

A Call for Strategic Collaboration

Between

The Cambridge After-School Community

&

The Cambridge Public Schools

POSITION PAPER OF THE CAMBRIDGE AFTER-SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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Developed by:

The Agenda For Children - Out of School Time Initiative

Leaders Group

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PREFACE

Preparing children for success in today's competitive world is among our city's most important responsibilities. Increasingly, it is a responsibility that cannot be undertaken by families and schools alone. Community partners, such as after school and summer programs, early childcare programs and health and human service agencies, must join with families and schools to meet the challenge of raising healthy, successful children.

As the following position paper outlines, the city's after school community is uniquely poised to collaborate with families and schools to promote the learning and development of school-age children (K-8). Over the last few years, through the Agenda for Children Out of School Time Initiative, we have seen over 40 city and community after school programs come together to form a coordinated system, which engages in citywide professional development and quality improvement efforts. More than ever before, the after school community comes to the table, unified and ready to partner effectively with schools and families on behalf of our children.

The benefits of broad, sustained partnerships between schools and after school programs are considerable. We share the same children – 60% of children enrolled in the Cambridge Public Schools Department's eleven elementary schools also attend one or more of the 40 city and community after schools programs. This overlap provides the opportunity for schools and after schools to collaborate in ways that could creatively support learning and social-emotional growth. Results from our 2007 Out of School Time Family Survey indicate that families strongly want this type of exchange. Out of 700 families, 63% reported that it was important that school teachers and after school staff regularly communicate in support of their child's growth and learning.

At the same time, with the increasing focus of schools on academic performance, after schools programs can help families and schools maintain a “developmental balance” by offering numerous opportunities for children to explore areas, such as art, music, and sports/recreation. In addition, after schools provide children with multiple experiences with peers and adult mentors that help to foster essential social-emotional skills.

Collaboration is, of course, not a new idea. Cambridge after-school programs and Cambridge Public Schools have a long history of partnership in support of children's learning, development, health and safety. Yet, with the growing challenges placed on all of us—families, schools and after school programs alike—to ensure the well being of children, it is essential that we reach out anew, looking for innovative, more in-depth ways to support our work with children and combine our strength. This position paper is designed to put us on this path. We look forward to engaging families and schools over the next year to see where this path might ultimately lead.

Ellen Semonoff
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FORWARD

What does collaboration between schools and after school programs look like? How does it benefit children? A quick look at some experiences of children, teachers and after school staff in Cambridge provides some answers.

A 7th grade student is studying the human body in his biology class in school, learning about the respiratory, muscular and blood systems and how they interact. Later that afternoon, he visits a Cambridge biotechnology laboratory on a field trip with his after-school program to learn how scientists are using their understanding of the body's systems to develop important medicines.

Worried about rising obesity rates among middle school girls, a school nurse and physical education teacher work with an after-school program to provide hip hop dance and exercise classes to a targeted group of girls at risk of becoming overweight.

A male student who is having trouble relating to peers during the school day joins a strategic games class offered in his afterschool program. This group is tailored to attract children with social difficulties, intentionally integrating relationship skills building activities as part of the game process.

A 5th grade girl who is having difficulty understanding poetry is encouraged by her after school teacher to sign up for Kreative Kareoke - a series of classes offered by her afterschool program that focus on creating new lyrics to popular songs.

A 3rd grade teacher is concerned about a student's poor test results. The student is bright and generally freezes up or panics when presented with an exam. The teacher mentions this to one of the students after-school teachers. Realizing that this student is not the only one struggling with this issue, they collaborate to devise a series of relaxation and stress management activities to be included as part of the after-school program.

These are some of the real ways schools and after-schools work in concert to promote children's learning, social-emotional development and physical health. Yet these examples are too few and far between. They often emerge only through the commitment and creativity of individual teachers and after-school staff, rather than through formal, cross-organizational efforts. With most Cambridge Public School students participating in an after-school program, there is tremendous potential for greater, systematic collaboration along these lines.

The following position paper is a first step towards this goal. The Cambridge after-school community looks forward to engaging Cambridge school leaders and faculty, families and community members in rich discussion over the next year about ways to creatively and productively shape the whole day for children. It is our hope that in the near future schools and after-school programs routinely collaborate so that all children experience the types of integrated support described above.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Serving nearly half of the city's school-age population, the Cambridge after school community represents the second largest child-serving system in the city, next to the Cambridge Public School Department (CPS). Together, the Cambridge after school community and Cambridge Public Schools have the exciting potential to shape and support the whole day for children in ways that can powerfully promote their overall growth and learning.

It is therefore the position of the Cambridge after school community that:

Cambridge is best served by establishing a formal collaboration between the city's after-school system and school department in support of school-age children's healthy development, academic success and expanded participation in quality out-of-school time activities.

The Benefit of Collaboration

The role of after-school ~ What the research says

Research suggests that after school programs serve as essential partners with school and families in promoting children's learning and development because they provide the following:

Complementary Learning

After school programs provide children with an array of learning experiences and positive relationships with adults and peers that significantly *complement* their learning and development at school and at home. Unbound by schedules and content requirements, they are free to develop curriculum and activities of varying subjects, lengths, and pedagogical methods, including project-based and experiential learning models. Research shows that children who participate in after school programs demonstrate the following:

- Better school attendance and lower dropout rates
- Stronger feelings of connection to school and teachers
- Increased homework completion
- Improved grades and performance on proficiency tests

Whole Child Development

After school programs are vital assets to communities because they offer children a broad menu of developmentally rich experiences. In addition to academic learning activities, after school programs routinely engage children in activities that promote the following:

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Social-emotional development

With low staff to child ratios, small group sizes, and child-centered activities, after schools provide children with unique opportunities to connect with positive adults and peers and to exercise autonomy, decision-making and leadership. Research shows that children participating in after school programs demonstrate the following:

- Increased sense of efficacy
- Improved school behavior and attitudes towards school
- Better emotional adjustment.

Creative/artistic expression

With schools more focused on academic performance, after school programs play a vital role in providing children with exposure to the arts. Flexible schedules allow staff and children to engage in art projects and to explore a range of art mediums, both within programs and in the community.

Physical health, fitness and safety

With the level of exercise decreasing and obesity rates rising among school-age children across the country, after school programs offer a much-needed range of physical recreation and sports activities. After school programs also operate during the “prime time” for youth involvement in risky behaviors (the hours between two and six P.M), and thus serve as a key protective and preventative factor for children. Research shows that children participating in after school programs demonstrate the following:

- Increased physical exercise
- Healthier eating choices
- Lower obesity rates
- Reduced rates of participation in risky behaviors (e.g. substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and sexual activity)

Family Engagement

After school programs serve as an important bridge between schools and families. Because after school staff have frequent contact with family members during pick up times and typically reflect the diversity of students and families, they often develop strong bonds with families. At the same time, because after-school staff and school day teachers share students and in many instances work in the same school buildings, they often develop collegial relationships. As a result, after-school staff are often in a position to serve as translators and brokers of information between teachers and families.

A Vital Ally ~ The Cambridge After-school Community

This collective size and capacity of the Cambridge after school community make it the second largest child-serving system in the city and, thus, an essential partner in promoting positive outcomes for children.

A True System

Over the past five years, through the organizing efforts of the Agenda for Children’s Out of School Time initiative (AFC), the Cambridge after school community has evolved from a network of 40 loosely connected programs to a coordinated system, with the

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ability to establish shared policies and initiatives across programs and staff. Systems-level components in place include the following:

- A shared governance structure
- Citywide professional development and quality improvement initiatives (e.g. staff training and onsite coaching)
- Cross program data collection and assessment
- State advocacy efforts.

Enrollment

In 2006/2007, the total number of children attending after school programs in Cambridge was approximately 2, 500, representing 44% of the total number of children, ages 5-14 living in the city. Of those enrolled, 93% are Cambridge Public School (CPSD) students, representing 59% of the district's overall K-8 enrollment. Across a range of variables—such as race/ethnicity, income, languages spoken and special education status—the after school enrollment closely mirrors the CPS enrollment.

Workforce

The Cambridge after school workforce consists of over 370 paid staff, and over 150 volunteers and student interns. This workforce is diverse, educated, and experienced. Forty-percent of staff are persons of color, while 30% are bilingual. Over half of after school staff have completed four years of college and 44% have over four years of professional youth development experience. As a result, the after school workforce has significant capacity to serve children from different cultural backgrounds and to offer a wide range of high-end academic supports and enrichment activities. Further, after-school programs play a key role in exposing children to adult role models and mentors who are persons of color.

Scale and Quality of Activities

Cambridge after school programs provide over 700 activities to children each week, in the areas of academic support and enrichment, art enrichment, fitness and health, and social-emotional skills development. Cambridge after school programs also provide a high number of “high-end” activities. Over half of activities (52%) have a formal, written curriculum or lesson plan. Nearly 40% of activities require that staff have specialized knowledge and/or training to lead the activity.

The Pathway to Collaboration

Collaborative Models @ Work

Cambridge after school programs and Cambridge Public Schools have often found common ground—partnering in multiple ways in support of children’s learning, development, health and safety. Several of these partnering efforts provide a solid foundation from which to expand school-after-school collaboration. In particular, three types of successful partnerships have emerged in recent years that offer insight into the targeted ways schools and after school programs can effectively work together in support of children. These include the following:

1. *Communication-focused partnerships* – school-after school partnerships in which the primary goal is to improve the exchange of information and strategies to allow both teachers and after school staff to better address children’s academic and social-emotional strengths and needs. Examples include: the *DHSP Inclusion Initiative* and the joint CPSD-Agenda for Children *Quality Partnership Grants Initiative*, and the *Middle School Partnership*.
2. *Content-focused partnerships*—school-after school partnerships in which the primary goal is to communicate academic content and learning goals and/or to co-create aligned academic curriculum and support activities to be used in after school settings. Examples include: the *21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Partnership* sites, the *King Open Extended Day /Young People’s Project Math Initiative*, and the *Community Schools and Title I Partnership*
3. *Integrated programming partnerships*—school-after school partnerships in which the primary goal is to merge school and after school settings as much as possible to create a seamless, full day learning and social-emotional experience for children. Examples include: the *King Open Extended Day*, the *Fletcher-Maynard Extended Day* and the *Extended Learning Initiative* at the Fletcher Maynard Academy and the M.L. King School.

Moving Forward

The Agenda For Children’s Leaders Group recommends that the existing Complementary Learning Group serve as a joint steering committee, responsible for further exploring the development of a more formal, school-after school system collaboration. Convened in the fall of 2006 to attend the Harvard Achievement Gap Conference, the Complementary Learning Group (CLG) is comprised of CPSD administrators, principals and after-school program leaders. Over the winter and spring of the 2006-2007 school year, the CLG has met regularly to examine how after school programs and school can better work in concert to support children’s learning and development both in and outside of school.

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Going forward, the CLG could be expanded to include additional top managers within both systems—e.g. DHSP division heads, after school executive directors, and CPSD district administrators and school principals. The CLG could then gather input from both school and after-school leaders in thinking through next steps. Some of these steps may include the following:

- ▶ Adopting a shared mission that clearly defines *why* the after school system and school department will seek greater collaboration and what the specific *goals* of this collaboration will be.
- ▶ Developing a guiding framework that outlines key structures and strategies that support successful school-after school partnerships and disseminating this information to schools and after school programs
- ▶ Exploring and expanding comprehensive partnership models between schools and after school programs.
- ▶ Seeking ways to facilitate timely sharing of information between the after school system and the school department and between individual schools and after school programs.
- ▶ Evaluating the success of collaborative efforts.

INTRODUCTION

A CALL FOR COLLABORATION

The Cambridge after-school community plays an integral role in the lives of our children and families. Comprised of 40 diverse city-run and community based programs and serving nearly half of the city's school-age population, the Cambridge after-school community represents the second largest child-serving system in the city, next to the Cambridge Public School Department (CPSD). Cambridge after-school programs provide over 700 activities to children each week, in areas such as literacy, math, science, art, music, sports/recreation, and community service. Cambridge's 370 after-school staff serve as key, positive adults in children's lives, acting as teachers, mentors, coaches, and tutors.

Together, the Cambridge after-school community and Cambridge Public Schools have the exciting potential to shape the whole day for children in ways that can powerfully promote their healthy development and academic success. Schools and after-school programs can team up to accomplish the following:

- ▶ To provide a range of academic and enrichment activities and social-emotional experiences in after-school settings that strongly complement children's learning in school.
- ▶ To integrate after-school run youth development, enrichment and experiential learning activities into the school day, in conjunction with schools exploring Expanded Learning Time (ELT).
- ▶ To identify children in self-care—those not participating in organized out of school time activities and unsupervised at home—and reach out to their families.
- ▶ To ensure that children and families have access to quality summer learning and enrichment experiences.
- ▶ To develop comprehensive approaches for addressing key community challenges, such as reducing achievement gaps between students of different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds.

Together, the Cambridge after-school community and the Cambridge Public Schools have the exciting potential to shape the whole day for children in ways that can powerfully promote their healthy development and academic success

It is therefore the position of the Cambridge after-school community that:

Cambridge is best served by establishing a formal collaboration between the city's after-school system and school department in support of school-age children's healthy development, learning success and expanded participation in quality out-of-school time activities.

This citywide collaboration will build upon several current, promising school-after-school partnerships, while also bringing city, school and after-school leaders together to

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identify and pursue shared objectives in a broader, synchronized effort. At the same time, this collaboration will embrace the tremendous diversity across schools and after-school programs by providing a range of supports that can be shaped to meet the distinct needs and interests of individual schools and programs.

The following position paper outlines in full the case for establishing a formal after-school system-school department collaboration. More specifically, this paper includes the following:

Part I: The Benefit of Collaboration

The first part of this paper reviews *why* Cambridge after-school programs are essential partners with schools and families in supporting children's learning and development.

Section One: *The Role of After School ~What the Research Says*, provides a synopsis of research on how after-school programs provide complementary learning, promote whole child development, and engage families. **Section Two:** *A Vital Ally~ The Cambridge After-School Community*, provides a comprehensive profile of the size and capacity of the Cambridge after-school community, reviewing its emergence and ability to act as a coordinated system, overall enrollment and workforce, and breath and depth of activities.

Part II: The Path to Citywide Collaboration.

The second part of this paper examines *how* the Cambridge after-school community and the Cambridge Public School Department can collaborate more broadly and effectively.

Section Three: *Collaborative Models @ work*, reviews current, promising school-after-school partnerships in Cambridge that serve as models for how to strengthen and expand collaborative work. **Section Four:** *Moving Forward*, outlines proposed action steps for promoting formal, system-to-system collaboration between the city's schools and after-school programs.

PART ONE:

The Benefit of Collaboration

SECTION ONE:

The Role of After School ~ What the Research Says

With the benefit of research, there is far greater understanding today about what children need to thrive. Above all, they need a supportive environment that fosters their cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and moral/spiritual development (Blank, Melville & Shah, 2004; Bernard, 1991). Home and school, of course, encompass a large part of this environment. For many children, after-school programs comprise a third significant place in their lives. It is often in after-school programs that they encounter an array of unique, challenging, intellectual and social experiences that powerfully enhance their overall learning and development. It is often too in after-school programs where they take new risks, learn in hands on ways, and assume new leadership roles with peers.

The following section reviews the specific ways research suggests after-school programs serve as essential partners in promoting children's learning and development. First, it illustrates how after-schools programs provide complementary learning opportunities, by offering a range of formal and informal activities that extend learning time, allow students to explore academic content in new, varied ways, and fuel their interest in learning. Second, it reviews how after-school programs play a vital role in fostering the whole development of children, by providing not only academic experiences, but also positive social and play experiences, and opportunities for creative/artistic expression, physical recreation and community service. Third, it reviews how after-school programs engage families in authentic ways that promote greater understanding and collaboration between adults in the support of children.

It is often in after-school programs that [children] encounter an array of unique, challenging intellectual and social experiences that powerfully enhance their overall learning and development

The findings discussed in this section are drawn from a growing national research-base on after school programs. Thus, findings are not specific to Cambridge programs. However, as highlighted throughout this section, the Cambridge after school community is providing—in an impressive scale—the type of programs and activities that the reviewed research suggests leads to positive outcomes in respect to Complementary Learning, Whole Child Development and Family engagement.

COMPLEMENTARY LEARNING

The strength of afterschool programs has always been their ability to offer young people learning opportunities that are distinct from those offered in school or at home, yet complementary to both.

Sam Piha, Community Network for Youth Development-

The importance of educational success has never been greater. In today's knowledge-based, technology driven world, students must acquire increasingly advanced literacy and analytical skills to enter the workforce (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003; Murnane & Levy, 1996). More immediately, students must meet Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) performance requirements to advance in grade and graduate from high school. Further, the achievement gap between students from different racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds continues to concern school and community leaders. These realities have created tremendous challenges for school districts across the state, as they strive to ensure academic success for all children.

These challenges, however, are not schools' alone. Children learn within the context of whole communities—from the sum of their experiences both in and outside of school. In fact, the more educational experiences children encounter outside of school and within the larger community, the better it is for their overall intellectual growth. Research strongly suggests that children's learning is greatly facilitated when they have access to multiple opportunities to explore academic content and practice academic skill areas in a variety of ways and settings, beyond school hours (Russell & Reisner, 2006; Broh, 2002; Viadero, 2002). When these opportunities also provide exposure to positive adult role models and peer groups, they can increase children's motivation to learn,

DID YOU KNOW...

By offering a range of educational and social experiences that allow children to explore academic content in a variety of ways and settings, Cambridge after-school programs complement children's learning in school. In addition, programs make several intentional efforts to promote academic skills and knowledge in after-school settings, including the following:

- 1. School-related academic support activities**
 - ▶ All Cambridge after-school programs provide daily homework help
 - ▶ 10 programs participate in the Harvard After-school Initiative (HASI), in which staff receive specialized training and curricular resources to enhance student homework completion and quality
 - ▶ Cambridge after-school programs provide 23 tutoring activities per week to over 480 children
- 2. Academic enrichment**
 - ▶ Cambridge after-schools programs run over 250 activities per week that provide academic enrichment in one or more of the following areas: reading/writing, math, science, social studies, foreign languages, computers/technology and critical thinking skills
 - ▶ Two-thirds (66%) of these activities have a written curriculum
- 3. City-wide professional development**
 - ▶ In 2004-2005, staff from 40 after-school programs participated in a series of training workshops sponsored by the Agenda for Children on project based learning, individual learning styles, and links to learning standards.
- 4. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) partnership**

Through the CCLC partnerships, six after-schools receive high quality curricular resources and instructional support from the academic enrichment partners, such as the Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative (Literacy/language), the Young People's Project (Math), and the Boston Children's Museum (Science).

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engagement in learning activities and, ultimately, success in school (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Larson, 1994).

Quality after-school and summer programs work in just this way, providing children with an array of learning experiences and positive relationships with adults and peers that significantly *complement* their learning and development at school and at home. Unbound by schedules and content requirements, they are free to develop curriculum and activities of varying subjects, lengths, and pedagogical methods, including project-based, peer-teaching and experiential learning models. Especially valuable are the opportunities after-school programs provide for children to learn without social comparison norms (e.g. test scores or grades), control their own learning and achieve their own version of success. For at-risk and special needs students, these experiences are critical for increasing their self-confidence as learners as well as their motivation to learn (National Institute of Out of School Time, 2007).

Because of their success in engaging a range of children in positive learning experiences, after-school programs often help children improve in other, key school outcome areas. Evaluations of after-school programs report the following results for participating children:

- ▶ Improved attendance and reduced dropout and grade retention rates (Hamilton et al., 1999; Cardenas, 1992; Jones & Offord, 1989; Huang et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 1999)
- ▶ Stronger feelings of connection to school and teachers (Schlegel, 2003; Huang et al., 2000; Schinke et al, 1992; Brooks, 1995)
- ▶ Increased homework completion and quality (Carlisi, 1996; Johnson et al., 1999)
- ▶ Improved grades (Baker & Witt, 1996; Carlisi, 1996; Schinke et al, 1992)
- ▶ Improved performance on proficiency tests—e.g. literacy and math skills (Huang, 2001; Huang et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 1999).

Academic support in action

Homework Centers

One after-school program divides children into small homework centers, with each center run by one staff person. This staff person connects weekly with each child in their center. The focus of these ‘check-ins’ is to see how the children are doing in school, how they are fairing with their homework and to see if any additional help is needed to complete their assigned work. Based on this assessment, the staff person provides one-on-one assistance to those children who need additional support.

Homework center staff person also engages parents and school teachers, with the goal of creating a dialog and forming strategies of success for individual children. For instance, staff may seek parent and teacher input on how to modify center activities so that they are appropriate for young people with special learning needs and/or comply with their Individual Education Plan.

WHOLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

While supporting children's academic success is a vital mission of any community, promoting children's whole person development is just as critical. In addition to developing academic skills, children need opportunities to develop social-emotional competencies, such as empathy, self-control, and interpersonal skills. In addition to exploring intellectual ideas, children need opportunities to pursue creative/expressive interests. And while sufficient time on academic tasks is necessary, so too is ample time for physical exercise.

In fact, when communities do not adequately tend to the multiple developmental needs of children, they can inhibit academic growth. Research strongly suggests that cognitive development is closely tied to advances in other developmental areas, such as the acquisition of new social-emotional skills or physical abilities (Lave, 1990; Urdan & Klein, 1998; Wolfe, 2001). For example, children who develop strong interpersonal skills are more likely to enjoy group-learning activities in school and, as a result, more likely to become engrossed in the academic content being studied by the group. Moreover, failure to provide children with a broad menu of developmentally rich experiences can place communities at risk of alienating many children from adults (e.g. parents, teacher and counselors) and adult-run institutions (e.g. schools, community centers and churches). These children are then at greater risk of low school achievement and participation in unsafe behaviors such as substance abuse (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Resnick et al., 1997; California Department of Education, 2005).

After-school programs are vital assets to communities because they offer children this essential menu of developmentally rich experiences. In addition to academic learning activities, after-school programs

DID YOU KNOW...

There are several intentional efforts to promote social-emotional development across Cambridge after-school programs. These include the following:

1. **Targeted activities**—Each week, Cambridge after-school programs offer:
 - ▶ 233 activities that aim to promote positive peer social experiences
 - ▶ 54 activities that engage children/youth in community service
 - ▶ 44 activities that promote leadership development
 - ▶ 26 activities that provide mentoring opportunities
 - ▶ 20 activities designed to build specific social-emotional skills (e.g. conflict resolution, communications skills, etc.)
2. **City-wide professional development & quality improvement**
 - ▶ In 2005-06, 40 programs participated in the Human Side of Quality, a four-part/20 hour training series that included workshops on *supportive staff-child relationships, positive behavior guidance, positive peer-to-peer relationships, and encouraging youth initiative.*
 - ▶ From 2005 to 2007, over 30 programs participated in the Self-Assessment Support initiative. Through this initiative, programs assess how well they promote *supportive staff-child relationships* and practice *positive behavior guidance.* Based on results, program staff then develop an improvement plan for each area.
3. **Inclusion Initiative**

Through the DHSP Inclusion Initiative, all 23 city-run after-school programs participate in trainings designed to create settings that are supportive of children with disabilities. Several trainings have equipped staff with strategies for fostering social-skills and building the self-confidence among children with and without disabilities.

routinely engage children in activities that promote *social-emotional development*, *creative/ artistic expression* and *physical health and fitness*.

Social-Emotional Development

There is increasing consensus about the importance of social-emotional development for children's well being. Social-emotional skills—such as self-awareness and self-confidence, recognizing and managing emotions, communications skills, perspective taking, responsible decision making and problem-solving—are often considered the foundation for school, work and later-life success (Ragozzino et al., 2003; Goleman, 1995; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2003). Research suggest that promoting the development of these core social-emotional competencies among students reduces problem behaviors, fosters positive relationships with adults and peers and increases engagement in learning (CASEL, 2003; Eccles, 1999; Weissberg & Greenberg, 2000). Families also place great importance on social-emotional development. In a survey of Cambridge families with children participating in after-school, the highest rated priority was the development of social skills, friendship and independence (DHSP, 2006).

After-school programs are remarkably suited for fostering social-emotional competence among children. Low staff to child ratios—the average staff-child ratio across Cambridge programs is 1:8—facilitate strong relationships between children and caring adults who provide ongoing guidance and support. Small group sizes also help to foster positive interactions with peers. Flexible schedules and open-ended activities give children unique opportunities to exercise autonomy, decision-making and leadership. Further, after-school programs provide children—especially children with learning disabilities—with numerous successful experiences outside of a school/academic context which helps to reinforce a healthy, positive view of their self-worth. (See: CASEL, 2003; Eccles, 1999; Goleman, 1995; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2005, 2007).

Evaluations of after-school programs provide clear evidence of their role in promoting positive social emotional outcomes for children. Evaluation results include the following:

- ▶ Increased sense of efficacy, competence and leadership (Campbell et al., 1995; Heath & Soep, 1998)
- ▶ Improved school behavior and attitude towards school (Reisner, 2007; Baker & Gribbons, 1998; Johnson et al., 1999; Huang et al., 2001; Schlegel, 2003)
- ▶ Better emotional adjustment (Baker & Gribbons, 1998; Kahne et al., 1999; Marshall et al., 1997)

Social-emotional development in action

A new take on free time

One after-school program, serving children from Kindergarten to Grade 2, has developed a process that turns free time and open-ended activities into intentional strategies for promoting problem solving skills and positive peer interactions. At the start of free time, staff review the activity options with children. For each activity, there are only five slots or passes. Once the passes are gone, the activity is no longer open for other participants. The children learn to wait their turn, negotiate and make thoughtful choices. This process also gives children opportunities to interact with a variety of peer groups, including children with whom they may not otherwise work and play.

The staff have also provided a 'peace table' for conflict resolution. The children know that when they are having a disagreement about who can join an activity they can go to the table and work out their issues.

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- ▶ Improved conflict resolution skills (Carsili, 1996; Posner & Vandell, 1999, Warren, Feist, & Nevarez., 2002).

Creative/Artistic Expression

The benefits of artistic expression to children's development—whether visual arts or performing arts—cannot be understated. Through art, children engage all their senses and develop new ways of thinking about and observing the world (Arts Educational Partnership, 1999). Similar to academic tasks, arts projects often require intensive focus and management of a product from beginning to end over multiple stages and days and thus build key cognitive skills (Heath, Soep & Roach, 1998; Winner & Hetland, 2000). Moreover, art activities provide chances for children to set and pursue non-academic goals and, in doing so, help maintain their interest and motivation to be in school (Heath & McLaughlin, 1994). In fact, involvement in arts often provides a reason—sometimes the only reason—for at-risk and special needs students to remain engaged with school or other community organizations (Heath & Soep, 1998; Oreck, Baum & McCartney, 1999).

Families highly value the arts as well. Of families who completed the DHSP family survey, 86% rated providing children with art enrichment as a high priority/priority (DHSP, 2006).

As schools have become more focused on academic performance, children's participation in art activities during the school day has decreased. After-school programs play a vital role in filling this gap and, in many ways are better positioned than schools to provide art resources. Flexible schedules allow staff and children to engage in open-ended projects and to explore a range of nontraditional topics and experiences, both within programs and in the community. With fewer hiring constraints than schools, programs can select diverse staff, with expertise in a variety of art mediums. Further, many after-

DID YOU KNOW...

Cambridge after-school programs have a rich tradition of providing quality art activities to children. Art enrichment is the most commonly provided activity across all programs. The scope of activities provided each week includes the following:

- ▶ 111 arts and crafts activities
- ▶ 88 performing arts activities (theater, film, video)
- ▶ 80 visual arts activities (painting, photography, sculpture, etc)
- ▶ 43 music lessons/activities

Of these activities:

- ▶ 60% percent have a formal, written curriculum
- ▶ 62% are taught by staff with extensive expertise in their subject.

Community Schools

The Community Schools are a major provider of arts enrichment in the city. Each year, Community School sites hire 40 or more specialist that offer art enrichment classes to over 1400 children. Classes include: music lessons, drumming, ballet, theater, circus arts, modern dance, world beat/hip hop dance and music.

Creative/artistic expression in action

Art exhibit

One after-school program has created a long-term art enrichment project that involves the community. This six-week activity begins with a field trip to a local art museum where the children view the works of different artists and became familiar with various styles of painting. This was followed by a visit from a parent artist who brought samples of her artwork and discussed her approach and passion for art. The children then had the opportunity over three to four weeks to practice various painting styles on canvas. The project culminated with the children displaying their work in an exhibition to which the parents and community members were invited. The children were enthusiastically involved in every aspect of this project, from the initial field trip to hanging their art at the exhibit.

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school programs establish strong relationships with art-focused organizations and thus have access to experts, audiences and exhibition opportunities. (Sources: Rauscher et al, 1997; Winner & Hetland, 2000; Brice, 1998; Russell & Reisner, 2005).

Physical Health, Fitness and Safety

Across the country, there is growing public alarm over a drop in the level of physical exercise among children, either in or outside of school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; National Institute of Child Development and Health, 2003; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). In Cambridge, health officials have expressed concern over rising child obesity rates. In the most recent Cambridge Public Health Assessment, 38% of school-age children were considered overweight or at-risk of being overweight (Cambridge Public Health Department, 2006). As a result, Cambridge families, health officials and community leaders have called for more opportunities for children to exercise and eat healthier foods.

In addition to fitness and nutrition, there are other key health challenges facing Cambridge children. The most recent middle school health survey reveals an increase in several risk behaviors among middle school age children, such as the alcohol use, exposure to violence, and sexual activity (Cambridge Prevention Coalition, 2005).

After-school programs are well positioned to support community health and safety outcome goals. They traditionally offer a wide range of physical recreation and sports activities. Further, it is well documented that the “prime time” for youth involvement in risky behaviors is between the hours of two and six P.M. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999, US DOE, 2000, Fox & Newman, 1997). Because after-school programs operate during these “prime time” hours, they serve as a key protective factor for children.

More specifically, research shows that children participating in after-school programs benefit in the following ways:

DID YOU KNOW...

Physical fitness/health activities are the second most common activity offered by Cambridge after-school programs. The scope of activities provided each week includes the following:

- ▶ 110 formal/organized sports activities
- ▶ 52 informal sports and exercise activities
- ▶ 80 health education and nutrition/cooking classes

Eight programs participate in the Tufts University, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy’s after-school initiative. These programs were trained in the HEAT Club (Health Eating and Active Time) curriculum, which provides lessons in cooking, nutrition, and physical activity. Programs also received cooking and physical activity equipment and staff were taught yoga, dance and soccer skills.

In addition, Cambridge after-school programs have demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering healthy eating habits. *Health Living Cambridge* reports the following results:

- ▶ 87.5% of programs use a healthy food criteria for selecting/serving snacks to children (Source: Healthy Living Cambridge/CPHD)
- ▶ 88% of programs limit the number of servings/food intake to provide healthy portions (Source: Healthy Living Cambridge/CPHD)

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- ▶ Increased amount of physical exercise (Hall & Gruber, 2006; Engels et al, 2005)
- ▶ Increased healthy food intake (Engels et al, 2005)
- ▶ Reduced obesity rates (Mahoney, Lord & Carryl, 2005)
- ▶ Reduced substance abuse (Schinke et al, 1992; Jones & Oxford, 1989)
- ▶ Reduced juvenile delinquency (Warren, Feist & Nevarez, 2002; Jones & Oxford, 1989)
- ▶ Decreased sexual activity (Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Gregory, 1996).

Health and fitness in Action

One after-school program created an extensive fitness and nutrition curriculum for their children. The children first learned about energy in/energy out (how the body uses food for fuel). They then took several walking field trips to a local farmers market where they learned about local fresh produce from the vendors. The children used the produce they purchased from the farmer's market to create a fresh, nutritious and delicious dish to share with friends and family. To finish, they chronicled their recipes, along with energy information and created a fitness/nutrition cookbook.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

It is well documented that strong connections between schools and families can improve students' attachment to and performance in schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Deiro, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Carter, 2002). It is also well documented that meaningful, sustained family engagement is an ongoing challenge for schools (Dodd & Konzal, 2002; James & Partee, 2004). Many families—single parents and working parents—are simply pressed for time (Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997). Family members who themselves had difficult school experiences or who are from different racial/ethnic backgrounds than their child's teacher, may feel detached from, intimidated by and, in some cases, distrustful of the organizational cultures of schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Colorado Foundation for Children and Families, 2002). At the same time, school teachers have growing instructional demands and, many simply lack the time to effectively engage families. As a result, families and school teachers often meet sporadically, in some cases no more than two or three times a year during scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

After-school programs can serve as an important bridge between schools and families. Because after-school staff have frequent contact with family members during pick up times and typically reflect the diversity of students and families, they often develop strong bonds with families. At the same time, because after-school staff and school day teachers share students and in many instances work in the same school building, they often forge collegial relationships.

As a result of this two-way relationship building, after-school staff are in a position to serve as key translators and brokers of information between families and schools. For families, they provide important insights about school culture, expectations, and curriculum. They also often relay to families daily reports from teachers about how their

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child did in school. For school day teachers, after-school staff provide a richer understanding of the family and community context of their students. They also often shed light on the different ways individual students learn and respond to behavior guidance, based on their experiences with students in after-school settings (See: Miller, 2003; Fiester, White, Reisner & Castle, 2001; Noam, Baincarosa & Dechausay, 2001).

Families strongly support this exchange of information. Results from the Cambridge Out of School Time Family Survey (DHSP, 2007) show that 63% of families felt it was either very important or important that school teachers and after-school staff regularly communicate to support their child's learning and development.

DID YOU KNOW...

The Cambridge after-school community seeks to provide information to and engage families in multiple ways. Efforts include the following:

Information:

- ▶ The Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) annually publishes a resource guide, listing all city-run after programs and services.
- ▶ The DHSP maintains the Cambridge-Somerville Resource Guide, an online searchable database on all out-of-school time programs and services for children.
- ▶ Both city and community nonprofit after-school programs host information nights in the fall and spring to provide information and register families.

Family Events & Workshops:

- ▶ In 2005, the AFC and the Cambridge Public Schools 21st Century Partnership hosted a family conference, entitled "Developing Parent Teacher Partnerships; Advocating for Your Child." Attended by over 90 families, this conference shared with parents strategies for developing effective relationships with teachers and showcased ways that after-school staff and school staff collaborate to promote children's intellectual and social and emotional development
- ▶ In 2005, the DHSP inclusion initiative established the Parent Inclusionary Effort (PIE) advisory group. Comprised of 12 parents and six after-school program staff, the PIE's mission is to advise DHSP "in shaping and supporting its continuing efforts to provide high quality inclusive programs for all children.

Staff training in family engagement:

- ▶ Over a two-year span (2003-2004), staff from 40 programs participated in a citywide Staff-Family Interactions Training, sponsored by the AFC. In addition, 12 programs were supported in implementing new family engagement strategies.
- ▶ In 2005, ten after-school programs participated in a three-part Cultural Competency training, "Walking the Talk: Change Starts with Self", led by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

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SECTION TWO:

A Vital Ally ~ The Cambridge After-school Community

Today, there are over 40 different after-schools programs operating in the Cambridge, offering children and families a wealth of options to choose from. While some programs focus primarily on enrichment, others offer intensive academic support. While some programs mainly serve elementary age students, others target middle school students. While some programs enroll over 150 children, others serve less than 25 children. And while some programs are located within schools, others are community-based, located in church basements, neighborhood settlement houses and public housing developments.

Yet just looking at individual programs only captures part of the story. Collectively, Cambridge after-school programs serve over 2,500 school-age children (K-8) and employ a workforce of over 370 paid staff. Next to the Cambridge Public School Department, the Cambridge after-school community is the second largest child-serving system in city. The following section provides a comprehensive profile of the Cambridge after-school community, reviewing its emergence as a coordinated system and its capacity to provide a broad range of services to children and families. In doing so, this section illuminates the Cambridge after school system's tremendous value as a community-wide partner in promoting positive outcomes for children

Next to the Cambridge Public School Department, the Cambridge after-school community is the second largest child-serving system in city.

A TRUE SYSTEM

Over the past five years, through the organizing efforts of the Agenda for Children's Out of School Time initiative (AFC), the Cambridge after-school community has evolved from a network of loosely connected programs to a coordinated system, with the ability to establish shared polices and initiatives across programs and staff. More specifically, the after-school community has successfully developed the following systems-level components:

The Cambridge after-school community has evolved from a network of loosely connected programs to a coordinated system, with the ability to establish shared polices and initiatives across programs and staff.

Governance

In 2001, through the AFC, the after-school community formed the Leader's Group—comprised of executive directors of community-based organizations, division heads and managers from the city's human service department and managers of CPSD run after-school programs. The Leaders Group meets regularly to establish shared goals and policies, oversee cross-

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program quality improvement and data collection initiatives, develop strategic plans, and organize advocacy efforts.

System wide professional development & quality improvement

Over the past four years, the AFC and Leaders Group have developed several cross-program professional development and program quality improvement initiatives, including the following:

- ▶ *Citywide trainings.* Since 2001, citywide trainings have been offered annually to all Cambridge after-school staff, providing participating staff with at least 20 hours of professional development per year. Led by experts in youth development, education and childcare from, among others, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the National Institute for Out of School Time (NIOST) and the Boston Medical Foundation, these trainings included workshops in the following areas: positive youth development, project-based learning/linking to learning frameworks, cultural competence, family engagement, organizational development and effective/facilitative leadership.
- ▶ *Self Assessment Support.* In 2005, the AFC implemented the Self Assessment Support (SAS) process. Through this process, a trained observation team works side-by-side with Cambridge after-school programs to assess performance in three key quality areas: Child-staff relationships, Positive behavior guidance, and the Quality of activities. Using the Assessment of After-School Practice Tool developed by NIOST for the Massachusetts Department of Education, the observation team and program staff identify both strengths and improvement areas. The observation team then assists program staff in developing an action plan to address identified improvement areas. To date, 30 programs have participated in the SAS process.
- ▶ *Quality Coaching.* In 2004, the quality coaching program was initiated, with the purpose of offering targeted, high quality hands on support to program leaders and staff. Quality coaches provide guidance in areas, such as staff supervision, curriculum development and lesson planning, writing skills and behavior management. To date, coaches have worked with 20 staff across 12 programs.
- ▶ *Communities of Practice.* This past year, seven Communities of Practice groups were launched. Led by trained facilitators, each Community engaged 10 to 12 staff from across different programs (85 staff in total) in sharing and developing effective program strategies.

Advocacy

In collaboration with the Leaders Group, the AFC engages in a variety of advocacy efforts to raise community awareness about the benefits of after-school programs, secure ongoing and new local and state funding, and build stronger partnerships with schools and community organizations. Key advocacy efforts include the following:

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- ▶ *Lights On Afterschool!* Since 2002, the AFC has hosted an annual *Lights On Afterschool* event that convenes the after-school community, community partners, and local and state elected officials and leaders to highlight the value of after-school programs in a citywide forum.
- ▶ *Complementary Learning Group.* Convened initially in the fall of 2006 to attend the Harvard Achievement Gap Conference, this team of CPSD administrators and after-school program leaders meets regularly to build awareness of existing school-afterschool program partnerships and to think collaboratively and innovatively about expanding partnership efforts across additional schools and after-school programs.
- ▶ *Achievement Gap Forums Subcommittee.* The AFC sits on the Cambridge School Committee's Achievement Gap Subcommittee. Comprised of the Mayor, School Committee members, the Superintendent, Teacher's Union and representatives from the early care and after-school community. This committee is charged with designing a series of forums to build public awareness and participation in the reduction of the Achievement Gap.
- ▶ *0-8 Council.* Over the past several years, the after-school community, through the AFC, has participated in the 0-8 Council, to advocate jointly with early childhood leaders for local and state support for quality early childcare. In addition, the after-school community collaborated with the 0-8 Council to develop the Transition Subcommittee of the 0-8 Council, which in 2005 and 2006 coordinated Transition Dinners. These events brought together preschool, school and afterschool teachers and administrators to discuss kindergarteners, healthy transitions and partnership.
- ▶ *Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP).* The Cambridge after-school community participates in MAP, a statewide network that seeks to coordinate and build advocacy efforts among the out of school time field and to increase funding in of support afterschool programs. AFC Out of School Time coordinator, Susan Richards and CPSD-after-school partnership director Khari Milner, serve on the Executive Committee of MAP, helping to shape both regional and statewide advocacy initiatives, such a rallies, public testimonies and "lobby days" held at the state house and around the state.

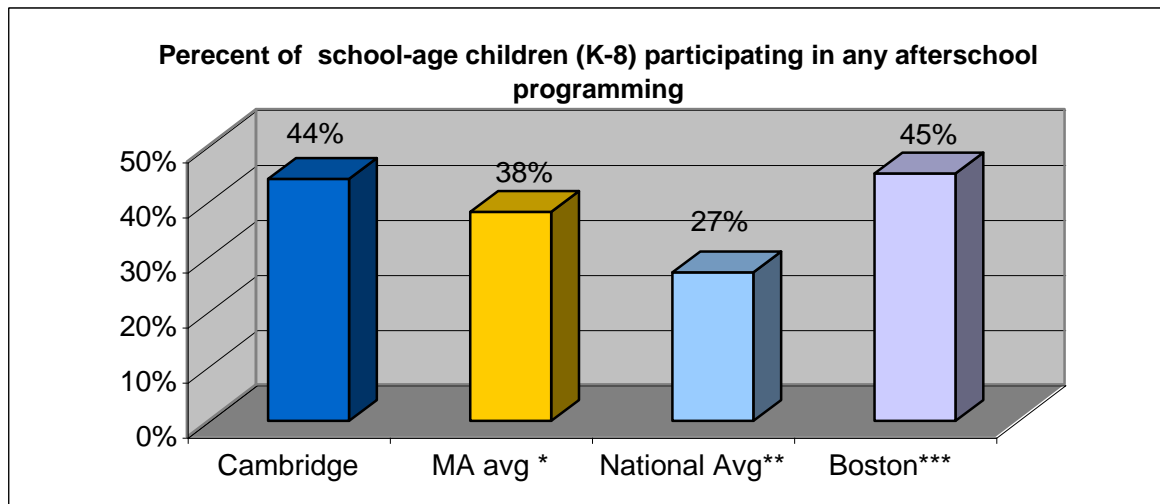
Data collection

The AFC and Leaders group have also initiated a series of uniform data collection activities to gather information and identify trends across programs. Over the past two years, programs have submitted enrollment data, administered family surveys, and completed activity and workforce profiles. Findings have helped shaped system-level professional development, coaching and advocacy efforts. Several results from these data collection activities are also included in the comprehensive profile of the Cambridge after-school community that follows.

ENROLLMENT

In 2006/2007, the total number of children attending after-school programs in Cambridge was approximately 2,500, representing 44% of the total number of all children, ages 5-14 living in the city. Relative to local and national trends, Cambridge children attend after-school programs at a high rate. Cambridge's attendance rate of 44% among school-age children (K-8) exceeds the state average of 38% and the national average of 27%. Cambridge's rate is compatible to Boston's rate of 45%, considered among the highest participations rates for an urban area in the country. See chart below.

Relative to local and national trends, Cambridge children attend after-school programs at a high rate



*Source: Mass 2020, (2002) No Time to Lose: Children and Their After-School Hours.

** Source: National Center for Educational Statistics (2005). After-school programs & activities report.

***Source: Boston After-school for All Partnership. (2003) Survey of Boston Parents About After-school Hours.

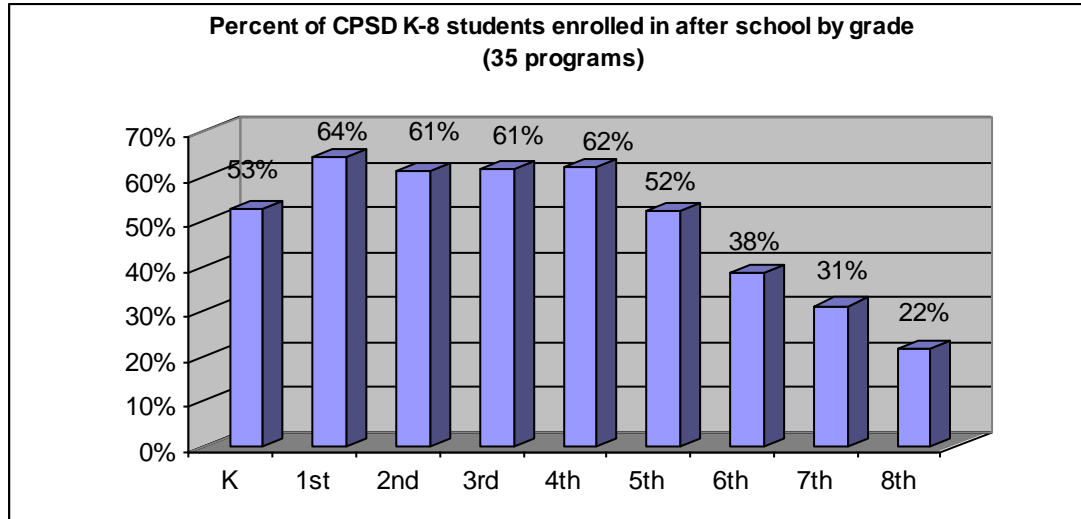
Further review of enrollment data collected from a sample of 35 programs shows the following:

- ▶ The large majority of after-school participants from the 35 programs are Cambridge Public School (CPSD) students.
 - 93 % (2,330) attend CPSD schools, representing 59% of the district's overall K-8 enrollment.
 - 125 students (5%) attend a public charter school
 - 50 (2%) attend a private school.

- ▶ Most after-school participants are in the primary grades. Approximately 60% of CPSD students enrolled in after-school programs are in grades K-3. In contrast, only 18% of CPSD students enrolled in after-school programs are middle school students (Grades 6,7 & 8).

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- ▶ Among CPSD students, the rate of participation drops significantly in the middle school grades—see chart below.



- ▶ Across a range of demographic variables, the enrollment among the 35 after-school program sample mirrors the CPSD enrollment. For instance, the percentage of children identified as special needs, receiving free/reduced lunch and limited English proficient are comparable. The one exception was race/ethnicity—while over half (53%) of the 35-program enrollment sample are children of color, this is less than the CPSD rate of 65%. However, given that the five programs not participating in this sample all predominantly enroll children of color, it is likely that the actual number of children of color enrolled in after-school programs is higher and thus the rate is similar to the CPSD rate. In an enrollment study conducted by the AFC the previous school year (2005/2006) that did include all programs, 65% of enrolled children were children of color.

Enrollment Gaps

Despite this comparatively high participation rate, the Cambridge after-school community recognizes the need to reach out to children and families not enrolled in after-school care. Of particular concern are children in self-care, those not supervised by an adult, either at home or in a structured out-of school time program. Both national trends and review of Cambridge enrollment data suggest that children in self-care arrangements are primarily middle school age children. According to Cambridge's 2005 Middle School Health Survey, 38% of youth, ages 11-14, report spending 2-4 hours per day unsupervised during the school year—i.e. not participating in after-school programs, sporting leagues or youth centers. Thus, middle school students are far less likely to receive the benefits of after-school programs and are at increased risk of participation in or exposure to unsafe behaviors—e.g. alcohol use, juvenile crime, violence, and sexual activity.

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The after-school community—through the Department of Human Service Programs and the Agenda For Children—is currently collecting insight from families and middle school youth to help explain this drop in middle school participation. At the same time, over the past year, the DHSP has proactively initiated two efforts to improve enrollment of middle school children in out of school time activities. These include the following:

► **The Middle School Partnership**

In 2006, the DHSP launched a new after-school program, specifically targeting middle school students, the Middle School Partnership. Housed at the Gately Youth Center in North Cambridge, this program has successfully recruited 60 middle school students.

► **The Middle School Family Social Marketing Campaign.**

The Cambridge Prevention Coalition is currently developing a social marketing campaign geared towards parents of middle school students in the city. The coalition will develop and disseminate a series of public service messages that encourage middle school parent to get their kids involved in after-school programs and other out-of-school time activities. The goal of this campaign is to reinforce to parents the positive benefits of out-of-school time activities, as well as their preventative role in reducing youth involvement in drugs, alcohol and other high-risk behaviors.

WORKFORCE

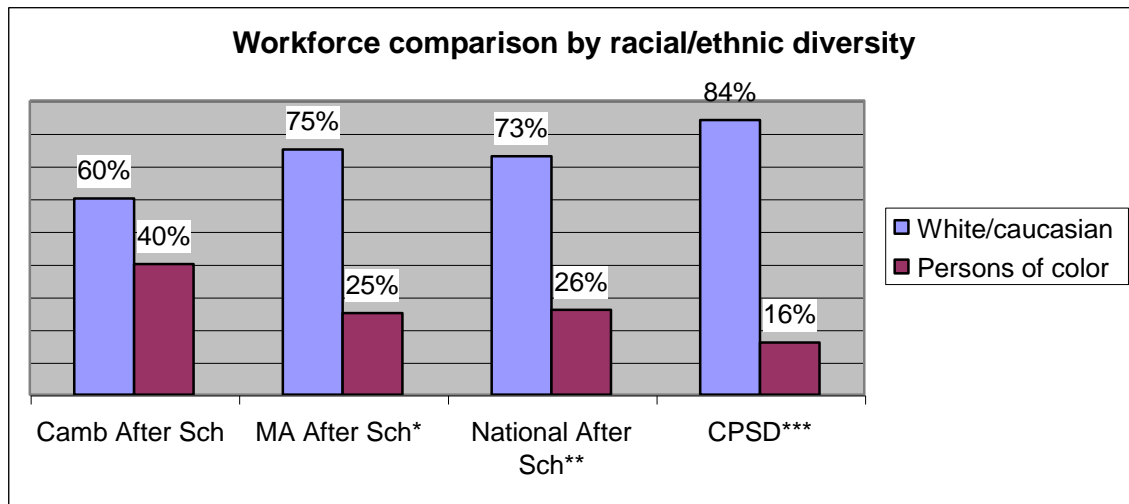
The Cambridge after-school workforce consists of over 370 paid staff. In addition, there are over 150 volunteers and student interns. Review of data collected from a representative sample of over 30 programs paints a profile of a workforce that is tremendously diverse, educated, and young, though experienced.

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Across all Cambridge after-school workers, 60% are White/Caucasian and 40% are persons of color. The proportion of staff who are persons of color exceeds both the state and national after-school workforce rates in this category see chart below. In addition, this rate is two and half times the rate of teachers of color within the CPSD.

[Cambridge after-school programs] are a vital community asset in that they provide children with exposure to adult role model and mentors who are persons of color.

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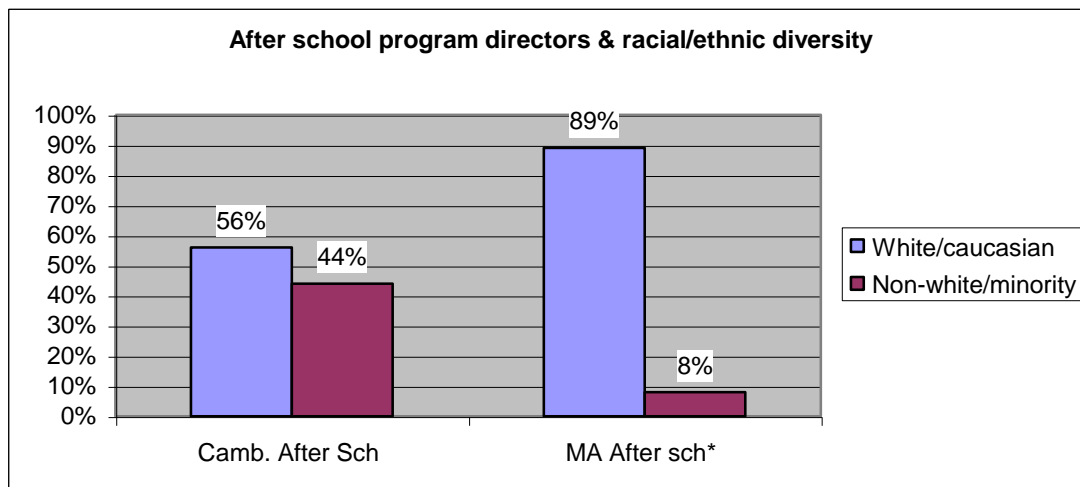


*Source: Massachusetts Office of Childcare Services (Now the Office of Early Education and Care). (2000). Salary and Benefits Report.

** Source: National Afterschool Association. (2006). Understanding the Afterschool Workforce

*** Source: CPSD

Among program directors, the percentage for persons of color *increases* to 44%. This rate far exceeds the state rate for persons of color among after-school program directors (national data on administrators was not available) – see chart below. Moreover, this upward trend is a significant departure from the statewide trend, in which staff diversity decreases when moving from frontline staff to program directors.



* Source: Massachusetts Office of Childcare Services. (2000). Salary and Benefits Report.

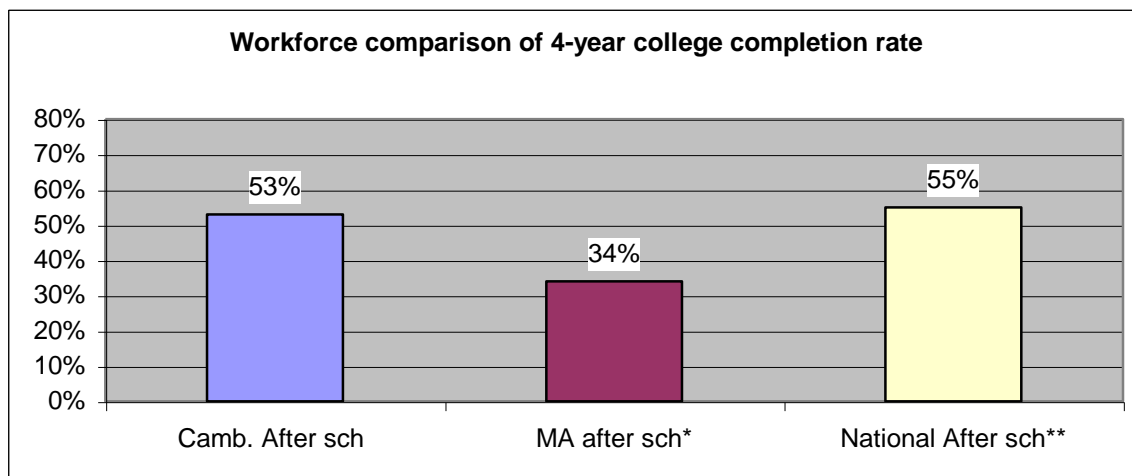
Another indicator of diversity among the Cambridge after-school workforce is that 30% of staff are bilingual. In all, Cambridge after-school staff speak 20 different languages, including, among others, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Korean, Armenian, German, Polish, Russian, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Bengali and Japanese.

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As a result of this diversity, Cambridge after-school programs have significant capacity to serve children from different cultural backgrounds. Further, they are a vital community asset in that they provide children with exposure to adult role models and mentors who are persons of color.

Education Level

Over half of the Cambridge after-school workforce (53%) has completed four or more years of college. Of this number, 16% also have a Masters degree. Another 13% of staff are currently enrolled in college programs in pursuit of their bachelors degree. While the Cambridge workforce's four-year college completion rate is on par with the national rate among after-school workers, it exceeds the state rate—see chart below.



* Source: Massachusetts Office of Childcare (2000). Salary and Benefits Report.

** Source: National Afterschool Association. (2006). Understanding the Afterschool Workforce

Among Cambridge after-school program directors, 76% have completed four or more years of college. This college completion rate exceeds the state rate of 60% for program directors, (Source: United Way , Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study, 2006)

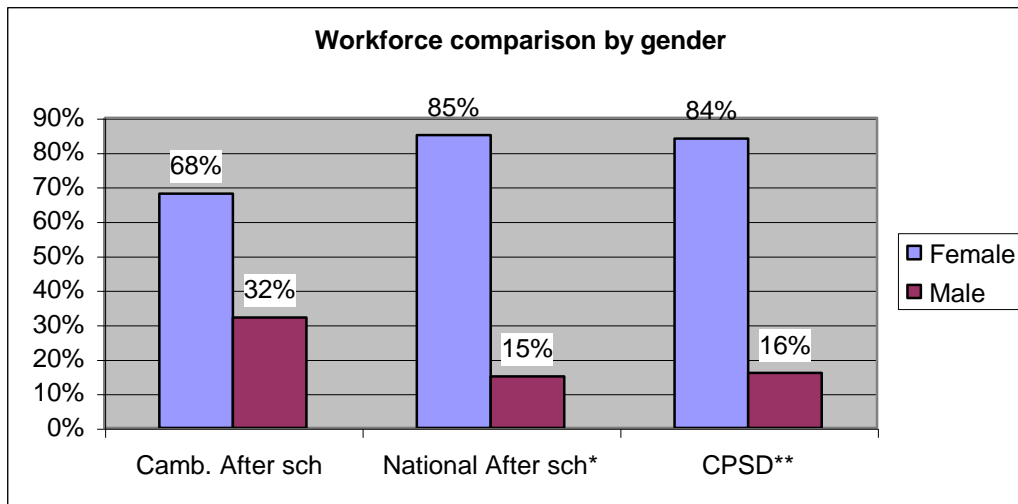
Gender and Age

Most Cambridge after-school staff are female (68%). However, the percentage of male staff (32%) is more than double that of the national after-school workforce rate. Moreover, there are twice as many male staff in Cambridge after-school programs than there are male teachers (16%) in the CPSD. (See chart below). Cambridge after-school programs, thus, serve as a key source of male role models for many children in the city.

There are twice as many male staff in after-school programs than there are male teachers in the CPSD.

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*Source: National Afterschool Association. (2006). Understanding the Afterschool Workforce

** Source: CPSD.

The Cambridge after-school workforce is on balance a young workforce, with 60% of staff below the age of 30 and 40% at or above 30 years of age. In comparison, across the country only 30% of after-school workers are below the age of 30 and 70% are at or above this age.

Experience

Though on balance young in age, Cambridge after-school staff have considerable professional experience working with youth, whether gained from past work experience, through their current position or some combination of past and current work experiences. Forty-four percent of staff have four or more years of professional youth development experience. Another 15% have between two to four years of professional youth development experience. In addition, 10% of staff hold licenses or certificates in teaching, social work or counseling. Further, through the Agenda for Children, between 30% to 40% of the Cambridge after-school workforce has participated in a minimum of 20 hours of youth development training per year over the past five years.

The average length of employment for Cambridge after-school staff is approximately 2.5 years, which corresponds with the Massachusetts state average of 2.8 years (Source: United Way, Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study, 2005). The majority of staff (57%) have been in their current position for two years or less. However, 30% of Cambridge after-school staff represent a stable core that have served in their current position and/or program for four or more years. Within this core, 20% have worked in their current position and/or program for six or more years.

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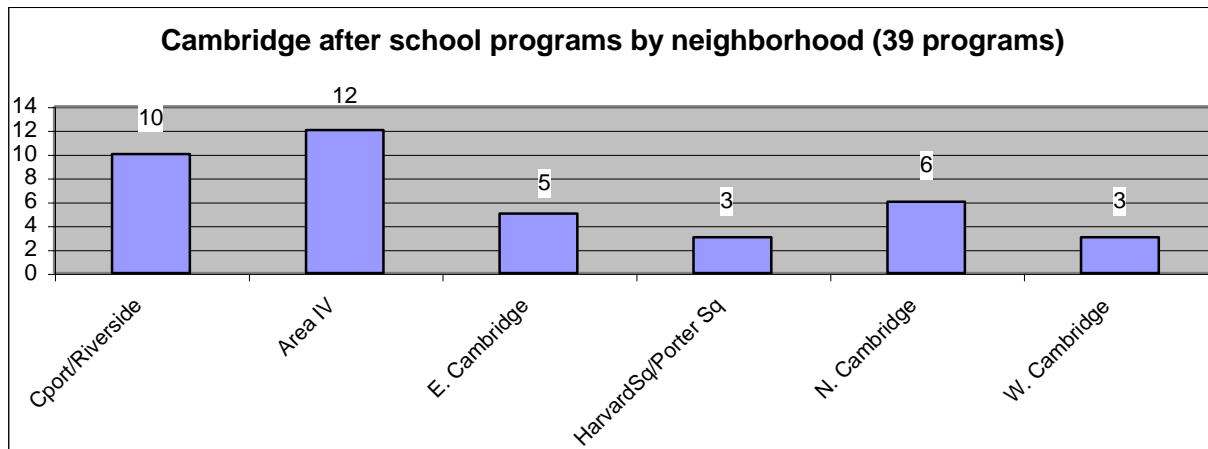
PROGRAM FEATURES

Cambridge after-school programs exist in a variety of different forms, providing children and families with a rich array of options. Review of data from 39 programs provides the following information related to program location, size, licensing and organizational status.

Program Location

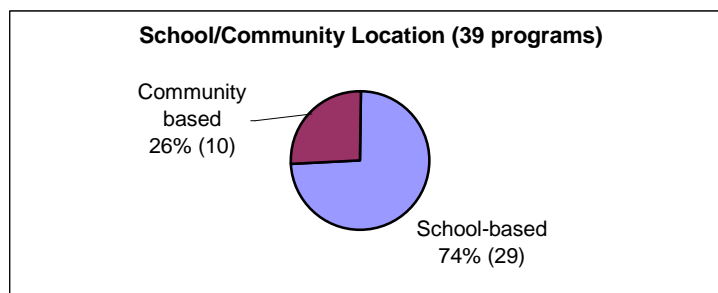
Neighborhood

While there are after-school programs in every residential Cambridge neighborhood, over half of the 39 programs reviewed (56%) are located in two neighborhoods—Cambridgeport/Riverside and Area IV – see chart below. This distribution reflects city demographics—the Cambridgeport/Riverside and Area IV neighborhoods have among the highest concentration of children under 18 years of age in the city and the highest rates of children from low income families – based on Census Data.



School based or Community based

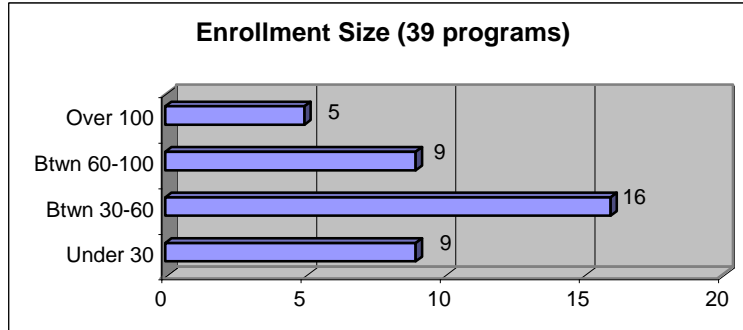
Approximately three-quarters of the programs reviewed are school-based (located within or on the grounds of a school facility). There are one or more programs operating in every CPS elementary school in the city. Another quarter of programs are located outside of schools, in community-base settings, such as youth centers, churches, and settlement houses.



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Program Size

Cambridge after-school programs vary widely in enrollment size, with some serving fewer than 25 children and other serving over 150 children. Of the programs reviewed, the largest percentage (40%) serves between 30 and 60 children – see chart.



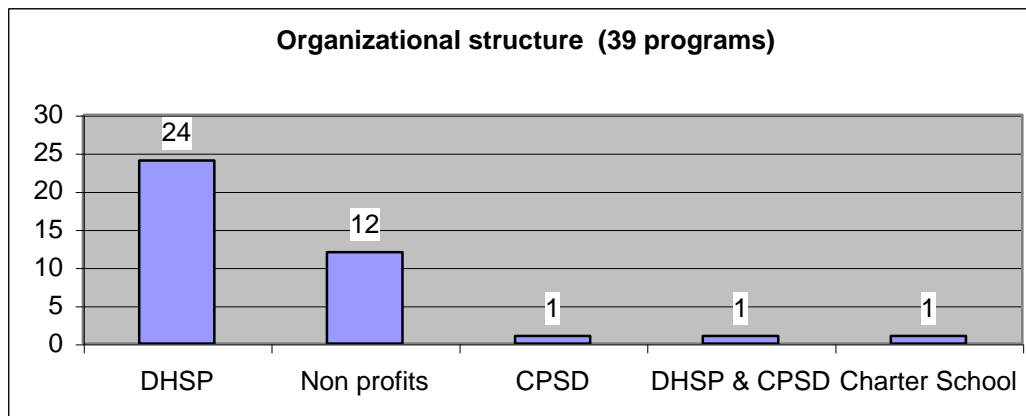
Program size is a function of physical space limitations, license restrictions, and program philosophy.

Licensure

Half of the reviewed programs (20) are state licensed school-age childcare programs. The other half (19) are license-exempt programs, based on whether the program is school-run, drop-in by design (as in the case for older youth) or offers individual classes, rather than a full-time program option.

Organizational structure

The large majority of Cambridge after-school programs (60%) are run by the city's Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP). These include 5 Youth Center pre-teen programs, 11 Community Schools, 7 Childcare programs and one middle school after-school program, the Middle School Partnership. The DHSP also jointly runs the King Open Extended Day program at the King Open School, with the Cambridge Public Schools. The CPSD also runs one after-school program independently, the Fletcher-Maynard Extended Day program, as does the Benjamin Banaeker Charter School. All other reviewed programs are run by community-based, non-profit organizations.



Programs with summer camps

A majority (62%) of the 39 programs also run full-time summer camps, providing access to valuable summer learning and enrichment activities. In addition, the AFC network includes both the Cambridge Camping Association and the Phillips Brooks House, two of the largest summer camp providers in the city.

SCALE AND QUALITY OF ACTIVITIES

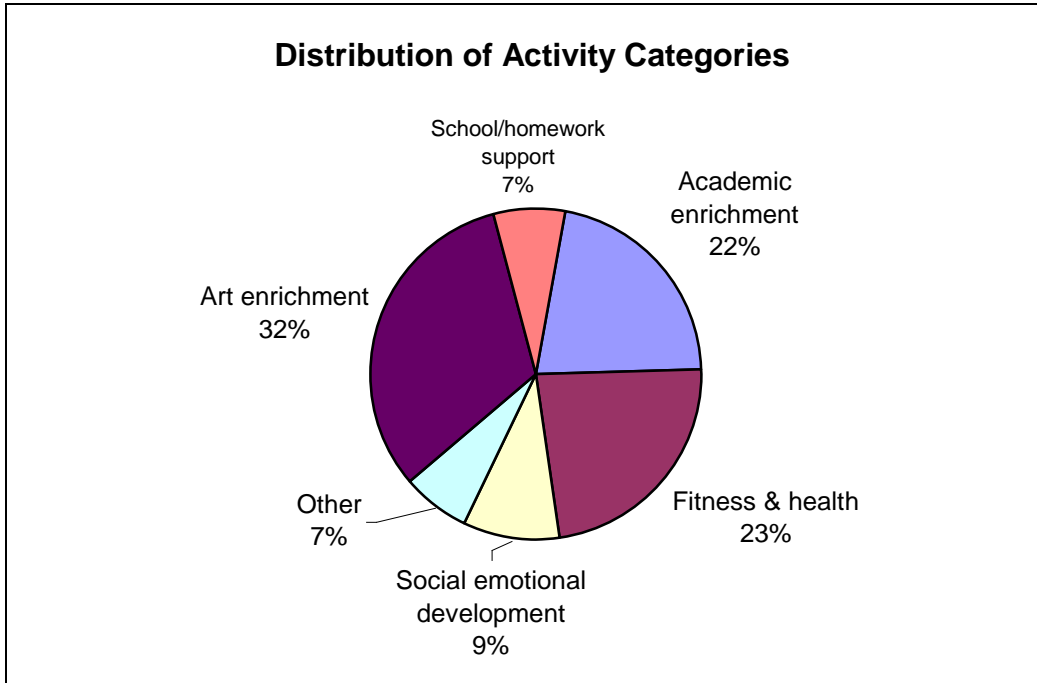
The Cambridge after-school community provides an impressive array of activities. Each week, programs offer over 700 activities to children. These activities can be grouped into the following categories:

1. **School/homework support**—e.g. homework help, tutoring, test preparation and study skills activities.
2. **Academic enrichment**—e.g. reading/writing, math, science, social studies, critical thinking skills and technology/computer skills development activities.
3. **Arts enrichment**—e.g. arts and crafts, visual arts (drawing, painting, photography, video and film), performing arts (theater and dance) and music activities.
4. **Fitness and health**—e.g. formal, organized sports/exercise (basketball teams, martial arts, fitness/aerobics classes), informal sports or exercise (open gym), nutrition/cooking classes, health education and risk behavior prevention activities (e.g. education, awareness and/or counseling about substance abuse, sexual behavior, violence/gangs.).
5. **Social-emotional development**—e.g. community/group meetings, leadership development activities, social/gender clubs, mentoring, community service and workshops to promote specific social skills (e.g. conflict resolution)
6. **Other**—e.g. free time and/or semi-structured activities, such as board games, puzzles, billiards, blocks/legos, and computer games.

Each week, Cambridge after-school programs offer over 700 activities to children.

Data collected from 37 after-school programs shows that nearly all programs offer a mix of these six types of activities, though on balance most primarily provide art enrichment activities, followed by fitness and health activities and academic enrichment activities respectively—see chart below. While only 7% of all reported activities were school-related supports, all 37 programs offer daily homework assistance.

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Both the types of activities offered and the proportion in which they are offered are closely aligned with what families say they want from after-school programs. In a survey of over 680 after-school families, representing 800 children, the majority (65%) felt that after-schools should provide *mostly* enrichment and recreational activities, followed by academic support activities. This finding was consistent across income, grade level and special education status (Source: DHSP 2006 Out of School Time Family Survey).

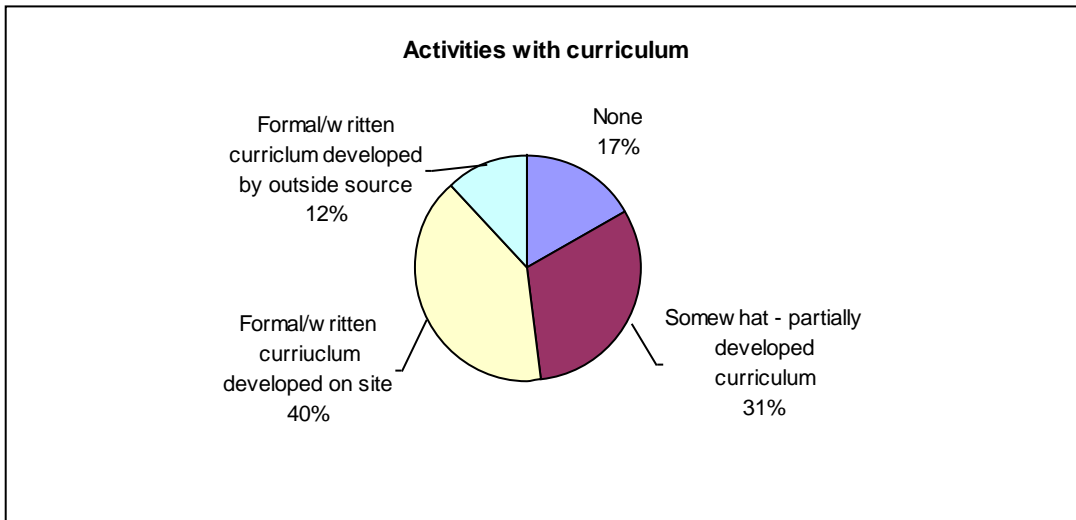
Interdisciplinary Approach

While for this report activities have been sorted into one of six primary categories/focus areas, many activities reported by programs were interdisciplinary, in that they integrate learning across several focus areas. For example, working in collaboration with the Harvard University's Program in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency (PEAR) over the past four years, the DHSP childcare division developed a series of Project Based Learning units that creatively balance learning in academic content, fitness/health, social-emotional development and art enrichment. These activities are also intentionally linked to city learning. For one unit, Learning about Worms, staff lead children through a series of seven activities that are linked to city science and health learning standards, and that are recreational, supportive of social emotional development and include arts enrichment. Activities titles include *discovering worms in the garden*, *worm relay races*, *experiments with gummy worms*, *worm tag*, and *writing and illustrating a book about worms*.

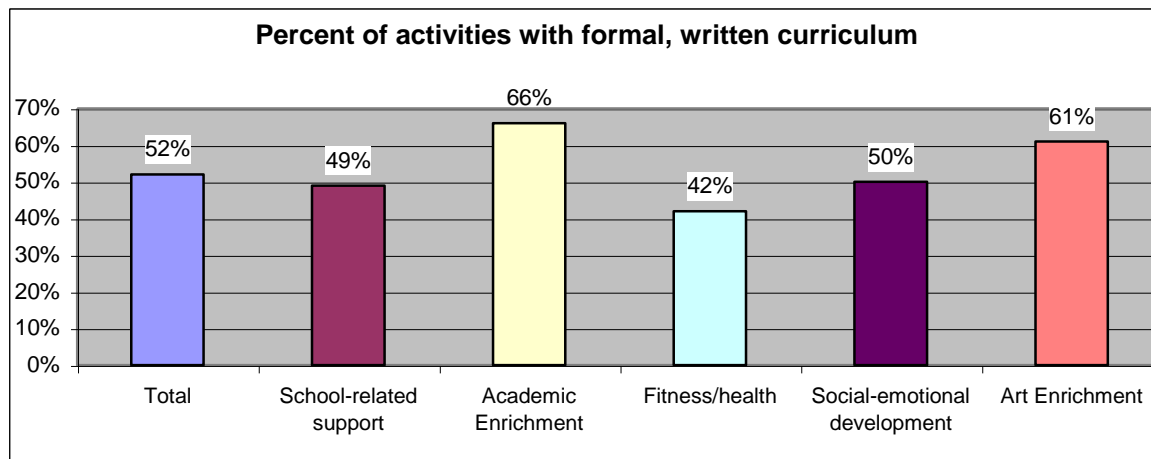
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Depth of Activities

Cambridge after-school programs not only offer a wide range of activities, they also provide a high number of rigorous activities—defined as those that either have a formal, written curriculum, require a high level of staff expertise or both. Over half of activities (52%) reported by the 37 programs had a formal, written curriculum or lesson plan developed either on site or by an outside resource provider, such as TERC, the Harvard After-school Initiative and the Young People’s Project—see chart below.



The percentage of activities with formal, written curriculum within certain activity categories varies. For instance, among academic enrichment activities, 66% of activities have a formal, written curriculum, whereas among fitness and health activities, less than half (42%) do – see chart below.



In addition to curriculum, nearly 40% of activities offered by Cambridge after-school programs require that staff have specialized knowledge and/or training to lead the activity—see chart below. Another 41% of activities require that staff have some degree

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of specialized knowledge and/or training. Among art enrichment activities, 62% are led by staff with extensive expertise in the relevant subject area.



PART II:
The Path
To
Citywide Collaboration

SECTION THREE:

Collaborative Models @ Work

With a shared interest in the well-being of children, Cambridge after-school programs and Cambridge Public Schools have often found common ground—ways in which they could collaborate in support of children’s learning, development, health and safety. In fact, Cambridge after-school programs and schools have an extensive history of partnering across a range of academic and developmental areas. While most of these partnerships are small in scope—involving one or a few programs and schools—they serve as a solid foundation for developing a broad, more systemic school-after-school collaboration, for the following reasons:

- ▶ *They demonstrate value*—existing partnerships demonstrate how school and after-school can successfully collaborate to enrich the academic, social-emotional and physical health experiences of children beyond school hours.
- ▶ *They show what it takes*—existing partnerships serve as models to other schools and programs about how to collaborate in ways that ensure success. There are many lessons that can be learned from these efforts about what school staff and after-school staff must do to effectively communicate, plan high-end activities and share important information about children.
- ▶ *They are supported by key leaders and organizations*—existing partnerships have been supported—whether financially, administratively or through providing technical assistance—by administrators and staff from the DHSP, AFC, CPSD, Massachusetts Department of Education, National Institute for Out of School Time, Lesley University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. As a result, there are numerous existing community resources that could be drawn upon to support a comprehensive and coordinated school-after-school collaborative effort.

The following section provides an overview of several current, promising school-after-school partnership initiatives. Specifically, it looks at three common types of partnerships:

1. *Communication-focused partnerships* – school/after-school partnerships in which the primary goal is to improve the exchange of information and strategies to allow both teachers and after school staff to better address children’s academic and social-emotional strengths and needs.

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2. *Content-focused partnerships*—school/after-school partnerships in which the primary goal is to communicate academic content and learning goals and/or to co-create aligned academic curriculum and support activities to be used in after-school settings.
3. *Integrated program partnerships*—school/after-school partnerships in which the primary goal is to merge school and after-school activities to create a seamless, full day learning and social-emotional experience for children. These partnerships often share staff, develop overlapping schedules and link learning themes and activities.

Leading the Way: The 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Partnership

Since 2002, the Cambridge 21st Century Community Learning (CCLC) Partnership, funded through Massachusetts DOE 21st CCLC Grant, has been an essential collaboration catalyst, working citywide to bring schools and after-school programs closer together. The Partnership's collaborative model includes all Cambridge elementary schools (grades K-8), ten community-based afterschool programs and several academic enrichment curriculum specialists. The Partnership coordinator provides assistance to both school and after-school staff to produce partnering activities that are mutually beneficial, understandable and replicable. The Partnership has also developed several data collection processes that allow for joint CPSD and afterschool enrollment data analysis.

COMMUNICATION-FOCUSED PARTNERSHIPS

The DHSP Inclusion Initiative

In 2004, the DHSP launched the Inclusion Initiative, a cross-division effort to make all 23 city-run afterschool programs more accessible to children with learning, behavioral and/or physical disabilities. A key component of this initiative includes collaboration with the CPSD Office of Special Education and school based special education staff to gain insight into how best to support children with identified special needs in after-school settings. Key collaborative activities have included:

- ▶ Sharing of Individual Education Plans – with parent consent
- ▶ Inclusion of the DHSP inclusion specialist and after-school staff at school-based student support meetings
- ▶ Onsite consultation from CPSD special education staff
- ▶ School-after-school staff connection forums held at two schools to share program information and strategies related to special education students.

Quality Partnership Grants

In 2006, the CPSD's school-afterschool partnership and the AFC received funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education After-School-Out Of School Time grant and the Harvard Agassiz Neighborhood Fund to support the Quality Partnership Grant (QPG) initiatives. The QPG initiative seeks to foster stronger relationships between after-school programs and schools to support the academic success and positive development of shared students. In 2006, nine after-school programs received QPG grants. Seven of these programs are using funds to support greater communication with school staff, by either hiring a liaison or expanding the hours of managers and/or staff to work outside of program hours. Liaisons and staff then outreach to school administrators, teachers and specialist to accomplish the following:

- ▶ To gain insight into how to respond to students who demonstrate learning and/or emotional/behavioral special needs
- ▶ To communicate regularly with school day teachers about students' homework, provide homework assistance and reinforce study habits that are aligned with school goals
- ▶ To meet with principals and attend in-school student support and grade cluster meetings
- ▶ To arrange opportunities to observe students in classrooms
- ▶ To plan joint enrichment projects and events

CONTENT-FOCUSED PARTNERSHIPS

The Cambridge 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Partnership

Over the past five years, the Cambridge (CCLC) Partnership has sponsored several dynamic academic enrichment projects, including the following partnering initiatives:

- ▶ *Literacy Kits Initiative.* In 2004, the Agenda for Children's Literacy Initiative teamed up with the CPSD English Language Arts (ELA) Department to develop "literacy kits" for after-school programs in over 30 academic content areas. These kits include a variety of books, activities, hands-on projects, games, puzzles, videos, software programs, and other resources that revolve around themes central to the CPSD ELA, Science and Social Studies curriculum frameworks for kindergarten through fourth grade. Two Literacy Coaches provide initial training and ongoing follow up support to after-school directors and staff in how to use the kits. Participating after-school programs report success in providing fun and engaging activities, while also promoting reading, writing, vocabulary-building and spelling skills that supports students' work in the classroom.

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- ▶ *Frisoli Youth Center – King Open Literacy Buddies Project.* Initiated in 2005, this project supports King Open 7th and 8th graders struggling with reading and writing skills by preparing them to become Literacy Buddies for King Open kindergarten through 3rd graders. Participating 7th and 8th graders attend the Frisoli Youth Center pre-teen after-school program, where they complete a series of Literacy Buddies training workshops. Through this training, they learn activities, strategies and techniques to support younger students' reading and writing development. At the same time, they are supported in improving their own reading and writing skills by Frisoli and King Open staff.
- ▶ *Science enrichment through the Boston Children's Museum.* In conjunction with CPSD Science teachers, the Boston Children's Museum provides Museum Teaching Kits to both schools and after-school programs. Each kit offers a rich, science focused, interdisciplinary and hands-on set of activities designed to introduce and engage children in a variety of science topics. The "Shoreline" kit, for example, explores the Massachusetts shoreline and islands in depth, and includes field trips to beaches in the spring or summer. Children's Museum staff have also helped after-school programs coordinate a strategic sequences of Kit rotations that corresponded with Cambridge Public School Science Frameworks so that activities complement children's learning at school.
- ▶ *Engineering and Physics Project.* In 2005, a science teacher from the King School and the Cambridge Community Center collaborated to develop an innovative experiential engineering and science project. Students (6th-8th graders) were posed with 3-5 week challenges, such as building bridges out of toothpicks, and creating shock absorption egg-protectors. The areas and themes that these students investigated were aligned with—and designed to prepare students for—science subject matters they will encounter in Freshman Science (Physics) classes at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.
- ▶ *Young People's Project – Increasing Math Literacy through Peer Teaching Models.* Beginning in 2003, the Young People's Project has collaborated with the CPSD Math Department to develop hands-on, interactive math modules and activities for both school and after-school settings that are aligned with district math standards and curriculum goals. Implemented across 6-10 after-school sites per year, these activities are designed to positively impact students' attitudes about math, teach math and algebraic concepts and develop an in-depth understanding of how to methodically analyze and approach math problem solving.
- ▶ *Drum Logic.* Initiated in 2004, Drum Logic has implemented activities that introduce students to various hands-on challenges (such how to construct different types of musical instruments) and physical science topics ranging

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from estimation, conversion, measurement, tessellations, to the physics of sound. They are also exposed to artistic, cultural and mathematical concepts.

- ▶ *Planet Protectors*. Since 2006, E., Inc., has implemented interactive and hands-on environmental education modules at 21st CCLC Partnership-supported afterschool programs that culminate in student-led actions and projects that have an impact on the health of their communities.
- ▶ *Rhyme & Reason (Poetry and Spoken Word Initiative)*: Students involved in this academic enrichment initiative had opportunities to write their own poetry and rhymes, and they built skills in the following areas: meta-cognition, alliteration, vocabulary development and public speaking techniques including the importance of tone and pace of delivery.
- ▶ *Summer Science Exploration and Learning Projects*. The Science Club for Girls trains adolescent girls to become mentors and science teachers for younger children at Cambridge 21st CCLC Partnership sites through weekly hands-on science and technology activities.
- ▶ *Pre-Teen Youth Mentorship Multimedia Initiative*. Began in 2004, this project is designed to have high school seniors work with a groups of seventh and eighth graders in a mentoring capacity, engaging them in conversations and activities that exposed them to issues they would be encountering as teens in Cambridge, and particularly helping them to prepare to be freshman at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. Another major component of the high school mentors' work was to complete a small community assessment and multimedia projects based topics that pre-teen students identify as important to their community.

The Community Schools and Title I

Over the past five years, the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) Community Schools Division and the Cambridge Public School Title I Office have collaborated to provide both summer and after-school supplementary literacy and math supports for K-2nd graders. Targeting at-risk learners, this partnership provides children with needed, additional instructional support, while at the same time giving them access to a range of quality enrichment and recreational activities through the Community Schools. In addition to coordinating this balance of activities, school teachers and Community School staff work together to engage the families of participating children, by offering these families strategies for supporting their child's learning at home.

INTEGRATED PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

The King Open Extended Day Program

Founded in 1999 as a school-based, “extended day” program, the King Open Extended Day program (KOED) at the King Open School is collaboratively run and supported by the CPSD and the DHSP. The expressed goal of KOED is the successful integration of the school day experience with the after-school experience to create greater opportunities for learning and development. KOED seeks to achieve this integration in the following ways:

- ▶ *Administrative communication and collaboration.* The KOED director and King Open principal meet every other week and as needed. The KOED director is also a member of the King Open School Council and the KO principal serves on the KOED Steering Committee. Further, the KOED director is part of the school’s Student Support Team, which meets weekly to discuss and strategize about individual children and school climate.
- ▶ *Overlapping program and staffing model.* Full-time after-school staff (seven Youth Development Mentors) spend part of their time in classrooms during the school day. This model allows staff to develop knowledge of curriculum and classroom dynamics, establish working relationships with school day teachers, increase understanding of students’ individual strengths and needs, and strengthen bonds with students.
- ▶ *Adequate, integrated space.* KOED receives separate, designated office and classroom space within the King Open School, helping to establish KOED as a fully integrated component of the school community, rather than as an “add-on” program.

Fletcher-Maynard Extended Day

In 2001, with receipt of a three-year federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, the Fletcher Maynard Academy established the Fletcher Maynard Extended Day (FMED). With the end of federal funding, the FMED has been supported by the CPSD. A school-based after-school program, the FMED’s mission is to provide enriching and educational after-school programming to Fletcher Maynard Academy students. FMED provides both enrichment classes, designed to broaden FMA students’ horizons and pique or sustain their interests in non-traditional subject areas, and academic classes and supports (such as homework help), designed to promote student progress towards FMA’s academic goals.

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The FMED has worked closely with the FMA to integrate and align the missions, staffing, and methodology of the after-school program and school. Key components of the FMED-FMA collaboration include:

- ▶ *Administrative communication and collaboration.* The Extended Day Director, Afterschool liaison, and staff members communicate regularly with school administration and staff, as well as with the administration and staff from other programs both inside and outside of the school building. The level of collaboration allows the school and the different programs to more quickly and effectively identify and address the unique needs of the shared student population.
- ▶ *Shared staffing model.* Five out of the seven Extended Day classroom teachers are Fletcher Maynard teaching assistants or paraprofessionals during the school day. Having the same staff members working in the different capacities allows for a more consistent and coherent ‘whole day’ experience for students. The shared staff also act as after-school ambassadors to the school (and vice versa) and facilitate communication and collaboration with school staff and departments.
- ▶ *Extended Learning Time initiative.* Over the past school year, the FMED and FMA have collaborated to participate in the state funded Extended Learning Time (ELT) initiative, resulting in the expansion of their school day by two hours. As part of this new schedule, the FMA has partnered with three after-school providers that also partner with the FMED—Science Club for Girls, Jammastics and the Young People’s Project—to provide enrichment courses throughout the lengthened school day. This overlap of programs (and program staff) provides much of the same benefits of consistency and continuity as the shared staffing model. FMA is also seeking funding to partner with the Cambridge Community Schools to offer additional enrichment classes in such areas as chess, dance, cooking, art and music.

SECTION FOUR:

Moving Forward

Up to this point, this report has primarily focused on the question of *why* it is essential for the Cambridge after-school system and the Cambridge Public School Department to collaborate on behalf of children. We turn now to another vital question: *how* can the after-school system and school department successfully collaborate? What steps should be taken?

The following section proposes several actions steps for moving the Cambridge after school and school systems towards formal collaboration. **First and foremost among these steps is to charge the existing Complementary Learning Group with serving as a joint steering committee, responsible for promoting school-after school collaboration across the city.**

Convened in the fall of 2006 to attend the Harvard Achievement Gap Conference, the Complementary Learning Group (CLG) is comprised of CPSD administrators, principals and after-school program leaders. Over the winter and spring of the 2006-2007 school year, the CLG has met regularly to examine how after school programs and school can better work in concert to support children's learning and development both in and outside of school.

Going forward, the CLG could be expanded to include additional top managers within both systems—e.g. DHSP division heads, after school executive directors, and CPSD district administrators and school principals. The CLG might also engage key advisors at strategic points, such as leaders of higher education institutions, health agencies and area businesses. The CLG could then gather input from both school and after-school leaders in thinking through next key action steps.

Possible actions steps may include the following:

► **Adopting a shared mission**

The CLG might revisit its original charge to ensure that the purpose and specific goals of after school system and school department collaboration are clearly defined.

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▶ **Identifying relevant staff and resources from both systems to support this work.**

The CLG might seek to enlist directors and project managers within the AFC, DHSP, CPSD and community-based organizations, with experience and expertise in developing and supporting school-after-school partnerships to play significant coordinating roles in this effort. These staff should be given a clear mandate, adequate time and resources to serve in this role. This may include revising current job descriptions to include new administrative responsibilities

▶ **Developing a guiding framework that outlines key structures and strategies**

The CLG might develop a framework that spells out key components underlying successful school-after-school collaborations—i.e. what needs to be in place to have an effective school-after school partnership. This framework might then serve as an accessible guide to school and program staff seeking to establish new partnerships, or to strengthen existing ones. The CLG could draw from existing school-afterschool partnership criteria, such as that developed and/or described by Learning Point Associates (Chicago, IL), United Way of Mass Bay, NIOST, and the Boston Public Schools DELTA Initiative, etc.

▶ **Exploring and expanding comprehensive partnership models between schools and after school programs.**

Building from a guiding framework, the CLG might support several schools and after-school programs in implementing or strengthening existing partnership efforts. The CLG should seek out schools with demonstrated commitment and capacity to partner with one or more after-school programs.

▶ **Seeking ways to facilitate cross-system data collection and information sharing**

The CLG might seek to develop efficient processes for collecting and sharing the following types of information in support of children growth and learning:

- District and school-level learning goals, content requirements and homework assignments
- Child-specific cognitive and social-emotional strengths and needs—including those of children’s with identified special education needs.
- Children’s level of participation in out of school time activities and other services, to identify children in self-care arrangements and, thus, in need of safe and structured after-school program options.

▶ **Evaluating the success of collaborative efforts**

The CLG should monitor the success of collaborative efforts in reaching stated goals and implementing key action steps.