Prologue

Many people have asked how Philadelphia has achieved the cross systems approach that has become its signature for youth programming. There are several critical elements that undergird the city's success. We are the beneficiary of leadership at the highest levels of government within the city and at the state and federal levels. We are integrating and aligning fiscal resources to produce better outcomes for our youth. We are creating an unprecedented level of connectivity between and among programs and initiatives that are individually effective, but collectively provide a citywide system designed to span early childhood through high school graduation and transition to adulthood. All of this is supported by a network of public and private partnerships that become more institutionalized every year.

But what is the common denominator that ignited and helps to sustain all of these actions? If I had to isolate one core factor, it would be the City of Philadelphia's commitment to the use of data and research to guide, inform, assess and continually refine this evolving system. Seven years ago, Philadelphia produced its first [Children's] Report Card—with dismal results in too many indicator areas. This knowledge underscored and validated what everyone knew and suspected. It also catalyzed a new sense of commitment to changing those outcomes. The first step was to use research to identify best practice strategies and solutions.

That research focused our attention on the non-school hours—when too many youth lack supervision, positive relationships, and constructive activities. As a city, we moved from a sense of hopelessness to

> **"As a city, we [have] moved from a sense of hopelessness to a new level of understanding about what we [need] to do."**
> **—Naomi Post Street,**
> **First Lady of Philadelphia**

a new level of understanding about what we needed to do.

We learned that data was a powerful tool for educating the public, funders, and other organizations. Data is helping us to make our case with city council, state government, private funders, and with Congressional leaders in a tight fiscal environment. Research guides the development of every new commitment and every new dollar committed.

Developing a 'whole child' systems approach is multidimensional. It means cultivating partnerships vertically, horizontally, and with sufficient depth that it transcends politics, turf, and funding cuts. For Philadelphia, data has become the common denominator that makes this possible. We are a 'system' with a common commitment to the city's children and youth. Each partner plays an indispensable role. But we have learned that we need each other if we are to achieve the success we want for our youth. We are improving—especially with our younger children. We still have much to do, and violence continues to be our greatest challenge. But we have seen what is possible and will not stop until every indicator for our youth is moving in the right direction.

—Naomi Post Street
First Lady, City of Philadelphia

Introduction

In May of 2006, the **American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF)** led a field trip to Philadelphia, Pa., in an effort to expose Washington, DC policymakers to the unique, comprehensive out-of-school time (OST) programming system that Philadelphia has created and successfully sustained. Visitors included staff from the US Departments of Education and Labor, the District of Columbia public school system, youth programs that focus on issues such as juvenile justice, employment, and education, and representatives from intermediaries that work with cities and other local entities. The participants shared an interest in learning how a city with high rates of youth violence, crime, drug use, and academic failure, coupled with relatively low rates of high school graduation, employment, and college entry, is able to engage various systems and programs in successfully working together to increase opportunities and improve outcomes for all of the city's youth.

Philadelphia's commitment to this goal has come largely from **Mayor John F. Street**, who places a very strong, and very public, emphasis on helping all children succeed.

This emphasis has come to life through Street's Children's Investment Strategy (CIS), which was initiated in 2001 and enables multiple public and private agencies, as well as a variety of funding sources, to work together to address the needs of children and families. A strong emphasis of CIS is providing services and programs that run during the out-of-school hours, as too many youth engage in risky and unhealthy activities during this usually unstructured time. CIS is unique in that it maintains a strong focus on performance, accountability, and targeting of services, and it directs spending to the most in need to ensure that the Philadelphia government is maximizing the dollars it spends.

Taken as a whole, Philadelphia's system for serving youth is considered to be unique due to its comprehensiveness, its tendency towards problem solving "from the ground up," its ability to take full advantage of the city's vast array of human talent, and its commitment to placing children's needs before political interests.

During the field trip, participants were able to interact with Mayor Street and staff from various city agencies as well as to visit youth programs that are working toward goals such as reconnecting dropouts and other disconnected youth, lowering the recidivism rate among adjudicated juveniles by assisting in their positive development, offering job and life skills training and connecting youth with employment, and giving youth positive, productive ways to spend their out-of-school time. Attendees also spent time in discussion with two of the city's youth-focused intermediary organizations, the **Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN)** and **Philadelphia Safe and Sound (PSS)**, which play important roles in brokering the partnerships between many of the city's organizations and agencies.

As participants listened to and took part in discussions on topics such as how to serve high-risk youth during non-school hours and how the school district can partner with other organizations to reconnect disconnected youth, a key group of learnings emerged and were noted as best practices that Philadelphia uses in order to successfully build and sustain its comprehensive, unified system for serving youth. AYPF is presenting these best practices with the hope that Philadelphia's experience will help other policymakers and practitioners create, expand, or improve their own OST initiatives.

The key learnings include:

- **Involvement of High-Level Leadership**
- **Strong Coordination Across Agencies Supported by Intermediaries**
- **Creative Use and Sharing of Funding**
- **Data-Driven Methods and Firm Accountability Measures**

Involvement of High-Level Leadership

Securing a high level of commitment from government and other prominent community leaders is perhaps the most important component to envisioning, creating, and sustaining any intensive city-wide system. In Philadelphia, the mayor and **first lady Naomi Post Street, Esq.** (also the founder of PSS) are *personally* interested in youth, especially supporting youth at risk of academic failure, and they have both taken active roles as champions for the cause. On the field trip, Mayor Street noted the importance of "wrapping families with services" and noted that one way to do this is through the development and implementation of a system of afterschool and OST programs.

The mayor and first lady are committed to keeping youth issues on the front burner and are reaching out to federal, state, business, foundation, and community leaders in an effort to improve collaboration between these entities to support youth programs. In a meeting with trip participants, Naomi Post Street asserted that the support of OST programs by local leaders also needs to be supplemented at higher levels. "Federal policy will determine the extent to which we can sus-

tain these programs," she said. She continued that community and business involvement in OST programs at all levels further helps to sustain such efforts.

The mayor's and first lady's efforts are complemented by the work of the chief executive officer of the **School District of Philadelphia**, **Paul Vallas**, who has also made it a priority to serve high-risk youth—and in fact, all youth—during OST. The district's OST network includes Extended Day Programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Beacon Programs, ELECT (Education Leading to Employment and Career Training) Student Works Afterschool Enrichment Academies, and student clubs. These programs offer a broad range of services, such as academic enrichment and homework support, recreational, art, music, and cultural activities, job training skills, classes for parents, community gatherings, English as a second language classes, and field trips, among many more. Vallas has been a true force in the sustainability of many of these programs; he actively works to maintain their funding on an ongoing basis, as he wholeheartedly believes in the importance of providing OST programs for youth of all ability levels.

Strong Coordination Across Agencies Supported by Intermediaries

Building a functioning youth-focused system involving multiple agents takes a great deal of persistent communication between players. Best practice has demonstrated that this communication and coordination can best be achieved by the presence of an intermediary organization. An intermediary organization can serve as a neutral convener by bringing key individuals and organizations together to make connections, build relationships, and seek out and harness sustainable funds. In Philadelphia, two intermediaries, Philadelphia Safe and Sound (PSS) and the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), work in tandem to keep the lines of communication open among key OST

CORA Beacon Center
Grover Washington, Jr. Middle School

The CORA Beacon Center is located at Grover Washington, Jr. Middle School and serves approximately 1,000 children and their families. It offers a variety of programs and activities such as homework help, fencing, soccer, golf, dance, drama, ceramics, comic book drawing, chess, and youth leadership. The pride of CORA Beacon is its strong community bond. Grover Washington School, Jr.'s principal, Michael Rosenberg, believes in his school's free-flowing link to the surrounding community and feels that this facilitates a sense of ownership of the school and Beacon Center among participants. "The community has completely bought into the school and therefore views it as its own," claimed Rosenberg. He says that the school and its Beacon Center have formed a cohesive relationship with one another, and that this relationship has helped renew the sense of mission and accomplishment for Grover Washington teachers. Both Rosenberg and Beacon Director AnnMarie Shultz agree that this renewal effect has been due to the collaboration and trust that has built upon five years of focusing services on the needs of the students. Teachers have come to respect what the Beacon program adds to the school and how it has helped establish open lines of communication and a sense of trust between school-based and afterschool instructors.

CORA Beacon parent Kathy Ryder-Brown told trip participants that the invaluable real-life experiences like mock trial and youth council that the Beacon Center offers have given her daughter Katasha Ryder "personality, creativity, and expression." In Ryder-Brown's view, effective OST programs should not only aim to keep children busy, but also engaged, as well as removed from "the need for an immediate dollar." Her daughter, who sees law school in her future, thinks that the safe, supportive environment at the Beacon Center and the exciting experiences it offers have helped her develop confidence and strong leadership skills.

providers, especially during times of limited or reduced funding. They have become invaluable resources in Philadelphia's youth system community.

Philadelphia Safe and Sound is an independent nonprofit that works with the city government, foundations, corporations, and community groups through the integration and leveraging of resources, research, policy analysis, and program development. According to **Anne Shenberger, CEO of PSS**, research is the backbone of her organization. PSS disseminates crucial data sources to communities, policymakers, advocates, and the media, including *The Report Card: The Well-Being of Children and Youth in Philadelphia, The Community Report Cards,* and *The Children's Budget: Investment in Children and Youth in Philadelphia*. Combined, these three documents shed light on school and community progress in facilitating academic achievement and healthy behavior and in providing safe environments. PSS also plays a key role in establishing and administering the city's overall After School Initiative, its 24 21st Century Community Learning Centers, its 30 school-based Beacon programs, and the Philadelphia Alliance for Better Child Care. In addition, PSS has collaborated with the Division of Social Services to create DSS Cares (discussed in a following section).

Similar to PSS in function but focusing on different areas of work, the Philadelphia Youth Network functions as an intermediary between schools, government, businesses, and community-based organizations. According to **Laura Shubilla, President of PYN**, the organization facilitates projects around one major common goal held by many of Philadelphia's local youth organizations: "preparing youth for real-world futures" by implementing "well-considered strategies that blend together work and school" in practical yet innovative ways. PYN's role can be broken into four components:

- *Convening local leadership* – PYN provides administrative support for the city's Youth Council (comprised of local business leaders interested in youth issues); manages the Philadelphia Youth Transitions Collaborative (a grant used for improving outcomes for vulnerable youth); and rallies employers and workforce partners through WorkReady Philadelphia (a system of youth workforce development programming).
- *Brokering and providing services* – PYN administers public and private funding streams for the above-mentioned programs; oversees services for 7,000 youth annually through contracts with community-based organizations; and manages E3 Power Centers and Student Success Centers.[1]
- *Ensuring the quality and impact of local efforts* – PYN develops and implements curricula and standards for youth service providers, delivering training directly to youth and to service agency staff.
- *Promoting policies to sustain effective practices* – PYN develops policy recommendations for the Youth Council and city agencies.

On the field trip, regarding collaboration at the school district, **Vicki Ellis, City Liaison Coordinator for the School District of Philadelphia**, described the inter-agency coordination of services and support that she does as working at "the mezzo level"—the managerial space between organizations that are running programs and individual school leadership at the ground level. Ellis focuses on creating attitudes of trust and partnership between afterschool providers and schools where there might otherwise be an awkward, "landlord/tenant" relationship. According to Ellis, operational and logistical support provides a critical buffer for blending "two organizational cultures."

An example of one such ideal collaboration between a school and its OST program can be found at **Grover Washington, Jr. Middle**

The E3 Power Centers

E3 Power Centers offer intensive career preparation for out-of-school youth through four different pathways: education, employment, occupational skills training, and life skills. At each of their three locations, the E3 Centers serve approximately 300 youth aged 14-21 (including young offenders in Philadelphia's reintegration initiative) each year. Education services include GED preparation courses at four different levels of instruction, individualized tutoring, test preparation, and linkages to external programs and support services. Each student first receives a thorough education assessment that guarantees individualized supports. E3 Centers also work closely with community colleges that can act as gateways to other higher education opportunities for many program participants. The Community College of Philadelphia allows E3 students to work toward their associate's degrees while still earning their high school diplomas.

The E3 Power Centers foster a "culture of work" through Job Readiness Training (JRT) and also by modeling appropriate professional behavior. Classroom work includes how to prepare a resume, how to interview, and how to build positive relationships with co-workers and supervisors. After JRT, students are paired with employment specialists who match them with potential employers. As part of the occupational skills pathway, youth can learn computer programming and maintenance or choose from the various external partnerships with local businesses. Finally, life skills training requires each student to pick from a range of challenging and nurturing activities including an Enhancing Teen Parenting Skills series, a video production project in collaboration with local radio station WHYY and Temple Voices, and the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program.

School, which runs a Beacon program called the **CORA Beacon Center**. Field trip attendees visited this school and had a chance to hear from its principal, the Beacon's director, two students, and one of their parents at a panel discussion. Serving approximately 1,000 children and adults from a diverse student body and with a poverty level of 80 percent, CORA Beacon offers a variety of programs that supplement normal coursework and also provides a much-needed community outlet for many latch-key children.

Furthermore, the school district is spending an ample amount of time and resources collaborating with other organizations on the specific issue of disconnected youth such as dropouts and how OST programs can help this population. It is working closely with PYN to integrate the concerns of disconnected youth with broader high school reform activities including joint planning of smaller, alternative high schools (three accelerated schools for overaged/under-credentialed students were opened FY2005) and measures to guarantee that academic programs at juvenile placement facilities (including E3 Power Centers) are aligned with school district standards. As part of this collaboration, 32,000 Philadelphia youth have received academic credit for work completed while attending their summer and year-round programs, which were funded by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) monies. The district has also granted academic credit for external summer and year-round programming and is pushing for an expanded menu of alternative pathways for out-of-school and under-credentialed youth. According to Shubilla, a lot of credit must go to Philadelphia's present and past school district administrations for "owning the problem" of disconnected youth that PYN, advocacy groups, and other district leaders are now addressing, and for providing a range of programs beyond regular school hours for these youth.

The school district's steps to identify effective dropout prevention programming included best-practice research from PSS and other organizations, as well as focus group work by the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project[2] to identify community-specific solutions. Examples of quality programming have also come from PYN's work, as well as from the Philadelphia Workforce Invest-

The Honickman Learning Center and Project H.O.M.E.

As an OST initiative located in Philadelphia's North Central neighborhood, the Honickman Learning Center, in partnership with its creator, Project H.O.M.E., focuses on technology, literacy, and parental involvement in an effort to effectively support school-based learning. The Learning Center is a new 38,000 square foot facility located in a neighborhood where most of the children do not have computers or technology in their homes. A staff of 26 paid employees and about 80 volunteers, mostly college students, serve approximately 250 youth at a time in Grades K-12. It is expected that in the next year, more than 1,000 youth will be served.

The Learning Center's and Project H.O.M.E.'s emphasis on literacy is a primary strategy for attacking the root causes of homelessness and poverty. A literacy program is offered alongside a continuum of care that strives to integrate street outreach, supportive housing, health care, education, and employment services for its clientele. In order to prepare North Central Philadelphia youth for higher education and the workforce, instruction at the Learning Center blends together the disciplines of literacy, art, and technology. While children in Grades K-6 are taught the basics of using technology, youth in Grades 7-12 are taught how to *create* with technology, including web design, video production, digital photography, and desktop publishing.

ment Board and the Philadelphia Youth Council. In addition to the alternative schools Philadelphia runs, other options for youth include the Gateway to College[3] program, which will enable 400 students to earn college and high school credit during the 2006-2007 school year, the Educational Options Program (EOP), which serves students with more than eight credits in afterschool classroom and work-based environments, the Students Electing Acceleration Program for Grades 6-8, which includes counseling, smaller class sizes, extended school day and year, interventions, and highly qualified, content-certified teachers, and RETI-WRAP (Re-Entry Transition Initiative–Welcome Return Assessment Process), a program for youth who have been deemed delinquent by the juvenile justice system and are transitioning back to the district from court-ordered placements.

Cheryl Ransom-Garner, Commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, reiterated the importance of building synergy between organizations. To do this, she cited the various partnerships her agency has developed to help support youth:

- Cooperating with PYN in supporting the E3 Power Centers, increasing the number of youth internship opportunities, and establishing a Transitional Living Program for youth aging out of foster care;
- Collaborating with PSS in targeting resources toward "hot [crime] spots" within the city;
- Working with the school district, Family Court, and a network of community-based agencies to coordinate tutoring, literacy development, case management, and mentoring; and

- Cooperating with the Parenting Collaborative and the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation to provide parenting education.

Another effective example of cross-agency collaboration in Philadelphia is the **Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP)**. In the 1990s a variety of Philadelphia organizations and agencies teamed up to address the high number of youth murders in the city (involving both victims and perpetrators 24 years and younger), and in 1999, YVRP was born. The partnership was fashioned after lessons learned from the "Boston Miracle" in which clergy, school principals, and police and probation officers identified the youth most at risk of violent behavior and then implemented strict interventions in an effort to curb youth violence. YVRP uses probation officers and "streetworkers" as the primary agents for achieving a similar goal: ensuring that the youth most at risk of "killing or being killed" are "alive at 25." YVRP mostly functions during the afterschool and evening hours, when violent and risky behavior among youth is most prevalent. What is most remarkable about YVRP is how seamlessly it functions as a collaborative by teaming up with public agencies and nonprofit organizations such as the Adult Probation and Parole Department, the Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department, the Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network, the District Attorney's Office, and PSS, among others. Since it began in 1999 in the 24th Police District in North Philadelphia, YVRP has expanded into the 25th, 12th, 19th, and 22nd districts, is currently serving 800 youth, and continues to show positive results. The program's secret to success is known to be its focus on information-sharing between key players in the youth violence arena.

Creative Use and Sharing of Funding

Because every city is different, understanding how a city specifically organizes and funds its youth systems and programs is helpful. Sorting out the myriad sources and streams of funding for Phila-

delphia's rich array of OST providers takes concerted effort, given the large number of governmental and private organizations and various sources of funding involved. Funding entities involved with the city's OST system include city, state, and federal governments (and include TANF and WIA funds, among many others), both local and national foundations (such as the William Penn and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations, respectively), the School District of Philadelphia, and various local businesses and national corporations (such as PECO Energy and Comcast, respectively).

> **An important factor in the city's success is that its youth systems leaders "speak with one voice" rather than "compete for dollars."**
> *—Loree Jones, Secretary of External Affairs, City of Philadelphia*

In Philadelphia, despite or perhaps because of the tight youth programming budget, organizations and agencies emphasize collaboration whenever possible. **Loree Jones, Secretary of External Affairs for the City of Philadelphia**, says that an important factor in the city's success is that its leaders "speak with one voice" rather than "compete for dollars" for youth initiatives. For example, when leaders at both the federal and state levels heard from the mayor, the district attorney, local judges, and many other officials that based on outcome evaluations and data, the YVRP model was the city's best chance for helping youth involved in violent crime, they were convinced of its value and provided not only adequate funding support but additional funds for expansion.

Using data and documentation to demonstrate the value of youth programs has been a cornerstone of Philadelphia's success. Says Jones, if leaders can provide evidence of the success of their programs, the question shifts from "who is going to pay for this," to "what is the best or most appropriate resource that can be leveraged to pay for this [program]." This is a great example of yet another way that Philadelphia puts politics aside in an effort to put the primary focus, and funding, on youth.

An example of resource sharing between entities that Jones shared with field trip participants is the collaboration between the school district, the city government, PSS, and the State Department of Education to combine 21st Century Community Learning Center grant funds and TANF dollars to support afterschool programs in 24 schools. Initially, the state's 21st Century award to the school district was only going to be enough to fund 12 schools, but through a proposal to combine TANF and other funds, the local partnership was able to fund all 24 targeted programs. In addition to supporting the 21st Century grantees, the City of Philadelphia also helps to fund Philadelphia's Beacon programs.

Cheryl Ransom-Garner of the Department of Human Services provided another example of resource sharing. Philadelphia officials agreed that the most likely source of funding to support a comprehensive OST system was the Child Welfare Department, which is, according to Ransom-Garner, "the largest funding stream [in the city], operating a $600 million budget in addition to employing 1,800 professionals." Once the main funding source was identified, the city shifted its focus to deciding who would be the other key providers and funders. It quickly realized that the mental and behavioral health of youth were growing problems and that medical assistance funds from the Department of Behavioral Health could also be used to support the afterschool initiative. The City of Philadelphia also brought the Department of Housing Development under this initiative, tapping Chafee Foster Care Independence Program funds and
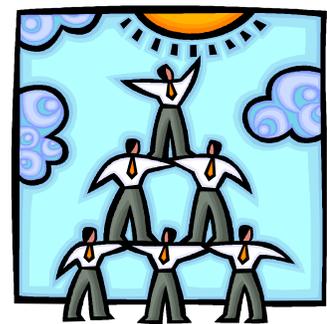
other public funds for housing. During the beginning stages of the partnership, Ransom-Garner asserted that money should not overpower the collaborative decision-making process. This message helped facilitate the natural progression from a territorial battle for limited funds to a collaborative plan for a cohesive umbrella of overall child welfare, housing, and juvenile justice services. Speaking generally about DHS and all of its OST partners, Ransom-Garner further described how the perception of limited funds has shifted from a point of contention to an imperative for collaboration. She also noted how important it is for any initiative to invest in data collection, as demonstrable results are vital for the sustained funding of any program.

Data-Driven Methods and Firm Accountability Measures

Obviously, getting various players to unite behind particular programs is very difficult without data and evidence to support the value of the intervention. Luckily, in Philadelphia, another critical feature of the city's success is its strong data collection. The city's emphasis on showing "how smart investments can most effectively address the problems young people face" has enabled it to establish its distinctive pattern of implementing "creative solutions." And by speaking with one voice and relying on data, city leaders have been able to pool and blend funds, thereby centralizing the services available.

There is an overall theme present in all of the city's efforts: that a city can only work efficiently if it has the evidence it needs to first be able to pinpoint problems and issues, and then support the programs that are proven to aid in addressing and solving them. The city also believes strongly in the relationship between data and accountability to funders and that programs that are not proven should not be funded. Because of this strong belief, Philadelphia's systems and agencies invest heavily in data collection and analysis in an

OICA's Career and Academic Development Institute (CADI)

The Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc. (OICA) is an organization that serves poor, unemployed, and underemployed adults and youth in 30 states and the District of Columbia. Services include education, life skills development, job skills training, and employment readiness services. According to OICA, results of their youth development program include reduced pregnancy rates, reduced criminal and negative behavior, reduced drop-out rates, and increased college enrollments.

The Career and Academic Development Institute (CADI) is an exemplary accelerated (non-traditional) high school operated by OICA during non-traditional hours. It provides much-needed transitional services to students who are overaged and lacking the necessary credits to graduate from a traditional high school. Principal Nathaniel Teagle says that the student body is drawn from all over the city and is one that needs extra services and constant motivation and support from a caseworker in order to succeed in education. Each student is assigned a case manager that "bridges the gap between counselor, friend, mentor, and disciplinarian." Caseworkers help with court hearings, living arrangements, job placement, and higher education opportunities. They are actively involved in the students' lives and even make home visits.

CADI uses the same curriculum utilized at public high schools, and students receive computer-assisted instruction and an online subscription to internet lessons. The school is run year-round with two summer sessions. Upon completion of the program at CADI, each student receives a diploma from the last high school he or she attended. CADI has seen great success thus far, and there are currently over one hundred students on the waiting list for future years.

effort to remain accountable to the public, to funders, and to other invested entities.

Mayor Street and First Lady Post both strongly believe in the use of data to drive public systems, and this belief has been the foundation of the OST system. According to Post, the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of data on youth by PSS for its annual **Report Card** has helped to build support of OST programs from local elected officials who can easily see the impact of those programs. The *Report Card* collects data on youth demographics and outcomes using healthy-lifestyle indicators, which provides a method for Philadelphia to track trends in child well-being from pre-natal through high school graduation city-wide. This report is disseminated to public and elected officials, government agencies, youth-serving organizations, the media, and the general public so they may view the overall condition of Philadelphia's children and youth at a fixed point in time. This report is supplemented by the individualized **Community Report Cards**, which report specifically on 11 neighborhoods in the city. *The Community Report Cards* measure indicators such as immunization rates, family stability, teen birth rates, rates of youth homicide, and graduation rates. It also reports on numbers of OST programs and other positive resources in the area. "With knowledge there is power," asserts Post. She and Mayor Street support this geographical "mapping" of neighborhood statistics as a tool to help the City of Philadelphia determine where OST programs could be most beneficially placed for the youth who reside there—so that locations for OST programs are decided based on need, not politics.

Post also spoke to the importance of using data to obtain information on whether or not the programs in which the city government is investing are truly effective. "You need to know if the students are indeed attending the programs, and if their overall school attendance rates are higher [because of it]," she said. Showing the effectiveness of programming through polling and data

collection, she noted, provides much needed political capital and can also encourage investment from some "*un*usual suspects"—the business sector.
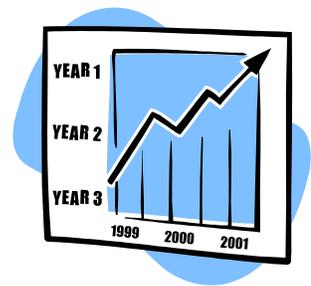
A great example of how the OST system in Philadelphia utilizes data systems is PSS's collaboration with the Division of Social Services to create **DSS Cares**. DSS Cares was created based on the understanding that the multiple needs of a single family are often intertwined with one another and require the support of several different systems. As a solution to this issue, PSS has invested in a method of combining the records of multiple social service agencies in the city with those of the school district and police department. With this effort, PSS aims to avoid duplication of efforts while improving outcomes for children and youth by encouraging more informed decision-making and service planning.

Consistent with Post's comments, PSS's Shenberger said that the fundamental principle behind all of PSS's noted efforts is a commitment to the cycle of "evidence-based practices, implemented in such a way that allows for evaluation and proof for further funding." This data-based approach has been a key piece of PSS's efforts since the beginning, as it was integral to the city-wide polling that resulted in the overall Children's Investment Strategy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these lessons from Philadelphia provide a dynamic outline for creating and sustaining a comprehensive, collaborative system for serving youth during OST. Key strategies that Philadelphia employs include involving high-level leadership in planning and decision-making, coordinating services across agencies while strategically engaging intermediaries, using funding creatively and shar-

ing resources when necessary, and collecting and using data for accountability purposes.

Through interactions with Mayor John Street, First Lady Naomi Post Street, and the School District of Philadelphia's President and CEO Paul Vallas, and in addition to various program directors, education administrators, city department heads, and other leaders in Philadelphia, AYPF field trip participants were able to obtain a first-hand look at these strategies and share them with their respective organizations and agencies.

> **"Federal policy will determine the extent to which we can sustain these [afterschool] programs."**
> **—Naomi Post Street**

Endnotes

[1] Student Success Centers are "one-stop shops" in the district's high schools that provide resources on college preparation, career exploration, and social support. The main goal of the centers is to show students that with proper guidance, they can achieve a successful postsecondary plan.

[2] The Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project is a democratic faith-based organization that works for positive change in Philadelphia. Priorities include safer streets, improved city services, greater education opportunities for young people and adults, region-wide dialogue, immigrant-friendly services, and public and private reinvestment in the city's neighborhoods.

[3] The Gateway to College program serves at-risk youth, 16 to 20 years old, who have dropped out of school and gives youth the opportunity to earn a high school diploma while achieving college success.

About This Report

This report is an analysis of the best practices that have been noted by both AYPF and field trip participants to be utilized by the city of Philadelphia regarding their OST system. Program profiles listed are of programs that were visited by attendees. This field trip to Philadelphia was taken May 23-24, 2006. Washington, DC field trip participants came from the following organizations: US Department of Education, National League of Cities, Center for Summer Learning (at JHU), Council for Opportunity in Education, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, National Youth Employment Coalition, Street Law, Inc., Diploma Plus Program, US Conference of Mayors, Congressional Research Service, Alliance for Children and Families, National Governor's Association, US Department of Labor, and Workforce Tools of the Trade.

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About the American Youth Policy Forum

The **American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF)**, a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC, provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local levels. AYPF's goal is to enable participants to become more effective in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation's young people by providing information, insights, and networks to better understand the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers, and participating citizens in a democratic society. AYPF does not lobby or advocate for positions on pending legislation. Rather, we believe that greater intellectual and experiential knowledge of youth issues will lead to sounder, more informed policymaking. We strive to generate a climate of constructive action by enhancing communication, understanding, and trust among youth policy professionals. AYPF publishes a variety of nationally disseminated youth policy reports and materials, many of which may be viewed at **www.aypf.org**.

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