

Moving From Talk to Action: A Summary

PHASE ONE: FINDING A STARTING POINT

Situation, Values, Vision

STEP	ACTION	QUESTION
Describe the Current Situation	Describe the current situation and the factors contributing to it.	What needs to change?
State Core Values	Identify the core values or principles that will guide the group's work.	What matters most? What are the values and assumptions that should guide our actions?
Create a Long-Term Vision	Describe how the situation ought to be in your community in regards to the issue(s) you are addressing.	What should be the long-term results of our efforts?

PHASE TWO: MAPPING THE JOURNEY

Research, Relationships, Program, Resources, Goals

STEP	ACTION	QUESTION
Research: Collect Information	Collect information about what works. What have other communities facing similar challenges done?	What works to address this issue? What are effective strategies?
Build Relationships	Determine who needs to be involved and include them in your efforts.	Who is most affected by the issue we are addressing and therefore needs a voice in the solution? What groups or individuals do we need to design and implement a solution? Who do we need to win over to the effort?
Program Development and Action Plan	Determine program strategies to implement. Define responsibilities and time frames.	Who will do what and when?
Identify Resources	Research sources of financial and other support.	What organizations provide financial support for this work?
Establish Interim Goals	Establish interim goals to track your progress.	What should we accomplish after three months? Six months? A year? How can we track our progress?

Module Seven • Group Handout #1

PHASE THREE: REVISING THE COURSE EN ROUTE Celebration, Evaluation, Revision

STEP	ACTION	QUESTION
Celebrate Accomplishments	Celebrate early successes and accomplishments, such as the creation of a new partnership, the release of new information about your issue, the launch of the first stage of a project, etc.	What early successes can we celebrate to sustain and build momentum for the work?
Evaluate Program*	Determine how you will measure the effectiveness of your program.	How can we measure success? What actions are we taking? What are the results of those actions?
Review and Revise Action Plan	Take a close look at your progress and revise the action plan to meet new and/or unanticipated challenges. Reflect on what you have learned so far and refine your plans to reflect this new understanding.*	What changing or unexpected circumstances are having an impact on the program? How should we take advantage of new opportunities? How can we correct what is not working as planned?

*Module Eight addresses the process of reviewing and evaluating program strategies in more depth.

After-School Programs

BACKGROUND: THE NEED

The parents of more than 28 million children work outside the home. The quality of care in the after-school hours has become a pressing personal and community issue.

- Research from a number of sources has documented that “school-age children who are unsupervised during after-school hours are more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors; receive poor grades; and drop out of school.” (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Safe and Smart: Making After-school Hours Work for Kids*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998, p. 5.)
- A 1994 Harris poll found that “one-half of teachers singled out ‘children who are left on their own after school’ as the primary explanation for students’ difficulties in class.” (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, *Prisoners of Time*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994.)
- After-school programs have a broad range of purposes and missions. However, all types of programs are in great demand. Current research shows that demand exceeds the supply by two to one. Even though many parents can and are willing to pay more for after-school programs, data show that there are just not enough programs.

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES: WHAT WORKS IN EFFECTIVE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

As communities and families face the after-school challenge, it is important that they examine different program strategies and the needs of their children. After-school programs that are available generally fall into three types:

- Daycare programs
- After-school programs sponsored by an array of organizations
- School-based academic extended-day programs

Each type of program has different goals and objectives with the overall mission of occupying children in those critical hours from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

After-School Programs (continued)

In addition to those broad categories, there are three primary functions for after-school care:

- Supervision
- Enriching programs and experiences and positive social interaction
- Academic improvement

(O.S. Fashola, *Review of Extended-Day and After-School Programs and Their Effectiveness*, Report No. 24, Baltimore, MD, and Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University and Howard University, Center for Research on the Education of Children Placed at Risk, 1998, p. 1.)

Studies of after-school programs suggest that children who participate regularly in after-school programs experience more positive outcomes than those who have little supervision. Positive outcomes include improved school performance and attendance, improved social skills and self-confidence, and a healthier use of time.

Strategies of effective after-school programs include:

- Clear goals, on-site management, and coordination
- Qualified staff
- Strong focus on safety, health, and nutritional needs of children during the program
- Effective collaborations and linkages with community agencies
- Strong involvement of parents
- Coordination with school-day learning and personnel
- Ongoing evaluation of programs

The available research and data leave little doubt that quality after-school care must be a priority for communities and families.

Many effective after-school programs also include other learning opportunities such as computer use, art, music, and leadership development. The combination of these learning approaches and topics has proven to be an effective way for students to build life skills and expand personal interests (J. Funkhouser et al., *Extended Time for Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: Department of Education, 1995).

The challenge to communities is to begin and sustain collaborative efforts between organizations, parents, and schools so that the after-school hours create the opportunity for children to be safe, to increase their academic success, to learn social development skills, and to enjoy the time.

Possible Partners

Developing solutions to complex community problems demands that we come together to understand the issues behind a problem and begin to work on a plan of action using all of our community's assets. Although parents have crucial responsibilities for the care of their children, this issue concerns the entire community. Diverse partnerships among organizations and individuals are important for drawing together the resources and know-how to create positive environments for youth. Partnerships can be made up of community members, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses. In most partnerships, partners contribute time, financial support, expertise, and work toward shared goals.

Partners might include the following:

- **Families** seeking safe and nurturing environments that promote the social, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being of their children.
- **Youth** seeking to be involved in facing today's challenges that tend to be somewhat different from the challenges their parents faced.
- **Teachers, principals, and school superintendents** seeking to improve students' academic performance.
- **Local government** seeking to improve the quality of education and support working families.
- **Philanthropies** seeking new ways to support families and create environments that encourage the healthy development of children.
- **Health and human professionals** seeking support from public and private sectors to increase and improve community-based services for children.
- **Law enforcement** seeking ways to enhance community safety.
- **Community and civic organizations** seeking to provide recreational, cultural, and academic services to youth.
- **Business and industry** seeking to develop the future workforce of the region and retain employees who are parents.
- **Hospitals** seeking to improve the health of the community.
- **Universities and colleges** seeking to link research with community issues as well as to provide students with volunteer and service-learning opportunities.

Program Model

PHASE ONE: FINDING THE STARTING POINT

Current situation

The parents of more than 28 million children work outside the home. The quality of care in the after-school hours has become a pressing personal and community issue. Research from a number of sources has documented that “school-age children who are unsupervised during after-school hours are more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors; receive poor grades; and drop out of school” (U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Safe and Smart: Making After-School Hours Work for Kids*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 1998, p. 5). A 1994 Harris poll found that “one-half of teachers singled out ‘children who are left on their own after school’ as the primary explanation for students’ difficulties in class.” (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, *Prisoners of Time*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994.)

Many parents are struggling to find quality, safe experiences for their children during the after-school hours. Current research shows that demand exceeds the supply by two to one. Even though many parents can and are willing to pay more for after-school programs, data show that there are just not enough programs.

Core values

- All children need safe places to learn and grow.
- Parents of all income levels should have access to quality childcare.
- A community that invests in children and families is strengthening its social and economic future.

Create a long-term vision

We want safe, affordable, high-quality childcare and after-school programs to be available to every family in our community.

Program Model (continued)

PHASE TWO: MAPPING THE JOURNEY

Research: collect information

Strategies of effective after-school programs include:

- Clear goals, on-site management, and coordination
- Qualified staff
- Strong focus on safety, health, and nutritional needs of children during the program
- Effective collaborations and linkages with community agencies
- Strong involvement of parents
- Coordination with school-day learning and personnel
- Ongoing evaluation of programs

Relationships

Partners might include the following:

- Parents and children
- Schools
- Local government
- Employers and businesses
- Philanthropies
- Social service agencies
- Law enforcement
- Community and civic organizations
- Mentoring programs

Program development and action plan

We will launch pilot after-school programs at two middle schools in neighborhoods where many children are at risk of dropping out of school, becoming pregnant, and abusing drugs and alcohol. In the first eighteen months of our work, we will develop partnerships and design and implement the program and explore resources with our partners. In the second year, we will launch and evaluate the program at the first two sites. In the third year, we will try to expand the program to three more schools while continuing to evaluate its results.

Program Model (continued)

Resources

The collaborative developed a budget of \$100,000 to fund the after-school program at two sites for the first year. The community foundation has donated \$50,000. The city government has committed \$25,000 in Community Development Block Grants. The team needs to raise another \$25,000.

Establish interim goals

By the end of the first three months, we will have established a formal partnership with the school system and agreed on roles and responsibilities. By the end of six months, we will have hired a full-time executive director of the project and a part-time administrative assistant. At least seventy students will participate in the program at each site in the first year.

PHASE THREE: REVISING THE COURSE EN ROUTE

Celebrate accomplishments

When we launch the program, we will hold an open house on the first day of school. We will invite all parents and children to come and learn about the activities of the after-school program. We will have refreshments and demonstrate fun craft projects. We will invite the mayor, the superintendent of schools, and the local media to this celebration of a program to help working families.

Evaluate program

We are starting the program based on research that shows that if children have positive environments to spend after-school hours, then they will be less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors that jeopardize their future. We hope that participants in the program will have better school attendance, better grades, and be less likely to become teen parents or engage in criminal activity than their peers who don't have the benefit of an after-school program. We also want to structure a program that students enjoy and that meets parents' needs. As we launch the program we will work with a graduate student from the local university's school of education to help us determine how to document the actions we are taking and measure the results of the strategies.

Program Model (continued)

Review and revise action plan

We are worried that transportation problems are keeping many families from enrolling their children in the program. We had approached the school system about providing some bus service, but because of contract issues, this was not feasible in the first year. We are investigating how we can bus students home at 6:00 p.m. when the program ends. There are many legal and financial issues to work out, and we are continuing to work on these with assistance from the city transportation department.

So that children would think that the program was fun, we also emphasized recreation and arts activities, rather than just academic work. However, parents and teachers have both expressed a desire that children be given more structured help with subjects. We are exploring ways to partner with mentoring organizations that could provide volunteer tutors to the children.

Program Model Worksheet

PHASE ONE: FINDING THE STARTING POINT

Current situation:

Core values:

Vision:

PHASE TWO: MAPPING THE JOURNEY

Research–Collect information:

Build relationships:

Program development–Action plan:

Identify resources:

Establish interim goals:

PHASE THREE: REVISING THE COURSE EN ROUTE

Celebrate accomplishments:

Evaluate program:

(More on this follows in Module Eight)

Review and revise action plan: