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Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Connecting School and Afterschool
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Moderator: **Clifford Johnson**, Executive Director
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
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Speakers:

Lisa Fowler, Special Assistant to the City Manager, City of Pasadena, California
Maureen Murray, Department Head for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers,
Brockton, Massachusetts public schools
Theresa Daly, Director of Professional Development, Foundations, Inc

JOHNSON: This is Cliff Johnson. I'm the Executive Director of the Institute for Youth, Education and Families at the National League of Cities. I want to welcome you today and thank you for joining us for this latest of our monthly series of audioconferences sponsored by the Institute.

I hope that many of you have a sense of the Institute at this point. We are a special entity within the National League of Cities, which is the oldest and largest membership group representing cities and towns across the nation. The Institute was launched in 2000 to try to build the capacity and strengthen the capacity of municipal leaders to address the needs of children, youth and families in their own communities. We're working in a broad range of areas, and if you're not familiar with our work, I would encourage you to go to our website, which is www.nlc.org/iyef. And you'll see a wide range of information about our programs and offerings.

I would draw your special attention to an exciting event that we'll be holding in San Antonio at the end of September -- the 2005 National Summit on Your City's Families. This will be the largest gathering in 2005 of people from across the nation who are lodged in cities and towns and who care about kids and families, so it should be a very exciting summit event in beautiful San Antonio for a couple of days. So we hope you'll think about joining us then -- September 26th through 28th. And you'll find more information on our website about that key event.

I want to introduce our three panelists for today's audioconference call. First we have with us Lisa Fowler, who is the Special Assistant to the City Manager in Pasadena, California. Welcome, Lisa.

FOWLER: Thank you very much.

JOHNSON: Second we have with us Maureen Murray, who is Department Head for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers effort within the Brockton, Massachusetts public schools. Welcome, Maureen.

MURRAY: Thank you, Cliff.

JOHNSON: And finally we have Theresa Daly, who is the Director of Professional Development for a national non-profit called Foundations, Inc, which is located in Morristown, New Jersey. Welcome, Theresa.

DALY: Thank you.

JOHNSON: We have an exciting topic for today's call. As many of you listening to this call no doubt are aware, afterschool programming continues to be a very hot topic nationally and in communities across the country, especially with the creation of federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers across the country. People are interested in afterschool programs at the city level for lots of different reasons -- some of them related to public safety, some of them related to the needs of working parents, and some of them related to interest in bolstering academic achievement and student outcomes for kids in public schools and in other schools across the communities.

This call focuses specifically on those questions of how afterschool activities can and should connect with what happens in school. There are folks on both sides of this issue certainly. Some people are of the view that afterschool should offer things that are different than what's offered during the school day, that the alignment between afterschool and school day activities is not an important issue. Others say that young people will benefit much more from afterschool programming when it's connected to the themes and the ideas taught during the school day. We even in polling data see some mixed feelings from parents and some differing views from different kinds of parents. And a very interesting finding from a recent Public Agenda study showed that, in general, parents wanted afterschool programs to offer more sports, arts, music and other activities to develop young people's interests. But when you go further into the data, you find that particularly among low-income, minority parents, there is a lot of interest and support for afterschool programs that have an academic focus to help children perform better in school.

So I want to start this conversation with the basic question of what the role of afterschool programs should be and whether there should be this connection between in-school learning and afterschool programming. And perhaps we can ask Lisa to start that off from Pasadena.

FOWLER: I would be happy to, and welcome everyone, and hello. I have a feeling, based on the research and the activities that we've done here locally in Southern California, that the connection should be very strong between in-school learning and the actual out-of-school programs. However, I emphasize that the presentation should be very, very subtle. And what it really amounts to is kind of an unexpected learning so that this is where the creativity really comes in. For example, if you're having a cooking class, a violin lesson, even baseball practice, that's an opportunity to emphasize the very same skills that you would want during the in-school day -- team building, focus, discipline and concentration. These are all very important attributes

that need to be developed, both in school and after school.

JOHNSON: Lisa, do you get a lot of push-back in terms of people worried that this is just going to be more school, that this is -- “Oh, the school day is already long enough and you’re going to take my child and give them two more hours or three more hours of school”?

FOWLER: Yes, there certainly is that concern. But at the moment, the climate in Pasadena is such -- and I think this is thanks to our superintendent, who said, “We just simply need more time on task.” There aren’t enough hours in the day with all of the demands that both the students and the teachers have to really reach out and get the kind of time that you want on all these many activities. So the only thing that can really be done is to do them in a way that takes those kinds of tasks and elongates the day without being obviously more school time.

JOHNSON: Maureen, how does this look in Brockton -- other side of the country? Do you see a similar picture there?

MURRAY: Yes, I do. And I tend to look at it as not an “either/or,” but as a “both/and” kind of a thing. I don’t think we want to focus solely on academic skills in afterschool. I think we have to learn how to address the needs of the whole child. And as Lisa said, there are some subtle ways of getting in that academic piece. One of the things that we’ve spent a lot of resources on in Brockton is creating afterschool curriculum that integrates our state learning standards into fun, engaging kinds of activities. For example, we have one that’s called “Literature and Cooking” for students in elementary grades where they would introduce different kinds of literature, and then the students do some kind of a cooking activity that goes with that. We have things like Bug City, where kids are learning about different science concepts. But I think the idea is to make it look different than what’s going on in the school day and allowing the children to be active, providing lots of hands-on opportunities so that it’s a fun thing. So that even though there are some academics infused into it, they’re not necessarily aware of that. They’re having fun.

JOHNSON: Do the parents understand that that’s going on?

MURRAY: They do. The loudest clamor we hear here in Brockton from the parents for the academic portion is the homework piece. They want to see that the homework is completed before the children go home so that there is some quality family time for them after they get home. So in most of our programming, we provide some homework time with assistance from teachers or providers as the first part of the program. And then we move into the other part of the programming. And the parents are very happy with the kind of combination. But I do constantly hear the need for some help with getting that homework done, because in many cases there are some concepts that are introduced in the school day that even parents might have some difficulties, struggling with, trying to help address in the homework.

JOHNSON: And as a working parent, I’ll raise my hand. It always seems like a gift when my daughter, who is in fourth grade, comes home and the homework is all done. It’s like, oh yes, we’ve won the jackpot today.

MURRAY: Right.

JOHNSON: Theresa, you've looked at this and thought about this from a national perspective obviously. When you think about the case for making the connection between in-school learning and afterschool programming, what comes to mind for you?

DALY: Well, I think that both what Lisa and Maureen have said is true, that afterschool is this different learning arena. And if we think of the whole child, as Maureen suggested, we might consider afterschool to be a connection point between the deliberate, formal learning of day school and the informal, incidental learning of home and social life. We have this time in the afternoon that can be its own learning arena, a deliberate but non-formal learning arena. And that speaks then to, as Lisa put it, more subtle teaching approaches and more interactive, hands-on learning experiences that blend academic support for day school efforts with support of the positive social and emotional development that kids of all ages need.

FOWLER: And keep in mind, too, that the physicalness of actually touching something -- whether it's a musical instrument or a bowl to put a spoon in and make dough for cookies or whether it's a baseball bat. I think that it's really important that the touching and the eye contact and the feel of all that goes beyond the book and makes coming back to the books a more pleasurable experience. And it fits nicely with the other activities and goals.

JOHNSON: How should folks at a city level think about the potential benefits here? And what are your thoughts about what's realistic and what's hype or over-promising or unrealistic in terms of expectations of what you get out of an effort to align education and afterschool? Maureen, do you have some thoughts on that?

MURRAY: Yes, I think one of the things that we need to think about is that, again, it's different than school. We don't want to be teaching kids in the afterschool programs. But we want to allow them that extra time for some of the things that they're taught in school to really take hold. Many kids don't learn in the same ways -- they don't learn identically. They have to, as Lisa just said, touch things or be able to move around or just have some extra practice time to really get some of those skills and concepts to gel. So I think allowing them to have those opportunities in afterschool to give the additional time where it's done with different materials and in different ways. So that it allows some of those children that learn in other ways than through the way it's taught during the school day to use some manipulatives and just try to get some of the concepts in a different way. And I think both the other speakers have talked about the opportunities and social skills as well. I think to give kids chances to work in groups and to work as part of a team is a really important aspect as well, and it's a very important piece of excelling in academics. So I think it all ties in and that using that as extra time makes sense. From an educator's standpoint, I think we'd be missing the boat if we didn't use that opportunity to provide some academic opportunities for children.

JOHNSON: Yes, and I can see why school folks might be particularly keen on this idea. I'm curious, Lisa, how you pitch this to city and community folks when you're thinking about the benefits or the potential benefits of doing this.

FOWLER: Correct. I think most people know that there is a fine line between the school day

and afterschool in terms of where municipal leadership and municipal people at all want to get involved or would be welcome being involved. And after three o'clock, there is pretty much a general consensus that those students become community pieces and no longer just belonging in the school. They belong to the community and it's the community's responsibility to make that a special time for them, regardless of where those services are performed. If they're on an afterschool campus or they're in a park or they're somewhere, that definitely -- the time after three o'clock definitely gets the interest of the municipal people. And they also want a sound educational system for their communities. So if there is evidence that aligning education and afterschool is producing overall better performers, this is going to be attractive for the community people. But in terms of making sure that those are valuable hours, from a municipal perspective, everyone from the elected officials right down to the police department and the park staff all want to be sure that that's a useful time, that good things are happening, that they are being physically challenged, that they are being mentally challenged and that they are being socially challenged because that's going to make a better community, a safer community and a more productive community.

JOHNSON: Theresa, let's let you jump in on this, and perhaps commenting both on benefits, but also start us down the road of thinking about the challenges of doing this. Because it doesn't sound all that easy.

DALY: It is a great challenge, and I'd like to just speak to Maureen's comment about afterschool being its own learning arena. Being well planned and non-formal does not mean unplanned -- and that is where a great piece of the challenge is. But well planned afterschool programs can provide opportunities for kids to more immediately apply or use the new knowledge and skills they're learning in the day to different contexts -- contexts that are more like real life and perhaps more interesting for them because the content doesn't necessarily have to be the same. So with that, the new skills and knowledge become applied and more meaningful for the learners.

In looking at the challenges in terms of connecting afterschool and learning during the day, I think great progress has been made already by all stakeholders in identifying the need for the connection for kids in all kinds of communities. But for afterschool to really substantially and consistently support academics and youth development at the same time, the knowledge and skills of the frontline staff are key. They need training that's specific to teaching in afterschool. So the challenge now is to make the afterschool experience connected to, but not an extension of, the regular school day and to look at what that means in terms of the frontline staff skills.

JOHNSON: So training is a big piece of that challenge, I assume.

DALY: Training has been identified -- staff development has been identified to be a big piece of this.

JOHNSON: We'll come back to that certainly in the call. Maureen, Lisa, other thoughts on challenges and making this connection, either in terms of selling it locally or in actually playing it out and implementing the strategy?

FOWLER: I just wanted to say that from what I've heard from the education pieces that there is something of a disconnect, and this is always going to be an area that needs to be overcome. I think the teaching staffs feel so overwhelmed and so overburdened -- and I don't believe this is just California, I'm sure this is nationwide -- with the expectations, the deliverance of higher academic scores and being somewhat competitive. I think unless the daytime teaching staff understands how this connection can be a benefit to what they're trying to do, there will be some resistance because it's just one more thing that they have to do, more people that they have to meet if they need to in some way engage with the afterschool staff. And I think the demands at times can be overwhelming.

So one of our goals has been here in Pasadena to make sure that that's a more seamless transition, that the staff and the principal are part of the efforts. And that in the long run, after four years now of particularly having a strong afterschool program, I think the teaching staff is seeing that there are some substantial benefits and that it's certainly helping -- you know, time helps and success helps to overcome these challenges.

MURRAY: I was going to say, in addition to that, I think that there is a problem of communication and coordination. That often I think many teachers and school staff would see the afterschool opportunities as a real plus and something that will help them get done what they need to get done in the daytime. But I think the problem is that sometimes there isn't a link -- somebody to link the afterschool folks with the in-school folks, so that there is that communication. Because if you could bridge that, I think you'd be way ahead of the game. You'd have teachers that could actually hand the spelling list to the afterschool providers or tell them exactly what the homework assignment was that day so that it gives the afterschool provider a leg up. So I think in addition to any misconceptions or lack of understanding of what afterschool can provide, I think we need to pay attention to how you bridge that gap between the actual providers of during school and afterschool.

JOHNSON: Maybe, Maureen, you can help us get to a bit of the nuts-and-bolts here about how city and school leaders can play a role. Particularly, I know in Brockton you had a mayor's taskforce that's played a key role up there in what you've been doing and focusing on creating standards, etc. Can you give our audience a sense of that?

MURRAY: Sure. The Mayor's taskforce has been -- it's a group that really is all the stakeholders, all the folks who have a vested interest in making sure that our children are safe and in quality programs in out-of-school time. And a couple of the things that we tried to do as the taskforce was to focus on developing standards to ensure that all of the programs that we were providing were high quality programs. And then the other thing we've been trying to do is to make sure that all the providers are also high quality and come with some real skills that Theresa had alluded to.

I would be wrong to say we developed the standards. We actually borrowed standards from the National School Age Care Alliance, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory had some, and the School Age Environment Rating Scale were three tools that we kind of merged. And we made our own standards from those existing tools and really spent a lot of time with a subcommittee that looked at those and then got the final draft out to everyone. So all of Brockton now knows pretty much what those standards are, and we've adopted those as what we feel are the common denominator of what we'd like to see in programs.

And then along with that, we've created a professional development portfolio to help some of the providers look at what are the competencies we think everybody who works with a child afterschool should have. And then there's a portfolio that allows the providers to think about what competencies they already have and which ones they need to start working on and to try to kind of plot their own professional growth over time. So we've been rolling out both of those documents and those processes over the last two or three years to try to get everybody in our city to start using that as the common language of what's high quality programming and what do we hope that the staff is bringing to those programs as well.

JOHNSON: Maureen, what kind of people are on this Mayor's taskforce? Who are the partners here?

MURRAY: Most of the partners are the providers -- a lot of school personnel. We also have out-of-school providers like the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], Boys' and Girls' Club, and then some of the smaller organizations that represent different ethnic and linguistic groups throughout the city -- faith-based organizations.

What we also did for the taskforces that worked on the standards and the portfolio was to bring in some other people who wouldn't necessarily be actively involved in afterschool, but might have some expertise that could help us move toward where we wanted to go. So for example, on the Standards Subcommittee, we had a couple of individuals who do a lot of evaluation. We have a professor of economics at Stonehill College who does a lot of outside program evaluation who could help us get the standards and some kind of a rating scale that we could actually use to evaluate programs.

So we did very finite kind of tasks that we invited people that we knew could really provide some solid expertise and help to get us to where we were trying to go, but without tying up their time for the long term.

JOHNSON: Sure. And you have participation from the Mayor's office?

MURRAY: Yes, the Mayor's Taskforce is co-chaired by myself and the Mayor's Chief of Staff.

JOHNSON: Chief of Staff -- so that's quite a statement.

MURRAY: Right.

JOHNSON: And are there other city agency people -- city department folks --?

MURRAY: Yes, there is the Parks Department and any of the city branch that has anything to do with out-of-school time opportunities for kids.

JOHNSON: That's great.

DALY: So Maureen, in recapping what you just described about the standards creation, is it that you looked at different standards for core area subjects, and then chose the ones that you felt would be best supported in the afterschool environment? So therefore, kind of boiling it down for the afterschool staff and cutting out some of the feelings of being overwhelmed that can

occur when folks are told to support standards, but we all know there are hundreds of them?

MURRAY: Exactly. And we also wanted everyone to feel that these were the ones that were the most important for us here in Brockton. So that everybody would buy into these as being the most important. And we wanted to whittle it down to, just as you said, something that was manageable and didn't have people feeling too overwhelmed when they saw the document.

DALY: I think that that very area is the one piece that people do kind of wonder if they can embrace because obviously they need to have a grip on standards so that they know what to connect to. They know what they need to plan to link with. But also that it's not everything. We're not looking to support everything in afterschool, but just specific standards that are doable.

MURRAY: Right.

JOHNSON: So keeping the task manageable is a key piece here.

Lisa, I want to turn to you in Pasadena. I know that your mayor has been also wonderfully active and a strong advocate locally for improving afterschool programs out there. And I'm hoping you can share a bit about how the city role has played out there in Pasadena.

FOWLER: I'd be happy to. For the benefit of the audience, Pasadena was one of six cities selected nationally to partake in a technical assistance grant that focused on this very subject -- connecting afterschool programs with in-school learning. And just basically what we felt would be the best approach for that task would be to create a group of which the Mayor was the head and divide up into four major teams, each team looking at specific areas -- one focused on publicity, one focused on revenue and finance and sustainability. Another one focused on resource identification -- just making sure that we had really examined this community and had identified potential resources that could contribute to the whole afterschool experience. And finally, our last group was on standards -- but a little bit different than what Maureen was talking about. This particular group took a little bit different step and decided that for our needs and what we felt was a unifying factor or the common denominator among all afterschool providers was project-based learning. And that has really taken off in this community. We've had the benefit of Theresa Daly to come and actually help teach us, and that made a huge difference.

But what's interesting about this is regardless of where the providers are from, school people, city people, whether they're from the Y [YMCA], the Boys' and Girls' Clubs, faith-based organizations -- and Pasadena has upwards of 60 different organizations that are identified as providing some kind of afterschool programming -- have all been willing to be trained and to learn and to adopt this project-based learning as kind of the focal point of how they're going to approach afterschool. And that's been really wonderful because that's something that we can all agree on and it feeds nicely into the standards.

A particular local foundation here in Pasadena -- the Flintridge Foundation -- has been very much a proponent of this and has taken it upon themselves to be responsible for future trainings well beyond the expiration of our technical assistance grant. So that we know that the kind of training that we've been blessed to have, particularly through Theresa's shop, will go on in the future because this foundation has taken that responsibility for continued training.

DALY: Lisa, thank you very much. And I'd just like to add that Pasadena was an unusual training for me insofar as you said from the outset that our focus is project-based learning, and this is a citywide focus. And it was exciting to see the cross-fertilization that can occur when leaders of citywide agencies come to a consensus on program goals and plans that can lead to targeted training initiatives like this.

FOWLER: You know, Theresa, what would be very helpful -- as you know, I'm aware of project-based learning, but I'm hardly an expert. I think it would be helpful if you could just in one sentence tell the audience what is project-based learning, just to be clear.

DALY: Well, project-based learning usually starts in a learner-centered way. So you find out what the kids are interested in, and with them plan where it's going to go. So it's kind of open-ended, but directed by the adults in charge. And its scope is open then to look at in-house resources, community resources that could be brought in to support the project work. It can include products that might then be developed as a result of the study and information learned.

So project-based learning actually encompasses different types of student interests. And the outcomes can be very powerful. But it does take careful planning and it takes buy-in by all of the participants.

FOWLER: And I think people can see why this is such an ideal spot for project-based learning, because it really takes the learning into a new level. And that kind of creativity and openness is so suited for the afterschool environment.

DALY: Absolutely, Lisa. And I know we're meant to talk a little bit later on in this conversation about assessment as well. But all kinds of teachers -- day school teachers, university teachers -- everybody knows what the most powerful learning experiences are and the most useful assessment measures are. But day school unfortunately doesn't always have the capacity to accommodate that and to meet different kids' learning styles. And afterschool is so well placed to do this.

JOHNSON: Let me ask for your thoughts about realistic outcomes here. What one could hope to achieve if you succeed in going down this path, whether it's through project-based learning or other efforts to align education and afterschool? What's realistic here and what's hype?

MURRAY: I would say -- Massachusetts has developed a tool that we use in all 21st Century programs. And one of the things that has really become evident is that all of the afterschool programming seems to improve student engagement. And we all know that if students are not engaged, you're not going to get very far with them. So we have seen some bumps up in terms of academic skills. Now whether or not we can attribute that to afterschool programming or something else, we're not absolutely sure of at this point. But I think the fact that we can say that the students are attending and they're engaged in the whole learning process, that's a huge thing. So I don't think that's something that we should minimize at all. I think that's an important aspect of what afterschool can bring. And then in addition to that, I'm a firm believer that we will and we have seen some improvement in academic achievement. But in spite of that, I think the first step is the engagement of students.

FOWLER: Right. I would like to add too that, in Pasadena we've had some very extensive evaluations because that's actually been part of the 21st Century Learning funding, to make sure that an independent evaluator takes a look at measuring these very things we're speaking of. And I can assure you that the city has been watching very carefully the results of those evaluations.

But just to add with what Maureen was saying about students being engaged, there is very hard evidence -- and I'm sure it's not just Pasadena -- that those who are engaged in the afterschool programs do actually have a higher level of attendance. And those days are very measurable. I think it was something like seven days more of participants in the afterschool program from those who weren't. And seven days translates -- if you're going to be number-crunching about it -- those translate into dollars with ADA [average daily attendance]. The more students you have attending every day, obviously the better off it is for the school district. And that doesn't take into account the educational benefit of that youngster being in a learning environment more days than not.

And after the third year of evaluation, it finally is coming out that, at least in our particular city, that the scores for non-English language learners are improving. It may only be 1%, but that is a very large population in Pasadena, and those youngsters are improving in their scores. And also across the board, all of the math is being affected. The math scores are improving in English language learners and non-English language learners. So those are some pretty serious statistics that I think can back up what we've all known and felt for many years. But it's nice to have some evidence.

JOHNSON: And so the ways you're measuring outcomes and the tools you're using -- you're looking at test scores, of course --

FOWLER: I'm afraid so. And that wouldn't be necessarily my ideal way of measuring, but I'm afraid that's what the community wants.

JOHNSON: Reality of the world --

FOWLER: That's the reality -- exactly.

JOHNSON: And you're looking at attendance rates?

FOWLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Maureen, you were talking earlier about engagement. How do you measure that engagement? What are you using to assess progress on that kind of outcome?

MURRAY: We use a survey that's administered as a baseline when the student starts the program and at the end of the program. And the survey goes to both the afterschool provider and the in-school -- you know, the teacher that the student has during the school day. And it asks questions about attendance and involvement and engagement in school activities, initiatives, turning in homework. It has a list of outcomes that we're looking for. And that's where we're finding that information. And I think the most valuable information for us is what they are seeing during the school day and if there is any change and improvement in behavior and

academic achievement.

JOHNSON: Theresa, anything to add on this question of measuring outcomes based on your national work?

DALY: Well, I know that a lot of programs have grants to look at the test scores. But afterschool, unlike day school, doesn't have mandated attendance and oftentimes the academic component of a program may only be one hour a day. And if a child only attends two days a week or maybe three days a week, it may be difficult to measure outcomes in that way on a wide scale.

For our programs in Philadelphia, we certainly look at attendance levels, as both Maureen and Lisa mentioned. And with the time dedicated to homework and the completion of assignments and the management of longer term assignments that is available for kids in afterschool, we find that through our focus groups, it's showing that students feel less anxiety about school and their studies in general. And we look at their class grades as an indicator of improvement because if class grades are good and improving, then obviously that's a reflection of perhaps what they're doing and gaining in the afterschool program.

Another indicator might be -- I think, as Maureen mentioned, lower rates of serious incidents in communities during the afternoon hours and the gains that we all get when that happens. I mean, that is one of the big arguments for afterschool programs is that so many things do happen in those hours because kids are unsupervised if they're not in programs.

JOHNSON: Theresa, I want to come back to you and ask for your thoughts a bit on what city leaders should be looking for in this training and professional development area, which is clearly central to this whole challenge. And what kinds of things should they be focusing on as the most important sorts of training? Any thoughts on where they can find it, how teachers can find time for it with all the other burdens they have, etc.?

DALY: Well, I think the most important thing with this, Cliff, is that individual programs, citywide programs, have to establish a purpose and goals for their afterschool initiatives. And these have to be shared by all sides -- day school teachers and administrators, afterschool administrators and teachers, and parents, too.

JOHNSON: Reaching consensus there about what it is you really want is an important starting point.

DALY: Yes, and big strides have been made towards this. But of course, there is still a long way to go. And Lisa and Maureen mentioned the fact that communication is key, so that day school teachers don't see having to work with the afterschool educators as a burden, but as a real assistance. And once the goals are established, then you can determine what training is appropriate. So for example, it's not making afterschool an extension of the school day, but making it its own arena for learning as a goal. Then day school staff need to recognize that the content and teaching methods needed are different from what they do during the day. And maybe there would be training in that area. Afterschool providers often do not have formal backgrounds in education. So they may need training on methods and techniques for teaching and planning and assessment, but they also need a clear understanding of what the kids are

learning during the day so that they know what they're aiming for and they know what's appropriate to blend in terms of skill support as they conduct their projects and activities.

And parents need to understand that while afterschool attendance isn't mandatory, it is really important for it to be consistent if the potential as a learning opportunity is going to be realized.

JOHNSON: And now obviously one of the places that city leaders can turn for help in trying to think about this is here at NLC at our Institute for Youth, Education and Families. The technical assistance that Lisa was referring to earlier in Pasadena was part of a six-city project that Brockton also participated in -- that provided technical assistance from the Institute with support from Foundations Inc for city leaders trying to grapple with some of these questions.

Where else, Theresa, should folks at the city level be thinking about looking for help if they're trying to grapple with some of these training and professional development questions?

DALY: Well, training and staff development can take different forms. And again, having a clear mission and a sense of what the program goals and needs are is key. There are many organizations like Foundations [Inc] that can provide training once it's determined what is needed and what fits the current situation and would allow program staff to immediately build on their strengths. You know, any training -- training like ours -- is effective only insofar as it is applied and integrated into the teaching practice of direct service providers. Training can be done in large mixed groups on days that are dedicated to staff development. But that's really a luxury in the field of afterschool.

It can also be done -- and again, this is just perhaps a shift in attitude and a different way of looking at what staff development can be in afterschool. But staff development can be done in small site-based groups, as part of regular staff or committee meetings. It can be done in a peer teaching way with individuals helping each other over time in the course of their workdays. Or it can be self directed, using reflective practice and action planning techniques. So I can only stress that folks have to be realistic about where they are and what their resources are to determine what they need and then seek advice on where to get the really targeted training that's going to make a change in the right direction for them.

MURRAY: If I could add something to that -- Brockton also was involved in the project that Lisa was talking about, as you mentioned. And NLC had introduced us to the Foundations Inc training. And although we didn't have Foundations come to Brockton, we purchased -- I'll put in a plug for the book, Theresa --

DALY: -- Thanks very much.

MURRAY: -- A wonderful book called *Afterschool Style: A Notebook and Guide*. And it's a wonderful compilation of activity ideas and some ways of having afterschool providers look at their own skills and what they bring to the table and what they bring to programs and how they can tie in some academics with that. We actually have an organization here called "Get On Base" that took those books and did a training with out-of-school time providers here in Brockton. And they each went away with one of those books and were thrilled with it, and they've come back since to kind of talk about some of the things that they've used and tried, to

share some things that have worked and haven't worked. So that's another way of doing the training.

DALY: Maureen, thank you very much for mentioning *Academic Content, Afterschool Style*. But it sounds much in line with what you had already determined needed to be done. You needed to boil down the standards. Standards for different age groups are included in the handbook. You also determined that staff need to be able to reflect -- do self assessments and figure out what their own professional development needs are from where their starting points are. And we can only know that for ourselves. I think really that is the way forward.

JOHNSON: Thanks for all of this advice. Let me turn to our conference call operator, Jessica, to see if we have a question waiting for us.

FACILITATOR: Your first question comes from Regina Price from Coral Springs, Florida.

QUESTIONER: Yes, I would like to find out have you done the afterschool programs in middle school? That is our term here in Florida is middle school, which is sixth grade, seventh and eighth grade. Have you been successful with middle school programs? That's what I'm concerned about. Because we don't have them here and that's what we're looking at doing because we have children that we feel for safety issues and with working parents --.

JOHNSON: Thank you, Regina.

FOWLER: I can respond to that. We do have two middle school programs in Pasadena, and they are both very successful. We started with just one, and then we were able to add a second one. And I wanted to let the group know that also in Pasadena, we have two high school programs, and we are one of the first in the state that's been able to take advantage of that. And it's quite amazing. And I think the differences between the younger students participating in afterschool and the middle and high school is the level of direction that the students themselves put forth and what activities will be done.

I don't have a lot of specifics about the kinds of programming that go on in the middle school. But I'm hoping that this caller will -- I'll give you my contact information later -- hook up with me and I'll make sure that you have everything that would be helpful to you in planning.

But on the high school, I can say, for example, that students want to learn things about job interviews, about college applications -- the kinds of things that they believe are going to help them as they go down the road. And they have been very, very involved in deciding what kinds of program they're going to be studying and going to be learning. And I would understand that the middle school had certainly more of that than the younger kids. But a lot of emphasis on science and homework assistance as well as a little bit more sophisticated participation in league sports and things of that nature. But I certainly would be happy to share whatever information we have with this caller.

DALY: Lisa, as part of your project-based learning, have any of the students participated in service learning? Because oftentimes, middle school and high school students do participate in that. They can get credit from their day school teachers for doing it. And that's also another

nice way for them to experience the world of real work and what's involved in that.

FOWLER: I believe the high school has. I don't know enough to speak to the middle school. I just want to be sure that whatever I say is accurate and a little bit more comprehensive. But that certainly is -- everything from computer skills to office skills -- a lot of that goes on at the high school level.

JOHNSON: Let me pose another question for you. This is a question via e-mail from Lynn Johnson in San Francisco. And she writes, "What's the role of the arts in encouraging and supporting learning in afterschool? How can we improve the quality of all enrichment activities to give students the best possible learning experience?"

MURRAY: I would respond to that that we've made a very conscious decision in choosing some of our partners to bring in some of the entities in Brockton that can bring arts to some of our programs. So for example, we have the Fuller Craft Museum, we have a symphony and we have brought those kinds of programs in because, again, we're talking about a whole child. We don't want to just provide academic kind of programming. We want to have all kinds of opportunities for them. So we've tried to provide a mixture of things that the students can participate in, and those certainly include the arts because that's -- you know, for many kids, that's where they're going to shine, too. So you want to bring something where they can not only enjoy themselves, but feel like they're having a lot of success.

JOHNSON: And build that crucial self-esteem.

FOWLER: I can just add one little comment to that, and that is in Pasadena, some of the providers for services such as the symphony have been targeted specifically for that afterschool block. While they're not going to provide funding and training for the in-school hours, they will do it for afterschool, and that has been a wonderful resource. And that's one of the ways that we've been able to enlarge that section of the academic training to the arts and to the cultural. It would be by having those providers specifically target the out-of-school hours with instruments, with lessons, things of that nature.

DALY: And I'd just like to comment that as part of the multi-day afterschool teaching institute that we piloted at our conference in Atlanta in February -- we were lucky enough to have Carmen Diego Rivera from the East Harlem Afterschool Initiative join us and do a three-hour project-based learning session on connecting afterschool and the arts through different mediums. And it was called, "Who, Me? I'm No Artist" because a lot of the teachers in afterschool just feel like they don't have expertise in an area, and therefore they might shy away from it. And it just kind of demystifying it and making it accessible to the teachers so they in turn can make it accessible to the kids.

JOHNSON: That's great. Operator, do we have another question on the line?

FACILITATOR: Your next question comes from William Monogle from Little Rock, Arkansas.

QUESTIONER: My question -- two questions -- Theresa, I was wondering if you could send me

your or Claudia's calendar schedule the first couple of weeks of August?

DALY: Sure, I'd be happy to do that.

QUESTIONER: Okay. And then the second question is do any of you have the name of a person who would be available and also capable of delivering a good, inspiring keynote address on this topic to an audience of afterschool providers and some of their school district contacts as well as possibly some of the administrators from the school district to inspire people about this initiative?

JOHNSON: That's about great speakers -- I mean, we certainly can try and help with that for individual communities through the Institute. Any off-the-cuff thoughts?

DALY: Claudia Weisburd.

JOHNSON: That is the head of Foundations, Inc.

QUESTIONER: Thank you -- good.

JOHNSON: Let me see what other questions we have on the line.

FACILITATOR: Your next question comes from Jim Soltis from Trinidad, Colorado.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Tell me how you deal with the matter of dropout students that may want to become involved.

JOHNSON: Kids who have already left school?

QUESTIONER: That have dropped out of school, correct.

DALY: In Philadelphia, they have what is called "Twilight Programs", which are afternoon programs for kids who do not attend school during the day, but are interested in continuing until they complete their diploma requirements.

JOHNSON: Here at the Institute, we've been doing a lot of work, both on alternative high school programs, programs that are designed to reach kids who have not succeeded in traditional high school settings. And also we have a disconnected youth initiative that tries to help city leaders who are struggling with questions of how to reach young people who are no longer connected to school or work or in many cases family and community. Our most recent action kit for municipal leaders -- many of you may know that we have a series of action kits on key topics. And the most recent action kit is on re-engaging disconnected youth. You'll find that in a .pdf version on the Institute website at www.nlc.org/iyef.

It's a challenge. Probably -- I think it's fair to say afterschool programs may not be the first conduit for trying to re-engage young people in school per se. But there is certainly a lot of work and discussion going on in communities across the country about how to reach that population.

FOWLER: Let me just add one quick sentence from Pasadena. What we have -- we call them the Academies. And they simply focus right away on skills for young people going out into job markets. It's amazing how young people who may not take that well to traditional studies love the idea of learning about the entertainment industry or service industry or the healthcare providing industry or printing or things of that nature, who can get the skills that they need with a school-inside-of-a-school. So those can be very helpful also to re-engage youngsters who just aren't making it in the traditional sense.

JOHNSON: Thank you, Lisa. We have time for one more question, and then I'm going to come back to each of you on the panel and ask each of you for a closing thought about either a key lesson you've learned or a key piece of advice for city leaders on how they can make progress in this area.

JOHNSON: Jessica, can we go to the next question?

FACILITATOR: Mr. Johnson, you have a follow up question from Regina Price from Coral Springs, Florida.

QUESTIONER: Yes, hi. Thank you so much for this information. And Lisa, could you give me the information of how to get in touch with you?

FOWLER: Yes, I'll give it to you. I'll give you my e-mail address. It is Lfowler@cityofpasadena.net.

QUESTIONER: Okay, great, thank you so much.

FOWLER: I look forward to hearing from you.

JOHNSON: Thank you, Regina. So let's go to closing thoughts, and particularly closing pieces of advice for city leaders who want to make progress in this area. Would any of you like to jump in first?

FOWLER: I don't mind. First of all, I want to thank everybody for listening. I hope that we've been able to be helpful. I'm going to talk just briefly about a bit of advice for both elected officials and government staff. I think we have to approach our relationship with our colleagues on the school side in a new light -- that really the barriers have to be taken down. And if I had any advice for a municipal leader or elected official, I would say look to that school board or look to that colleague that has the same kind of a role you do in the city as your new best friend. Because there really is no reason that these organizations and these entities cannot work together. I have had the experience of being both a council member and a school board member. And during my tenure on either one of those groups, I never had the privilege of having the kind of relationship that I am encouraging now.

The opportunities are endless, not only the kinds of partnerships we've been talking about today, but it's just a better way to run a community. It's a better way to be entwined with other decision makers. And it's the best way to produce the most ideal climate for

your community. And I would just encourage all elected officials and appointed officials to work closely together, to get to know each other, to try to put yourselves in their shoes. Try to imagine what it's like to cope with the issues that they have. I mean, city elected officials don't know what it feels like to work with out-of-control principals and horrible budget restraints from the state and teachers that are constantly looking for new raises and for all the things that they have to deal with. And just like school board members don't know what it's like to have to deal with potholes or planning issues. But I think if there can be a little bit of understanding and trade-off between the roles of these different groups, there can be just endless opportunities for partnering and for working together to make a better community. And I would certainly encourage, again, like I said, the tearing down of any barriers and looking at what marvelous relationships can be created through that.

MURRAY: I guess in Brockton, we've been very blessed that we walked into a very nice, well-established relationship between the schools and the city that we both certainly felt and understood the importance of working together to create programming for students. And historically, originally it started out as providing safe places for children to be after school. But we've broadened our thinking, and I would encourage the listeners to think about a broader view of afterschool beyond the safe places, to think of it as a place of opportunities to address the needs of the whole child, that do include academic needs.

And I would also say not to limit partnerships. And I think the mayor and the city leaders bring their presence and their background to open a lot of doors for partners that can come and bring their expertise on a short-term basis, as I've cited in our creation of the standards. Or longer-term basis -- partners like Junior Achievement that already bring established curriculum and programming that has a good solid base and brings some academics into the programming. So I would say to use those city leaders, and the mayor in particular, to open the doors to bring additional partners that can develop a high quality program and sustain that programming.

JOHNSON: Great advice -- there is really no substitute for that kind of strong mayoral leadership and leadership by other city officials. Theresa, closing thoughts for folks?

DALY: Yes, thank you. I would like to thank you all too for joining us today, and just to suggest and ask that city leaders make every effort to create teaching positions in afterschool that are desirable and that offer the teachers leadership opportunities and opportunities for career advancement. That is another great challenge to the work because it is still usually part time and there is great turnover on the front line. So we do need to address that and try to stabilize that workforce.

JOHNSON: Great. I'm afraid there is so much more we could talk about. I very much appreciate each of you taking the time to be with us today -- Lisa Fowler from Pasadena, Maureen Murray from Brockton, Massachusetts and Theresa Daly from Foundations, Inc.

ALL: Thank you.

JOHNSON: I appreciate it so much.

Thank you all for joining us today. We look forward to having you back for

future audioconferences. If you have other questions that you did not have a chance to pose today or if there are other ways the Institute here at NLC can be of help, you can send an e-mail message to iyef@nlc.org. We'd be delighted to hear from you.
Thanks again to the three of you. We look forward to being in touch.