Parent permission required
What MS youth want: autonomy, peers, variety, leadership opportunities, not like school	Uncertain that students can lead, some students will misbehave	Students want opportunities to lead; have "sparks" to share
Students recruit other students, using their own methods including social media	School won't be in control of this non-traditional recruiting	School can assert extensive control as needed
High engagement connected to school	Principals don't have time to manage	Schools have found ways to manage extracurricular activities - this is easier
High positive youth development	Doesn't build adult relationships; Can't measure non-cognitive improvement	Adults are involved; assessment tools are being developed
Facilitator helps with PYD	Principals don't have time to recruit Facilitators	Community organization could consult or help with start-up
Low cost, sustainable	Maybe high cost equals better	Compare to 21st CCLC

What implementing the model would require

Because of the *Equal Access Act*, almost all middle and high schools have the ability under their existing policies to implement the model to some extent. As recommended in the policy implications section of the *Wallace Report*, however, schools need policies that go beyond tacit approval for this approach. School policies need to create a “safe space” for schools and out-of-school programs to “tinker” and make mistakes as they learn new ways of teaching and working with young people. For this reason, school districts that widely implement the model may want to add provisions in their board-adopted local policies on student clubs that affirmatively encourages them, provides students some kind of recognition for attending or leading groups, and approves that principal time is time well-spent. Appendix 4 includes the text of the Equal Access Act and some sample local policy language.

To address the need for assistance in launching the model at a school, a paid project director might not be needed as much as an independent contractor or consultant during the start-up phase. Having ongoing paid staff would change the model dynamics as well as its cost and sustainability. The authors recommend instead that the model be implemented at one pilot school in a district, adding another one or two schools the following year to see if startup gets easier by following the leader.

Appendix 5 includes a sample “toolkit” for school principals to use in starting the model at their school (referred to as “Connection Day”). The toolkit includes an overview of the model, a scenario of the model in action, basic rules, stakeholder roles, tools and samples for principal to use in model startup, tools for student organizers, tools for facilitators and monitors, and a glossary.

Model limitations

The new model has not been developed to the degree it would need to be if it were the subject of a million-dollar grant application. Nor has it been developed with significant input from youth experts, school leaders, parents, or students. However, given its low cost and pre-existing bone structure, the best development might come through piloting the program at a few willing schools and then tweaking it. As one school administrator remarked at a focus group, “This really requires a paradigm shift.” In the authors’ view, this means that schools will need to trust that students have ideas to share, that the sharing itself will have a positive effect, and that students won’t set fire to the furniture without a teacher in the room.

The new model for facilitated student groups may be counterintuitive or may even seem disrespectful to some teachers and school administrators. They work exceedingly long and hard as professionals to engage students in learning and keep classrooms well managed, and now it is being suggested that students will benefit by being left on their own. Non-profit program staff could feel the same way. The authors mean no disrespect. The benefit to students from the model should not be compared to the benefit students get from great school-day teachers and instruction or from great non-profit programs and mentors. Instead, it should be compared to the benefit students get from essentially doing nothing after school.

Conclusion

To be academically successful in the long run, even the U.S. Department of Education is recognizing that students need “non-cognitive” skills like a growth mindset and perseverance. The research discussed on the impact of non-cognitive skills on academic performance provides justification for schools being more interested in non-academic programs. The research literature recognizes, however, that there are only a handful of validated assessment tools for measuring changes in non-cognitive skills. Until more tools are developed and validated, benefits might need to be measured the old-fashioned way – by observation.

Non-cognitive skills are normally “taught” by providing youth with enrichment and leadership opportunities and supportive adult relationships—in other words, by getting youth involved in some activity besides school. Schools can still play an important role in reducing youth disconnection, including by offering more non-academic afterschool activities. When schools and non-profits collaborate in this endeavor, they can accomplish even more.

Despite their common interest, there are a number of challenges to schools and non-profits working together to provide afterschool activities. Schools actually may not have the space that a non-profit would need to run a program or the school personnel to monitor use. Formal collaboration may be needed to get resources dedicated on both sides. With formal collaboration, however, comes a rule-laden environment, most of which is not by choice, but is important for the benefit and rights of students. While non-profits may need to adhere to restrictions that would not otherwise apply, they may also receive school protections or immunities.

Examining the different alternatives for offering afterschool activities, there can be a tradeoff between the level of school connection and control over activities and the positive youth development outcomes. Afterschool programs can provide a more effective environment than the school day for developing non-cognitive skills. Similarly, non-academic afterschool activities that are less-structured than traditional extracurricular activities can be more successful in keeping older youth engaged, given their development stage and priorities.

In collaborating on non-academic, non-traditional afterschool activities, schools and non-profits have the rare opportunity to think outside the box about how to provide students the experiences they most want. The proposed Facilitated Student Group model gives older youth the autonomy they desire and has the benefit of falling within a recognized policy framework and being very low cost. As a result, it could be one of the more sustainable ways to reduce youth disconnection. While it will require schools and youth-serving non-profits to place more trust in students, who better than these to do so.

References

- Bowden, C. B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning* (Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Trans.). New York, NY: Teacher College, Columbia University
- C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. (2015). Cost of school sports still a problem for many families. from <http://mottnpch.org/blog/2015-01-29/cost-school-sports-still-problem-many-families>
- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. S., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087-1101.
- Durlak, J., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., Weissberg, R., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.
- Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development. Board on Children, Youth, and Families. Committee on community-level programs for youth*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D. W., & Beechum, N. O. (2012). Teaching adolescents to become learners. The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance: A critical literature review. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago
- Fernandes-Alcantara, A. L. (2014). *Vulnerable Youth: Backgrounds and policies*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Retrieved from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33975.pdf>.
- Finn-Stevenson, M. (2014). Family, school, and community partnerships: Practical strategies for afterschool programs. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2014(144), 89-103. doi: 10.1002/yd.20115
- Grossman, J. B., Walker, K., & Raley, R. (2001). *Challenges and Opportunities in After-School Programs: Lessons for Policymakers and Funders*. New York, NY: Manpower Demonstration research Corp.
- Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Ling, T. J., McPhee-Baker, C., & Brown, B. V. (2009). Youth who are "disconnected" and those who then reconnect: Assessing the influence of family, programs, peers and communities. *Child Trends*, 2009-37, 1-8.
- Harvard Family Research Project. (2011). Out-Of-School Time Programs for Older Youth. *research Update: Highlights from the out-of-school time database*. from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/research-updates-highlights-from-the-out-of-school-time-database/research-update-7-out-of-school-time-programs-for-older-youth>
- Miller, B. M. (2003). *Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success*. Brookline, MA: Miller Midzik Research Associates.

- Nagaoka, J., Farrington, C. A., Ehrlich, S. B., Heath, R. D., Johnson, D. W., Dickson, S., . . . Hayes, K. (2015). *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework*. Chicago, IL: The Wallace Foundation.
- Office For Civil Rights. (2013). Dear Colleague. from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201301-504.pdf>
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2009). P21 Framework Definitions. 2017, from http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_Framework_Definitions.pdf
- Paso del Norte Health Foundation. (2015). Priority Area 4: Healthy Relationships *Ignite Engaging Youth* (Vol. February 2015). El Paso, TX: Paso Del Norte Health Foundation.
- Paso del Norte Health Foundation. (2017). Priority Areas. Retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.pdnhf.org/what_we_do/priority_areas
- Sahin, A., Ayar, M. C., & Adiguzel, T. (2014). STEM Related After-School Program Activities and Associated Outcomes on Student Learning. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 14*(1), 309-322. doi: 10.12738/estp.2014.1.1876
- Saito, R. N. (2006). Beyond access and supply: Youth-led strategies to captivate young people's interest in and demand for youth programs and opportunities. *New Directions for Youth Development, 112*(Winter 2006), 57-74. doi: 10.1002/yd
- Teen Voice. (2010). Relationships that Matter to America's Teens. from <http://www.search-institute.org/sites/default/files/a/TeenVoice2010.pdf>
- Texas Partnership for Out of School Time. (2014). Texas Standards of High Quality- Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning. Retrieved January 1st, 2017, from https://txpostblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/txpost_qualitystandards_final-jan-2016.pdf
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation fund-Development Grants*. Washington, D.C.: Authenticated U.S. Government Information GPO Retrieved from https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-04-25/pdf/2016-09436.pdf?TB_iframe=true&width=921.6&height=921.6.
- United States Government Accountability Office. (2008). *Disconnected Youth: Federal action could address some of the challenges faced by local programs that reconnect youth to education and employment*. (GAO-08-313). Washington, D.C.: United States Government Accountability Office Retrieved from <http://www.nyec.org/page.cfm?PageID=11&CategorySearch=163&startRow=61>.
- youth.gov. (2017). Reconnecting Youth. from <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/reconnecting-youth>

Appendix 1. Features of Positive Developmental Settings, from IGNITE Initiative Strategic Plan – 2015.

Indicators for Positive Youth Development High Quality Youth Programming

Indicators	Descriptors	Opposite Roles
Appropriate Structure	Limit setting, clear and consistent rules and expectations, firm-enough control, continuity and predictability, clear boundaries, and age-appropriate monitoring	Chaotic, disorganized, laissez-faire, rigid, over controlled, and autocratic.
Community Involvement	Concordance, coordination, and synergy among family, school, and community	Discordance, lacking of communication, and conflict.
Opportunities for Skill Building	Opportunities to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills; exposure to intentional learning experiences; opportunities to learn cultural literacies, media literacy, communication skills, and good habits of mind; preparation for adult employment; and opportunities to develop social and cultural capital	Practices that promote bad physical habits and habits of mind and practices that undermine school and learning.
Physical and Psychological Safety	Safe and health-promoting facilities and practices that increase safe peer group interaction and decrease unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.	Physical and health dangers, fear, feeling of insecurity, sexual and physical harassment, and verbal abuse.
Positive Social Norms	Rules of behavior, expectations, injunctions, ways of doing things, values and morals, and obligations for service	Normlessness, anomie, laissez-faire practices, antisocial and amoral norms, norms that encourage violence, reckless behavior, consumerism, poor health practices, conformity.
Supportive Relationships	Warmth, closeness, connectedness, good communication, caring, support, guidance, secure attachment, and responsiveness	Cold, distant, over controlling, ambiguous support, untrustworthy, focused on winning, inattentive, unresponsive, and rejecting.
Youth Involvement	Youth-based, empowerment practices that support autonomy, making a real difference in one’s community, and being taken seriously; practices that include enabling, responsibility granting, and meaningful challenge; and practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels	Unchallenging, over controlling, disempowering, and disabling; and practices that undermine motivation and desire to learn, such as excessive focus on current relative performance level rather than improvement.

Eccles, Jacquelynne and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, Eds..*Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. Board on Children, Youth, and Families. Committee on community-level programs for youth. 2002. Available at: http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10022&page=R1

Appendix 2. Summary of Facility Use/ Rental Policies

Community Use of School Facilities	El Paso	Ysleta	Socorro	Clint
Applicable Legal Policy	GKD Legal	GKD Legal	GKD Legal	GKD Legal
Applicable Local Policy	GKD Local	GKD Local	GKD Local	GKD Local
Applicable Regulation or procedure	GKD Reg and Exhibit	GKD Reg	GKD Reg and Exhibit	
Other documents		Rental Booklet, Q&A, Agmt		Facility Rental Info Packet
District Point of Contact	Asso. Supt Operations	Purchasing	Dept Admin Svcs	Operational Svcs Dept
Who is authorized to approve use of school?	Supt or Designee	Principal	Board	Supt or designee
Can unlocked outdoor facilities be used without prior approval?	yes	yes, if no electricity use	yes	
Is a written agreement or signed form required for indoor facilities?	yes	yes	yes	yes
How long can repeated use be scheduled?	only as negotiated	6 months		12 months
Can school kitchen be used?	special approval	special approval	special approval	
Does district exempt certain uses from rental fees?	During 2 hours following school day	school related and where >60% are district students	school-support orgs, school sponsored	afterschool enrichment, Non-profit youth group for 2 hrs
Are there charges in addition to rental?	yes	yes	yes	
Can fees be waived per request and circumstances? By whom?	Board can waive	Ask Purchasing Director		



Community Use of School Facilities	Canutillo	San Elizario	Fabens	Tornillo
Applicable Legal Policy	GKD Legal	GKD Legal	GKD Legal	GKD Legal
Applicable Local Policy	GKD Local	GKD Local	GKD Local	GKD Local
Applicable Regulation or procedure	GKD Reg and Exhibits			
Other documents				
District Point of Contact	Associate Supt	Principal or Supt		Business office
Who is authorized to approve use of school?	Board if for profit or religious; Asso Supt for non-profit	Principal for campus, Supt for other	Principal for campus, Athletics Dir for athl facilities, Exec Dir Compl for all other	Supt
Can unlocked outdoor facilities be used without prior approval?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Is a written agreement or signed form required for indoor facilities?	yes	Yes	Yes	yes
How long can repeated use be scheduled?			6 months	
Can school kitchen be used?	school-sponsored, school support	special approval		
Does district exempt certain uses from rental fees?	yes		no charge for 2 hrs after school	
Are there charges in addition to rental?	Board of Trustees	yes	yes	yes
Can fees be waived per request and circumstances? By whom?			Ask Purchasing Director	



Community Use of School Facilities	Anthony	Dell City	Ft. Hancock	Sierra Blanca
Applicable Legal Policy	GKD Legal	GKD Legal	GKD Legal	GKD Legal
Applicable Local Policy	GKD Local	GKD Local	GKD Local	GKD Local
Applicable Regulation or procedure				
Other documents				
District Point of Contact				
Who is authorized to approve use of school?	principal for school, Supt for all other facilities	Campus Principal	Supt	Principal for campus, Supt for all other
Can unlocked outdoor facilities be used without prior approval?	yes	yes	yes	
Is a written agreement or signed form required for indoor facilities?	yes			
How long can repeated use be scheduled?		no limit on repeated use for children's activities		
Can school kitchen be used?				
Does district exempt certain uses from rental fees?				
Are there charges in addition to rental?	yes	yes	yes	
Can fees be waived per request and circumstances? By whom?				

Community Use of School Facilities	Las Cruces	Gadsden	Deming	Hatch Valley	Alamogordo	Cloudcroft
Applicable Local Policy	KF	KF	670, 652	KF	KF	KF
Applicable Regulation or procedure	KF Reg	KF Reg		KF-Reg	KF-Reg	KF-Reg
Other documents	Facility Use Form	Site Use Agreement		Site Use Agreement	Site Use Agreement	Site Use Agreement
District Point of Contact	Operations Dept	Principal		Make request at campus	Business & Finance Dept	Make request at campus
Who is authorized to approve use of school?	Supt or designee	Supt or designee	Supt	District office	Supt	District Office
Can unlocked outdoor facilities be used without prior approval?	yes					
Is a written agreement reqd for indoor?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
How long can repeated use be scheduled?		same school year				
Can school kitchen be used?	special approval	yes, with distr staff				
Does district exempt certain uses from rental fees?	Designated non-profit youth groups	Designated non-profit youth groups		Designated non-profit youth groups		Designated non-profit youth groups
Are there charges in addition to rental?	yes	can pay via svcs, in-kind		can pay via svcs, in-kind	yes	can pay via svcs, in-kind
Can fees be waived? By whom?	Supt or designee	Site Administrator			Supt per mutual benefit	



Appendix 3. Excerpts from TXPOST Program Quality Assessment Tool

Assessment tool published by TXPOST, Texas Partnership for Out of School Time. Excerpts include those standards and indicators that most relate to non-academic programs that support positive youth development.

<p>Category 1. Safe Environments, Health and Nutrition: A high quality program offers a safe environment where youth have opportunities to practice healthy behaviors.</p>
<p>Category 2: Staff and Volunteer Management - A high quality program has staff and volunteer management policies and practices that benefit youth and emphasize hiring and retraining qualified staff as part of their program implementation strategy.</p>
<p>Category 3: Programming and Activities - A high quality program provides a variety of activities that support the cognitive, social emotional and physical development of all participants.</p> <p>Standard 3.1 Program activities offered demonstrate intentional planning.</p> <p>Indicator a. Developmentally and age-appropriate activities are offered that reflect the mission and goals of the program.</p> <p>Indicator c. The program offers activities that promote high order skills development.</p> <p>Indicator d. Youth have the opportunity to develop new skills through participation in program activities.</p> <p>Indicator e. The program offers challenging activities for youth in a variety of disciplines.</p> <p>Indicator f. Staff designate a role for youth in program planning and decision making.</p> <p>Standard 3.2 the program implements activities with fidelity and best practices in youth development and instruction.</p> <p>Indicator d. The program includes structured activities and experiences that promote youth leadership.</p> <p>Indicator f. The program provides a range of opportunities to showcase youth work.</p> <p>Standard 3.3 The program has measurable goals and objectives aligned with the mission of the program and activity objectives.</p> <p>Indicator e. Formal and informal measures of program effectiveness are used with youth, staff and families.</p>
<p>Category 4: Diversity and Inclusion in Programming - A high quality program allows all youth to thrive in the program, with the recognition of differences in youth abilities, family structure, cultural background and economic resources.</p>
<p>Category 5: Family Engagement and Community Partnerships - A high quality program provides opportunities for meaningful participation by families and actively engages with other community organizations.</p>
<p>Category 6: Relationships and Interactions: A high quality program creates an environment to develop positive relationships and consistently promotes social interactions among youth, staff and the community.</p>
<p>Category 7: School linkages - A high quality program engages in regular communication with the school day staff and leadership to share resources and work toward positive outcomes for youth.</p>
<p>Category 8: Program Sustainability, Evaluation and Awareness - A high quality program conducts regular evaluation and uses the data to continually improve, promote sustainability and increase awareness of the program.</p>

Appendix 4. Equal Access Act and Local Policy Modification

Equal Access Act 20 USC 4071

(a) Restriction of limited open forum on basis of religious, political, philosophical, or other speech content prohibited

It shall be unlawful for any public secondary school which receives Federal financial assistance and which has a limited open forum to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting within that limited open forum on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings.

(b) “Limited open forum” defined

A public secondary school has a limited open forum whenever such school grants an offering to or opportunity for one or more noncurriculum related student groups to meet on school premises during noninstructional time.

(c) Fair opportunity criteria. Schools shall be deemed to offer a fair opportunity to students who wish to conduct a meeting within its limited open forum if such school uniformly provides that—

- (1) the meeting is voluntary and student-initiated;
- (2) there is no sponsorship of the meeting by the school, the government, or its agents or employees;
- (3) employees or agents of the school or government are present at religious meetings only in a nonparticipatory capacity;
- (4) the meeting does not materially and substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of educational activities within the school; and
- (5) nonschool persons may not direct, conduct, control, or regularly attend activities of student groups.

(d) Construction of subchapter with respect to certain rights. Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to authorize the United States or any State or political subdivision thereof—

- (1) to influence the form or content of any prayer or other religious activity;
- (2) to require any person to participate in prayer or other religious activity;
- (3) to expend public funds beyond the incidental cost of providing the space for student-initiated meetings;
- (4) to compel any school agent or employee to attend a school meeting if the content of the speech at the meeting is contrary to the beliefs of the agent or employee;
- (5) to sanction meetings that are otherwise unlawful;
- (6) to limit the rights of groups of students which are not of a specified numerical size; or
- (7) to abridge the constitutional rights of any person.

(e) Federal financial assistance to schools unaffected

Notwithstanding the availability of any other remedy under the Constitution or the laws of the United States, nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to authorize the United States to deny or withhold Federal financial assistance to any school.

(f) Authority of schools with respect to order, discipline, well-being, and attendance concerns
Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to limit the authority of the school, its agents or employees, to maintain order and discipline on school premises, to protect the well-being of students and faculty, and to assure that attendance of students at meetings is voluntary.

(Pub. L. 98–377, title VIII, § 802, Aug. 11, 1984, 98 Stat. 1302.)

As used in this subchapter—

(1) The term “secondary school” means a public school which provides secondary education as determined by State law.

(2) The term “sponsorship” includes the act of promoting, leading, or participating in a meeting. The assignment of a teacher, administrator, or other school employee to a meeting for custodial purposes does not constitute sponsorship of the meeting.

(3) The term “meeting” includes those activities of student groups which are permitted under a school’s limited open forum and are not directly related to the school curriculum.

(4) The term “noninstructional time” means time set aside by the school before actual classroom instruction begins or after actual classroom instruction ends.

(Pub. L. 98–377, title VIII, § 803, Aug. 11, 1984, 98 Stat. 1303.)

Sample Texas local policy with additional language to support Facilitated Student Group Model

POLICY FNAB (LOCAL)

STUDENT EXPRESSION – USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR NONSCHOOL PURPOSES

For purposes of the Equal Access Act, the District has established a limited open forum for secondary school students enrolled in the District. Each District secondary school campus shall offer an opportunity for noncurriculum-related student groups to meet on school premises during noninstructional time.

The District has not established a limited public forum for elementary school students to meet as noncurriculum-related student groups on school premises during noninstructional time. [See GKD for community access]

SPONSORSHIP

Noncurriculum-related student groups shall not be sponsored by the District and shall in no way imply to students or to the public that they are school-sponsored. All letterheads, flyers, posters, or other communications that identify the group shall contain a disclaimer of such sponsorship.

District personnel shall not promote, lead, or participate in the meetings of noncurriculum-related student groups.

[For student activities sponsored by the District and having subject matter and purposes directly related to the school's curriculum, see FM]

REQUESTS

To receive permission to meet on school premises during noninstructional time, interested students shall file a written request with the principal or designee on a form provided by the District.

The students making the request shall indicate that they have read and understand the policies and rules governing nonsponsored, noncurriculum-related student groups and that the group will abide by those rules.

APPROVAL

The principal or designee shall approve or reject the request within seven school days, subject to the availability of suitable meeting space and without regard to the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech likely to be associated with the group's meetings.

Approval to meet as a nonsponsored, noncurriculum-related group shall be granted for one school year at a time, subject to the provisions of this policy.

MEETINGS

The principal or designee shall designate noninstructional time for meetings of nonsponsored, noncurriculum-related student groups and shall assign each approved group an appropriate location and time.

EMPLOYEE MONITOR

The principal may assign a District employee to attend and monitor each student group meeting. Monitors shall be present at meetings and activities in a nonparticipatory capacity to maintain order and protect school property.

No employee shall be required to monitor meetings at which the content of the speech would be objectionable to the employee.

DESIGNATED TIME FOR STUDENT GROUPS AT MIDDLE SCHOOL

At the middle school level, the District encourages the formation of student groups as a way for students to connect with activities and interests besides traditional school extracurricular activities, to engage in leadership, to try new experiences and learn new skills.

District middle schools may designate one or more days per week in which all approved student groups can meet after school and be monitored by school staff or other approved and designated adult volunteers. On such day or days, such middle schools may offer a late bus route or routes for students otherwise eligible for bus transportation.

The middle school principal shall establish the procedures by which student groups request and receive approval to meet, which may differ from the procedures described above.

Approved student groups at middle school may choose to have their activities facilitated or advised by a community non-profit organization with District approval and to the extent in accordance with policy FNAB (Legal) and the Equal Access Act.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PUBLICITY

All nonsponsored, noncurriculum-related student groups shall be given access on the same basis for making announcements and publicizing their meetings and activities, in accordance with guide-lines developed by the principal.

[For distribution of nonschool materials, see FNAA]

VIOLATIONS

Failure of a student group to comply with applicable rules may result in loss of the right to meet on school premises.

In addition, students who violate applicable rules are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

APPEALS

Decisions made by the administration in accordance with this policy may be appealed in accordance with FNG(LOCAL).

Appendix 5. “Toolkit” for Facilitated Student Group Model

SAMPLE **Connection Day Toolkit**

Contents

Principal Welcome Letter

Information about Connection Day

Connection Day Scenario
Overview of Connection Day model
Basic Connection Day rules
Stakeholders and Roles in Connection Day
Cost and Sustainability
Equal Access Act

Tools for Principal

Connection Day model - Sample Timeline
Principal letter to potential Facilitator
Student Group Application and Facilitator addendum
Sample Letter to Parents
Parent Permission Form

Tools for other student organizers

Ideas for Student Groups/ Interests to explore in Middle School
Instructions for student organizers
Running a group meeting
Attendance Sign-In Sheet
Mid-Year Recap and notice of continuation
Year-end Recap and renewal request

Tools for Facilitators and Monitors

Facilitator discussions with student organizers
District’s adult volunteer application
School policy on non-school literature
Glossary

Dear Middle School Principal:

Welcome to *Connection Day*, a new concept for connecting middle school students to school-based activities to promote positive youth development.

We know that youth benefit from being connected to quality afterschool activities. Middle school students who are busy after school are less likely to get into trouble. There is growing evidence that activities that build “noncognitive skills” will improve academic achievement, even if the activities are not aimed at academics. For this reason, schools have a self-interest in decreasing youth disconnectedness.

Research shows that middle school students prefer afterschool activities that are non-academic and give them choices, opportunities to be leaders, and a chance to do something important. They also want to do activities with their friends. Student groups or clubs can be a great way to decrease disconnection, but few schools actually encourage this, as compared to traditional extracurricular activities. The *Connection Day* model involves community organizations as “facilitators” for the formation and positive direction of student groups, so that schools can feel comfortable about encouraging participation.

With *Connection Day*, middle school students form student groups and the school dedicates one day per week for groups to meet after school. Students with a “spark” are encouraged to organize a group around that interest, and get help from the Facilitator in starting the group, setting goals, and registering with the school. Students recruit other students to join and run the group’s activities, with no dues, fees, or fundraising. Onsite adult supervision is provided by adult monitors, who are not teachers, but are usually volunteers from a Facilitator organization. This importantly provides youth with a connection to a caring adult besides their parent or teacher.

We invite you to check out this *Connection Day Toolkit* to see if the model is a good fit for your school. The toolkit is aimed at answering your questions and getting you started in the process.

The *Connection Day* model and this toolkit were created by a policy research group from the University of Texas at El Paso. In collaboration with the Paso del Norte Health Foundation, the University of Texas at El Paso is a partner of the IGNITE Initiative. IGNITE is an initiative of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation that is focused on improving a range of health outcomes by engaging disconnected youth in the Paso del Norte Region through out of school programs.

Connection Day Scenario

Central Middle School holds *Connection Day* every Wednesday from 3:50pm – 5:30pm. There are 7 groups or clubs meeting Fall semester: Drawing and Graphic Novel Club, Jewelry Club, Planet Care Club, Everyone Matters group, Hip Hop Dance group, Bible Study, School Garden Club.

Six of the groups are “Facilitated Student Groups” or “FSGs”. The YWCA facilitates the Drawing club, the Everyone Matters club, and the Hip Hop Dance group. Faith Church facilitates the Bible Study, the Planet Care Club, and the Jewelry club. The Facilitators have provided advice and materials to the organizers, some supplies, and occasionally a guest presenter.

About 70 students attend on any given Wednesday. Two YWCA adult volunteers serve as the onsite “Monitors” on the first and second Wednesdays of the month, and two from Faith Church on the third and fourth Wednesdays. *Connection Day* is held in C wing in 7 classrooms. The Monitors have set up a table in a central spot in C Wing and greet students as they arrive and go to the classrooms designated.

Within each group meeting, a student leader follows a short routine of welcoming newcomers and describing what the group plans to accomplish that day. No teacher or adult sponsor or adult leader is in the meeting. Students usually bring their own supplies and materials.

About 4:00 in the first of 3 “rounds”, a Monitor checks that groups are settled down and are starting to do their activity, picks up sign-in sheets, asks about leaders and plans for the day, and encourages them. In a second round about 4:30, the Monitor checks back, distribute snacks, asks about progress, and briefly answers questions or offers advice, if needed. When a burst of yelling comes from one group, the Monitor checks on that group. In the third round about 5:10, the Monitor alerts groups that it is time to wrap up and clean up, and asks about the leader and plans for the next meeting. The Monitors greet students as they leave and encourage them to return next week.

After dismissal, the Monitors check the meeting rooms and bathrooms, notify the custodian that students have left, and check on any students that are still waiting for transportation. A Monitor sends an email to the school Principal with a count of student attendance, and any concerns or questions.

Overview of *Connection Day* Model

Why

- Decrease the number of youth who are “disconnected”
- Connect youth to positive activities and another caring adult during high risk hours
- Use activities to help build “noncognitive skills”

How

- Federal “Equal Access Act”
- Schools provide space and incidentals only
- Students with a “spark” involve their friends and others with similar interest
- Facilitator organizations provide advice, resources, guidance
- Monitors provide adult onsite supervision – all groups
- Principal oversees “registration” of student groups and rules for safety

Cost and sustainability

- Deliberately low cost
- Schools can operate as many days per week as they choose
- Facilitator organizations are important, but not essential
- Adult Monitors are essential
- No group dues, fees, or fundraisers allowed
- School can provide “late bus” route

Basic *Connection Day* Rules

Formation of Groups

- Each student group must submit an application to Principal
- Any student can be an organizer and complete the application; need Parent and 1 other student to sign.
- Application includes: Group Purpose/Common Interest, Improvement Goals by end of semester or end of school year, Leadership Opportunities.
- No “faculty advisor” is required or allowed for non-curricular group
- If group is facilitated, Facilitator representative must sign the Facilitator addendum
- The application is a school record and is subject to FERPA.

Membership

- No minimum size for a group
- Groups must be open to all students from all school grades, without discrimination of any kind
- A religious group can organize around one religion, but can’t limit members
- A student can attend any meetings of any group. After the parent permission deadline, a signed Parent Permission Form is required.
- Sign-in sheet is required and collected by Monitors

Dues and fundraising

- To keep activities accessible to everyone, groups may not charge dues or fees. Groups are discouraged from requiring or expecting members to spend more than nominal amount.
- Student groups may not conduct fundraisers, but can ask their Facilitator for assistance with supplies they really need.

Monitor and Facilitator

- Follow policies that limit relationships and outside contact with students
- Principal must approve any materials provided and any outside presenter
- Monitor is responsible for protecting the safety of students during the *Connection Day* program.
 - keep Campus Security, Principal cell, and emergency numbers on hand.
 - don’t physically discipline any student
 - don’t drive any student without express parent or school permission
- Adult volunteers get the same liability protection as other adult volunteers at school

School order and safety

- Students must stay in designated area
- Every adult must have a background check
- All school safety, behavior, and discipline rules apply
- All internet access has school-required filter
- Principal can impose other safety and order rules as needed

Stakeholders and Roles in *Connection Day*

School Principal

- Decides whether, when and where to hold *Connection Day*.
- Decides about registration process, groups' use of school bulletin boards and announcements, and transportation.
- Contacts and recruits 2-3 organizations to serve as Facilitators.
- Works with school leadership, teachers, and others to identify potential student organizers.
- Sets up and promotes an organizer workshop that any student can attend.
- Ensures that adult volunteers have background checks before working unaccompanied.
- Oversees that rules are enforced similar to any other campus-based activity - student conduct, discipline, nondiscrimination, anti-bullying, parental rights, student privacy.
- Plans and hosts any "Connection Showcase" and awards.

Student Organizer and Co-organizer

- Furnishes the idea for a group.
- Talks with and decides whether to have a Facilitator
- Completes the Registration packet and agrees to rules; parent permission required.
- Recruits other students to come to group meetings
- Takes initial and "default" responsibility for leading the meetings and following a routine that will involve other students in leadership as well.
- Timely completes required reports.

Facilitator

- At the start of the school year, generally helps the student organizers form groups that are likely to have a positive impact and will decrease disconnection.
- Talks with student organizers and decides whether to be a Facilitator for a particular group (your Facilitated Student Group or "FSG").
- Agrees with the Principal on furnishing adults to serve as Monitor.
- Visits your group once or twice per semester. Helps student organizers learn how to lead their groups and how to involve other students in leadership.
- To the extent Facilitator chooses, provides in-kind resources (supplies, small equipment) as needed, hosts a field trip, provides a guest speaker, provides useful materials.
- With Principal permission, the Facilitator is welcome to share information about events or programs that the Facilitator is hosting in the community.
- Provides feedback to Principal on operation and impact of program.

Monitor

- Obtains required background check.
- Commits to a schedule for serving as Monitor.
- Provides onsite adult supervision to all the groups meeting during *Connection Days* as scheduled
- Follows the Monitor routine and instructions.
- Shows students that you are interested in and care about them and their group's subject.
- Encourages groups in their activities and in setting and reaching goals.
- Assists in completing surveys and reports.
- Provides feedback to Facilitator and/or Principal on operation and impact of program.

Tools for Principal

Connection Day Model - Sample Timeline

July – August – Planning

- Principal contacts potential Facilitators, provides information
- Principal obtain commitment from 1 or more Facilitators, meet as needed
- School leadership and teachers discuss how to encourage student organizers
- Calendar all key dates

September - Recruit Organizers and students

- Publicize that *Connection Day* will start early October
- Recruit student organizers, talk to parents
- Schedule and hold a workshop for student organizers and Facilitators. Parents welcome.
- Open group registration/renewal process
- Hold *Connection Day Open House* to publicize what groups will be in *Connection Day*
- Close group registration process
- Give registered groups access to school announcements, bulletin boards, webpage, etc.

October - Launch *Connection Day*

- *Connection Day* starts meeting weekly
- Facilitators and Monitors help obtain student “pre-survey”
- Facilitator meets at least once with organizers and visits group
- Deadline for students to attend without written parent permission

Nov - February. Underway

- Group activities should be well underway.
- Facilitators and Monitors provide input to Principal
- Student organizers file brief notice to continue for spring semester
- Principal and Facilitators schedule and plan *Connection Showcase*

Feb - March – Quality

- Facilitators urge and support their FSGs in meeting their goals
- Facilitators ask how each FSG might showcase its accomplishments by year end
- Facilitators and Monitors provide input to Principal on operation and impact

April - Wrap up and renew

- Groups showcase their work
- Facilitators administer “post- survey” of organizers
- Facilitators support each group in deciding whether to continue next year
- Facilitators and Principal complete impact evaluation
- Group “renewal registration” opens
- Update Student Group Handbook and registration packet as needed
- Principal asks Facilitators and Monitors to re-commit for next year

Sample - Principal letter to potential Facilitator

Dear _____ :

[School] is organizing a new afterschool initiative to involve more [school] students in positive activities outside of the school day. While [school] offers some team sports and extracurricular activities and community organizations offer some afterschool program, most students are “disconnected” from any activity outside school. Research shows that decreasing disconnection can help youth build valuable skills they will need in high school, college, and life.

I know your organization cares about young people and wants them to thrive. That’s why we’re asking for your help.

Through *Connection Day* students will participate after school once a week in groups or clubs formed and led by students themselves, not teachers. We are not asking you to lead, fund, or attend the group meetings. Instead we want your organization to be a Facilitator for one or more student groups. This means –

- At the start of the school year, give students who want to start groups your advice and encouragement. Help them complete the group registration paperwork. If you and a student organizer agree, become the Facilitator for that group, and include this agreement in the registration paperwork. We encourage you to be the Facilitator for 1 – 3 groups.
- Provide a pair of trusted adults to share in the onsite adult monitoring of the *Connection Day* operation (not individual groups) once a week, 4:00pm to 5:30pm during 10 – 20 *Connection Days* per school year.
- Periodically check with the student organizer of the group(s) you facilitate about how the group is doing, and visit the group once or twice per semester. If you choose, you can help furnish supplies the group may need, provide a community expert to make a presentation, and provide materials you think would be useful to the group. We encourage you to invite students to events or programs that you are hosting in the community.
- Provide feedback to the Principal about the impact the group is having on students and their sense of connection.

We believe that *Connection Day* will be a great and sustainable way to decrease youth disconnectedness and promote positive youth development. I would appreciate the opportunity to tell you more about this new approach, if you would allow me to give you a call in the next week.

Sincerely,

Principal



Student Group Registration

School _____

Proposed Group Name _____

Group's Purpose _____

Group's Categorization (check all that apply)

___ Art/music/performance

___ Games, crafts, collecting

___ Community Service, social justice

___ Fitness, health

___ Religious

___ Reading, media

Group's proposed activities:

Positive Youth Development Goal Statement

___ Check if Facilitated Student Group and complete information on back of application

Student Name: _____ Grade _____

School email _____ Other contact info _____

By signing below, I affirm that I have read and agree to the rules for student organizers and groups. This is a school record and I consent that this application can be provided to parents of other school students upon request.

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent email _____ Other contact info _____

This space for school use only

Date Received _____ Date approved _____ Signature _____

Assigned Meeting Day _____ Time _____ Location _____

___ Initial if approval denied. Reason _____

Notice sent _____ Deadline to supplement or correct _____

Facilitated? ___ Organization _____ Signed ___ Monitors ___



Complete this portion of form if your group has a Facilitator Organization

Facilitator Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Contact email _____

Organization's relevant resources and expertise

How are you acquainted with the student organizer?

Met at Workshop Met parents Provided organizing materials:

Other : _____

Have you agreed to provide any cash or buy any items? If so, what dollar limit? Other in-kind?

Is Facilitator also providing Monitors?

No adult may have direct contact with students without receiving school background clearance and Volunteer ID.

By signing above, I affirm that I have read and agree to the rules for student organizers, groups, and Facilitators. Parent consents to Facilitator communication with student through emails sent to (check all that apply) student parent Principal Facilitator CEO

Facilitator Contact signature: _____

Facilitator CEO signature: _____

CEO Name _____ email _____

Student organizer signature _____

Parent signature _____

This space for school use only regarding approval of Facilitator

Date reviewed: _____ Signature of Principal _____



Sample Parent Letter

Dear Parent:

Connection Day is a new afterschool activity designed to involve more [school] students in positive activities outside of the school day. While [school] offers some team sports and extracurricular activities and community organizations offer some afterschool program, most students are “disconnected” from any activity outside school. Research shows that decreasing disconnection can help youth build valuable skills they will need in high school, college, and life.

Through *Connection Day* students participate in groups or clubs formed and led by students themselves, not teachers. Groups will meet every Wednesday from 3:50pm to 5:30pm at school. Adults will be onsite to monitor for safety and to show they care. Community organizations will be lending their expertise and support to help make *Connection Day* a positive and productive time for every student.

Connection day is free to school] students – no dues, no fees, no fundraisers. There are no requirements to join, except for parent permission. Students come when they want and when they can. It’s their time to try new things with friends and make new friends, all in a safe environment.

To learn more, please come to a *Connection Day* Open House on _____ at the [school] cafeteria. You and your child can check out what groups and activities will be offered, meet some of the student organizers and adults involved, and get your questions answered. You can also visit the *Connection Day* website at _____.

We’re looking forward to your child getting connected!

Sincerely,

Principal



Connection Day Parent Permission Form

As the parent of _____, as student in grade ____ at [school], I give my permission for my child to stay late after school to attend *Connection Day*.

I understand and agree that *Connection Day* ends at 5:50pm, that I will be responsible for ensuring my child leaves the campus by 6:00pm, and that my child may be unsupervised after 6:00pm.

If [school] offers a "late bus" after *Connection Day*, I understand that the bus will drop my child at the same location as the regular bus home.

I understand that *Connection Day* activities are run by students and the school will keep only limited records about a student's participation. Information about a student's participation will be considered "Directory Information" available for school purposes.

I agree that as part of *Connection Day* activities at school,

my child can take the "late bus"

my child may be photographed or videotaped and my child's work may be displayed

"Directory Information" about my child may be used for *Connection Day* activities and communication.

My child and I have read and accept the rules of *Connection Day* posted on the school district website at _____.

Parent Name [print] _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Starting with the 3rd Connection Day each semester, a student may not attend without having a signed Parent Permission Form on file. A form signed for fall semester will remain good for spring semester.

Ideas for Student Groups/ interests to explore in Middle School

Babysitting skills	Jeopardy
Book club	Karaoke
Board and card games	Leadership skills
Brain Teasers	Mobile Devices and Apps
Bullying prevention	Money making and management
Chess	Music
College interest and planning	Origami
Cooking/Healthy Eating	Outdoor exercise opportunities and skills
Costuming	Pet care and understanding
Crafts	Photography
Creative writing and journaling	Ping Pong
Cup Songs, Cup Stacking	Poetry and Songwriting
Dance	Politics and Culture
Doodling and complex coloring	Recycling
Drawing and graphic art	Self-Esteem and Individuality
Drama	Service project planning
Environmental club	Singing
Faith/ Bible Study	Team-building exercises
Fashion	Technology club
Fitness stretching/ Yoga	Twister/ wall-climbing on the floor
Gardening	Video Gaming
Guitar jamming	

Instructions for Student Organizers

Application

- Each student group must submit an application to be recognized and obtain permission to meet on campus.
- Applications will be accepted in the Principal's office only until _____.
- Any student can be an organizer and complete the application.
- No "faculty advisor" is required or allowed for non-curricular group.
- Organizer statements on application include: Group Purpose/Common Interest, Group's proposed activities, Positive Youth Development Goal Statement
- Student and Student's parent must sign
- Signature mean student and parent have read and agree to rules
- Principal will have __ days to review the application.
- Unless application on its face shows violation of policies, principal should approve and notify organizer. Principal may give rejected organizer notice and deadline to supplement or correct application.
- The application is a school record and is subject to FERPA.
- Organizer's parent must sign the application, and agree that organizer's name and contact information can be released.
- If FSG, Facilitator representative must sign the application/Facilitator addendum.

Membership

- Except for one organizer and one other member, there is no minimum size for a group.
- Groups must be open to all students from all school grades, without discrimination of any kind.
- A religious group can organize around one religion. A group cannot restrict participants to students of one religion.
- A group cannot restrict its participants to one gender or to "try out" for participation, without the written permission of the Principal.
- At each meeting of the group, students attending must sign a sign-in sheet.
- A student can attend any meetings of any group, except that after the parent permission deadline, a student that has not submitted a signed Parent Permission Form will not be allowed to attend any group that meets during Connection Day.

Dues and fundraising

- To keep activities accessible to everyone, groups may not charge dues or fees, or require members to buy particular materials or uniforms.
- Student groups may not conduct fundraisers, but can ask their Facilitator for assistance with supplies they really need.

Running a Group Meeting

Students should

- Sign the group attendance sheet each time you attend.
- Stay in the area assigned to *Connection Day*.
- Eat the snack provided to keep energy levels up.
- Tell the Monitor if there is a problem or if you are uncomfortable in any group.
- Tell the Principal if a Monitor or other adult makes you uncomfortable or contacts you outside *Connection Day*.
- Take the “late bus” (if available and allowed); otherwise wait for your ride home in the place designated.
- In case of emergency, follow the instructions of the Monitor or Campus Security.

Connection Day Group Norms (internal group rules)

- Come on time and stay the whole time
- Be respectful of others, Use indoor voices
- Keep track of your own stuff. Don’t use or take classroom items
- Share what you know and commit to learn more
- Keep your commitments to the group
- Don’t post any person’s photo or work without their permission
- Appreciate the efforts of the group organizers
- Cooperate in group leadership opportunities
- Help spread the word and recruit other students to join.

Group meeting Open/Close Routine

Open:

Hello everyone, I’m _____ and I will be the group leader for today.

Do we have any newcomers today? Hi, __. Welcome. Let me or someone else know if you need anything or have any questions.

We agreed last time that today we will _____.

I’d like our goal for today to be _____.

Close:

Everyone, listen up. We have 20 minutes left to wrap up and clean up.

Did you like what we did today?

Did we accomplish our goal?

What should we plan to do next week?

Who will be the group leader next week?

Ok, good, let’s finish cleaning up and thank you for coming. See you next time.



Connection Day - Mid-Year Recap

School:

Date:

Name of Student Group:

Name of Student Organizer:

Email:

___ Group's Sign-In Sheet is attached and represents actual attendance.

In your Student Group Registration, you described the group's purpose and planned activities. Is this what your group has actually done? Yes___ No ___ If No, please explain why this changed and write your new purpose and activities here. The Principal will review whether these meet the *Connection Day* rules.

In your Student Group Registration, you described some Positive Youth Development Goals. Is your group making progress toward these goals? Yes___ No ___. If you wish to change these goals, please write the new goals here.

Most of the students who attend think the group activities are

___ really fun or interesting ___ usually fun or interesting ___ not sure

Most students come because ___ they like the group's activities or purpose; ___ their friends come;

___ other. Please explain "other":

Other students ___ are ___ are not sharing in leadership responsibilities for the group.

We have enough time to do our activities. ___ yes ___ no. We have enough supplies ___ yes ___ no.

As the organizer, I think *Connection Day* and the Monitors ___ are really good and organized ___ are OK ___ are disorganized ___ are not what I expected ___ help me enough ___ don't help me enough.

The group ___ has a Facilitator ___ does not have a Facilitator. The Facilitator has ___ visited my group ___ given me or the group advice or help on something ___ provided supplies ___ provided a guest presenter ___ other

Please write here and on back any suggestions you have to make your group or *Connection Day* better.



Connection Day – Year-End Recap

School:

Date:

Name of Student Group:

Name of Student Organizer:

Email:

___ Group’s Sign-In Sheet is attached and represents actual attendance.

THANK YOU FOR ALL THE TIME AND EFFORT YOU PUT INTO THIS GROUP

In your Student Group Registration, you provided the following Positive Youth Development Goal(s).

Do you think your group made progress toward these goals? What shows this progress?

In serving as group organizer, did you learn new leadership skills? ___ a lot ___ some ___ not really

For you, has doing this made you feel more interested in school? ___ a lot ___ some ___ not really

I ___ would ___ would not recommend to my friends to be the organizer of Student Group.

For other students who usually participated in your group, do you think they ___ learned new skills

___ met new people ___ helped with leadership of the group ___ feel more interested in school

I ___ would ___ would not recommend to my friends to participate in a Student Group.

Does your group want to continue for next school year? ___ yes ___ no ___ not sure.

The group ___ had a Facilitator ___ did not have a Facilitator.

The Facilitator ___ helped me a lot ___ helped me enough ___ didn’t help me enough.

The Facilitator ___ visited the group ___ provided supplies ___ provided presenter ___ other.

Overall, I think *Connection Day* and the Monitors were ___ good ___ OK ___ not very good.

If not very good, why? _____

Please write on back any suggestions you have to make your group or *Connection Day* better.

Tools for Facilitators and Monitors

Facilitator discussions with Student Organizer

What Facilitator might say to Student Organizer to encourage Group Goals for Connection and Positive Youth Development

- Your role is to enthusiastically share your interest about the subject with other students
- Activities will build their connection to the subject and to the group
- Plan activities where the group can set and reach goals
- Help them experience how their skills grow with dedication and practice
- Let others share in leadership opportunities and responsibilities
- Set and enforce group norms – the other students will thank you for this
- We adults care about you and want this to be a rewarding experience.
- Please talk to me and the other adults involved about what you're doing and ask for help when you need it. That's why we're here.
- The school is relying on you and us to provide feedback on how *Connection Day* is working. Let's work together to complete the surveys and reports that the school needs.

Discussion to help student answer the Group Goals question on the Application

Why will students want to join your group?

- Because it is important for society or out world
- Because it is fun and creative
- Because it is good for health and wellness
- Because it is a challenging hobby
- Because it is a way to explore or express self-identity

By doing group activities, what skills do you think students will learn and practice?

- Group cooperation
- Perseverance
- Positive mindset
- The ability to change
- Leadership skills
- Responsibility

Glossary

Continuation: Brief notice that a group provides to continue into spring semester. A group that does not complete Continuation paperwork will be considered disbanded.

End-of-year Report: A longer report completed by organizer that includes group accomplishments. Checklist signed by Monitor. If FSG, Facilitator’s Evaluation is attached, along with summary of pre & post surveys.

Extracurricular activity: An activity that is officially sponsored by the school, includes a faculty advisor or coach; often is governed by interscholastic competition rules, including “no pass no play.”

Group Goals: observable levels of increased knowledge, skill, or commitment of group members

Group Purpose: The purpose, subject, or common interest that brings the members together. The Group Purpose can be religious, political, controversial, or purely recreational.

Leadership Opportunities: opportunities that the organizer and other members will have to suggest, shape, or lead group activities, share information, expertise, or perspective with other members or as a spokesperson for the group, or help other members achieve improvement goals. Also, opportunities for students who are highly dedicated and experienced in the program model to provide feedback on the model, mentor new organizers, promote the model to other schools.

Mid-year Recap: A short report completed by organizer, with some checklist signed by Monitor to confirm that group has been meeting, following Purpose, and following rules.

Non-school Literature: Any materials provided by the Facilitator or other outside organization or guest speaker to student groups.

Organizer: the student who wants to start a group and who completes the registration process. A group must have 2 organizers (Primary Organizer and co-organizer) by the end of the registration process.

Registration: the organizer of a new group files an initial application with the school during the open registration period, it is reviewed for compliance, and the group is assigned a meeting place and time.

Renewal: an existing group files paperwork to continue for next school year. Show any change to students listed as primary and co-organizers/contact. Requires submission of End-of-year Report.

Sign-In Sheet: Each week the Monitor delivers and picks up the group’s master sign-in sheet, which will record which students attended which meetings, how many at each meeting.

Student Group: a registered group that meets regularly after school to discuss, improve skills, or practice a common interest.