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**May 28, 2008**

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## Special Announcements

### Upcoming BOSTnet News and Events

- **Save the Date! June 6, 2008 Families Matter! Conference** - BOSTnet and the United Way are holding a conference on family engagement with the latest tools and strategies developed for the Out-of-School Time field. **RSVP by June 2, 2008:** [Click Here to Register for Families Matter! 2008.](#) For more details about the event, scroll down to **Promoting Positive Youth Environments** and **BOSTnetBenefits - Build Your Network** (below).
- **New! State of the Field, Volume 2, Issue 4: Environment Matters! Promoting Positive Program Environments** - BOSTnet has published its latest State of the Field report on a new quality improvement strategy. When OST programs develop their capacity to foster positive environments they provide inherent supports that build critical developmental assets in children and youth, including social and emotional competence, positive self-identity, and engagement. Research is clear that youth who have opportunity to develop these assets have a higher level of resiliency as they grow into adulthood. Yet, there is no single prescriptive model that OST programs can implement to intentionally create such an environment. OST is a field with many diverse programs and how children and youth interact with those settings is often very individualized. Being intentional is the key. An ecological approach that starts with staff self-awareness and builds out progressively to encompass contextual elements of the environment affecting quality and continuous improvement provides a viable method for addressing these issues. To read more [click here](#).

- **Promoting Positive Behaviors (PPB) in Out-of-School time** - The Behavior and Emotional Support Assessment Tool (BESAT), developed by PEAR and BOSTnet, has served a number of programs this year with BOSTnet staff traveling to five sites providing training and technical support. In addition, BOSTnet provided PPB Action Plans to twenty-five sites in and around Boston to get staff talking about the issues at their program and developing a culture that is unique to their particular out-of-school program. The BESAT has facilitated discussions between staff and administrators around the challenges of certain behaviors and ways to create a positive environment. For further information or to learn more about PPB, contact [Peter Griffin](#) at 617-720-1290 x230.
- Please visit BOSTnet's [Community Resources & Events](#) and [Community Job Postings](#) webpages to view the latest in events and career opportunities in the OST field!

### Out-of-School Time Field Announcements:

- **BOSTONavigator** - BOSTnet encourages you to review and update your program information on BOSTONavigator ([www.bostonnavigator.org](http://www.bostonnavigator.org)). If you already have your username and password, please login to [www.bostonnavigator.org/admin/](http://www.bostonnavigator.org/admin/). If you need a username and password please contact us at [help@bostonnavigator.org](mailto: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.
- **Teachers Looking for Summer Jobs** - Citizen Schools Boston teachers are looking for meaningful summer employment. If your organization has summer job openings then please contact Ryan McCarthy at [ryanmccarthy@citizenschools.com](mailto:ryanmccarthy@citizenschools.com) or 617 695 2300 x161.
- **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](mailto:jzuman@incre.org); 781-643-2142) or Michael Bennett at BOSTnet ([bennett@bostnet.org](mailto:bennett@bostnet.org), 617-720-1290 x 240).
- **Massachusetts Department of Public Health Youth Violence Prevention Program** is hosting a statewide conference on youth violence prevention in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Youth Violence. The 1st Annual conference on Youth Development Approaches to Youth Violence Prevention will be held on Monday, June 2, 2008 at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. The conference is designed to bring together a diverse array of youth development and youth violence prevention practitioners in an environment that fosters learning, sharing and networking opportunities. The conference is FREE, but registration is required. For more information on the conference and its workshops, and to register online [click here](#) or contact [Neil Maniar](#), Director, DPH Youth Violence Prevention Program.

# Promoting Positive Youth Environments

## ***Promoting Positive Relationships with Families in OST***

As profiled late last year, 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 expanded initiatives to engage families in their programs with support from United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and technical assistance and guidance from BOSTnet.

These programs have been actively implementing Family Engagement strategies and are now ready to share some of the products that they have developed. At the United Way and BOSTnet **Families Matter! Conference on June 6th**, the programs will not only unveil these tools and strategies but will provide guidance in using them. The theme of the conference is **Voice and Leadership**, which is reflected in the successful family engagement approaches developed by programs. Programs this year focused on collecting information from families on what they wanted, whether they were parents/guardians with limited involvement or those taking on more significant roles in the programs. Programs then made efforts to develop **responsive** programming and services and improve quality.

On June 6th, we will share how programs, whether they serve young children, middle school youth or teens, have successfully incorporated parent voice and leadership through communications, surveys, and innovative strategies for engagement,. We are honored to have parent leaders, such as Trannee Creecy, who will provide a first-hand experience of how they lead in out-of-school time programs as well as in their communities.

What are some of the ideas and tools programs will share?

- Ellis Memorial & Eldredge House Afterschool program will discuss how to cultivate parent/guardian leadership. Parent Advisory Committee members will provide their perspective. Attendees will receive some of Ellis' tools in building an Advisory Committee.
- Catholic Charities' St. Peter's Teen Program will provide a special communications tool for engaging families of teens and showcase successful activities.
- Lynn YMCA will be presenting on how to engage families that seem hard to reach and will provide a specific tool for doing this.
- Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE) will highlight reaching out to Hispanic families and tools translated into Spanish.
- East End House of Cambridge will discuss evaluation of Family Engagement activities.

Suzanne Bouffard, Project Manager from the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) will moderate the morning panel providing her insight on family engagement throughout the developmental stages of children and youth. Please read the section **Research and Information** below for a summary of the recent edition of *The Evaluation Exchange: Building the Future of Family Involvement*, in which Suzanne is a lead contributor. Suzanne will also run a session on **Engaging Families of Teens** along with Paulo De Barros of Catholic Charities.

\*\* Institutions such as the **Museum of Science, the Museum of Fine Arts, The Institute for Contemporary Art, and the Aquarium** will also be presenting their family friendly activities. Attend this workshop and learn of the discounts offered to families or groups, and resources offered to OST programs and families, particularly for the summer.

The **BOSTnet Guide to Boston's Before and After School Programs 2008-2009** edition will be launched fresh off the press.

Please join us on June 6th for a great event that is the culmination of the learning from the **Engaging Families Initiative 2007-2008**. There will be plenty of opportunity to network and share promising practices from programs!

## BOSTnetBenefits - Build Your Network

### ***Families Matter! Conference 2008***

#### Creating Opportunities for Family Voice, Empowerment and Leadership

Join BOSTnet and United Way on June 6th for the **2008 Families Matter! Conference** to celebrate family involvement throughout the ages and stages of child and youth development. You'll learn how to design responsive programs, enhance parent communications, and improve outcomes for youth of all ages.

**Event date:** Friday, June 6, 2008

**Time:** 8:30 am - 12 noon

**Location:** United Way, 51 Sleeper Street, 1st floor, Boston, MA 02210 [[map](#)]

**Cost:** This is a FREE event (light breakfast will be served)

**Questions?** Contact Manosi Datta at BOSTnet at 617.720.1290 x210 or [datta@bostnet.org](mailto:datta@bostnet.org).

**RSVP by June 2, 2008:**

[Click Here to Register for Families Matter! 2008.](#)

Please complete some basic information and click "Register" when you are done.

*We're pleased to have the support of the United Way and the Ludcke Foundation for this Initiative.*

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### ***Focusing on Middle School Youth***

BOSTnet wishes to thank both the **State Street Foundation** for their support of our **Middle School Half-Day Forum** on May 15th, 2008 and **The Boston Foundation** for hosting the event. A new report from the Boston Public Health Commission says that only 21% of Middle School students use after-school services. This statistic prompted us to ask the questions, "*Who is the other 79%?*" and "*How can we find ways to better engage the other 79% of middle schoolers so that they will want to participate in after school activities?*" If you are reading this article, it's very likely you already are a proponent of out-of-school time (OST) programming and recognize the positive outcomes to be had when youth are involved in activities outside regular school hours. Middle school age youth are at a crux in youth development: while they may feel they're "too old" for the afterschool scene, in fact, its often in quality OST programs that youth can find their voice, explore their creativity and find others who share their skills and interests. The large turnout for this event underscored the relevancy of this topic and the eagerness of providers to learn more strategies for working with middle schoolers. At the Middle School Forum, we discussed some of the challenges and opportunities in building middle school age programs, aided by a panel discussion of several OST program directors and managers. We invite you to continue the dialogue! [Click here](#) to join the **BOSTnet Middle School Google Group** to share your strategies and stories around engaging Middle School youth.

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### **BOSTnet's 2008-2009 Guide to Boston's Before and After-School Programs**

The new edition of the Guide is here! Our annual Guide illustrates the power of the out-of-school time network in Boston. This edition includes program descriptions, activity types, summer program information, and disability and access information for families with children who have special needs.

We also provide an **After-School Program Checklist** to guide parents and guardians in finding the right out-of-school time programs. Right in time for the summer, you will be able to choose from hundreds of summer opportunities for children and youth!

**\*NEW to this Edition: Middle School Program Listing** - find out which programs serve middle school students. We only include those programs that serve youth of all middle school ages (11-14) as these programs often have middle school specific activities.

**For programs looking for support** in curriculum development, program specialists, equipment, and other resources, BOSTnet includes a **Resources for OST Programs** section. Find out how to enrich your out-of-school time programs with health, arts, outdoors, inclusion, history, literacy, leadership, mentoring, and many other activities from organizations that specialize in these areas. You may continue to update your program information through [www.BOSTONavigator.org](http://www.BOSTONavigator.org).

Check out the new **Summer Search** function on BOSTONavigator to find the latest summer programs.

Contact [info@bostnet.org](mailto:info@bostnet.org) to request a copy of the Guide or look for them at your local library or family resource center!

The Guide is also available online, please [click here for a pdf version of the Guide](#).  
Receive a free hard copy by attending the Families Matter! Conference.

**Research & Information**

## ***Reframing Family Engagement***

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) released its latest issue of ***The Evaluation Exchange: Building the Future of Family Involvement***. Drawing on 25 years of research and practice in family engagement, HFRP has put together a content rich issue that presents many different perspectives from leaders nationwide on an array of diverse issues, including innovative initiatives, promising practices, and new evaluation approaches and findings.

Family involvement is at the core of HFRP's complementary learning concept that promotes an alignment of school and OST supports for healthy learning and youth development. Spurred mainly by No Child Left Behind and other federal legislation, family involvement is moving from a common sense approach to engagement to a clearly defined field with its own set of expectations and mechanisms for evaluating success. Picking up on that movement, HFRP argues for a reframing of the concept of family engagement around 3 core principals:

1. Family involvement must transcend all contexts in which children and families live, learn and engage with their communities.
2. Family involvement must extend from birth to adulthood, but must evolve as the developmental needs of children change over time.
3. Families, youth, schools and other community institutions are mutually responsible for the implementation and success of family involvement initiatives.

HFRP makes a compelling case for a more concerted effort to educate, engage, empower and enlist parents in the education and healthy development of their children. Research suggests that parents who become involved in their children's education tend to develop an advocacy perspective that improves opportunities for all children. Rather than leave this to the motivation of an individual parent, systems need to be created to ensure a high-level of engagement and to measure the effectiveness of that engagement so that a community of practitioners can share knowledge with the field and funders can more effectively target investments. The arguments presented in this Issue are supported by multiple case studies that highlight the positive impact of family engagement-primarily in school environments-ranging from transitioning kids to kindergarten to empowering Latino parents within urban school communities.

The perspectives are heavily weighted toward schools and education reform efforts, but the relevance for afterschool is clear. Getting parents involved in your afterschool program is central to quality, but it is our responsibility as a field to educate parents on the unique aspects of afterschool as a developmental setting for youth. If we truly want to create an approach to learning and development that is complementary, we must empower parents to advocate for value of afterschool that is true to its mission and not just an extension of the school day.

To read more, please [click here](#).

## **Advocacy**

### ***State Budget News***

The Massachusetts Senate Committee on Ways and Means released their FY2009 budget on May 14th and the full Senate passed it with amendments on May 23rd. Despite a very tight fiscal climate, there is some good news for afterschool. Efforts to mobilize the field and advocate for improved opportunities for youth in the state are paying some dividends. A few budget highlights:

- **Line Item 7061-9611:** The Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Quality Grants are in at **\$5.45 million**. This is a \$450,000 increase over the House version that funded the program at \$5 million. (FY2008 funding--\$2 million).
- **Line Item 4590-1506:** DPH Youth Violence Prevention money is funded at **\$3.5 million**. An amendment filed by Senator Wilkerson increased the Ways and Means proposal by \$500,000. (FY2008 funding--\$2 million).
- **Line Item 8100-0111:** Shannon Grants funded at **\$13 million**. (FY08 funding--\$11 million).
- **Line Item 3000-6075:** EEC mental health consultations to reduce expulsions and suspensions in programs funded at **\$2.9 million**. (FY2008 funding--\$2.4 million).
- **Line Item 3000-4060:** **\$30.8 million** increase in income-eligible early education and care programs. This increase recognizes the FY08 deficiency and projected FY09 growth in the temporary assistance for needy families child care account.
- **Line Item 1599-0042:** An amendment filed by Senator Augustus proposes funding the rate reserve for EEC professional development and quality improvement activities at **\$7 million**. (FY08 funding--\$7 million).
- **Line Item 7002-0012:** YouthWorks Jobs for Teens Program funded at **\$8 million**. (FY08 funding--\$6.7 million).
- **Line Item 7061-9412:** Expanded Learning Time Grants funded at **\$17.5 million**. (FY2008 funding--\$13 million).

These numbers will continue to change as House and Senate committees debate a final version of the budget. We encourage all of you to call, write and visit your state representative and voice your support for funding initiatives that strengthen opportunities for children and youth. We also want to thank Senator Thomas McGee and Representative Marie St. Fleur for their support and leadership at the State House.

**The Big Picture** - Our recent emphasis on budget line items and amendments should not cloud the need to take a long-term view in advocating for the field. A critical element of this advocacy must continue to be building public will around a strong identity for afterschool and OST. Unfortunately, the field is often inhibited by two somewhat conflicting expectations:

- Afterschool as childcare
- Afterschool as an extension of the school day

When parents view afterschool as childcare they often utilize it inconsistently in response to periodic need. Research shows, however, that such sporadic attendance limits a program's ability to have a positive impact. Moreover, reducing the basic function of afterschool to childcare excludes the role these programs play in healthy youth development. Viewing afterschool as an extension of the school day also limits the potential of the field. Focusing on academic achievement and structuring content in a school-like way overshadows the unique characteristics of afterschool that make it a valuable alternative learning environment. Regardless of the content a program offers, it will not tap deeper developmental assets in youth if it does not strengthen its assets as a distinct developmental setting.

As we continue to advocate for the field, it is critical that we work to reframe the expectations of the field. As a community, we need to understand that there is an objective value to supporting youth programs that are linked to outcomes that are cumulative over time and can't be easily measured through some point-in-time assessment. We also need to continue to advocate for the unique strengths and assets that these programs bring to partnerships and collaborations with other organizations so that their work is valued and respected and partnerships yield the best results for our children and youth.

***Thank You for Your Support!***

## Quick Links

- [BOSTnet website](#)
- [Newsletter Archive](#)
- [BOSTnet Publications](#)
- [Connecting You to Resources](#)
- [Donate](#)

**BOSTnet just finished celebrating twenty years** of helping families obtain a rich network of out-of-school time opportunities that challenge, reward, and inspire children and youth. We need your support to continue working toward our mission to enhance the quality and increase the capacity of out-of-school time programming for Boston's youth! **Please consider a [donation](#) today.**

***To access more Community News, Events, Resources and Job Listings, please visit our website, [www.bostnet.org](http://www.bostnet.org), to view our Resources Page.***

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