FairShare: DATA-SHARING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Sharing data between out-of-school time (OST) programs and schools is critical to supporting children's learning and development, but it's one of the trickiest issues to navigate.

Silo mentalities, privacy concerns and limited resources are only a few of the obstacles that can hinder efforts. Nevertheless, a small, but growing, number of OST systems have successfully maneuvered around roadblocks and are forging strong partnerships with their local school districts that are built on a shared vision and support for each other's work. Here are some of their strategies.

The Wallace Foundation

This is one of **six tip sheets** on using data to improve access to high-quality after-school and summer programs. The tip sheets are meant for staff members of city agencies, mayors' offices, "intermediary" groups, program providers and youth advocates.

Tip #1: Research current data-collection practices among providers.

You can't share data that you don't have. Find out what information providers are collecting about participants and how. In a 2010 survey of 121 providers by Boston Afterschool & Beyond, the local OST coordinating group, more than half said they tracked participation data in Microsoft Excel and 40 percent used paper – clearly revealing the limited technical abilities of providers to share information. (See a copy of the survey[1] and the results.[2]) A majority of respondents expressed at least some interest in contributing data to a common database and thought it would be useful to track enrollment and attendance online in a simple form to which they could export their data. Based on these results, the intermediary is designing a new feature for BOSTONavigator, its searchable online public database of OST programs, that will let providers input enrollment and attendance data using an upload function in Excel.

Tip #2: Overcome legal barriers.

The U.S. Department of Education recently made changes to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the federal law that protects student data, which should facilitate data sharing. This brief[3] by The Forum for Youth Investment explains the new regulations. Getting parental consent to share participant information and access school records is one way to comply with the law. (See details below.) Some systems have taken a different approach. After seven years of relationship building, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) and the Providence Public School District signed a memorandum of understanding that in effect makes PASA a quasi-district entity that's providing a service – OST programs – that the district would provide itself but can't. In that capacity, PASA can legally retrieve student educational records in order to effectively provide and evaluate its service to the district. Technically, the agreement eliminates the need for parental consent, but PASA hasn't removed the question requesting it from enrollment forms yet.

Tip #3: Get permission from parents.

The survey of Boston providers also found that only 37 percent had language about privacy and sharing participant data on their enrollment forms. Fewer still included language about access to students' academic records. Those findings prompted Boston After School & Beyond to draft appropriate language and suggest providers add it to their enrollment forms. Not only did this save providers some work, it ensured that parental consent began to become uniform across the system. Use clear language so parents understand what they're agreeing to, and provide translations from English if necessary, as the Providence After School Alliance did in its permission form.[4]

Tip #4: Collect student ID numbers at enrollment.

It's the most accurate, efficient way to match after-school participants with their school records. In analyzing provider data on 1,800 after-school participants, researchers at Boston Public Schools found that half of the records did not have student identification numbers, which can lead to errors and duplication. Boston After School & Beyond is now working with providers to ensure consistent collection of student ID codes.

Tip #5: Determine who can see the data.

PASA's data-sharing agreement with the school district spells out who will have access to the information, to what degree and for what purpose. Among those with access are managers employed by community-based organizations to run the logistics of PASA's after-school programs at four sites. PASA has an agreement with each of these organizations that holds them, and not PASA, liable for whether their staff members follow the data confidentiality agreement.

Tip #6: Be clear on what's being shared and its purpose.

PASA and the Providence school district, for instance, share data about after-school participants as well as students who could gain from attending OST programs. The district identifies those students by using a formula, based on several data points, that generates a list of children at each school who are in most need of OST services, such as those who are struggling with math and could benefit from engaging math programs. A team at the school, including the after-school site coordinator and school administrators, then reviews the list and targets students for enrollment. The OST system in Jacksonville, Fla.,

meanwhile, has access to school records that allows it to compare participation in after-school programs with non-participation.

In addition to basic demographics, OST systems commonly request school data on attendance, promotion rates, standardized test scores, math and English grades, suspensions and behavior infractions.

Tip #7: Answer the "What's in it for me?" question.

Data sharing is a two-way street, so all partners need to see how they can benefit. Show providers how they can use school data to improve program quality and address student needs in real time. In Louisville, Ky., for instance, one provider started a truancy prevention program after a data query revealed high absenteeism at school among its ninth-grade participants. It continued the program until school attendance improved. This, in turn, supported in-school learning. Schools, under intense pressure to deliver results, want to know how OST helps them reach their goals. Researchers in Louisville found that kids who went to after-school programs at least three days a week had better school attendance, a lower suspension rate and better academic performance. "If you're talking to a school system that's struggling, and so many are these days, they want to hear that educating our children is not just their job," says Darrell Aniton, director of Louisville's Office of Youth Development. "Show them how you can work together."

Tip #8: Consider other data-sharing partners.

Which other municipal agencies or systems have data that could help build a strong case for OST programs? Our Community's Children, the partnership overseeing OST in Grand Rapids, Mich., and the local police department both share data with local university researchers who are studying whether there's an association between OST participation and reduced juvenile crime. In a study comparing a random sample of 3,000 after-school participants to a database of juvenile offenders, the researchers found only two matches, suggesting that after-school programming keeps kids out of trouble. In addition, a longitudinal study showed that juvenile offenses dropped 25 percent from 2006 to 2009, a time when the number of after-school programs grew in Grand

Rapids. (See the report.[5]) Our Community's Children has used these findings to advocate for OST with legislators and policymakers. (See the tip sheet for more on using data in advocacy efforts.[6])

Further Reading

Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches Spreading Across the Country, National League of Cities, 2011
http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/coordinating-after-school-resources/Documents/Municipal-Leadership-for-Afterschool.pdf

Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports, Harvard Family Research Project, 2010
http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/partnerships-for-learning-promising-practices-in-integrating-school-and-out-of-school-time-program-supports

Using Data in Multi-Agency Collaborations: Guiding Performance to Ensure Accountability and Improve Programs, Public/Private Ventures and Child Trends, 2012
http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2012_02_23_FR_UsingData.pdf
http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/338_publication.pdf

Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success, Harvard Family Research Project, 2011
http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/year-round-learning-linking-school-afterschool-and-summer-learning-to-support-student-success

Endnotes

1 http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/collecting-and-using-data/Documents/DATA-SHARING-Boston-survey-instrument.pdf

2 http://www.bostonbeyond.org/sites/default/files/Data%20Integration%20Survey%20Results_0.pdf

3 http://forumfyi.org/files/First_Look_FERPA.pdf

4 http://www.mypasa.org/sites/default/files/u3/Generic%20Brochure.pdf

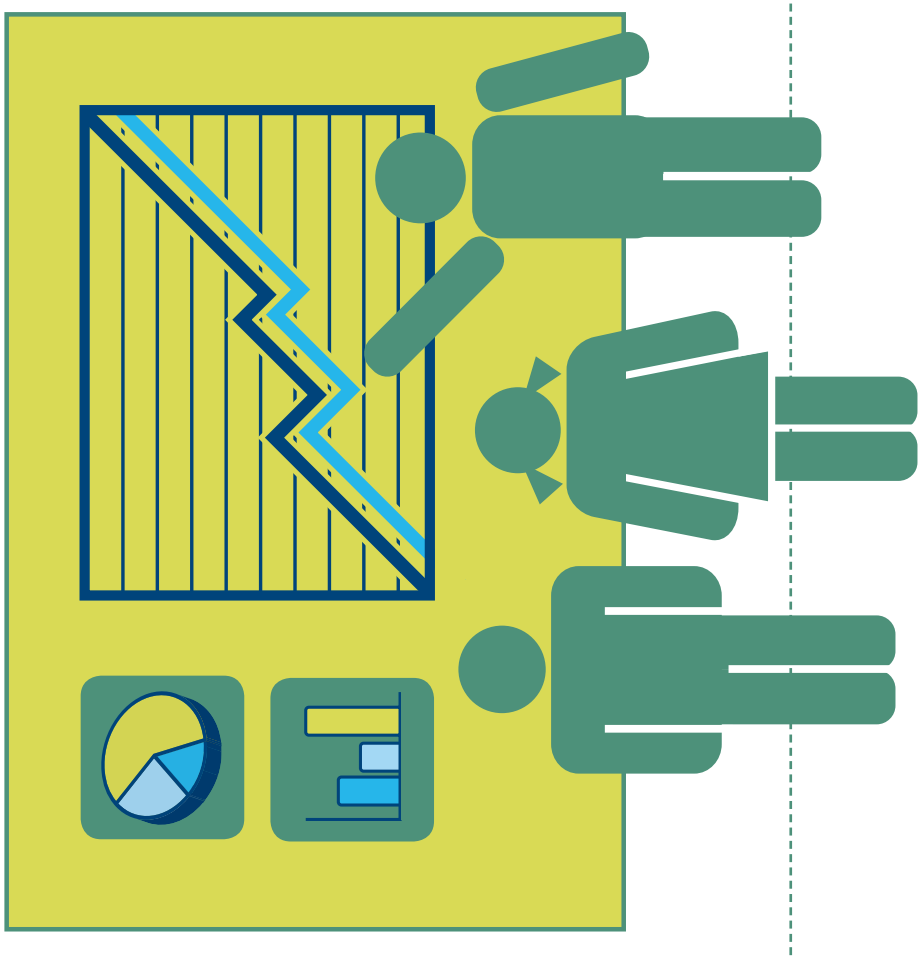
5 http://www.cridata.org/Projects/GRJOI/

[6] http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/collecting-and-using-data/Documents/All-in-Favor-Using-Data-in-Advocacy-Work.pdf

Other Tip Sheets in the Series:

Introduction • All in Favor: Using Data in Advocacy Work • From Good to Great: Using Data to Assess and Improve Quality • Made to Measure: Using Data to Improve Accountability • Fair Share: Data-Sharing Strategies That Work

After-School Data: What Cities Need to Know



For further reading, please visit: www.wallacefoundation.org

The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that seeks to improve education and enrichment for disadvantaged children. The foundation has an unusual approach: funding projects to test innovative ideas for solving important social problems, conducting research to find out what works and what doesn't and to fill key knowledge gaps – and then communicating the results to help others.

Wallace has five major initiatives under way:

- School leadership: Strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement.
- After-school: Helping selected cities make good out-of-school time programs available to many more children.
- Audience development for the arts: Making the arts a part of many more people's lives by working with arts organizations to broaden, deepen and diversify audiences.
- Arts education: Expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens.
- Summer and expanded learning time: Giving children more hours to devote to learning.

Wallace's work in after-school programming

Typically in the world of after-school programming, the many varied programs for youngsters and the government agencies and private organizations that fund them operate in isolation from one another. In 2003, Wallace began working in five cities to help coordinate the after-school workings of these institutions, in the hope this would lead to systems supporting better programs and increased access to them citywide. A 2010 RAND Corporation report that studied the initiative found the cities' efforts had provided "a proof of principle" that after-school systems hold promise. Wallace today is funding after-school system efforts in nine additional cities, and in a separate Chicago initiative, Wallace is trying to help after-school providers and funders overcome a little-recognized barrier to offering more and better services – weak financial management.

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