



## Special Commission on Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Final Report, November 2007

### Vision Statement:

“The Special Commission’s vision for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a state where children and youth are challenged and engaged, where families have quality afterschool and out-of-school time choices for their children, and where communities work together, in a public and private partnership, to offer enriching developmental opportunities for young people, regardless of their socio-economic or education status.”

### *Key elements of ASOST system:*

1. Parental choice from diverse range of public and private program opportunities that promote social and emotional development, resiliency and academics.
2. Coordination of early childcare, afterschool, school and community based learning opportunities to provide a continuum of support to youth age 0-18 (22 for special needs).
3. Expansion of service to underserved populations—special needs, English language learners, older youth, homeless and foster care youth, GLBT.
4. Coordination and alignment of statewide and regional infrastructure of funding, transportation, quality standards, professional development, data collection and evaluation, and building public awareness.
5. Sustained effort and investment to build quality program and quality staff.
6. Local flexibility and control.
7. Leverage existing public and private funding.

### Funding Overview:

There are currently 1.3 million school age (5-19) children and youth in the state of Massachusetts. Of these, about 20%, or over 250,000, participate in some form of afterschool or OST activity. In FY2006, less than 5% of children participating received public funding amounting to about \$2733 per child. The percentage of youth served through public funding increased in FY2007 to 5.5%. Overall, funding for school-age childcare and afterschool and out-of-school time increased by 24% in FY2007 to \$195 million. However, the majority of this funding increase came in areas outside of the core OST sector, such as expanded learning time, Shannon Grants and Youth-at-Risk Matching Grants.

There are at least 18 state agencies that administer OST funding, the great majority of which comes from federal sources. The Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Education administer the majority of core funding. In FY2006 DEEC provided nearly \$77 million to serve 17,226 low-income children between 5 and 13. Yet, there are still about 7000 children who remain on the waitlist for EEC vouchers statewide. The DOE provides nearly \$20 million in funding for afterschool and OST primarily through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and the ASOST grant.

According to the new study, “Supporting Student Success,” there is about \$80 million in public funds spent annually to support school-connected afterschool and OST programming in Boston alone. Over 70% of this funding is federal, and about \$34 million fund OST programs, with the other \$56 million funding health and mental health programs and other supports and community services. The study shows that while funding has remained relatively stable, this has not translated into program sustainability because the recipients of funding change from year to year. To be more successful, the study argues that the system could be improved through a more results-based funding strategy linked to a unified vision of desired youth outcomes. The study also argues for strengthening community-based partnerships and partnerships between state and city agencies. Perhaps more innovative, the study argues for the potential value of creating a Child and Youth Budget for Boston to better align funding streams and strategies.

There are over 100 federal funding streams available that can potentially serve the OST field. Clearly, as The Finance Project argues, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts needs to maximize its ability to tap these federal dollars. The commission report laid out a number of recommendations related to funding out-of-school time. They include: 1). Develop coordinated funding streams to better leverage existing dollars, 2). Identify and tap multiple funding streams to provide more options and choice, 3). Improve access to funding opportunities for community-based organizations, and 4). Develop more multi-year and continuous funding cycles.

#### Key Recommendations:

The commission’s recommendations are based upon public testimony from the 10 statewide public hearings, OST research, and the input of the 3 Work Groups: 1) Information and Access Work Group, 2) Quality, Workforce and Professional Development Work Group, and 3) Sustainability Work Group. The priority recommendations revolve around 5 key areas of engagement:

##### 1. Building Public Awareness:

The commission recognized the importance of building public will and recommends a statewide education campaign to highlight the value and diversity of the OST field. Beyond this, there is little discussion about what such a campaign should look like and who would lead the effort. Moreover, the report does not push for a unifying principle of afterschool and OST around which such a campaign would be based.

The campaign would highlight the following issues:

- Role of afterschool in youth development
- Current gaps in service

- Place at the table in school reform discussions – links to education

## 2. Providing Information and Increasing Access

There is a recognition that the multiple stakeholders in afterschool (policymakers, funders, parents, programs) have different information needs to be effective decision-makers. To be more effective in making resource decisions that provide access to more children, the commission is pushing for a comprehensive statewide data collection system to be overseen by some coordinating body. Information was linked with access because of the perception that without data about gaps in service, policymakers cannot develop programs or target investments that would expand access.

Priority Recommendations:

- Increase access to underserved populations – special needs, low income, older youth, GLBT, homeless, English language learners, etc.
- Increase the use of public facilities – schools
- Inventory and study existing transportation system and make recommendations of better utilization.
- Build on existing IT systems to provide real-time information on youth served, program quality rating, professional and program development opportunities, grants, capacity, etc.

## 3. Promoting Quality Programs and a Quality Workforce

Recommendations around quality are derived from research on the positive impact of OST on youth development and, in particular, link that impact to staff quality. The report recognizes the obstacles to professionalism in the field—low wages, high turnover, the lack of affordable professional development opportunities, and limited certificate and degree programs. Enhanced funding, strong community partnerships and a mixed delivery system of a wide-range of programmatic activities are necessary to address quality issues.

Priority Recommendations:

- Creation of a professional development fund—stipends to workforce to take part in training and other professional development programs.
- Support for leaders and Executive Directors through network development and coaching that address competency gaps in fiscal management and organizational development.
- Develop regional technical assistance centers through public/private partnerships.
- Explore approaches to increase compensation and benefits for program staff.
- Develop and implement a statewide standards approach to building worker competencies. Get all staff working toward the same goals.

## 4. Fostering Partnerships and Collaborations

The report embraces the need for effective and efficient use of resources through public/private collaboration and partnerships. There is also an explicit recognition

that diverse experiences are critical to child and youth development and that no one organization (read: schools) can address all the needs of children. A key component of the report revolves around the need for collaboration among schools, CBOs and other social support agencies, but there are no real recommendations on how such collaborations can be successful.

Priority Recommendations:

- Explore whether or not Chapter 70 language can be amended to include incentives for school/CBO collaboration.
- Strengthen legislative language to require schools and CBOs to collaborate when creating new programs.
- Elevate the role of OST in the education of children and youth.
- Improve the coordination of schools and CBOs to help families of children with special needs—mental and physical disabilities.

### 5. Sustaining the Effort

Sustainability is about funding, relationships, policy and advocacy. Recognition that cyclical and short term funding is a destabilizing factor in the field and leads to many of the problems we associate with bad service. Need to build the capacity of an OST system through coordinated investments in infrastructure that allow programs to provide quality services. In effect, this recommendation ties the others together because it calls for investments in facilities, professional development, management training and support, organizational development, strategic planning, and outcome evaluations.

Priority Recommendations:

- Explore and tap all potential state and federal revenue streams.
- Promote public/private funding approaches that emphasize low-income children, programs for older youth, summer programming and special needs children.
- Advocate for more multi-year funding cycles and competitive priorities for existing programs across all state agencies.
- Create a centralized, accessible database of all funding opportunities.
- Better coordination of state agencies to improve efficiencies and reduce barriers faced by CBOs applying for funds.

To coordinate and unify all these efforts and move the recommendations forward, the commission co-chairs have pushed for the creation of a statewide **Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Public/Private Coordinating Council**. There are still a lot of questions about what this council will look like, where it will function, and what authority it will have to implement the recommendations. The report calls for a council comprised of “diverse stakeholders who are leaders in their organizations and their fields . . . including, state and municipal representatives from public safety, arts, libraries, parks and recreation departments, workforce development, higher education as well as leaders from public and private schools, community and faith-based afterschool and out-of-school time programs, youth representatives, private funders and business – all whom have a stake and role in creating future opportunities for the Commonwealth’s children and youth.”