After-School in Chicago: A Study of Unresolved Challenges and Innovative Successes
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Chicago has recognized the importance of a strong after-school system by embracing a diverse array of after-school programs focused on positive youth development. Its system offers programs ranging from academic enrichment and recreational activities for elementary and middle school-age children to apprenticeship and internship opportunities for teenage students. Recent studies have demonstrated that participants in some Chicago after-school programs have improved in their educational progress and social relationships. Despite these successes, Chicago, like many of its peer cities, has struggled to identify and maintain the key tenets of an after-school system. While Chicago’s after-school system has achieved remarkable successes in innovative program design and community partnerships that other cities across America should strive to replicate, it must resolve organizational challenges to ensure its future sustainability.

As students increasingly demand access to after-school programs, Chicago’s system must reform its weak components. Its accessibility problems exemplify the current issues that restrict the after-school movement’s goals. Researchers at the University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall Center for Children, studying participation in after-school programs, concluded that high school students demanded a greater number of programs than currently exist. Of the 47 percent of district high school students surveyed by Chapin Hall, around “35 percent were not engaged in a structured or academic activity”. While the city has met demand for after-school programs in its poorest neighborhoods at a growing rate, close to 55 percent of students [surveyed] claimed that “they have no safe places like [programs], parks, or community centers to go”. In contrast to these deficiencies, Chicago features a diverse after-school system that thrives on its innovation and the extensive partnerships between the players in the after-school system, businesses, and the city government. Therefore, future development of Chicago’s system should balance reform with the maximization of Chicago’s positive attributes.

OVERVIEW OF CHICAGO’S AFTER-SCHOOL SYSTEM

Mayor Richard M. Daley has largely engineered the development of Chicago’s after-school system. Mayor Daley consistently “provides substantial leadership to the city in the youth services arena”; in fact, he labeled the development of Chicago’s system as one of the cornerstones of his 2002 re-election campaign. Mayor Daley has directly supported the system’s major players, After School Matters, Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Park District and has created an umbrella organization, the Department of Children and Youth Services (DCYS), to streamline these diverse opportunities. Many organizations, like After School Matters and Chicago Public Schools, which actively focus on teens and younger youth respectively, strongly

2 Ibid. 9.
support one another. Mayor Daley has hoped that DCYS will capitalize on the intricate relationships between the players and assume the central role within the city’s system.

After School Matters

After School Matters is often regarded as the crown-jewel of Chicago’s after-school system. The program dates to 1990 when Chicago First Lady Maggie Daley and Chicago Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Lois Weisberg, developed an arts-related job-training program for teenagers known as Gallery 37. The program, which employed professional artists as instructors, placed teenage students in a safe environment in which they built useful skills and fortified social relationships. Mrs. Daley soon expanded the apprenticeship program to include a wider array of fields, including sports, technology, and communications. She subsequently moved these programs underneath a new, non-profit organization: After School Matters. The new program grew on its extensive ties with the Mayor’s Office, as well as the Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Public Library. After School Matters has ambitiously aimed to reach close to 50 percent of Chicago teens by 2010.

In After School Matters’ apprenticeships, skilled professionals instruct teenagers about proper practices in the teen’s field of choice. While engaged in positive relationships with adults, students acquire skills applicable to the workplace, and “learn about career and educational opportunities both in their neighborhoods and throughout the city.” More importantly, as only students who have attended a full day of school can participate in After School Matters, the organization positively reinforces the educational program. In order to reward these teenagers who consistently attend their apprenticeship program and to incentivize participation, After School Matters awards each teenager a $45 stipend on a weekly basis.

After School Matters encourages students to build on the skills they have gained in their original apprenticeship by providing funding for advanced apprenticeships and internships. According to Tony Proscio, “ASM internships work like college-level internships do: students are assigned to a workplace outside of school, where they report to a supervisor, are responsible for clearly defined tasks of real value to the employer, and get relevant training on the job.” After School Matters also offers unpaid clubs in which participants engage in recreational activities under the supervision of adults; in the coming year, the program will fully implement an unpaid, pre-apprenticeship program. In the seven years since its inception, After School Matters has stood as the basis for comparison for other after-school programs within Chicago.

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools has parlayed its traditional involvement with the city’s youth into a powerful position in the city’s after-school system. The school district, in a coordinator intermediary role, runs programs for students between kindergarten and eighth grade, which range from After School All-Stars, a structured academic environment, and the Community

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6 Ibid. 2.
Schools Initiative, a public-private partnership. It has increased its involvement in the system after the appointment of CEO Arne Duncan, a tireless advocate of after-school programming.

The Community Schools Initiative, a joint partnership between Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Community Trust, and other non-profit organizations classified as “Lead Partner Agencies”, has achieved remarkable growth in the years since its inception. Piloted in three elementary schools in 1997 with a grant from the Polk Foundation and expanded into a fully-funded program in 2002, the Community Schools Initiative currently works with 110 district schools and over 400 community partners. Community School programs, hosted in a Chicago Public School, must ensure that “all out-of-school-time programs relate to and support the school’s academic program”. However, the community school has the liberty by which it can achieve this goal: for example, many schools practice arts integration activities in order to further the non-academic growth of each student. Students have demonstrated interest in Community Schools through increased participation: according to a University of Illinois-Chicago study on the Initiative, “overall student enrollment increased by 19% between FY 2005 and FY 2006”.

Unlike many other programs in Chicago’s after-school system, the Community Schools Initiative has fully integrated working parents into its curriculum. Many Community Schools, which remain open as late as 9 PM, offer assistance to working parents through ESL programs, computer training, and citizenship classes. Furthermore, every Community School has an advisory committee comprised of parents, teachers, and other community members that “conducts a needs assessment or asset mapping to determine the types of programs and services that are needed”; this has strengthened the relationship between parents and their child’s school. Parents have certainly fulfilled their role in developing the after-school curriculum: for example, in predominantly Hispanic Marquette Elementary School, an original Chicago Community School, parents successfully lobbied for a traditional, folkloric dance class, providing cultural instruction outside of the home. Overall, the Community Schools Initiative has deepened Chicago Public Schools’ and community involvement in the after-school system.

Chicago Park District

The Chicago Park District, an independent organization affiliated with the City of Chicago, also operates in the city’s after-school system. The Park District organizes PARK Kids, a program that runs between 3 and 6 PM and targets students between the first and eighth grades. PARK Kids operates in over seventy parks across the city, providing recreational activities, arts and crafts, and homework assistance to youth participants for a limited fee. Moreover, in conjunction with Chicago Public Schools, the Park District offers free transportation to participants deemed eligible through an application. The Park District’s numerous parks have provided youth with accessible after-school options.

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9 Ibid.
12 “CPS After School Programs”
Department of Children and Youth Services

In early 2004, Mayor Daley created the Department of Children and Youth Services to consolidate Chicago’s sprawling after-school and youth services system. Mayor Daley declared that his new department would coordinate “a long list of programs serving preschool-age youngsters through teenagers, including early child care and education programs, after-school and summer initiatives, and outreach for at-risk children”. DCYS funds community partners, recommends best practice guidelines, and has built advisory partnerships with After School Matters, Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Park District. Mayor Daley hopes that through DCYS, the city’s after-school system will become more efficient and structured.

DCYS has also implemented its mayoral mandate through direct oversight of after-school programs traditionally operated by the Mayor’s Office. For example, DCYS has taken full control of Mayor Daley’s KidStart program, an umbrella group of programs for teens. In order to expand access to Chicago after-school programs, DCYS has created six Regional Consortium Centers (RCCs) across Chicago, each of which provides a centralized location where families can learn more information about after-school activities. Within the centers, the staff collaborates with other organizations and individually meets with young people, helping to locate activities that match interests”. The centers represent the city’s focus on a grassroots approach to programming; in communicating directly with the members of the community, RCCs serve as a channel by which DCYS can gain information needed to adjust programs to adequately meet community demand. The RCCs represent DCYS’ goal of incorporating Chicago’s strong, grassroots programs within a more centralized system.

FUNDING AND FINANCING

As in many cities across the United States, Chicago’s after-school system lacks a dedicated funding stream. As a result, Chicago’s organizations have faced continued challenges and financial limits to expansion. While they have remained solvent, the current structure forces these intermediaries to rely on a diverse set of sponsors in order to fund their programs. Meanwhile, business leaders and researchers have questioned the sustainability of this financial model, advocating for a funding stream directed from a department like DCYS.

After School Matters

Researchers studying After School Matters at Chapin Hall have asserted that its funding stream depends on Maggie Daley’s leadership. According to After School Matters’ audited reports from FY 2005-2006, of the $22 million in revenue received, 30% came from in-kind contributions from Chicago’s public partners, such as school and park space, while 51% came from government contributions. The organization’s relationship to the Mayor’s Office ensures that city departments direct funds towards After School Matters. Mrs. Daley receives further credit for the 14% of revenue that After School Matters received from corporate fundraising.

18 Ibid.
Every year, the organization hosts a spectacular gala at one of Chicago’s multiple stadia, inviting some of the city’s most prominent financiers and philanthropists. The gala raised a total of $2.6 million, net of expenses, in one night. More importantly, through both the gala and the similar fundraising drives, After School Matters has cultivated longstanding relationships with the city’s most financially powerful individuals and corporations, thereby ensuring it prominence. Many of these partners have assumed seats on After School Matters’ board, have participated as volunteers, and have advocated directly on behalf of the program.

**Chicago Public Schools**

Chicago Public Schools financially supports its programs through its annual budget along with active fundraising efforts. As a senior researcher at Chapin Hall noted, Chicago Public Schools funds the majority of its after-school projects, especially After School All-Stars and Tuition Based After School, exclusively through regular school board money. The financing structure behind the Community Schools Initiative differs from other school district programs. According to the University of Illinois-Chicago, “one of the most striking features [of the program] is the strong support it enjoys at all levels of the business community, from the city’s leading corporate philanthropies, to local businesses and chambers of commerce”. The Community Schools Initiative has thrived on its strong relations with business: business partners have committed not only financial resources, but also in-kind donations and volunteers.

The sheer structure of the Community Schools Initiative requires further financial contributions from community-based organizations. As the initiative constitutes a public-private partnership, Chicago Public Schools recruits a diverse group of human service and community-based organizations that fulfill the role of Lead Partner Agency. These Lead Partner Agencies, which include 49 different organizations with three or more years of experience in the system, work closely with schools to manage the Community Schools effort and the finances used to operate the program. Funding requirements imposed on these community partners, however, still hinder effective involvement: some partners have claimed that the role of Lead Partner Agency is “satisfying professionally…but an absolutely under-funded mandate from the administrative angle”. Yet, the heaviest burden for financing and managing the Community Schools Initiative falls on Chicago Public Schools, with 39% of the funding coming directly from the school district. Chicago Public Schools uses a combination of its own resources and its relationships with community organizations to fully fund its after-school programs.

**Chicago Park District**

The Chicago Park District uses its annual budget to fund its after-school program, PARK Kids. The immense Park District possesses a distinct advantage over other intermediaries in its ability to raise revenue. In accordance with Illinois Statute 1505/20a, the Chicago Park District has the authority to tax property in the Chicago metropolitan area, thereby allowing it to raise revenue for its entire budget. Furthermore, this statute allows the Chicago Park District to issue

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19 Ibid.
20 Whalen, 13.
21 Ibid. 16.
22 “CPS After School Programs”.
23 Ibid. 22.
24 Whalen, 14.
bonds to raise funds without requiring the consent of the District’s voters. This year, out of its $260 million budget, the District has allocated $5 million for youth programs, including PARK Kids. As the Chicago Park District is an independent taxing authority, it worries less about the consistency of funding in comparison to Chicago Public Schools and After School Matters.

Department of Children and Youth Services

The City of Chicago funds the Department of Children and Youth Services through regular budgeting procedures. As a city department, DCYS has embraced the funding intermediary role. It largely funds programs like KidStart and those organized by community partners through its city budget and the federal government’s community development block grants; approximately 5.16% of its budget comes from CDBGs. While DCYS does draw funds from a variety of sources, it remains underfunded: in the years since its inception, it has only managed to fund roughly 200 programs, with many qualified community-based organizations itching for funding. Despite community-based organizations’ high demand to run programs, DCYS simply does not have enough money to distribute to its community partners.

Fixing the Funding Gap

While the organizations in Chicago’s after-school system have maintained solvency despite the absence of a dedicated funding stream, local businesses leaders have questioned the stability of this funding model. Chicago’s system simply cannot grow to accommodate demand without a consistent stream of funds. In 1999, a group of business leaders united to form Chicago Metropolis 2020 to raise awareness about Chicago’s future. Metropolis 2020 has funded studies on the benefits of after-school programs and early childcare, and has used its financial prowess to lobby for additional funding for Chicago’s system. For example, in 2003, leaders from the group actively met with Governor Rod Blagojevich and the Illinois Committee for Economic Development to advocate for additional funding. Despite these efforts, state funding of Chicago’s system remains rather limited; in recent years, the Governor’s office has directed some money towards After School Matters, but a steady stream of funds simply does not exist. The players in the after-school system, the business community, and researchers largely concur that fulfilling hopes for the growth of Chicago’s system requires a dedicated funding stream.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As each component of Chicago’s after-school system has approached the challenge of staffing their programs differently, DCYS has recognized the wide inconsistencies in professional development between the players in Chicago’s system. The inefficiency of multiple staff development programs aimed at the same goal wastes resources. DCYS has taken early steps to remedy this problem and achieve a limited number of consistent training approaches.

27 Senior Researcher.
29 Senior Researcher.
31 Senior Researcher.
After School Matters’ unique model relies on specialized staff in the apprenticeship areas it offers. For example, After School Matters recruits licensed computer and information technology professionals, chefs with culinary certification, and professional artists. It then requires its instructors to attend Advanced Youth Development Trainings, which prepares them for proper interaction with the program’s teenage participants. Apart from the instructors, After School Matters also includes staff organized into “regional teams whose members get to know the landscape, develop personal relationships, hold regular training sessions, and spend time at apprenticeship sites”.

This staff actively monitors participant attendance and outcomes, but also analyzes instructor performance. On the whole, After School Matters places a primary emphasis on the skill sets of its instructors.

In its Community Schools Initiative, Chicago Public Schools actively pairs itself with a community based organization which assumes the responsibility of staffing and professional development. Each Lead Partner Agency must select a full time Resource Coordinator, who has the “primary responsibility for developing and managing programs during after school hours in partnership with key school and agency staff”. The Resource Coordinator then works with teachers, staff members, and community members to develop cohesive programming for the Community School. Staffing issues largely fall under the Resource Coordinator, who recruits a full-time staff of teachers and other community members, and conducts all necessary training.

Chicago Park District’s PARK Kids operates with a non-professional, volunteer staff. Each summer, the Park District recruits volunteers ranging from high school students onwards to fully staff this program; commitments to the program range from a minimum of two nights a week to daily volunteering. However, there is a full-time project coordinator for each park’s program who operates out of the Chicago Park District’s central office. On the whole, the Park District offers limited training for its volunteers, who are chosen on an application basis.

To improve consistency in staff training, DCYS worked in conjunction with the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time Initiative (MOST) to create Chicago Youth Program Standards, a set of guidelines that defines expectations about professional development. DCYS administrators have concluded that “all program staff, including managers and supervisors, must receive relevant training for youth work and [remain] engaged in regular professional development activities”. While DCYS currently cannot direct the training procedures of the system’s major players, they can offer universally-applicable guidelines. Furthermore, as a Chicago-based agency, DCYS, and not the State of Illinois, should continue to define expectations for program staff development, as what works for Southern Illinois certainly does not work for Northern Illinois; in essence, DCYS can ensure consistency between the city’s programs, and eventually could train every after-school professional in the city.

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32 Proscio, 29.
33 Whalen, 2.
34 “Chicago Park District: Park KIDS”.
35 Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services. Chicago Youth Program Standards. 2006, 1.
36 Senior Researcher.
ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS IN CHICAGO’S AFTER-SCHOOL SYSTEM

Accessibility to Chicago’s system remains a critical, unresolved issue. In some neighborhoods across Chicago, close to “55 percent of students” spend their time not engaged in structured activities or work following the school day. Moreover, as aforementioned, a large number of students simply remain unaware of the available options. Teenagers in Chicago also face a dearth of age-appropriate programs; while After School Matters dedicates itself exclusively to teenagers, only slightly more than 200 out of 1374 programs run by community-based organizations serve ninth to twelfth graders. With many adolescents on waiting lists for programs while others remain unaware of the options available to them, Chicago faces questions about the accessibility and public awareness of its system. While the city has taken steps in improving recruiting and expanding programs, these problems have failed to disappear.

After School Matters

After School Matters employs targeted recruitment. The organization tries to connect with hard-to-reach teens during an annual sign-up drive during which teachers are encouraged to “seek out the loners, the discouraged or troubled, or students they suspect don’t have anything constructive to do [after school]”. Apart from the teachers’ concerted effort, After School Matters’ well-established links with Chicago Public Schools increases the visibility of the program. As a result, After School Matters remains heavily over-subscribed.

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools’ programs recruit with the goal of improving students’ educational outcomes. The Community Schools Initiative operates under similar parameters. As researchers from UIC concluded, “the Community Schools Initiative is clearly targeted to reach academically at-risk students in Chicago”. For example, within the average Community School in FY 2006, close to 66% of students received low-performance ratings from teachers in the basic classroom setting and nearly 89% of students qualified for Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Programs. This approach has allowed Chicago Public Schools to reach many members of its target cohort: largely poor students who face academic challenges.

Systematic Improvements

City programs have taken steps to remedy its glaring problems of accessibility and awareness. Some programs have addressed the shortage in programs aimed at increasing teenager participation. Maggie Daley designed After School Matters chiefly with the purpose of serving teenagers; with her bold goal of serving of over 50% of city teenagers by 2010, After School Matters has made admirable strides in this direction. Similarly, Mayor Daley’s KidStart YouthNet, now administered under DCYS, specifically selects community-based organizations that create programs for teens. For example, every KidStart YouthNet has a Youth Advisory Council which serves as an intermediary link between community programs and DCYS, while

37 Goerge, Chaskin, and Guiltinan, 7.
38 Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, and Gladden, 6.
39 Whalen, 29.
40 Ibid. 29.
41 Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, and Gladden, 2.
simultaneously providing leadership opportunities for teenagers. Although programs like After School Matters have taken great steps to increase the number of teenagers served, they face inherent limits to their growth. Forcing growth on the program could dilute the efficacy of apprenticeship programs and reduce developmental outcomes gained through participation.42

DCYS has embraced the mission of expanding program accessibility and awareness to all cohorts through its creation of six Regional Consortium Centers. The RCCs provide local experts to guide parents and youth towards the correct program. The inclusion of the centers within the community can help to assuage parental apprehension regarding community programs, while providing further links with the community. This regional approach increases the probability that students learn about local opportunities and will attend a program. Moreover, RCCs strengthen ties between City Hall and the community, building channels for communication.

DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION

Chicago’s after-school system largely operates without a data collection system. For example, many programs, including large players like the Chicago Park District, cannot refer to any reliable attendance data when analyzing their programs.43 Likewise, many community-based organizations will apply for funding using certain attendance data, when in reality, student participation frequently fluctuates.44 The basic absence of a proper data collection system hinders the efficient allocation of program funding and limits analysis on the efficacy of these programs. However, After School Matters and Chicago Public Schools have developed model data collection systems that have permitted the proper evaluation of their programs.

After School Matters collects detailed attendance data from its instructors in order to uphold its mission; to participate in an apprenticeship after-school, the student has to attend a full day of school. Likewise, as After School Matters offers a stipend as a reward for participation, the organization must document student attendance. In addition to attendance, the organization monitors its participants’ grades in courses and graduation rates.

As a result of After School Matters’ detailed data collection, researchers at Chapin Hall have studied its programs effects on Chicago Public Schools’ students. Researchers found that “students who participated in After School Matters, especially at the highest levels, tended to miss fewer days of school than students who did not participate”.45 Furthermore, active participation has significantly reduced the probability of failing a course, thereby improving students’ chances of graduation; “for students with very high levels of participation in After School Matters, the odds of graduating were 2.7 times greater than the odds for students who did not participate in the program, even after taking into account demographic characteristics and prior academic achievement”.46 While researchers at Chapin Hall caution that conclusions cannot be made about the long-term implications of After School Matters47, it does appear that a positive trend has emerged for participants. These tangible results, which demonstrate short-term success, aid After School Matters in raising funds from private donors.

42 Senior Researcher.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, and Gladden, 3.
46 Ibid. 5.
47 Senior Researcher.
Meanwhile, Chicago Public Schools has recently instituted an online system, After School Attendance Reporting\textsuperscript{48}, which measures attendance for all Chicago Public Schools’ after-school activities. The centralized data collection system links with Chicago Public Schools’ existing framework, allowing for connections between after-school attendance and student’s school attendance, “demographics, contact information, Iowa Test of Basic Skills’ scores, and immunization records”.\textsuperscript{49} Through this detailed data collection, Community Schools Initiative leaders have attempted to calculate how effectively the program reaches members of its target cohort. Researchers at the University of Illinois-Chicago found that, between 2005 and 2006, participation by students with special needs increased by 57%, while attendance for fifth to eighth graders had also risen.\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, researchers found that community schools “with more sustained funding may yield dividends in academic progress”, including increased composite scores on elementary-school statewide assessment tests.\textsuperscript{51} The district’s practices in data collection suggest a pursuit of accountability that clearly resonates with potential donors.

**FUTURE OF CHICAGO’S AFTER-SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Today, Chicago’s system faces opportunities for both growth and consolidation. In 2006, After School Matters, DCYS, and the Chapin Hall Center requested an $8 million, three-year grant from the Wallace Foundation to study how to coordinate after-school services from a city level.\textsuperscript{52} Through the grant, Chicago hopes to “develop more information on programming; raise the quality of programs and the skills of the people who run them; promote innovation in program design; [and] ensure a broad enough base of support so that the program is sustainable beyond the support of any one foundation”.\textsuperscript{53}

Ultimately, as a result of the Wallace grant, DCYS could evolve into a central umbrella encompassing the entirety of Chicago’s after-school system. An enlarged DCYS would “develop quality standards for every Chicago program; [ensure] a dedicated funding stream; create guidelines for the development, training, and certification of staff; [and on the whole, build] an infrastructure that is supportive of Chicago’s individual programs”.\textsuperscript{54} Naturally, consolidation of Chicago’s programs under one umbrella consisting of a dedicated funding stream and standard professional development standards would result in increased efficiency that corresponds with improved accessibility, professional development, and program expansion.

On the other hand, consolidation of Chicago’s programs under DCYS could diminish qualities inherent to a program’s organizational structure. As David Sinski, executive director of After School Matters, claims, “Now that we’re coming to be seen less as something new and innovative and more as part of the daily norm... we have to work harder to maintain [the program’s] distinctness and clarity of purpose. As more organizations become involved with this refined, carefully designed model, how does [ASM] collaborate and cooperate…without losing [its] identity”?\textsuperscript{55} At the same time, if After School Matters truly wants to cover “50 percent of the

\textsuperscript{48} “CPS After School Programs”
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Whalen, 30.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. 44.
\textsuperscript{52} Proscio, 31.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. 32.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. 32.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. 29.
city’s teens by 2010”\textsuperscript{56}, widening the organization with increased DCYS support might prove necessary. Balancing DCYS’ guidance and involvement with the effective, individual leadership from programs like After School Matters and the Community Schools Initiative is critical.

CONCLUSION

As in many cities across the United States, Chicago’s after-school system must tackle its crucial, unresolved problems. Despite the current solvency of Chicago’s programs, most depend on a variable combination of funding from different levels of government and private contributions. As a result, Chicago desperately needs a dedicated funding source, especially to cover more adolescents. Similarly, the system’s current framework of professional development is rife with inefficiency. A more centralized training system, perhaps run under the auspices of DCYS, could free funds spent by organizations on the same task, thereby improving both quality and consistency across programs. Many city programs currently remain inaccessible; at the most popular of programs, like After School Matters, long waiting lists deter many potential participants. Meanwhile, the absence of effective data collection leads many community-based organizations to operate programs that are not even at capacity\textsuperscript{57}, wasting funds that other organizations could better spend. Chicago must solve these challenges.

In spite of the wide array of problems that Chicago’s system faces, it continues to manifest a wide degree of innovation and support from the business and political community that have led to its initial successes. After School Matters and the Community Schools Initiative represent the creativity that has led to these successes: both programs place students in safe environments where they engage in non-academic activities that stimulate self-development, maturity, and social advancement. These programs also feature easy to implement and fundamentally efficient data collection systems.

More importantly, these two programs, and the Chicago Park District, receive immeasurable support from Chicago politicians, ranging from Mayor Richard M. Daley to CEO of Chicago Public Schools, Arne Duncan. Mayor Daley has actively participated in the system’s development. He has ensured that city programs, including his wife’s After School Matters, receive a fair share of city funds and has secured federal community development block grants and 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Community Learning Center grants for DCYS and Chicago Public Schools.\textsuperscript{58} Through the Regional Consortium Centers, the Youth Advisory Councils, and the Community Schools Initiative, Chicago has taken a grassroots approach towards programming; proper after-school solutions may, in fact, vary from one Chicago district to another. Finally, Chicago’s programs rely on partnerships; After School Matters operates independently, but thrives on it ties to the Mayor’s Office, the Chicago Public Library, Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Park District, while the Community Schools Initiative works well with community leaders and parents.

Chicago offers critical lessons for cities like Philadelphia. Programs that stress innovation and target all cohorts, including teenagers, can have positive outcomes. Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter must view the opportunity to create a directly funded after-school system under a

\textsuperscript{56} Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, and Gladden, 2.
\textsuperscript{57} Senior Researcher.
\textsuperscript{58} Whalen, 22.
central city department as his mandate. Through this department, a regional approach for recruiting youth and curriculum development, as performed by both the Community Schools Initiative and the Regional Consortium Centers in Chicago, can establish after-school programs as a central goal of the local community. Finally, effective ties to the business community can offer an additional source of funding and advocacy on all levels of government. The unification of these factors can establish a system that can achieve the diverse goals of the after-school movement, but most importantly, the physical safety of the city’s youth.
Works Cited


Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services. Chicago Youth Program Standards. 2006.


