

Room to Grow: Tapping the After-School Workforce Potential

PROPOSAL: Leaders in after-school and workforce development should collaborate to create a system that clearly articulates the path from part-time entry-level work through core occupations in after-school. Workers should be able to earn recognized credentials and higher wages through systems that link on-the-job training and credit-bearing courses. This system will both enhance the quality of programs and help trained workers build careers in after-school and critically important related fields, such as teaching.

Why Create Career Pathways in After-School?

More than 1 million Americans work in the non-school hours (after school, summers and holidays).^{*} For many, it is their first job. Most after-school workers are required to undergo extensive on-the-job training, gaining valuable skills they can apply to related careers, such as teaching. As large as this workforce is, however, after-school does not have a well-accepted system of formal instruction, set of core courses to prepare individuals, or a system for crediting workers for their training.

The after-school field has been overlooked as part of a national strategy to boost employment and create new career paths, perhaps because many positions are part-time and low-wage. Yet because workers receive grounding in child development and other competencies, they've already taken strong first steps toward many professions. Consider, for example, the potential among men of color, who are active in the after-school workforce but under-represented among certified teachers.

After-school programs employ people of all ages and

backgrounds: teachers and social workers with degrees, but also high school and college students, artists, and parents seeking part-time work. An asset for programs, workers are highly diverse by ethnicity, income, language, background and experience. Kids interact with adults who see kids through a different lens than their teachers.

When The After-School Corporation (TASC) first offered opportunities in 2007 for after-school workers to enroll in college courses and earn professional certification, for example, the first group of participants ranged in age from 18 to 61. Some had only G.E.D. credentials while one had a master's degree. Half were African-American and a third were Latino.

Jobs are accessibly based in communities where meaningful work may be hard to find. A large proportion of jobs carry few specific experience or education requirements, which makes the field an accessible entry point into the workforce. As a result, after-school workers often live in the neighborhoods where they work, and invest their wages back into these communities. Given the chance to earn college credits and develop professionally, after-school educators can be powerful role models for young people in their programs.

For more than a decade, TASC has provided and supported extensive training of after-school educators. More

^{*} Because the field lacks consistent job definitions, this is an estimate based on a conservative analysis of available information.

recently we've provided New York City youth workers with opportunities to earn undergraduate and graduate credits and professional certification.

As a reflection of the growing movement to deepen connections between the after-school field and institutions of higher education, TASC's Center for After-School Excellence joined with Foundations, Inc., an education nonprofit, to explore best practices together with a national panel of experts. In January, 2010, the group will publish a white paper on strategies to expand those connections.

To be effective, after-school programs must be staffed by people who are trained to work with rich curriculum and forge strong and supportive relationships with children. As they gain experience and undergo required training, after-school educators develop an understanding of youth development and the skills to engage students in curricula of many kinds, including arts, fitness, literacy and science.

We propose that policymakers, educators and leaders in this field collaborate to build an after-school professional development system that will lay down career paths and support staff members in their current practice. We support creating standardized, formal systems of instruction to help after-school educators gain credits and credentials that are linked to higher wages. Informal training should be sequenced, credited and aligned to this larger professional development system so staff members who participate in on-the-job training are rewarded.

After-school educators should be able to earn credentials that are recognized across organizational and geographic lines and that are durable and portable. College

credits are expensive, but perhaps the best way to accomplish this.

The Problem

There is growing consensus regarding the skills and competencies after-school workers need. They should be trained in education, community work, and child and youth development. Currently, however, the after-school field does not have standard educational or training requirements or standard job descriptions and titles. This makes it difficult for organizations to articulate career ladders, or for workers to envision career paths.

In most regions, it's left to individual organizations to develop a sequence of continuous training for after-school staff. There is no national educational or certification requirement for an after-school worker. Most informal trainings do not lead to portable certification and are not tied to universities that could offer credentials and degrees that are recognized from state to state.

The field is pyramid-shaped, with many entry-level and part-time jobs narrowing to higher-wage, high-skill jobs. Some 84 percent of jobs in after-school are part-time. This is conducive to employing college students, people who work other jobs, and people re-entering the workforce. However this also means that many jobs offer low wages and limited benefits. Turnover is high among frontline staff, as much as 30 percent a year, according to a survey of New York City programs completed by The Center for After-School Excellence at TASC.

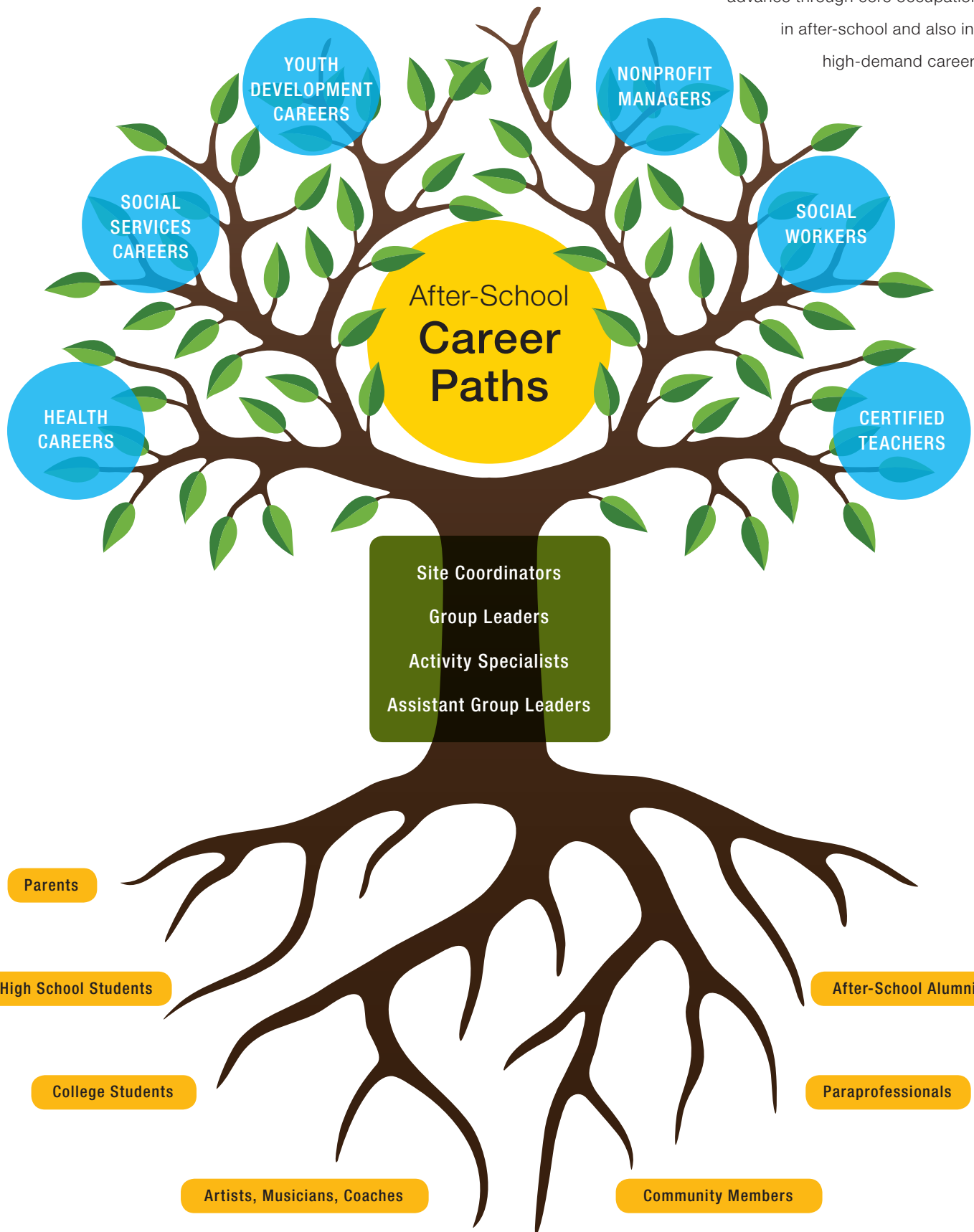
Many people employed in after-school programs are committed to youth work and want to advance in

Common Job Titles, Wages & Education Requirements

Assistant Group Leaders	\$9-\$13hr	High school student or graduate/equivalent
Activity Specialists	\$15-25hr	Associate's degree or some college
Group Leaders	\$13-\$20hr	Some college
Site Coordinators	\$13-\$30hr	Bachelor's degree

Wages are based on survey of New York City after-school programs.

After-school draws its workforce from many sources. A strong professional development system can help individuals advance through core occupations in after-school and also into high-demand careers.



after-school careers. In surveying 752 staff members at 70 federally-funded after-school programs in New York City, the Center found they were satisfied with most aspects of their jobs. The reasons workers most often cited for leaving the field, according to a survey by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, were lack of status as a profession and lack of time off to attend classes or trainings, as well as low pay and lack of benefits (including health insurance).¹

No comprehensive data set includes wage informa-

tion for after-school occupations. Among those surveyed by the Center in New York, roughly half of all site coordinators (who manage programs), certified teachers and social workers earn annual salaries above \$40,000. These occupations also have the highest level of responsibility and educational attainment in the after-school workforce. The majority of after-school workers are in part-time entry level positions. More than half earn less than \$10,000 a year. Fifty-nine percent of assistant group leaders make between nine and thirteen dollars an hour with no additional benefits. Some 53 percent of group leaders earn between 13 and 20 dollars an hour. Some 48 percent of activity specialists (who have expertise in areas such as art or music) make between 15 and 25 dollars an hour.

New York Trilogy

Where do after-school workers who pursue professional development see their careers going? Here are three New York stories.

Carmen Dingui volunteered in her daughter's after-school program and, after becoming a group leader, enrolled in a nine-credit program at Kingsborough Community College to earn a professional certificate in after-school. Her long-term plan is to earn a bachelor's degree and become a licensed substance abuse counselor.

Wanda Santiago was hired as an after-school assistant group leader and promoted to assistant site coordinator while attending Hostos Community College to earn her after-school professional certification. She became a fulltime site coordinator and is expected to earn her associate's degree in 2010. She plans to apply those credits to a bachelor's degree and become a teacher.

Diane Shirley began as an AmeriCorps volunteer in an after-school program. Two months after becoming a site coordinator, she enrolled in college courses. Her long-term goal is to teach elementary school and run her own after-school program.

The Solution

In order to plot a course forward, it's important to know how informal training of after-school staff typically operates.

For programs to be licensed, after-school workers are required to receive basic safety training and typically 10-15 hours of additional training each year. These non-credited trainings may cover increasingly advanced topics. For example, entry-level staff may begin in core content areas of youth development such as developmentally appropriate practice, keeping children safe and healthy, and classroom management. More senior staff often train on managing budgets and human resources.

Some organizations throughout the country have articulated learning frameworks in partnership with institutions of higher education. A sequence of college courses covering education, psychology and social work are developed to support careers in after-school. Credit-bearing courses offer after-school workers opportunities to acquire widely recognized, standards-based knowledge that can help them advance.

- The Center for Afterschool Education, Foundations, Inc. and Arcadia University in Philadelphia launched a 15-credit online graduate certificate for the after-school field in 2008. The program requires individuals to attend one on-campus weekend institute and to choose from online coursework which includes instructional methods, organizational management and human development.

¹ Le Menestrel, S. & Dennehy, J. (2003). "Building a Skilled and Stable Workforce: Results from an On-Line Survey of Out-of-School Time Professionals." Wellesley, MA: National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

Arcadia grants credits to those who participate in trainings offered through the Center.

- Through the Department of Education at University of California, Irvine, college students who are interested in the after-school field can earn a Certificate in After-school Education. They engage in both classroom instruction and supervised fieldwork. They attain core knowledge in theory, research, and evaluation of after-school programs and activities, and practical skills in delivering quality programming in after-school settings.

- In the UC Links programs in California, university faculty members collaborate with community partners to operate after-school programs. Practicum courses place college students at UC Links programs, where they guide kids in activities and have opportunities to connect theory with practice.

- The University of Minnesota’s Extension Center for Youth Development partners with the College of Education and Human Development to offer non-credit and degree programs for youth workers. They include undergraduate Youth Studies; master’s level Youth Development Leadership Program; and doctoral level Curriculum & Instruction (Family, Youth and Community).

- Twenty states have expanded the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood model to after-school staff. T.E.A.C.H requires funds for scholarships and support.

- In New York City, TASC partners with the City University of New York to offer undergraduate and graduate professional certificates in after-school. After-school and youth workers earn certificates, and accumulate credits toward their college degrees, by taking a year-long series of courses at CUNY college campuses.

An entry-level worker should be able to continue to work part-time and receive only the informal training required for licensing purposes. However, for those who wish to move ahead in the field, there should be an easily navigable system that links training and education with higher wages. We do not advocate that workers be required to earn credentials or college credits without tuition subsidies and/or wage incentives.

States are struggling on their own to create navigable

systems for linking training with credentials, credits and jobs with increasing pay and responsibilities. Ideally, there would be definitions that work on a national level and common strategies that lead workers toward career advancement.

Recommendations

All players in the after-school field – including government agencies that work with schools and nonprofits to serve youth – should join forces with institutions of higher learning to build an effective after-school professional development system. This system should support after-school workers in their current practice and further their life and career goals.

Leaders in after-school and workforce development should:

- Develop credit-bearing courses and degrees in youth development and after-school, in partnership with colleges and universities
- Articulate sequenced informal trainings across a range of topics and align them with formal training, so that all participation builds towards attainment of higher education degrees
- Support staff development as an essential tool for program operation through public and private funding, and an essential element of state and federal policy as it applies to after-school, including reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Develop common job titles and educational requirements across state lines
- Collect data to demonstrate the connection between credit-bearing training and program quality
- Collect data on wages and career advancement ■

About TASC

The After-School Corporation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to giving all kids opportunities to grow through after-school and summer activities that support, educate and inspire them.

TASC's vision is that kids from all backgrounds will have access to the range of high quality activities beyond the school day that every family wants for their children: experiences that support their intellectual, creative and healthy development and help them to be their best, in and out of school.



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