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BOSTnet Information

November 28, 2007

"Engaging Families"

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Special Announcements

Welcome to the November 2007 edition of the BUZZ! Please send your feedback and ideas on the BUZZ to info@bostnet.org.

- **Welcoming two new additions to the BOSTnet team!**

Peter C. Griffin, Project Director - Peter grew up in the Hudson valley, receiving his BA. in History from Vassar College and his MS.ed. from Bank Street College of Education in the Museum Education program. Since 1996 he has had experience in education from kindergarten to college in various settings, having worked for LaGuardia Community College, The New York Historical Society, Harvard University's Project Zero, The New York University, and The Indie Programs, a media education organization working with "at risk" middle and high school students to teach filmmaking and media literacy. Outside of work, Peter is active in

visual arts, owning a gallery in Catskill, New York as well as participating in community media projects involving youth and local filmmakers.

Upcoming BOSTnet news and events:


- **Leadership Roundtable-Afterschool Program Quality Improvement: Making the Most out of Shared Space**
Thursday, December 6th, 2007
10am - 12noon
City Year Boston Headquarters, 287 Columbus Ave, Boston.

Based on 10 years of BOSTnet's Facilities Initiative, the December Roundtable focuses on an important issue in the out-of-school time field: Making the Most out of Shared Space. Come get ideas to help you think creatively about your shared space. Learn strategies to build new relationships that will benefit your program; effective communication techniques that can help meet all partners' needs; and how to set and manage expectations that contribute to success. [Click Here](#) for Directions. Contact BOSTnet for more information or to RSVP at info@bostnet.org or 617-720-1290 x232. [View the 2007-2008 calendar.](#)

Out-of-School Time Field Announcements:

- **BOSTnet's 20th Anniversary** - BOSTnet is celebrating twenty years of helping families obtain a rich network of out-of-school time opportunities that challenge, reward, and inspire children and youth. Help us continue our mission to enhance the quality and increase the capacity of out-of-school time programming for Boston's youth! It is so important - [donate online](#) today!
- **New State of the Field Report on "Expanded Learning Time and Out-of-School Time"** - Build the Out-of-School Time Network (BOSTnet) is pleased to release its most recent State of the Field. The ongoing work of the After School and Out-of-School Time Commission and Governor Patrick's "Readiness Project" has illuminated both the need and the challenges in improving our approach to education and youth development. It is only through real collaboration and mutual decision-making that true reform is possible. This will require extraordinary effort and leadership from an array of stakeholders, including policymakers, funders, state agencies, and education professionals (both in-school and out-of-school). [Read the latest issue.](#) Please let us know your thoughts.
- **Notice to Programs** - BOSTnet encourages you to review and update your program information on BOSTNavigator (www.bostonnavigator.org). If you already have your username and password, please login to www.bostonnavigator.org/admin/. If you need a username and password please contact us at help@bostonnavigator.org. Your help will make this new tool the place for parents and families to find youth opportunities in the City of Boston.

- **Free Training is still available for the Sunflower Science Curriculum** - An innovative, hands-on science curriculum developed especially for afterschool programs by the Intercultural Center for Research in Education (INCRE). Designed specifically for children in grades 2-4, the Sunflower Science Discovery Curriculum is fully bilingual and highlights the accomplishments of Latino scientists. To take part in this wonderful opportunity, contact John Zuman at INCRE (jzuman@incre.org; 781-643-2142) or Michael Bennett at BOSTnet (bennett@bostnet.org; 617-720-1290 x 240).



Strengthening Programs...

Developing Strong Management Techniques

Our November Leadership Roundtable was the first in a three-part series of meetings focusing on After School Program Quality Improvement. On November 1st, around 50 out-of-school time professionals gathered to learn strategies to improve their program is management, how to make better use of financial resources, and to turn a program that is constantly in crisis to one that runs smoothly from week to week. First-hand knowledge and experiences were imparted by a panel of after school program directors that included Brian Woods from Ellis Memorial, Tanna Preston from Greenwood Shalom and Tania Buck-Ruffen from the Greater Lynn YMCA. Attendees appreciated the real life scenarios and their practical solutions for some of the challenges they've had to face in their programs. The panel also served as a strong reminder to be more involved in your own programmatic budgets (how to better manage program finances); staff development (including stricter highering standards, staff accountability and tips for staff empowerment). Attendees were also taught strategies to better manage stress (including tools to use to go from "crisis to composure"). Networking with colleagues is always an important draw for participants to each monthly Roundtable, and as many as 25 program directors, managers and/or supervisors were in attendance, with teachers, instructors and site coordinators also eager for strategies and tools to bring back to their programs. OST providers face a constant struggle to reconcile funding deficits with the need for strong, capable staff and resources at their sites.

Attendees took the following strategies back to their programs:

- "I gathered information to move our program forward with the accreditation process"
- "there's been a change in leadership in our program and we are always looking for ways to improve"
- "I learned where to find tech support"
- "was a good reminder of management basics"
- "financial tips, staff development & administration, 'crisis to composure' technique"
- "be strict, but fair!"
- "generate supporters from the community for our program"
- "forge allies with area businesses and especially with my licensor"

Engaging Families in Out-of-School Time

BOSTnet continues its work around family engagement, a legacy of our 4-year Engaging Families Initiative, supported by The Wallace Foundation and the United Way. This year, 5 programs will expand initiatives to engage families in their programs with support from the United Way and technical assistance and guidance from BOSTnet. These programs include East End House in Cambridge, Greater Lynn YMCA, the Hispanic Office of Planning & Evaluation (HOPE), Catholic Charities Teen Center, and Ellis Memorial and Eldridge House. Programs have been busy with activities for families this fall, establishing relationships at the beginning of the year to facilitate communications and work toward helping children and youth succeed. Some highlights include:

Lynn YMCA held its first Family Fun Night of the year with 50 people in attendance;

East End House held a family Halloween Dinner;

Ellis Memorial hired a family engagement specialist in September, and confirmed 6 parents who have agreed to join the Advisory Board. This past month, they held a family night at the Boston Children's Museum, taking advantage of the Musuem's City Celebrations Program that offers admission at \$1;

St. Peter's Teen Program transformed their expanded program site with new paint, floors and furniture, creating a welcoming environment for youth and families; and

HOPE is hiring a family engagement specialist and held an Open House.

BOSTnet will continue working with these programs to implement time-tested strategies from the Engaging Families Initiative. These include using a checklist to assess family engagement in a program, improving communications with families, developing a family engagement action plan, and collecting feedback from families.

For more resources on Engaging Families, you may go to our website and download the BOSTnet Engaging Families Toolkit or the Focus on Families guide, published in partnership with the United Way and the Harvard Family Research Project. To download these materials, [click here](#).



ASOST Commission Report Released

The highly anticipated report from the Special Commission on After School and Out-of-School Time was released to the public on November 13th in Springfield and November 15th in

Boston. The report caps six months of hard work that included 10 public hearings held across the state, program site visits, subcommittee work by commission members and other stakeholders, and intensive research and data gathering coordinated by Debra McLaughlin of The Kunnusta Group and a staff of expert consultants.

The report makes two points very clear. One, OST programs are unique in what they offer children and youth, and when young people take part in these programs we can see measurable positive outcomes in their academic, social and emotional development. Two, there are very real problems in the current system that need to be addressed, including limited resources, transportation, lack of choices, especially for older youth and children with disabilities, and few opportunities for professional development and career options for the workforce. Investment in OST is truly an investment in our future. With that understanding, the Commission stakes a forceful position. "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 public/private partnerships, to offer enriching developmental opportunities for young people, regardless of their socio-economic or education status."

The report notes that in order to achieve this mission, Massachusetts will need to strengthen and coordinate its current OST system to improve quality and access for all children and youth and to link early care and education, school-age care, and youth development into a continuum of high quality learning opportunities for the state's children and youth ages 0-22 years. Five key elements will be critical in building a comprehensive network of afterschool and OST opportunities:

1. Increasing Public Awareness
2. Providing Information and Increasing Access
3. Promoting Quality Programs and a Quality Workforce
4. Fostering Partnerships and Collaborations
5. Sustaining the Effort

As we move forward, these elements will be central in our work and the continuing work of the Commission. As a way to elevate the dialogue and coordinate all the various pieces of the system, the ASOST Commission recommends creating a statewide Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Public/Private Coordinating Council comprised of diverse stakeholders who are recognized leaders in the field. Please stay tuned for more information about specific recommendations of the Commission's report. Next month we will look more closely at both state and federal funding streams that support afterschool and OST programs in Massachusetts. For more information about the report, please contact Deb McLaughlin at dmclaughin@kunnusta.com or 617-792-3173.

Save The Date!!

February 27, 2008 - In order to get the most leverage out of the ASOST Commission report, we are holding Lobby Day earlier this year. Please keep this day open to join us in advocating for Boston's out-of-school time opportunities. Stay tuned for announcements on organizing events and meetings to help us prepare for this opportunity. If you won't be able to join us at the State House on February 27th, please take the time to write or call your representative. The

time is right and with the newly released report we anticipate that the state legislature will be more receptive to our requests. Thanks for all your help!

To access more Community News, Events, Resources and Job Listings, please visit our website, www.bostnet.org, to view our Resources Page.

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Contact Information

email: buzz@bostnet.org
phone: (617) 720-1290
web: www.bostnet.org

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